



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO!

We're soooooo ready to Create a Scene with you all this weekend in Nashville! But there's a lot of information to share, so please take time to read through this email or, if you prefer, it's available for download on the conference website and in your SCBWI Member Home under My Events.

[Download It All Here](#)

Where and When To Go

Registration check-in begins at **7:30 a.m.** **THIS** Saturday, Sept. 13, at the Southwestern Conference Center, located at **2451 Atrium Way**, Nashville, TN 37214. Parking is **FREE** on site and there's plenty of it. When you arrive, get your name badge and personalized schedule, grab a cup of coffee or tea, and make your way to the Auditorium for opening remarks at **8 a.m.**

[Get Directions to the Venue](#)

[View the Parking Map](#)

Download! We're (Mostly) Paperless

New this year, you will not be receiving a folder when you check in at the Registration tables. Your personalized schedule, including room assignments and your critique times, will be printed on the back of your name badge for easy reference. The general conference schedule (not personalized for your selections) is available on the conference website, along with helpful maps. If you want to print a hard copy, click the button below, or save it to the laptop and/or mobile device you'll have with you.

[Download the General Schedule](#)

Don't remember what you signed up for? **Log in to your SCBWI Member Home and click on My Events.** Everything you're signed up for is listed there. You are welcome to take a screenshot of what you see in My Events and save it to your mobile device or laptop for handy reference. Note that the sessions in My Events do not indicate room assignments. See your name badge for rooms.

[Log into Your Member Home Here](#)

For a refresh of our breakout sessions and intensives, visit our Conference website. There will not be a printed program this year.

[Breakout Session Descriptions](#)

[Intensives Descriptions](#)

Don't Leave Home Without

- Something to take notes with
- Chargers for phones and laptops
- Something comfy to wear (think business casual and layers)
- Two printed copies of your pitch if you paid for a pitch critique
- The emailed feedback you receive about your manuscript if you are doing a face-to-face manuscript critique
- Your portfolio if you paid for a portfolio critique
- Your portfolio and signed release form if you paid to participate in the Portfolio Showcase
- Three printed copies of the first 500 words of your WIP if you paid to participate in the Sunday intensive about critiquing with Ruta Sepetys and Sharon Cameron
- Your Broadway-inspired costume if you're dressing up for the Bash
- Your wallet if you plan to buy books, a drink from the bar during the Autograph Party, or if you plan to make a donation to the Midsouth Gives Back campaign to benefit [Appalachian Literacy Initiative](#).
- A tote bag to carry all the books you know you're going to buy
- A water bottle to make use of the conference's water fountain refilling stations

For Illustrators

If you paid for a Portfolio Critique or are participating in the Portfolio Showcase, remember to bring your portfolio with you to the conference. Don't forget to review the portfolio guidelines and, if you're participating in the Showcase, also bring your completed release form with you. **Note the form has been updated as of Sept. 9 to reflect this year's current schedule.** If you submitted the form via email before Sept. 9, you do *not* need to complete a new one, but be aware that your portfolio must be dropped off between 11:45 a.m. and noon on Saturday. (The time was incorrect on earlier versions of the form.)

[Review the Showcase Guidelines Here](#)

[Download the Release Form Here](#)

[Have ??? Email Scott Soeder Here](#)

For Manuscript Critiques & Pitches

If you paid for a manuscript critique (either Choose Your Own or Chosen For You), your written feedback will be **emailed** to you before the start of the conference, along with additional pertinent information about the critiques, so be on the lookout for that email! If you do not receive it by Friday, email Erica Rodgers. We recommend you review the notes **BEFORE** you meet with faculty for your face-to-face so you make the best use of your 15 minutes with them. It's also a good idea to bring the feedback with you to your paid critique so you can follow along.

DO NOT BE LATE FOR YOUR CRITIQUE!

[Email Erica Rodgers](#)

If you paid for a pitch critique, bring **TWO printed copies of your pitch**. One is for you to read from. The other is to hand to the faculty. Review the pitch guidelines below.

[Review the Pitch Guidelines](#)

[Have ??? Email Laura Ayo](#)

Intensives Notes

If you are signed up for the Sunday Intensive "**Neglected Art of Critique**" with Ruta Sepetys and Sharon Cameron, check your email for information sent Wednesday, Sept. 10, about what to bring to the workshop. **NOTE:** you need **THREE** printed copies of the first 500 words of your work-in-progress and some other items that will be used during the session.

If you are signed up for the Sunday Intensive "**Designing Standout Covers**" with Maryn Arreguín, you should have already submitted your cover designs to Scott Soeder. Follow the emailed directions from Scott about what to expect on Sunday.

What's to Eat?

Coffee, tea and water will be provided Saturday morning until supplies run out.

Lunch is not provided on Saturday or for those staying on Sunday for intensives. You'll have 90 minutes for lunch on Saturday, but there are only 15 minutes between intensives on Sunday, so plan accordingly. There are several cafes and restaurants in the area, but none are within walking distance.

Wine and beer will be available for purchase during the Autograph Party and Social Hour from 4:30-6 p.m. Water will also be available at this time.

Dinner for those who purchased a ticket to the Create a Scene Bash on Saturday night will be served buffet-style starting at 7 p.m. There is not assigned seating at the Bash for attendees (sit where you like!), but we ask that once you pick a table to **please wait for your table number to be called to get in the buffet line.**

Sorry, but tickets to the Bash will not be available at the door.

If you bought a ticket to the Bash, your meal includes a ticket for one glass of wine or beer. You may use your ticket at the bar during the Autograph Party and Social Hour or you can wait to use it with your meal. Additional drinks are available for purchase, as well.

