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Volume XXIX. Issue 6.

## Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers

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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.

## *Lori Foster: Helping Others Where She Can*

Recap by Saralee Etter

Central Ohio Fiction Writers welcomed *New York Times* best-selling romance author Lori Foster. A longtime friend of our chapter, she came back for a visit at our June meeting. It was great to see her again!

Lori has been a published romance author since 1996. Her 100<sup>th</sup> story, “Worth the Wait,” will be coming out in July 2017. Now, after more than two decades as a romance writer, Lori shared with us her process for writing her stories as well as her perspective on writing and on life.

The first thing to know about Lori Foster is that one of her guiding principles is helping others when you can.

“Authors have a unique opportunity to help others,” said Lori.

Helping a wide variety of people and organizations is a principle she's put into action throughout her career. Her most recent contract with Harlequin Books contains an unusual provision funnelling all her royalties to the Animal Adoption Fund. Also, this year the annual Reader and Author Get-Together she organized raised \$22,500 for the One Way Farm Children's Home.

Lori reminded us that every writer's writing process is their own. She urged her audience to remember that there's no such thing as the “right way” to write a story. Plotting a story ahead of time doesn't work for her. She focuses on writing stories in her own way. Picking up an idea or a situation from a movie or a TV show, or wondering about a character may be all the information she has when she sits down to write. Her current work in progress, she said, will take place at an RV camp on a lake, but that's all she knows so far.

She shared some of her Facts About Writing:

(1) Writing is a business. Meet your contracted deadlines. A contract is a contract, and you must be true to your word. Lori always builds in extra time and gets her work done early in order to make time for unexpected problems.

(2) Your voice is the most important thing you have. The market for certain genres is changing all the time. Not only that but the whole industry is changing. “Writing to market” or copying other writers' successes won't guarantee you a solid career.

Every possible story has already been told. Yet readers are still looking for engaging stories, and editors are still looking for “fresh voices.” It's the writer's voice that matters.

Be careful when you accept advice or editing; the book is still your book, right or wrong. Your

voice is the only thing that will stand out. If you're going to self-publish, go ahead, but make your finished product as professional as possible. Get a good editor and a good cover.

(3) Only write what you love writing. If you're not loving what you put into the story, the readers won't love it either. If your story makes you laugh or cry, then readers will too.

Lori's own life has gone into the formation of her writing voice. In school, she was a good student but a "daydreamer" who didn't enjoy the depressing reading selections offered by her teachers.

Her first experience with riveting stories came when she was left with an aunt while her parents were fighting. Her aunt, who lived in a run-down place in a bad neighborhood, had a stack of True Romance magazines. Secretly, Lori settled down to read these lurid tales in a hidden corner, but the cockroach-infested place always had her on edge. When she heard a thump, she shrieked loud enough to alert her aunt. As a result, the whole story of the "borrowed" True Romances came out in a rush. Lori discovered, to her relief, that the magazines weren't forbidden after all. She devoured the stories.

Reading didn't play a big role in her life until years later. She was married with three kids when she became very sick and was stuck in bed. Her sister brought her a bag of Harlequin romance novels. Lori's love of reading re-surfaced, along with the idea that she could tell a better story than the ones she was reading.

"I believe in a happy ever after, but you have to work for it," she said. And work for it she did.

Lori began writing romances as she continued with her day job cleaning houses. She still takes notes whenever she can, jotting down an idea when it comes to her, or writing notes for a future scene at the bottom of the page when she's in the middle of writing.

Lori also followed the advice to write what we know. "My husband is an alpha male, and so are my three sons. I think I know how those type of guys think. I understand



*Lori Foster, long-time friend of COFW, returns as a welcomed guest speaker. (Photo by Jeanne Estridge)*

how alpha males in a given situation will react.”

When Lori writes, she starts with a seed of an idea, an image or a situation, and then builds it up. She writes about 10-12 pages on her story per day, “until I’ve said what I want to say for that day.” She corrects herself as she goes but doesn’t delete large sections of her writing. Even in her early books, she only received smaller edits of a paragraph or less.

She prefers to work on one book at a time and not switch between projects, but it’s not always possible when she has multiple books in different stages of development. It’s often necessary to switch gears and work on edits for one book, or revisions for another, or approvals for a third, while the new story is under way.

