



SOCIETY OF CHILDREN'S BOOK
WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS

New York: West/Central Upstate Region

November 2025

Thank you for your interest in our region!

We have a packed schedule for the next 6 weeks! And we hope that you can join us for these free opportunities to connect and share your work!

Starting with this weekend, be sure to visit us at the **Rochester Children and Teens Book Festival** at Monroe Community College on Saturday, November 8th from 10 AM - 4 PM. Join **Cait Darfler** and me at our display table which features our region members' books and illustration postcards. We are thrilled to be supporting the RCTBF this year! If you are an SCBWI NY: West/Central Upstate Premium member and missed how to participate, please send me an email.

Simultaneously, on Saturday, November 8th starting at 10 AM, be sure to check out the **EMPIRE STATE 24 Hour Children's Book Challenge**, hosted by all SCBWI NY Regions, on Zoom. It's a great way to meet fellow NY creatives!

On Sunday, November 9th - Tuesday, November 11th, SCBWI NY: West/Central Upstate will partner with SCBWI NY: Westchester sharing a vendor table at the **2025 New York State Reading Association Annual Conference: Empowered Literacy and Leadership**. Here, we will display the books of our PAL members along with valuable information about their school and library visits. Joining me at our vendor table will be **Heather Harris** and **Dee Romito**. A special thank you to our Literacy Liaison, **Judy Bradbury**, for her guidance during this entire endeavor.

*Books and illustration postcards on display from both of these events
will be donated to a Buffalo area hospital.*

The **Connect** series is in full swing and well attended by SCBWI members from around the globe. **David Neuner**, **Kate Woodle** and **Sarah Mead** have put together informative, interactive meetings to inspire and regenerate your creative soul. Registration is free and open to SCBWI Premium members.

Please join **Melquea Smith** and the Regional Team at our first **Equity and Inclusion Social** on Thursday, November 20th from 7-8 PM. This event is free and open for everyone. Visit the SCBWI NY: West/Central Upstate Region webpages for more information about our **E&I Community**. If you are an SCBWI NY: West/Central Upstate Premium member and want to be added to our E&I Community page, please send me an email.

Early bird registration ends November 16th for the 2026 SCBWI Winter Conference in NYC!

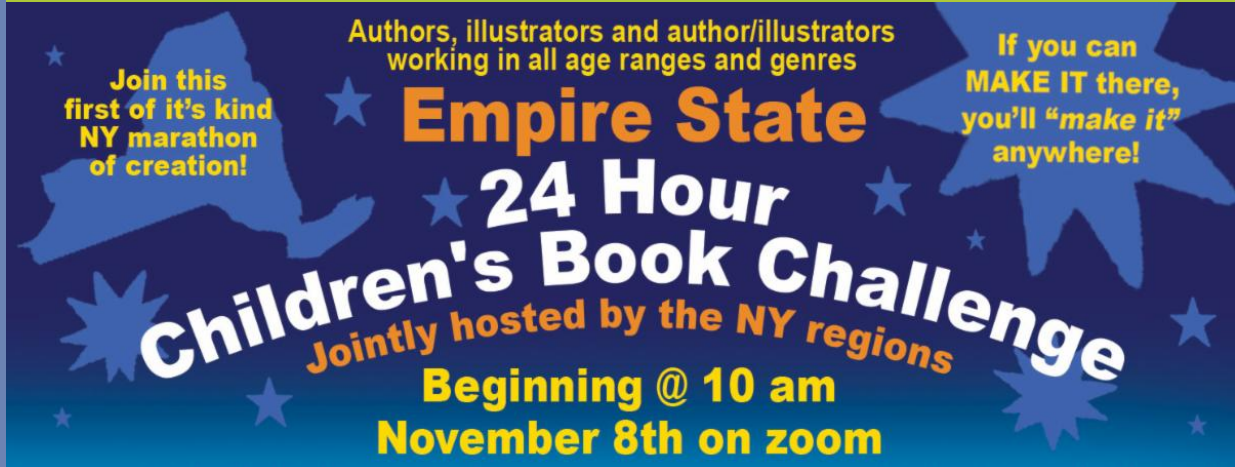
I hope to see you at these events. And, feel free to reach out at any time.

Patty Wurster: Regional Advisor

Annisa Glover: Illustrator Coordinator

Sue Heavenrich: Assistant Regional Advisor and PAL Coordinator

Upcoming Events:



Join this first of it's kind NY marathon of creation!

Authors, illustrators and author/illustrators working in all age ranges and genres

Empire State

24 Hour

Children's Book Challenge

Jointly hosted by the NY regions

Beginning @ 10 am

November 8th on zoom

If you can **MAKE IT** there, you'll "make it" anywhere!