[View Nearby Eateries](#)

Create a Scene Broadway Style at the Bash

Costumes are encouraged, but not mandatory, at the Bash! Come dressed as your favorite Broadway show or character.

While you're waiting for your table to be called for the buffet line, VOTE for your favorite table centerpiece, socialize and network, and gush about everything you learned throughout the day with your tablemates.

Play to Win: Take the Social Challenge

Want to win a gift card to your favorite hometown indie bookstore? Then take the Midsouth Conference Social Challenge. Part social media and part opportunity to meet up with fellow attendees and share what you're learning and loving about the conference, download the Social Challenge card (below or from our Linktree on Instagram and Facebook) and see how many challenges you can complete before 6:45 p.m. on Saturday. Unlike our other prize drawings throughout the day, you do NOT need to be present to win, but you DO need to use our conference

#SCBWIMidsouth25 and tag @SCBWIMidsouth when you complete challenges that require a social media post.

[Download to Play Here](#)

Still Have Questions?

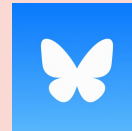
The Conference Committee and Regional Team will be busy getting everything ready for the conference, so we may not see your emails or questions posted on Facebook or Instagram right away (or at all on Saturday and Sunday). We appreciate your understanding as we work hard to ensure everyone has a memorable and positive experience. In the meantime, we've tried to anticipate a lot of your questions by answering them on our conference FAQ page. Be sure to check them out before reaching out.

[Conference FAQs](#)

SCBWI Midsouth encompasses Kentucky and Tennessee. A group of dedicated volunteers publishes these communications. If you would like to share your talents as a volunteer, have questions or ideas, please email midsouth@scbwi.org.

[Send Us A Message](#)

Keep in Touch!



SCBWI Midsouth | 10940 Wilshire Blvd Suite 1600 | Los Angeles, CA 90024 US

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Try email marketing for free today!

2025 Midsouth Conference Schedule

Use **#SCBWIMidsouth25** in your social media posts to win a bookstore gift certificate!

FRIDAY, September 12th

5:30–6:30 p.m. | Informal Happy Hour Regional Meet-and-Greet

Meet other attendees (and perhaps make dinner plans) at this meet-and-greet during the DoubleTree Suites happy hour in the hotel lobby and patio.

2424 Atrium Way, Nashville, TN 37214

****Please keep in mind that the hotel happy hour is generally for those staying at the hotel, but the cash bar is open to the public! If you join us, please be mindful of hotel guests.**

SATURDAY, September 13th

NOTE: Paid Face-to-Face Manuscript and Portfolio Critiques are scheduled throughout the day. Please refer to your individual schedule for your specific assigned time.

7:30–8:00 a.m. | Registration

8:00–8:20 a.m. | Welcome

8:20–8:30 a.m. | Break

8:30–9:25 a.m. | Session I (See the Breakouts page on the conference website for more details!)

- **A. Nicole Tugeau – Branding 101: What's Your Scene?**

- **B. Deeba Zargarpur** – Publishing Behind the Curtain
- **C. Mikaela Luke** – Show Don't Tell: How to Infuse Voice into Character Expressions and Movement

9:25–9:40 a.m. | Break

9:40–10:35 a.m. | Session II (See the Breakouts page on the conference website for more details!)

- **A. Deeba Zargarpur** – Revise Like an Editor - Getting into the Weeds
- **B. Mikaela Luke** – Contemporary Realism with a Little Bit of Magic
- **C. Maryn Arreguín** – From Manuscript to Illustration-Translating Text into Visual Storytelling

10:35-10:50 | Break

10:50–11:45 p.m. | Pitch Critique Sessions: Pay to Pitch or Watch and Learn! (Paid Pitch, \$30. Observation, FREE!) (See the Pitches page on the conference website for more details!)

Have your pitch critiqued by an agent or editor or observe and take notes! It's exciting to share your idea with an industry pro. This session is designed to help you improve and strengthen your pitch, whether you're meeting industry professionals, querying, or writing a proposal! Each paid pitch slot is 5 minutes, including Faculty feedback time.

- **A. Picture Books – Nicole Tugeau**
- **B. Picture Books/Middle Grade – Stephanie Fretwell Hill**
- **C. Middle Grade/Young Adult – Deeba Zargarpur**
- **D. Middle Grade/Young Adult – Lauren MacLeod**

11:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m. | Portfolio Drop-off at Registration Table

11:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m. | Lunch – Plan to either:

- **A.** Bring your own lunch (to eat in the atrium or elsewhere), OR

- **B. Purchase lunch** at a nearby restaurant, either by going out or utilizing Uber eats, etc. (See the Stay, Eat & Explore page on the conference website for more information.)

Be aware that you only have 90 minutes for lunch! You do not want to be late for First Pages!

1:15–2:00 p.m. | First Pages (See the First Pages page on the conference website for more details!)

First Pages sessions offer conference attendees the unique opportunity to witness an agent's first impression when reading a new manuscript. Anonymous first pages will be chosen at random and read aloud to the group. Then faculty will discuss the ever-important question: Would I read more? They will offer specific suggestions on how to improve the appeal of a story's opening. (First page submission is not required to attend this session, and not all first pages/materials will be read. Attendees may pre-register for one session only.)

- **A. Picture Books**— Nicole Tugeau and Mary Uhles
- **B. Middle Grade**— Stephanie Fretwell-Hill and Kristin Tubb
- **C. Young Adult**— Mikaela Luke and Erica Rodgers

To submit a first page, please email your page to midsouthfirstpages@gmail.com by August 23, 2025, following the guidelines listed on the First Pages page of the conference website.

