For immediate release

Inaugural Hill City Writers’ Workshop celebrates the love of words, Oct. 9-11

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HILL CITY, SD — The Hill City Arts Council will host the first Hill City Writers’ Workshop, “For the Love of Words!” Oct. 9-11. The workshop will connect writers to renowned South Dakota writer/mentors for one-on-one interaction, and will also include public sessions on popular topics about writing. Detailed information and registration is available here or call 605-574-2810.

The writer/mentors are Pamela Smith Hill, the editor of Laura Ingalls Wilder’s “Pioneer Girl: The Annotated Autobiography” and the author of “Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Writer’s Life;” Dan O’Brien, the author of 13 books of fiction and non-fiction; poet Norma C. Wilson, professor emeritus of the University of South Dakota; and Black Hills State faculty member Kent Meyers, an award-winning author of a memoir, a book of short fiction and three novels. Read their bios here.

Meyers comments, “You don’t have to be seeking publication in order to benefit from writing. All you have to want is a deepening of your response to the world and other people, an enriching of your own sense of yourself and your life, and a desire to use language in an exploratory way. Language opens our lives to us. It reveals what we've missed. It shows us what we've known but not quite recognized.”

He continues: “When I work with new writers, I am interested in getting them to understand that writing is based in tight focus, accurate perception, precise details. If you concentrate on these things, they reveal layers of meaning. I am also interested in bringing participants to recognize the
stories that surround us every day and to realize that these stories -- of family and community -- are as rich as literary stories, and are in fact the basis for the best literary stories.”

Additional presenters will include Kristin Donnan, Barbara Marshak, Marcia Mitchell, and Ken Steinken.

The cost for participant writers who receive one-on-one mentoring is $200. If you want to learn more about writing but don’t want to participate in the mentor-focused workshops, there are other opportunities:

• Attend the Saturday night dinner and keynote by author Pamela Smith Hill at High Country Guest Ranch. ($35 per person)

• Attend the Saturday morning and afternoon writing sessions on topics including writing memoirs, traditional versus self-publishing and more. ($10 per 3 hour session)

The workshop is the brain-child of writer and Hill City Arts Council board member Gervase Hittle, a University of South Dakota emeritus professor. “This workshop seeks not to duplicate other writers and literary events in the region,” Hittle explains. “Thus the workshop with a limited number of participant writers per mentor. We also have created various activities for the public. As this is our first year for the workshop, we are developing a format that can be employed for years to come.

He adds: “The genres and the writer/mentors can differ from year to year; so we can offer something for almost any literary preference. This year’s writers have an abundance of experience in this type of workshop event and a world of knowledge about the publishing world. Personally I can hardly wait for this event to begin.”

Scholarships are available for high school and college students as well as writers interested in the one-on-one sessions with mentors. Contact the Hill City Arts Council at 605-574-2810 for more information.
Here is the “For the Love of Words” schedule for the public.

Saturday, October 10 at Little White Church in Hill City, 525 East Main Street.
9:00am to 10:15am – “All About Me” with Kristin Donnan and Ken Steinken. Got a story? Grandma got a story? What about your childhood? Let’s discuss getting everything down in words, along with the pitfalls of the process – fictionalizing, privacy, the meaning of “truth” and more.
10:30am to 11:45am – “Independence and the Independents” with Barbara Marshak and Marcia Mitchell. Help for writers contemplating (or experiencing) the joys and challenges of publishing outside the traditional box. A look at both sides of independence, and determining when help is needed for a market-quality book.
1:00pm to 2:00pm – “The Hills are Alive: Giving Voice to Place” with Ken Steinken and Norma Wilson. Letting the natural environment serve as muse, using place to tap into memory, and combining literature and history with close observation when writing about place.
2:15pm to 3:15pm with Kristin Donnan and Dan O’Brien. Writing about your own life for publication – whether for your family, your writing group, your blog, or the next best seller – is all about story. We discuss how to hook the reader when the topic is...you.
3:30pm to 4:30pm with Marcia Mitchell and Kent Meyers. All about the long-standing traditional route of going from manuscript to bookstore shelf — how it’s changed and why. Stops along the route include agents, contracts, advances, deadlines, publicity and more.
6:00pm – Reception, Dinner and Keynote with Pamela Smith Hill, “What I’ve Learned from Laura Ingalls Wilder.” ($35/ticket)

A more detailed schedule for writers working with mentors is available as a pdf download here.

In support of the Hill City Arts Council, sponsors and partners of the Hill City Writers’ Workshop include the South Dakota Humanities Council, the South Dakota Arts Council, Rockin’ Dog Studio, Friends of the Hill City Library, Alpine Inn, High Country Guest Ranch, Newton Fork Ranch, Rabbit Bicycle, Black Hills Institute of Geological Research, Little White Church, Prairie Berry Winery, the South Dakota State Railroad Museum, and Warrior’s Work &
Ben West Gallery.
The Hill City Arts Council is a non-profit organization that promotes and celebrates the artistic culture and creative economy of the Black Hills. Located near two of the world’s largest sculptures -- Mt. Rushmore and Crazy Horse – the Hill City Arts Council hosts an annual “Sculpture in the Hills Show and Sale” the last weekend of June each year and has purchased monumental artworks for the town’s Main Street: “Patriarch,” a bronze bison by Peg Detmers and “Iron Star,” a hybrid metal horse sculpture by John Lopez – “the most photographed horse in South Dakota” -- celebrate our Black Hills heritage. In the winter, the Arts Council sponsors Open Stage, a showcase for established and emerging regional musicians and other performance artists.