Details and Registration about 24 Hour Challenge @
NY:Westchester

NOVEL CONNECT

Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Region Novel Connect. Get your query letter ready to send to agents! Learn about the querying process, including when to query, researching literary agents, batch querying, query letter basics, QueryTracker, handling rejection, and what to do while waiting for responses.

Hosted by **David Neuner**, YA thriller writer, and Novel Connect Facilitator.

Tuesday, November 18, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EDT on Zoom.
This Novel Connect is FREE for SCBWI Premium members.

[Register for Novel Connect](#)

EQUITY AND INCLUSION SOCIAL

Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Region Equity and Inclusion Social and brainstorming session. Together, we'll ideate on ways to make our region more accessible and inclusive to our current and prospective members. No idea is too big, no thought is too small!

Hosted by **Melquea Smith**, Equity and Inclusion Leader for SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Region.

Thursday, November 20, 7:00 PM – 8:00 PM EDT on Zoom.
This Equity and Inclusion Social is FREE and open to everyone.

[Register for Equity and Inclusion Social](#)

ILLUSTRATOR CONNECT

Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Region Illustrator Connect. Let's have a conversation about submissions. Where are you in the process? What should be in your submission letter? If you've submitted to either an art director or an agent, share your experience! Even if you're not sharing, please join us and meet illustrators in your community.

Hosted by **Kate Woodle**, published illustrator, PAL member, and Illustrator Connect Facilitator.

Tuesday, November 25, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EDT on Zoom.
This Illustrator Connect is FREE for SCBWI Premium members.

[Register for Illustrator Connect](#)

PICTURE BOOK CONNECT

Join us for an SCBWI New York West/Central Upstate Region Picture Book Connect. Let's Polish Up That Manuscript! Participants will have the option to share the first 250 words of a draft with the audience for feedback. We will also reserve time to discuss suggestions for comp titles as well as any other obstacles you're facing in your manuscript. Even if you're not sharing, please join us and meet picture book writers in your community.

Hosted by **Sarah Mead**, agented picture book writer and Picture Book Connect Facilitator.

Tuesday, December 9th, 7:00 PM - 8:30 PM EDT on Zoom.

This Picture Book Connect is FREE for SCBWI Premium members.

[Register for Picture Book Connect](#)

PAL News:

From PAL coordinators: **Dee Romito & Sue Heavenrich**

Literacy Liaison: **Judy Bradbury**

PAL members participating in the **Rochester Children and Teens Book Festival** are **Kathleen Blasi, Judy Bradbury, Susannah Buhram-Deever, William Hubbell, London Ladd, Mylisa Larson, Rose O'Keefe, Andrea Page, Dee Romito, Arlene Schenker, Peggy Thomas, Vivian Van Velde, & Brian Yanish.**

Meet **Heather Harris** at the 12 Corners Presbyterian Church of Rochester vendor table at the **Rochester Children and Teens Book Festival.**

Reach, Connect, Teach: SEL Books with Curriculum Tie-ins



Alex Sanchez



Catherine Cook-Cottone



Andrea Page



Arlene Schenker



Judy Bradbury



Mylisa Larson

Judy Bradbury is leading a panel of western NY authors whose books reflect the theme of the conference by promoting social-emotional-learning. PAL members include **Mylisa Larsen, Andrea Page, and Arlene Schenker.**

They are speaking at the **2025 New York State Reading Association Annual Conference: Empowered Literacy and Leadership** in Buffalo, Tuesday, November 11th at 10:40 AM. They will discuss how SEL threads through their fiction and nonfiction stories and how their stories connect to curriculum.

Heather Harris has a bunch of good news. She has an art show that just opened at the

Regina A. Quick Center at St. Bonaventure University on September 21. The exhibit, titled *"Once Upon a Sketch"*, offers a behind-the-scenes look at the art of children's book illustration through Heather's sketches, paintings, and narrative development work. Heather's art will hang till December 15th. Also, Heather's latest picture book, *Something To Sing About* (In Your Heart Books, 2024) was recently awarded an Honorable Mention by the Purple Dragonfly awards for picture books 6+ category. Meet Heather with her book, *Cory and the Seventh Story*, featured at the 12 Corners Presbyterian Church of Rochester vendor table at the RCTBF.

Tina Shepardson has enjoyed sharing her book, *The Sorry Seeds* with schools. In a recent program they opened with singing "The Sorry Song" in the morning assembly to kick off the day of exploring both sides of apologies, giving and receiving with roleplaying in sessions throughout the day. *The Sorry Seeds* earned the Teacher Favorite 2025 Category Award from the Children's Book Council in April of this year.

Rose O'Keefe has been doing presentations about the Frederick Douglass Family: two at the Rochester Festival to Go at Rochester City School #4, for 5th and 6th graders on Oct. 29, and also at the Rochester Children & Teens Book Festival.

