



*Professionals, Writers & Friends Perfecting the  
Happily Ever After*

March 2021

Issue 3

## 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](http://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: April 17, 2021; Better Faster First Drafts.**

Writing a good first draft in less time is not so much a matter of typing faster but rather of using your time more efficiently. If you know where you're going before you start your journey, you'll get there faster. This means two things. First, plan the story in advance. This doesn't necessarily mean stodgy outlines with roman numerals, but rather having a good handle on the broad story you're trying to tell before you sit down to tell it. Second, find your ideal writing time and use that time well.

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.*

## **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](mailto:fyrefly93@gmail.com)

Saralee Etter: [saralee\\_etter@yahoo.com](mailto: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](mailto:jeanneestridge@gmail.com)

Rachel Dye: [juliette.r.hyland@gmail.com](mailto:juliette.r.hyland@gmail.com)

## Minutes of the Central Ohio Fiction Writers via Zoom

### 13 March 2021

Minutes, Meeting 03/13/2021, 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:

- Janice Beckett, writing as Kimberly Becket
- Becky Barker
- Janet Ciccone
- Liz Deskins
- Rachel Dye, writing as Juliette Hyland
- Susan Heino, writing as Susan Gee Heino and Serena Gilley
- Shari Heinrich
- Sandy Kachurek
- Bernie Miller, writing as Jordan Riley Swan
- Michelle Orloff
- Linda Rice

#### **Works in Progress**

- Shari Heinrich, editing her YA shifter book *Chihuahua Tales*, D2.
- Rachel Dye, writing as Juliet Hyland—returned edits on 5<sup>th</sup> book. *Reawaken in the South Pole* comes out in October. Now working on historical, sent 3 chapters in, and working on 6<sup>th</sup> medical.
- Janice Beckett, writing as Kim Beckett—about 20K into the new book, book 5.
- Becky Barker, her book went into audio production—see last month's newsletter for title.
- Michelle Orloff—put out preorder for her debut novel, *Work With Me*, office rom-com.
- Bernie—Wizard of Oz retelling, with a co-writer. And revisions on *From the Bottoms Up*. Having fun with Rom-Com.
- Sandy—sci-fi/fantasy short story, she's working on, where telemarketers have an incentive they have to hit, around heaven and hell. She aiming to send to a magazine
- Linda—not making progress on book in terms of writing it, but has done a lot of studying about the subject matter, and about writing, trying to write with deep POV. Started working on intimacy—went to a sweet romances workshop on intimacy.
- Susan—Harlequin wants another inspirational, so she's working up a proposal for that. Her placeholder for the first book is already on Harlequin's site.

#### **Incentives**

- Shari, finished that first draft in 2 months at 51K; Participated in March PitMad on Twitter, where you pitch your book 3 times. No agent likes. Attended Women's Publishing Summit and heartily recommend it. Have more than 20 sessions still on my list to watch. Was \$100 for 5 days virtual, and we have access to materials for 6 months. Put my name in for some freelance writing for educational publisher that focuses on DEI.
- Rachel: Only ONE round of edits on book 5.

**Minutes from February Meeting**—Minutes are accepted as posted in the newsletter. The chapter did discuss the amount of details in there regarding staying in RWA, and the end decision was to retain what we had, as it's the only way for chapter members who did not attend to know what we discussed.

### 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 = \$7,497.28
- PayPal = \$250.00
- Available cash = \$7,747.28
- Balance in the Perseverance Fund = \$1,519.89

Changes to account balances this month:

- One new member joined.
- Expenses of \$19.33 for website.
- Transferred \$1,193.96 from PayPal to checking.

Membership for February is 31 members.

Reported by Michelle Orloff, COFW Treasurer

### Old Business

*Meetings in person:* What ratio of vaccinated folks do we want before we get back together; and when we do get back together, should we do hybrid so that folks not ready to attend could do it via zoom? We would have to figure out microphones for that. The Columbus location, The Forge Tavern, <https://theforgetavern.com/> at 1375 Bethel Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43220, is set up for Audio-visual, so we project it will meet the needs of hybrid—some members attend, others, via zoom. We are setting June 19 as the first in-person meeting, given the number of members who raised hands in meeting as having had full vaccinations or are beginning them. Monday's plotting group that same month, Bernie will do the dry run at The Forge Tavern. Shari will help remind him of that.

*Program Writeup:* Susan will write up today's program.

