



February 1, 2017

ISSUE XXIX, VOLUME 01

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers

COFW's January meeting featured COFW's published authors including a founding COFW members, NYT Bestselling author Karen Harper and Becky Barker, along with Donna MacMeans, Susan Gee Heino, Karin Shah and Robin Gianna.

Called Market Day, the authors talked about their writing journeys, how the market had changed and what they saw for the future. They represented authors who are long-time published, traditionally published, published with small press, indie published and published in a hybrid mix.

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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.

Published Authors in a Changing Landscape

Meeting Recap by Julia Blaine

The COFW Program on Saturday, January 14, 2017, presented a panel of seven COFW published authors with varying backgrounds.

Robin Gianna has published nine Category Romances for Harlequin in their Medical line and is planning to branch into Suspense. She received her first contract in 2013.

Susan Gee Heino writes Regency Historical, Fantasy Romance and Contemporary. She has published with Grand Central and Berkley and is also self-published.

Karen Harper is a New York Times and USA Today Bestselling Author who began her career in 1982, publishing with Harlequin Mira and eventually with Harper Collins.

Becky Barker writes Contemporary Westerns and Romantic Suspense. The rights to many of her backlist titles have reverted to her, so she has been re-publishing her novels in new formats and learning a lot about the self-publishing industry.

Donna MacMeans has published six books with Berkley Publishing, one with a small press, and has self-published two books. Being an award-winning author brought her stories to the attention of her first publisher.

Karin Shah publishes paranormal with a small press and is working on her ninth book.

Robin deliberately studied the market before taking on the publishing industry. Her background in journalism and advertising helped hone her writing skills. She discovered Harlequin was seeking Category fiction in the Medical genre. Since her husband is a doctor, she felt capable of producing what was wanted.

She sold after entering a Harlequin Mills & Boon Fast Track contest for the medical line. She has learned to finish on deadline, work with her editor, and follow the guidelines for her category.

Harlequin provides world-wide distribution but not a great deal of money with some of their category lines. One benefit has been meeting many readers and writers from other countries. Now Robin is ready to write Romantic Suspense in addition to Medicals.



She urges new writers to study the markets and publishing houses when they begin to write seriously. They should consider their own preferences, background and skills as well.

The Senior Editor for Harlequin Medical Romances wants lots of emotion. Story lines include maternity, children, reunions, and sheik or royal doctors. Secret babies are a good plot choice. Readers like international and exotic settings, or, if set in the U.S., cosmopolitan areas like New York City and San Francisco.

Susan was a winner in RWA's Golden Heart Contest for unpublished writers in 2008. She believes contests are a great way to get feedback. That year she signed her first contract with Berkley Publishing where she learned that deadlines and meeting a publisher's needs can be difficult. After four books for Berkley, she began to self-publish, writing for herself, and she continues to do so.

In 2014, she contracted with Grand Central Publishing and is working on the fifth book in a sexy, satisfying fantasy romance series. This is a departure from her usual historicals. She finds it



both challenging and wonderful.

Susan's advice to new writers is to keep trying or simply wait for the market to change. Don't think that just because something is "hot" today it will still be popular in a year or a few months. Trends change faster than we can write a book, so write what you love. If one door will not open, try a different door.

Karen says, "The good news is you're published; the bad news is you're published."

After a career teaching English, she began writing. Her second book was accepted by a New York publishing house, but Karen says, "Never tell people your first or second book sold. It upsets writers who have pitched many books with no success. Most authors spend years attempting to sell their work."

When Karen began, she knew no other writers. She found her first agent through Literary Marketplace, once an annual book, but now a service that lists editors, agents and publishing houses among other industry information.



As her career progressed and she learned more, she eventually changed agents and now writes Romantic Suspense for Harlequin's Mira, and Historical novels mostly based on actual women of Edwardian England for Harper Collins. These Historicals are bestsellers in Russia. She has a large international readership through foreign editions, large print and audio.

She earns more with Romantic Suspense than she does with Historicals, but she changed genre because she wanted to.

