

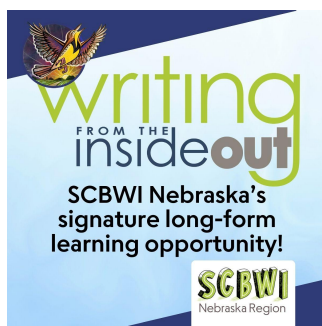
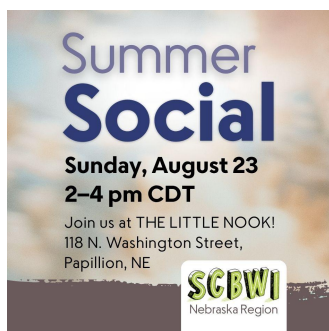


Prairie Song

SCBWI Nebraska Newsletter

Back to School!

August, 2026



We'll have treats & plenty of time to chat about writing and illustrating! Let us know if you are coming – we're looking forward to seeing you! **Sunday, August 23, from 2 – 4 pm** [Register here.](#)

Level up your picture book skills with award-winning author Marcie Colleen in the Fall SCBWI-Nebraska virtual workshop. [Click](#) for more details!

The Fall Retreat is set for **October 16 – 18** in Red Cloud, NE. Join us for a weekend away & get those words on the page. [Click](#) to register.



Katie Martens
SCBWI – Nebraska Assistant Regional Advisor

A note from Katie...

What I love about August in Nebraska is that it's a reminder that each season has an ending to make way for a new season to start. While we all may be sweating a little more as the corn fields pull water from the soil and release that water through their leaves as vapor (otherwise known as "corn sweats"), we all know that flannel shirts, pumpkin patches, and nights cold enough to kill the mosquitos are just around the corner.

In each changing of the season, I think most of us are pretty good at finding something to look forward to. Similarly, our SCBWI region is exiting our quiet, planning summer season, and throwing the doors wide open for our fall season full of education, community, and support. I'd love for you to find one of our workshops, retreats, or educational webinars that fits your writing season. We have socials, study groups, multi-region collaborations for *From Concept to Career*, critique groups, *Writing From the Inside Out Workshop* on picture books, the *Fall Retreat*, and an *Illustrator Portfolio Review*, with additional plans to provide two *Creative Connections* webinars.

The goal is to support our members in each season of their writing career and help them with the tools they may need to get to their next season. Don't see anything that could help you? Email us! Tell us what you need or want, we'd love to hear from you. Or better yet, tell us in person at the social on August 23 from 2:00 - 4:00 pm at The Little Nook bookstore, 118 N. Washington Street, Papillion, NE 68046.

Katie Martens

FEATURED MEMBER: Let's Meet Alissa Hansen



Story by Anna Kleiber

Courtesy of Lincoln Journal Star, reprinted with permission

Alissa Hansen always knew she wanted to be an artist. "There were a couple times I thought I'd be an entomologist because I loved insects," the Wahoo-based illustrator said, "Or maybe an architect because I loved building little houses with sticks, but art was always my focus." Hansen would spend hours outside observing and drawing the world around her.

She received an Associate in Arts degree from Highland Community College in Kansas on a full-tuition scholarship. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Studio Art with an emphasis in

drawing from the University of Nebraska Omaha in 2004. While her priority shifted to raising and homeschooling her children, Hansen always found time to make art with one of her life goals being to illustrate a book.

"For many years, I had a dream to illustrate a book, and it just didn't happen. There were a couple times it almost did but it didn't — until now," Hansen said.

Hansen made that dream a reality alongside Lincoln-based children's book author Rebecca Atanassova when the pair teamed up to create "George the Mouse in a Log Pile House" — a book inspired, in part, by real life.

The inspiration

The book tells the story of George, a wild mouse befriended by wildlife photographer Simon Dell. Dell first met George in his backyard in 2018. The pair became fast friends after Dell offered George a peanut, and built him a little house in a log pile in Dell's backyard in Sheffield, England.

When Hansen first discovered Dell's social media pages, she felt inspired to make sketches of George. After sharing a few of her drawings with Dell, he mentioned that he wanted to create a children's book someday for his grandchildren and asked if she would be interested in doing the illustrations.

The process

For Atanassova and Hansen, the phrase "in the treehouse" became emblematic of their creative process.

"We always say that when we work together we're like two little girls climbing up into their treehouse with their papers and their paints and their pens just making silly things," Atanassova said.

"That's us playing, collaborating and working," Hansen added. "We'll say, 'Oh, we're totally in the treehouse today' or 'do you want to go in the treehouse? Do you have a few hours?'"

Together, Hansen and Atanassova began to give the story life by weaving Dell's real experiences with George into their imaginative retelling through George's perspective, adding new details and locations.

