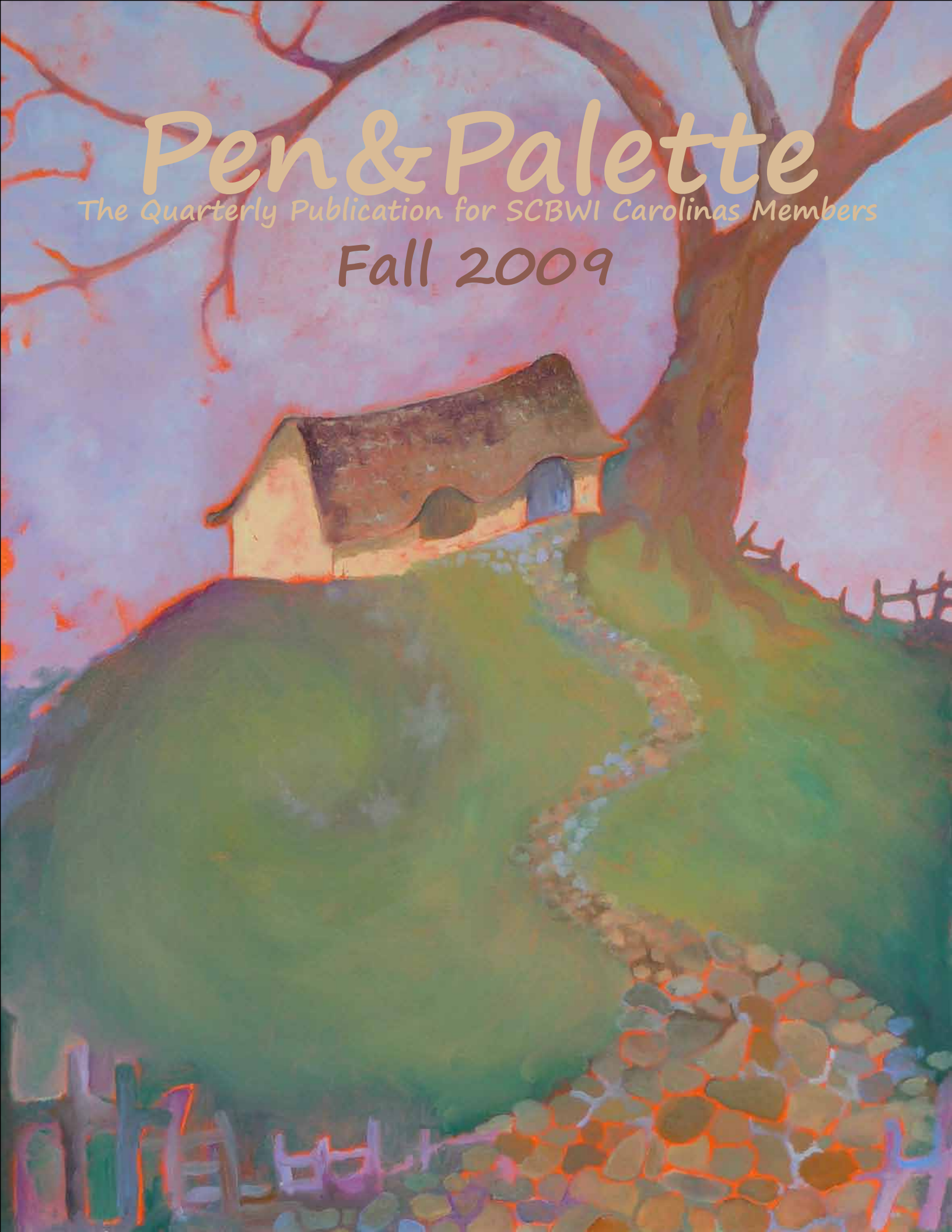


# Pen & Palette

The Quarterly Publication for SCBWI Carolinas Members

Fall 2009



# Pen & Palette

## CONTENTS

**4** *Fall Conference Survival Guide*

**16** *NEW! Notes from the Front Lines*

**21** *Caption Contest Winners*

**8** *Calendar*

**9** *Opportunities*

**10** *Hurrahs*

**11** *First Sale Insights*

**12** *Cover Story*

**13** *Pursuing the Craft*

**14** *Collective Wisdom*

**18** *Writers Well*

**19** *Becoming A Serious Writer*

**20** *Polishing Your PB*

**22** *Book Fairs*

**23** *The Artists*



Holly McGee © 2009 "No Worries"

**Cover Credit:**



HAYDN'S  
CHILDHOOD  
HOME by Laura  
Lagomarsino.  
Read an interview  
with the artist on  
page 12.

# RA Letter

from Teresa Fannin

We're excited about the outstanding line up of keynote addresses and workshop presenters and the beginning of an Illustrator Track for our 17th Annual Fall Conference, REACH FOR THE STARS, in Durham, September 25-27, 2009. And we hope that you've had the opportunity to take advantage of our Early Bird conference pricing.

We want to thank Joni Sensel and Laurie Thompson, Co-RAs, for permission to reprint two articles from Western Washington's newsletter, *The Chinook*.

Do you know your Editorial Etiquette? Test your knowledge by taking the pop quiz in "Get Ready for a Great Conference." This is for novices as well as veterans.

Are you nervous about your critique with an editor or published author? Then read Lois Brandt's "Surviving Manuscript and Dummy Consultations." Lois gives tips for 'staying on the island and surviving....'

We have a Revision 9-1-1 coming up in Charlotte, November 7. Cynthea Liu, a high-energy MG/YA writer, will be offering critiques and a morning workshop that walks attendees through revision techniques that can turn a bogged down story into something that shines. This program is limited to thirty attendees.

Enjoy the summer. Get ready for the conference, kick back, and read some of the books highlighted by our editors and written by our presenters (see listing inside). Meanwhile, we'll be toiling away putting together our SCBWI-C 2010 calendar.

Sláinte,  
Teresa

---

## the Masthead

**Pen & Palette**, a publication of SCBWI Carolinas

Teresa Fannin, Regional Advisor  
Jo Hackl, Assistant Regional Advisor

Samantha Bell, Managing Editor  
Rebecca Petruck, Designer  
Bonnie Adamson, Illustration Editor  
Copy Editors Monica Bryan, Cindy Clemens, Beth Revis, Anne Stockdell-Giesler

Submissions:  
General News/Features Articles: jcllbell@yahoo.com  
Illustrations: bonnieadamson@att.net  
Calendar Events: mariaross@ec.rr.com  
Hurrahs: blonnie@ec.rr.com  
Opportunities: jbiti@yahoo.com

The **Pen & Palette** welcomes submissions of articles of interest to our illustrators and writer members. We also welcome illustration submissions. No payment is made for items that appear in the **Pen & Palette**. For illustrations, we retain only

first-time rights. For articles, we take only one-time **Pen & Palette** and all SCBWI Carolinas website rights. Email submissions to the point of contact on the staff listing for consideration. Members may not reprint **Pen & Palette** articles in any form, including posting on members' websites. Requests to reprint articles in SCBWI publications may be sent to jcllbell@yahoo.com. Submission deadlines are January 15 for the spring issue, April 15 for the summer issue, July 15 for the fall issue, and October 15 for the winter issue.

