



A Proud Chapter of  
Romance Writers of America®

**August 9, 2016**

**Volume XXIX, Issue 7**

## **WELCOME TO CENTRAL OHIO FICTION WRITERS**

COFW's July presenter was Beth Henderson, who talked about Goal-Setting and Procrastination. If you're wondering how to make your achievements meet your expectations, try Beth's method!

For more great articles and news about your fellow COFWers, see inside.

## **CONTENTS**

1. Minutes of COFW Meeting, July 9, 2016
2. Recap: Procrastination and Goal-Setting by Beth Daniels
3. New Releases by COFW Members
4. Article: Research Like An Einstein, but Don't Write Like Him!
5. Article: When Good Scenes Go Bad
6. Works in Progress
7. COFW Leadership Contact List

Central Ohio Fiction Writers (COFW) <http://cofwevents.org> is a non-profit professional association for romance writers and a local chapter of the Romance Writers of America (RWA) organization that offers monthly meetings. Since 1987, COFW has promoted excellence in fiction writing, encouraging writers to grow and gain knowledge in their craft. Members provide a networking system to share knowledge and support the goal of becoming published.

# MINUTES OF THE COFW BUSINESS MEETING 7-9-2016

by Julia Blaine



Jane called the meeting to order at 12:30. She reminded everyone to turn off their cell phones, to fill out a name tag, and sign in on our Works in Progress sheet. Present were, Jane Conner, Julia Blaine, Saralee Etter, Stacy McKittrick, Linda Rice, Lisa Coffey, Nancy White, Kris Branch, Jenessa Hardin, Lillian Zeller, Becky Barker, Linda Culbertson, Sandy Kachrek, Tanja Fazzari, Jill Oder, and our speaker, Beth Daniels.

Linda reminded us that next year, 2017, is the 20th anniversary of COFW's beginning.

Julia will do the recap of Beth's talk on Procrastination for the Newsletter.

Jane likes how the Treasurer's Report is set up on the computer now. The Treasurer's Report is available in the files section of the loop and the minutes from last month's meeting are in the newsletter. There were no questions on either from the members present.

RWA will host a Streaming Party on Saturday night, July 16. Members can host it in their home and take photos which they can send to RWA. Contact other members on the loop to set it up. Use your smart phone or TV.

Those attending the Conference are: Jane, Jody Brohard, Donna MacMeans, Karin Shah, Jeanne Estridge, Sheri Atkins, Robin Gianakopoulos and Tanja Fazzari.

Jane reported that Andrea McConnell is our Social Media Chair. She invited us to suggest material to use on the COFW Website. We can promote new books and authors but cannot sell books through COFW because of our non-profit status. Saralee said we might feature posts from our blog, coming events, photos, and craft articles. We should limit our new release announcements to two. RWA has no rules as yet about Social Media.

RWA is on Twitter and Facebook. So is "COFWWRITER." There may be a link to Goodreads.

September 17, there will be a business meeting and then two presentations by Alicia Rasley. This will be, altogether, a longer program than usual but it is not a workshop. It is free to members. The business meeting will be 12-1. Alicia Rasley will speak from 1-2:30 and again from 3-4:30.

The subjects of her talks are to be announced.

Cathy Matusak from the Cleveland RWA Chapter chairs their conference. They usually have their conference in the spring but are moving it to fall in 2017. Cathy was concerned that there might be a conflict



# COFW MEETING MINUTES (CONT'D)

between activities of the two chapters. She asked if we would be interested in co-hosting a conference in the fall of 2017. They would then co-host a conference with us in 2018. The COFW Board discussed this and decided to decline working together on this because of the distance and logistics of being so far apart. COFW will be sure to keep the Cleveland chapter notified of our activities and we will also announce any activities in Cleveland to our members.

Linda Rice will chair any conference or other activity in fall, 2017. There was discussion of the format of this activity. The room at the Norwich

Township Safety and Services Building at 5181 Northwest Parkway in Hilliard is very large and might be a good place for a program like this. It is less expensive than a hotel and there are many eating places nearby for a lunch break of either 1 or 1½ hours. It will be a one-day event.

Lisa brought the basket of Incentives which had plenty of chocolate. Lillian reported she had submitted a story to Light Speed. Julia Blaine finished editing "Shot Through the Heart" (again) and discovered the errors were in the Createspace version, not a problem with Amazon or herself. Nancy White received a contract offer for a short story, "Sippin' Bourbon Dressing," which will be published in the December issue of Good Old Days magazine.