*Old Business, Programs*

- July—open
- August—swapping in the presentation we would have had for July, because our July meeting overlaps the RWA convention. Heinrich finalized this post meeting.
- September—Trope Your Way to a First Draft, Rachel Dye. This is a seminar she did for a writers group, and got great feedback. Chapter raised hands, we'd love you to do that here. She has worksheets, explains her process, and the conflicts that come more naturally for some of the tropes. Because of those worksheets, this would be better in person. We will slate this for a September presentation. Thank you, Rachel!
- Oct.—open
- Nov.—open

Shari will work with Jeanne on looking up these authors below for talks, and seeing what 3 we could get for our open spots.

The one that Susan had listed, Publishing Platform, for example, BtoB, and how to make the most of it, stuff on Smashwords, and Amazon, etc. (and distribution channels that libraries work with, and how do we get into that list!)—Shari will look at the presenters from the Women's publishing summit, to see if we can get someone, and as from discussion, chapter members do like if we can have in-person speakers. We often would like to have access to people's slide shows after the presentations if possible.

**Manage Group**

**Central Ohio Fiction Writers Group**  
Central Ohio Fiction Writers Group  
Private group

**Home**

**Admin Tools**

- Member Requests
- Automatic Member Approvals
- Membership Questions
- Pending Posts
- Post Topics
- Scheduled Posts
- Activity Log
- Group Rules

**COF Central Ohio Fiction Writers Group**

you're interested in--as many as you're interested in.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Added by you	Sexual tension. Michelle has had Jeffe Kennedy's recommended to me, but hasn't taken. Link in her comment	4 votes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Writing from cultures other than European - Rebecca Roanhorse	2 votes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Added by you	Writing superheroes around the world - Fran Wilde	2 votes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Added by Susan Gee Heino	2 votes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Added by you	Visibility is Power By Roshanda Pratt - steps for authors to engage with media and social media, being your author brand live	2 votes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Added by you	1 vote
Add an option		

**About**

Welcome to the Central Ohio Fiction Writers members-only group! Central Ohio Fiction Writers (COFW) is a local chapter of the Romance Writers o... [See More](#)

**Private**  
Only members can see who's in the group and what they post.

**Visible**  
Anyone can find this group.

**Columbus, Ohio**

**General Group**

#### Non-Board Positions:

- **Programs and Workshop Chair**—Jeanne is willing to assist, but no one has stepped up to be the chair. As above, Shari will put out feelers for the five authors/topics above.
- **Education Chair (Digital classes)**—Still not filled. Lori from PubCraft would be paid; and she could moderate, but we'd need have Erin spend time instructing her on how to do it—how we pick the opportunities, how we do contracts, and how we set up the sessions. Shari will coordinate that between Erin and Bernie.

#### New Business:

*RWA National Conference:* What do we know about it? Nothing on the Chapter Leadership loop to give update. Editor loop, they talked about the negotiations with the Gaylord (RWA National

would lose a lot of dollars for breach of contract if we can't get out of the contract from COVID); and this one would be driving distance from Columbus. Some members are waiting to see if publishers and agents and editors are able to come—the RWA website has absolutely *no* details. That's the big thing, those industry opportunities. Others might attend virtually, if that is also an option, regardless of industry opportunities, if the workshops look good.

Shari motioned to adjourn at 1:25 PM after no additional new business was brought forth. Rachel seconded.

Minutes respectfully submitted, Shari Heinrich

# The Complete Package

Workshop by Nikki Sloane  
COFW March 13, 2020

Recap by Susan Gee Heino

*Nikki Sloane is an award winning, USA today bestselling author of erotic romance. She began as a screenwriter in 2001, then made the switch to novels in 2014. Before becoming a fulltime writer in 2016, Nikki worked as a graphic design manager. Visit her website at [www.NikkiSloane.com](http://www.NikkiSloane.com).*

Nikki Sloane graciously began her workshop by reminding us that we are all unique. Each one of us has our own style, so there really is no “one-size-fits-all.” However, she is happy to share what she has learned and what has worked for her.

## Packaging is king!

How we package our book is very important. This refers to all the things we do directly for the reader—cover, book description, retail sales pages, book content, ads, marketing material, etc. However, packaging is not the best thing we can do.

The *best* thing we can do is write a great story. Even the most elaborate gift needs to be something we want. She gave the example of someone receiving a beautifully wrapped gift, but inside was a membership to “Mustards of the Month Club.”