Mention in the **Pen & Palette**, including articles, market listings, and advertisements, does not constitute endorsement by SCBWI. Please be careful and make informed decisions when entering into any professional transactions. Should any member contact the companies mentioned in the **Pen & Palette**, SCBWI cannot be held responsible for the future use or sale of that member's name and address. Additionally, SCBWI does not endorse companies or services and encourages members to investigate any company or advertiser's references.

# Get Ready!

by Kjersten Anna Hayes and Joni Sensel

Are you all set for the 17th Annual Fall Conference, Reach for the Stars? You've researched the faculty, read some of their books, and reviewed the sessions available so you can decide what to attend, right? If so, you're ahead of the game.

A few more things to consider:

A. If you have a manuscript critique, bring a copy of what you submitted to refer to and make notes on.

B. Think about an achievable goal or two for the conference so you can be sure to walk away having achieved them. Good examples: Learn more about what a certain editor likes. Meet another writer in my genre to exchange a manuscript with. Get a sense of what editors and agents are snapping up lately. Or, find out three things you didn't know about promoting your book once it's published.

C. If you haven't already, consider staying at the conference hotel to ensure you're rested, unrushed, and can fully enjoy all the events of the weekend.

D. Keep an eye out for information about informal events on Friday and Saturday night to attend. Or plan to meet with writers you know and set up your own!

E. Consider whether there are people with upcoming birthdays or other events who might enjoy a signed book that you buy at the conference bookstore.

F. Bring a notebook and pen as well as a book bag for handouts, notes, business cards received from other participants, and any books you decide to buy.

G. If you bring a laptop for taking notes, know how to turn off unneeded sounds and plan to sit near the

back of the room, where your typing may disturb fewer people. (And be prepared to turn it off and take notes on paper if people around you glance or glare; a clacking keyboard can be really distracting and make it difficult for others to hear the speaker well.)

H. Make sure you'll make a good impression on everyone around you by refreshing your memory about conference etiquette.

## **Pop Quiz One: Etiquette for Conference Novices**

### **1. You prepare for conferences by...**

A. Making 20 copies of your 198,000-word manuscript and accompanying illustrations so you can hand them to every member of the faculty throughout the weekend.

B. Studying the faculty list, reading the faculty's books, and identifying two or three contacts you really want to make, perhaps while chatting over lunch about kids, pets, and food. You know you'll be able to submit your writing later, following their published guidelines.

### **2. Which better describes your networking style?**

A. You thrust your manuscript or art samples at faculty members during lunch, in the bathroom, or even in the middle of sessions. You elbow aside wanna-bes so you can discuss your work with presenters. You may make a few enemies among other writers and illustrators, but this is a competitive field; who needs them?

B. You are pleased to discover that editors, agents, and art directors are happy to talk, as long as they aren't attacked or bombarded. You don't expect to send your manuscript or art samples home with them; instead you come prepared to describe your current project in a line or two — if anyone asks. And because you realize your peers can be as inspirational as the faculty, you are able to learn more about the business of writing, find a critique group to join, or meet a new like-minded friend.

### **3. What is your approach to manuscript consultations?**

A. You arrive to your appointment late. Good thing you didn't waste too much time there—the author who critiqued you didn't see the genius in your work anyway. Who cares what an author has to say, only an agent or editor can get you a contract!

B. You arrive at your appointment on time and with an open mind. You listen without interrupting or trying to explain. You say thank you. You keep the critique



Brooke Lauer © 2009 "Chicken"

# Get Ready!

by Kjersten Anna Hayes and Joni Sensel (cont.)

in perspective and use the best of the suggestions to improve your work.

#### 4. How do you ask questions during sessions?

A. You are unapologetic for dominating Q&A time. You ask multiple questions in a row, share lengthy specifics of your own situation, and even interrupt if you need to.

B. In workshops, you steer clear of asking too many questions or talking too much; you give everyone an opportunity to speak. When you do ask a question, you keep it brief and ask things that apply to everyone. You never make critical comments about anyone.

5. After the conference, you...

A. Mail your manuscript and art samples to everyone on the faculty, whether they seem a good fit or not.

B. Choose just three places to send your manuscript and art samples, but the matches are good. You are bursting with new story ideas, notes for future submissions, and new enthusiasm for creating books.

#### Novice question results:

If you answered A to any question: Yikes! Unfortunately, you have more to learn than you think, and you are setting yourself up for a frustrating conference. But at least you've realized it. Please go back and study the B answers; you'll have a better time and so will those around you.

If you answered B to all of the questions: YAY! Congratulations! You have the perfect attitude to have a successful conference. Since you aced those questions, try the harder questions for conference veterans.

#### Pop Quiz Two: Etiquette for Conference Vets

#### 6. You're lucky enough to sit alongside an editor at lunch. She asks what you're working on. You...

A. Realize you have the first chapter in the bag alongside your chair, pull it out, set it next to her box lunch, and ask if she would like to take a quick look, since it's so much easier to read than to describe.

B. Describe your current project in a few pithy sentences designed to pique her curiosity and hope she'll ask questions so you can continue talking about it—and, depending on her interest level, maybe offer to submit it to her after the event.

#### 7. The agent from *Hotties Literary* is, indeed, a hottie, and he's single, too. When you meet him, you...

A. Tug down on your shirt so your cleavage is more prominent and stand a little too close. He's away from home, after all, and you're sure to have some chance to discuss your manuscript if you go back to his room.

B. Be as friendly as you can and ask questions that don't directly benefit you, such as whether he has a pet or what good adult book he's read lately.

#### 8. The Q&A portion of a session has begun. You raise your hand. When called upon, you...

A. Explain that you're writing an historical set in 1960 with such-and-such a plot and ask if the speaker thinks your manuscript might sell.

B. Explain that you're writing an historical set in 1960 and ask if the speaker can generalize about how well historicals are selling right now, if there are particular eras that are hotter than others, or if he can identify common elements in successful historicals lately.

#### 9. The Q&A portion of a session has begun. You...

A. Raise your hand and ask the speaker, who has offered to look at submissions from attendees, what her mailing address is.

B. Wait for others to ask more pertinent questions that might also benefit you, since such basic information is readily available online, and probably even in the conference packet.