Publishers are currently asking for three-book series material. It takes Karen two years to write a Suspense trilogy, and she is out of the

public eye during that time. The series books come out quickly, one after another, so it helps her sell.

Currently, when a writer pitches a story, publishers are interested in unique locations as well as the all-important characters and plot. Finding a distinctive location is one way to interest an editor in your story, but character and plot always rule. Setting gives these two central elements that extra lift to sell. Karen is writing about the area of Naples, Florida. She has been successful with Amish country and with Appalachia.

Karen says she feels like a survivor, for the publishing industry has changed radically since she began her career. Nowadays she finds the industry and market more challenging.

Becky writes Category Fiction and has sold to many publishers during her career.

Publishers have been buying each other out for many years. Now there are probably four large traditional publishers in existence, each of which owns many other publishers.

As publishers go out of business, the rights to an author's material revert back to the writer. Because she has been writing for a number of years and the publishing industry is so volatile, Becky owns the rights to many of her books.

As an Indie publisher, Becky reformats and revises her print material for digital and audiobook self-publishing programs.

She presented a list of independent publishing programs and gave information about each.

Becky believes once you have learned a format, it is easy to use. Some are more difficult to learn than others.

Nearly all the indie programs pay 60-70% of the cover price in royalties. Traditional publishers usually pay 6-7%. With ebooks an author can set her own price.



Becky suggests authors put together their very best work and get the material out there.

Donna spoke about the current market. She signed her first contract in 2006, before the 2008 recession. In her view of the industry, there are fewer traditional publishers now than in former years and they don't necessarily pay advances.



Most of these companies format books by new authors as ebooks. New York publishers need a large number of readers to stay in business. There must be a large number of sales as an ebook before the material becomes a paperback or hard cover book.

Instead, many authors are now using a small press or self-publishing their books.

If you have an ebook, you must promote it yourself, which is difficult and time consuming. Traditional publishers used to do this for authors.

BookBub is an online service that selectively promotes books—for a price. See insights.bookbub.com. A book needs a certain number of reviews before it is

considered. It does improve sales.

Tropes are types of stories. Depending on what they think readers want, publishers are looking for trends that sell. Some genres sell better than others; for example, a secret baby or fake relationships. In the Historical category, publishers like Regencies, mistaken identity or a marriage of convenience. But the pendulum swings.

Tropes change. A fantastic book may not be published for a number of reasons. But stories are needed. Keep abreast of trends. Make your story stand out. Make it emotional.

Your first novel may not be your best work no matter how good you think it is. Don't self publish that book right away. Put it aside and look at it after your second book is finished.

There is a lot of growth in audio and film. A new entrant to the field, iTunes, (Apple) shows the expansion of film while the printed word decreases in print books, news and magazines.

Don't be jealous of other authors. Create your own definition of success.

Donna encourages unpublished authors to enter the RWA Golden Heart contest as entries are down. This means the opportunities to final or win are increased.

Karin started writing seriously in 1998. She loved both Romance and Juvenile fiction but needed an agent for publishing YA and Middle Grade books, which is why she started with Romance. *Literary Marketplace* was her Bible.

Some publishers accepted unsolicited manuscripts, but after submitting and waiting—and waiting—she never heard back. She called. No results.

She won the COFW Ignite the Flame contest and was published by Samhain. Then a friend started a small publishing house called Soulmate. Karin began publishing with them.



If you're considering publishing with a small house, ask yourself these questions:

How stable is the company?

How long has it been in business?

Do they actually pay their authors?

Soulmate has responsive editors and a relatively quick publishing schedule. All books of a certain length go to print with a delay of about nine months.

They take care of all the things a publishing company does; cover, professional editing, formatting and uploading. Books are often first released on Amazon only to take advantage of the Amazon Select program, but older books are available at Barnes and Noble.com. Royalties are lower than in self-publishing but are much higher than that of traditional publishers. They print on demand. They publish a lot of Victorian and other Historicals.

Question after the presentation:

Are publishers pulling back on their pressure for authors to turn out books quickly?

Since this trend is affecting quality, there is a movement by some publishers to give authors more wiggle room.