Deena Viviani's debut picture book, *Wendell Called Me Weird!* will be released in Spring 2026 in both English and Dutch. It is illustrated by Olya Seidova and published by Clavis Publishing.

Andrea Page was a panelist on Booklist's *"Native American and Indigenous Voices"* webinar on November 2. Later this month (on the 21st) she'll be at the NCTE Conference in Denver. She'll be speaking on a panel about how Native books and stories can be universal and culturally specific while challenging stereotypes and common misconceptions.

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 Info:

November DRAW THIS! art prompt: BUTTONS

Draw This! is a monthly art prompt that is part of *SCBWI Insight*. Members have the opportunity each month to show their artwork in a social media gallery and two winning pieces are featured in the INSIGHT email and on social media. SCBWI will review the SCBWI Illustrator Gallery, Bluesky, and Instagram for illustrations with [#scbwiDrawthis](#). Participants can post to one or all of these platforms where reviewers, agents, art directors, editors and the community can find our illustrator members using this hashtag.

[SCBWI Draw This!](#)

REGIONAL Website Illustrator Gallery Page!

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 this page or need assistance, contact **Annisa Glover**, Illustrator Coordinator.

Illustrators on SCBWI on Region
Website

Equity and Inclusion Community:

Hey there!

Welcome to our new **Equity and Inclusion Community**. This part of the newsletter will shift and change as the needs of our region members shift and change. But my goal is to connect with you here and keep it nice n' cozy! I'm still building this out, so if you have suggestions or want to see something featured or highlighted, please give me a holler at **westcentny@scbwi.org**.

Hope to meet you at the **Equity and Inclusion Social** on Thursday, November 20th!

Thanks a ton, and see you in the next issue!

With love,
Melquea Smith, Equity and Inclusion Leader

Equity and Inclusion on SCBWI Region
Website

Query Cafe:

TIP #5: Perfect your Pitch!

Purpose of the pitch: pique interest, show you can write well, entice agent/editor to read your manuscript.

- Who is the MAIN CHARACTER of your story?
- What do they WANT?
- What OBSTACLES are standing in their way?
- What ACTIONS do they take to get what they want?
- What do they LEARN in the end?

Pitch formula:

[MC] wants more than anything in the world to [wants], but they can't because [obstacles], so they [actions] and learn [learn].

Not all stories will follow this formula. If you have a unique story structure there might be a better way to formulate the pitch. Look for examples online or with the help of your critique partners.

READ SUBMISSION GUIDELINES CAREFULLY

From **Cait Darfler**, Assistant Regional Advisor

Let's Celebrate!!!

Michelle Cavigliano, Heidi Marschner, Julian Plum, Katelyn McKillip, Vanessa Bidwell, Melquea Smith, Jacob Souva, and Patty Wurster for sharing their Fall themed work on our SCBWI website pages!

Melquea Smith is now represented by Lori Nowicki and Gabry Crivilare of Painted Words!



Alicia Klepeis had a new book hit the shelves last month. *Secrets of the Stars: 15 Bedtime Stories Inspired By Nature* was released in hardcover and as an audiobook by Neon Squid. Illustrated by Jennifer Falkner (Neon Squid, October 7, 2025)

An anthology of stories about the animals that come out when we're asleep. Meet a lost wolf pup who needs to find its way back to its pack, a flying fox taking a midnight swim, a pineapplefish with a flashlight built into its mouth, and a dung beetle using the stars to navigate.

Learn more about [Alicia Klepeis](#).

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 Winter Conference 2026

SCBWI Regional Virtual Events:

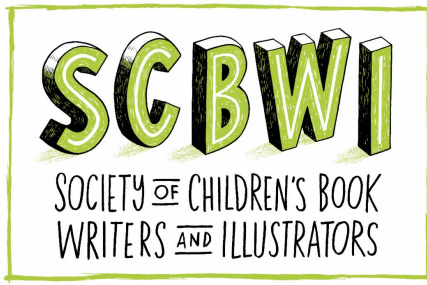
SCBWI regions offer affordable virtual events featuring industry professionals from all around the globe – and you can attend from the comfort of your own home! Check here often to find a webinar that fits your interests and your budget.

SCBWI Regional Virtual Events

Newsletter Contributing and Proofreading Editors:

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Annisa Glover: Illustrator Coordinator
Sue Heavenrich: Assistant Regional Advisor and PAL Coordinator
Cait Darfler: Assistant Regional Advisor
Dee Romito: PAL Coordinator
Judy Bradbury: Literacy Liaison

Melquea Smith: Equity and Inclusion Leader
Sarah Mead: Picture Book Connect Facilitator
David Neuner: Novel Connect Facilitator
Kate Woodle: Illustrator Connect Facilitator
Deb Blowers: Proofreading Editor



SCBWI NewYork: West/Central Upstate

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