2:00–2:15 p.m. | Break

2:15-3:10 p.m. | Session III (See the Breakouts page on the conference website for more details!)

- **A. Stephanie Fretwell-Hill** – Just the Right Fit: How Finding an Agent is Like Finding Romance
- **B. Lauren MacLeod** - AI Unpacked: What Every Kidlit Creator Ought to Know

- **C. Maryn Arreguín and Scott Soeder** - Art Director & Illustrator: A Creative Partnership

3:10–3:20 p.m. | Break

3:20–4:10 p.m. | Art Director/Agent/Editor Panel—Maryn Arreguín, Lauren MacLeod, Deeba Zargarpur

4:10-4:20 p.m. | Closing Announcements

4:30–6:00 p.m. | Midsouth Autograph Party with Portfolio Showcase and Cocktail Hour

Come mingle with us before the Create a Scene Bash and Dinner! Check out illustrator portfolios and purchase that special book you want to have signed by a faculty member or an SCBWI author.

- See the For PALs page on the conference website for PAL opportunities for this party!
- See the For Illustrators page on the conference website for Illustrator opportunities for this party!

7:00–9:00 p.m. | Create a Scene Bash and Dinner (\$50)

Saturday concludes with our Create a Scene Bash for conference attendees and faculty. Wouldn't it be lovely if you joined us? Come From Away or come from Nashville, but come dressed as your favorite Broadway character* and join us at the always-delightful SCBWI Midsouth Bash! There will be dinner! Drinks! Kid-lit trivia! A centerpiece design contest where you can **WIN A FREE CRITIQUE AT OUR NEXT CONFERENCE!** And of course, the annual Midsouth Award Ceremony! Don't throw away your shot! It will be some enchanted evening, and you'll be Les Misérables if you miss it!

*Costumes not required but it'd sure be Wicked if you had our Six!

(See the Evening Festivities and Contests pages on the conference website for more details.)

SUNDAY, September 14th

POST-CONFERENCE INTENSIVES AND PAL MEETUP

Post-conference intensives are available on Sunday for an additional fee. Registration is limited. To register for intensives, please check the appropriate box when registering for the conference online. Intensive registrations are non-transferable, and there will be no refunds. (See the Intensives page on the conference website for more details!)

8:00 a.m. | Doors Open

8:30–10:30 a.m.

- **INTENSIVE 1 (Full participation \$60 / Observe Only \$30) –** Maryn Arreguín: Designing Standout Covers: A Hands-On Workshop
- **INTENSIVE 2 (\$60) –** Sharon Cameron and Ruta Sepetys: The Neglected Art of Critique

10:45 a.m.–12:45 p.m.

- **INTENSIVE 3 (\$60) –** Stephanie Fretwell-Hill: How to Read a Picture Book
- **INTENSIVE 4 (\$60) –** Jennifer Lynn Alvarez: Whodunnit? Secrets to Plotting a Mystery/Thriller

1:00–3:00 p.m

- **INTENSIVE 5 (\$60) –** Nicole Tugeau: Embracing Empathy & The Natural World in Picture Books
- **PAL Roundtable (FREE!)** Join us for a PAL (published and listed) meeting to discuss marketing strategies, school visits, contract questions, AI challenges, the state of publishing...wherever our discussion takes us. We'll have a loose agenda, but are mainly

hoping to build and support our amazingly talented PAL authors!
Please plan on joining us and sharing your best practices and
strategies!

See the FOR PALs page on the conference website for more information
about PAL opportunities at the conference!

Saturday, Session I, 8:30–9:25 a.m.

Nicole Tugeau – What's Your Scene?

A no-nonsense approach to telling the world who you are, what you create, where you fit, and why you belong. A confidence-boosting breakout for anyone creating for children. We'll cover everything from portfolios, websites and social media to attitude, self-talk, and your personal space. Come ready to visualize your success!

Deeba Zargarpur – Publishing Behind the Curtain

Ever wondered what happens after you submit your manuscript to a publisher? Get an insider's look at the publishing process from an editor's point of view. From evaluating submissions to acquisition meetings and beyond, learn what editors consider when choosing projects and why the journey from book deal to bookstore shelves can take longer than you think. Whether you're a debut author or looking to refine your understanding of the publishing world, this session will pull back the curtain on how books come to life.

Mikaela Luke – Show, Don't Tell: Infusing Voice into Character Expressions and Movement

He “said”, she “said”—in this session, we'll talk about dialogue tags, character expressions, and descriptions of character movement. When readers describe a manuscript as voice-y, they aren't necessarily just talking about a protagonist's dialogue or POV. Voice can permeate throughout a manuscript and is built through thoughtful word choice and economy of language. Though character movement and expressions can often be hurried to set the scene or drive along the plot, they're also opportunities to infuse voice into the storytelling. This breakout session will look at how to rewrite character motions such that they more naturally describe the action while also providing a unique voice for the story at the same time.

Saturday, Session II, 9:40–10:35 a.m.

Deeba Zargarpur – Revise Like an Editor - Getting into the Weeds

In this session, you'll learn how to approach the revision process with an editor's eye and discover what an editor looks for when acquiring books and how to identify common pitfalls before submitting your work. Whether you're preparing to query agents or submit directly to publishers, this session will offer practical strategies to polish your manuscript.