Robin writes three medical romances a year, but some category lines prefer four books a year from their authors. A writer should read her contract and make sure the demands and responsibilities are realistic and fit a life style.

“Light Medical” are Medical Romances without a lot of blood and gore or details as to surgery, or the look of wounds and damage to the body. Some readers prefer this while others want realism. Editors and authors decide together how much medical detail they want in a story.



Minutes for January 14, 2017

Treasurer Stacy McKitrick moved to approve November's minutes, which was seconded by Robin Gianna and approved.

The Treasurer's Report had not been posted to the Yahoo Loop but will be done ASAP.

Designated Agent Registration provides legal protection if the COFW site is found infringing on copyright. Discussion followed. Given the minimal cost (\$6-\$14 per year), the Board would proceed. President Jenessa McRoy to ask COFW member and RWA Treasurer Donna MacMeans if she will serve as the designated agent.

The COFW PO Box was moved to Huber Heights for convenience of the new Board, who all live in the HH area. It would not be open to membership because of difficulties in distributing the mail received. Robin Gianna has a PO Box, and she's willing to share with people who either come to the meetings regularly or live near her.

Central Ohio Fiction Writers P.O. Box 24254 Dayton, OH 45424

Rachel Conner has been the COFW Web Administrator for the past year. The Board voted to raise her salary to \$45/month. Membership felt this was reasonable.

On a related note, holiday references and a reference to the November meeting at the next meeting should be removed from the Home Page. Speakers from past meetings should go on a separate page. President Jenessa McRoy will ask Rachel Conner to do this.

The 2017 Budget forecasted a \$5,999 loss for the year. The Board wants to promote membership growth, so it was budgeted for promotion.

Treasurer Stacy McKitrick sent a questionnaire to all non-returning members, researching why they're not coming back. Donna MacMeans asked if we could leverage librarians, making our existence known to them. Maybe offer a discount for conference attendance. Librarians are a resource for new writers. Nancy White said posting flyers is a centralized process in Columbus. You have to send the information to one lady, with enough flyers for all the libraries you'd like to see

display it. Westerville is separate, though.

Karin Shah would like the RWA to know their emphasis on romance may discourage potential members. Donna MacMeans will forward this information. Linda Rice suggested that COFW consider separating from RWA. COFW would have to give up its treasury and other benefits associated with belonging to RWA.

Donna Alward (Samhain, Harlequin) will be the February speaker and present via Skype. She will talk on two topics, "Your Core Story" and "Marketing Without Killing Yourself."

Programs Chair Sheri Adkins spoke of a binge event with two presenters on March 18, 2017 at the German Haus, 588 South Third Street, German Village. Parking would be available nearby at a Methodist Church and a hobby store, half a block away.

March 18 Schedule:

9-10: Business Meeting

10-12: Deb Gilbert of Soulmate Publishing to speak. Afterward, she will be available for questions and informal pitches.

12-1: Lunch on your own.

After Lunch: Eloisa James will speak, followed by a book signing, which is open to the public.

Linda Rice gave a Workshop update to feature Larry Brooks, author of *Story Engineering*, *Story Physics* and *Story Fix*, at the Marriott Courtyard West on October 21, 2017. He will present four workshops. Fees are \$75 for non-members and \$55 for members. President Jenessa McRoy will ask Web Developer Rachel Conner to post a Save the Date.

Kris Branch has reserved Crockett's Lodge in Hocking Hills for April 21-23, 2017 for a Writer's Retreat Weekend. Price is \$160 per person and includes room both nights, food on Friday night and three meals on Saturday. Sunday meal is contingent on whether twenty attendees sign up. The lodge has five rooms and a loft, so room-sharing will be required. The agenda includes brainstorming, critiquing and plotting sessions.

At least sixteen participants are needed to break even. A show of hands suggested

eight members plan to attend. It was agreed to open the retreat to friends of COFW members to ensure sufficient signups.

Social Media Chair Andrea McConnell asked us to send her release information. She posts on the first and third Tuesdays of the month. Please re-tweet COFW news and "share" on Facebook and "like" the posts.

Share! Share! Share!