The sophisticated answers, just in case you haven't guessed, are all Bs.

You should be all set. Have a great conference!

*This and the following article are reprinted from The Chinook newsletter with grateful thanks to the Western Washington SCBWI chapter. Reprinted by permission of Co-RAs, Joni Sensel and Laurie Thompson.*

REGISTRATION IS ONLINE ONLY!

[www.scbwicarolinas.org](http://www.scbwicarolinas.org)

SCBWI CAROLINAS



# Surviving the Critique

by Lois Brandt

The fantasy: You secure a consultation with the editor, agent, author, or illustrator of your dreams. You walk in and before your butt hits the chair, the professional leaps up, grabs your hand, and congratulates you for creating the best pages she has ever seen.

During our upcoming conference this may, indeed, happen to a few. This article is for the rest of us.

Manuscript consultations are often where art meets the rough sharp edges of business, a.k.a. the book industry. Most of us will receive varying comments from these consultations, anywhere from “I might want to see the full manuscript” to “There’s no market for this book.”

I’ve seen the shell-shocked look of inexperienced writers—and some experienced ones—as they walk out of a consultation where they’ve been told their book won’t sell. These authors look very much like someone who’s just been voted off the island in an episode of *Survivor*.

Here are some tips for staying on the island:

Margaret James © 2009 “Counting on Dreams”



## 1) Prepare

- Know who you are talking to. Check out their websites and Google them. If they have agented/edited/written or illustrated books, read a sampling.
- Know the market for your book. Who else has published similar books? Were these books successful? You won’t share this information with your consultant. She already knows. You are educating yourself.
- Show up early. You’ll be stressed and it’s harder to pay attention if you’re late, rushing, and embarrassed.

## 2) Listen

- You have paid to have a professional discuss your first five pages or dummy. Be an attentive listener.
- Jot down brief notes. You’ll be amazed how easy it is to forget the details of this fifteen-minute discussion.
- Remember the big picture. Is the consultant saying that she doesn’t really need a cat story, but why doesn’t anyone have a naked mole rat as the hero of a novel? This isn’t all bad. You now have inside information on this consultant’s taste and wants.

## 3) Reflect

- As soon as you leave your consultation, sit down and write thorough notes.
- What specifically did the consultant focus on? What kinds of questions did she ask? What did she like about your work? Write everything down.
- Was her response to your work negative? If so, don’t dwell. Write down what you remember so that you can review your notes later, when you’re calm.

## 4) Get back to the conference

- Don’t let yourself be distracted by either positive or negative comments about your work.
- Set your notes aside for later.
- Enjoy the rest of the conference.

## 5) Apply what you heard

- After the conference—perhaps days or weeks afterward—review your notes about the feedback.
- You should be able to consider them more objectively and may spot notes that have meaning or resonance they didn’t in the heat of the moment.
- Use them as prompts to get additional feedback from others, try something new with the manuscript, do additional market research, or guide a new project.
- If you received an invitation to submit, make the work the best it can possibly be before accepting.

# Surviving the Critique

by Lois Brandt (cont.)

A sampling of reasons for a disappointing consultation:

*All too common:* Your expectations focused on selling your work and not on receiving a professional critique. Although sales sometimes happen, the true value of these consultations is self-education and feedback.

*Most likely:* Your taste and that of the consultant are different; the consultant is already working with a book like yours; and/or the consultant hates cats and you have a cat in your first five pages.

*Possible:* Your craft (language use, structure, genre knowledge) isn't up to standards. But it can get there.

Remember that your manuscript is a work in progress.

*Totally impossible:* You are not cut out to be a writer. There are dozens of writers who were told that they would never make it and should find a different profession. Writing is a craft. The more you write, study, and attend conferences, the better you will become.

The writing life sometimes does feel like an episode of *Survivor*, with one important difference: You are the only one who can vote yourself off the island. Think about the advice you've received, use what you can, and discard the rest. Above all, keep on writing.

## Reading List

### 17th Annual SCBWI Carolinas Fall Conference Faculty

Namrata Tripathi, Executive Editor, Atheneum Books for Young Readers, Simon & Schuster's Children Publishing division

- JABBERWOCKY illustrated by Christopher Myers (PB)
- THE LITTLE MADADOR written and illustrated by Julian Hector (PB)
- SWEET DISORDER by Jacqueline Kolsov (YA Historical Fiction)
- UGLY by Donna Jo Napoli, (MG novel)
- DINOSAUR VS. BEDTIME by Bob Shea (PB)

Bonnie Bader, Editor in Chief, Grosset and Dunlap and Price Stern Sloan, Penguin Young Readers Group

- KATIE KAZOO series by Nancy Krulik
- HANK ZIPPER series by Lin Oliver and Henry Winkler
- PIRATE SCHOOL series by Brian James
- DISH, series by Diane Muldrow
- CAMP CONFIDENTIAL series by Melissa J. Morgan

Fatima Kahn, Associate Editor, Little Brown Kids

- PAW PAL board books with animal photographer Rachael Hale
- MY BIG BOOK OF SPANISH WORDS by Rebecca Emberley
- THE BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BEARS by Gillian Shields

Elana Roth, Agent, Caren Johnson Literary Agency

- ROTTEN SCHOOL by R.L. Stine

John J. Bonk

- DUSTIN GRUBBS: ONE MAN SHOW
- DUSTIN GRUBBS: TAKE TWO!

David Macinnis Gill

- SOUL ENCHILADA

Edith M. Hemingway

- ROAD TO TATER HILL

Joyce Moyer Hostetter

- BLUE
- HEALING WATER

Lisa Williams Kline

- PRINCESSES OF ATLANTIS
- WRITE BEFORE YOUR EYES

Carrie Ryan

- THE FOREST OF HANDS AND TEETH

Carole Boston Weatherford

- BECOMING BILLIE HOLIDAY
- BEFORE JOHN WAS A JAZZ GIANT: A SONG OF JOHN COLTRANE

Chris Woodworth

- GEORGIE'S MOON
- DOUBLE-CLICK FOR TROUBLE

# Calendar

by Maria Nolletti Ross

SEPTEMBER 12: BOOKMARK'S FESTIVAL OF BOOKS in Bethabara Park, Winston-Salem, NC. See [www.bookmarksbookfestival.org](http://www.bookmarksbookfestival.org).

SEPTEMBER 25-27: REACH FOR THE STARS! 17th Annual SCBWI Carolinas Fall Conference at the Sheraton Imperial Hotel in Durham, NC. See [www.scbwicarolinas.org](http://www.scbwicarolinas.org).

SEPTEMBER 26, 1:00-3:00 P.M.: BLONNIE BUNN WYCHE to storytell at Hop-Into-The-Park with Read-a-Roo at Moores Creek National Battlefield in Currie, NC. See [www.nps.gov/mocr](http://www.nps.gov/mocr).

