

FAMILY MATTERS

In “Faithful,” New York Times best-selling novelist Alice Hoffman introduces us to one of her favorite characters. Shelby is a Long Island teenager who is at the wheel of a car when it skids off an icy road, leaving her best friend in a coma. The accident plunges Shelby into a deep depression, causing her to be institutionalized. Yet the book is far from a tragic tale, Hoffman says. It’s a hopeful story about a mother’s unconditional love for her daughter. The novel was 10 years in the making, as she returned to Shelby in between penning other books.

Hoffman will appear at the Marcus Jewish Community Center of Atlanta’s book festival on Nov. 14.

Living Northside: How did you come to write “Faithful?”

I’m really interested in the relationships between mothers and daughters, and it’s just a lot of heavy material. But in the end, it’s a really funny, kind of heart-warming book. When you are young, everything you’re angry with your mother for, as you get older, those are the things you wind up admiring about her. For me, the biggest loss in my life was not to have daughters. I was very close with my mother and my grandmother, and I grew up with the tradition of strong relationships with the women in the family.

What do you hope readers will take from this novel?

Shelby’s really lovable, even though she’s kind of a mess and a disaster. And I guess what I would want is [for people to know] that you can change your life, you can change your fate by the tragedy you have to face. Shelby is someone who goes through a lot of trauma and manages to come out on the other side. In many ways she was a terrible daughter and her mother stood by her.

What advice do you give to aspiring writers?

I’m a real big believer in workshops, and whether you are getting a degree or whether you’re in some kind of group with other writers, it really helps to have other people look at your work. It also helps just to know that you have to write. Writers write. And that’s hard to get yourself to do when there are all these other things happening in your life. If you’re taking a class or you’re in a group, you know you have to have something on Thursday. So it forces you to write.

Alice Hoffman appears at Book Festival of the Marcus Jewish Community Center. Nov. 14, 7:30 p.m. »



Alice Hoffman hopes “Faithful” inspires readers.

The New York Times bestselling author wrote “The Dovekeepers” and “The Marriage of Opposites.” Her latest is a story of survival.