Julia Blaine offered incentive goodies to the following:

Stacy McKitrick finished her seventh book.

Donna MacMeans will teach at Thurber House on April 27, 2017.

Karin Shah just signed the contract for her eighth book.

Saralee Etter shared that the plotting group met for the first time.

Sheri Adkins received a request for a full.

Karen Harper is in the midst of a "revision from Hell."



Question: Julia Blaine volunteered to write up the panel recap.

COFW Treasurer's Report: Year-To-Date

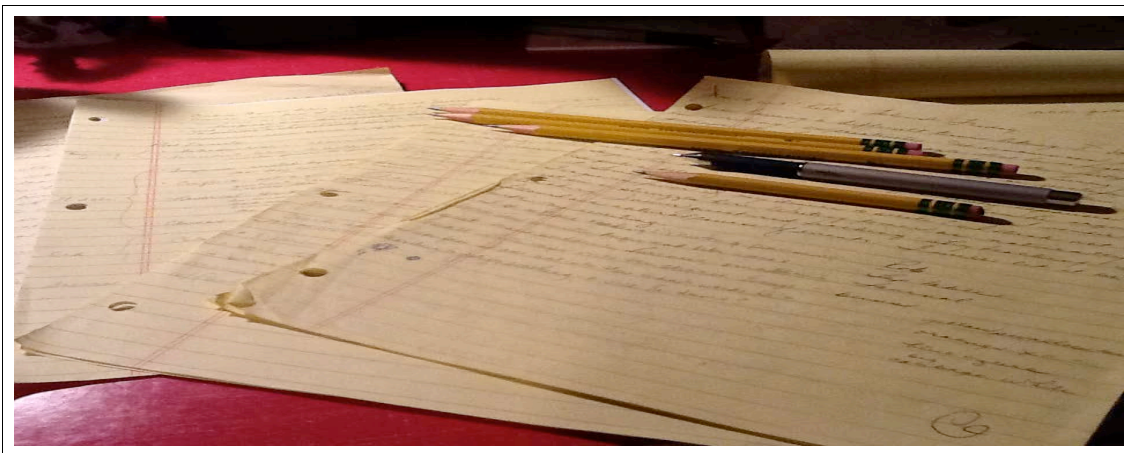
Checking: \$10,891

PayPal: \$1,273.14

Savings 1: \$0

Savings 2: \$1,564.39

Total: \$13,728.61



Attendance and Works in Progress

January 14, 2017

1. Jeanne Estridge: Contemporary, *Girl's Best Friend*.
2. Julia Blaine: Story, "Angel Cat."
3. Becky Barker: Editing latest audio book for *Zack's Ranch*.
4. Andrea McConnell: Finishing WIP--15,000 words left!
5. Robin Gianna: Tenth Medical Romance, *The Spanish Duke's Holiday Proposal*.
6. Karin Shah: *Dragon's Flame*, Book 5.
7. Nancy White: *Abandoned Hearts*.
8. Linda Rice: Plotting.
9. Saralee Etter: Victorian mystery, *A Short, Sharp Shock*.
10. Sandy Kachurek: Draft 2 of WIP.
11. Shari Heinrich: 61K into YA draft 1; resubmit romance short story.
12. Kris Branch: Chapter 8 of my series.
13. Tanja Fazzari: Shapeshifter story.
14. Stacy McKittrick: Started eighth book!
15. Jenessa McRoy.