“First you go for one book that’s published, then two books published, then a contract before the full book is written, a multi-book contract,” she said, regarding the development of an author’s career. But the important thing is that when you sign a contract, you must deliver as promised.

For Lori, it was difficult to write a book based on a submitted outline or proposal because her finished works never followed the outlines at all. But she still kept her promises and fulfilled her contracts on time. Publishers began to rely on her to produce a book they could confidently sell, even if the details weren’t the same as in the synopsis.

So many people hold on to their completed manuscripts out of fear, Lori said. The fear of rejection is a constant, but you have to send your work out to get any response.

One way to get over that fear is to have the proper attitude toward the place of writing in your life. “I love writing,” Lori said, “but I am first and foremost a wife, mother, sister. If I never wrote again I’d still be a happy person. Writing doesn’t define me.”

Many things have changed in the publishing industry. Nowadays, Lori noted, it is harder to get a good agent than it is to find a publisher because many publishing houses can be approached through editors at conferences. However, writers are no longer receiving rejection letters as in the past. Publishers will simply note that if you haven’t heard back from them within a certain amount of time, you should assume that they aren’t interested.

Her husband, Alan, manages her finances and keeps tabs on industry trends, allowing her to focus more on writing. He reported that at the most recent Reader and Author Get-Together, the self-published authors were doing very well. They offered digital coupons or certificates for free downloads of their books, which were even more popular than print books.

Lori answered questions from the audience at the end of her talk.

**On Pen Names:** If you have a pen name, use it for everything online. Just be that other “persona” in all interactions. You don’t need a different pen name for each different genre you write in because your voice will be the same.

**On Box Sets:** Box sets of books tend to dilute the value of bestsellerdom because a box set will sell based on one high-profile name. The rest of the authors will claim the status that really belonged to the biggest name on the box set.

**On Traditional vs. Indie Publishing:** If you can, try the traditional route first before self-publishing. But Courtney Milan, who is a successful indie publisher after having been published traditionally, says it's a personality thing. Your skills and your natural inclination will determine the best route for you.

**On Rights:** Make sure your agent (or other professional) can get your rights deals set up properly.

**On Cover Art:** Get the best you can. Research other covers in your genre. Your cover is very important. Lori is helping her son indie-publish his horror book, which will be coming out soon.

**On her first time on the NYT Best-seller list:** Her then-editor, Kate Duffy, called Lori as she was moving boxes into her new home right before Christmas. Kate said, "Are you sitting down?" Distracted by the phone under her chin and the box in her hands and the Christmas party plans in her head, Lori said yes, even though she wasn't. So the news wasn't as exciting as it could have been because she couldn't savor the moment!

**On Helping Others:** Thanks to generous sponsors, volunteers and attendees, the 2017 Reader & Author Get Together raised \$22,500 for the One Way Farm, \$1,500 for the Animal Adoption Foundation, and—thanks to Barnes and Noble— \$2,200 for the Conductive Learning Center. Check out the details on Lori Foster's website [www.LoriFoster.com](http://www.LoriFoster.com)



RECAP WRITER. **Saralee Etter** is the author of three traditional Regency romances. Her next book, coming later this summer, is *A Short Sharp*, the first book in a Victorian-set mystery series featuring sleuth Lucy Turner and her friends, William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. You can visit her on the web at [www.saraleeetter.com](http://www.saraleeetter.com)

# **Minutes for June 17, Norwich Township Building, Hilliard**

By Jeanne Estridge, Secretary

President Jenessa McRoy welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order.

Financials were reviewed and approved. Donna MacMeans complimented Treasurer Stacy McKitrick on doing a great job last year.

The notebook to record attendance and works in progress was passed around.

Linda Rice made a motion to accept May's minutes, seconded by Donna and approved by all.

According to the Treasurer's report for May, checking had \$9,848.37, \$1,440.97 in PayPal and \$1,564.44 in Financial Assistance.

Program Chair Sheri Adkins provided reminders:

(1) July at the Columbus Downtown Library: Laurie Schnebly from 9 to 5.

Free to members and a \$10 donation from non-members, which can be applied toward membership. The schedule will include morning for "Plotting via Motivation" and afternoon "From Plot to Finish" with a Lunch break.

