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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Finalists Announced for the 37th Annual Oklahoma Book Awards**

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla — The Oklahoma Department of Libraries, in partnership with the Oklahoma Center for the Book, has announced the finalists for the 2026 Oklahoma Book Awards. Now in its 37th year, the Oklahoma Book Awards celebrate outstanding books and authors connected to the state. The awards ceremony will take place Saturday, May 16, at the Oklahoma History Center.

The Oklahoma Book Awards recognize outstanding work across five categories, highlighting authors, illustrators, photographers and book designers whose books reflect the depth and diversity of Oklahoma’s literary community. This year’s finalists include both nationally recognized creators and emerging voices whose work shares a meaningful connection to the state.

“Oklahoma has an incredible tradition of storytelling, and the Oklahoma Book Awards allow us to celebrate the authors who continue that legacy,” said Natalie Currie, executive director of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries and state librarian, archivist and records manager. “Each year, these awards highlight the depth of talent connected to our state and the powerful role literature plays in preserving and sharing Oklahoma’s stories.”

This year’s celebration is especially meaningful as the Oklahoma Center for the Book marks its 40th anniversary. For four decades, the center has championed Oklahoma’s literary heritage by recognizing outstanding writers, promoting reading and connecting readers with stories that reflect the state’s culture and history.

The Oklahoma Center for the Book, housed within the Oklahoma Department of Libraries, is an affiliate of the Library of Congress Center for the Book. Through programs like the Oklahoma Book Awards, the center promotes Oklahoma's literary culture and fosters a lifelong appreciation for books and reading.

The awards ceremony and banquet provide an opportunity to celebrate the finalists and their work while connecting with authors from across the state. Guests will have the chance to meet the authors, purchase their books and have them signed during the evening's festivities.

The Center will also present the Arrell Gibson Lifetime Achievement Award, recognizing an individual's years of creativity and service. The award is named after the Center's founding president, Arrell Gibson, an esteemed historian from Norman whose impact on Oklahoma's literary field has been profound and lasting. This year, the award will be presented to Carol Haralson, an award-winning book designer and writer and 10-time recipient of an Oklahoma Book Award in the design, illustration and photography category.

Tickets are \$75 for members of the Friends of the Oklahoma Center for the Book and \$100 for nonmembers. Tables are also available for purchase at a discounted rate of \$550. Dinner is included with each ticket. To purchase tickets, contact the Friends of the Oklahoma Center for the Book at [friendsofocb@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofocb@gmail.com).

## Finalist List

### CHILDREN

- ***Braided Roots*** – Pasha Westbrook and Madelyn Goodnight (Scholastic, Orchard Books)
- ***The Good Shepherd and the Stubborn Sheep*** – Hannah E. Harrison (Zonderkidz)
- ***Mary Had a Little Jam*** – Tammi Sauer (Hachette Book Group, Union Square Kids)
- ***Vampirita and the Musical Mayhem (Vampirita Book 2)*** – Mariana Llanos (Reycraft Books)
- ***Woody's Words*** – Lisa Rogers (Astra Publishing House, Calkins Creek)

### YOUNG ADULT

- ***Aubrey Helps a Ghost*** – Desiree Webber (G. Markle Publishing)
- ***Augmented (The Hybrid Series Book 3)*** – Candace Kade (Enclave Escape Publishing)
- ***August Rain*** – Marlo Holly (Balboa Press)

- **Careful What You Hear (Do You Hear What I Hear? Book 2)** – Helen Dunlap  
Newton (Yorkshire Publishing)
- **Gittel** – Laurie Schneider (Regal House Publishing)

## POETRY

- **Blood Wolf Moon** – Elise Paschen (Red Hen Press)
- **Oh, I Think I Have a Poem About That** – Jim Spurr (Spurline Productions)
- **Quantum Entanglement** – Gary Reddin (Mouthfeel Press)
- **This is the Truth** – Jennifer Kidney (Clare Songbirds Publishing House)

## DESIGN / ILLUSTRATION / PHOTOGRAPHY

- **Making of the Killers of the Flower Moon** – Authors and Photographers: Shannon Shaw Duty, Benny Polacca, Chelsea T. Hicks, Allison Herrera, Ruby Hansen Murray, Tristan Joseph Espinoza, Cody Hammer, Sherry Stinson, Echo Reed, Louise Red Corn (Osage News)
- **Route 66: The First 100 Years** – Author Jim Ross, Photographer Shellee Graham (Reedy Press)
- **Totally Possum** – Author Trey Hays, Illustrator Eli Corbin (White Dog Press)

## FICTION

- **Filling Station** – Vanessa Miller (Thomas Nelson)
- **The Kennedy Girl** – Julia Bryan Thomas (Sourcebooks Landmark)
- **Low April Sun** – Constance E. Squires (University of Oklahoma Press)
- **A Rare Obsession** – Sheldon Russell (Cynren Press)
- **Shadow of the Solstice** – Anne Hillerman (HarperCollins, Harper)

## NON-FICTION

- **Belle Starr: The Truth Behind the Wild West Legend** – Michael Wallis (W.W. Norton and Co)
- **Black Moses: A Saga of Ambition and the Fight for a Black State** – Caleb Gayle (Riverhead Books)
- **History of the Cherokee Nation** – Author Rachel Caroline Eaton, Editors David Berry, Martha Berry and Patricia Dawson (University of Oklahoma Press)
- **Justice For All: Dick T. Morgan, Frontier Lawyer and Common Man's Congressman** – Michael J. Hightower (University of Oklahoma Press, 2 Cities Press)
- **One Lucky Cowboy** – Bob Burke and Gary Shutt (Oklahoma Hall of Fame)
- **Peyote Politics** – Lisa D. Barnett (University of Oklahoma Press)
- **Sooner Doughboys Write Home** – David W. Levy (University of Oklahoma Press)
- **Tulsa, 2021: A Massacre's Centennial and a Nation's Reckoning** – Randy Krehbiel (University of Oklahoma Press)

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## **ABOUT THE COLLABORATORS**

The [Oklahoma Department of Libraries](#) is the official State Library of Oklahoma. It leads public library development, serves the information and records management needs of state government, coordinates library and information technology projects for the state, and serves the general public through its specialized collections.

The Oklahoma Department of Libraries and the [Oklahoma Center for the Book](#) (OCB) has partnered with the non-profit [Friends of the Oklahoma Center for the Book](#) for more than 30 years to co-sponsor the annual Oklahoma Book Awards. Housed within ODL, the Center promotes Oklahoma authors, celebrates the state's literary heritage, and encourages reading for pleasure statewide.