Mikaela Luke – Contemporary Realism with a Little Bit of Magic

With all the talk of genres—sci-fi, fantasy, speculative fiction, horror—where do you fit in contemporary narratives that have just a sprinkling of unexplained magic? In this breakout session, we'll talk about the cultural history of magical realism and look through examples of magic blurring into the real in contemporary works of middle-grade children's literature. Rather than focus on genre, we'll talk about magic used as narrative tool and when, why, and how it might be used for certain types of stories. We will specifically consider stories where the characters struggle to convey their realities within the confines of the dominant language, such as stories told against the backdrop

of marginalization or migration. We will give a brief overview of theories of racial melancholia and the Dark Fantastic as it pertains to magical narratives. Rather than look at magic as a means of escape, we will discuss the flip side to magic in children's books: how the real can be made realer through magic.

Maryn Arreguín – From Manuscript to Illustration: Translating Text Into Visual Storytelling

Discover how art directors transform manuscripts into compelling visuals by identifying key scenes and crafting cohesive color palettes, compositions, and emotional tones that align with the narrative.

Saturday, Session III, 2:15-3:10 p.m.

Stephanie Fretwell-Hill – Just the Right Fit: How Finding an Agent is Like Finding Romance

The first barrier to finding an agent is the quality of an author's work. But even skilled writers with stellar manuscripts get turned down, often with the mysterious phrase "not a fit for me." What does that really mean? And how do you find the right fit? Just like in love, the best author-agent relationships involve respect, communication, mutual admiration, and a little bit of chemistry. In this session, we will talk about finding and querying agents, selling them on you and your work, and moving on if he or she isn't "the one."

Lauren MacLeod – AI & LLMs Unpacked: What Every Kidlit Creator Ought to Know

Lauren will provide an overview of AI and large language models (LLMs)—what it is, how it works, and what that means for creators— and unravel the impacts on the publishing industry. From copyright and licensing complexities to discussing emerging AI-related concerns, Lauren will break down the key issues facing authors and illustrators and give some insight into the ways publishers may be thinking about and leveraging AI tools. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of the basics of AI and LLMs, along with the potential risks and opportunities, and what it could mean for the future. The class wraps up with a lively 15-minute Q&A, where this human will attempt to answer creators' most pressing questions about this rapidly evolving topic!

Maryn Arreguín and Scott Soeder – Art Director & Illustrator: A Creative Partnership

Have you ever wondered what it would be like to work with an Art Director? Here is your chance to learn about this unique publishing partnership. This interactive session fosters teamwork by bridging the gap between illustrators and art directors. Learn about their relationship, expectations, workflow, feedback, and process insights. Bring your questions.

Maryn Arreguín – Designing Standout Covers: A Hands-On Workshop – \$60 to participate; \$30 to observe

A successful cover is essential for both book sales and an illustrator's portfolio. In this workshop, participants will receive a title, choose between picture book or graphic novel formats, and create three cover sketches before the conference. After a round of feedback, they'll refine each one into a final colored piece to present at the intensive. With templates, an art brief, and a presentation guide, illustrators will gain real-world experience in working with an art director. Through group critique and selection of their strongest piece, participants will leave with a polished portfolio addition and greater confidence in their creative process. Space is limited to 12 Full Participants who will do the assignment. Illustrators wishing to Observe Only but not do the assignment may join for \$30. NOTE: Those paying the lower fee to observe the intensive do not work on cover sketches with the instructor before the conference. Observers benefit by attending the intensive during the conference and seeing how working with an art director helped the participants transform their work.

Sharon Cameron and Ruta Sepetys – The Neglected Art of Critique – \$60

Critique is one of the most valuable yet underappreciated skills a writer can develop. Learning to both give and receive feedback is essential—not just for improving your work, but for maintaining the perspective every writer needs to see their work clearly. Join two SCBWI success stories who've built a twenty-year critique partnership for a hands-on workshop that will transform the way you approach revision. You'll learn how to listen deeply, recognize strengths and weaknesses, and supercharge your own ability to self-edit. This two-hour workshop will include practical strategies for being part of a critique group, as well as real-time critique exercises and discussion. Please bring three copies of the first 500 words of a novel or short story and come ready to engage and share. There are many ways to write a novel. Let the art of critique help you find yours!

Stephanie Fretwell-Hill – How to Read a Picture Book – \$60

A standard piece of advice to writers is to read, read, read. But what are you looking for when you read a picture book? Together, we will analyze a range of published work, from silly to serious to poignant and everything in between. We will look at structure, pacing, plot, characterization, setting, voice, and language—and decide together what aspects are more and less successful in the examples. This session will help you use mentor texts effectively, critique your partners' manuscripts constructively, and read your own work more critically.

Jennifer Lynn Alvarez – Whodunnit? Secrets to Plotting a Mystery/Thriller – \$60

This workshop is designed to unravel the secrets of plotting a compelling mystery or thriller. In this hands-on session, we will explore the key elements of crafting intricate plots that keep readers on the edge of their seats. From designing a gripping hook to weaving in red herrings, you'll learn how to build tension and suspense at every turn.

We'll dive into the anatomy of a mystery—developing complex characters, creating surprising twists, and ensuring a satisfying yet unpredictable conclusion. Whether you're just starting your story or looking to elevate your existing plot, this workshop will equip you with the tools needed to structure a captivating mystery or thriller from beginning to end.

Nicole Tugeau – Embracing Empathy & The Natural World in Picture Books – \$60

Inspired by Hans Christian Anderson's THUMBELINA, this workshop will challenge authors and illustrators to connect with their audience through empathy and the natural world. We'll work to develop and/or re-develop scenes using classic storytelling aspects found in Anderson's writing and ground ourselves in the art of using the natural world to connect with our readers. Participants are encouraged to bring one picture book WIP or a detailed outline, a sketchbook, and drawing supplies of their choice.

