



SOCIETY OF CHILDREN'S BOOK  
WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS

## New York: West/Central Upstate Region

### February 2026

**Thank you for your interest in our region!**

As most of west and central New York is buried in a blanket of snow and we are experiencing bitter cold temperatures; our volunteers are working hard to keep our region moving along. On behalf of the Regional Team, I acknowledge the following members; **Melquea Smith, Kate Woodle, Judy Bradbury, Dee Romito, Deb Blowers, David Neuner, Sarah Mead, Heidi Marschner, Kanchalee Deganis-Libera and Daniel Shanahan.** Find out more about [Our Regional Volunteers](#).

The **SCBWI 2026 VIRTUAL Winter Conference** is this week!!! Registration is open **NOW** with recordings available for viewing through March 15th. Don't miss out on the Golden Kite Awards and Afterparty, Inspiring Keynotes, Industry Panels, First Pages Panel, and Creative Labs.

**Patty Wurster**: Regional Advisor

**Annisa Glover**: Illustrator Coordinator

**Sue Heavenrich**: Assistant Regional Advisor and PAL Coordinator

**Cait Darfler**: Assistant Regional Advisor

### Upcoming Events:



**Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate a.m. JAM craft session.**

Kick-start your week with a full hour of dedicated writing or illustrating. This is a quiet session without discussion or sharing. Welcome-10 mins. Write/Illustrate-20 mins. Break-5 mins. Write/Illustrate-20 mins. Break-5 mins. Write/Illustrate-20 mins. Wrap-up- 10 mins.

Hosted by **Patty Wurster**, SCBWI NY: West/Central Upstate Regional Advisor @ **SCBWI Member Profile**

Every Monday morning 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM EDT on Zoom.  
This **a.m.JAM** craft session is **FREE** for **SCBWI Premium members**.

[Register for a.m.JAMs](#)



Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Region Picture Book Connect.

We will talk about structure in picture books including page turns and the rule of three.  
**Participants will have the option to screen share one work-in-progress picture book manuscript** limited to the first 300 words with the audience for feedback.

Even if you're not sharing, please join us and meet Picture Book writers in our global community.

Hosted by [Sarah Mead](#), agented picture book writer and Picture Book Connect Facilitator  
[@ SCBWI Member Profile](#)

Above Illustration by [Kate Woodle](#) [@ SCBWI Member Profile](#)

Tuesday, February 17th, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EDT on Zoom.  
This **Picture Book Connect** is **FREE** for **SCBWI Premium members**.

[Register for Picture Book Connect](#)



Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Illustrator Connect.

Let's share our favorite materials and techniques. **Be prepared to screen share one illustration and explain how you created it.** Multiple slides to describe your process are acceptable. Consider: What materials did you use? Do you use paints, pencils, or pens? Are you a collage artist? Do you work digitally? What programs and techniques do you use? Explain why you chose the medium that you use. What are the benefits and drawbacks. Let's learn from each other!

Even if you're not sharing, please join us and meet illustrators in our global community.

Hosted by **Kate Woodle**, published illustrator, PAL member, and Illustrator Connect Facilitator @ [SCBWI Member Profile](#)

Above Illustration by [Andrea Wickert @ SCBWI Member Profile](#)

Tuesday, February 24th, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EDT on Zoom.  
This **Illustrator Connect** is **FREE** for **SCBWI Premium members**.

[Register for Illustrator Connect](#)



**Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Novel Connect.**

Have a story idea but don't know how to put finger to keyboard? Or maybe you're in the middle of the story and don't know where to go? There's no single way to avoid these pitfalls, but there are tried and true techniques that can help you plan your story.

We'll discuss story structure and plotting. **Bring your preferred methodology and join the discussion.** Or sit back and learn as other authors share their approaches to planning a novel.

Even if you're not sharing, please join us and meet Chapter Book, Middle Grade and Young Adult writers in our global community.

Hosted by **David Neuner**, YA writer and Novel Connect Facilitator @ [SCBWI Member Profile](#)

Above Illustration by [Jonathan Schnapp @ SCBWI Member Profile](#)

Tuesday, March 3rd, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EDT on Zoom.  
This **Novel Connect** is **FREE** for **SCBWI Premium members**.

[Register for Novel Connect](#)

# PAL Community:

PAL coordinators: **Dee Romito & Sue Heavenrich**  
Literacy Liaison: **Judy Bradbury**



## PAL EVENT:

### Early Chapter Book Series:

Uncover the Text & Art Supports Readers Need to Succeed!



