



**2023 Peace in the Pages
Presented by David and Monique Miller
Award Honorees**

Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy through Journalism

Mark Woods, Florida Times-Union



Mark Woods has been the Metro columnist for the Florida Times-Union in Jacksonville, Florida for two decades, writing about slices of life, news of the city, our natural resources, our challenges and triumphs, always with words that are honest, insightful, and heartfelt.

After graduating from the University of Missouri with a master's in journalism, Woods worked as a sportswriter for 20 years at newspapers in several states before taking on his present role. He has walked across Jacksonville and written a series of columns about it, covered the earthquake in Haiti, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, political conventions, the Olympics, Wimbledon, the Masters, the World Cup, and 11 Super Bowls. By far, his most exciting assignment occurred when Woods won the 2011 Eugene C. Pullman Fellowship awarded to one writer in America from the Society of Professional Journalists. As a result of the fellowship, Woods journeyed through America's National Parks from "sunrise in Maine to sunset in Hawaii," and wrote his book *Lassoing the Sun* (Thomas Dunne Books, June 2016).

Although *Lassoing the Sun* began as an ambitious project to explore the future of our nation's parks, the book evolved into a beautiful memoir when he lost his mother to cancer during his journey. Woods wrote from his heart about finding solace

in the serenity of the parks and developing a deeper understanding of what it truly means to be alive.

Woods' formative memories of summers spent in the family station wagon with his parents and two sisters heading toward America's National Parks also include memories of his mother "zipping through several books while on the road." According to Woods, his mother (a social worker) was a fast reader, while his father, a minister, read *A Christmas Carol* to the family at the dinner table annually and set reading goals for himself. "Dad once announced that he would read all the works of Shakespeare that year." Books were integral in Woods' upbringing. A trip to the library in town was considered a family outing. "Being read to was something that was part of my childhood," he says.

Woods says he is honored and humbled to receive the Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy through Journalism. "I'm glad that READ USA is doing the work you're doing," he says. "Literacy has a profound lasting impact."