## Buzz sells!

Create some buzz, give readers something to grab onto. Hook them! Readers love tropes, so don’t be afraid to lean into them. As you’re plotting your story, consider what marketing angles you can use. This will increase your chances of creating a successful package.

## Make it a Passion Project!

We all have certain themes, certain tropes, certain story elements that are like catnip to us. We just love them and can’t get enough! Maybe it’s bodyguards, or secret crushes, or shipwrecks with drunken confessions. Go ahead and make a list of all the story elements you love. Once you determine what these are, you can incorporate them into your projects. Your passion will be evident; you will love what you write and your readers will, too.

Nikki suggests a workshop by Dr. Jennifer Lynn Barnes. It was presented at the 2018 RWA conference and the audio is available for purchase through RWA’s website. The title is “Writing to your Id” and Nikki insists that it is worth every penny of the price.

## Cliffhangers!

It’s true, nobody “likes” them, but they really do work. We should end every chapter on a cliffhanger. What if we can’t come up with enough cliffhangers to do that? Then we

should just write fewer chapters! Go ahead and make your chapters a little bit longer so you can get to that all-important cliffhanger. Each chapter might be longer, but it could actually make the book feel faster because readers will keep turning those pages.

However, you might want to be careful about ending a book with a cliffhanger. Readers don't always appreciate that. If you have another book ready for them to buy, it might work in your favor. Just don't warn them ahead of time that the book ends that way! It's not a good marketing tool.

### **Write that Series!**

You should write a series if you can. There are multiple reasons why this is a good thing for an author. A series means more books for readers to love, more ways for readers to discover you, more marketing opportunities, stronger branding, and each new release builds off the last one.

### **Strategy!**

It's time to put on your business hat. Writing is a business. Sometimes we have to do what is smart, not just what we like. Not only do we need to be passionate and creative, we need to think critically and do our research.

### **Choose the best title!**

Sometimes the title you like might not be the best one for this book. Consider it from your reader's perspective. Is this title hard to spell? Hard to pronounce? Too much like someone else's? Remember, you want readers to find your book easily when they do a quick Google search.

### **Get the Cover Right!**

Definitely do get a professional cover. Don't just pull something together yourself unless you have the graphics design background to know what you're doing. Don't settle for a cover—get the best one. Next to the writing inside your book, the cover you put on it is the most important part.

The goal of a cover is to stand out yet conform to the market. Study other books that will be out there with yours. Keep in mind who your market is, and your platform. Will you be releasing for wide distribution? Will you be publishing through Kindle Unlimited? The readerships are somewhat different—study current titles in these markets to get a feel for the types of covers that work.

Do some thumbnail comparisons, too. Copy a whole page full of postage-stamp sized covers, add yours to the mix. Now share this page with friends—ask them which three covers jump out. Does yours make the cut? What is it about the covers that catch the eye?

Also, don't forget about audio covers. If you are doing an audio book, it will need its own cover. Don't let this be an afterthought! Audio book covers are a different size than print or ebook covers. Do your research so your cover still stand out!

## **Backmatter matters!**

What you put at the end of the book helps to sell the next one. Once a reader finishes your book, backmatter that invites them to read more is always a bonus. Just remember that in a digital book, once you type The End, the book ends. So don't do that! Just go right into the backmatter with a "Thank You" instead of The End. Thank them for reading and tease them with a bit of your next book. Invite them to read more, and supply links.

## **Blurbs!**

Technically, blurbs are the helpful quotes from reviewers or other authors that help sell your books. Often, though, we also call book descriptions "blurbs." That's what we're talking about here—book descriptions. You want to describe your book in the best way to attract your readers. Study the market! If your books are in Kindle Unlimited, study those books. If you are in wide distribution, study the wide market. Find the stand-out words that are used to describe the books that your readers might like. Use these words to describe your book! Of course, make sure they fit the book.

## **Stay above the Fold!**

In the newspaper world, "above the fold" refers to material that shows up on the front page while the paper is still folded. This is the headline material—the biggest news, the most important bits that will grab attention. For authors, this is the material that shows up in an Amazon description without having to click or scroll for more. Keep this in mind as you write your book description and blurbs. How much shows "above the fold?" Make sure it's the good stuff!

