

What's Going On (besides an election)

Written by Margaret Evans

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September always catches this editor off guard. After a low key, easygoing summer – interrupted only by that fleeting burst of hysteria we call Water Festival – my inbox suddenly erupts with a flood of exuberant press releases vying for my immediate attention. Once summer passes, Beaufort's the most happening small town on earth, and all those happenings start happening at once.

I confess, I'm grateful for the distraction. Otherwise, I'd just be staring at my Facebook news feed, brooding over all those ghastly political posts and wondering when the Second Civil War might officially be declared. Who needs it? Not me!

I'm much happier telling y'all about all the grand and glorious goings-on coming your way. This weekend, of course, is the third – third *annual*, now, I suppose? – Lt. Dan Band Weekend, and all of Beaufort is aflutter. At a time when most everything seems to divide us, this fantastic event to benefit wounded warriors is something we all love to rally around. The volunteers have worked tirelessly for months, and it's finally time to welcome the heroes – and the movie star, who's kind of a hero, himself – to our fair city. Read Mark Shaffer's terrific interview with Gary Sinise [here](#).

The weekend after LDW3 marks the first (*annual*, I hope!) Short Story America Festival and Conference. Writers from all over the country will converge here in Beaufort, the home base of Tim Johnston's brainchild, Short Story America – the website and anthology – that's earning international acclaim. There are all sorts of interesting events planned – workshops, lectures, readings, parties – and no, it's not too late to get your tickets. (You need not be a writer; you need only be a reader.) See a complete schedule and headliner highlights

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And then there are the artists. Do we have an embarrassment of riches here, or what? Last Friday night, three major art exhibits (that we know of!) opened in Beaufort: a group show at USCB, featuring new work by Mary Segars, Bill Mead, Donna Kirkpatrick, Lana Hefner and Cabell Heyward; “Let Our Voices Emerge,” featuring paintings by Olga Stamatou at the downtown Library; and Candace Lovely’s “God Bless America” at ARTworks. This last exhibit – by an artist who has painted portraits of both Barbara Bush and Barack Obama – bills itself as “a patriotic show to make the election season more lovely.” Oh, Lordy, I hope it works! (I like the bi-partisan portraiture angle, anyway...) All these shows will be up for a good long while, so be sure to check them out.

The downtown Beaufort Library has just launched a fascinating series called “One County Reads One Country: Afghanistan,” designed to engage the community in a thoughtful dialogue about this critical part of the world. Everyone will be reading the same three books about the region, and there will be panel discussions, lectures, a kite festival, a film series, and much more. Olga Stamatou’s art exhibit (see above), featuring colorful images of Muslim women in burkas, is part of this program, which runs through October. To learn more, see our story [here](#). And while you’re at it, check out the new schedule for the [USCB Lunch with Author series](#).

In upcoming issues, we’ll have information about the Friends of the Library Fall Book Sale, Polo at Rose Hill, theatrical productions at the Arts Center (on Hilton Head) and the Center for the Arts (in Beaufort), a host of fall festivals, and ever so much more!

This election season, don’t let the bickering get you down. Do what I plan to do – immerse yourself in all the wonderfulness the Lowcountry has to offer. It’s as easy as turning these pages or stepping outside your door.