

4-23-2024

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eCommons Citation

Downey, Kris, "There Will No Longer Be Chocolate Cake At Every Meal" (2024). *Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Blog*. 18.

https://ecommons.udayton.edu/ebww_blog/18

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There Will No Longer Be Chocolate Cake At Every Meal

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Tuesday April 23, 2024

By Kris Downey

The 2024 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop has come to an end. It's time to go home. Brace yourself. For the foreseeable future, no keynote speakers will be inspiring you as you sip Chardonnay while waiting for your food to appear before you.

To add insult to injury — it's unlikely Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, novelist, and memoirist, Anna Quindlen will be settling in for a chat and a piece of cake any time soon. Although, her memoir *Lots of Candles, Plenty of Cake*, a New York Times bestseller, does imply she's a fan of cake.

She's also a fan of family. Anna says all stories are about family. I agree. I'd be lost without Hub's antics to poke fun at.

You can never have enough inspirational keynote speakers.

At lunch, about 400 attendees were inspired by Zibby Owens, of *Moms Don't Have Time to Read Books* fame, her 30-minute podcast that launched the Zibby Verse. She told stories of things she almost did — like take over the world.

Instead of taking over the world, Zibby settled on becoming a best-selling author, creating a media company, a bookstore, a magazine, a publishing company, and four kids. Not bad for a humble, funny woman who freely admits to using Munjuormo, a weight loss drug.

She also almost ate a whole chocolate cake, oh wait — that was me.

Another keynote speaker, Jacquelyn Mitchard, a New York Times bestselling author of a crazy number of novels, and mother of a passel of kids used her time to encourage us to get our work out into the world.

This hit a nerve for me. I'm the proud owner of a pile of journals and notebooks full of stories — possibly worth sharing. Of course, they're tucked in with an abundance of whining — definitely not worth sharing.

Guess the trick is in the sorting.

Beth Lapidés, keynote number four, is a comedian, creativity coach, and fan of wearing sequins. She sparkled as she talked about decisions, habits, and ditching booze — all good things. She didn't mention cake, but I'm sure she's a fan.

Our final keynote speaker, Wade Rouse, is a memoirist and novelist. Wade told the story of his mom and Grandmother reading Erma's columns together over coffee and cake. Wade's job was to cut the columns out of the newspaper and put them on the fridge behind the cow magnet.

As a young teen, Wade wrote to Erma expressing his gratitude for the joy her words gave his mom and grandmother. No one expected her to write back. But it was Erma, so of course, she wrote back.

Her message was: "Keep writing, laughing, and believing." And eating cake.

I added the cake part but I'm betting Erma would agree.

I came home with my clothes feeling tight, my funny tuned-up, and my very own group of potential keynote speakers in the guise of newfound friends.

Writing, laughing, and believing, that's our plan — along with wine and cake.

Thank you, Erma.

The Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop is held every two years in Dayton, Ohio. It's on my calendar for life.

—Kris Downey

Kris Downey is a woman who pays attention and enjoys sharing the absurd things she notices. She writes for several humor publications on [Medium.com](https://medium.com) as well as her community magazine. She is also working on an essay collection destined to become a bestseller and a memoir destined for the bottom drawer.