**Katie Carella**

Editorial Director, SCHOLASTIC INC

date: Saturday February 28th  
time: 11 AM - 12:00 PM PT

Premium Members: \$15  
Non-Members Members: \$25



Through looking at **Scholastic's Branches** early chapter book line, Editor **Katie Carella** will reveal how to craft quality, page-turning series for newly independent readers! Early chapter book readers are just starting to read longer page-count, more text-heavy books. So they need certain supports in place to invite them into this format. We'll explore key features of **Branches** books and do brief writing exercises together. Also, while this category generally targets children ages 5–8, it is especially important to create high/low books for today's marketplace—now that more older children than ever before are significantly behind in their reading journeys. **Hosted by SCBWI: CA SF/South Region** with registration open to everyone.

[Register Here](#)

PAL members **Sandra Athans** and **Mike Downs** are offering a 2 night mini online course. Register **Breaking into the Educational Market** @ Boyd's Mills. **Tuesday, February 3rd and Thursday, 5th**. This event will be recorded. This event is not organized by SCBWI and we are not liable for the information presented.

## Connect with local PAL members!

The members on our PAL page have chosen "New York: West/Central Upstate" as their home region, designating our region as where they are geographically located. If you are NOT on our PAL page and feel like you should be, let us know.

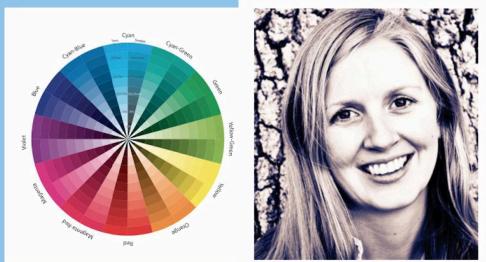
[PAL on SCBWI Region Website](#)

[School and Library Visits on SCBWI Region Website](#)

# Illustrator Community:

Illustrator Coordinator: [Annisa Glover](#)

A Colorful Tale:  
Storytelling with Color Theory



**Virtual Workshop with Jen Betton**  
Thursday, February 26th, 7:30-9pm EST

Do you ever struggle with picking a palette or would you like to learn more about how color works? **Calling all illustrators!**

Color provides impact, mood, and is a way of focusing attention. Learn how to use color to emphasize storytelling. Add to your toolbox with this virtual workshop on color theory. 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

**Hosted by SCBWI NY: Metro Region with registration open to everyone.**

**Register Here**

## SCBWI DRAW THIS!

### February 2026 Prompt: TOUGH TOPIC

Post your work to Bluesky, Instagram, and in your SCBWI Illustrator Gallery with the hashtag #SCBWIDrawThis. Deadline is the last day of each month. [Learn more here](#).

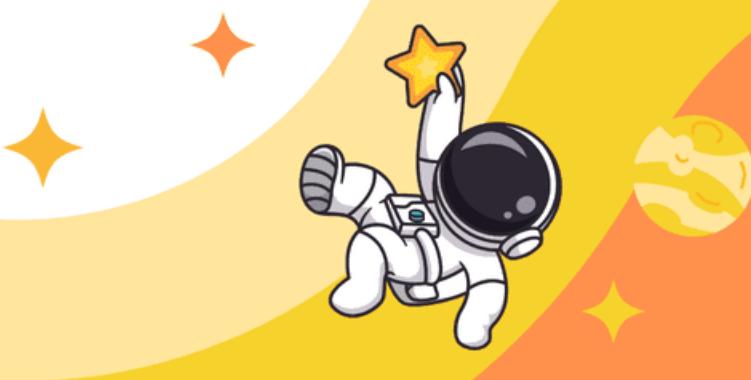
## REGIONAL Website Illustrator Gallery:

Update or create your **SCBWI Illustrator Gallery** on your Profile. Make sure you select New York: West/Central Upstate as your region. If you are not included on the Regional Website Illustrator Gallery page or need assistance, contact [Annisa Glover](#), Illustrator Coordinator.

**Illustrators on SCBWI Region Website**

## Equity and Inclusion Community:

Equity and Inclusion Leader: [Melquea Smith](#)



Hey friends!

**Picture Book Rising Stars**, or PBRS for short, is a free 4- month long mentorship program for both agented and un-agented authors and illustrators. PBRS pairs mentees with published mentors to improve craft and give a hand up the turbulent publishing ladder. For their FINAL year of mentorship, PBRS has 40 incredible mentors for 2026!

