



September, 2018.

Volume XXX. Issue 08.

Welcome to Central Ohio Fiction Writers Newsletter

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Newsletter Editor. Sandra J. Kachurek

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.

September 2018/ Vol. XXX/ Issue 08/1

♥ Central Ohio Fiction Writers ♥
Proud Chapter of the Romance Writers of America®

2018 Leadership

President, Jenessa McRoy <jenessahl@gmail.com>
Secretary, Susan Heino <susan_gee_heino@yahoo.com>
Treasurer, Jeanne Estridge <jeanne.estrIDGE.author@gmail.com>

Program Chair, Aleta Dodson <aletawrites@hotmail.com>
Newsletter Editor, Sandra J. Kachurek <sandrajkachurek@gmail.com>
Membership Chair, Linda Rice <lindarice05@gmail.com>
Social Media Chair, Andrea McConnell <fyrefly93@gmail.com>
Incentives, Julia Blaine <julmassie@aol.com>

Meetings

First "Teen" Saturday of the Month.
Social: Noon to 12:30. Business: 12:30. Guest Presentation: 1:30.

Location

Norwich Township Building
5181 Northwest Parkway. Hilliard, OH 43026

Dues [Must also join RWA.]

Renewal before January 31: \$25.
After January 31: \$30.

Follow COFW

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

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

Closed Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/177462723049177/>

Central Ohio Fiction Writers

P.O. Box 24254
Dayton, OH 45424

Next COFW Meeting: September 15

J. Leigh Bailey

Mastering the Meet-Cute in Romance Fiction

The very first encounter between the romantic leads of your story sets the tone for the rest of the book. This encounter either pulls the reader deeper into the story or makes them decide the book isn't for them.

The meet-cute is the quirky, funny, sexy, and/or memorable way two people meet for the first time. It has been used for decades in film, television, and novels as a way to get the audience immediately sucked into the romantic storyline.



This presentation will use examples from popular movies, television shows, and books to identify the main characteristics of an effective meet-cute, to recognize the basic formulas and tropes of the meet-cute, and to explore ways to create fresh versions of this classic plot device.

J. Leigh Bailey is an office drone by day and the author of Young Adult and New Adult LGBT Romance by night. She can usually be found with her nose in a book or pressed up against her computer monitor.

<http://jleighbailey.net/>

October 13

Suzanne Sabol on Story Mapping

[Suzanne M. Sabol](#) has been writing from age 16, when she finished her first full-length novel. She graduated from The Ohio State University with majors in Criminology, International Studies, Russian and Political Studies. She married her wonderful husband, Ross, who makes sure her books don't have too much gore because there could be more. They live in Columbus with their daughter, Scarlet.

November 10

ALLIE PLEITER

THE CHUNKY WRITING METHOD

**MORNING WORKSHOP AND AFTERNOON WRITING TIME
FOR NANO WRITING PROJECT**

Clintonville Woman's Club

3951 N. High St., Columbus 43214

9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M.

**Members: \$45. Non-Members: \$49.
Includes Lunch.**

Bring laptops, extension cords and enthusiasm.

Do you find you can't seem to finish that book you've been writing?
Do you want to write faster and get published?

Allie's innovative Chunky Writing Method offers practical, real-world productivity advice in an easy-to-read and inspiring workbook. You will follow a step-by-step plan to identify your unique writing "chunk" and wield it to create a solid plan that works "even when life gets in the way."

It doesn't matter if this is your first manuscript or your 20th, writers of every experience level have "gotten Chunky" with dramatic results. Whatever your writing style, *The Chunky Method Handbook* will help you chart an individualized path to your creative writing goals.

http://www.alliepleiter.com/thechunky_method.html

Registration Opens: 9:00 A.M.

COFW Fiction Plotters Meet Monthly

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.

