

# Writers' Notes

The Newsletter of



News and Information for Women Who Write, Inc.

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## President's Message by Dana Faulkner-Punzo

I want to let all of you in on a little secret. Here it goes. If it wasn't for Women Who Write I would not be where I am today in my life.

I truly have stretched myself into this woman who tries new things frequently. For example:

Cross Country Skiing  
Traveling alone  
Writing comedy  
Wearing red combat boots

All of these things may seem insignificant, but each time I step over the line I drew years ago, the more I learn about myself and can better serve others.

How this all ties in you may be asking? I get so excited when one of you is daring to create something outside the box, or should I say, "your personal comfort zone" is the nicer way of putting it.

Women Who Write played around with this in 2019, by asking writers to turn poetry into flash fiction at the writers' conference. We see critique groups cross genres more frequently. There is a freedom to play; color outside the lines that I am intrigued with as I continue to write, travel, ski, and wear pink sequins.

I want to see all of you stretch yourselves just like I did this year!

Life is like a symphony, each instrument, experience combined to create a beautiful melody to share together, even if some of us are a little off-key, like yours truly.

I will close by quoting Audrey Hepburn: "Sing the song of life!"

May this holiday season be one of your very best ever, and thank you for allowing

me to serve all of you.

I am truly better for it.

Gratefully yours,  
Dana



## Madison Community House Event



The Madison Community House hosted a "Welcome to Madison Gala" where many community members gathered for a day of informative displays of what Madison has to offer new residents!

Women Who Write had a table and many people told me they appreciated the arts in their neighborhood.

Some other organizations like: Thursday Morning Club, Dress For Success, St. Huberts, Madison Library and The Fire Department had tables and give aways.

I learned so much about Madison, and plan to be a part of this event again next year!

## Visit to Last Friday Critique Group

Mary Olmsted recently welcomed WWW President, Dana Faulkner-Punzo to sit in on a meeting of the Last Friday Critique Group which is held at the New Providence Memorial Library.



In addition to sharing the wonderful stories of our talented writers, we got to enjoy the beautiful artwork that is displayed at the library on a recurring basis.

## Amy Read's Visit to Spooky Ladies

by Mary Olmsted

Last April a WWW writer's craft group, the Spooky Ladies –writers of mystery, thriller, fantasy and sci-fi—were treated to a talk by Amy Reade, a USA today best-selling author. Amy was very generous in sharing her methods and thoughts on publishing. She expertly laid out the differences between being a self-published and traditionally published author.

Traditional publishing includes mandatory deadlines and some loss of control of the book. One of the major areas where traditional authors have no control can be cover design. Right now, Amy prefers her current path of indie author.

Some of the points Amy made about self-publishing included the fact that organization and outsourcing were key, especially for self-publishing. Amy patiently went over the steps of self-publishing which included the discipline to show up daily and work on your book. Amy told us that her tremendous book output was due to the fact she spent six hours a day, six days a week, working on writing. Some aspects that she did outsource included content editing and things like formatting and cover art.

Amy's newest book, *Trudy's Diary*, from her Libraries of the World mystery series, was released right after her talk with us. Seeing the eight or so physical books that Amy brought with her inspired the members of Spooky Ladies that they too could publish—if they were willing to put the work and effort into it.

The Spooky Ladies would very much like to thank the Board of Women Who Write for granting us the educational stipend to have a speaker for our group. Just about all our twelve members came, enjoyed the talk, and were very inspired by it. While Amy laid out more steps to self-publishing than some members had considered, such as formatting and distribution, Amy made all these steps seem very doable if you knew where to look for help.

## Montclair Writers Workshop by Linda Morgan

On May 8, the Montclair Women Who Write group convened at the Parsippany headquarters of Universal Yums, owned by member Monique Bernstein, to participate in a three-hour writing workshop led by author, editor, and corporate historian Marian Calabro. Earlier this spring, the Montclair group successfully applied to the board of Women Who Write for a grant to help offset the costs of the workshop. Several of the members had previously taken classes with Marian at the Montclair Adult School, and knew she would offer sage advice on topics such as character development, the difference between editing versus revising one's work, and writing confidentially about family members. We sent our questions to Marian in advance so she had time to develop answers to the specific issues we were currently confronting in our writing. The Montclair group is mixed-genre, mixed age, consisting of five women ages 20s through 70s. Some of us have published numerous times, while others are immersed in writing first poems or memoirs for future publication.