Register for the [2026 PB Rising Stars Application Prep Party](#) on **Thursday, February 12th**. This is an information session on how to craft the best application possible. I'll also

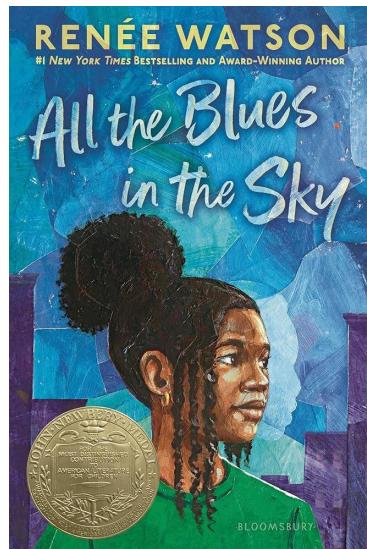
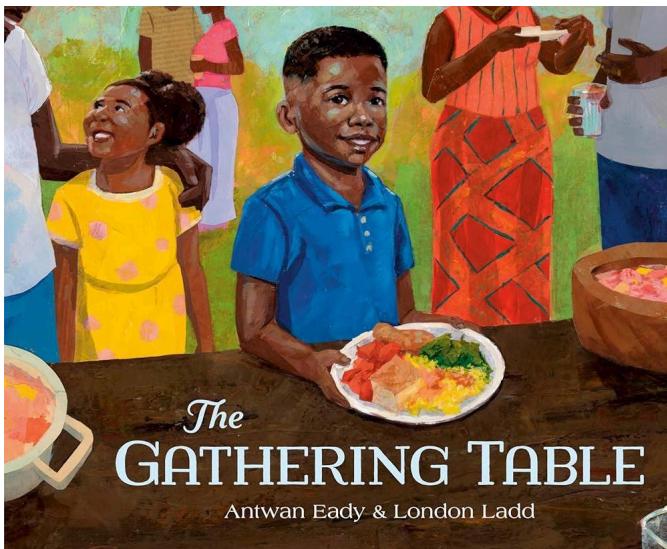
be speaking during the event and sharing some tips and strategies on how to make the best of your application. This event is not organized by SCBWI and we are not liable for the information presented.

And, here's an event hosted by **SCBWI New England**. Register for **BIPOC/Latine mingle** where my friend **Khadijah Van Brackle** is sharing about how to handle finances and taxes as an author.

### Equity and Inclusion on SCBWI Region Website

## Let's Celebrate!!!

**Kate Woodle, Michelle Cavigliano, London Ladd, Erin O'Leary Brown, Kanchalee Deganis-Brerera, Christopher Roberts, and Jacob Souva** for their illustrations on our SCBWI NY:West/Central Upstate webpages.



London Ladd's *The Gathering Table* (written by Antwan Eady) for being included on the **Top 10 Title for Young Readers on the American Library Association Rainbow Book Project List**. The Reading Rainbow List presents an annual bibliography of quality books with significant and authentic LGBTQIA+ content, which are recommended for people from birth through eighteen years of age.

London Ladd's cover illustration for **2026 Newberry Medal** recipient, Renée Watson's *All the Blues in the Sky*.

London Ladd for his illustration from *When I Hear Spirituals* (written by Cheryl Willis Hudson) included in **The Original Art 2025: Celebrating the Fine Art of Children's Book Illustration** at the Museum of Illustration at the Society Of Illustrators in NYC.

### CONGRATULATIONS LONDON!

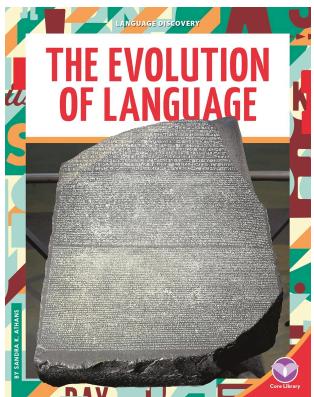
Find out more about [London](#)

Find more about the [ALA: American Library Association](#)

Find more about [Reading Rainbow top ALA List](#)

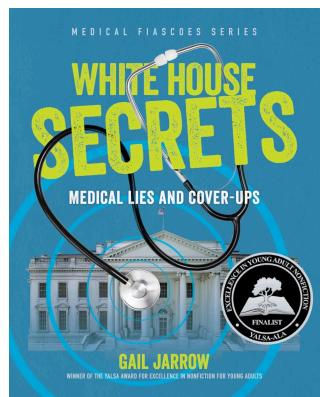
Find more about the [Newberry Medal 2026 and the ALA](#)

Find out more about the [Society of Illustrators](#)



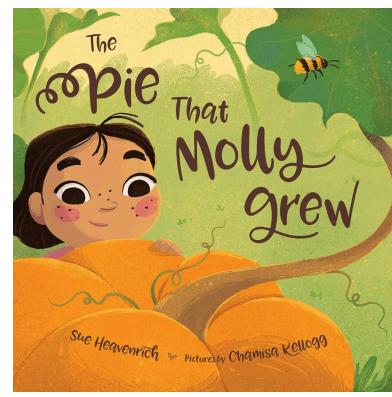
Sandra Athan's middle grade nonfiction book, *Evolution of Language* came out at the end of 2025. It's published by ABDO Core Library.