GETTING TO THE SOUTHWESTERN CONFERENCE CENTER

Traveling by air?

Nashville International Airport (BNA) is about 5 miles from the Southwestern Conference Center. Many of the hotels around the conference center offer complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport. Or you can take a taxi or ride-share service.

Driving?

Three major interstates pass through Nashville, and Southwestern Conference Center is easily accessible from each.

South on I-65

Take I-65 S toward Nashville. Take exit 90B toward Briley Pky East onto TN-155 E (Briley Pkwy). Take exit 7 toward Elm Hill Pike/South College. Turn left onto Elm Hill Pike. Turn left onto Atrium Way.

North on I-65

Take I-65 N toward Nashville. Take exit 80 toward Knoxville/Airport onto I-440 E. Take the left exit toward Nashville/I-40 E/Knoxville onto I-24 W. Take exit 52B toward Knoxville/Airport onto I-40 E. Take exit 215B toward Briley Pky onto TN-155 N (Briley Pkwy). Take exit 7 toward Elm Hill Pike. Turn right onto Elm Hill Pike toward South College. Turn left onto Atrium Way.

East on I-40

Take I-40 E toward Nashville. Take exit 208A toward Knoxville/Huntsville onto I-40 E/I-65 S. Continue on I-40 E toward Knoxville/I-24 E/Chattanooga/Airport. Keep left onto I-40 E toward Knoxville/Airport. Take exit 215B toward Briley Pky onto TN-155 N (Briley Pkwy). Take exit 7 toward Elm Hill Pike. Turn right onto Elm Hill Pike toward South College. Turn left onto Atrium Way.

West on I-40

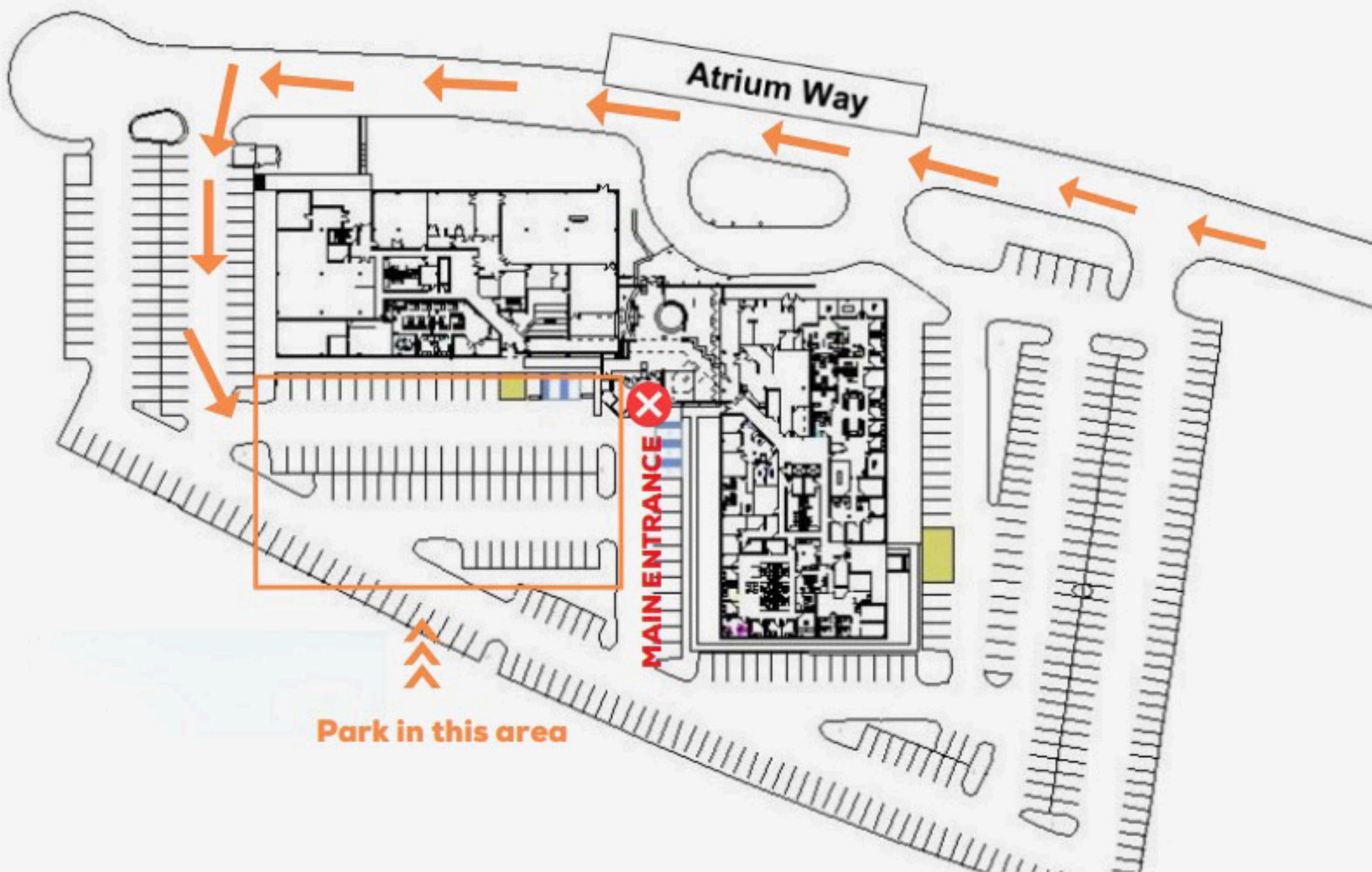
Take I-40 W toward Nashville. Take exit 215B toward Briley Pky onto TN-155 N (Briley Pkwy). Take exit 7 toward Elm Hill Pike. Turn right onto Elm Hill Pike toward South College. Turn left onto Atrium Way.