New Release from COFW Member

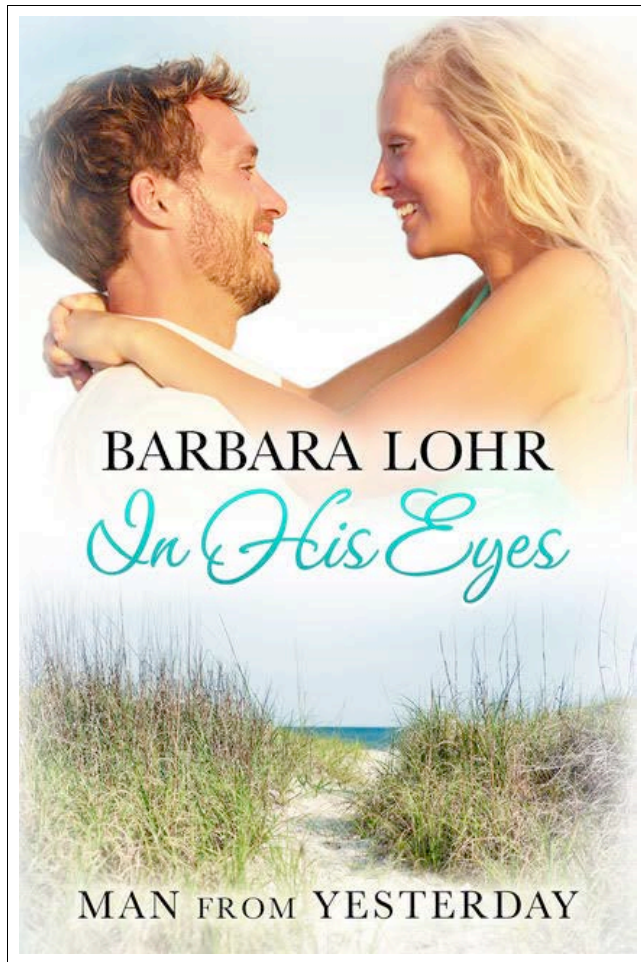
In His Eyes by Barbara Lohr

Release Date: January 25.

A reckless romance brings Diana Prescott to Gull Harbor. Pride makes her stay. Then she meets Will Applegate. Too perfect and way to good for Diane, given her history.

But what woman can turn down an ice cream tour of souther Michigan?

In His Eyes is the third book of the *Man from Yesterday* series.



Barbara Lohr writes contemporary romance with a flair for fun and subtly sexy love scenes. In her *Windy City Romance series*, the Kirkpatrick family and friends take on love and life's issues. Set on the shores of Lake Michigan, the *Man from Yesterday* series provides a provocative glance back at "what if." When she's not writing, she loves to golf, bike, kayak or cook. She makes a mean popover. Formerly a resident of Cincinnati, Barbara now lives in Savannah with her husband and a cat that insists he was Heathcliff in a former life. For more information on the author and her work, please see <http://www.BarbaraLohrAuthor.com/>.



A **COFW member** for at least ten years, she was also a member of the Cincinnati RWA chapter before it folded about three years ago. "She says, "There is no RWA chapter in Savannah so I retain my COFW membership just to keep up on things!"

COFW Meeting for February 18, 2017

NYT Bestselling Author, Donna Alward



Simplify & Thrive: Declutter Your Career

Location: Norwich Twp Safety & Services Building

5181 Northwest Parkway, Hilliard, OH 43026

Business Meeting: 12:30

Donna Alward: Beginning at 1:30

HOOR ONE | YOUR CORE STORY AND YOUR BRAND

Zeroing in on your core story provides clarity in your writing, branding, and overall satisfaction as an author. Who doesn't want to take away some of the stress and clutter and enjoy their job a little more? In this hour-long workshop, Donna Alward explains why simplifying is so helpful, how to find your core story, and how this helps with brand-building.

HOOR TWO | PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE MARKETING

Facebook parties. Bookbub Ads. Live Chats. Blog Tours. The list of "must dos" goes on and on—and how can an author possibly do it all and still maintain a rigorous publishing schedule (and avoid burnout)? If you have a love/hate relationship with marketing, join author Donna Alward for this one-hour workshop as she helps you get off the promotion merry-go-round, and develop simple strategies so that your marketing plan keeps working for you while you're sleeping—or busy writing your next bestseller.