Laurie will also be presenting the next day in Cincinnati for free, a session with no overlap with the presentation at the COFW meeting.

(2) For the remainder of the year, the programs will include: A recap of the 2017 RWA National Convention in August; Leta Lawson on "Editing and Formatting" and Kat Sheridan on "How to Write a Back Cover Blurb" in September; Annual workshop in October; nothing planned yet for November; and the holiday party in December.

Sheri reminded us that a new Program Chair for next year needed to be recruited. Although Donna couldn't volunteer because of her National Treasurer duties, she was willing to assist whoever would take the position.

Saralee Etter volunteered to recap today's speaker for the newsletter.

Linda reminded us of the upcoming October all-day workshop. Her updates: the workshop is on RWA's website under "Conferences"; it will be in the RWA magazine next month; registration is open and four to five people have registered.

A discussion brought up additional options for publicizing the workshop, such as:

(1) Nita Sweeney lists every writing event in Columbus in her monthly newsletter; everyone

should check for writing groups in their area and publicize the workshop; and another possibility was the *Ohioana Quarterly*.

Someone asked about local colleges. Karen Harper had a contact at the OSU/MFA program.

Sheri was to contact the Columbus library to promote the July workshop with Laurie Schnebly.

Someone asked whether an indie author workshop on October 14 in Pickerington can be promoted here.

Julia Blaine offered the incentives basket to Kris Branch who finished her book; Amalie Berlin who contacted an agent who offered to mentor her; Shari Heinrich who was 24,000 words into her paranormal *The Queen's Wand*, and Linda who entered a contest.

Due to absences, no reports were given for social media, newsletter and Ignite the Flame contest, which closed for entries on May 31.

Meeting ended.

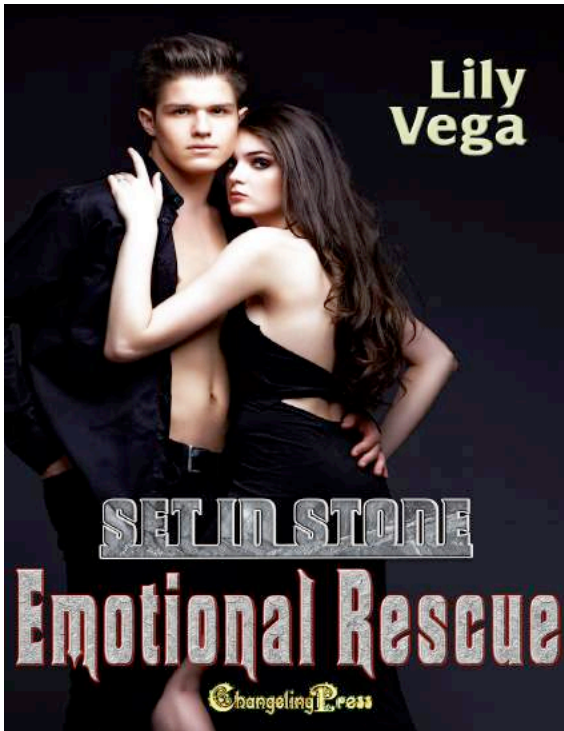
## **Works in Progress and Attendance for June 17**

1. Jenessa McRoy: Urban Fantasy WIP.
2. Jeanne Estridge: finishing revisions to Contemporary.
3. Stacy McKittrick: editing *Ghostly Interlude*.
4. Amalie Berlin: *Intrigue Proposal* plotting.
5. Linda Rice: working on Bridge book.
6. Julia Blaine: trying to finish cat book.
7. Kris Branch: on Chapter 3 of Book 2.
8. Linda Culbertson: working on life and fitting writing into it.
9. Donna MacMeans: working on reissuing *The Education of Mrs. Brimley* and *Seduction of the Duke* and writing *To Bait a Rake* and a nonfiction book.
10. Karen Harper: working on a historical novel on Consuelo Vanderbilt. In Chicago for the American Library Association this week to speak.
11. Saralee Etter: still working away on *A Short, Sharp Shock*, a Victorian mystery.
12. Sheri Adkins: hoping to write soon!

## New Release from COFW Member

Lily Vega

### Emotional Rescue (Set in Stone)



Alistair, a human by day and a stone gargoyle by night, goes along with a scheme that could break his curse, but he risks losing the woman of his dreams.