Find more about [Sandra](#)



Gail Jarrow's *White House Secrets* was one of the five YA nonfiction finalists chosen by The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA), a division of the American Library Association (ALA).

Find more about [Gail](#)



Sue Heavenrich's picture book, *The Pie that Molly Grew* (illustrated by Chamisa Kellogg) was selected by the Indiana Farm Bureau as their 2026 Book of the Year for Ag in the Classroom.

Find more about [Sue](#)

All Traditionally Published Books and Self-Published Books are welcome here!

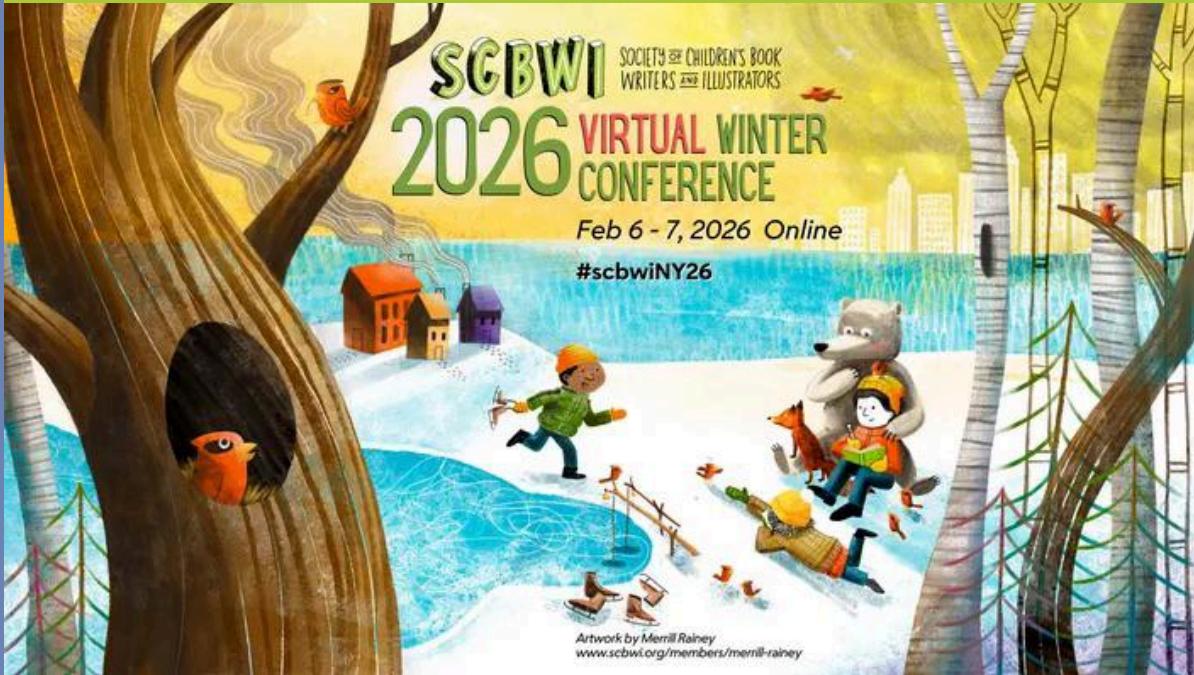
Send your Good News by 1:00 PM EDT on the last Friday of the month to:

Regional Advisor [Patty Wurster](#)

PAL Members can send your Good News to

Assistant Regional Advisor and PAL Coordinator [Sue Heavenrich](#)

## SCBWI Events and Information:



### SCBWI 2026 Virtual Winter Conference

Don't miss this chance to boost your children's book career! Join us online for exclusive industry panels, hands-on sessions focused on the craft of writing and illustrating children's books, plus valuable networking with fellow creators. Whether you're looking to sharpen your skills, gain insider knowledge, or connect with other talented authors and

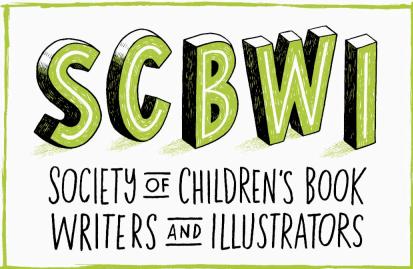
illustrators, this event is for you! If you can't make it to the live sessions, video replays will be available to view through March 15th.

## SCBWI 2026 VIRTUAL Winter Conference

### SCBWI Regional Virtual Events:

SCBWI regions offer affordable virtual events featuring industry professionals from all around the globe – and you can attend from the comfort of your own home! Check here often to find a webinar that fits your interests and your budget.

#### SCBWI Regional Virtual Events



#### SCBWI New York: West/Central Upstate

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