To verify members are meeting and to stay in touch in between, they use this email: cofwplot@yahoo.com

If you have questions, contact:

Andrea McConnell: fyrefly93@gmail.com

Saralee Etter: saralee_etter@yahoo.com



Works in Progress/Attendance for August 18

01. Aleta Dodson: combined *Foolish Gamble* and *Kentucky Bluegrass Wedding* into a duet Kindle set. Hoping to finalize Nashville romance series and publish all three stories before end of year.
02. Jessica Rappaport (guest): contemporary romance, just finished my first book, still fine-tuning it before I send it out to potential agents and publishers.

03. Arianna James: continuing to edit WIP, get it to my agent by 8/27 deadline.
04. Janice Beckett: *Racing Toward Love*—just sent first draft to publisher for edits.
05. Becky Barker: over half way through WIP, *Deeper than Love*.
06. Linda Rice: continuing editing of WWII book.
07. Alyssa Hardin (guest): visiting.
08. Barbara Failing (guest): moving to Dublin in the fall; hoping to get back to my ms and send it to agents/editors.
09. Shari Heinrich: third draft of *Queen of Wands*; plot point 54 of 60!
10. Erin Novotny w/a Tobi Doyle: trial romance novella, romantic suspense third draft of *Adrianna*.
11. Donna MacMeans: writing *To Bait a Rake*.
12. Jeanne Estridge: *Touched by a Demon*, Book 3, *The Demon Wore Stilettos*.
13. Linda B. Munn: *Another Love Story*—editing in progress.
14. Saralee Etter: still working on *Her Wild Irish Rogue*.
15. Jenessa McRoy: moving!
16. Susan Gee Heino: sending first chapter of *Rogue of the Greenwood* to be included in chapter anthology for *Legend to Love* series.

Minutes, Treasury Report, Attendance for August 18, 2018

Norwich Township Building, Hilliard

Submitted by Susan Gee Heino, Secretary

President Jenessa McRoy convened the meeting; Secretary Susan Heino arrived late.

Works in Progress sheet was distributed, and introductions were made.

Continuing Business

Nominating Committee: Jenessa put out a call for a nominating committee. Volunteers are needed to fill upcoming vacancies on our board as well as chair positions. Jenessa has completed her maximum terms as president so her position will be open next year. Requirements can be found in our By-Laws and will be posted to the loop.

Online Workshops: The board is still working to schedule these for 2019 as a way to increase income for COFW. One topic suggestion has been the "Workshop in a Box" offered by RWA. Members have investigated this and determined the current offering is not very good. We will be on the lookout for better ones to be offered.

Forum and Loop troubles: We are still experiencing significant trouble with Yahoo Groups. Jenessa cannot upload documents to our files and will continue to make these available somehow. Again, a change will have to be made.

Code of Conduct: In September, President Jenessa will be posting RWA's new Code of Conduct for an upcoming vote to incorporate this into our by-laws. If COFW does not accept the code, we will no longer be affiliated with RWA and must disband. It is not expected we will

have issues with this code—COFW is a well-behaved bunch. Voting will take place in November.

Policy & Procedures (P&P) update: The COFW board will begin updating our P&P manual. This is also a routine procedure and must be done every year to assure the manual is current with our policies and procedures. Board will notify members when update is complete.

Meeting Recap: Saralee Etter and Aleta both volunteered to write this month's recap.

Reports

Incentives Report: Julia Blaine was unavailable so Susan Gee Heino asked for news and milestones from our members. Many rewards were passed out to celebrate, including;

Arianna James won RWA's Golden Heart® Award at 2018 RWA Conference Denver in July;

Janice Beckett's book, *Dressage Dreaming*, came out in paperback; Barbara Failing was attending her first meeting and recently got a rejection;

Aleta Dodson released her novella as a Kindle Duets set; Jeanne Oates Estridge received the proof copy on her latest book; Erin Novotny did a speed-pitch at RWA Conference and got three requests;

Donna MacMeans spoke at a senior independent living center; and Shari Heinrich will be pitching to Donald Maass in September.

Newsletter Report: Sandy Kachurek was not in attendance.

Treasurer's Report: Jeanne presented the treasurer's report. Our current bottom line is \$8160.36.