After being burned by love, Kendra sets her sights on her employer's hunky gardener for a down-and-dirty romp. Their physical connection has the potential to be the emotional rescue they both need, until Kendra discovers the secrets Al's been hiding.

**Lily Vega is a COFW member** living in the Midwest with her sexy husband who combines all of Dean Winchester's best qualities with a flair for computers. She continually cultivates her dirty mind, fueling it with caffeine and craft beer. She believes all creatures, especially those of the night, deserve mind-blowing sex with a happily every after.

<http://lilyvega.com/>



**Re-Release this July on Amazon**

## *Blame the Moonlight*

Movie makeup artist, Chelsea Davenport, turns invisible in moonlight. As a descendant of the Nevidemi, she can't help it, she just fades to nothing. A recent Hollywood "ghost" sighting spooks her into joining a public relations crew bound for Haven Harbor, Massachusetts, a town populated by witches. Rather than escaping her problems, she's landed in a cauldron of new difficulties, triggered by a full moon and a chance encounter with her old high school boyfriend who is now a (gasp!) journalist. She needs a safe harbor but can she trust the sanctuary she finds in his arms?



Brandon Parker needs a big story to break him out of the doghouse with his news editor, who sent him to Haven Harbor to cover Halloween preparations. The discovery of a woman who fades away in moonlight could be his ticket out of this small town hell, but reawakened attraction for his never-forgotten girlfriend along with appreciation of her unique abilities has him tied up in knots.

Will Chelsea Davenport become front-page news, or are the witches of Haven Harbor just stirring the pot?



The author of nine published romances and a licensed CPA, **Donna** currently serves as the Treasurer for Romance Writers of America, while maintaining small tax practice. She has received the 2013 RWA Service Award and the 2014 RWA Pro Mentor award for her work with unpublished writers. She has taught workshops for the Nora Roberts Institute, the Writer's Boot camp for RT, The Thurber House, the Antioch Genre Fiction day, several libraries, several RWA conventions and numerous RWA chapters.

She lives in Columbus, Ohio with her husband of forty+ years, along with a demanding cat who likes to dive bomb her from the bed headboard at five o'clock in the morning. Please contact her at [www.DonnaMacMeans.com](http://www.DonnaMacMeans.com)

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

**Donna has been a longtime member of COFW.** It was there that she discovered an entire organization existed devoted to getting members published in romance, and it worked! She was a member for years learning about writing at the chapter meetings and finally sold her first historical manuscript to a New York publisher in an auction. She's made life-long friends through COFW. It's one facet of her writing journey that she'll never regret. Through the years, she's been COFW's president for two years and treasurer for six years (or was it eight?). While she's not allowed to hold an official position in any chapter while the RWA Treasurer, that hasn't lessened her enjoyment of attending chapter meetings.

## **Signing the Contract is Only the Beginning**

By COFW Member, Julia Blaine

I got the call! Why didn't I feel more excited about this ultimate goal for a beginning writer? I MIGHT become a published author!

After many years of writing and uncounted rejections, I'd learned a lot. Mostly not to take rejections personally.

And that signing a contract was only the beginning.

Was it Heaven? Maybe. But did angels work this hard in Heaven? Being chosen by a publisher started something new.

I was blessed. The book was already completed and available, selling on Amazon. I didn't need to submit a query or synopsis. The blurb, bio, acknowledgments and a cover were already finished.

But I was scared. Sign a contract? Would I be able to understand the legalese? Meet the deadlines?

I needed a webpage. How would I do that? I didn't have any money. Writers need a financial base for swag, business cards, ads, gasoline for travel. And things I didn't know about yet.

There was editing... .

I'd heard lots of stories about authors who were "chosen" by editors and agents only to need multiple rewrites on their books. And editing. More rewrites. Some were even asked to change the plot or add a character, not adapt or flesh out someone, but create a new person.

Their story could actually be rejected after long hours, days, even months of trying to cooperate and be creative!

Would that happen to me?

The rewrites were important. Both the publisher and I wanted the best book possible. One that would encourage buyers and thrill readers. It's my creation, but I was certainly willing to improve it. Overall, I wouldn't mind editing.