East on I-24

Take I-24 E toward Nashville. Exit onto TN-155 E (Briley Pkwy). Take exit 7 toward Elm Hill Pike. Turn right onto Elm Hill Pike toward South College. Turn left onto Atrium Way.

West on I-24

Take I-24 W toward Nashville. Take exit 54 onto TN-155 E (Briley Pkwy). Take exit 7 toward Elm Hill Pike. Turn right onto Elm Hill Pike toward South College. Turn left onto Atrium Way.

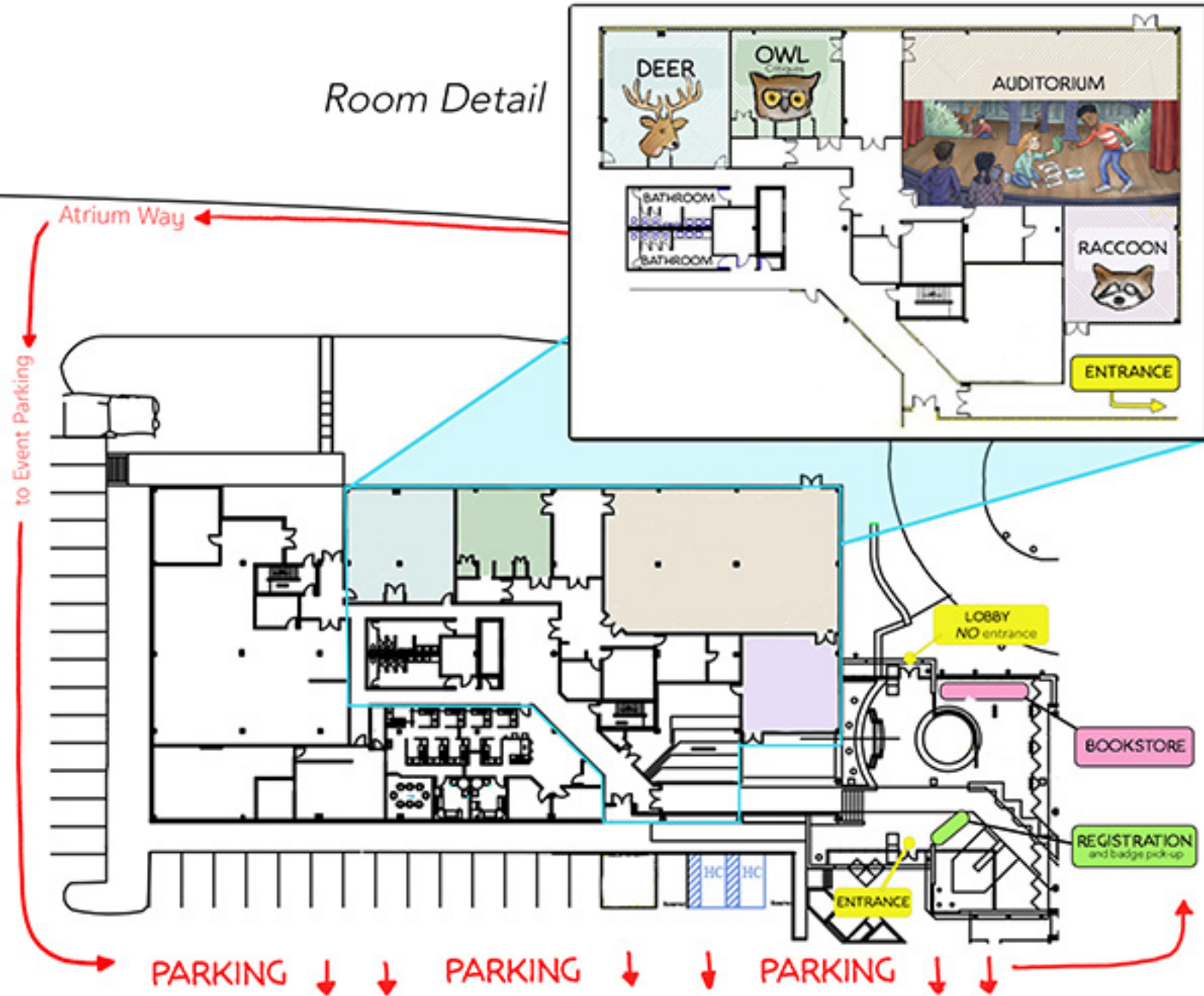


Atrium Way

MAIN ENTRANCE

Park in this area

Room Detail



SCBWI MIDSOUTH CONFERENCE SOCIAL CHALLENGE



PLAY: DOWNLOAD OR PRINT THIS CARD AND MARK THE PROMPTS YOU COMPLETE.
USE #SCBWIMIDSOUTH25 AND TAG @SCBWIMIDSOUTH WHEN YOU POST TO YOUR
SOCIAL MEDIA. COMPLETE ONE ROW FOR 1 ENTRY TO THE PRIZE POOL OR THE FULL
CARD FOR A BONUS ENTRY.