We all benefited from this workshop; the first we had initiated in over 10 years of the Montclair chapter's existence. Marian addressed our questions with professionalism, offering concrete examples as well as handouts for further reading. We also participated in writing to a prompt: "write about the loss of a friendship," which brought out fresh, new prose from a member of our

group who confessed she'd been concerned about extemporaneous writing, as she was used to revising her work multiple times before sharing with others. Her writing, as was true of all the quick pieces we produced, was magnificent. The workshop brought us closer together, and we are grateful to Monique for hosting, to Marian for ably guiding us, and to Women Who Write for providing grant funding to make the workshop possible.



Montclair Women Who Write: Diane Masucci, Monique Bernstein, Linda Morgan, Nancy Murray, Marion Goldstein, with workshop Leader Marian Calabro (seated)

## Congratulations to Dr. Sarah Smith Ducksworth, EdD.

**On August 15, 2019, Sarah was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award by Albert Nelson Marquis Who's Who**

Marquis Who's Who, the world's premier publisher of biographical profiles, is proud to present Sarah Smith Ducksworth, EdD, with the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award. An accomplished listee, Dr. Duckworth celebrates many years of experience in her professional network, and has been noted for achievements, leadership qualities, outstanding credentials and successes in her field.

Dr. Duckworth led a distinguished career in education for more than 40 years and is a member of Women Who Write's Published Authors Group. Congratulations Sarah.



## Conference Junkie Attends the Writer's Digest Conference

by Colleen Markley

Confession: I'm a bit of a conference junkie. I've attended (and planned) everything from public educational symposiums, to Association for Junior League International conferences, to the TedWomen conference. This August I attended the Writer's Digest Conference (WDC) in NYC. It was my first writing conference, and my favorite conference experience yet.

I knew that I wanted to be more professional and serious about my writing, so I took a chance and registered. WDC had a great mix of workshops on craft (fiction, nonfiction and screenwriting) as well as the publishing business (building your platform, insights from agents and editors, publicity and comps). I arrived a day early so I could attend a full day program called "Successful Writers Run Successful Businesses." I knew it was for me just reading the description asking if I were "an introvert concerned about being too pushy and 'selling out.'" Yup.

The workshops were all high quality and run by industry pros, and I had so many notes I needed to create an index for my notebook. There was one stressful point: the infamous Pitch Slam. It's like speed dating, except with authors pitching their books to literary agents. Plenty of writers attend the conference without pitching anything. But there were hundreds of writers who pitched during one of four hour-long slots throughout the day. I wanted to see if agents were interested in my recently completed novel about the end of the world, where only the women survive.

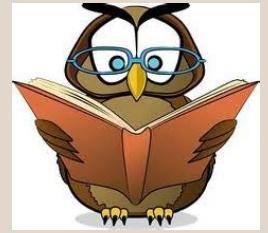
The support of the other writers was amazing. "Would you like to practice your pitch?" random writers would ask, offering their attention and feedback on a sixty second elevator speech, which needed to include title, genre, word count, main characters and plot, as well as comps. Impromptu critique groups popped up, sharing insights from the workshops that might help finesse a word choice or two in each pitch. We celebrated our successes and then shared our next set of stresses. Agents actually want to see what we have written. Onwards!

Writer's Digest celebrates 100 years during their next conference, set for August 13-16, 2020 in New York City.

## Beta Readers Group Ends



We are sorry to report that due to lack of interest and participation, it was decided that our Beta Reader's Program will be discontinued.



## Volunteers Needed



process, with critique groups, workshops and discussions.

We cannot do all of this without our wonderful member volunteers.

If you feel that you can help out in any capacity, no matter how small, please contact either:

As you all know, Women Who Write, Inc. is a non-profit group that was created 30 years ago to assist women writers in every phase of the writing

Ginger Pate at  
(webliaison@womenwhowrite.org)  
Dana Faulkner-Punzo at  
(president@womenwhowrite.org)

There are so many ways you can help. We need volunteers to help our conference committee in planning our next conference. Also needed are people to help plan programs and events, set up workshops and so much more. Our volunteers are what makes this organization great and we truly appreciate everything they do.

Everyone is welcome to help out. Thank you.

## WWW Book Club by Maryanne Carey

Our new Women Who Write book club has had a wonderful response. We are setting up dates and soon we will be posting a calendar with information on when and where the club will meet. We hope everyone will support the authors by reading their books and then coming to the book discussion. We are entering the perfect season for curling up and reading and our members' books are perfect choices. Remember, this will only work if we help each other and that's what Women Who Write is all about. The information will be posted on our website at [www.WomenWhoWrite.org](http://www.WomenWhoWrite.org).

See you there!



