



# Prairie Song

## SCBWI Nebraska Newsletter

## A New Chapter...

The weather is changing and so are we!



**A journey begins by knowing where you are**

Please fill out our 2026 member survey, so we can identify paths that help us better serve our group!



**Creative Connections**  
with Industry Experts!

Connecting you to:

- Authors
- Illustrators
- Agents
- Editors
- Creatives
- ...and more!



**TIME FOR VOLUNTEERS TO BLOOM!**

SCBWI-Nebraska is a volunteer-run group. We're thankful for the volunteers we have, but there's always room for more!



Please fill out the 2026 SCBWI-Nebraska member survey so we can identify paths that help us better serve the group! [Click here](#) to access the survey.

Calling all illustrators! Join us online Apr. 23 @ 7pm where illustrator Jen Betton will explore how to use color for maximum impact in your work. [Click for details.](#)

We are thankful for the volunteers we have but there's always room for more! Have you considered being part of the [SCBWI-Nebraska team?](#)



Jennie Gollehon  
SCBWI-Nebraska Regional Advisor

### A note from Jennie...

**April 2026** - Last month, we hosted Book Camp, the first full-day in-person event SCBWI Nebraska has held since I've been in leadership. I may be a little biased, but I think it went well. We had a room full of both new and established members, both locally and those who crossed state lines to attend. Our faculty editor, Anna Parsons, gave a great presentation that was well received. And the weather held out. For March in Nebraska, it is always a bit of a gamble!

What I love about in-person events is how every time I attend one, I come away feeling creatively invigorated. There's something incredibly special about being in a room full of creatives. The conversation is bright. The energy is electric. The level of support and encouragement is nothing like I've ever experienced in any other setting. Plus, the connections made tend to last for years to come.

We couldn't do events like Book Camp, without our esteemed team of volunteers. Every event, whether in-person or virtual, with programming or as a casual meet-up, has come together with the assistance of volunteers, including myself. Let me tell you, it's such a rewarding experience to see your idea come to fruition.

I wish each one of you could experience that. And guess what, you can! We have volunteer position vacancies. Check the article below for more information on how you can get involved and take your membership to the next level. If you have any questions, please reach out. My inbox is always open: [nebraska-ra@scbwi.org](mailto:nebraska-ra@scbwi.org).

Speaking of events like Book Camp, we want your input. As a member of SCBWI, you're here for a reason. To learn, to grow, to find success. Take a moment to fill out the quick survey and tell us how we can be a part of your journey.

[Click here to access the survey](#)

~Jennie



## FEATURED MEMBER: Let's Meet Jayme Sandberg



**JAYME SANDBERG, APR**, is a bestselling author, seasoned public relations professional and coach. As an author, she took her first children's picture book *Total Solar Eclipse: A Stellar Friendship Story* to No. 6 on Amazon's all books bestseller list. As an accredited public relations professional, she's won international industry recognition and worked with some of the world's leading brands, personalities, experts and media. As a coach, Jayme draws on two decades in communications,

storytelling, and nonprofit leadership to help people strategically and confidently pursue the goal they've imagined but have not yet realized. In her free time, Jayme loves reading, traveling, golfing, and cheering on her Wyoming Cowboys.

She lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with her husband, two daughters, and a spoiled cocker spaniel who has yet to realize he's a dog (shhhhhh). You can connect with Jayme on [LinkedIn](#) and learn more about her strategic communications company at [www.ItsAllStories.com](http://www.ItsAllStories.com).



## Meet the New Regional Team Members!

We're so excited to announce two new SCBWI Nebraska Regional Team members. Joining the team are Katie Martens as Assistant Regional Advisor (ARA) and Tim Hantula as Illustrator Coordinator (IC). Both members are current volunteers and we're thrilled to have them joining the regional team.

**Katie Martens**, as workshop coordinator, has tirelessly moderated our *Writing From the Inside Out* workshops for the past couple of years. From collecting book quotes to attending writing summer camps as a kid, Katie has always loved the written word. Instead of plowing forward with her dreams of authorship, Katie instead became a lawyer (as her mom liked to say, "lawyers write a lot.") While she does write during her day job (often through email), Katie has found renewed joy in her creative writing in the time she's wedged between work, wrangling two kids and a husband, and walking the dog.