Saturday, March 18, 2017

COFW Is Hosting an **All-Day** Special Event

Deborah Gilbert, Publisher and Lead Editor of

SoulMate Publishing

and

Eloisa James



NYT Best-Selling Historical Author

at

The German Village Society Haus

588 South Third Street

Columbus, Ohio 43215

Admission Fee:

***COFW Members Free. Non-members \$10 at Door**

For more info: <http://www.cofwevents.org/march-2017-event>

COFW Meeting for April 15, 2017



Lori Foster

NYT Best-selling Author

www.lorifoster.com

and

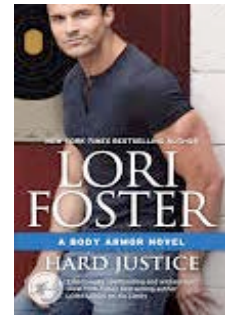
Founder of RAGT

<http://readerauthorgettogether.com/>

Lori will share her personal experiences with the current industry and its changes along with her recent struggles with issues such as an insane schedule. Questions and Answers, too.

Since first publishing in January 1996, Lori Foster has become a USA Today, Publisher's Weekly and New York Times best-selling author of over 80 novellas and novels.

She currently writes single titles for HQN. Her newest release, *Hard Justice*, comes out in March 2017.



Location: [Norwich Twp Safety & Services Building](#)

[5181 Northwest Parkway, Hilliard, OH 43026](#)

Business Meeting: 12:30

Lori Foster: Beginning at 1:30



2017 Writer's Retreat Weekend

April 21-23, 2017

Crocket's Run Lodge

<http://www.crockettsrun.com/>

Hocking Hills in Logan, Ohio

\$160 Includes:

Two Nights Lodging and All Meals

Open to COFW Members and Friends.

Register Today.

Deadline: March 3.

See Following Page for Registration Info.

To Register for 2017 Writer's Retreat Weekend

Open Files in Yahoo COFW Group folder "Writer's Retreat 2017"

COFW Writer's Retreat Info
COFW Writer's Retreat Questionnaire
COFW Writer's Retreat Registration Form

***The Retreat is open to non-COFW members. At least 16 people must register by March 3 for retreat to occur.**

To ensure registration, follow these two steps:

- 1) Fill out the registration form and send it to <krisbranch@ymail.com>.
- 2) Pay by either option:
 - a) Our website (cofwevents.org) will be updated with the Retreat information and a payment button <NOT CURRENTLY OUT THERE>
 - OR
 - b) Post mail your **\$160** check made out to and sent to:

**Central Ohio Fiction Writers
P.O. Box 24254
Dayton, Ohio 45424**

Registration Confirmation Process:

- 1) Once Kris receives your registration form, you'll be on the "Reserved" list.
- 2) Once payment is confirmed you'll be "Registered," guaranteeing your spot.

For questions or concerns: email Kris <krisbranch@ymail.com>.

Save the Date
Saturday, October 21, 2017

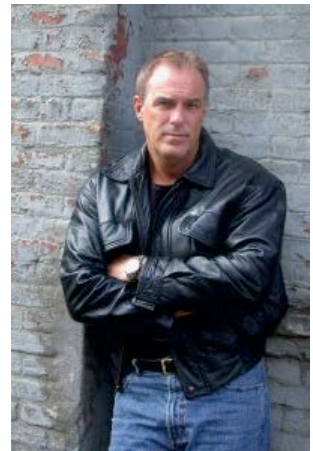
All-day Workshop
with

Larry Brooks

Author of *Story Fix* and *Story Engineering*

Location: The Courtyard Marriott, 2350 Westbest Drive, Columbus.

Larry is a career writer from the corporate sector who had nourished the fiction writing dream the entire time. He's published six novels, a couple of them with modestly respectable resumes, all of them nicely reviewed. He's written two best-selling writing books and a third released in 2015. All were published by Writers Digest.



Larry also does a lot of workshops and conferences at the behest of writing groups and clubs. He operates a story coaching service based out of his blog, "Storyfix2.0."

More Details Coming.

