

Riverbend Women Share Empowering Stories In New Anthology

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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ALTON - Women from across the Riverbend have collaborated to write the upcoming anthology “Perfectly I’Mperfect: Remarkable Stories of Ordinary Women Overcoming Extraordinary Circumstances.”

The book has 41 chapters, several written by local authors. Forty-two women collaborated to tell their stories of grief, trauma and healing. The book will be available on Amazon on Thursday, Oct. 5.

“Sharing your story is so beneficial for you in your healing and so beneficial for other people in their healing,” said Teresa Reiniger, one of the book's authors. “If you just touch one person’s life, it’s well worth it.”

Like most of the authors, Reiniger was excited but hesitant when Tara Hurst approached her about writing a chapter for the anthology. Hurst decided to compile the book in March, and she worked with collaborator Nina DeAngelo to rally writers from around the world, including many local women they met through [the Riverbend Chapter of Little Black Book: Women in Business](#).

Some of the women were eager to be involved, but others needed more convincing. Not only were the stories often emotional and difficult to write, but the authors also had to make peace with sharing those stories, most of which are intensely personal. The writers relied on each other and a trauma-informed writing coach for support — and they soon realized their vulnerability could lead to healing for themselves and others.

“For some of these women, this was the first time that they ever maybe even told someone about this,” Hurst said. “So I think it was a tremendous healing journey for everyone just to let the shoulders down and say, ‘You know what? I don’t have to hold on to this secret anymore.’”

That rings true for Tammy Egelhoff, who summarized the experience as an “incredibly healing process, although so incredibly difficult to put to paper.” Egelhoff and fellow writer Terry Schneider agree that sharing their stories helped them even though it was hard, and they hope readers can experience that sense of healing, too.

“I’m very anxious because what I wrote about is something that a lot of people in my personal life have absolutely no idea that I went through,” Schneider said. “But if it helps one person, it’s worth it.”

You can purchase “Perfectly I’Mperfect: Remarkable Stories of Ordinary Women Overcoming Extraordinary Circumstances” on [Amazon.com](#) starting on Oct. 5. For the first 24–48 hours, you can buy a digital copy of the anthology for only \$1.99.

To celebrate the book and continue to spread its messages of strength, the first Perfectly I’Mperfect Women’s Empowerment Summit will be held on Saturday, Nov. 4 at Julia’s Banquet Center in East Alton. The event, which Hurst called “powerful,” will run from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. You can listen to several keynote speakers and network with attendees.

To save your spot, visit the [official Eventbrite registration page](#). Register before Oct. 1 to save \$50.

Nicole Gaither, one of the authors, noted how meaningful it has been to write her chapter for the anthology and help organize the empowerment summit. She added that she has learned a lot from the process, and her best piece of advice — which you can read about in her chapter of the book, titled “Shift Happens” — is to trust yourself.

“Just stay with yourself,” she added. “Spend time with yourself. Get to know yourself. Who are you? Why are you here? What is your passion? What brought you joy as a child? And don’t die with your music inside of you.”