**Tim Hantula** fills two roles; PAL Liaison and Social Media Coordinator. Tim grew up in northeast Iowa, drawing on the roll ends of newsprint from the local paper, eventually receiving his BFA from the University of Northern Iowa. While studying Graphic Design, Theatrical Design, and Illustration/Painting, he worked for the college newspaper creating a weekly comic strip and writing art and theater reviews. The comic strip, *Scherzo*, won an honorable mention in the 1982 Rolling Stone College Newspaper Awards, and then a 1983 award from the College Media Advisors. Summer School studying children's book illustration at the Rhode Island School of Design led to a Master's Degree. After grad school, Tim joined SCBWI and continued working in Theatrical Design, Advertising, Visual Merchandising, and Exhibition Design. In the past several years, he's illustrated book covers for Chicken Scratch books, along with self-publishing a series of comics. Tim also volunteers with the Great Plains Bluegrass and Old-Time Music Association and the Benson Songwriter Exchange.



Welcome aboard, Tim & Katie!

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**GET INVOLVED WITH SCBWI-NEBRASKA:  
Join Our Team!**



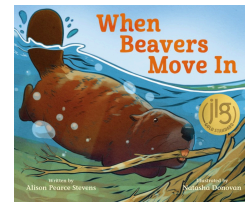
SCBWI Nebraska would not exist without our volunteers. And what better way to be informed and take your membership to the next level than to get involved? We currently have two vacancies: **Newsletter Coordinator** and **Website Coordinator**. Both roles require a minimum time commitment and have step-by-step guides to help ease individuals into the role. We will also provide training to get you started!

For more information click to read the [Newsletter Coordinator description](#) and [Website Coordinator description](#). If you are interested in becoming a volunteer or have questions, contact [nebraska-ra@scbwi.org](mailto:nebraska-ra@scbwi.org).



## Congrats to Our Nebraska Members!

**ALISON PEARCE STEVENS** - Alison Pearce Stevens's debut picture book, *When Beavers Move In*, made a splash last month as a Junior Library Guild Gold Standard book. Her previous book, *Detective Dogs*, was listed as a 2026 Best STEM Book and won several awards. Great work, Alison!



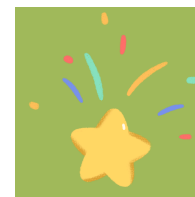
**STEFANIE RASZLER** - Congratulations to Stefanie Raszler who won an honorable mention in Vivian Kirkfield's 50 Precious Words Contest! Way to go, Stef!



**MARY BETH RICE** - SCBWI Nebraska is on a role! Congratulations to Mary Beth Rice who also won an honorable mention in Vivian Kirkfield's 50 Precious Words Contest! Nice job, Mary Beth!



**ANNE BACKER** - Kudos to Anne who will be teaching the "Writing for Young Readers" workshop in Iowa City, July 22-24 that includes topics such as story ideas, outlining, character, plot, point of view, novel openings and revision. [Email Anne](#) if you are interested in joining the workshop. Keep up the good work, Anne!



**SHELI PETERSEN** - Congrats to Sheli who was a featured presenter for SCBWI-New Mexico's PB 'n' J Day earlier this month. Sheli's session was titled, "Take Two! Developing a Cinematic Eye for Illustrators." Well done, Sheli!



# CREATIVE CONNECTIONS: Thursday, April 23rd @ 7pm



STORYTELLING WITH COLOR THEORY - Calling all illustrators! Do you ever struggle with picking a palette? Would you like to learn more about how color works? Join us from 7:00-8:00pm on Thursday, April 23rd to find out how color provides impact, mood, and can focus attention. Add to your toolbox with this virtual workshop on color theory and using it to emphasize storytelling. Author, illustrator, and teacher, Jen Betton, will talk about how to use color for maximum impact in your work, using examples from illustration and animation.

