



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 9, 2023

**Media Contacts:**

Christie Garella/Rachel Sumang  
Dancie Perugini Ware Public Relations  
713-224-9115

**BARBARA BUSH HOUSTON LITERACY FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES  
AUTHOR LINEUP FOR 29<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL A CELEBRATION OF READING**

*Annual event to take place Thursday, April 20 featuring a lineup of prominent authors*

**HOUSTON** – The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation (Foundation) is pleased to announce that its 29<sup>th</sup> annual *A Celebration of Reading* will take place Thursday, April 20 at The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. The annual signature event hosted by Neil and Maria Bush, co-founders of the Foundation, will feature a notable lineup of bestselling authors and shine light on the importance of reading in our community. This year’s event will also commemorate the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation.

“My wife, Maria, and I are honored to present the 29<sup>th</sup> annual *A Celebration of Reading* this year featuring inspiring authors,” said Neil Bush. “Mom created this event to demonstrate the transformative power of reading and to call upon the Houston community to give in support of literacy programs that empower more children and adults with the skills and tools they need to reach their full potential in life and position our city to thrive socially and economically.”

The 2023 author lineup includes:

- **Nelson DeMille**, a former U.S. Army lieutenant and decorated Vietnam Veteran, and seven-time #1 *New York Times* bestselling author. He has written 22 novels, 16 of which made the *New York Times* bestsellers’ list. His book, *The General’s Daughter* was made into a major motion picture, and two of his books, *Word of Honor*, and *Mayday*, have been adapted to television. DeMille will share thoughts about his work and most recent book, *The Maze*, the eighth in a series featuring NYPD Homicide Detective John Corey who readers first met in *Plum Island*.
- **Tess Gerritsen**, an international and *New York Times* bestselling author of 30 books, most notably her crime and medical thrillers. Her Rizzoli & Isles series of novels featuring homicide detective Jane Rizzoli and medical examiner Maura Isles inspired the TNT television series “Rizzoli & Isles.” She will speak about her most recent book, *Listen to Me*, a fast-paced, harrowing thriller of a brutal investigation with dire consequences.
- **Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr.** has been an ordained Episcopal Church Minister for over 30 years and served as Rector of St. Martin’s in Houston, Texas – the largest Episcopal Church in North America – for more than 15 years. He will share insight into his book, *Witness to Dignity: The Life and Faith of George H.W. and Barbara Bush*, which highlights the Bushes’ wit and wisdom, commitment to faith, family, and friends, and their tireless desire to bless the lives of others.



- **Tom Papa**, a stand-up comedian and writer, is one of the top comedic voices in the country finding success in film, TV, radio, and podcasts, as well as on the live stage. A frequent panelist on NPR's Wait Wait Don't Tell Me and other shows, Tom has written three books and will discuss his most recent, *You're Doing Great!: And Other Reasons To Stay Alive*, a collection of essays on how people really live in modern America and what's truly good and wonderful about our lives. He has also penned *We're All In This Together*, set for release in June.
- **Isabel Wilkerson** has become a leading figure in narrative nonfiction, bringing the invisible and marginalized into the light and into our hearts, and is the recipient of a number of awards. She is a National Humanities Medal recipient and during her tenure as Chicago Bureau Chief of The New York Times, became the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in journalism. She will share her most recent bestselling book, *Caste: The Origins of our Discontents*, which invites us to discover the inner workings of an American hierarchy that goes beyond the confines of race, class, or gender.

Proceeds from *A Celebration of Reading* advance the mission of former First Lady Barbara Bush's legacy championed by the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation, as well as national efforts through the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy of helping more children and adults realize their fullest potential in life and live the American Dream by learning how to read.

Phillips 66 will serve as the title sponsor of *A Celebration of Reading* for the eighth year in a row, continuing its leadership position in the community to promote the literacy cause. Kathrine McGovern/McGovern Foundation and ConocoPhillips will serve as platinum sponsors.

"Thanks to the generosity of our event sponsors over the years, proceeds from *A Celebration of Reading* have enabled the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation to launch several reading intervention programs at schools across Houston to boost reading achievement, expand availability of literacy classes for adults, empower tens of thousands of underserved children to become book owners, and more," said Julie Finck, Ph.D., President and CEO of the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation. "Together, we can make great strides in addressing one of our city's most pressing problems, low literacy."

Tickets and table sponsorships for the event are available for purchase on the Foundation's website at [bushhoustonliteracy.org/celebration](http://bushhoustonliteracy.org/celebration). For more information on *A Celebration of Reading*, call 346-212-2310 or email [events@bushhoustonliteracy.org](mailto:events@bushhoustonliteracy.org).

### **About the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation**

The Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation is a charitable organization formed by Neil and Maria Bush to carry forth First Lady Barbara Bush's legacy in the literacy cause and to focus deeply on breaking the intergenerational cycle of low literacy in the Bush family's hometown. Founded on Mrs. Bush's belief, "If you help a person to read, then their opportunities in life will be endless," the Barbara Bush Foundation's mission is to improve lives through the power of literacy – the ability to read, write, speak clearly and



think critically. The Foundation serves as the champion across the Greater Houston area for the literacy cause, raising awareness for the value and importance of literacy, mobilizing volunteers and resources to build critical capacity of community-based literacy providers, and investing in local literacy programs and services that support children and families to develop strong literacy skills for success. For more information, visit [www.bushhoustonliteracy.org](http://www.bushhoustonliteracy.org) or follow us on Facebook at [@bushhoustonlit](https://www.facebook.com/bushhoustonlit) on Twitter [@bushhoustonlit](https://twitter.com/bushhoustonlit) and on Instagram [@bushhoustonlit](https://www.instagram.com/bushhoustonlit).