

February 2021

Issue 2

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers Newsletter

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Newsletter Editor: Rachel Dye

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.

2021 Leadership

Board

President: Bernie Miller
Secretary: Shari Heinrich
Treasurer: Michelle Orloff

Non-Board Positions

Newsletter Editor: Rachel Dye
Programs Chair: Vacant
Education Chair: Vacant
Social Media Chair: Vacant
Incentives Coordinator: Vacant
Ignite the Flame Contest Chair: Vacant
Monthly Meetings Facility Coordinator: Vacant
Equipment Inventory Coordinator: Vacant

Meetings

First "Teen" Saturday of the Month. Social: Noon to 12:30. Business: 12:30. Guest Presentation: 1:30. Location: Check www.cofwevents.org

Dues

New Members: \$35

Renewal before January 31: \$30. After January 31: \$35.

- Dues run January to December
- Membership with Romance Writers of America required.

Follow COFW

Twitter <https://twitter.com/COFWriters>

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

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/cofwriters/>

Closed Facebook Group <https://www.facebook.com/groups/177462723049177/>

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

P.O. Box 24254 Dayton, OH 45424

Next Meeting: March 13th, 2021; Slay Your Promos with bestselling author Nikki Sloane.

Join us for an educational talk with author Donna McMeans on defining the happily ever after for your reader! Business meeting at 12:30 pm, Discussion at 1:30 pm

Our meeting will be held via Zoom. The password will be posted on the Central Ohio Fiction Writers Group page which can be accessed via the Romance Writers of America website under the Forums tab. If anyone has any questions, email authorkimberlybeckett@yahoo.com

COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly - East

Need a boost with a story idea that has yet to see words on a page? Can't get your protagonist out of a hole you've written her into? Not sure whether the antagonist is antag-ging enough? Consider stopping by the COFW Fiction Plotters group. We meet the first Wednesday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Panera Bread in Taylor Square in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, 43068.

If you have questions, contact:

Andrea McConnell: fyrefly93@gmail.com

Saralee Etter: saralee_etter@yahoo.com

COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly - West

All the same fun as above but located in Huber Heights. We meet the second Monday of the month at 6:30 pm at the Panera Bread off I-70 exit 36.

If you have questions contact:

Jeanne Estridge: jeanneestrIDGE@gmail.com

Rachel Dye: juliette.r.hyland@gmail.com

Minutes of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers via Zoom

13 Feb 2021

Minutes, Meeting 02/13/2021, Zoom only

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

The mission of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers is to promote excellence in romantic fiction, help writers become published, and establish careers in the writing field.

12:00 Networking

12:30 Call Business Meeting to Order

Welcome Visitors & Round Table: introduction of members, intro bypassed since we all knew each other. Present are:

- Jeanne Estridge
- Sandy Kachurek
- Rachel Dye, writing as Juliette Hyland
- Susan Yutzey
- Janice Beckett, writing as Kimberly Becket
- Liz Deskins
- Linda Rice
- Guest: Donna MacMeans
- Becky Barker
- Michelle Orloff
- Stacy McKittrick
- Susan Heino, writing as Susan Gee Heino and Serena Gilley
- Shari Heinrich
- Bernie Miller, writing as Jordan Riley Swan
- Janet Ciccone
- Guest: Janet Irvine

Works in Progress/Incentives

- Shari Heinrich, working on her YA shifter book *Chihuahua Tales*, was on target for Feb. completion, but hit rocky patch this week, needs weekend and Monday holiday to catch up.
- Rachel Dye, writing as Juliet Hyland— turned in 5th book, took week off from writing.
- Janice Beckett, writing as Kim Beckett—4th book in Horses Heal series released; 45 copies sold first day. She did a Facebook ad, getting exposure, working on 5th, doing research on Oxford now.

- Jeanne Estridge—7 or 8 scenes to go on book 3, and 75% done with book 4. Trying to figure out how to do her boxed set—2 duets? Trio and start new set? Hopes to have 4th drop in Sept., but that depends on the editor's availability.
- Stacy, *Ghostly Protector*, going slow, writing a mystery. Won't be writing another mystery!

Incentives

Susan, Rejected from the Harlequin medical call after a year. They wanted more medical, but she was at the limit of her medical understanding, so now she'll look how to make the book fit other markets, perhaps the Inspirational line.

Shari, Participated in NYCM SSC, 8 days, 2500 words, prompts were fairy tale genre, puppeteer, building trust, which really is a theme, so how could she *not* hit a theme? Has gotten good feedback, and of the questions, none are huge; and in fact one of them she wanted readers to come to their own conclusion based on how it was written.