Yet I would rather spend my precious writing time on that new novel that was annoyingly leaping about in my head.

We all had other calls on our schedule. For example, I had a broken car, an insurance company to deal with, necessary home repairs, an un-well husband and a sick cat. Other writers had children, work or other family issues. You name it. There's always something.

If all fell into place, every writer could get the "call." I thought time and learning were the keys. But being published was just the beginning. It changed everything.

I took the leap and followed through on the requests of my very nice editor.

I like my novel. She likes my novel. I look forward to working with her. I sincerely hope we can promote the story, please our readers and make money for both of us.

Everyone who wants to be published should keep trying.



**ABOUT THE WRITER.** **Julia Blaine** comes from a long line of storytellers. As a child, she sat fascinated as her father, six uncles and grandfather sat on a hillside after a big family dinner to spin yarns, tall tales, and strange occurrences they claimed to have lived through themselves.

From her mother, Julia learned family history, such as how Grandma's and Grandpa's wedding was not planned but a spur of the moment thing when the preacher was available and suggested it. She learned who was a rogue and who was a hero among ancestors traced back through word of mouth and through meticulous research to the American Revolution and before.

No wonder Julia writes mostly historical romances--sometimes with a touch of fantasy.

**A long-time COFW member, Julia** is currently in charge of writing and publishing incentives during meetings.



## Coming July 15 to COFW: A Full Day with Laurie Schnebly

### Different Location and Time

9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Columbus Metropolitan Library, Main Branch

96 S. Grant Avenue, Columbus 43215

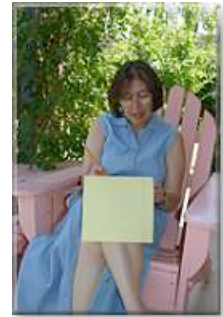
614-645-2275

COFW Members: Free

Non-Members: \$10 Donation

### Morning Session:

Plotting vs Motivation: Any one of us could write a book in which characters set out for a three-hour tour and get shipwrecked on an uncharted desert isle. But if you nail down the characters' motivation, it doesn't matter whether the ship capsizes or lands safely three hours later. Your characters will create a plot from WHATEVER happens because you've got their motivation built in from the very beginning...and here's how to do it.



From Plot to Finish: Once a writer knows the elements that belong in her characters and her plot, she's all set...right? Well, not always. Making the move from a few basic answers to a manuscript which is ready to type involves a series of steps that people have called "incredible...a plotting system which truly RESPECTS that I'm a pantser" and "the easiest way I've ever seen of getting from Basic Idea to Finished Book."

### Afternoon Session:

Building Conflict from the Head Down: They're perfect for each other, right? So why can't things ever seem to go as smoothly for these people as they deserve? Well, you know why--it's because nobody wants the happy ending to arrive five minutes into the book. Which means we need to stir up conflict for these characters, and no matter what kind of conflict is happening around them it'll be even more dramatic when you get the conflict happening inside each one.

**Laurie Schnebly** also writes and produces videos, brochures and commercials for a Phoenix advertising agency. She'd written six books for Special Edition before turning to non-fiction, using her research into the nine personality types to help writers create plausible, likable people with realistic flaws.  
<http://booklaurie.com/>

**On September 16, COFW Presents**  
**Self-Publishing**  
**with**  
**Lita Lawson and Kat Sheridan**

**Editing and Formatting**

**Lita Lawson**, self-published, contemporary author and COFW member, will discuss how to hire an editor and format your work, along with other handy tips regarding publishing your own work.  
[www.litalawson.net](http://www.litalawson.net).



A **COFW member** off and on for over 15 years, Lita 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!"

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

**Writing the Back Cover Blurb**

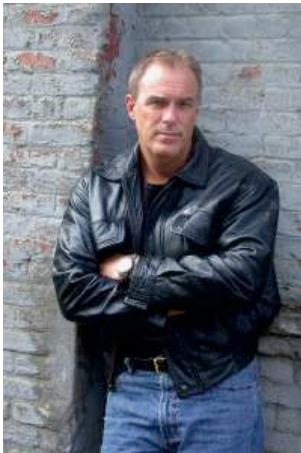
**Kat Sheridan**, self-published historical author, will discuss how to write a back cover blurb for your book.