Nancy reported that ITF still needs judges. Authors who enter ITF, if they are PAN or PRO, can judge entries in categories they did not enter. Currently we have 80 entries and 30 judges. She sent around a sign-up sheet for more volunteers to judge. There was a question as to whether there is an example of a winning entry an author could look at before they enter the contest. It is a subject to think about.



Saralee asked for 700–1500 word articles on craft for the Newsletter. The deadline is July 20. Authors with submissions that are accepted for the newsletter will be paid \$15. She also wants information on New Releases in August.

Linda Rice reported that we have 62 members.

The next meeting will be Saturday, August 13. We almost always meet on the "teen" Saturday of a month. It will be at Norwich Township Safety and Services Building, 5181 Northwest Parkway, Hilliard, Ohio 43026. Those attending the RWA Conference will report on events there.

The meeting was adjourned.



# SPEAKER RECAP: PROCRASTINATION

by Julia Blaine

Beth Daniels is a Speech and English teacher, as well as an author of 29 fiction books in many genres under a number of pseudonyms. Her books include Romantic Suspense, YA, Mysteries, Fantasies, Fantasy Mystery, Historical Romance and Romantic Comedy under the names of Beth Henderson, Lisa Dane, J.B. Dane, Elizabeth Daniels and Beth Cruise. She is also a prolific author of books on the writer's craft under her own name, including the only available title about Steampunk.

Procrastination is devious, Ms. Daniels says. To overcome procrastination, we must learn to identify things that are procrastination in disguise.

Beth is a pantser, not a planner. A pantser is a writer who writes by the seat of her pants, so to speak, rather than plan and plot her story from beginning to end. Beth does not always know how her story will evolve or how long it will be. This can create a lively tale with flashy dialogue but it also can cause problems meeting deadlines or sending a synopsis with a query letter.

NetFlix is Beth's nemesis. It's not all bad. A good film can put her mind in the right groove to solve a plot problem.

Writing was easy for Beth before 1998. Clinical Depression shut down the creative part of her brain and her organizational skills. She missed deadlines. At last her medicine kicked in and by 2000 and she could write again, but life was not the same.

Before C.D. Beth could be employed, write books, read at least one 90,000 word Historical Romance a week and care for one husband and two children. Now she had to give up some activities to maintain this lifestyle, things like TV and cleaning house. In the current writer's world, an author must spend time on promotion and social media. Beth also likes to nap.

Is a nap procrastination? Maybe. Each individual must discover what is vital and what is procrastination in their life.

Beth passed out four-page worksheets to her audience. She offered examples of procrastination such as: home-made fancy cupcakes for an elementary school party when plain ones are devoured just as quickly and take less time to provide; volunteering too much.; and over-scheduling activities.

Many women are multi-taskers. They put the laundry in the washing machine before dinner and put it in the dryer afterwards; two jobs done in the time it takes for one. Writing women are thinking about their story while loading the dishwasher or dryer. Having a flexible schedule can make time as well. If being a writer is a prior-



# PROCRASTINATION (CONT'D)



ity, make the time to do it. Then write. Don't add in something else to keep you away from the computer.

On the first page of the worksheets, Beth asked us to answer eight questions:

1. When did you decide you wanted to write?
2. What do you want to write about? Genres?
3. Are you writing to share stories or to have a writing career?
4. Is being published a dream or a goal?
5. What stage as a writer are you in currently? A beginner? Published? Trying to stay published?
6. What will you give up in order to find time to write?
7. Are you a patient person?
8. Are you flexible or do you want things done your way?

As an example, Beth gave us her answers to these questions.

Page 2 had the headings, "Dream," and "Goal." We answered the questions from page 1, putting our answers in one of the two columns. The point was to compare having a goal or having a dream. How serious are you about being a writer?

If writing appears to be a goal rather than a dream, think of writing as a part time job. If you took employment outside the home, how many hours will be involved? Will you need some training to do the job? Where will you get the training and how much time will that take? What will you give up to find that time?

Think of writing a book as a part time job. Get your training by attending writer's meetings and talking with other authors.

It takes some planning to take your writing seriously, but this outlook also can keep procrastination at bay. There's a lot involved with writing—trial and error; disappointments; keeping up with trends; actually writing the story; editing and editing and editing; submitting; attending writing conferences and meetings; blogging; and lots of patience.