Programs Report: Aleta gave an update of the exciting programs she

has lined up for us here at COFW, including:

September 15: “Mastering the Meet-Cute” with J. Leigh Bailey;

October 13: author Suzanne Sabol on “Mapping Your Series”;

November 10, All-Day Event: In conjunction with National Novel Writing Month, COFW will be hosting Allie Pleiter who will present her “Chunky Writing Method” at the Clintonville Women’s Club. The day will begin at 9:30 am and include workshop, lunch, and writing time. Cost will be \$45 for COFW members, and \$49 for non-members. The event will end by 4:00 pm;

December Holiday Party! We love to celebrate the end of the year with a party for members-only. Date, time, location, details to come; and

January 19, 2019: author Maddie James will speak to us about writing a series.

Damon Suede: One of the hottest authors out there and an excellent teacher, too, Aleta is working to bring Mr. Suede to present a workshop in 2019. Let’s cross our fingers!

New Business

RWA Website Hosting: Some members in attendance at RWA Conference were privileged to be in a workshop where RWA unveiled its new web platform. It looks very promising! The online chapters who have been testing this say they are pleased with it and from the outside their websites look wonderful.

COFW should consider making the shift to RWA for hosting our site—it will save us considerable money and give easier access to some of the membership and payment features. Sadly, this will not include a “loop” feature, so it will not solve our Yahoo issues there.

NEORWA Cleveland Rocks Workshop: Several members will be

attending this event.

COFW Branding: Members raised concern about how to make COFW relevant to new, diverse and younger members. This is an issue that will be investigated further with an eye toward updated branding.

Meeting adjourned at 1:20 p.m. to prepare for our speakers, several COFW members who recently attended the 2018 Romance Writers of America Conference.



Highlighted Sessions

From

2018 Romance Writers of America Conference

Recap by Saralee Etter

At the August COFW meeting, members who attended the 2018 Romance Writers of America Conference in Denver shared with us highlights of the workshops and meetings they attended.

For any of us who couldn't make the conference but wish we could benefit from an entire presentation, note that RWA sells conference audio recordings here <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=1343#RWA2018>

First, Janice Beckett shared her notes from "Crafting Authentic Military Characters" by Geri Krotow. Krotow, a Navy veteran, talked about the myths and truths about heroes and heroines in the military.

Common character traits for members of the military include intensity, mission focused, dedication, integrity, a commitment to service and being prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice. For example, Navy SEALs are extremely intense, and this trait is going to apply to all aspects of their life.

Motivations include patriotism, a desire to serve their country, and continuing a family legacy (since many parents of military personnel are also military).

In some ways, the military can be more socially progressive than civilian society—military forces were racially integrated, accepted women in leadership positions, and accepted same-sex couples and transgender individuals before civilian society did (although not during the current administration).

However, the military is apolitical—they serve the country, not a particular individual or party. Military personnel must abstain from politics while they are on duty. They must not wear their uniforms to political events or rallies or use their military standing to support a particular political ideology.

Because military families move often and are asked to travel to other countries, learn other languages and experience other cultures than their own,

they can be more adaptable than civilians who stay in one place.

Geri Krotow has pet peeves regarding how the military is portrayed. One example is showing a character in the wrong uniform or a military woman with long, flowing hair. It's also important for writers to do their research in order to depict post traumatic syndrome, PTSD, authentically.

Next, Jeanne Estridge talked about the workshop "Writing for your Id" by Jennifer Lynn Barnes, PhD. Because we, and our readers, all have "pleasure buttons" (which Barnes defined as hard-wired preferences in the brain for enjoyment and gratification), a wise author will be sure to include as many pleasurable moments as possible to keep audiences riveted.

The presenter identified seven pleasure buttons:

Sex—as you would expect, this refers to... sex;

- Touch—cuddling or other non-sexual contact that brings comfort and satisfaction;
- Beauty—descriptions of beautiful people and places, makeover stories, stories where a person's beauty is their source of power;
- Wealth—depictions of wealth and luxury, even when the wealth is being disparaged;
- Status or Power—influence, connections, occupational power or personal prestige, and even power differentials (prince and pauper, for example);
- Competition—contests, races, games, battles, rivalries of all kinds; and
- Danger—people like to read about vicarious danger, characters and worlds in peril, moments of personal danger.