Kat is addicted to historical, gothic novels and any romance that includes storms, castles, bat-shit crazy villains and a high body count. Heroes and heroines must be larger than life. She's excessively fond of shiny things and bourbon and is non-functioning until she's had her coffee.



Her latest release is a Victorian Gothic Romance *Echoes in Stone*.

[www.facebook.com/Kat-Sheridan](http://www.facebook.com/Kat-Sheridan)



**Saturday, October 21, 2017**

**All-day Workshop. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**with**

**Larry Brooks**

*Author of **Story Fix** and **Story Engineering***

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

**Fee:** COFW Members: \$55. Non-members: \$75 (includes continental breakfast, lunch, raffle).

**To Register and Pay:** COFW Website: <http://www.cofwevents.org/workshop>.

**Workshop Topics:**

- ☆ The Hidden Secrets of Story Structure.
- ☆ The Beautiful Collision of Concept and Premise.
- ☆ Dramatic Arc as the Key to Everything (Including Character).
- ☆ When Every Month is NanoWriMo.

**Larry Brooks** is a career writer from the corporate sector who had nourished a fiction-writing dream the entire time. He's published six novels and two best-selling books on writing, *Story Engineering* and *Story Physics* and the 2015 release *Story Fix*, all through *Writer's Digest*.

**For Questions:** Linda Rice: [lindarice05@gmail.com](mailto:lindarice05@gmail.com).



# **On the Craft and Business of Writing**

## **♥ Fiction Plotting with COFW Members**

- ~First Wednesdays, 10 a.m.
- ~Panera Bread, 2374 Taylor Square Drive, Reynoldsburg, 43068.
- ~Sharing and discussing plots. Giving constructive advice on improvements.
- ~Between meetings, attendees stay in touch and ask questions via [cofwplot@yahoo.com](mailto:cofwplot@yahoo.com)

## **♥ Live Q & A on Facebook with Author Assistant, Melissa Jolly**

- ~Every Wednesday, 2:30 p.m. Eastern
- ~Request to be her Friend on Facebook. Click on it when it pops up in your feed. Or go to her page and click on the "play" icon hovering over her picture.
- ~She takes questions for 30 minutes or until people stop asking.
- ~To ask your question, simply type.
- ~If you can't make it during that time, email her at [melissa@authorrx.com](mailto:melissa@authorrx.com) -- [melissa@authorrx.com](mailto:melissa@authorrx.com). She'll try to answer your question during one of her weekly chats.

Melissa has spoken at COFW meetings and regularly presents workshops at RWA Conferences. She's been an author's assistant for many years and would love to share what she knows.

## **♥ Want More of Laurie Schnebly? See Her on Sunday, July 16 in West Chester.**

- ~Laurie Schnebly Campbell will be giving a free class (or two) at the West Chester Library.
- ~Sunday July 16.



## 2017 COFW Leadership

### Executive Board

President: [Jenessa McRoy](mailto:jenessah@gmail.com) (jenessah@gmail.com)  
Secretary: [Jeanne Estridge](mailto:jeanne.estridge.author@gmail.com) (jeanne.estridge.author@gmail.com)  
Treasurer: [Stacy McKitrick](mailto:semckitrick@aol.com) (semckitrick@aol.com)



### Committees

Programs Chair: [Sheri Adkins](mailto:sherirenaeadkins@gmail.com) (sherirenaeadkins@gmail.com)  
Newsletter Editor: [Sandy Kachurek](mailto:sandrajkachurek@gmail.com) (sandrajkachurek@gmail.com)  
Membership Chair: [Linda Rice](mailto:lindarice05@gmail.com) (lindarice05@gmail.com)  
Social Media Chair: [Andrea McConnell](mailto:fyrefly93@gmail.com) (fyrefly93@gmail.com)  
Incentives: [Julia Blaine](mailto:julmassie@aol.com) (julmassie@aol.com)

### Ignite the Flame Contest Coordinators

[Nancy White](mailto:nancywhite0529@gmail.com) (nancywhite0529@gmail.com)  
and  
[Jane Conner](mailto:djconner@earthlink.net) (djconner@earthlink.net)



### Central Ohio Fiction Writers

P.O. Box 24254  
Dayton, OH 45424

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

### Meeting Days:

The first "teen" Saturday of the month.