



**Wizard's
Wardrobe**

WHERE READING IS MAGIC

READERS THEATRE EVENT

"AN EVENING OF POWERFUL READINGS"

ABOUT WIZARD'S WARDROBE

In September 2011 over 20 members and friends of First Presbyterian Church started tutoring at Giffen Elementary School.

In June 2014 a subset of that group, realizing that the children of Giffen needed more help started planning the next step. Inspired by the TED talk "Once Upon A School", we set out to establish a one-on-one after-school tutoring program primarily for first through third grade students, continuing on with them through elementary school. We incorporated one year later as South End Neighborhood Tutors and located space for the program one block east of Giffen.

In February 2017, the Wizard's Wardrobe became a reality and opened its doors to 7 students. Since then we have served 36 students with 62 trained tutors.

Meeting a Need

- We believe that all children deserve the opportunity to succeed.
- Only 13% of the students in 3rd - 6th grade at Giffen Elementary School read at grade level. In grades one to three students learn to read; in grades four and above students read to learn. Once students reach 4th grade, those who cannot read are at an overwhelming disadvantage.
- Research shows that students who get 35-40 hours of individual tutoring can gain one year in academic growth.
- With three hours a week of one-to-one tutoring, we aim to achieve marked improvement in our students' reading skills, positioning them for academic success.



Debra & Eric Fagans
Founders of Wizard's Wardrobe



7:00 PROGRAM



FEATURING

WILLIAM KENNEDY

Author of many books with an Albany interest including *Ironweed*, for which he won the Pulitzer Prize in 1984, and his son

BRENDAN KENNEDY

Father and son will be reading from the *Charlie Malarkey* children's book series, which they co-wrote

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

CASEY SEILER

Editor of the Times Union

ADDITIONAL READINGS BY LOCAL AUTHORS

JOSEPH BRUCHAC

ELIZABETH BRUNDAGE

ASHLEY CHARLESTON

TED WALKER

ALSO JOINED BY

AYAH OSMAN *from*



WILLIAM KENNEDY has for half a century crafted history and memory into a body of literature known as the Albany Cycle – eight novels that give Albany, N.Y. a place on the mythic map of the American imagination. *Ironweed* (1983), the third novel in the Cycle, won the Pulitzer Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award for fiction, and was a Modern Library choice as one of the 100 best English-language novels of the 20th century. The other novels in the Cycle include *Legs* (1975), *Billy Phelan's Greatest Game* (1978), *Quinn's Book* (1988), *Very Old Bones* (1992), *The Flaming Corsage* (1996), *Roscoe* (2002), and *Chango's Beads and Two-Tone Shoes* (2011).



Brendan and William Kennedy

Kennedy co-authored the screenplay for *The Cotton Club* with Francis Coppola (1984), and wrote the screenplay for *Ironweed* (1987), directed by Hector Babenco. He worked for years as a journalist and wrote an impressionistic history of his city, *O Albany!* (1983), and two collections of non-fiction, *Riding the Yellow Trolley Car* (1993), and *Bootlegger of the Soul* (2018). He wrote, in collaboration with his son, Brendan, two children's books, *Charlie Malarkey and the Belly-Button Machine* (1986), and *Charlie Malarkey and the Singing Moose* (1992).

His novel *Roscoe* was turned into a Concerto for Violin, Narrator and Orchestra by Kevin Beavers, and also into an opera, *Roscoe*, by Evan Mack and Joshua McGuire. His first play, *Grand View* premiered at Capital Repertory Theater in Albany, 1996. *Ironweed*, as a play, is in development in New York.

Kennedy taught writing at Cornell, is a professor at the University of Albany, and in 1983, after receiving a MacArthur Fellowship, created (at U Albany) the New York State Writers Institute, which sponsors a wide range of literary and cultural activities. He is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and is a commander of the Order of Arts and Letters in France.

BRENDAN KENNEDY was born and raised in the Capital Region, and is a Senior Counselor at Mower, a nationally ranked marketing and communications firm with an office in Downtown Albany. Prior to Mower, Brendan was Director of New Media at the public relations firm Sawchuk Brown. Before that, he spent 10 years in New York City as a web consultant before landing as a senior developer at Columbia House.

Brendan's early career encompassed five years in New York and Los Angeles working in the film industry on feature films such as *Last Action Hero*, *Boys on the Side*, *Primal Fear*, *Virtuosity*, *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*, and *The Horse Whisperer*, among others.

