

March 1, 2017

VOLUME XXIX, ISSUE 2

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers

COFW's February meeting was a first in offering Skype for Canadian writer Donna Alward. The potentially complex identification of branding and marketing may eat into a writer's personal and professional life. Using core story and focusing on simplifying the choices will, in the end, allow a writer the time to write with joy and love.

CONTENTS

1. Presentation Recap by Julia Blaine: Donna Alward: Simplify and Thrive.
2. Minutes and Treasurer's Summary for February 18, 2017.
3. Attendance and Works in Progress.
4. Q & A Spotlight: Newest COFW Member, Janice Beckett.
5. New Release: Aleta Dawson w/a Lita Lawson, *Kentucky Bluegrass Wedding*.
6. Coming Attractions: Eloisa James and SoulMate Publishing (March), Lori Foster (April).
7. COFW All-day Workshop with Larry Brooks, October 21, 2017 in Columbus.
8. Plotting Group: First Wednesdays, 10 a.m., Reynoldsburg Panera.
9. 2017 COFW Leadership.

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.

Donna Alward: Find More Time to Write What You Love

Guest Speaker Recap by Julia Blaine

Using Skype for the first time, COFW connected with our speaker, Donna Alward, who lives in eastern Canada. This award-winning author shares her home with a husband, a couple kids, a senior dog and two crazy cats. Currently she had three feet of snow outside.

While attending college, Donna escaped her studies by reading romance novels. Several years after completing her degree, she decided to write romance on her own. Five years and ten manuscripts later, she sold her first book and launched a new career.

She has written craft articles for *Romance Writers Report* (RWR) and is an editor at The Red Pen Coach, an editorial service. Her list of recognitions and awards stretches from a Cataramance Reviewers' Choice for *Marriage at Circle M* in 2007 to the Colorado Award of Excellence for *How a Cowboy Stole Her Heart* in 2012.

Core story was the first aspect of a handout Donna sent us with an exercise to discover how your core story could lead to your branding statement, followed by questions examining your marketing efforts, and a marketing checklist. Throughout her presentation, she reminded us of her mantra, "Keep it Simple" with the corollary, "Enjoy what you do."

Knowing core beliefs will bring back the joy of writing and possibly make it easier. The exercise also will help when beginning a new story. More than that, Donna said, knowing core beliefs will help with marketing and in choosing a branding statement.

Donna's selected three phrases were "coming home," "where your heart finds home," and "leap of faith." Using core story as a compass for decisions about writing, "hometowns" is Donna's core story and branding statement.

Branding is how people see you in real life as they do in your books. Donna's creative identity or brand is the force of her career world. It applies to all her work. It brings consistency.

Donna asked us about our personal brand. How we wanted readers to see us, the person. She believes that a connection with your professional and personal brand leads to more authentic and genuine engagement with your readers.

Regarding publishing, Donna said to be knowledgeable but not obsessed with the publishing industry, which is always changing. "Don't try to write certain things unless it fits you. It will not be fulfilling and will not be your best writing. Be genuine. Love what you write."

Marketing is your interaction with your readers.

"First of all, you'd rather be writing," said Donna. "*Don't* stress about what you *should* be doing in marketing. Instead, assess your abilities and priorities. To be affective, you should be genuine and authentically interact with your readers."

She referred to the four questions on her handout regarding marketing. Overall, she called it prioritizing necessities and not necessities when creating goals and objectives in your business plans and when building a mailing list.

If we needed help, Donna recommended *2017 Author Life Planner* by Bria Quinlan (briaquinlan.com). "It offers plans and schedules in one place to balance life and make things simple to help you hold on to your joy of writing."

One of Donna's marketing necessities includes a website, which lists books, links, a biography, her blog and consistent branding. She suggested using Word Press or Mail Poet for building a website.

Her other necessity is a newsletter with a mailing list. Donna uses Elastic Mail.

Find *quality* subscribers. "The number of followers does not matter as much as the number of people who will stick with you," she explained.