Jeanne spoke of an additional pleasure button, that of Anguish. Readers love a black moment or a time when it looks like the character is completely destroyed or humiliated.

Jennifer Lynn Barnes mentioned four ways to integrate pleasure buttons into stories, though the distinctions may not be clear:

Build the pleasure into the premise (*Hunger Games* puts the competition in the premise of the story, for example.) by

- Adding the pleasure to the premise;
- Adding the pleasure to the plot; and
- Including moments, details or scenes of pleasure.

How do you find those pleasure buttons?

Make a list of things that you love to read about. Some things that pushed pleasure buttons for the Jennifer Lynn Barnes included organ transplantation, unnatural hair color, dating bets, boarding schools, dying requests and old maps.

Consider the pleasurable elements you identify in characters, story elements, plots, places and details. Ask yourself: When your character is in trouble, how does he or she solve it? Through money, actions, community effort, personal skills, cleverness, or something else?

The third summary was by Erin Novotny, who talked about "How to Find Your KDP and Amazon Audience" presented by David Symonds (CreateSpace) and Dan Slater (KDP).

Most of the information in the talk was familiar, since it focused on choosing the right keywords and making sure that an author's book is positioned to reach as many potential readers as possible through the Amazon algorithm.

KDP stands for Kindle Direct Publishing, where authors can choose to offer their ebooks for sale exclusively through Amazon and not make them available through other ebook sales outlets such as iTunes or Kobo.

CreateSpace is being replaced by Kindle Direct Publishing.

Erin said that the rise in the popularity of audiobooks makes it important for authors to make sure they have an audiobook version of their story. ACX is an online marketplace for creating audiobooks. Draft2Digital is another company that is expanding its services in that area as well.

A recent problem with books published through KDP is Amazon purging reviews that they suspect are not authentic. Authors can contact KDP and ask

for a certain review to be reinstated, but it's up to Amazon.

With respect to bare-chested book covers ("nipples on book covers," as Erin put it), Amazon has recently changed its rules regarding advertising of such books.

In the past, book ads on Amazon's front page (like on a Kindle) had to display the book's actual cover. Therefore, if a book cover had a naked male torso, it could not be advertised on Amazon's front page because it might be seen by young children.

But now, authors can substitute another, less-offensive image in the place of the book cover, which will allow these books to be advertised on Amazon's front page.

Also discussed was "book stuffing," which is the unethical practice of offering a book for sale, with additional books inserted at the end as so-called "additional material."

For example, if an author had a three-book series, and each book had 400 pages, the author would add the other two books to the end of the novel advertised. This would turn each copy of the "book," in the view of Amazon's computer, into a 1,200-page tome, with the other two complete novels stuffed into the back.

Because KDP pays the author a small amount per page read, the bigger the book is, the more money earned from a reader who finishes the whole thing.

The Amazon algorithm only knows that the reader has read the whole thing if they click on the first and last pages. At the end of the book they really bought, readers were encouraged to click to the very back to get some benefit – in the case of one author, to enter a drawing for an item from famous jeweler Tiffany's.

When the reader skipped over the extra material to the back, the computer would credit the author with all 1,200 (or however many) pages read. This scandal was called "Tiffanygate" and this kind of gaming of the system has been disallowed by Amazon.

The second session Erin Novotny attended was a panel about hybrid authors

called "The Ultimate Happily Ever After: Hybrid Publishing Decoded" with Kimberly Brower, Justine Bylo, and Helena Hunting.

All three authors said that being both traditionally and independently published were ideal for them, since some stories don't fit well into a traditional mold. That doesn't mean, however, that there isn't an audience for those books.

Moving from traditional to indie publishing takes planning and forethought. A writer who wants to "just write" may choose to go the traditional route. Someone willing to be an entrepreneur can learn the ropes of publishing independently. Either way, marketing is mostly up to the author.