For the last 10 years, Brendan was a member of the board of trustees of the Rensselaer County Historical Society, now known as the Hart Cluett Museum, where he was board chair for two terms, from 2016 through 2020. He is also on the advisory board of the New York State Writers Institute known as Friends of Writing. He has published two children's books that he co-authored with his father, novelist William Kennedy: *Charlie Malarkey and the Belly Button Machine* (1986) and *Charlie Malarkey and the Singing Moose* (1992).

Brendan attended Trinity College in Hartford, CT where he majored in English Literature. He and his wife Tracy live in Downtown Troy with their three daughters (Annabella [18], Scarlett [14] and Evelyn [14]), as well as an Angora rabbit with anger management issues (Ophelia) and an anti-social Himalayan cat (Winnifred).

CASEY SEILER is editor in chief and vice president of the Albany Times Union. He previously served as the paper's managing editor, statehouse bureau chief and entertainment editor. He also co-hosted WMHT's "New York Now" for a decade. His column appears in the Sunday Perspective section.



JOSEPH BRUCHAC is a traditional storyteller, a poet and a writer. An enrolled member of the Nulhegan Abenaki Nation, his work often reflects his Native ancestry and his lifelong interest in American Indian history and culture. His many honors include an NEA Poetry fellowship and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Native Writers Circle of the Americas and his poems, stories and essays have been published in hundreds of magazines and anthologies over the past five decades.



Photo Credit: Eric Jenks

Author of over 170 books in various genres, his most recent books are *Rez Dogs* (Dial)--a novel in verse, *Peacemaker* (Dial)--a novel based in the time of the founding of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) League and *One Real American* (Abrams)--a biography of Ely Parker, Seneca Chief and Civil War general.

ELIZABETH BRUNDAGE is the author of five novels, *The Vanishing Point*, *All Things Cease to Appear*, *A Stranger Like You*, *Somebody Else's Daughter*, and *The Doctor's Wife*. *All Things Cease to Appear* was a New York Times Editor's Choice, a WSJ best mystery of 2016 and was the basis for the Netflix film *Things Heard and Seen* starring Amanda Seyfried and James Norton. She is a graduate of the Iowa Writers Workshop where she received a James Michener Award, and attended the American Film Institute in Los Angeles. Her writing has appeared in The New York Times Book Review, Witness, New Letters, Greensboro Review, and elsewhere. She has taught at several colleges and universities, most recently at Skidmore College, where she was a visiting writer in residence, and lives with her family in Albany, New York.



ASHLEY CHARLESTON is a self-published author, and special education ELA teacher. She received her bachelor's of arts in English from the University at Albany and her masters of arts in African-American Literature from the North Carolina A&T State University. Charleston believes that words can change the world. She hopes to inspire children to write themselves into existence.



TED H. WALKER, SR. lives in Albany, New York and is currently a Prevention Coordinator at New Choices Recovery Center in Schenectady, NY. Mr. Walker is a graduate of SUNY Empire State College with a bachelor's degree in Human and Community Services. His passions include weightlifting, reading historical documents, and watching documentaries of historical figures. He is the proud father of six children ranging in ages from thirty years old to five years old.



He is a self-published author who has written *Waiting For You*, *Still Waiting For You* and *Kendra & Terrance*. These fictional stories revolve around the lives of Kendra and Terrance. They both are seeking true love. Terrance has some 'inner demons' that are preventing him from finding and keeping true love. Kendra seems always to be unlucky with love. The main themes are life, love, addiction, and loss.

Ted hopes to one day create a play based on his writing.

AYAH OSMAN is a Sudanese American poet, storyteller, and student activist from Niskayuna NY. Currently, she is a sophomore at Union College where she is pursuing a double major in English and Political Science as well as a minor in Africana Studies.



*The **Children at the Well** program, founded in 2006 in the Capital Region, seeks to build community, grow leaders, and foster authentic relationships grounded in the celebration of differences by increasing the capacity for civil discourse through the sharing of stories.*

OUR VISION

Through literacy, every child will be poised to reach their full potential.

OUR MISSION

Connecting elementary school children with caring and dedicated tutors, our one-on-one tutoring program enhances literacy, fosters creativity, and supplements classroom learning in the South End of Albany.

OUR VALUES

Reading is Essential....One-on-one Tutoring Works...Every Child has Worth

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books as a sword
needs a whetstone,
if it is to keep its
edge.”

– George R.R. Martin



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