SEPTEMBER 27, 3:00 P.M.: CAROLE BOSTON WEATHERFORD to read and sign BECOMING BILLIE HOLIDAY at Malaprop's Book Store in Asheville, NC. See [www.malaprops.com](http://www.malaprops.com).

OCTOBER 1: YALSA DEADLINE to submit a program, preconference, or paper proposal for next Young Adult Literature Symposium to be held in Albuquerque in November 2010. See [www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org).

OCTOBER 1-DECEMBER 31: DELACORTE PRESS Twenty-Seventh Annual Contest for a First YA Novel. See [www.randomhouse.com/kids/writingcontests](http://www.randomhouse.com/kids/writingcontests).

OCTOBER 9-10: SOUTHERN FESTIVAL OF BOOKS in Nashville. Midsouth region will have a booth. Information on the Festival is at <http://tinyurl.com/mx5byb>, and a list of children's and YA authors who will speak is at <http://tinyurl.com/nkegh9>.

OCTOBER 14-18: THE FRANKFURT

BOOK FAIR in Germany. The fair is for both children's and adult book publishers. Offers many educational forums and great networking. [www.frankfurt-book-fair.com](http://www.frankfurt-book-fair.com)

OCTOBER 17: SOUTHERN BREEZE AL/GA/MS Writing and Illustration for Kids '09, 18th Annual Fall Conference in Birmingham, AL. See [www.southern-breeze.org](http://www.southern-breeze.org).

OCTOBER 23-24: CAROLINA CHRISTIAN WRITERS WORKSHOP Some sessions for children's writers. Anderson, SC. See [www.upstateschristianwriters.com](http://www.upstateschristianwriters.com).

OCTOBER 23-25: SC WRITER'S WORKSHOP Annual Writers Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC. See [www.myscww.org](http://www.myscww.org).

OCTOBER 31: CHILDREN'S WRITER DEADLINE for Readaloud Folktale or Fantasy for age 7, to 500 words. See [www.childrenswriter.com](http://www.childrenswriter.com).

NOVEMBER 5-8: AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS 14th Annual National Conference and Exhibition in Charlotte, NC. See [www.aasl.org](http://www.aasl.org).

NOVEMBER 7, 8:30 A.M.: REVISION 911 with MG/YA author Cynthia Liu. See [www.scbwicarolinas.org](http://www.scbwicarolinas.org).

DECEMBER 4-6: CREATING CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS with Elizabeth Dulemba at John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC. See [www.folkschool.org](http://www.folkschool.org).

DECEMBER 15: SCBWI DEADLINES for Golden Kite Awards, Sid Fleischman Humor Award, and Magazine Merit Awards. See [www.scbwi.org/awards.htm](http://www.scbwi.org/awards.htm).

JANUARY 1-31: HIGHLIGHTS 2010 FICTION CONTEST based on a true story from your family. See [www.highlights.com](http://www.highlights.com).

JANUARY 1-FEBRUARY 2: DON FREEMAN MEMORIAL Grant-In-Aid. See [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org).

JANUARY 2-31: SCBWI WINTER CONFERENCE NYC. See [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org).

FEBRUARY 7-13: WRITING FOR CHILDREN with Faye Gibbons at John C. Campbell Folk School, Brasstown, NC. See [www.folkschool.org](http://www.folkschool.org).

FEBRUARY 15-MARCH 15: SCBWI WORK-IN-PROGRESS GRANT Open to assist children's book writers in the completion of a specific project. See [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org).

FEBRUARY 15-MARCH 15: BARBARA KARLIN GRANT open to picture book writers. See [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org).

FEBRUARY 28: CHILDREN'S WRITER Science Article Contest for ages 11 to 750. See [www.childrenswriter.com](http://www.childrenswriter.com).

*Maria Nolletti Ross is a stay-at-home mom who lives in Wilmington, NC, with her husband and two*



*children. She writes every day. Please send your calendar items to [mariaross@ec.rr.com](mailto:mariaross@ec.rr.com).*

[www.scbwicarolinas.org](http://www.scbwicarolinas.org)



# Opportunities

by Janelle Bitikofer

It's that time. You've finished your book, listened to your critique group's advice, revised each chapter somewhere between four and forty-eight times, and now you're ready to sell your manuscript. Congratulations!

There are two ways to go about it. You can submit your work directly to publishers who are accepting submissions from authors, or you can seek an agent to represent your work to the publishers. Editors and agents repeatedly say that either way is fine. But they also both say that agents can be helpful for dealing with contracts and publishing details when your book is in the process of being sold, printed, and marketed. Good agents know how things are supposed to be done in publishing and can guide the author through that maze. They also know which types of books each publisher is looking for, and they don't get paid unless they sell your book.

There are agents for authors and for illustrators. Newer agents tend to be more likely to accept new authors.

So, here is a list of new agents who are seeking polished children's and YA manuscripts. Check out the agency websites for submission guidelines and to discover whether your book fits their lists.

## **Paul Rodeen, Agent, Rodeen Literary Management**

Paul Rodeen worked for several other literary agencies before starting his own in 2008. He specializes in children's and YA books. According to his agency's website he "is actively seeking writers and [www.scbwicarolinas.org](http://www.scbwicarolinas.org)

illustrators of all genres of children's literature including picture books, early readers, middle-grade fiction and nonfiction, graphic novels and comic books, as well as young adult fiction and nonfiction."

<http://www.RodeenLiterary.com>

## **Jill Corcoran, Associate Literary Agent, Herman Agency**

Jill has an English degree from Stanford and an MBA in finance and marketing. She is seeking chapter books, MG and YA books written by "published authors or SCBWI members" to build her list. Jill also blogs about publishing and how she analyzes a submission at <http://www.JillCorcoran.blogspot.com>.

<http://www.HermanAgencyInc.com>

Jeffrey Duckworth © 2009 "Crocodile"



And of course we can't forget those editors who've succumbed to downsizing at the publishing houses and chosen to become literary agents this year. Check out Brenda Bowen (<http://www.Greenburger.com>), former editorial director at Scholastic, Henry Holt, and Simon and Schuster, and also consider Mark McVeigh (<http://www.TheMcVeighAgency.com>), former editor at Aladdin (Simon and Schuster), Dutton (Penguin Group) and HarperCollins Children's

Books.

Work with professionals: always check out websites like Preditors and Editors (<http://www.Anotherrealm.com/preditors>) to make sure that the agent who you are submitting to has a good reputation.