## **Promotions!**

What about a publicist? Do I need one? This is up to you and your budget. Do you need someone to handle blog tours, press releases, and promotional graphics? Then maybe you need one. A great suggestion is to ask author friends for their recommendations. Once you find a publicist who might suit your needs, hire them for one project. This will give you a chance to find out how well you work together without long-term commitment.

## **Graphics!**

Less is more. Keep in mind, this isn't art. This is marketing—it needs to do a job. Don't sacrifice your message. Readers click and scroll quickly. You have three seconds or less to get their attention and make an impression. It's helpful to remember that the eye is drawn to babies, faces, animals, negative space, and objects in focus. Keep it simple and go for wide appeal.

## **Advertising!**

There are so many reasons that graphics are important. The author needs to use them for many purposes. For instance, there are Book Bub bottom ads—ads at the bottom of a Book Bub offer. With limited real estate there, make sure your message is clear. Use text sparingly so it is not too small, and aim for bright colors, high contrast, and a strong call to action. Always include your cover and the sale price.

Graphics also play a huge role in Facebook ads. Be careful with these! Social media often has filters that screen for too much skin. If you want your ad to go through, make sure it meets the regulations. Study successful ads that come through your feed. Keep in mind that sometimes your whole image won't show—so be careful about important info that might get missed. Don't use too much text. People "shop" the image first, then the headline. Interestingly, ads without covers sometimes perform better. People are more likely to click on it to see the cover if it is not included.

You will also be writing advertising copy. This is where you really lean into your hook or your trope. Readers love excerpts that end on a cliffhanger! Witty dialog can also work well. As with everything, be sure you study the market. Go to Kindle quotes or Goodreads highlights to find things that readers really responded to. Let your copy tell who the character is, what they want, and why they can't get it.

### **Questions?**

**Q:** How is the best way to find a publicist or a graphic designer?

**A:** Reach out to other authors and ask. Focus on one small project to start with. Really consider what your needs are, what you are looking for. Query a PR company the way you might query an agent. Join an Indy Author Group, that's a great place to get information. Keep asking, keep studying—be the squeaky wheel.

**Q:** What about niche publishing? Would a publicist be able to help with that?

**A:** Yes! Follow the same advice as above but be very specific about what you need. Look for someone who loves to think outside the box.

**Q:** If Facebook ads without covers do well, what would one look like?

**A:** It would include buy links, a quote or a blurb, eye-catching image, and price.

**Q:** Is Kindle Unlimited a good idea at this time?

**A:** For a debut author, absolutely a smart choice! Enrolling in KU helps build a level of trust with readers. It gives them access to your books without a commitment. If you're not sure if KU is for you, study other authors in the program to see how they make it work. What are you doing that compares? What do you do that is different?

**Q:** What do you wish you had known when you first started out?

**A:** There's a lot I would do differently! I would not do things just because I liked them. I wish I'd been more business focused right from the start. But there is joy and magic in your first book—every author should enjoy that. In the beginning, you're doing it for the joy and not the dollars. Still, I wish I'd been a little more focused, not just throwing spaghetti at the wall to see what would stick.

**Q:** Should we be doing audio books? Do you put all your books out on audio?

**A:** Not all of mine are in audio. Most are, and some did great. Not all of them, though. It's getting harder to earn your investment back. It's a good idea to wait; don't put out an audio book at the same time as your digital release. Wait awhile to see how that does. If the ebook does well for you, then consider the audio.

## **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>

February Winner: Shari Heinrich

The winner gets Eddie!

# Women in Publishing Summit—Plan for March 2022

By Shari Heinrich

Over the past year, the world of writing conferences pivoted, with many opting to go virtual rather than forsake our writing community completely. In that digital plethora, I had the privilege of attending my first-ever RWA conference; my third year of WriterCon, and my first-ever, but not last, Women's Publishing Summit (WPS). This is *not* the first time they have been digital. In fact, I think their history is digital. Hang on to your keyboards, because I hope to give you a tiny taste of what WPS looked like.

First, when I hit their webpage after seeing a Facebook ad for “early registration, \$97,” I did what I’ve promised to do since RWA’s mis-handling of the ethics complaint two cis-het white ladies levied against the LGBTQ Asian American Ethics chair: I looked at who would present, ready to abandon it for lack of diversity.

