



Prairie Song

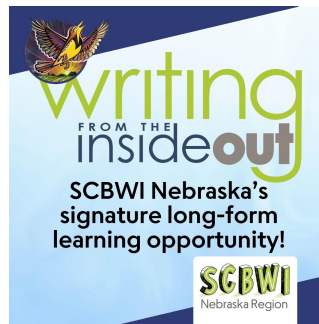
SCBWI Nebraska Newsletter

SUMMER VIBES...

Your Summer Scoop is Here!



Join us for a few hours of casual in-person writing and illustrating time on Wed., **July 15 from 10am-2pm** at Cheri-O's in Ashland, NE. [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.



Tim Hantula
SCBWI-Nebraska Illustrator Coordinator

A note from Tim...

I don't know how many birders we have in our readership. I'm not one, but I ran across this phrase from the birdwatching community, and it stuck in my head. A *Spark Bird* is the species that ignites a birder's passion for birdwatching. At some point, an emerging birder encounters something that suddenly provides a direction and focus that potentially leads them for the rest of their life.

I've read that when you're trying to find happiness in your career direction, one tactic is to look back at what fascinated you as a child. Essentially, it asks you to find your Spark Bird again. So, what happened that instilled your initial passion for children's literature?

Adulting tends to treat those early dreams as mere stuff and nonsense. Imagine being at a grown-up party where another guest finds out you're working to get published in children's literature. Their usual response tends to fall into two disparaging categories. First, they'll make it about themselves, and you'll find out they'd like to knock off a couple picture books this weekend as well. Or, second, they'll spit their drink back into the red plastic cup and demand to know whatever led you down that career path. Chastened by their response, I would mumble something about how I always liked to read as a kid. You know the feeling.

"Liking to read" is all well and good, but is that really my Spark Bird? Could I identify a more specific event in my life that set me off on this path? Turns out, I feel like I've encountered my Spark Bird several times. They all tend to be moments that reinforce to me that it's totally possible to create things, for me to be the storyteller.

One of these happened during an episode of *The Partridge Family* in 1971. For those too young to remember, *The Partridge Family* was a TV show loosely based on the real-life band *The Cowsills*. And 1971 was a year loosely based on the end of the age of dinosaurs.

This episode featured guest star Bobby Sherman as a songwriter wanting to share his music with the Partridges. Almost none of the plot mattered to me. What impressed me was that he was using a bunch of tape recorders to playback the different musical parts he had performed. The way it's portrayed on screen doesn't work in real life. But this concept of *multitracking* — that one person could create the complete 'story' of a song — was completely new to me. That episode ("Knight in Shining Armor" — you can find it on YouTube) has stuck with me ever since.

What about you? Can you think back to the moment that shifted how you thought about working in children's literature? Did it just feel right at the time, or did you take some time to recognize its significance in your life?

FEATURED MEMBER: Let's Meet Kimberly Glass



KIMBERLY GLASS, a children's picture book illustrator residing in Omaha, Nebraska, packs warmly humorous connections, big feelings, and huge heart into the boat of imagination that she sails. Descriptive line, a gently comical style, and brightly modulated hues define characters such as exasperated lions, grumpy bear pals, and children navigating the ups, downs, and adventures of life. Digital tools, giving the effect of

charcoal pencil paired with rich areas of color, allow a natural feel to the subtle emotional expressions of her characters, reminiscent of the line styles of Virginia Lee Burton and H.A. Rey—Kimberly pored over *Curious George* books as a child (how she wanted to sail a paper boat!) She was the 2026 winner of the illustrator portion of the SCBWI Nebraska Indi-500 Challenge, submitting a classroom scene of snoozing readers zapped into sleep during an alien abduction of books.

A lifelong artist, Kimberly studied visual art for two years at the University of Northern Iowa and University of Nebraska Omaha. As a homeschooling mom for many years Kimberly found great joy in providing her children with ample time for books, creativity, and mudpie making. Observing the playful and curious natures of her children unlocked her own memories of delighting in nature nose-to nose and in creating magical imaginary worlds. Her love for stories, children, and art led her to create homeschool art classes based on illustrations from picture books.

