

Jennifer McGaha

Biography

Jennifer McGaha is the award-winning author of *Flat Broke with Two Goats* (Sourcebooks, 2018) and *Bushwhacking: How to Get Lost on the Trail and Write Your Way Out* (Trinity University Press, 2023). Her debut memoir (*Flat Broke with Two Goats*) sold over 26,677 copies; *Kirkus Reviews* dubbed it a “...determinedly upbeat memoir,” and *Library Journal* praised it as “an enjoyable back-to-the-land memoir.” It won the Overdrive Library Award—beating out Paula Poundstone—and was shown on the set of “Modern Love,” an Amazon Prime original starring Anne Hathaway. It was also a featured read at Barnes and Noble and was displayed in the front of stores across the country. *Publisher’s Weekly* called her second book (*Bushwhacking*) “Gutsy, entertaining, and heartening, McGaha’s dispatches guide and inspire.”

Jennifer was a contributing writer for the *Huffington Post* (2014-2017), where she wrote over a dozen humorous articles. She has published over 60 articles, essays, micro-essays excerpts, hybrid pieces of poetry and prose, and memoir-style short stories over the course of her career. Jennifer’s work has been featured in *The Huffington Post*, *The New Pioneer*, *Crab Creek*, *River Teeth*, *Passengers*, *PANK*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Baltimore Fishbowl*, *Back Home Magazine*, *Mountain Xpress*, *Smoky Mountain Living Magazine*, *Passengers Journal*, *Crab Creek Review*, *New Pioneer Magazine*, *Deep South Magazine*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Brevity*, *The New York Blye Ride Country Magazine*, *The Brooklyn*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, and many others. *Image Journal*, one of the longest-running magazines that explores the intersection of faith and art, is publishing a piece from her *Hanging in There* essay collection in their next issue. *Barrelhouse* magazine published her essay “Witnessing” from this collection earlier this year.

Jennifer has done extensive press for her books and has been featured on radio shows like “WordPlay” in Asheville (103.3 FM). *The Laurel of Asheville* and *The Wall Street Journal* have both written feature articles about Jennifer. C-SPAN covered her discussion at the Rose Glen Literary Festival. She has been a guest on numerous podcasts, including *Professional Book Nerds*, *Listen & Be Heard*, and *ChatChat with Claudia Cragg*, and her books have been discussed on literary podcasts like *Beer by the Books* and *Clermont County Public Library’s Podcast*. Jennifer has been a featured speaker at the Rose Glen Literary Festival, the Carolina Mountains Literary Festival, Alma College, and the public libraries of Halifax-South Boston, VA and Henderson County, NC. She has won the Overdrive Library Award (2018), the Best of the Net nomination for “How to Host a New-Age-y Wake” (2022), and she was nominated for the Pushcart Prize for “Leanin’ Back” (2010). Jennifer has served as a judge for the North Carolina Writers’ Network’s Thomas Wolfe Fiction Prize, East Tennessee State University’s Mockingbird Creative Nonfiction Award, and Lois C. Bruner’s Creative Nonfiction’ Award. She is the recipient of the Mills Fund Grant (2022) and the University Teaching Center Grant (2023). She is a member of the North Carolina Writers’ Network and the Author’s Guild.

Jennifer has taught English at private high schools, community colleges, private colleges, and large universities. She is currently a member of the English department at the University of North Carolina-Asheville, where she wears many hats: She has taught classes in poetry, fiction, literature, first-year writing, creative nonfiction, memoir-writing, and nature-based writing. She is the coordinator of the Great Smokies Writing Program, which is a joint effort between the UNC Asheville departments of English, Creative Writing, and the Asheville Graduate Center. The program offers roughly 25 low-cost writing workshops for students and local community members with writing skills of all levels.

Through her work with the Great Smokies Writing Program, she does community outreach and engages with other art organizations like the Flatiron Writers Room and Story Parlor arts venue to provide programming, host events, and operate writing contests, where she has also served as a judge. She coordinates and acts as the administrator of the monthly Writers' Home Reading series, where she takes an active role planning, scheduling, and hosting readings. Jennifer is a skilled public reader who reads for these events and is often asked to host, read for and moderate book launch parties, book signings, literary functions and other publishing events by local bookstores and libraries. She has welcomed such celebrated authors as Lee Smith, author of *Fair and Tender Ladies*, and Daniel Wallace, author of *Big Fish*. She is the host and co-creator of the "Plays Well with Others" monthly reading series, which celebrates the work of UNC-Asheville students and faculty as well as community members. Jennifer has taught a writing class called "Wild Thing: Writing the Outdoors" as part of the Carl Sandburg Writer in Residence program. Jennifer holds a BA from UNC-Asheville, an MA in English from Western Carolina University, and an MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts.

Her next book, *Hanging in There: Fifty Dispatches From Over the Hill* is a 55,000-word collection of gutsy and hilarious essays, exploring one woman's post-fifty journey through the lens of a rapidly changing political and cultural landscape.

