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You Can Write!

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Emmy Award-winning talk show host Phil Donahue used to live across the street from humorist Erma Bombeck in an ordinary, middle-class neighborhood in Centerville, Ohio. From those unpretentious beginnings in suburbia, both soared to national popularity.

This spring, Donahue returns home to kick off the 2014 Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop at the University of Dayton with memories of that special friendship in a keynote talk.

Besides Donahue, the keynoters include:

- *New York Times*' best-selling novelist Lisa Scottoline and writer-daughter, Francesca Serritella.
- Author Mary Lou Quinlan, marketing expert and writer of four books, most recently *The God Box, Sharing My Mother's Gift of Faith, Love and Letting Go*, which became a *New York Times*' bestseller in just three weeks.
- Author and comic Judy Carter, whose bestseller *The Comedy Bible* was touted by Oprah Winfrey and described by the *Washington Post* as "the number one comedy essential of 2010." Her 2013 book, *The Message of You*, teaches readers how to inspire others and advance their careers.
- Author and Emmy- and Golden Globe-nominated writer and producer Bruce Ferber, whose sitcom credits include *Home Improvement, Bosom Buddies, Growing Pains, Sabrina, The Teenage Witch* and *Coach*. He's the author of *Elevating Overman: A Novel*.

The workshop will feature "Pitchapalooza" — described as the "*American Idol* for books, only kinder and gentler." Five years ago, Arielle Eckstut and David Henry Sterry created an event that has drawn thousands of people into bookstores, writing conferences and book festivals all over the country — and captured attention from *The New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post* and NPR. Writers get one minute to pitch a book idea before a panel. The judges pick a winner, who will receive an introduction to an agent or publisher appropriate for the book idea.

The workshop will include a special panel, "Women Writing Their Lives — Truth-Telling, Wisdom and Laughter," with Suzanne Braun Levine, the first editor of *Ms. Magazine*, and two former keynote speakers — humorist and scholar Gina Barreca and author Ilene (Gingy) Beckerman. Patricia Wynn Brown, the workshop's popular emcee, will moderate the discussion.

In addition, *New York Times* best-selling author W. Bruce Cameron and his screenwriting partner Cathryn Michon will share excerpts from their 2014 romantic comedy, *Muffin Top: A Love Story*, and talk about turning a novel into a screenplay. Michon, one of the film's stars and an advocate for putting more women in front of and behind Hollywood's cameras, raised \$75,000 from a Kickstarter social media campaign to conduct a nationwide red carpet tour of the movie.

The workshop's faculty includes Dan Zevin, the winner of this year's Thurber Prize for American Humor, and two nationally syndicated cartoonists (Tom Batiuk and Tony Cochran) among the 25 experienced writers and publishing professionals. Here's the slate:

- Nina Amir, author of *How to Blog a Book* and the upcoming *The Author Training Manual, 9 Steps to Prepare You and Your Book Idea for Publishing Success*
- Gina Barreca, feminist scholar and author of eight books, including *It's Not That I'm Bitter: How I Learned to Stop Worrying About Visible Panty Lines and Conquered the World*
- Tom Batiuk, creator of the nationally syndicated comic strips *Funky Winkerbean* and *Crankshaft* and a Pulitzer Prize finalist
- Ilene Beckerman, author of the memoir, *Love, Loss and What I Wore*, the inspiration for an Off-Broadway play that broke records
- Tracy Beckerman, nationally syndicated humor columnist and the author of two books, including the recent *Lost in Suburbia: A*

Memoir How I Got Pregnant, Lost Myself and Got My Cool Back in the New Jersey Suburbs