Included in her newsletter are special events, giveaways, new releases, cover art, sneak previews and blurbs.

She likes to round up similar authors and titles, use "buy links" and ways back to her website. She holds giveaways two to three times a year and offers "subscribers only" perks.

Social Media: Donna believes you don't have to be everywhere on social media. She commented on most of the media items on her handout.

Facebook: Donna reminded us that Facebook owns all the material posted on it and recommended we type in "Book Marketing: Facebook Advertising for Authors" by Mark Dawson; see online for more information.

Donna has a group page called "Donna Alward's Amazing Readers" where her readers respond with reviews and discussion and utilizes a street team with it. Donna uses her regular profile for friends and family.

Merchandising: All marketing choices should support your core story. Donna uses Adagio tea where she can create her own brand, such as Charitea. Author Nancy Nagel, for example, uses candles.

Outsourcing: What is it worth to have someone else do certain aspects of marketing for you?

Donna said to look at your budget as you consider your own strengths and weaknesses. Determine how much you can spend and what you can do yourself. Can you hire an assistant? Some companies offer package deals.

Traditional publishers have publicists and offer blitzes for material coming out on as many as eighty sites, especially in the fall. Traditional publishers may provide a blog. Authors can pay for certain sites to post their releases.

She mentioned a variety of other marketing choices, such as buying ads on Facebook and Thunderclap, giveaways on Goodreads, working with BookBub, Twitter Blitz, NetGalley, buying swag, blog tours, BookFunnel and Author Central.

Donna discusses a promotional plan with her editor. She doesn't care for release-day blitzes or bombs. She's found that swag doesn't sell books but recommended doing it for fun and if it's cheap. It's a great idea to have books for reader events, such as conferences and retreats. For her, one of the biggest expenses is postage.

Putting it all together: In general, look at your data, examine the costs and prioritize. Determine what you enjoy doing. Just because something works for one author, it may not work for you. Finally, put it all together into a market plan.

With promotion, such as one day a week devoted to your blog and newsletter and fifteen minutes each day on Facebook, you can have a constant presence without being present.

Finding your core story, determining what aspects of marketing you enjoy doing yourself, what you can afford to hire out to do and what you find is the best quality engagement with your reader are key elements for thriving in the writing business.

Donna believes in listing and prioritizing because, in the end, it gives you the time to do what you really want to do: Write something you love.



Donna Alward visits COFW via Skype.

Membership Minutes for February 18, 2017

The business meeting began at 12:30 with a welcome to all and a reminder that we needed to be out of the meeting room by 4:30 for another group.

Sandy Kachurek made a motion to accept January's minutes, seconded by Stacy Mckitrick and approved by the membership.

Members were reminded that anyone not on the roster will be removed from the loop in March. There were 52 renewals to date.

Under New Business was the need for a financial audit of the 2016 books. Last year, Donna MacMeans performed it, but with tax season upon us, she may not have time. No other members appeared to have the required expertise. President Jenessa McRoy will look into confirmation that two non-Board members may be selected to audit the books.

There were no questions regarding the Treasurer's Report for December. Treasurer Stacy McKitrick reported a current balance of \$13,385. for January.

Under Old Business was the issue of copyright coverage from Safe Harbor. President Jenessa will acquire it by March, and Donna MacMeans will be the contact person.

Linda Rice presented an update on the October 21 workshop. Registration and payment info was ready to post to the RWA website. The hotel and speaker have been arranged. The registration fee will include a Continental breakfast, lunch and a fun raffle. Registration will start at 8. Workshop will run from 9 to 5. Linda was preparing to set up needed committees.

Kris Branch gave an update on the April 22 Writer's Retreat in Hocking Hills. She emphasized the need to meet the minimum number of sixteen registrants by March 3. She currently had three. Members discussed strategies to recruit attendees including members sharing with other writers' groups they belong to. Kris planned to do a mailing to all COFW members via Mailchimp.

Julia Blaine delivered Incentives to several members, including new member Shari Heinrich who made the long list for an anthology call, Marcia Anderson who got

something in print, and Aleta Dodson who will have three box sets out this year.