Finally, Donna MacMeans presented a summary of what the RWA Board has been working on.

Topics of major concern included revising the Policy and Procedures Manual, the end of the Golden Heart® contest after 2019 (Something else will be considered, but it is not certain what that will be.), and diversity.

There was a discussion of whether to include a DNF (Did Not Finish) category for the RITA. Also, with respect to the RITA®, new computer software will keep track of RITA judges' scores. If it seems that a judge is unfairly scoring diverse manuscripts too low, then he or she will be challenged.

Donna said that members who have ideas on how RWA can help authors of all stripes, they should contact RWA directly or talk to a board member.

The RWA also held a Diversity Summit. A summary of the summit can be seen at <https://www.rwa.org/p/bl/et/blogaid=2283>.

A survey of romance readers was discussed, and the findings are included here: <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=582>

Among other things, the results showed that the greatest percentage of readers are between 25-34, a large proportion are print readers, and the future emerging readership is more diverse in gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity, more active on social media, frequent readers. They also consume fiction in a variety of ways, including on tablets, smartphones, and via

audiobooks. For the complete details see the study.

In addition, RWA is working on improving their website and will offer chapters like COFW the chance to have their website handled under the RWA site umbrella. The services of gotowebinar.com will be available for chapters to offer webinars and teaching sessions online.

Donna also mentioned that the PAN retreat speaker, Rosanne Bane, gave an excellent presentation on "Writer's Block."

Rosanne discussed the "Reptilian Brain," which contains the primitive fight or flight response, and the "Cognitive Brain" which does all of our conscious thinking.

One of the problems with this set-up is that our cognitive brain thinks too much, which scares our reptilian brain into immobility and we end up paralyzed and unable to work. Briefly, the way around this impasse is to take a walk or a shower, or something else that allows the cognitive brain to stop thinking too much.

On Rosanne Bane's website, <https://baneofyourresistance.com/> she has many materials to help writers overcome the writer's twin problems of resistance and being overwhelmed.

Visit the RWA website today to check out the resources available there, order a workshop audio recording, and learn more about writing for today's romance reader.



Saralee Etter is the author of three traditional Regency romances. Her next book, releasing in October 2018, is *Her Wild Irish Rogue*, part of the *Legend to Love* Regency romance series, with a protagonist based on the legendary Irish hero Cuchulain. She is still working on *A Short Sharp Shock*, the first book in a Victorian-set mystery series featuring sleuth Lucy Turner and her friends, William S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan.

www.saraleeetter.com and *A Fine Mystery Indeed*, at www.saraleeetter.com/blog1

♥ First Release ♥
by Jeanne Oates Estridge

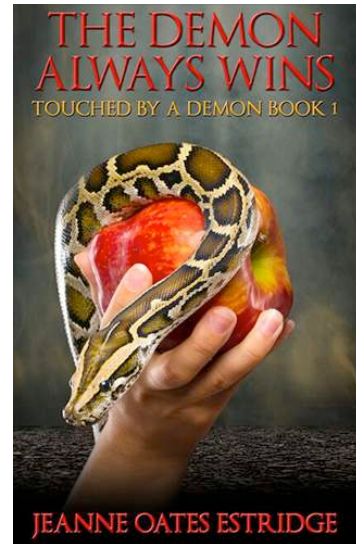
The Demon Always Wins

September 1 Release on Amazon.

After beating Satan at poker, demon Belial takes on a new bet: If he can get God's champion to curse God within the agreed timeframe, Hell gains another soul and Belial earns a promotion to chief demon.

Widowed nurse Dara Strong, a granddaughter of famous demon fighters, recognizes Belial and kicks him out of her clinic.

Belial doesn't give up. As their conflict escalates, so does their passion, and they discover that sometimes you have to go through Hell to claim your Heaven.



Jeanne Oates Estridge wrote her first short story in third grade, a tale of birth-control-challenged bunnies who named their children in alphabetical order. She has a Master's in Creative Writing at the Nora Robert's School of Romance Writing at MacDaniel College.