This webinar is offered as part of our SCBWI-Nebraska Creative Connections series and is free to Nebraska members. If you live outside of the Nebraska region, please click the link below to register.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



## Shop Talk: The Cherry On Top

Readers often enjoy getting to know the author. The following tips can turn your Author's Note into a delicious, sweet treat at the end of your book!

- **Personal Connection** - Your connection provides depth to the reader's experience with your story. Consider sharing how the idea came to you, or why you wrote it. Perhaps you gained new perspective or changed in some way through researching the topic. Do you have expertise or professional background related to the story? Readers will eat it up.
- **Fun Facts** - During the writing process did you learn something interesting that didn't make it into the manuscript? This is the place to dish.
- **Length and Voice** - Keep it short and sweet. Match the tone of your author's note to the main text to add a hint of story flavor that keeps your readers engaged.
- **Call to Action** - An author's note is an enticing place to thank your readers, as well as direct them to your author website, or ask them to leave a review. A well written Author's Note offers a little something extra at the end of a good book - the cherry on top.

We have enjoyed leading Shop Talk as Co-Coordinator over the past 5 years. It was a pleasure to "meet" you all on our Zoom calls, to learn and grow together. We will continue to stay involved in our wonderful SCBWI-Nebraska chapter and hope to see you soon!

Wishing you all Happy Writing!

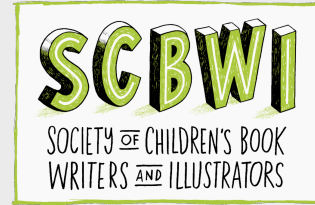
~ Mary Beth Rice & Ashley Karges, Shop Talk Co-Coordinator

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU** to Mary Beth and Ashley for their efforts over the last five years in making Shop Talk such an informative and integral part of SCBWI-Nebraska. We couldn't have done it without you! Our Shop Talk series will be taking a break, but stay tuned for info on new, upcoming events this Fall.

## Weekly SCBWI Podcasts

### New Podcasts Every Thursday!

SCBWI Podcasts is a weekly children's publishing podcast hosted by archivist Theo Baker. He interviews publishing professionals as well as award-winning children's book writers, illustrators, and translators who inform and inspire about the ins and outs of the children's book industry. Find out about the craft and creative process behind young adult novels, picture books, middle-grade fiction, graphic novels, and nonfiction for kids. The 2026 season includes guests such as Winsome Bingham, Jason Reynolds, and Xindi Yan!



[CLICK HERE](#) for more details and links to the podcasts.

## Upcoming Events in Other Regions:

### [SCBWI Rocky Mountain: The Art of Dialogue](#)

APR. 21 - Join Newbery Medal-winning author, Erin Entrada Kelly, (*Hello, Universe*, *We Dream of Space*, *The Land of Forgotten Girls*) who will guide participants through excerpts from mentor texts to determine how and why the author's dialogue was successful and learn how to implement best practices in our own work.

### [SCBWI Arizona: Humorous Ways to Surprise Your Readers](#)

MAY 9 - Dive into various methods on how to use humor to surprise readers. From dramatic irony to unique picture book formats to setting up the perfect page turn, author-illustrator, Kathryn Rammell, will dissect humorous picture books and the different techniques their creators utilized to elevate their stories. The presentation will conclude with an activity to help spark humorous story ideas. The presenter will also offer picture book, dummy, and portfolio critiques.

### [SCBWI MD/DE/WV: Board Book Creation Behind the Scenes](#)

MAY 14 - In this informative and interactive webinar, author and early childhood educator Katrina Moore will take audience through an in-depth look into creating board books for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. She will break down their format, key features, target audience, and elements that make them stand out in a crowded marketplace, as well as give a behind-the-scenes look at the making of her *Big Jobs For Little Babies* board book series, from crafting through production.

### [SCBWI San Diego: MayFest Virtual Conference](#)

MAY 23 - Come join SCBWI San Diego for a virtual one-day conference for authors and illustrators! MayFest features a keynote speaker, an editor panel, an agent panel, an art portfolio showcase, and optional Zoom critiques.

[MORE VIRTUAL EVENTS](#)

MORE IN-PERSON EVENTS

SCBWI

[Got questions? E-mail us by clicking here!](#)



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