Fiction Plotting

First Wednesdays

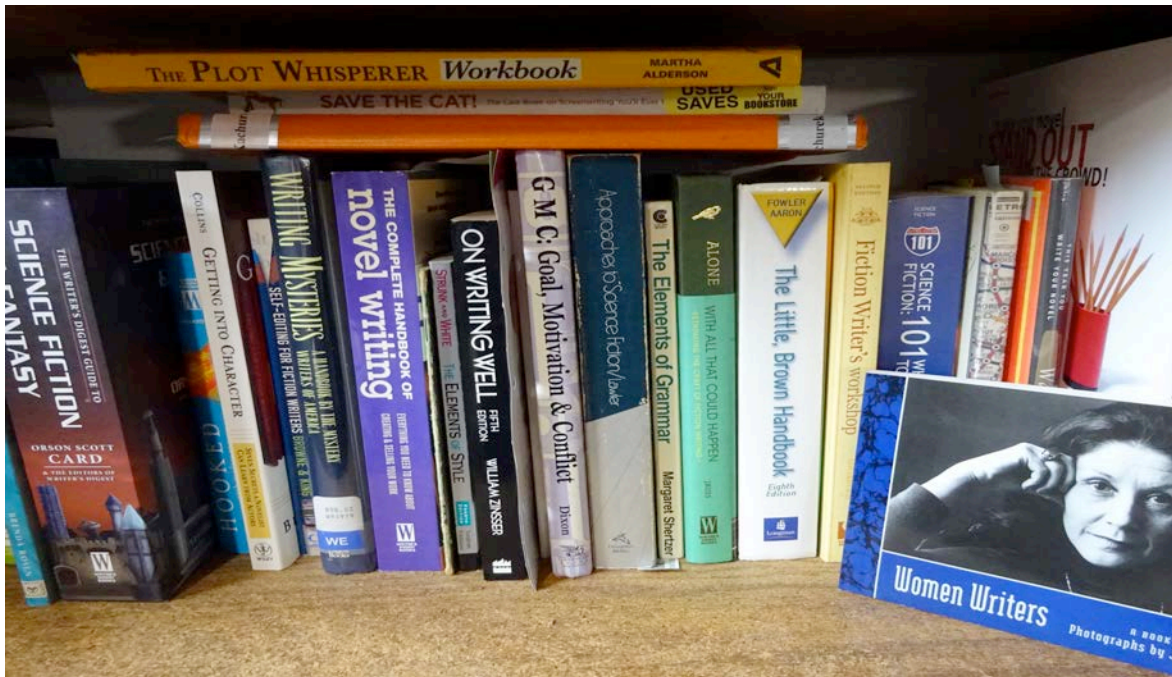
10 a.m.

Panera Bread

2374 Taylor Square Dr., Reynoldsburg, 43068

Sharing and discussing plots, giving constructive advice on improvements. In between meetings, attendees can stay in touch and ask questions through this loop:

cofwplot@yahoo.com



Renew Your COFW Membership!

\$25 Deadline: January 31, 2017

\$30 After January

Continue to Be Involved.

Continue to Be Informed.

Meetings, Speakers, Retreats, Workshops, Contests, Social Gatherings, Writing Craft Subgroups.

Click on "COFW 2017 Membership."

<http://www.cofwevents.org/membership>



Share the Latest. Hear the Latest.

COFW News

<https://twitter.com/COFWriters>

<https://www.facebook.com/COFWriters>

Basket Raffle Teaser

Raising Funds for Great Programming!

Donated Items Greatly Welcomed.

Goodies to Date:

♥ Ticket to the **RT Book Lovers Convention** in Atlanta, May 2-7. Use it as a reader entry fee (\$450) or author entry fee (\$495). Not for hotel or airfare.

<https://www.rtconvention.com>

♥ Ticket to **Lori Foster's Reader and Author Get Together** at the Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport, June 8-10. Use as reader entry fee (\$50) or as author entry fee (\$100).

[\(http://readerauthorgettogether.com/](http://readerauthorgettogether.com/)

Tickets: One for \$1. Six for \$5.

Contact:

Program Chair Sheri Adkins



2017 COFW Leadership

Executive Board

President: Jenessa McRoy

Secretary: Jeanne Estridge

Treasurer: Stacy McKitrick



Programs Chair: Sheri Adkins

Newsletter Editor: Sandy Kachurek

Membership Chair: Linda Rice

Social Media Chair: Andrea McConnell

Incentives: Julia Blaine

Website Developer: Rachel Conner

Ignite the Flame Contest Coordinators:

Nancy White and Jane Conner