

The Stories We Carry: Colum McCann and Narrative 4 Bring the Power of Storytelling to the University of Michigan

National Book Award winner Colum McCann joins Michigan Public's April Baer in Ann Arbor for a free conversation on storytelling and human connection.

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Narrative 4, the University of Michigan Institute for the Humanities and Michigan Public invite the Ann Arbor community to an evening exploring the power of storytelling to foster compassion, curiosity and human connection.

The Stories We Carry: Writer Colum McCann in Conversation with Michigan Public's April Baer will take place on Wednesday, September 30, from 5:30–6:45 p.m. at the University of Michigan Museum of Art's Helmut Stern Auditorium. The free event is open to the public, with no registration required.

Drawing on McCann's celebrated fiction and his work as co-founder of global nonprofit Narrative 4, the discussion will explore how stories invite us to listen more deeply, understand one another across differences and expand our sense of what it means to be human. At a time when genuine listening can feel increasingly rare, this conversation will consider the unique role that literature and storytelling can play in helping us encounter one another with greater openness, compassion and imagination.



National Book Award Winner Colum McCann



Broadcaster April Baer will host the conversation.

"Stories have the power not only to entertain or inform, but to help us imagine lives beyond our own," said Colum McCann. "We are living through an epidemic of loneliness. If we are to ease this crisis of connection, we must try to understand one another. Both as a writer and through my work with Narrative 4, I have witnessed firsthand the power of story to bridge deep divides. The shortest distance between us is always a story."

Jason Young, Director, U-M Institute for the Humanities said:

"The Institute for the Humanities is pleased to welcome Colum McCann and Narrative 4 to the University of Michigan. At a time when so much of human interaction is mediated through technology and determined by algorithms, we look forward to the power of human connection, one story at a time."

The evening will include:

The Stories We Carry: A Conversation with Colum McCann and April Baer (5:30 p.m.), exploring the power of storytelling.

A Community Story Exchange led by Narrative 4 (7:00 p.m.), giving participants the opportunity to share and retell one another's stories, building connection and deepening understanding through Narrative 4's powerful methodology. Participants will pair with another attendee, share a personal story in response to a prompt and then retell their partner's story in the first person—an exercise in perspective-taking and human connection.

Colum McCann is the author of eight novels, three collections of stories and two works of nonfiction. His honors include the National Book Award and the International Dublin Literary Prize, among numerous other international distinctions. He is also the co-founder of Narrative 4. He lives in New York with his wife Allison and their family. His 2009 novel *Let the Great World Spin* has sold a million copies in the United States alone and was included on The New York Times list of the 100 Best Books of the 21st Century.

April Baer is the host of Michigan Public's *Stateside*. Before joining Michigan Public, she hosted *State of Wonder* at Oregon Public Broadcasting and worked as a reporter and host covering government, legal affairs, changing demographics and the arts.

The conversation is part of the Jill S. Harris Memorial Lecture series, an annual program established in memory of Jill Harris, a University of Michigan undergraduate student. The Jill S. Harris Memorial Endowment, established in 1985, brings a distinguished visitor to campus each year who has made significant contributions to humanities and the arts.

Event Details

The Stories We Carry: Writer Colum McCann in Conversation with Michigan Public's April Baer
Wednesday, September 30, 2026

5:30–6:45 p.m.

University of Michigan Museum of Art — Helmut Stern Auditorium
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Community Story Exchange with Narrative 4

Wednesday, September 30, 2026

7:00 p.m.

University of Michigan Museum of Art — Helmut Stern Auditorium

Ann Arbor, Michigan

For more information and registration details, visit the [University of Michigan event listing](#) and the [Community Story Exchange page](#).

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About Narrative 4:

Narrative 4 is a not-for-profit with a mission to equip young people to harness the power of stories to drive change in their communities. Narrative 4's programs replace loneliness and isolation with connection, community and action. Founded by artists, educators and students, the organization is established in 12 countries across Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and North and South America, with over a million stories shared to date. To learn more, visit Narrative 4.

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