*Janelle Bitikofer works and writes in Raleigh and travels whenever she can. Please send suggestions for future Opportunities columns to [jbiti@yahoo.com](mailto:jbiti@yahoo.com).*



Fall 2009 9

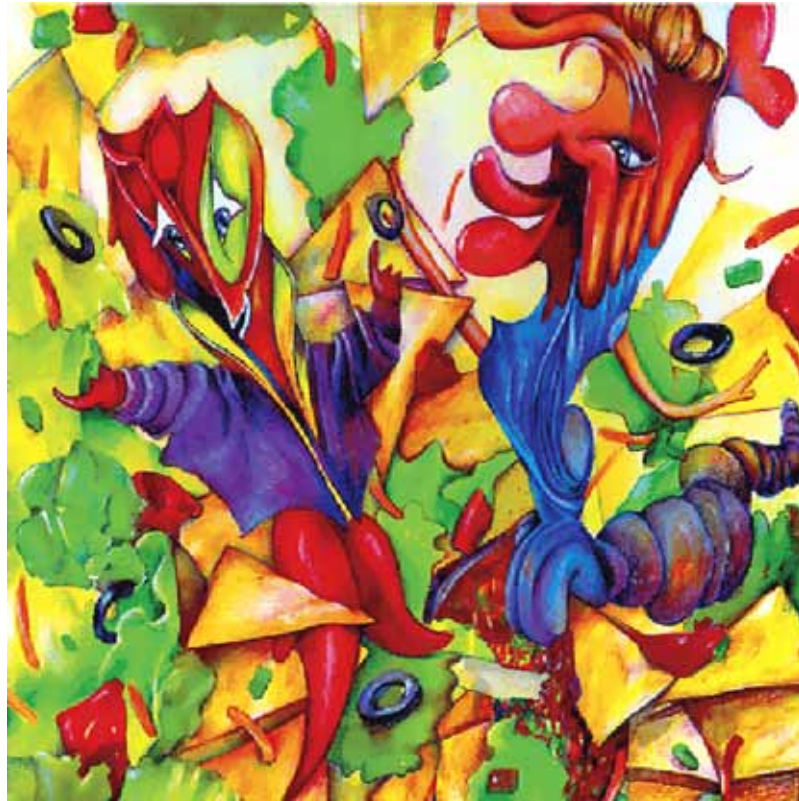
# Hurrahs

by *Blonnie Wyche*

**John Claude Bemis'** novel THE NINE POUND HAMMER, the first book in the CLOCKWORK DARK series, was released in August.

**Alice Berger's** book WHO'S TAKING A BATH? (Studio Seven Publishers) was reviewed by Basil & Spice Kid's Pick Review.

**Clay Carmichael's** novel WILD THINGS (May 2009, Front Street), now in its third printing, received a starred review from KIRKUS and a highlighted review from VOYA. WILD THINGS is also an ALA 2010 Notable Children's Book Discussion List Selection, an ALAN pick, July 2009, and ACPL Mock Newbery 2010 Selection, and was Book Advice July Book of the Month.



**Margaret James © 2009 "Celebrate Salad"**

Schools for the United Arts Council of Raleigh and Wake County, and as a CAPS Teaching Artist for the Durham Arts Council.

**Steve Matchett** snared second place with "I Hear You, Leonardo" from the Pacific Northwest Writers Association. New Millennium Writings gave Steve an Honorable mention for "Leaving Home." (Both of these are national short story contests.) Steve also had an article accepted by 5 HOUR HANDS which will be published on Personal Watercraft Illustrated web site.

**Jocelyn Rish's** short story, "A Little Honey," was one of the three winners of the HIGHLIGHTS 2009 Fiction Contest.

**Niki Schoenfeldt** had an article in the May/June issue of I LOVE CATS magazine.

**Carole Boston Weatherford** was featured in the July 2009 issue of BOOK LINKS magazine.

10 Fall 2009

**Laurie J. Edwards** had two releases with different publishers on the same day: RIHANNA (PEOPLE IN THE NEWS) from Lucent, and "Summer Storms," a story in the anthology SUMMER LOVIN' from The Wild Rose Press. Laurie read excerpts from SUMMER LOVIN' on the Red River Writers Show on Blog Talk Radio.

**Joan Holub's** recently published two picture books: KNUCKLEHEADS (Chronicle Books) and APPLE COUNTDOWN (Albert Whitman). SHAMPOODLE (Random House) will be out in October 2009.

**Kelly Starling Lyons's** picture book, ONE MILLION MEN AND ME, was named a Youth Top 10 book by Detroit Public Library's African American Booklist publication. Kelly was selected an Artist in the

*Blonnie Bunn Wyche, author of THE ANCHOR and CECILIA'S HARVEST, loves to brag on writers and illustrators. Send announcements for future issues of the P&P to [blonnie@ec.rr.com](mailto:blonnie@ec.rr.com).*



[www.scbwicarolinas.org](http://www.scbwicarolinas.org)

# David Macinnis Gill

## First Sale Insights

Tell us about your first book sale, SOUL ENCHILADA (Greenwillow, 2009).

**Q:** What initial incident or idea sparked this story?

**A:** The novel began as a short story in 2005. One of my writer's groups was having a Halloween story contest. I was given several story seeds to begin my work, and I had to include the seeds in the story. While I didn't win, my idea was greeted enthusiastically by the group. I entered the story into the WIN short story contest, and it won.

**Q:** Did you start writing the book as soon as you got the idea?

**A:** It took a couple of years after I wrote the short story to turn it into a novel. I was struggling with the umpteenth revision of a ghost story when I decided to do something with the Halloween story. I set the other novel aside and began letting the narrator of the short story tell me more about her life. Her voice swept me up, and the first draft was done within a month.

**Q:** What was the most challenging part of your revision process?

**A:** Probably, it was getting the timeline down pat. The story starts with Bug, the main character, having a set amount of time to get her grandfather to turn himself in, but I kept changing the sequence of the middle chapters, which would throw the timeline off.

**Q:** How did you know when it was ready to submit?

**A:** I knew it was ready when I made several passes and stopped making changes, except for fiddling with phrasing and deciding whether or not a comma or an em dash would read better in certain sentences.

**Q:** What key incidents led to this publishing house/this sale?

**A:** My agent, Rosemary Stimola, has a good working relationship with Greenwillow, and she thought SOUL ENCHILADA, which is a literary genre bender, would be a good fit for their list.



**Q:** What book on the craft of writing do you like to recommend to others who write for children?

**A:** WRITING THE BREAKOUT NOVEL WORKBOOK by Donald Maas was a great help to me because I'm very task oriented, and the workbook asked me to do specific things and ask piercing questions about my own characters. It was like doing homework on my own novel.

**Q:** Any daily habits that keep you writing?

**A:** I write every day. When I'm drafting a novel, I keep a minimum quota of one thousand words. Between novels, I write stories, description snippets, snatches of dialogue, etc. Anything to keep the pump primed.