After packing the last of her children off to college, Kimberly enrolled in a children's illustration course, bought an iPad, and downloaded Procreate—her current illustration tool. Today you can find her outdoor near the violets and bunnies in her yard, dreaming and sketching big ideas for little characters—she is trying her hand at crafting stories to accompany them. At night you will find her thinking under the moon and making splashy paintings on canvas featuring babies, moms, and other grownups. At the heart of both her illustration and painting is the honoring of the child within all of us—beautifully imperfect, magical, and worthy of a story with a happy ending. Visit [Kimberly Glass Illustration](#) to find our more about Kim and her work.



Heather Dawn Torres
Newsletter Coordinator

From Heather's View...

Although, I hold the title of *Newsletter Coordinator*, the SCBWI-Nebraska newsletter is anything but the work of one individual--it is a team effort! Every other month, when this newsletter lands in your inbox, it represents the collaborative efforts of so many people: our regional team who work tirelessly to organize the events that are featured; local volunteers who help promote the events, create graphics & set up website links; and Nebraska members who submit Good New items for us to celebrate or who serve as our featured members.

In my role, I take all of these pieces and "stitch" them together into the newsletters that you read (well...I hope that you are reading them)! This collaboration makes my job almost effortless. Almost. I also proof-read all of the copy to (hopefully) catch any grammar or spelling mistakes, click on every link to make sure each one works, and lay out the content into the template that you see. Having said that, I must apologize in advance if you find a broken link or a typo in a newsletter--I do miss things on occasion (especially now I've had to start using these pesky little reading glasses). I hope that the newsletter brings value to your membership and helps you to stay connected to what is going on in and around the Nebraska region. Happy Reading!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT:

Carla Ketner New Website Coordinator



Please join us in giving a warm welcome to Carla Ketner who has just joined the SCBWI-Nebraska Team as *Website Coordinator*. We are so grateful for Carla's willingness to jump in and help with making our website look so fantastic! Thank you, Carla!

Interested in volunteering? We are still looking for someone to help with coordination of the newsletter. If you have strong editing skills, a few hours every other month, and a desire to be part of our amazing SCBWI-Nebraska team, this position could be for you! Contact nebraska-ra@scbwi.org for more info.



Congrats to Our Nebraska Members!

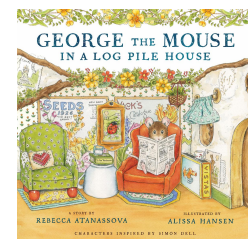
CARLA KETNER - Congrats to Carla Ketner who has a new book coming out on August 1. *Applying and Interviewing for Jobs* is a hi-lo nonfiction title in a new series from BrightPoint Press. Great work, Carla!



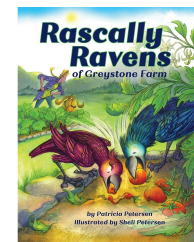
RHONDA JOHANSON - Kudos to Rhonda who has recently published her first novel, a middle-grade humorous fairy-tale, *A Toad's Tale*, available on Amazon on May 12. Huge Congratulations, Rhonda!



ALISSA HANSEN & REBECCA ATANASSOVA - Lincoln author Rebecca Atanassova and Wahoo illustrator Alissa Hansen teamed up on a new picture book, *George the Mouse in a Log Pile House*, that released April 1st. Inspired by the real Log Pile Village in Sheffield, England, this gentle story celebrates finding where you belong, kindness, community, and caring for even the smallest creatures. George's story is a message of wonder, belonging, and compassion. Always follow your whiskers! We can't wait to read it, Alissa and Rebecca!

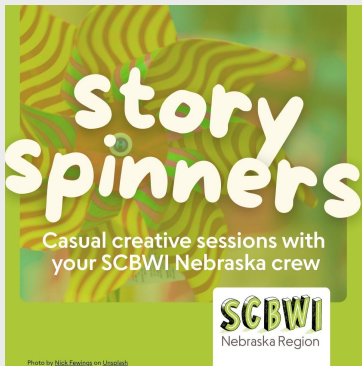


SHELI PETERSEN - Sheli Petersen's picture book *Rascally Ravens of Greystone Farm* received a 5 Star review from The Wishing Shelf Book Awards, a UK-based international independent authors' competition: "A heartwarming and beautifully illustrated adventure about two mischievous ravens, a tiny lost chick, and the unexpected friendship that changes everything. A FINALIST and highly recommended!" —Wishing Shelf Book Awards. Way to go, Sheli!