Social Media expert Andrea McConnell would like more fresh content for the COFW page. She asked members to share anything writers would be interested in learning about—blog posts, etc.

Andrea shared some social media tips and tricks. For example, if you type a period before @COFW, the tweet will go to all who follow COFW. On Facebook, if you "Like" someone's author page, FB automatically makes you a follower, but if you want to be sure of seeing the author's posts, click "Follow" and select "See First."

Members were grateful for the tips and would consider having Andrea do an entire program on Tips and Tricks.

Sandy Kachurek gave a Newsletter update. She won't be available next month and asked for a volunteer to do a recap. Julia Blaine volunteered. Sandy needed info on any new releases by Monday.

Under Programs, Sheri Adkins said we were set for our March mini-workshop and asked us to promote the event on our social media. The site has a 130-seat capacity. If anyone planned to donate a raffle basket, please let Sheri know.

Sheri asked for ideas for future programs. Responses included social media and Scrivener.

Under Other Business, Julia Blaine volunteered to write a recap of today's guest presentation with Donna Alward.

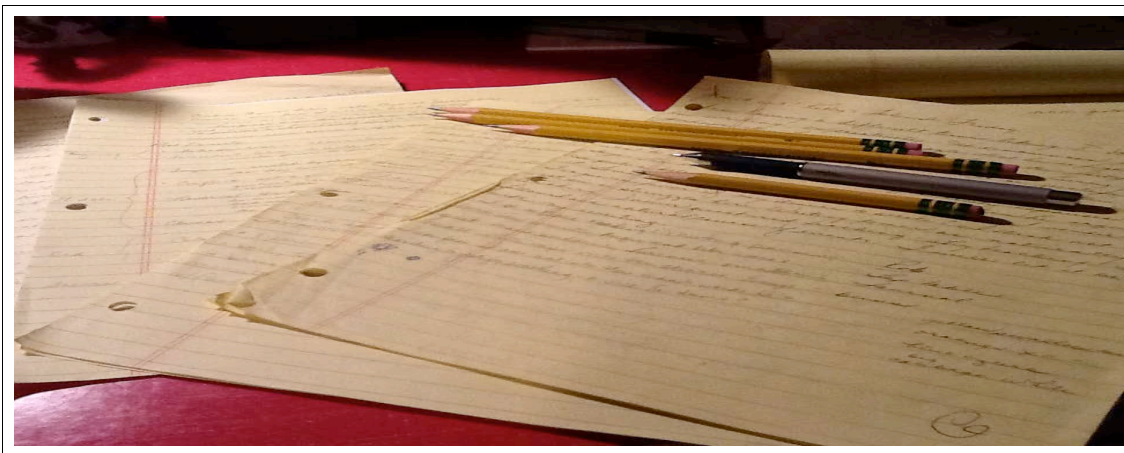
The business meeting closed at 1:15.

COFW Treasurer's Summary for January 2017

Total Revenues: \$775.01.

Total Expenses: \$1,185.21.

Total Assets: \$13, 318.41.



Attendance and Works in Progress

February 18, 2017

1. Jeanne Estridge: Contemporary, *Girl's Best Friend*.
2. Julia Blaine: Story, "Angel Cat."
3. Becky Barker: Finished audio edit for *Zack's Ranch*.
4. Andrea McConnell: 82K of 90K! *The British Captain*.
5. Robin Gianna: Working with I.T. to provide today's Skype presentation.
6. Marcia James: Putting all ebooks into print.
7. Shawn Dickerson: Caroline Battista series.
8. Linda Rice: Working on WIP.
9. Janice Beckett: Contemporary.
10. Sandy Kachurek: Halfway through final draft.
11. Shari Heinrich: 77K into *Solve for X* (YA)... of 65 goal.
12. Kris Branch: Heading into 37K of her 50-60K book.
13. Sheri Adkins: Setting up for today's Skype presentation.
14. Stacy McKittrick: *Ghostly Protector*.
15. Jenessa McRoy. *My Lady Spy*.

