



UPSTART CROW, INC.

PRESS KIT

Books. Ideas. Community.

Virginia 501(c)(3) Nonprofit · EIN 42-3727159
upstartcrow.org · October 2026

WHO WE ARE

Upstart Crow is a Virginia 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to promoting books, literacy, and cultural appreciation through podcasts, public forums, and educational initiatives. Our mission is to inspire individuals of all ages to explore the literary arts, foster meaningful discussions, and celebrate the diversity of ideas in our world, ultimately encouraging everyone to read and engage with stories that enrich lives.

We create a platform for educators, artists, curators, historians, and art enthusiasts to discuss and explore our world and imaginations. Our team of experienced and passionate hosts brings knowledge and insight to each episode, offering in-depth conversations that probe the whys and wherefores of writers and their work, including how they practice their craft and the challenges they face.

WHERE WE CAME FROM

The name “Upstart Crow” comes from a 1592 pamphlet by dramatist Robert Greene, who called Shakespeare “an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers.” An upstart climbs the ladder without standard credentials; a crow is known for borrowing from others. The phrase has inspired centuries of debate, fiction, and even a BBC sitcom. We chose it for its rich literary backstory—and because we see ourselves, to some extent, as upstart crows: passionate advocates bringing fresh conversations to readers and writers.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & AUTHOR DISCUSSIONS

We put readers in direct conversation with authors about intention and craft, whether the work is fiction or nonfiction. Programs are free, open to the public, and often produced in partnership with libraries and cultural organizations. Our goal is to expand access to literary discussion, support lifelong learning, and strengthen community connections through books.

From established writers to emerging voices, our guests share unique perspectives on writing, the literary arts, and culture. We welcome colleagues in the arts and academia to host special episodes from time to time. Conversations are designed to give listeners information they won’t hear elsewhere.

SUPPORT OUR WORK

We are open to partnerships, collaborations, and services for organizations seeking author talks and literary programming for their communities. We welcome opportunities to work with libraries, cultural institutions, community organizations, and other civic partners. We prefer to keep conversations free and open to the public and are looking for underwriting and sponsorship support to do so. We are also open to donations. Please contact us if you are interested in helping further our work.

PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

- Fairfax County Public Library — Free virtual author conversations and library programming. Example: a four-part author series presented October–November 2026, open to the public and sponsored by the library.
- Watershed Lit Radio / George Mason University — Podcast affiliation and ongoing literary collaboration.
- Fall For The Book Festival — Board involvement and shared commitment to literary events that connect authors, readers, and communities across Northern Virginia.
- New American Voices Literary Award — Established by Fall For The Book and the Institute for Immigration Research to recognize books by immigrant and first-generation writers. Upstart Crow features the authors on the podcast to raise awareness of these important fiction and nonfiction stories and expand the impact of the awards.
- Bards Alley Bookshop (Vienna, VA) — Local independent bookstore where listeners can purchase books by Upstart Crow podcast guests and authors featured in our programs.

LEADERSHIP

Jennifer L. Disano, President & CEO — Co-founder of the Upstart Crow podcast and nonprofit, along with Ken Budd and William Miller. Former Executive Director of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at George Mason University (2013–2025). As a lifelong advocate of libraries, Disano served as Chair of the GMU Libraries Board and Vice Chair of the Fairfax Library Foundation. For many years she served as Chair of the Fall For The Book Festival Board and currently continues on the Board.

William Miller, Vice President & Treasurer — Directed Mason’s creative writing program for more than two dozen years and taught in the English Department for more than thirty years. Founder of Fall For The Book Festival and currently its Vice Chair. Advisor to Watershed Lit and the Alan Cheuse International Writers Center. Former newspaper journalist.

Ken Budd, Secretary — Author of the memoir *The Voluntourist* (William Morrow). Longtime editor at AARP The Magazine (nominated for a National Magazine Award). Previously Chair of the University Library Board and currently Chair of Fall For The Book Festival. Frequent contributor to *The Atlantic*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Smithsonian*, and other national publications.

CONTACT

Media Contact: Jennifer Disano, President & CEO

ContactUpstartCrow@gmail.com · upstartcrow.org · Fairfax County, Virginia