Susan: 2 friends want to join COFW!

Someone asked about how Julia Blaine is doing, if anyone has heard—she's about to move into new apartment, and still finalizing home sale, so has not yet moved the big furniture out. Talking about her membership with RWA—if she has financial need, she could write a letter to RWA of need. Bernie offered if there's a problem with her membership, he would be willing to pay for it—she made such a great impact on him at the first meeting he attended with COFW, sitting with him, and guiding him.

Question came up, could our perseverance fund cover the RWA fee? Answer, currently based on our bylaws, only covers COFW membership. A suggestion, we could look into whether we can amend our bylaws, but also look at RWA bylaws, make sure no issue there.

Michelle shared during the chat: Info on the RWA Perseverance Fund:
https://www.rwa.org/Online/About/Perseverance_Fund.aspx

Minutes from January Meeting—Minutes are accepted as posted in the newsletter.

Treasurer's Report

Michelle shared the treasurer's report ahead of the meeting, on the COFW loop of RWA. This is a recap of the high points:

At the end of the month our current assets were as follows:

- Checking = \$6322.65
- PayPal = \$1410.03 and Michelle will be transferring to checking.
- Balance in the Perseverance Fund = \$1,519.88
- \$920 in new member dues, and those deferred from 2020.
- \$1050 from January class with Linnea
- 2021 membership: 31 members now.

New Business

RWA and the January Townhall

Things did settle down, but with some board fighting, some members quitting, Bernie asked for thoughts about the townhall, or any questions?

At member's request, Bernie recapped the issues—that RWA had connectivity issues; they dropped the number of people from 500 to 150 who could access; people couldn't get on; LaQuette said some things that the members at large said “no, that's not right,” but LaQuette shared the emails afterwards, validating what she'd relayed, and then asked for board communication to go to whole board, then the person with issues went to the RWA forum at large, not to board, and things did *not* look good. Bernie added that at least one member in COFW will not be renewing when her membership expires; others have hinted the same thing—they gave the organization a second chance, but then the next board does this....

Membership, what are we thinking? We've previously talked and voted on disaffiliation. What are your thoughts about what RWA is doing?

Board communication still isn't what we wanted, using example of president stepping down, and then we didn't get any clear messaging, though Janet had tried hard to get more information during her time as president. Leaves us feeling like we're not as important to RWA.

Freedom of speech discussions: hate speech versus discriminatory speech versus venting, and what those board members did who stepped down, they joined into those negative discussions—positives versus negatives to my own writing reputation. Chapters should be recognized for our value.

Bernie also mentioned the financial shape—that we need a successful conference; and struggling with the contract with the Tennessee venue; Editors are the value; publishers; agents, and we don't know who will be going.

It's also about the quality of workshops at the event—it's always packed with learning opportunities.

When RWA's executive director, Allison, left, they did not replace her with a nationwide search. Leslie Scantlebury is the current executive director.

RWA is suspending the print publication, where April is the last print edition; but they do intend to do some sort of digital publication to continue. If we disaffiliate, now instead of losing 50% of our account, we would lose 25%.

We could also make donations to other organizations if we did not want RWA to have our funds; but if we made donations to OFW, every one of us who is a member of that would need to abstain from the discussion and the vote.

Some members who were in the camp of “give RWA a second chance to turn itself around,” well, RWA has been a valuable resource; and at one point matched our values, but even with this second chance, RWA is failing. This chapter has been a valuable resource. That second-chancer is waiting until July, to see what RWA is doing at the conference.

Suggestion: those COFWers with agents—ask *them* if they are going back to RWA.

Board infighting tends to happen, but an organization can stay viable; it does take a strong executive director who will have to make sure the organization works the way it is supposed to work. That seems to be a current RWA weakness. Doesn't seem to be the same problems with racism that cause the initial RWA implosion. This is another COFWer hanging on until the July convention to make a decision.

One member asked if part of the RWA board disagreement centered around a BLM donation post. Was that true? (we're not sure!); This does look like racism, if so. They thought it was a point brought up during the townhall.

Michelle shared in chat the notes she took during the Town Hall (where she references that topic):

<https://community.rwa.org/communities/community-home/digestviewer/viewthread?GroupId=343&MessageKey=4645c438-3a1d-4272-ba99-7e0ffdd5be08&CommunityKey=6321371c-5c6d-4113-964d-036be333b6e0&tab=digestviewer&ReturnUrl=%2fcommunities%2fcommunity-home%2fdigestviewer%3fCommunityKey%3d6321371c-5c6d-4113-964d-036be333b6e0>

Sourcebooks is holding their own Golden Heart type award, a telling point that they don't trust RWA to do a fair contest.