Spotlighting Newest Member in Q & A: Janice Beckett

February was Janice Beckett's first meeting. A new writer from Waynesville, Ohio,



Julia Blaine (left) offers Janice Beckett an incentive for joining COFW.

she's worked for the Air Force for twenty-nine years and has been married for twenty-nine years. She has a 24-year-old son Chris. Her hobby is horseback riding.

Q: Do you have a pen name?

A: Since I'm still working as an attorney for the Air Force, I'm considering Kimberly Beckett. Kimberly is my middle name.

Q: What are your favorite genres in which to read and write?

A: I love reading historical and contemporary romance and feel more comfortable writing in those genres than any other.

Q: When and where do you like to write?

A: I've set up an area in our formal dining room where I try to write every day at 7 pm for as long as the words flow.

Q: What and/or who inspires you?

A: I'm inspired by the desire to create an escape for readers and provide them with an HEA in their complicated, stressful lives.

Q: What is one writing goal you hope to achieve this year?

A: I hope to have my first novel completed by the RWA conference in July.

Q: Who's your favorite author?

A: I have several: Elizabeth Hoyt, Grace Burrowes, Mary Balogh, Loretta Chase, Eloisa James. Kathleen Woodiwiss is my all-time favorite.

Q: What are your favorite books?

A: *Shanna* by Kathleen Woodiwiss or *Lord of Scoundrels* by Loretta Chase.

Q: What are you reading now?

A: I'm reading Lisa Kleypas's *Marrying Winterbourne* in anticipation of her newest book in the Ravenal series due out soon.

Q: How did you hear about COFW?

A: When I joined RWA, the organization encouraged its members to join and become active in a local chapter.

Q: Why have you joined COFW?

A: To meet and connect with other authors and learn as much as I can about starting a career as an author of romantic fiction.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add?

A: Because I own two horses, I've decided to use the professional dressage world and horses in general in my stories.

Welcome to COFW, Janice.



Share the Latest. Hear the Latest.

COFW News

<https://twitter.com/COFWriters>

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

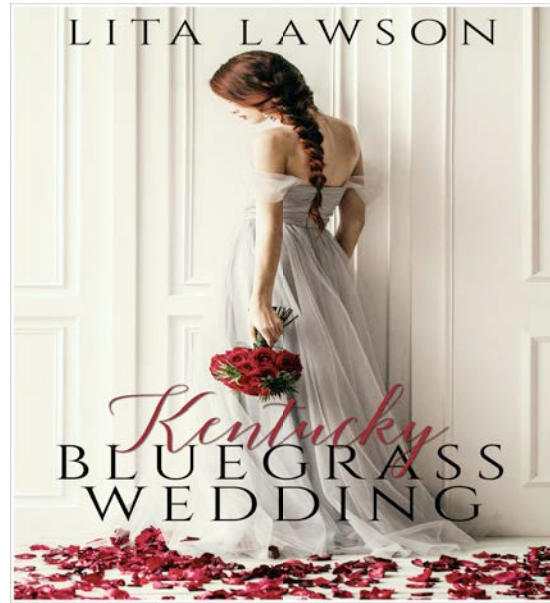
**New Release from COFW
Member**

Aleta Dawson

Writing as Lita Lawson

Kentucky Bluegrass Wedding

Release Date: April 18 .



Will Cassi have the wedding of her dreams or will her future mother-in-law turn it into a three-ring high society affair? Fans of *Foolish Gamble* will delight in the novella of Cassi and Austin's wedding.

Aleta w/a Lita fell in love with romance and alpha males when she watched *Gone With the Wind* with her mother. She's been an avid reader since she was young and has always had an active imagination. She prefers her males alpha, the sexier the better!



She writes contemporary romance with heroes you will fall in love with. She hopes you enjoy her stories, from the first kiss to the happily ever after. If you read her stories and enjoyed, please leave a review. And stop by Facebook and like her Author Lita Lawson page!