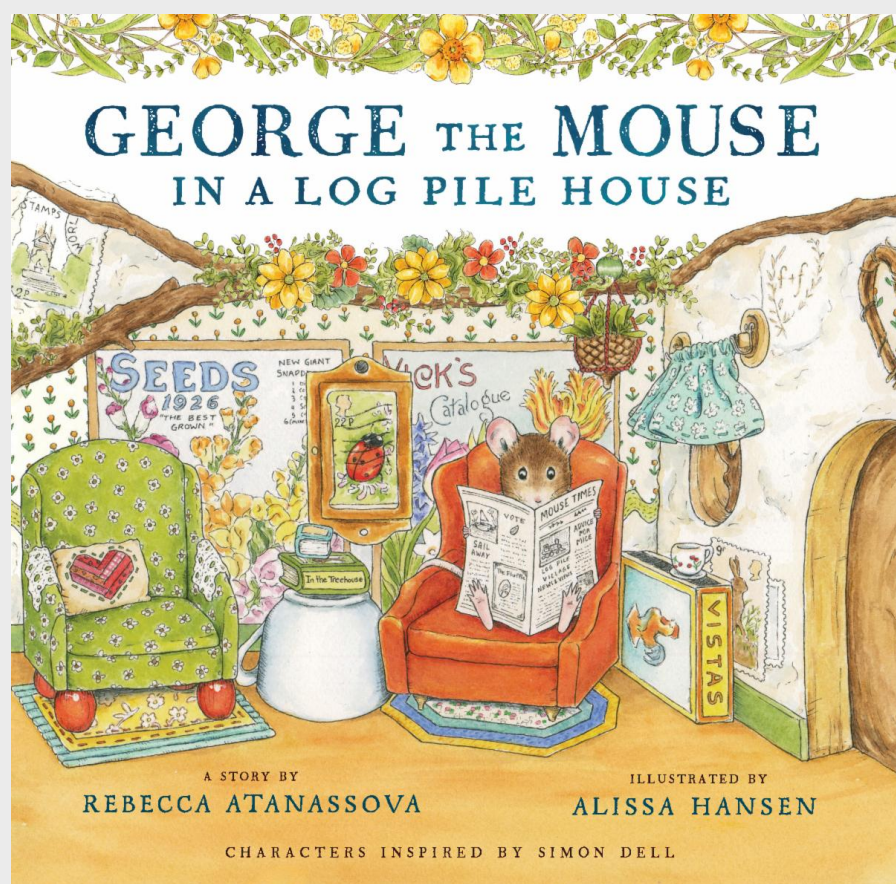
"It was highly collaborative. That's not the norm for an author and illustrator," Hansen said.

While Hansen who works primarily in watercolor and ink, a big part of her creative process comes from physically bringing the scenes to life. For George, she crafted mouse-size models to help visualize his world.

That includes George's bed as illustrated in the book.

"I actually built it. I have the whole bedroom built. I sewed mattresses and built the bed, trying to imagine if I was a mouse, what would my bed be made out of?" Hansen said, adding that she would also work off of reference photos and has bought a few things like men's work boots and British postage stamps to help inform her art.

"My process is very time consuming but it makes better art," Hansen said. "It is believable, and I want children to be immersed."



The little details

From how George would sign his name to what he sounds like when speaking, no detail was too small for Hansen and Atanassova.

That same attention to detail was poured into the book's cover, which includes a price tag from the store where they held the book launch, a pillow with a quilted heart her mother had made placed on a chair and even a book on an upside-down tea cup titled, "In the Treehouse".

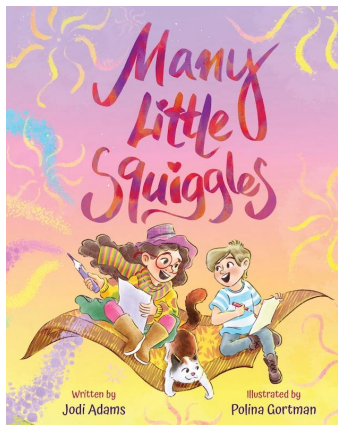
"It's just fun to be able to include things that are special and hide them in there," Hansen said.

After three years of hard work on the project, "George the Mouse in a Log Pile House" published in May 2026.

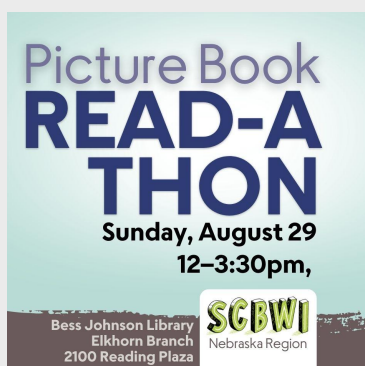


Congrats to Our Nebraska Members!

