



**CITY OF  
COLUMBIA**



## **For Immediate Release**

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## **City of Columbia and Richland County Public Library Kick-Off the Reading Period for the 2012 One Book, One Columbia Program**

The official reading period for the 2012 One Book, One Columbia program has begun! Reading advocates and citizens around the Midlands will be reading “Saints at the River” by Ron Marsh from Tuesday, January 17 to Wednesday, February 29, 2012. This past year's inaugural program, which drew several thousand participating readers, was co-sponsored with the Richland County Public Library and the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods and involved numerous community groups and book clubs across the Midlands. This year the City of Columbia is proud to announce that Richland County has joined this effort as a community partner.

The Richland County Public Library and a few other organizations in Columbia have arranged several events associated with the reading initiative. A book discussion and signing with the author, Ron Rash, on February 1<sup>st</sup> and Mayor Steve Benjamin's Panel Discussion on February 16 will be held at the RCPL Main Library (1431 Assembly Street).

The One Columbia for Arts and History organization will host a Fine Arts Contest sponsored by the SC State Fair where the SC State Fair will award \$1,000 in prize money and will showcase the top three winning entries in their Fine Art Exhibit October 10-21 during the 2012 State Fair. Each artist that enters the contest will receive a copy of the book "Saints at the River" by Ron Rash and will create work inspired by the novel in the medium of their choice.

Local publication, Jasper Magazine announced a Jasper Magazine One Book, One Poem Competition. Poets from the arts community are invited to submit poetry inspired by the reading of “Saints at the River”. Rash will serve as adjudicator for the contest and the winning selection will be published in a future issue of the magazine – the Word on Columbia Arts. The winning poet will receive a literary arts prize package. Finalists, adjudicated by Jasper Magazine literary arts editor will be published in the publication's blog, What Jasper Said ([www.jaspercolumbia.net/blog](http://www.jaspercolumbia.net/blog)). The deadline for this competition is March 31, 2012.

Columbia area poets who are interested in entering the contest should submit (in triplicate) poems to Jasper Magazine One Book, One Poem Competition, Muddy Ford Press, 1009 Muddy Ford Road, Chapin, SC 29036. Writers are asked to include a cover sheet with name, address, phone number, e-mail address, and the title or first line of each poem. Entry fee is \$5 per each three poems submitted. Checks can be made payable to Muddy Ford Press. For more information, contact [editor@jaspercolumbia.com](mailto:editor@jaspercolumbia.com).

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In support of the City's reading initiative, American Rivers and their partners will celebrate the Congaree River Blue Trail and Three Rivers Greenway with a canoe and kayak trip starting near Columbia. The Congaree River Blue Trail was recently recognized by President Obama as a model for how communities are connecting with America's Great Outdoors through their rivers. For more information on the paddle event, please contact Rebecca Haynes at [rhaynes@americanrivers.org](mailto:rhaynes@americanrivers.org) or 803.771.7114.

Columbia's One Book initiative provides a community reading experience for area residents who read the same book at the same time and then meet for discussion and dialogue. A type of community-wide book club, it is modeled after similar programs across the country.

"Last year's program was a huge success and I am thrilled to see that, with this new partnership, we are well on our way to making this year's bigger and better," Columbia Mayor Steve Benjamin said. "I am truly excited about this wonderful opportunity to bring people together and celebrate the Midlands as a region of readers."

"Reading helps us in every aspect of our lives. It helps us become successful in school and our careers. It helps us grow as individuals by teaching us new information or by allowing us to walk in someone else's shoes," said Richland County Council Chairman, Kelvin Washington Sr. "Richland County is excited to connect with our community through One Book, One Columbia, and we encourage all of our citizens to participate."

"The conversation's already started! This book has been checked out more than 300 times as of today," said Melanie Huggins, executive director of the Richland County Public Library. "The library wants to help continue the conversation by providing ways for you to participate and learn, regardless of your interests or your need for information."

For more information on the events surrounding the 2012 One Book, One Columbia program, please visit <http://www.myrcpl.com/onebook>. Community members and citizens hosting an event during the reading period can e-mail their calendar information to [pio@columbiasc.net](mailto:pio@columbiasc.net) and their information will be placed at the web address [www.columbiasc.net/OneBook](http://www.columbiasc.net/OneBook).

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