## Annual Winter Gathering 2020

Women Who Write's Annual Winter Gathering which will be held on February 29, 2020 at The Madison Community Center located 25 Cook Ave., Madison, NJ from 11:00 am until 3:00 pm. All members are invited. Look for announcement on our Facebook Page. We hope you will join us.

## Editor's Note:



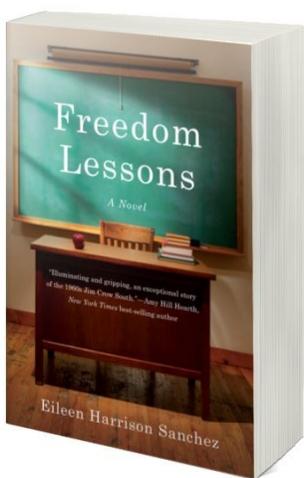
My term as Editor of Writers' Notes is coming to a close and in May 2020 someone else will be taking over. I wish the new Editor much success and joy, just as I have had working on this amazing paper.

It has been a wonderful experience in that it has allowed me to work with some wonderful and very talented writers. I also had the opportunity to meet many amazing women with beautiful hearts and souls and have formed some lasting friendships. I hope that my humble attempt at making your newsletter informative, entertaining, and colorful has been successful. I would like to say thank you to all those who have supported me as the Editor of Writers' Notes, especially those who have contributed articles and stories. See you at the WWW Events and Programs.

A special thank you to Ginger Pate, for having believed in me when I didn't think I could do it, Dana Faulkner-Punzo for her support and leadership as our President and helping keep me on the ball, and most importantly to Dorothy Ryan. Without her editing expertise, I daresay this newsletter wouldn't have turned out so well. Thank you to all of you. Sincerely, Maria Dewaik

## Freedom Lessons: A Novel by Eileen Harrison Sanchez

AN ENGROSSING HISTORICAL FICTION DEBUT ABOUT SCHOOL DESEGREGATION IN THE 1960S AMERICAN SOUTH



"[A] potent illustration of the formidable obstacles to equality that remained—and persist—post-Brown v. Board of Education." —Kirkus Reviews

School desegregation is something we all learn about in history class; perhaps we even remember the striking image of Ruby Bridges being escorted to and from school by the U.S. Marshals. But for most of us in 2019, that's near the extent of what we understand about that tumultuous time. Eileen Sanchez, the debut novelist behind *Freedom Lessons* (She Writes Press, November 12, 2019), draws on her own remarkable experience as a young, white teacher in the Jim Crow South during desegregation, to write her immersive work of fiction inspired by those events. The result is an unusually authentic exploration of a snapshot in history through the eyes of characters that are relatable and unmistakably human—living lives and navigating relationships against the backdrop of extreme societal upheaval. Sanchez has woven a beautiful story not just about desegregation as an abstract concept, but about the people who lived it—and asks us to question our assumptions about that time, and the issues it has left in its 50-year wake.

*Freedom Lessons* begins in Louisiana 1969 as Colleen, a white northern teacher, enters into the unfamiliar culture of a small Southern town and its unwritten rules as the town surrenders to mandated school integration. She meets Frank, a black high school football player, who is protecting his

family with a secret. And Evelyn, an experienced teacher and prominent member of the local black community, who must decide whether she's willing to place trust in her new white colleague. Told alternately by Colleen, Frank, and Evelyn, *Freedom Lessons* is the story of how the lives of these three purportedly different people intersect in a time when our nation faced, as it does today, a crisis of race, unity, and identity.

## In Memorium

Women Who Write lost a valued member in October, Karen Stober. Karen was involved in the Kids 111 critique group since the group got started by Pat Weissner. Karen was a coordinator of this group. Karen also attended the Spooky Ladies Group conducted by member Mary Olmsted. She was Secretary on the Board for four years, had art work on the covers of our literary magazine, *Goldfinch* a couple of times and she most recently got accepted in last year's *Goldfinch* with a comical illustration submitted with Ginger Pate's children's story. Karen's sister, Nancy said that WWW helped Karen's creativity and that Karen loved being a member of WWW. A mug was sent to Nancy which has the picture of one of Karen's *Goldfinch* covers and a picture of Karen next to the cake with her *Goldfinch* cover at our Conference (pictured with this article). Karen was an avid gardener, painter and musician. She will be missed dearly.



## Congratulations Lisa Tognola-Book Launch

Lisa Tognola recently celebrated the release of her debut novel *As Long As It's Perfect* and invited all WWW members to celebrate with her on Sunday, October 27th at 7:00 p.m. Lisa has enjoyed the friendship and support of her WWW sisters for many years and was delighted to celebrate her special day with all.