Would we lose our assets or be drawn into lawsuit? Shari answered—that was asked and answered by chapter liaison on the Leadership forum: chapters would NOT be drawn into lawsuits and would not owe *any* of our treasury to cover any RWA debts. However, see what Shari is providing post meeting, that response from Ashley Wucher, the chapter liaison, which doesn't say quite what Shari remembered:

“5. Hypothetically, if RWA goes under, what happens to individual Chapter funds? Are they considered RWA property at that point or would those funds be retained by the Chapters? **Those funds would be retained by the Chapter since RWA and the Chapter are separate business entities.**”

<https://community.rwa.org/communities/community-home/digestviewer/viewthread?GroupId=415&MessageKey=ecea4def-f08f-4a31-8d36-21702f4c2c8e&CommunityKey=7d19cbe5-ad70-48e6-863f-2acc4f63c3c8&tab=digestviewer&ReturnUrl=%2fcommunities%2fcommunity-home%2fdigestviewer%3fcommunitykey%3d7d19cbe5-ad70-48e6-863f-2acc4f63c3c8%26tab%3ddigestviewer>

Rachel has chosen to let her RWA membership lapse in at the end of June 2021. She stated that it was because RWA continuing struggles to be inclusive and transparent with their members and chapters.

Another thinking to wait to see what happens in July at the conference.

No motions were made, no votes taken—this was all discussion. We reminded that if we did decide to do anything with disaffiliation, we would have to follow the procedures of announcing such a vote in advance.

Susan will write up the presentation today, Donna MacMeans, “The Other HEA.”

Non-Board Positions:

- **Programs and Workshop Chair**—Jeanne gave us an update
 - Jeanne has been following up on suggestions—Kate McMurray for April
 - Hasn't heard back from Liz on May. Shari will take over this one, since she had a contact, and will cc Jeanne when she follows up. (Shari was going to report back that the assistant to the assistant editor hadn't responded to me, either, and planned to follow up regarding if Liz would be OK with us charging a fee for the session. Another member chimed in Liz was doing a session, maybe today, and that the chapter was charging a fee, perhaps \$30.)
 - Nikki Sloan should be March, and Jeanne hasn't heard back from her. Nikki is one of the board members from the townhall board resignations. The chapter discussed finding a potential speaker we might need at short notice. What we don't want to have happen is to have that person lined up, then find that Nikki does still plan to lead the workshop.
- **Education Chair (Digital classes)**—
 - Still not filled. Lori from PubCraft would have to be paid to fill this position if no chapter members volunteer to fill it.

New business

When are we willing to talk about live meetings? Think: what would you need, vaccinations percentage of members, perhaps, before we do in person meetings? We will talk about this topic at the March meeting, so please be prepared with ideas.

Minutes respectfully submitted, Shari Heinrich

The Other HEA

Grab Your Readers with Emotional Attachment

Workshop by Donna MacMeans

COFW Feb. 13, 2020

Recap by Susan Gee Heino

Donna MacMeans is an award-winning, best-selling author and long-time member of COFW. Four of her most popular Victorian-set romance novels are available now in The Chambers Boxed Set. Not only are her books packed full of engaging characters and emotion, but Donna also enjoys making her readers laugh. Donna is a happy grandmom with one husband, two wonderful adult children, and a not very adult cat. They all reside in the heart of Ohio. Visit her website at www.donnamacmeans.com and please sign up for her monthly newsletter.

Donna MacMeans presented her workshop our group via Zoom. She introduced us to the concept of Rooting Interests—the idea that to engage our readers, we need to give them reasons to root for our characters the way fans root for their team. She broke down, very concisely, what this means.

Rooting Interests are elements of a story that can be used to get the reader invested in our characters. They are useful in any genre fiction, not just romance. Donna has determined that these rooting interests fall under three separate categories. She gives us an easy way to remember them.

We all know what HEA means for a romance writer—it stands for Happily Ever After. That's what we want, isn't it? Well, rooting interests can get us there. All we need to remember are The Other HEA, the three types of rooting interests.

H = Humanistic

E = Empathy

A = Admiration

What are Humanistic rooting interests? If we want our readers to relate to our characters, we need to highlight their human qualities. These are some examples of Humanistic rooting interests: a character helps the less fortunate, she makes friends with a dog, she comes to the aid of a friend, she shows ethical responsibility, she has suffered humiliation, etc.