- Dr. Nancy Berk, online columnist for *Parade Magazine*, host of the celebrity podcast "Whine at 9" and author of two books, including *College Bound and Gagged*, which can be seen in the Tina Fey movie *Admission*
- David Braughler, self-publishing adviser at Greyden Press
- Patricia Wynn Brown, performer, producer and author of *Hair-A-Baloo: The Revealing Comedy and Tragedy on Top of Your Head* and *Momma Culpa: One Mother Comes Clean and Makes her Maternal Confession*. She has performed her humor-memoir Hair Theater shows nationally.
- W. Bruce Cameron, screenplay and sitcom writer and author of *A Dog's Purpose*, *A Dog's Journey* and *The Dogs of Christmas*
- Donna Cavanagh, humor entrepreneur and founder of HumorOutcasts.com and HumorOutcasts Press/Shorehouse Books
- Tony Cochran, creator of the nationally syndicated comic strip *Agnes*
- Arielle Eckstut, agent-at-large with Levine Greenberg Literary Agency in New York and the author of eight books, including *The Essential Guide to Getting Your Book Published*
- Anna Lefler, writer, comedian and author of three books, including *The Chicktionary: From A-Line to Z-Snap, The Words Every Woman Should Know*. She's a staff comedy writer and performer on the Nickelodeon/NickMom TV show *Parental Discretion with Stefanie Wilder-Taylor*.
- Robert F. Levine, New York City attorney and literary agent
- Suzanne Braun Levine, first editor of *Ms. Magazine*, first woman editor of *Columbia Journalism Review* and the author of six books, including *You Gotta Have Girlfriends: A Post-Fifty Posse is Good for Your Health*
- Leighann Lord, stand-up comedian and comedic commentator who pens a weekly humor blog, "The Urban Erma"
- Dahlynn McKowen, CEO and publisher of Publishing Syndicate, former co-author of *Chicken Soup* books and creator of the new book anthology series, *Not Your Mother's Book*
- Cathryn Michon, best-selling author, stand-up comic, actress and Hollywood screenwriter who stars in the upcoming films *Cook Off!* and *Muffin Top: A Love Story*
- Robin O'Bryant, award-winning humor columnist and *New York Times*' best-selling author of *Ketchup Is A Vegetable: And Other Lies Moms Tell Themselves*
- Ken Palen, adjunct professor of communication at the University of Dayton, where he teaches writing, editing and design
- David Henry Sterry, author of 16 books — from memoir to young adult fiction — actor and regular contributor to *The Huffington Post*
- Suzette Martinez Standring, nationally syndicated columnist and author of two books on writing commentary, including *The Art of Opinion Writing: Insider Secrets From Top Op-Ed Columnists* (2014)
- Kelsey Timmerman, co-founder of The Facing Project, which seeks to connect people through stories to strengthen community, and author of *Where Am I Wearing? A Global Tour to the Countries, Factories and People That Make Our Clothes* and *Where Am I Eating? An Adventure Through the Global Food Economy*.
- Dan Zevin, 2013 winner of the Thurber Prize for American Humor and author of four books of personal essays, including *Dan Gets a Minivan: Life at the Intersection of Dude and Dad*, which has been optioned for a TV series by Adam Sandler

Every workshop has sold out — some in a matter of days, others in weeks. This year's workshop sold out in 12 hours; organizers have started a wait list.

The 2014 workshop is expected to bring more than 350 beginning and professional writers to Dayton. Why the enormous appeal? The workshop has attracted such household names over the years as Dave Barry, Art Buchwald, Nancy Cartwright, Don Novello, Gail Collins, Garrison Keillor and Alan Zweibel, but the personal involvement of Erma Bombeck's family makes the event at her alma mater memorable and sets it apart from the myriad other writers' workshops offered across the country. Alumnus Bill Bombeck and his children, Betsy, Andy and Matt, regularly attend the workshops. In 2010, the workshop was featured on "CBS Sunday Morning."

The Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop is co-sponsored by the University of Dayton's Alumni Association, the University of Dayton's College of Arts and Sciences, National Society of Newspaper Columnists, Greyden Press, Dayton Marriott Hotel, University of Dayton Bookstore and the Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop Endowment. Workshop sessions will take place on campus, with dinners held at the Dayton Marriott Hotel, 1414 S. Patterson Blvd.

To arrange interviews, contact Erma Bombeck Writers' Workshop co-directors Teri Rizvi or Annette Taylor at 937-229-2028.