

For immediate release:

**RAGDALE'S NOVEL AFFAIR:
"A MAGICAL EVENT FOR EVERYONE IN ATTENDANCE"**

LAKE FOREST, IL – October 15, 2007 – The Ragdale Foundation knew it had a gem of a program when tickets to its *Novel Affair* sold out in only two weeks. The two-evening event on Oct. 12 and 13 introduced a select group of literary stars to 125 lucky ticket-holders. Guests had a chance to talk about books with bestselling authors Dorothy Allison (*Bastard Out of Carolina*), Karen Joy Fowler (*The Jane Austen Book Club*), Erik Larson (*Devil in the White City*), Ann Patchett (*Bel Canto*), Gregory Maguire (*Wicked*), and Gail Tsukiyama (*The Street of a Thousand Blossoms*) – as well as award-winning composer/lyricist Stephen Schwartz (*Wicked*) – at this unforgettable affair.

Novel Affair opened with a cocktail reception at Mettawa Manor, the home of honorary co-chairs Bill Kurtis and Donna La Pietra. Filmmakers, philanthropists, and booklovers, Kurtis and La Pietra welcomed all the guests and invited them to explore the house's two-story private library.

"I've never met a book I couldn't cozy up to," La Pietra said.

The guests enjoyed themselves immensely in such esteemed literary company and a dramatic setting.

"The combination of a spectacular opening evening on the Illinois prairie with such gracious hosts, the gathering of interesting people and the talented ensemble of artists, made for a lovely evening," Brook Carl of Lake Forest said.

Saturday evening featured six intimate gourmet dinner parties with each of the authors in private homes in Lake Forest and Lake Bluff. Each author spoke, read from his or her work and answered questions, and each guest left with a signed copy of their author's latest book.

"This was a magical event for everyone in attendance," Nancy O'Mara of Lake Forest said.

Ragdale, whose residency program provides time and space for over 200 writers and artists to work each year, brings creative people together around a dinner table for food and interesting conversation every evening. *Novel Affair* has extended that touchstone Ragdale experience to the community.

"*Novel Affair* allowed us to bring the best elements of Ragdale out into the community – sharing great dinner conversation with 125 people!" Executive Director Susan Tillett said.

Through ticket sales and generous donations from Northern Trust, Macy's, Lake Forest Book Store, Fortune Brands, Lord and Mar LTD, and all the *Novel Affair* hosts, the event raised \$25,000. And, at the conclusion of the weekend's events, a delighted participant made an anonymous \$35,000 donation, bringing *Novel Affair's* total proceeds to \$60,000.

Ragdale is located in Arts and Crafts architect Howard Van Doren Shaw's Lake Forest country estate, just 30 miles north of Chicago. Built in 1897, the Ragdale House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1976, Shaw's granddaughter Alice Judson Hayes transformed her family's summer home into an artists' colony providing time and space for artists to create important new work. Today Ragdale hosts over 200 artists, writers, and composers each year, making it the largest interdisciplinary artists' community in the Midwest and the fourth largest in the country. Noted past residents include Jane Hamilton, Alex Kotlowitz, Audrey Niffenegger, Lawrence Block, and Stephanie Kallos.

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