**Q:** What helps you keep a kid's eye view of the world?

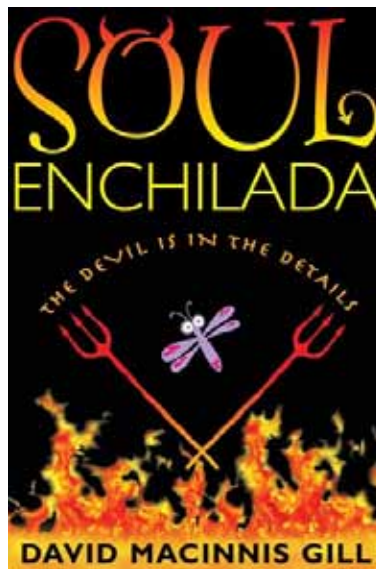
**A:** The three teens living in my house! It's not hard to get into the mind of a teen when they eat dinner with you. And borrow your computer for IM. Or take your car keys to go to the mall. Or...

**Q:** What are you reading now?

**A:** I just finished Libba Bray's hilarious but tragic GOING BOVINE and Mary Pearson's awesome THE MILES BETWEEN.

**Q:** Any parting thoughts or a favorite quote to share?

**A:** In ON WRITING, Stephen King wrote, "If you don't have the time to read, you don't have the time or the tools to write." I think that's good advice.



# Laura Lagomarsino

## Cover Story

This issue's cover painting uses color and technique to produce a landscape that is welcoming, with the hint of a tale about to unfold, full of possibilities.

**Q:** There's a sense of mystery in the setting—what is the story behind this piece?

**A:** This piece is the first illustration out of twelve that I did for the Chamber Music Society of Wilmington. The paintings are being used in school presentations about the life of Franz Joseph Haydn. For this piece, I wanted to capture the feeling of his beginnings, where he was born, his early years living in the country. I tried to capture what I thought his house might have felt like in the hills outside Vienna.

**Q:** The layering of textures and colors suggests atmosphere so well, and gives a lot of depth to the painting. Is this the way you usually work?

**A:** Yes, my paintings always have many layers, and I love to build the layers up in a thoughtful way. My medium is oils, and they naturally lend themselves to this approach. This piece is typical of how I work, a realistic look but yet some magic, some unusual swirling movements, to suggest feeling and atmosphere.

**Q:** Can you describe your process for creating this piece?

**A:** This is oil on gesso board. I love oils for the richness that can be obtained with layering colors. When I paint landscapes and scenes, I strive to capture luminosity of light and its interplay with objects and nature. About ten years ago, I started experimenting with toned canvases. Although there was a definite learning curve, I can't get away from it now, and I love the unity it gives a painting. For my realistic oils, I tone with burnt sienna, but for my whimsical work/children's book illustration, I use bright red, and love the exciting energetic look it lends the piece. With the underpainting poking through here and there, the painting process becomes a push and pull, igniting a sense of freedom to use unexpected colors, like in this one there are purples and cornflower blues, etc. in the cobblestones and fencing.

**Q:** What is your background/training in art?

**A:** My mom tells me I always had a fist full of crayons and drew almost before I could walk. Although I was born in Virginia, we moved to England when I was about a year old, so my early years were filled with the fairy folklore of the Old World culture. We returned to the

US when I was seven, and I was enrolled in private art lessons, starting in oils around age eight. I took classes in college but found that what I saw in my head was something that couldn't be taught, so many of my years of painting have been self-taught.

**Q:** Why do you illustrate for children?

**A:** My imagination never seems to stop.

Images come to me in a continuous stream, during every day life, in my dreams, during travel. Everywhere I look I see something that inspires me, a windowsill with light hitting it, a praying mantis on the porch wall, a spider in its web...some images find their way into paintings, others into a whimsical illustration, and still others come to me in the form of stories for children.

**Q:** What are your goals, professionally?

**A:** Happily, I am exactly where I want to be. I own a little pottery painting studio where customers come in and paint their own cups, mugs, etc., and I decorate the walls with artwork, mine and other artists'. I get immense enjoyment out of offering an inspiring and fun place for people to be creative. I'll continue to paint for my shop/gallery, perhaps participate in an art festival or two a year, and would like to have some of my children's stories published in picture books.

**Q:** What are you currently working on, and where can we see more of your work?

**A:** Current projects vary from two or three realistic oils to four mural-sized imaginary landscapes. I also have 30 or 40 children's books written in my head out of which there are always about five that scream the loudest at me to be "born," so I work on them too, simultaneously. My work can be viewed on my website, [www.ljago.com](http://www.ljago.com), or in my studio/gallery.



# Joan Edwards

## Pursuing the Craft

Pursuing the Craft is dedicated to those active members of SCBWI Carolinas who make the chapter so strong—and have yet to sell a first book. To quote the great American rock band Journey, “Don’t Stop Believing.”

**Q:** How long have you been a member of SCBWI, and what do you feel is most valuable about your membership?

**A:** I joined in 2002. I’ve gained friends who support me in my writing profession, my writing group, skills and knowledge from the fall conferences, and advice from the listserv.

**Q:** What project(s) are you working on now?

**A:** One is an ELDER CARE GUIDE based on what I learned from taking care of my mother for 14 years. Another is a YA novel, CATARINA’S IMMIGRANT HEART. I also have several other stories ready to send off.

**Q:** What helps you stay motivated in your work?

**A:** I love writing. It calms my soul. I keep my goal of getting published by a traditional publisher. One day I will hear an editor say: “I’ve just gotta have your book.”

People visit my website ([www.joanyedwards.com](http://www.joanyedwards.com)) and tell me they have used my devotionals and puzzles to help teach the Gospel to children in America, the Philippines, Trinidad and Tobago, Ireland, and Scotland. They’ve also performed the skits I wrote.

Another thing that keeps me motivated is the comments of my writing group. They keep telling me this is funny, or I like the way you wrote that, or people really need your book. This inspires me to keep on writing, as does any feedback I receive from publishers and editors.

**Q:** Is there a book on the craft of writing that you have found to be particularly helpful?

**A:** One is THE FIRST FIVE PAGES by Noah Lukeman. This tells you that the first five pages may indicate good qualities or problems that occur throughout the story. Another is A NOVEL IN A YEAR by Louise Doughty. A third is BREAKOUT NOVEL by David Maas. He says to think of the worst thing that could happen to your

character and make it happen. This helped me get an idea of how to carry a character through a novel with layered meaningful conflicts. It gave me insight as to how to interact dialogue with the setting. It also gave me ways to end chapters on a note that drives the reader to read the rest of my story.