The Demon Always Wins won the 2015 RWA Golden Heart® and is the first book in her *Touched by a Demon* trilogy of paranormal romances.

Jeanne joined COFW in 2014 before her first trip to RWA Conference where she learned of the Golden Heart® contest and went on to win it the next year. She also finaled for the 2018 Golden Heart®. <http://www.jeanneestridge.com/>

New Release

by Robin Gianna

The Family They've Longed For



Love. Family. Him.

Pediatric surgeon Rory Anderson is dreading returning to her small Alaskan hometown and seeing her ex, local doctor Jacob Hunter. After everything they've lost, discovering he's a single dad brings back too many painful memories.

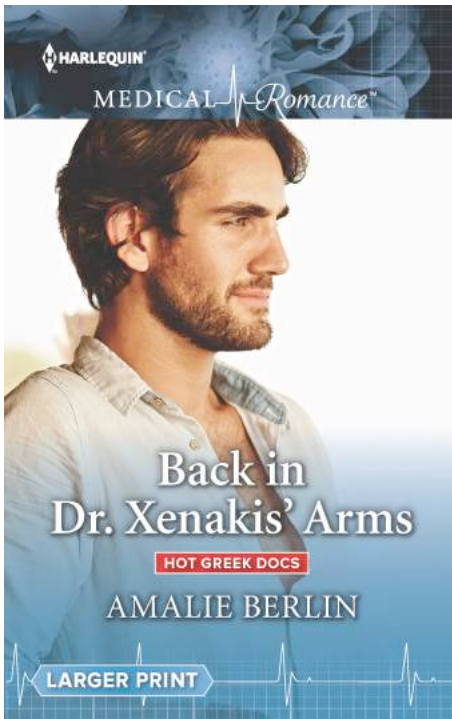
But when it becomes clear their chemistry is as powerful as ever, Rory dares to hope that Jacob and his son could be the family she's always longed for ...

Robin Gianna joined COFW in 2004 as a naive newbie. "Being a member has been hugely important to my growth as a writer and eventual publishing contract with Harlequin/Mills & Boon. Members are friendly and inclusive, always generous with their knowledge and happy to share their experiences and expertise with me. Writing is mostly a solitary endeavor, and it's easy to get discouraged. Spending time with other authors has always been the boost I need to feel excited again. COFW and RWA gives me exactly that!"



When she's not writing, Robin's life is filled with a happily messy kitchen, a needy garden, a wonderful husband, three great kids, a drooling bulldog and one grouchy Siamese cat. <http://www.robingianna.com/>

Recent Release
by Amalie Berlin
Back in Dr. Xenakis' Arms



She can't resist the doc from her past!

But do they have a future?

In this *Hot Greek Docs* story, obstetrician Erianthe Nikolaides is returning home to Mythelios and dreading seeing her sinfully hot ex, Dr. Ares Xenakis! She's still haunted by the devastating circumstances of their breakup. To truly heal she must share her pain with Ares.

But when a scorching kiss reignites their desire, dare Eri risk her heart a second time?

Amalie Berlin lives with her family and a passel of critters in Southern Ohio. She writes quirky, independent characters for Harlequin Medical Romance. Her favorite stories buck expectations with unusual settings and situations. She believes that humor can powerfully illuminate truth--especially when juxtaposed against intense emotions, and that love is stronger and more satisfying when your partner can make you laugh through the times when you don't have the luxury for tears.

Amalie is a member of COFW because she believes, "We all need a place where our particular brand of creative strangeness is normal. Because normal people just don't get it." <http://www.amalieberlin.com/>

The Benefits of Joining National Novel Writing Month: An Interview With Gina Smith, COFW Member and NaNoWriMo Municipal Liaison

by Sandra J. Kachurek

We may still be feeling summer's heat, but now is a good time to consider participating in National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) held every November. Winning the event means hitting the ideal goal of writing 50,000 words in 30 days.