ENTER BY 6:45 PM ON SEPT. 13: POST THE COMPLETED CARD TO YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA
(USING ABOVE TAG AND #) OR DROP IN THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE BASKET AT THE
REGISTRATION TABLE

WIN: A GIFT CERTIFICATE TO YOUR FAVORITE HOMETOWN INDIE BOOKSTORE

Post a photo from your day at the conference (no venue logos, please)	Find a picture book author/illustrator and learn the title of their current project	Post about something new you learned from a breakout session	Practice pitching your WIP with a friend	Download an "I'm going to the conference" social media badge and post it
Like a Midsouth social media post about the conference	Post a picture of yourself at the conference (no venue logos, please)	Visit the "Authors Against Book Bans" table	Post a picture of your conference book haul	Post a photo of a Midsouth creator's book with a person on the cover
Post a photo of a Midsouth creator's book with an animal on the cover	Like a conference-related post by another attendee		Find a middle grade author and learn the title of their current project	Visit the "Midsouth Gives Back" table
Share the Midsouth's Instagram story to celebrate those pitching	Post a selfie with a book signed by a Midsouth author and/or illustrator	Thank a member of the faculty or conference committee for being here!	Post a photo with a ride-or-die friend at the Midsouth conference	Post a photo of you at the Autograph Party with a signing author
Post about something new you learned from the first pages session	Post a photo of you at the Autograph Party with a signing illustrator	Post a photo of you with a new friend at the conference	Share the Midsouth's stories to celebrate those whose first pages are being read	Find a young adult author and learn the title of their current project



2025 Midsouth Portfolio Showcase Release

I, _____, am submitting a portfolio (Artwork) for the SCBWI Portfolio Showcase ("Showcase") being held on September 13th at the Southwestern Conference Center in Nashville, Tennessee. I understand that by submitting this Artwork I agree to the following:

1. The Artwork will be dropped off by me between 11:45 a.m.-12:00 p.m. on September 13th at the Registration Table in the lobby of the conference center, and picked up in the same place that evening by 6:30 pm.

2. The submission of the Artwork is solely my responsibility and I hereby assume all risk of loss, theft, damage, destruction, delay and misdirection. I hereby represent and warrant that I am the sole owner of the Artwork and all copyrights therein and the Artwork does not infringe upon the rights of any third party or entity. I understand there is no guarantee that the Artwork will be available after 6:30pm September 13th and that the SCBWI has the authority to dispose of said Artwork as it sees fit in its sole discretion

3. By participating in the Showcase, I hereby release and agree to hold harmless SCBWI and its respective officers, directors, employees, representatives and agents from and against any and all liability for any loss, injury, property damage or damage to persons, including, without limitation, death, and injury, due in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, from or arising out of participation in the Showcase or participation in any Showcase related activity and acknowledge that SCBWI has not arranged for or carry any insurance for the Artwork. By submitting Artwork I agree that it (including any text, if applicable) and/or my likeness may be used by SCBWI in any media and form whatsoever, whether now known or hereinafter devised, in perpetuity worldwide.

4. Any and all disputes, claims, and causes of action arising out of or in connection with the Artwork (including any text, if applicable) and/or Showcase, shall be resolved individually, without resort to any form of class action; any and all claims, judgments and awards shall be limited to my actual, directly out-of-pocket expenses for the Artwork, but in no event will attorneys fees be awarded or recoverable; and under no circumstances will I be permitted to obtain any award for, and I hereby knowingly and expressly waives all rights to seek punitive, incidental or consequential damages and/or any other damages, other than actual out-of-pocket expenses, and/or any and all right to have damages multiplied or otherwise increased.

5. ANY CONTROVERSY OR CLAIM ARISING OUT OF OR RELATING TO THE ARTWORK AND/OR THESE TERMS AND CONDITIONS, THEIR ENFORCEMENT, ARBITRABILITY, OR INTERPRETATION (COLLECTIVELY, CLAIMS) SHALL BE GOVERNED BY AND CONSTRUED UNDER CALIFORNIA LAW AND ANY CLAIM WILL BE SUBMITTED TO FINAL AND BINDING ARBITRATION IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY, CALIFORNIA, UNDER THE RULES OF JAMS. IN THE EVENT THAT ANY PROVISION IS DETERMINED TO BE INVALID OR OTHERWISE UNENFORCEABLE OR ILLEGAL, THESE TERMS AND CONDITIONS SHALL OTHERWISE REMAIN IN EFFECT AND SHALL BE CONSTRUED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR TERMS AS IF THE INVALID OR ILLEGAL PROVISION WERE NOT CONTAINED HEREIN.

ACKNOWLEDGED AND AGREED:

Signature: _____

PHONE NO. _____

EMAIL _____

Guidelines for Pitch Critique Roundtable Participants

NOTE: Specific instructions will be discussed during the **FREE** pre-conference webinars on July 19 and August 30, and emailed to participants by August 23, 2025.

This opportunity is designed to help you improve and strengthen your pitch so it will make your query package stronger. To prepare for your time in front of an industry professional at the upcoming conference, keep the following guidelines in mind:

FORMATTING YOUR PITCH: Your pitch should consist of 1-3 paragraphs, no more than 200 words. (What you would write in the plot section of your query letter.

BRING: Only one (1) pitch for one (1) manuscript. Bring two (2) printed copies of your pitch (12-point Arial or Times New Roman font or larger and double-spaced for ease of reading). Also bring a pen/pencil and paper to jot notes. (**NOTE:** You do not submit your pitch before the conference.)

AT THE SESSION: This is a tightly timed event that will begin at the designated start time, so please arrive five minutes early to find your seat. You will be assigned a number (1 through 10) and corresponding chair in the front row upon entering the pitch room. Pitches will be presented in this order. Please do not ask the assigning volunteer to give you another number, but you are welcome to see if another participant is willing to swap.

Silence your phone. If you'd like, ask someone else in the group to take notes for you when it's your turn and you can do the same for them. Please wait until after the roundtable ends to exchange notes.

