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***Bookmarks Announces First Bank as the Title Sponsor of the 2023 Bookmarks Festival***

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. (June 5, 2023) - Bookmarks is thrilled to announce First Bank as the Title Sponsor of the 18th anniversary Bookmarks Festival of Books & Authors taking place in downtown Winston-Salem on Saturday, September 23.

The Bookmarks Festival has grown to be the largest annual book festival in the Carolinas, a destination for authors and readers alike, drawing 20,000 attendees from 31 states in 2022. The 18th anniversary Bookmarks Festival will feature several lead-up events during the week, including approximately 40 Authors in Schools visits on September 22, before the all-day free event on Saturday, September 23.

As the title Sponsor, First Bank has committed both funds and volunteers to the festival and is excited to be involved with all of the events leading up to and at the festival. First Bank recognizes the value that Bookmarks and their annual festival provide to the community of Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, and the entire Carolinas. Supporting literacy and access to books is an important part of First Bank's commitment to serving the community. By sponsoring the Bookmarks Festival at the Title Sponsor level, First Bank hopes to increase the love of reading among all, young and old. Mike Mayer, CEO of First Bank said of the partnership, "First Bank has put an emphasis on supporting education in the Carolinas for many years now. More specifically, we believe reading is one of the best ways to get young students engaged in their education. That's why we partner with great organizations like Bookmarks to help encourage avid readers. The more children read, the more they experience a world outside of their own, think more creatively, and dream bigger for their lives and their communities." First Bank has committed a total of \$50,000 to support Bookmarks with the Bookmarks Festival, their Authors in Schools program, field trip program and others as the organization needs.

"We are honored to have First Bank as a true partner in our Festival," said Jamie Rogers Southern, Bookmarks Executive Director. "With the growing costs of putting on a festival of this magnitude, First Bank's support allows us to offset these increased expenses without compromising the high-quality programming we bring to our community," Southern said.

First Bank is headquartered in Southern Pines, North Carolina, with total assets of approximately \$12.4 billion. As a state-chartered community bank, First Bank operates 118 bank branches in North Carolina and South Carolina. Since 1935, First Bank has taken a tailored approach to banking, combining best-in-class financial solutions, helpful local expertise, and technology to manage a home or business. First Bank takes the role of community partner very seriously with a focus on supporting programs that provide equitable access to education, improve lives, and promote business and economic growth. To learn more, visit any of First Bank's locations or the website at <https://localfirstbank.com/>. Member FDIC, Equal Housing Lender.

Bookmarks is a literary arts non-profit that cultivates community by bringing people of all ages together with books and authors who educate, inspire, challenge, and entertain. For eighteen years, Bookmarks has hosted the largest annual Festival of Books & Authors, outreach into schools and community, year-round events for all ages, and opportunities to connect through the power of story. Bookmarks is located at 634 West Fourth Street in downtown Winston-Salem. Visit [bookmarksnc.org](http://bookmarksnc.org) for more information.

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