Aleta Dawson w/a Lita Lawson is a member of the Romance Writers of America and lives in Ohio with her very own alpha male husband and multiple cats. Please visit her Facebook page, where she generally hangs out! <https://www.facebook.com/authorlitalawson>

A **COFW member** off and on for over 15 years, Aleta says, "I love COFW as we have so many great speakers at our monthly meetings, annual conference or workshop. COFW has an amazing group of authors willing to share their experience in writing romance. COFW rocks!"

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

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

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

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

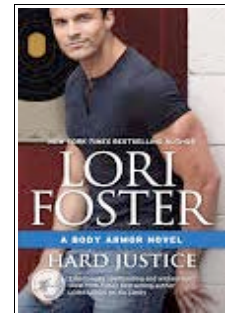
Founder of RAGT

<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

Save the Date
Saturday, October 21, 2017

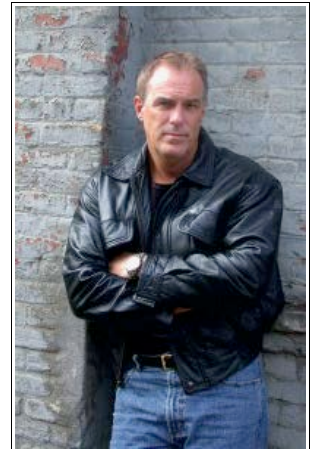
All-day Workshop
with

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

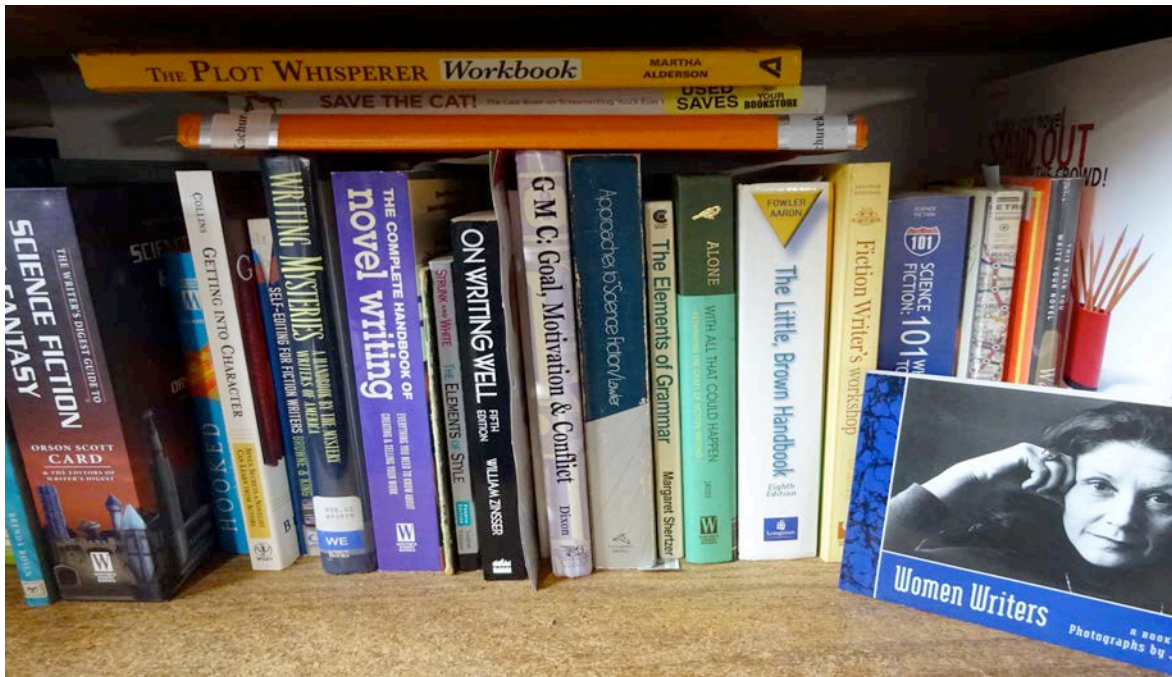
10 a.m.

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@yahoogroups.com



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