## Lisa's Debut Novel by Linda Morgan—Montclair Writers Group



Women Who Write friends, editors and colleagues gathered at Watchung Booksellers in Montclair on a rainy evening November 7 to celebrate member Lisa Tognola's launch of her debut novel, *As Long as It's Perfect*. Lisa read excerpts of this engaging book in which she shares the story of Janie Margolis attempting to be "assistant contractor" to a team of workers she and her husband Wim hire to build the "perfect house" in the midst of a recession while trying unsuccessfully to sell the house they own in the New York suburbs. Present in the audience were fellow writing group members, as well as Lisa's editors, Jessica Wolf and Laura Zinn Fromm, with Laura directing the Q&A after Lisa's presentation. Lisa spoke honestly about what it takes to be a dedicated writer while balancing being a mom of three teenagers (including pulling on her down coat and wool cap and writing in the back of her Honda Odyssey during the kids' activities), searching for the best editors and publishing path, and benefitting from the generosity of other writers in her circles (including the Montclair WWW group.) She ultimately chose She Writes Press to publish her novel, achieving a long-desired dream. Lisa's book is available on Amazon and via her website: [www.lisatognola.com](http://www.lisatognola.com).

## WWW First College Volunteer by Joanne Flynn Black

Lexi Segall is a Sophomore at Fairly Dickinson University who has a double major in Creative Writing and Psychology. She's been published in *Canvas Literary Journal* and *The USA Boxing News*.

She reached out to our President, Dana Punzo, offering to assist in any way. Dana contacted Joanne Flynn Black, our VP of Social Media, to see if we could utilize her skills. Joanne said, "Absolutely!"

Joanne and Lexi met at a Panera Bread during a rain storm. While there was thunder and pouring rain outside, they were snug inside brainstorming about ways to promote the Women Who Write.

Lexi took the lead on building our Instagram page. She created posts about our history and mission. She added posts for each one of our speakers for our annual conference and linked to their Instagram accounts. This helped increase our Instagram followers.

Lexi will continue with Joanne throughout the year. Joanne is thrilled to have her as part of the team. If you'd like to follow us on Instagram and see her work, we are Women Who Write.

Lexi attended our Ninth Annual Conference and had these words to say:

"It was empowering and inspiring to see how much women supported one another's creativity. Women Who Write is a lovely organization and I'm grateful that I was able to attend the conference and help out with the Instagram."



# WWW Annual Writers Conference 2019

Story by Joanne Jackovino  
Photos by Sha Renée



On Saturday, September 21, 2019, Women Who Write held its Ninth Annual Writer's Convention at the Madison Community House located at 25 Cook Street in Madison, NJ.

Upon entering the building, the members were given their schedules for the day and invited to enjoy a delightful breakfast buffet provided for them by ShopRite.

The members were asked to place copies of their unsigned First Pages on the table, as well as books they wished to donate on the Raffle table, and books they wished to sell on the Author's table in the Gym.

The doors opened at 9:15 and at 9:45 the meeting was called to order by Ginger Pate, former President of WWW, who welcomed those in attendance and introduced current President, Dana Faulkner-Punzo.

Dana graciously welcomed all those in attendance and promised them a day filled with new, exciting, creative ideas in all writing genres!

Over 70 members attended the event and enjoyed a day filled with valuable information which was shared with them by numerous speakers, teachers, editors, agents, and a Nia Instructor who showed those in attendance the importance of relaxation through dance movement.

Dana's promise was fulfilled, from the Opening Keynote by Lisa Romeo "Get Out," to the Afternoon Keynote by JR Bale, "Self-Marketing Author's Checklist," everyone in the audience was captivated!

Ms. Romeo spoke of getting out of your comfort zone and stepping into your non-comfort zone to learn something new as a writer. The audience was told to write in areas new to them in order to see what happens to their writer's brain! You would have to agree, it most surely would shake-up ones everyday writing routine!



JR Bale presented numerous ideas for the self-published author. He stressed the importance of social media for getting yourself known. He also said that writers should pay very close attention to their first page, and that they should always select a unique book title.

Other Workshop areas covered included: Flash Fiction, Finding an Agent, Prose, and Writing Humor that Doesn't Fail.



There were also First Page Sessions and Critiques held by editors and agents. As you can see, there were topics of interest for writers of all genres.

Nia Instructor, Lori Lynn Meader, presented a session on movement and relaxation. It was enjoyed by all and proved to be one of the many highlights of the day!

The day concluded at 4:00 with a Book Raffle, and coffee and cake was enjoyed by all!

Please join us for our Tenth Annual Women Who Write Conference on Saturday, September 26, 2020! WWW has plenty of exciting things in store for our Tenth Anniversary that shouldn't be missed!