Gina Smith, writing as Rochelle Bradley, is a NaNoWriMo Municipal Liaison for the Dayton Region. Her advice might help Wrimos, NaNoWriMo writers, get the most out of the writing event, even if they don't quite achieve the 50K.

"The two biggest benefits from pledging to write in November is getting plugged into a supportive writing community and developing a daily writing regimen," Gina explained.

As a Municipal Liaison, she helps to make those benefits happen. She organizes write-ins (where writers meet together to write), giveaways and fundraisers for NaNoWriMo, a non-profit organization. She educates others about NaNoWriMo, writes up pep talks, hosts virtual and in-person write-ins, and coordinates the calendar of events.



This photo, taken from the NaNoWriMo blogsite, shows just how much fun Gina Smith, Municipal Liaison for the Dayton region, creates as she encourages the community of Wrimos to reach their writing goals.

"My favorite part about being a Municipal Liaison is encouraging others," she said.

Her dedication keeps her busy.

"Dayton is awesome. We have librarians and Wrimos who host write-ins nearly every day during NaNoWriMo. Mornings, afternoons or evenings, weekdays or weekends, there is a time just right for everyone to participate."

If Wrimos can take on the goal alone, why write in groups?

"Writing is a solitary activity," said Gina. "Obviously, there are fewer distractions when an author is alone. However, when a group comes together, we realize we aren't alone. Others are walking the same path. We can ask for help with plot, character names or suggestions. The list goes on."

NaNoWriMo believes everyone has a story to tell and those stories matter.



A selfie of Dayton area Wrimos with Gina, bottom left, making word counts for NaNoWriMo.

The group's mission statement, according to Gina, states: "National Novel Writing Month believes in the transformational power of creativity. We provide the structure, community, and encouragement to help people find their voices, achieve creative goals and build new worlds...on and off the page."

Writing 50,000 words in 30 days is quite a goal. How a Wrimo accomplishes it falls into three familiar categories: the planner, the pantsier and the one who combines planning and pantsing called a "plantsier."

However one approaches it, the task may be overwhelming for the newer writer.

"Inexperienced writers," explained Gina, "may be intimidated by the goal and might not be able to turn off their inner editor or push through writer's block."

Gina remembered one new writer who was quite successful. "I met a writer and his wife a few years ago. The wife decided to try her hand at writing but didn't have a story in mind. Finding inspiration from the NaNoWriMo.org forums, she filled a bowl with writing prompts. During the month, she'd write 1,000 to 5,000 words per prompt. She had several interwoven short stories. By the end of November, she not only met but also exceeded the goal of 50K."



Many reasons exist for why writers stall out before November ends. Gina listed some. "Computer problems, school or work, kids, illness, and the holiday. Basically, life happens."

"In my opinion," Gina added, "there are no Wrimo losers. If a writer only reaches 5,000 or 45,000 words, he or she is that much closer to concluding their story."

Participants in NaNoWriMo receive badges, including Winner badges for reaching the ideal 50K and Participant badges for lesser word counts. The badge designs change every year.

Gina joined NaNoWriMo ten years ago in 2008. "I've won each time. My best year was 2016 with 54K words." Her largest writing group is "always the one that gathers at the kick-off parties on November 1."

For experienced Wrimos such as Gina, NaNoWriMo runs more smoothly because of a writer's familiarity with the organization's online site and its forums. Wrimo regulars understand their personal abilities. "Experienced writers will know tricks to keep the words flowing, and knowing they've won in the past leads to confidence," said Gina.

NaNoWriMo began in 1999 by Chris Baty when 21 people came together in

San Francisco to write. Since then, it's grown into an international organization. The current executive director is Grant Faulkner, author of *Pep Talks for Writers: 52 Insights and Actions to Boost Your Creative Mojo* (2017).

NaNoWriMo now offers four programs: the Young Writers Program, the Come Write In program, November NaNoWriMo and Camp Nanowrimo.