JODI ADAMS - Young At Heart Publishing, LLC has announced a release date of October 15th for *Many Little Squiggles*, the new picturebook written by Jodi Adams and illustrated by Polina Gortman. [Click here](#) to check out how they (along with book designer Lauren Gallegos) brought Squiggleville to life!



Picture Book Read-A-Thon: Saturday, August 29th, 12:00pm



Join Critique Group Coordinator, Judith Snyder, for a Picture Book Read-A-Thon in the meeting room at the Bess Johnson Library, Elkhorn Branch, located at 2100 Reading Plaza.

Gear up for *Writing From the Inside Out - Picture Book Workshop*. Stop by and read books from a curated list. **Saturday, August 29 from 12-3:30pm**

REGISTRATION REQUESTED (Click here)!

SCBWI KidLit Series: From Concept to Career Sept. 1 - Oct. 31, 2026

From Concept to Career

A Free 8-Course Menu for all members and nonmembers.

1 September 1	The Basics of Picture Books	15 September 15	The Query Letter
3 September 3	Consider Your Reader	17 September 17	How to Find an Agent
8 September 8	The PB Dummy	22 September 22	Independent Publishing
10 September 10	What to Include in Your Portfolio	24 September 24	The Process and Pacing of Promotion

This series is made possible by a grant from SCBWI and the Authors Coalition of America.



Celebrate World Kidlit Month with eight dynamic, 20-minute presentations. From picture book basics to querying, portfolios, and publishing paths, each session includes time for questions, so you can connect, learn, and move your work forward.

Join us in September for this fast-paced, inspiring series created for writers and illustrators ready to grow their careers. Replay recordings will be available until October 31st. You can register anytime.

This series is made possible by a grant from SCBWI and the Authors Coalition of America.

REGISTER TODAY!

WRITING FROM THE INSIDE OUT: Picture Book Workshop with Marcie Colleen

You've asked for it. We've listened. Join us as we level up your picture books! Award-winning author Marcie Colleen is teaming up with SCBWI Nebraska for a virtual 6-month workshop meant to take your picture books to the next level. Targeted for authors who have written a minimum of three picture books and have an established, basic understanding of picture book writing, this workshop is intended to take your projects from good to extraordinary. This workshop starts September 26, 2026.



REGISTER HERE

FALL RETREAT WITH TONYA KUPER: October 16-18, 2026



If you're looking for dedicated writing time surrounded by other creatives passionate about their craft, set in a venue dedicated to the heritage of literature, look no further. Join us as we spend a weekend away from the distractions of everyday life and put words on the page. Targeted for authors and illustrators who want to gift their projects what is needed most: TIME.

The retreat is set for October 16 - 18, 2026 at Hotel Garber in Red Cloud, Nebraska. Join us for an inspiring weekend in the heart of Willa Cather country.

REGISTER TODAY!

TIPS ON ILLUSTRATOR PORTFOLIO CREATION WITH OPTIONAL PORTFOLIO REVIEW

November 8, 2026



Calling all illustrators! Curious what art directors are looking for in a portfolio geared toward the children's publishing industry? Join us as Tracy Shaw, Art Director at Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, shares advice on best practices for organizing/curating your portfolio. Apply learned techniques to your portfolio, and assess the effectiveness of those changes by signing up for an optional 15-minute virtual portfolio review. Portfolio reviews participants are invited to a Virtual Happy Hour to debrief with other attendees and build community. The webinar will be on Sunday, November 8, 2026, at 1pm CST. Portfolio Reviews will be on Sunday, December 13, starting at 1pm CST.

REGISTER NOW!

Upcoming Events in Other Regions:

[Developing a Cinematic Eye for Illustrators](#)

October 24, 2026 (registration closes October 22): Take Two! Developing a Cinematic Eye for Illustrators with Sheli Petersen. You've got a great manuscript and character studies—now what? In this workshop, we'll put you in the director's chair by covering the basics in staging your character.

[2026 Letters & Lines Conference: RMC's 50th Anniversary!](#)

Join the Rocky Mountain Chapter of SCBWI for its **50th Annual Letters & Lines Conference** at Colorado School of Mines in Golden, Colorado, October 10-11, 2026. Work with a warm, welcoming community, eager to engage in learning around the craft and business of writing and illustrating for children and young adults.

Registration closes September 25

[Changing Lanes - The Picture Book to Graphic Novel Transition](#)

SCBWI Kansas/Missouri hosts critically acclaimed author-illustrator Daniel Miyares to discuss the transition from picture books to graphic novels and to share his process and approach to creating a graphic novel. Learn about visual storytelling, thumbnailing, dummy art, the research process and everything you need to know about creating a graphic novel.

MORE VIRTUAL EVENTS



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



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