**Q:** What is your writing routine?

**A:** I write most days in between household projects, going to the store, spending time with my husband, children, and grandchildren. I forget about time when I am writing. I may spend all night working on a story because it won’t let me rest. It also helps me when I am down, to write a funny story. If I’m stressed, you will likely find me at the computer writing.

**Q:** What helps you keep a kid’s eye view of the world?

**A:** I’ve never grown up. I get excited over the tiniest things, like a sunset, a phone call from a friend, a turtle in my yard, and going to a movie with my husband. I taught elementary school for 35 years. I also have 3 children and 6 grandchildren to help me keep a young point of view. I visit elementary schools to read FLIP FLAP FLOODLE, a self-published book that I wrote and illustrated. My hope is to inspire students to never give up on their dreams.

**Q:** What are you reading?

**A:** I just finished ZIGZAG, a YA novel by Ellen Wittlinger. I enjoyed how she handles the first person narrative in contemporary settings. I am also reading ATTRACTOR FACTOR by Joe Vitale. It explains how to use positive imaging, faith and gratitude to get what you want in life.

**Q:** Parting thoughts/favorite quote?

**A:** Believe it will happen. Visualize it. Be thankful for what you have. Take action to make it happen. Never give up. Keep on trying.

*To suggest a SCBWI Carolinas member for Pursuing the Craft, please send an email to [jclbell@yahoo.com](mailto:jclbell@yahoo.com). Include a few details about why this person should be featured.*



# Collective Wisdom

by Niki Schoenfeldt

This column focuses on different elements of writing for children. We invite all our members, both published and unpublished, to share their thoughts. For this issue, we asked: **“What are your best tips for garnering a web presence? How do you get your name out there where people will recognize it, and how important a step do you think a web presence is in terms of your writing/illustrating career?”**

The most helpful thing I’ve done is join the blogging community. I have several blogs and actually cross-post the same info at each one because they each reach different audiences. Everyone reaches out, welcomes newcomers, comments on their blogs, and offers hearty congrats when appropriate. We put out contests to give away our new books and everyone picks up the cause and spreads the word. Commenting on other blogs is also a great way to build goodwill while letting people know you exist, and a return comment seems to be customary as well.

Blogging was a little sluggish for me at first, but I’ve learned to utilize certain structures such as Tuesday Two, Writing Wednesday, Thankful Thursday, Five Things on A Friday, etc. Just having a title gives me some direction for choosing what to blog about. I don’t have to say a lot. In fact, less is usually more. And blogging provides great exercise in concise writing. It is, however, very time consuming!

I have a Facebook page for me and one for each of my books. I also have a Twitter account and have been interviewed for an article to be included in a writer’s guide by the Long Ridge Writer’s Group as a result of a return tweet! The emotional support I’ve gained from being online may well be the most sustaining benefit of all.

**Joyce Moyer Hostetter, author of MG historical novels BLUE, HEALING WATER, and COMFORT**

<http://www.joycemoyerhostetter.blogspot.com>

<http://moyer-girl.livejournal.com>

<http://www.joycemoyerhostetter.com>

An author must have a platform, and nowadays it is born on the web. Technology has made it easy for authors to start with a customizable blog. But be aware, blog only when you have something important to say to ensure that your readers come back because you have shown you respect their time.

A fully integrated presence is of utmost importance. That is a look or brand that carries over from the web to all applicable media. Say you have a website and also a Facebook page and a Twitter account. If you don’t have an integrated look across those pages, your readers may be confused. Integration can be as simple as carrying over the same design, the use of a tagline, a logo, or your book cover. Something that readers easily recognize the moment they arrive on your pages. Successful branding goes a long way to ensuring longevity in the minds of your readers.

Authors often overlook the online author community itself. Active engagement and networking in author communities is vital to meeting other writers, editors, publishers, agents, and professionals. As writing is often a solitary profession, getting online and meeting others like you is important to your well-being. It can also mean learning about opportunities, getting advice, and making friends. The more you write, the more of an expert you will become, and the more of your experiences you will be able to share, thus building your online platform.

Facebook: connect with other authors, readers, reviewers, bloggers, etc. Be kind, courteous, and give them a reason to connect with you. FB friendships require nurturing and work in order to turn into meaningful relationships.

14 Fall 2009



Billy Edd Wheeler © 2009 “Flying Cat”

[www.scbwicarolinas.org](http://www.scbwicarolinas.org)

# Collective Wisdom

by Niki Schoenfeldt (cont.)

Twitter: tweet with caution. Be kind, courteous, and respectful. Follow those of interest to you and don't be offended if people choose not to follow you. Tweet only when you have something interesting to say, and don't over-tweet. Don't be like the boy who cried, "wolf." Use hashtags to follow conversations of interest.

Life is what you make it, as is your web presence. You are sure to get out of it exactly what you put in. Maintenance is hard work and will take elbow grease. Complicated websites that sing and dance are no longer required to get a visitor's attention. In fact, it's frowned upon. Remember, some of the most successful authors of recent years have simple websites. Focus on the basics, write the best book you are able, and do the best you can re: everything else!

**Georgia McBride, writer of urban fantasy**

<http://www.georgiamcbridebooks.wordpress.com>, <http://www.facebook.com/georgiamcbride>

Lori Tussey © 2009 "Dressed Up Cat"



In thinking of my plans for my writing career, I decided it was essential for me to have a strong web presence. I have NO writing credentials—no short stories, magazine articles, NOTHING. But I needed something in the bio section of my query, so I decided to fill that gap with a popular blog, especially after hearing Alyssa Henkin talk about the importance of blogs during the last SCBWI-C Conference. To create a good blog worthy of inclusion in my query letter, I knew I needed to do certain things:

1. Every post links directly back to writing in some form. It's not all about MY writing—sometimes it's about news articles on the industry, book reviews, or a collection of helpful links for writers. But no matter what, the posts deal in some way to writing for a YA/MG audience.
2. I update every weekday. A blog is only as good as its content.
3. I remain professional. This doesn't mean I don't have fun—I often include funny, short vignettes. But I never slam agents, editors, or fellow writers.
4. I don't get too personal. I don't want an agent or editor reading about a gazillion different rejections for my work, or for an agent/editor to think I'm whiny. Sure, writing's not a rose garden, but I don't show that on my blog.
5. I seek to make my blog a resource for writers and a showcase of writing. Every link in my sidebar is to someone in the writing business, and I frequently share tips with the community. This has fostered a wealth of information and a communication back and forth with fellow writers.
6. I network with other people in the writing profession. I have been in contact with published writers and have been invited to join a critique group in which I am the only not-yet-published writer. I have made countless connections—and when I am finally published, I plan on using that as a launching point for book publicity.
7. I seek out followers. Because I wanted my blog to impress editors and agents, I need a strong following.

