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TOP STORY

## Ahwatukee's Katrina Shawver named Road Scholar

AFN News Staff

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Ahwatukee journalist Katrina Shawver can now add a new job to her resume: An Arizona Road Scholar.

Special to AFN

Ahwatukee journalist and author Katrina Shawver has racked up another honor in the wake of her book about an Ahwatukee man who escaped two Nazis death camps and made his way to America.

Shawver has been dubbed a Road Scholar by Arizona Humanities for its AZ Speaks program for 2019-2021.

“It’s a really big deal and huge honor as they are highly selective and reduced the number of speakers in this new program cycle,” she said, adding it may well be that she is the first presenter on the topic of Poland.

Shawver is the author of “HENRY: A Polish Swimmer’s True Story of Friendship from Auschwitz to America.”

It tells the story Henry Zguda, whom she met and befriended until his death in 2003. Zguda survived both Auschwitz and Buchenwald concentration camps from 1942-1945 as a Polish Catholic political prisoner.

Shawver spent 15 years researching Poland during World War II under the Nazis’ thumb.

The Polish American Congress of Arizona awarded her its 2018 Polish Heritage Award and the Arizona Authors Association named “HENRY” the best nonfiction book of 2018.

Earlier this year she served as Writer in Residence at the Glendale Public Library, where she presented multiple writing workshops.

AZ Speaks is the longest-running and most popular program of Arizona Humanities, which charges organizations across the state a nominal fee to hear its Road Scholars’ presentations.

The program offers non-profits, libraries, educational institutions, governmental and tribal entities engaging humanities-based programs.

Shawver will join a group of presenters with a diverse range of expertise from a variety of professional backgrounds, including history, cultural and gender studies.

“Speakers are selected based on their expertise and ability to offer content and insight that inspires discussion with audiences of all ages and backgrounds,” Arizona Humanities states on its websites.

AZ Speaks is a very popular program and we fund hundreds of presentations each year in towns from Bisbee to Yuma, Springerville to Kingman, and

Shawver can be enlisted to speak on one of two topics.

One is titled "Poland under Hitler and Stalin during World War II" and offers an overview of Polish history presented through Polish eyes.

The country was divided in two by Hitler and Stalin, the Polish government was exiled to England, and all Poles were targeted for slave labor, imprisonment or to be killed.

More than six million Poles were killed, and more than two million deported for slave labor in Russia and Germany.

"This presentation goes beyond the history of the German occupation and Holocaust to include the devastating impact of the Russian occupation and ultimate betrayal by the US and Britain that paved the way for three generations of Russian communist rule in Poland," Arizona Humanities said.

Shawver's other topic, titled "Polish Christians, Political Prisoners and Martyrs in Auschwitz and Buchenwald" focuses on two specific camps on Auschwitz in Oświęcim, Poland, and Buchenwald in Weimar, Germany, with a focus on the non-Jews who were targeted for extermination by the Nazis.

The Road Scholars program brings the best in humanities scholarship to virtually every corner of Arizona.