<https://womeninpublishingsummit.com/speakers-2021/>

**LIVE Training Workshops**



**Toby Dorr, Author & Speaker**  
Helping women escape their emotional prisons and find freedom

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#)



**Roshanda Pratt**  
Visibility is Power

[f](#) [in](#)



**Vivian Olodun**  
Failing Forward: Intersectionality, Rejection, and Resilience

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#)



**Annalisa Parent, Writing Coach at Date With the Muse**  
Top 5 Hacks to Finish Your Novel Now

[f](#) [t](#) [in](#)

## Fiction Speakers



Najla Qamber, Creative Director of Qamber Designs & Media

A guide to a smooth cover design process

[Qamber Kids](#)



Lucy Hay, Author & Script Editor

Writing Diverse Characters

f t in



Stephanie BwaBwa, YA Fantasy Author & Co-Founder of Indie Author Lifestyle

Worldbuilding

AI Text Summarizer



Jennie Goutet, Author

Steps to Take for Success

f t

Now *this* is what diversity looks like. I was ready to sign up for what had to be a weekend conference at this price. No, five jam-packed days, where each had a few live speakers so we could ask questions via the Zoom feature that; and we could chat with other attendees via chat. The majority of the sessions had been pre-recorded. Each day had a theme. Many of the presenters would either have a little time to do an exercise, or they would say things I *knew* I wanted to try. You know me, prolific note-taker, so I had my word doc already set with a style called “Exercise,” which I’d set as a heading level in *green* font, so it jumps out of my table of contents. In addition, each day had “office hours” twice a day, where presenters from the previous day would be present to answer questions, whether they had presented via video or live.

When I say the summit offered a ton of sessions, let me explain: each morning and afternoon, new content dropped. Since I’m in the fantasy/paranormal camp, and I’m forever teaching myself more about diversity, equity, and inclusion, and I know I need to grow my followers lists, I focused on sessions like that. They had presenters across all these named areas:

- Nonfiction (which included marketing tips, tools sessions, diversity/equity/inclusion, and more)
- Fiction
- Children’s
- Romance

- Publishers
- Writing to Heal
- New Authors
- Why You Need a Team

Add in all the other titles that drew my interest, and I still have 43 sessions I want to watch, spread over the next 6 months. I'll prioritize them, because with my own writing, my agent hunt, gardening, exercise, and the day job, I'm pretty sure I'll run out of time. This conference introduced me to Renee Eckles-Hardy and her "Brown Butterfly" publishing imprint, which includes her titles such as *Get to Know me from A to Z*, *Black Boys Are More than the Skin You See* and *Beautifully Nappy Headed Tar*.

British writer Kim Gravell hosted a session called "Real Magic." Pretty early on, she gave us an example of how we might build magic into a story by picking something around us. She used sofa, and then said, maybe it flies, travels through time, or gives the person sitting on it visions. She challenged us to come up with three everyday objects we would turn magical, and call out what it was. I picked:

- Chimera African Violet—control flora in the outside world
- Scissors—cut through the fabric of time
- Fireplace brush—nullify other objects' magic

You might notice that I picked magics that could logically go along with the object. That wasn't a requirement of the exercise in the least, simply something I decided.

As the session continued, she asked us to build on these three objects, such as figuring out how our story characters learned of the magical ability, or if it was common knowledge in the world; then layer on boundaries—what are the confines, reminding us that magic works best when it has rules that follow, and often consequences—no "get out of jail free" magics. Then, what would make the object *stop* working? Are Thursdays a no magic day, or does it not work when the full moon comes out? Above all, be consistent.

Want to make that world even more rich and believable? She quoted Terry Pratchett, and here I'm paraphrasing: Magic can do anything, but you better know how it works. She gave flying pigs as an example: how does that impact bird life? People may need always to have stout umbrellas for extra crap falling from the sky!

This was also the conference to learn about writing and publishing tools, like Fictionary, ProWritingAid, & FirstEditing. These are all companies that the amazing organizer, Alexa Bigwarfe, partners with. Each of these companies, as well as many of the other sessions where tool-talks or publishing industry folks talked about what they did, offered us discounts because of our conference attendance. Even if you didn't attend, you can still catch some of the session that Bigwarfe, set publicly viewable. Hit their page at <https://womeninpublishingsummit.com/> They also have a facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/WomenInPublishing>

That's a small taste of the craft and fun I had at this conference, which I thoroughly recommend. The organizer also does an annual program for writers struggling to work on a book, but I chose not to register. Each year, Bigwarfe and her staff host this event leading into International Women's day, so mark your March calendars now!