If being an author is a solid goal rather than a dream, it is easier to see what to avoid; what is and is not a procrastination activity. It is a big goal and should be taken in stages.

On page 3 we were asked to write a goal statement with specifics. Exactly what we write depends on how far along we are as we work towards our goal. Beth gave us examples.



## PROCRASTINATION (CONT'D)

Often the biggest procrastination road block (or writer's block) is because of plot problems. If you outline your story before you write, you solve these problems as you summarize. If you are a pantsner, you struggle as they arise.

Sometimes you must just rewrite. It may only need a POV change. Occasionally you must let a character "do his own thing," even if you don't understand why. Some characters almost write themselves.

Life events can interrupt your writing. If that happens, re-assess. Do you still want to write? Some events cannot be helped but others could be procrastination.

Fear can be procrastination. Don't let it get the best of you. Are you afraid you have forgotten how to write? That you can no longer plot and create an exciting conclusion? Fear that an editor will not like what you write? With self-evaluation, you can overcome fear.

What time of day is your most creative time? Find a way to work during those hours.

How long can you write before the ideas and words stop coming? Work that into your schedule.

If the words won't come, use the time for research or editing.

People write chronologically or by scenes. If you write chronologically, you may need to rewrite if the plot goes awry. After you do scenes, you must string them together. Either way you must allow for the time it takes when you set deadlines.

Do you need an outline or do you just start writing? Figure out which works for you.

What slows you down? Word count? Missing information? Dialogue? Know that this is a natural part of the writing craft. Find books and articles that help in these areas.

Does an editorial deadline or a personal deadline keep you writing?

Why do you procrastinate? Is it lack of time? Lack of ideas? Fear? What might cure this?

Beth gave us examples of how she plans to meet editorial deadlines. She knows how long it takes to produce a story of a certain length and how much she must complete each day to finish on time. It is a matter of how much time you have to write each day multiplied by the number of days till the deadline. Keep to the schedule.

If you self-publish, you need to produce a certain number of books each year to keep your readers.



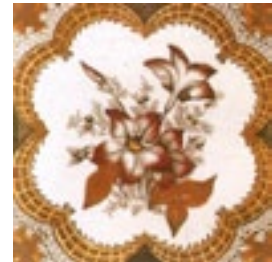


## PROCRASTINATION (CONT'D)

In summary, Beth says that to beat procrastination problems, plan before you start to write. Make lists as to plot problems, important characteristics of people and places. Figure out how long it will take to write a story with a certain number of words or pages. Do the math. Figure in any upcoming events like a wedding that will take you away from the computer.

You have decided that being a writer is more than a dream and analyzed this desire. You have put aside some activities because the writing is more important. You have learned to work with or overcome fear and self-doubt. You can even use the time you are not writing – procrastination time – to add to your abilities as an author.

Finally, Beth says, “If you want something bad enough, isn't it worth fighting for?”



## NEW RELEASES BY COFW MEMBERS!

### NOTHING BUT A HOUND DOG

*by Marcia James*

“Nothing But a Hound Dog” — Novella #3 in the Klein's K-9s Service Dogs series.

After a night of raucous partying, country music star Ryan “Rowdy” Gates is sentenced to community service at the Jenkins Animal Shelter. To his surprise, he bonds with the caring shelter workers and with a tiny, abandoned Basset Hound puppy. Cindi Landon, shelter director and his high school crush, offers Ryan something he's never had—a home, a family, and unconditional love.

*“Nothing But a Hound Dog is a heartwarming, hilarious, tail-wagging great romantic read! I love romance and I love Basset Hounds; this book combined both excellently!”*