WHEN IT'S YOUR TURN: The volunteer timer will start a 5-minute timer. You'll hand a copy of your pitch to the agent/editor, and then read it aloud for the entire group to hear. The agent/editor may ask you some questions, suggest places you need more information, or sections you could strengthen.

The timer will raise their hand when there is one minute left. When your timer goes off, your time is over. Timers will sometimes interrupt the conversation or might even catch someone mid-sentence! You may finish your sentence if it's no more than a few seconds. This can feel awkward, but this is the nature of timed pitch events – the timer always gets the final word! Thank the agent/editor and take your seat. To keep things moving and fair for everyone, it's best to try to lean into the experience, keep your sense of humor, and pass the ball when your time is up.

Additional Notes:

- You do not need to have your pitch memorized, but we recommend practicing in front of a mirror or a friend to become comfortable with what you plan to say. Time those practice sessions. The quicker you read your pitch, the more time you have for the feedback portion. If you register for a pitch session before the early bird deadline (July 1), you get to attend a FREE online pitch practice roundtable on August 30 with fellow attendees, which is a great way to test out your pitch among peers.
- A pitch is not a query letter. Keep your pitch short. If you register for a pitch session before the early bird deadline (July 1), you get to attend a FREE webinar on July 19 to learn what makes a solid pitch.
- You are welcome to take notes throughout the pitch session, even when it isn't your turn, and apply what the industry pro tells other participants to your own work. If you'd like to share those notes, or offer your own feedback to someone else about their work, please do so privately and only after the roundtable ends.
- Please do NOT put the agent/editor on the spot by asking whether they'd like to see your manuscript in their submission inbox.

Questions? Email Laura Ayo at midsouth-ra@scbwi.org **before Wednesday, Sept. 10, 2025**. After that, we'll be traveling and may not see your email in a timely manner.

Food Near the Southwestern Conference Center SCBWI Midsouth 2025 Conference

Within 1 Mile

Fleetwood Patio & Bar
2424 Atrium Way, Nashville, TN 37214
0.2 Miles
<https://www.fleetwoodpatiobar.com/>

Waffle House
2340 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
0.4 Miles
<https://order.wafflehouse.com/menu/waffle-house-584>

Dutch Bros Coffee
2381 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
0.5 Miles
[https://go.dutchbros.link/2rNJqFoyDOb?
y_source=1_MTAyMjAwNDQyOC03MTUtbG9jYXRpb24ubWVudV91cmw%3D](https://go.dutchbros.link/2rNJqFoyDOb?y_source=1_MTAyMjAwNDQyOC03MTUtbG9jYXRpb24ubWVudV91cmw%3D)

The Bistro Restaurant
2512 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
1.1 Miles

Within 3 Miles

Caliber Coffee Co.
2513 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.2 Miles
<http://www.calibercoffeeco.com/>

Troll House Cottage
222 McGavock Pk, Nashville, TN 37214
2 Miles
<http://trollhousecottage.com/>

Sunflower Bakehouse
2414 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.5 Miles
<https://www.ilovesunflower.com/>

Yeast Nashville (Donelson location)
2713 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.5 Miles
<https://yeastnashville.com/>

Nicoletto's Italian Kitchen
2619 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.3 Miles

<https://nicolettos.com/>

Tennfold
2408 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.3 Miles
<http://www.tennfold.com/>

Little Coffee Joint
519 Donelson Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
1.9 Miles
<http://littlecoffeejoint.com/>

The Nashville Tap House
600 Marriott Dr, Nashville, TN 37214
1.3 Miles
<http://www.thenashvilletaphouse.com/menu>

Music City Gyros
450 Donelson Pike C, Nashville, TN 37214
1.9 Miles
<http://musiccitygyros.com/>

Nectar: Urban Cantina
206 McGavock Pk, Nashville, TN 37214
2.1 Miles
<http://www.nectarcantina.com/home/>

Darfon's Restaurant + Bar
2810 Elm Hill Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.1 Miles
<http://www.darfonrestaurant.com/menus>

Cheba Hut "Toasted" Subs
329 Donelson Pike #103, Nashville, TN 37214
2.4 Miles
https://chebahut.com/locations/nashville-donelson/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=GBP&utm_campaign=Nashville-Donelson

Edley's Bar-B-Que
2719 Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.8 Miles
<https://www.edleysbbq.com/donelson>

Phat Bites
2730 Lebanon Pike B, Nashville, TN 37214
2.9 Miles
<https://www.phatbites.com/>

McNamara's Irish Pub & Restaurant
2740 Old Lebanon Pike, Nashville, TN 37214
2.9 Miles

<http://www.mcnamarasirishpub.com/>

Panera Bread

620 Royal Pkwy, Nashville, TN 37214

2.6 Miles

https://www.panerabread.com/en-us/cafe/locations/tn/nashville/620-royal-parkway?utm_medium=local&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=dpm-dist&utm_term=601794&utm_content=main

Other links provided in the email:

Main Conference website:

<https://www.scbwi.org/events/2025-scbwi-midsouth-conference>

Laura Ayo's email address: midsouth-ra@scbwi.org

Scott Soeder's email address: midsouth-ic@scbwi.org

Erica Rodgers' email address: SCBWIMidsouthCritiques@gmail.com

Portfolio Showcase information:

<https://www.scbwi.org/regions/midsouth/illustrator-lounge>

Midsouth Gives Back information:

<https://www.scbwi.org/events/2025-scbwi-midsouth-conference/midsouth-gives-back>

Conference FAQs:

<https://www.scbwi.org/events/2025-scbwi-midsouth-conference/faqs>