What are Empathy rooting interests? To create empathy for our character, we can show that he suffers undeserved misfortune, has been betrayed, feels like an outsider, has repressed pain, fears danger of some sort, etc.

What are Admirable rooting interests? If we want readers to like and admire our characters, we focus on admirable traits. We can show that our characters have self-confidence and courage, that they are passionate for a cause, they are attractive, or have

a sense of humor. Perhaps they are the underdog who never gives up, they sacrifice for others, they take an active rather than passive role, and they are admired by others.

For a more complete list of Rooting Interests, you can find them at Donna's website, here <https://www.donnamacmeans.com/extras-rooting-interests-for-writers.php>.

Donna also pointed out that when your character has an especially heroic profession, such as police officer or firefighter, you will probably need to use extra Humanistic rooting interests to make the character relatable. A more harsh character might need extra Empathy or Admirable rooting interests. The goal is to give the reader a reason to care, to keep turning the pages.

Donna asked us to remember how many times we've started reading a book only to abandon it. Why did we stop reading? She thinks rooting interests—or lack of them—might play a role.

Years ago when Kindle was first changing the way people read, they did a study. It was found that most readers who abandoned a book did so at about the third chapter. As authors, we know that this is generally the spot where we create a major turning point in the story.

So why would readers stop reading here? Because they recognized that the set up was complete, they'd been introduced to the characters and the conflict, and for some reason they decided it just wasn't worth it to continue. They did not care enough to continue. They weren't invested—they weren't rooting for the characters.

We all know how hard it is to get the attention of an editor or an agent. We've heard them warn us that they usually only read about three pages of a submission before they reject it. Three pages isn't much—what can we do to keep their attention? We've got to give them something that stands out right away. They need to root for the characters.

And if you're not trying to snag an agent or editor, you're still not off the hook. Donna pointed out that many independent authors enroll their books in the Kindle Unlimited program. Here they earn royalties based on pages read. If readers abandon your book after a few pages, you certainly can't earn very much! This is just one more reason to keep them turning pages and reading—keep them rooting for your characters.

Where did Donna get this idea for thinking in terms of rooting interests? She discovered it while studying books and workshops on screenwriting. As she investigated the notion, she took a look at the movies she enjoyed. Sure enough, she found rooting interests.

In watching *The Firm*, Donna noticed that in the very opening minutes, each shot gave clear insight into the main character. It was the same when she studied *Philadelphia* with Tom Hanks. The screenwriters and directors knew they needed to show, up front, that these characters were real people with Humanistic, Empathy, and Admirable traits.

Donna shifted her study from films to books. On a flight, she started reading *Montana Sky* by Nora Roberts. “It was like explosions were going off in my head,” Donna said. “There were so many rooting interests!” Counting them, she found a total of 33 rooting interests in just a short section of the book.

As a CPA, Donna loves to analyze things. She revels in statistics and measurable figures. She approached her writing career no differently.

In 2005, Donna was still an unpublished writer, trying to break into a tough industry. She noticed books by debut authors were coming out all the time and wondered, “What do these books have that mine don’t? What was it about these books that got an editor’s attention?” With a group of like-minded friends, Donna began analyzing.

She and her group studied the market. They read and read and read, then they compiled some data. Donna wanted to know, could rooting interests be the thing that set these debut books apart? Here’s what she and her group discovered:

Books by big name authors: avg. 17 rooting interest in first chapter
Books by debut authors: avg. 20 rooting interests in first chapter

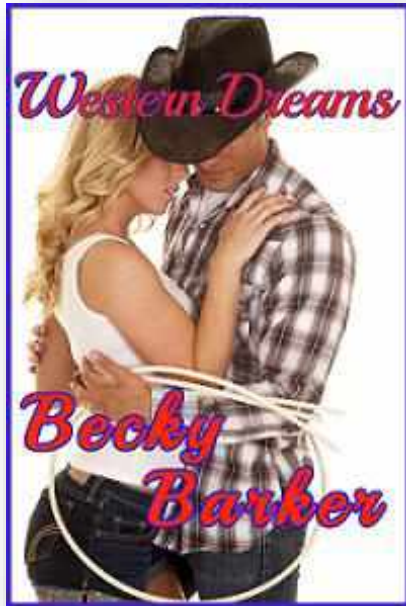
Just for fun, Donna decided to gather some statistics for works by unpublished writers. When the Golden Heart awards were announced for that year, Donna went back to study the entries she had judged for that contest. Sure enough, the entry that she had given the highest score had the highest number of rooting interests in the opening pages! It seemed that the lower the score, the lower the number of rooting interests.