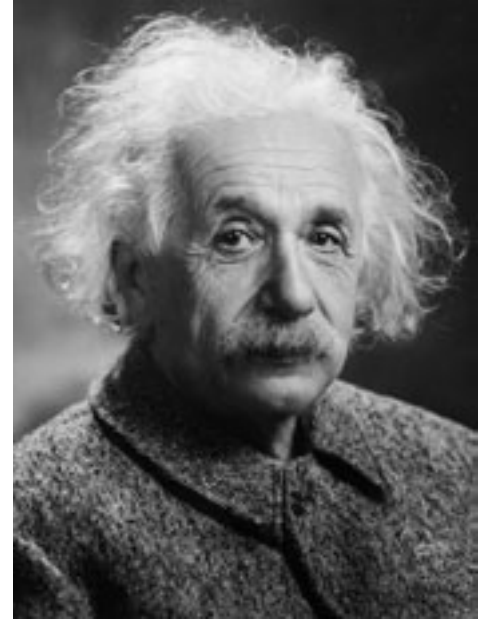
— Author J. Paulette Forshey



# RESEARCH LIKE AN EINSTEIN, BUT DON'T WRITE LIKE HIM!

*By Sandy Wickersham-McWhorter*

As most anyone on Earth knows, Albert Einstein was a theoretical physicist best known for his discovery of the two pillars of modern physics: the general theory of relativity and quantum mechanics. He experimented and researched, wrote papers full of long complicated equations, scientific facts, and theories that few regular people will ever understand. He had to write that way; novelists don't, and shouldn't. Fiction shouldn't be a paper of scientific equations and \$200 words. It needs an interesting balance of details that teach readers something new and add authenticity.



Luckily, most beginning writers know to use subjects they know about for their first foray into fiction. Nurses usually write about medical subjects, firefighters about arson, physicists about science\science fiction. This makes it easier to use proper terminology and correctly show processes on the page, like using a giant telescope on a -20° night or starting an IV on a patient.

Eventually, a writer wants to explore new subjects. Some know they must research but don't realize they need to know everything about a topic, but readers only need bits of that information pertinent to the plot. Use too much and you overload them, not enough and the writing is lifeless, without authenticity. Every genre has certain subjects, vocabulary, time periods, and fashions that readers will expect to be accurately used. What's a writer to do?

They can be like me, a born research terrier (according to a professor I had), become a terrier, or they can hire one in the form of an assistant. Terriers are small persistent dogs whose name is from the Latin word for Earth, terra, which hints at their love of digging out small underground rodents. Like a terrier, I live to dig out every detail about a subject from as many resources as possible.



I first start with my old encyclopedias or Wikipedia for very basic information, then I move to finding subject-specific resources, printing copies of everything I think is pertinent, reading everything, and highlighting what I think may be important.

Don't worry about remembering it all, your mind will recall information as you need it, then you can retrieve the pages to use. Don't forget, you can also brazenly call people! I called almost 30 places along the road to, and in, Yellowknife, Canada, for The Diamond Road.



## RESEARCH LIKE AN EINSTEIN... (CONT'D)

Business owners seem to love having their companies immortalized in a book.

The first trick is to make readers participants in your story by using a few bits of research to ease them into the more detailed story you'll unfold as they read. This saves you from bogging down the beginning with large chunks of research, and it lets readers use prior knowledge (what they already know) to fill in details.

What do you think when you see or hear the words Cinderella or Lake Erie in the summer? Do I need to say much more about them? Are images crowding your mind? Well, I might have to say more about Lake Erie for you non-Ohioans out there.



Imagine this example, when starting your story about a farmer: instead of saying, "100 twenty-foot tall aluminum cylindrical towers that store the grain the farmer grows" just say, "100 large grain silos."

Most readers have seen silos and farms in some form, and their mind will fill in details like color, height, placement on the farm, and contents until you begin filling in exact details as your plot unfolds. Also, 100 large silos instantly says this is probably a prosperous mega-farm which can cause conflict with local town residents and with small farmers not wanting to be eaten alive by a care-nothing corporation.

Instead of a long spiel from a failing inn's owner in Denver, Colorado, just have them say sadly, "Denver, Colorado, skiing Mecca of the West." Readers' minds will instantly fill in the white powder snow, wooden Swiss Chalet ski lodges, avalanches, mountains, rescue dogs, and people dressed like polyester mummies in L.L. Bean fashions to stay warm.

They'll wonder, why is the inn failing? Did an avalanche two months ago cut them off from town and the state can't (or better, won't) reopen the road until spring since the inn is the only building on it? This research trick saves thousands of words and draws a reader's emotions into the story early, making them care about a character right away.

Another trick is to let the research drive your plot, especially if you're drawn to a subject you know little about or have little plot. Cottonwood Place is a research-driven book because I had only the barest bones of a plot. Each new bit of research I found about the Navajo Indians let me add plot points.