SUMMER STORY SPINNERS:

Wednesday, July 15 in Ashland



Nebraska writers and illustrators! Join us for some casual in-person writing and illustrating time on July 15 from 10:00am-2:00pm. We will meet at Cheri-O's Coffeehouse in Ashland. Come for a few hours and focus on your current work in progress in the company of like-minded creators.

Most of our time will be spent working on individual projects with a few short breaks during the first 2 hours. Afterward, we can do some informal critiques or talk about our work. Stay for as long as you can or leave when you need to.

REGISTER TODAY!

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

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. Offered by the Nebraska region starting September 2026. Registration opens July 8th.

SCBWI-Nebraska is offering TWO Scholarships for this workshop. Deadline to apply is June 30th. [Click here](#) for



more information or to fill out an application.

[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!](#)



Shop Talk: Does Backmatter Matter?

Backmatter is supplemental information found at the end of a book, after the main text. Often it can be associated with nonfiction books, but backmatter can be included in fiction stories as well.

In children's books - whether picture book, middle grade, YA, or graphic novel - backmatter can take the form of fun-facts, glossaries, puzzles, maps, did-you-knows, discussion questions, or more.

The value?

Backmatter allows readers to linger with the story a bit longer. Also, agents and editors may find additional marketing hooks within the educational material it provides. For example, if the plot centers around playing in the snow, the backmatter could highlight facts about snowy climates, building with snow, or sensory-related activities that could be used in school and library markets.

Who is the backmatter for? Consider who will be reading the backmatter. Does it serve your story to write to parents or teachers leading a discussion? Or is it better suited as written to the young reader? Knowing the audience will help determine the tone and voice of your writing.

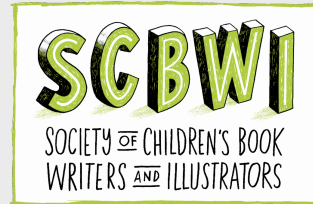
Keep in mind that backmatter is not included in word count, so paginating your manuscript may be useful to stay within the proper range of 12-14 spreads. Overall if you are on the fence about backmatter, give it a try! It may matter most to your readers.

Happy Summer & Happy Writing!

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

Cast Your Vote for Crystal Kite Award: Round 1 Voting Ends June 22

Don't forget to [cast your vote](#) for the Crystal Kite Award. All SCBWI members are welcome to vote on their favorite books from each division. Members may vote once each round in as many divisions as they want.



Round 1 Voting: June 1 through June 22, midnight PST.

Final Round Voting: June 26 through July 17, midnight PST.

Winners announced: July 24, 2026.

Upcoming Events in Other Regions:

[SCBWI San Francisco South: Championing Children's Books](#)

JUL 10 - This webinar, editor and translator María Camila Correa shares an inside look at translating children's books. Drawing on her bilingual background, María will explore what shapes a successful translation, walk through her own path into the industry, the translation process in children's book publishing, and touch on why a global outlook and multicultural perspectives are more important than ever.

[SCBWI KSMO: Using Art & Photo References in Illustrations](#)

JUL 11 - Meredith Lucius, illustrator of six children's books, will show us how she uses art and photo references to guide her illustration practice. You'll learn how to use references in a way that doesn't feel like cheating and that inspires to create something new, rather than rigidly adhering to your reference.

[SCBWI TEXAS AUSTIN: Kill Your Darlings Bootcamp](#)

JUL 12 - Join the Austin SCBWI chapter online for 6 hours of education on revision, self-editing, & critiquing others. Join editors, agents, and authors to understand and decode an "Edit Letter," embark on your revision journey after you've completed that first or fifth draft, understand cross-genre reading, interpret and implement feedback, and fully evaluate your manuscript. Optional: query, pitches, critique, and submission options with agents/editors!

[SCBWI Pennsylvania East: Crafting Authentic Representation](#)

AUG 27 - Invisible identities shape the lives of countless young readers, yet they often go unrecognized or are portrayed inaccurately in children's literature. We'll discuss how to avoid stereotypes, build fully realized characters, and integrate these identities naturally into story. A limited number of MY, YA, & NIV CRITIQUES available at an additional cost.

MORE VIRTUAL EVENTS

MORE IN-PERSON EVENTS



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



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