The Young Writers Program (YWP) is for children. The young writers choose their own word count goals, and teachers can receive supplies for their classes. <https://ywp.nanowrimo.org/>

The Come Write In (CWI) program connects libraries, bookstores and other neighborhood spaces to unite NaNoWriMo writers. <https://nanowrimo.org/come-write-in>

November NaNoWriMo is the national event with its goal of 50,000-word novel in 30 days. <https://nanowrimo.org/>

Camp Wrimo is different. It's held twice a year in April and July. Camp Wrimos join up in a cabin. They can make their own writing goal, choosing words, pages, lines, hours or minutes. https://campnanowrimo.org/sign_in

Gina encourages everyone to try out a program in the NaNoWriMo community.

She remembers a young writer who chose to stay with NaNoWriMo his first time. "I met Charlie in November 2016. He was 14 and instead of joining NaNoWriMo's Young Writers Program, where he could choose his own word count, he decided to go for the 50K. He won! His little sister and father joined him in 2017."

For Gina, the NaNoWriMo experience has improved her writing by teaching her discipline.

"As an author, the inner editor can be our worst critic and a stumbling block. It took me years to do it, but I've learned to ignore my inner editor and push through to the end. Through Nano, I've developed a voice and found inspiration. I've determined my genre and found the courage to venture out of my home to conferences."

As a Municipal Liaison for Dayton, Gina tries to keep activities fun.

"To spur writers during November we engage in word sprints and use writing dares. One such dare was to put Tippy, a three-legged cat belonging to a former Municipal Liaison, into a story. Tippy became Dayton's mascot and our annual regional dare and has been published by a few local authors."

This past November, Dayton region warred against neighboring Indianapolis region. You can read about their antics by scrolling down the page of this link <http://blog.nanowrimo.org/page/6> Look for the headline: "For the Honor of Tippy! How to Host a Regional Competition."

The sunshine may be blazing and leaves still green but it's not too early to think about pledging to write 50,000 for National Novel Writing Month during November. For more information: <https://nanowrimo.org>.



*Wrimos celebrate November 30 in a TGIO moment:
Thank God It's Over.*

Share, and Lighten, the Load

by Leslie Marshman, In Print! Editor

What do you get out of RWA?

That's not a rhetorical question. What do *you*, personally, get out of RWA?

I have to assume something, otherwise you wouldn't belong to your local chapter, wouldn't come to the monthly meetings.

It could be you're coming for the speakers, to learn and improve your craft.

Maybe you're looking for critique partners, to take your writing to the next level.

Possibly, you're networking. Building up that base of potential readers, reviewers, blurb-givers.

And for some of you, belonging to the organization could be just for the social aspect. And that's fine.

Hopefully, each person who belongs to a local chapter is getting from it what they're looking for.

But what if the monthly meetings stopped happening? What if the chapter disappeared? Would you even care?

If the answer is yes, then it's time to start thinking about helping your chapter survive, let alone thrive.

Increasingly, in chapters across the country, both local and online, members aren't stepping up to volunteer for board or committee positions. More and more of the work is falling on the shoulders of a few members who agree, over and over, for years and years, to serve.

Last year at this time I wrote a similar article which included the advantages to being on the board, and there are many. This year, I'm hitting a bit further below the belt. Because the problem persists from year to year.

If you think you have more important things to do than contribute, does that mean the people who are on the board don't? We all have families, jobs, or

other responsibilities that limit our time. We're all striving to become successful writers. And we all want our local RWA chapter to continue to help us on that journey.

But it can't if it's not there.

This fall, when volunteers for the board are asked for, think about that. Think about what relatively small contribution you could make to assure that the organization, from which you're receiving so much, continues.

Give back. The load is easier if we share it.

Leslie Marshman writes romantic suspense, using her psychology degree to get inside the heads of her characters. Her *Goode Over Evil* is a 2018 Golden Heart finalist, 2018 Emily Best of the Best winner, 2017 Charlotte winner, 2017 Molly winner and 2018 Daphne du Maurier finalist. Leslie is the editor of Houston Bay Area RWA's *In Print!* newsletter and contest coordinator for Houston Bay Area RWA's Judge A Book By Its Cover contest. Lesliemarshman.com
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