In researching Boulder City, Nevada, I found that though they don't live there in large numbers, enough Navajos were there for me to use them. I liked their reputation as being mysterious and enigmatic. That information gave my heroine a Navajo family and a job as a mystical lady with mysterious pets who runs the family bed-and-breakfast inn. She's also a nurse-practitioner.

## RESEARCH LIKE AN EINSTEIN... (CONT'D)

My research showed that the American Indians in the area have rampant alcoholism, diabetes, and kidney disease. Using that information, I added exciting plot points when she has to treat people who come to her for emergency situations and treatment of those chronic conditions.

When I got to the muddled middle, I remembered reading about the sweat hogans (lodges to some) and the visions some participants wish to get in the cleansing. I used the sweat ceremony to allow the hero to rescue her after the heroine is kidnapped. The great differences in Navajo culture and belagana ("white man") culture gave me many minor and major plot points, such as the heroine's doubt about living in two worlds and being so educated in medicine, yet many of her people don't trust her belagana knowledge. Being research-driven allowed me to keep all my plot points related to Boulder City, Navajos and their problems and joys, and the couple's relationship, keeping the book tightly focused.

Yet another trick is to put facts readers must know into characters' mouths as dialogue, in appropriate places. Like long passages of exposition (such as back story) from a narrator will bore readers, long passages of exact details will, too.

In **Cottonwood Place**, I felt it was important that readers learn about the rampant alcoholism, obesity, diabetes, end-stage kidney disease, and other deadly illnesses American Indians suffer on reservations. Some statistics were frightening: 50% of the Pima tribe is diabetic, 80% of Indian women and 67% of Indian men in Arizona are obese.



Those statistics coming from a narrator would make fiction readers drop the book like hot fry bread, which is another reason the heroine is a nurse practitioner. As she and the hero, a doctor, interact with and treat Indians throughout the book, this helps him with his alcoholism, and he hears carefully-chosen statistics. I gave her patients the illnesses I mentioned, and readers see the heroine accurately treating patients in the belagana way, with respect for Navajo tradition, teaching them important information.

## RESEARCH LIKE AN EINSTEIN... (CONT'D)

These craft skills aid in suspension of disbelief in any science-based fiction, either as the book's subject is explored, or due to the characters' jobs. In *The Winds of Fall*, a “wind” creature that can only contact her in dreams is following the heroine, an artist and doctor of aeronautical engineering and astrophysics. My task was to make all the weirdness in the book plausible by revealing the complicated science details slowly. I put the small chunks of research I used to explain my theories into dialogue during exciting plot-advancing moments.

Some major moments were when she undergoes sleep studies and rises above the bed, when she is hypnotized and reveals her origin, when she and the invisible creature finally meet, and when the hero shows her the moon in his personal spacecraft. All this is so that when the hero reveals what he really is, readers will believe him and so will the heroine.

Remember, research like Einstein, but don't write like him. Let your research drive your plot, let readers participate in the story with their imagination, and let your characters tell bit by bit those important exact details.

*Sandy Wickersham-McWhorter writes sci-fi and inspirational romance, and she's revising her MFA thesis into a marketable memoir and dabbling in poetry. Her newest release, THE DIAMOND ROAD, is available from Soul Mate Publishing and Amazon. She's finishing a sci-fi but finds starting a two-galaxy war difficult! Visit her at [www.sandywick.com](http://www.sandywick.com).*





# WHEN GOOD SCENES GO BAD

by Sandra K. Moore

*The following article first appeared in the July 2016 issue of **In Print!**,  
the monthly newsletter of Houston Bay Area RWA.*

If you write any kind of story, you've probably had the experience of getting half-way through a scene, everything cruising along just fine, and then— WHAM! hitting a wall.

What the heck?

I had this exact experience recently and banged my head against that particular wall for more writing days than I care to think about. I tried to power through it. I meditated on it. I slept on it. I went off and wrote something else, then came back. Still no joy.

But all the while, a suspicion crept up on me: Was the scene actually needed? Or was I trying to write something that wasn't of any use to the story at all?

That got me thinking about how and why we get stuck in a scene. See if any of these reasons resonate in your Writer's Brain™:

**The scene isn't necessary.** When I got stuck half-way through a conversation between two beloved characters, I started looking at what was actually being conveyed — and realized that while all sorts of deep emotional truths were coming forth, that's not actually what needed to be happening at that moment. So I've saved the problem bits and will see if they actually fit better at a later point.