Of course, Donna points out that rooting interests are subjective. We won’t all interpret them the same way. Still, it does seem that overall most of us are drawn to similar qualities in characters. We want to root for people we admire, people who seem real, people who care about something. When we root for them, we are invested in their story. We keep turning the pages.

Donna challenged everyone to do some homework. What is a movie you’ve enjoyed? Why not watch it again and notice the rooting interests packed into the opening scenes. What about your favorite books? Pull them off your keeper-shelf and count the rooting interests in the first chapter.

Now, look at your own work in progress. Can you use Donna’s list—or think up some elements of your own—to add interest to your characters? Considering this other HEA might just be what you need to keep your readers turning pages, all the way to the Happily Ever After.

New Releases:



Western Dreams *by Becky Barker*

A fun, sexy contemporary western romance.

Bree Conley is back at the Blackstone ranch and Reece Blackstone is at the end of his rope.

Maybe he loved her once but that's in the past, and now she's a total distraction. How can he get any work done when Bree's so beautiful, so sassy and so tempting?

Bree has no intention of rekindling their romance despite the fact that he was a perfect specimen of dream-worthy male. She has new dreams to fulfill, which includes turning the neighboring ranch into a wildlife sanctuary.

Maybe, if he's lucky, she'll take Reece for a walk on the wild side...

Available Now!

COFW has a goal sheet!!!



Want to track a daily word count and compete with your fellow COFW members for the highest point total? Add your name and goals to our Magic Spreadsheet here:

<https://bit.ly/2Wprwt0>

December Winner: Shari Heinrich

The winner gets Eddie!

What's in a Routine?

By Shari Heinrich

This year of COVID-19 has thrown all of us out of our routines. Whether we used to visit loved ones every month; used to work with others and now work from home; shopped for fresh fruits and veggies every few days, hand-picking the perfect avocado or lemon, and now do curbside pickup; participated in group runs or rides and now sign up for the virtual Sesame Street 100; or....

It's not just me, right? Okay, so that description is exactly me, but we all have the routines we trusted, that comforted us, that kept us healthy, spiritually fulfilled. We all had the ways we trusted to give us our creativity.

I mean, I'm an introvert, and I live by myself in a big house, and I have two cats to keep me company, so I should be in my element. I have this great picture window to look out, so when I'm doing my day job as a business process analyst working from home now, and I need those moments to think, to process the requirements one of our program areas has given me, I don't have to look at the pretty calendar with nature on it; I don't have to focus on the single flower picture or animal picture I changed out every few weeks—I gaze out the window, maybe catch the flash of enormous wings as one of the hawks hunts. I process the information now that my brain has had the moment of centering, of clarity.

But this also means that my work brain has interrupted my creative brain. The space that used to be reserved for writing, instead, now it goes into work mode for 8 hours a day. Come the end of that day, I have to “flip a switch,” and cue the creative brain that it's time for it to kick in. I used to have that drive home to reset. Now, it's make sure I get out for that run, or do some stretching before I sit right back down to create my YA worlds.

In these times of change, the COFW community has served as my constant in creativity via the M/W/F sprints that Rachel Dye launched for us. I've run a lot of them the past few months. As I powered through those edits of *Queen of Wands*, hacking words to bring it back into YA wordcount range, those three days a week served as my anchor. Even if I often missed the first sprint due to yard work or a workout, I kept myself editing. Three guaranteed days a week I knew I'd work on the novel, and be encouraged by any member who joined—Rachel, Linda, Anne, Marisa most often. Thanks, ladies, for having my back.

Another great thing about sprint support is that we cheer each other on through successes and setbacks. When Linda writes like the wind, 500 words in twenty minutes, she's making fantastic progress on her novel. She's motivating me to keep at it myself. Even when I'm exhausted after tackling the snow on my 180-foot driveway with that throat wide enough to park two cars parallel to the road.

Whatever your goals, share them with the chapter, whether at the meetings or on the Facebook page or on the RWA loop. As a chapter, we're stronger together. In this time of COVID, where

almost a year in and nothing's "normal" anymore, at the heart of it, each of us COFW members is the same writer we were before the pandemic.

I hope I'll see you at one of those sprints, or you'll share one of your goals or accomplishments. Keep building our community. Because as I keep working on my fourth novel, and start choosing agents for query round two on *Queen of Wands*, you can be sure I'll reach out to all of you, cherishing your friendship. Admiring you for the wonderful writers you are.

