

SONOMA

Your Local Community Magazine

# THE SOCIAL

PUBLICATION

JUNE 2024



Photo by Sharolyn Townsend

MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS

# The Marioni Family



Photo by Bob Stender

The 7th annual Sonoma Valley Authors Festival took place April 26-28th. Here's a Q&A with founders Ginny and David Freeman to wrap up the event!

- Who are you?** We are a “late-in-life newly married” couple. We retired from corporate jobs and moved to the Sonoma Valley, yet we wanted to continue to stay active and do something together that we both liked, and that had nothing to do with either of our former careers: David’s in Financial Services and Ginny’s in Tech.
- When did you move to Sonoma?** At the end of 2015
- What interested you in starting an Author’s Festival here?** We had attended The Sun Valley Writers Conference at the suggestion of friends. We loved the shared learning and being with others who were interested in life enrichment and the concept of vacationing with a purpose. We then stumbled on the Pebble Beach Authors and Ideas Festival and the Rancho Mirage Writers Festival. We felt that Sonoma Valley was similar in its allure and that an Authors and Ideas Festival might gain some traction. We studied each of those other Festivals for both content and format and tried to incorporate what we liked best about each one into our concept.
- Tell us a little about your family.** David grew up in Los Angeles, and his parents and older sister all were connected to the movie business in some way. He left after college and lived in Houston, Washington, DC, New York City, and then San Francisco. His mom lived to age 98 and was an avid reader all her life. Ginny’s Dad had degrees in math and physics and had jobs that required them to move frequently when growing up, so she attended 12 schools all over the South and Midwest. Her mom was a teacher and librarian, a voracious reader and learner who lived to age 101 and was sharp, fun, and humorous always. We started the Authors Festival in honor of our mothers.
- Where did you meet each other?** At church in San Francisco – really!
- What has been the most rewarding aspect of creating this local Festival?** We started it to “keep the little gray cells moving” and have done so much more. The way the Sonoma community has pulled together

to help us financially with volunteering, incorporating Students Day to include thousands of young scholars, Authors on the Plaza to reach thousands from all over Sonoma Valley, and the Virtual Festival to expand our reach worldwide has been amazing. For a town of only 10,000, it is astoundingly philanthropic, and the locals are very well-read, well-traveled, and have had fascinating careers. We say the audience is as engaging as the authors and speakers!

- What are your plans for it in the future?** We hope the Festival will outlive us in the long run. In the short run, we hope to find more ways to enrich lives.
- How long have you been running the festival?** We began planning in 2016 with the intent of holding our first Festival in 2017, yet our first was in the Spring of 2108.
- What has been a highlight of the Festival for you both over the years?** That our reach expands, and the presenters continue to leave us in awe!
- What are the highlights in terms of authors who have attended?** We have been blessed to have Isabel Allende, Doris Kearns Goodwin, Bill Browder, Amor Towles, Erik Larson, Dave Barry, Abraham Verghese, Bonnie Garmus, Ada Limon, Amy Tan, David Grann, and Colm Tóibín. Since our second year, we have had PBS’ Jeffrey Brown as a moderator.
- Who can attend the festival?** Anyone willing to invest in purchasing a 3-day Festival pass, which includes a

substantial donation. As a 501(c)(3) non-profit public charity, the entire Festival is made possible by those donations. When we divide the cost of all four parts – The Festival, Students Day, Authors on the Plaza, and the Virtual Festival – by the number of seats we can sell in the Pavilion, the cost per seat is high. However, it is those paying for a seat and donating that allow all the other parts to be available to the community for free. Those who don’t purchase a 3-day Festival pass can participate in Authors on the Plaza for free and The Virtual Festival, videotapes of all the presentations, for a nominal amount.

- Is there a membership, and what does one get from attending?** No. **Do you have year-long events?** No
- Do you plan to expand the festival?** We are restricted by the number of seats in the Pavilion, so we can’t really move The Festival itself anywhere else in Sonoma. Our expansion would come through simulcasting to locations throughout the community or beyond. We are working on a partnership with NorCal Public Media to make the presentations available to their Public Television markets in the North Bay and Silicon Valley. We really don’t want to become a giant book festival with thousands of attendees. The intimacy and curated content are what make it unique and suit the charm of our lovely town of Sonoma.

For more information visit: [SVAauthorsfest.org](http://SVAauthorsfest.org)



**Hanna**  
RECREATION

## Join Us This Summer for Camp!

Hanna Camps create connection through fun. With a balance of skill development and personal growth, campers learn while making lifelong memories. Our coaches, counselors, and campus await.

Rec | Culinary | Soccer | Tennis | Lacrosse | Baseball | Basketball

Week-long camp pricing starting at only \$200!



SCAN TO LEARN MORE & REGISTER



Hanna Center, 17000 Arnold Drive, Sonoma, CA 95476 | 707.996.6767 | f @ in @hannacenteronoma | hannacenter.org