**The scene is between the wrong characters.** Sometimes we pick the wrong secondary character for our protagonist to interact with. In my case, I had planned a couple of scenes of Evelyn where Evie had a chance for some serious character growth, only to discover while writing them that they fell flat. The issue was that those scenes were with a guy who I'd originally pegged as her love interest, but whom I found out later was just a good buddy. So of course there was little tension in those scenes. But the moment I re-wrote them with her love interest instead, they took off.

**The scene is in the wrong POV.** Figure out which character has the most at stake in the scene. If that character isn't your POV character for that particular scene, try writing it from their POV and see if that unsticks you. If the scene is written from the point of view of the character with the most at stake, or if you're writing a single-POV story, move on to...



## WHEN GOOD SCENES GO BAD (CONT'D)

**The scene is about the wrong story thread.** Sometimes a scene appears to be working because it's dealing with one of the protagonist's issues, but not the primary issue. In my case, poor Evie has more than one iron in the fire — she's faced with an ethical issue but also fretting about her marital status (set in the 1950's, folks, so please hold onto your torches and pitchforks) — and it's easy to veer off what the story is actually about, which is an ethical question playing up against the mores and expectations of the time. The romance is nice, but it takes a back seat in this novella.

**The scene doesn't have a goal (or tension, or conflict).** Charming but aimless drivel is what I end up writing if there's nothing to be lost or gained in a scene. The scene doesn't have to have high drama or life-and-death stakes, but it should have enough umph for the reader to sense the story is moving forward. And if your critique partners can't figure out why you wrote the scene or how it advances the plot, chances are you don't know, either.



These are just some places to start diagnosing the block. Sometimes, just backing off the scene for a while, taking a walk, or having a writing partner read it aloud to you can generate an Aha! moment that helps you identify what might be off-track. Keep writing (and hammering away at those walls).

*About the author: Sandra K. Moore is one-quarter of the Write or Consequences bloggers. A former Silhouette Bombshell author, she's currently writing Evelyn, third in the Promise House series of sweet historical novellas set in the 1950's Houston Heights, which is due to be released later this year.*



# WORKS IN PROGRESS

**Becky Barker:** Working on a new short story; no title as yet.

**Julia Blaine:** Finished re-editing "Shot Through the Heart." Problem was with Createspace, not Amazon or Julia. Researching next books. Coordinating Historical ITF.

**Kris Branch:** Back to working on my first book in my Paranormal series.

**Lisa Coffey:** Working on "Leah's Story."

**Linda Culbertson:** Attended Yale Writer's Conference. Still working on "Nora's Story."

**Saralee Etter:** Doing revisions of "Victoria Road Noir," so I'll have a completed manuscript to send to a reader by July 30.

**Tanja Fazzari:** Began revisions on NaNo work and working on a paranormal novel that may be a 3-book series; maybe 4.

**Sandy Kachurek:** My mermaid novel is being edited.

**Stacy McKittrick:** Still revising "Ghostly Interlude."

**Jill Oder:** Visitor

**Linda Rice:** Studying plotting.

**Nancy White:** Working on Western.





# COFW 2016 LEADERSHIP

## Executive Board

President	Jane Conner	djconner@earthlink.net
VP of Programs	Robin Gianakopoulos	Rgianakopoulos@gmail.com
VP Communications	Saralee Etter	Saralee_Etter@yahoo.com
Secretary	Julia Blaine	julmassie@aol.com
Treasurer	Stacy McKittrick	semckitrick@aol.com

## Editor, Coordinators and Moderators

Newsletter Editor	Saralee Etter	Saralee_Etter@yahoo.com
Membership Chair	Linda Rice	lrice39@wowway.com
Social Media Moderator	Andrea McConnell	fyrefly93@gmail.com
Yahoo Group Moderator	Jane Conner	djconner@earthlink.net
Yahoo PAN Group Moderator	Susan Gee Heino	Susan.heino@gmail.com
Incentives Coordinator	Lisa Coffey	writerchristinelawrence@gmail.com
Monthly Facilities Coordinator	Jane Conner	djconner@earthlink.net
Monthly Speakers Coordinator	Robin Gianakopoulos	Rgianakopoulos@gmail.com
Ignite the Flame Coordinator	Nancy White	Nancywhite0529@gmail.com
Inventory Coordinator	Robin Gianakopoulos	writerobinsg@aol.com