My goal for my web site was keep it clean, professional, and directly to the point. My blog is my network, my website is where agents and editors can quickly find information about me and my writing.

**Beth Revis**

<http://bethrevis.blogspot.com>, <http://bethrevis.com>  
<http://twitter.com/bethrevis>

**Next Topic:**

**What are your best tips for landing an agent?**

*Niki Schoenfeldt's first picture book, NATURE'S LULLABY, was recently released by Little Blue Works/Windstorm Creative. Email [nikiofware@carolinas.rr.com](mailto:nikiofware@carolinas.rr.com).*



# Joan Holub

## Notes from the Front Lines

Joan Holub is author of more than 120 books for children, including board and novelty books, early readers, chapter books, and picture books. Her upcoming titles are *SHAMPOODLE* (Random House, early reader, Oct 2009) and *GROUNDHOG WEATHER SCHOOL* (Putnam, PB, Dec 2009). Other recent PB titles include *KNUCKLEHEADS* (Chronicle Books—see the video at YouTube) and *APPLE COUNTDOWN* (Albert Whitman & Co). She loves cookies, cats, dogs, trees, oceans, and writing. Visit her at [www.joanholub.com](http://www.joanholub.com) | [www.readertotz.blogspot.com](http://www.readertotz.blogspot.com) | [www.joanholub.blogspot.com](http://www.joanholub.blogspot.com).



**Q:** What is one thing you know now that you wish you had known before being published?

**A:** How important it is to read current children's book as well as older ones. I visit a bookstore every week or two to scrutinize what's new in the children's department. You get ideas, you see who's publishing what, and you make sure you're not re-inventing the wheel, or bunny.

**Q:** What has surprised you about the publishing process?

**A:** Editors are real people. This sounds like a no-brainer, but when they were only names on an SCBWI list, they seemed like intimidating brick walls. It seemed impossible to get through. Like us, they want to enjoy their work. They want us to send them engaging, fresh stories that will sell in the marketplace. If you're easygoing, have a sense of humor, and meet your deadlines, that's a plus.

**Q:** What, if anything, frustrates you about the publishing process?

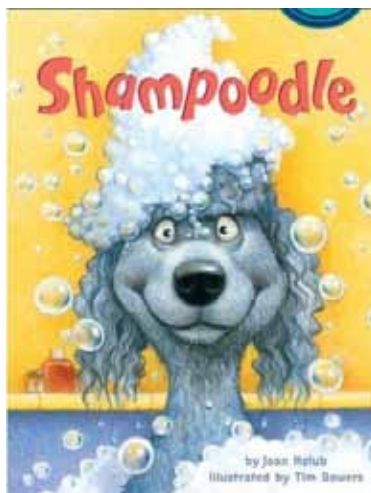
**A:** No question, it's the long wait to hear back after a submission. The only thing that helps me stop watching my email/mailbox is to be working on the next book(s). I've always got a running list of ideas and have several books in the works at once. That way, if I'm stuck with one, I can turn to another.

**Q:** Comparing your first book with your most recent project, what has changed?

**A:** My first two books were an easy reader *PAJAMA PARTY* (Grosset & Dunlap, still in print—yay!) and *BOO WHO? A SPOOKY LIFT-THE FLAP BOOK* (Scholastic, also still in print!). I still love both of those formats. My October book, *SHAMPOODLE* (Random House) is an easy reader. However, I've also branched out into picture books (*GROUNDHOG WEATHER SCHOOL*) and chapter books (*GODDESS GIRLS*) as well. I began my career as an illustrator, but these days the only illustration I do is for board and novelty books, and I love doing that. I really enjoy writing humor in fiction and also enjoy finding ways to convey nonfiction material in a humorous way. I write in almost all the formats that exist for ages 1 to 12. I'm not really a YA or MG writer, but never say never, right? In fact, I do have an MG idea simmering. So many ideas, so little time.

**Q:** Break down the timing of your most recent project.

**A:** *SHAMPOODLE* was one of the most unusual experiences I've had. I wrote it a few years ago fairly quickly, revised it over a couple of months, showed it to my crit group, revised some more over the next two weeks, and then sent it to two publishers. One was Random House. I got two nice rejections, then life got busy, and I didn't send it out again. About a year later while on vacation in London, I got email from Random House asking if I'd sold *SHAMPOODLE*, and if not, would I consider re-submitting. (A request to re-submit after a rejection? This never happens! I was thrilled.) The editor said she hadn't been able to get the book out of her head since she'd read it, and she had just gotten the go-ahead to buy some new titles. Fortunately, I had the manuscript on file on the laptop I had with me in London, so I zipped it over to her, and she bought it! Since this fall is the 25th anniversary of

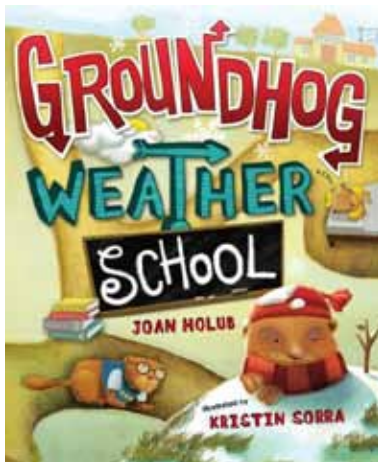




# Joan Holub

## Notes from the Front Lines (cont.)

Random House's Step Into Reading line, they're doing an extra push with ads that feature SHAMPOODLE in LEARNING MAGAZINE and BAKER & TAYLOR. So the delay in RH buying it actually worked in my favor. As far as promotion goes, I've sent out color galleys my editor gave me to dog magazines and grooming publications. In the fall, I'll get in touch with bloggers to guest blog or see if they'd like to review the book. Promo can become a time-sucker though, and I'd rather write.



Q: What craft challenges do you continue to face?

A: Evaluating my own work. Knowing which ideas to pursue. Knowing when to give up on a project and when to keep revising. I have a wealth of ideas bubbling up all the time, but books take time to develop. I try not to waste time beating the

same unsold manuscript to death after I've gotten four or more rejections, but sometimes it's hard to let go even when my critique group is saying, "Let go!" :o)

Q: What is one of the strangest things that has happened since being published?

A: I learned that there are other people named Joan Holub in this world. I've heard from five of them! None are authors as far as I know, but two are teachers. One said she was in the library with her class one day and one of her students said, "Look, Ms. Holub, you wrote a book!"

Q: Do you have any advice for aspiring writers/illustrators?

A: Write books kids want to read. Early in my career, I had the painful experience of giving a book I'd published to a young boy, who politely read it, then stashed it on the shelf as if to say, "Thank goodness that's over!" Of course not every child will like every book, but I learned something from that experience. Now I really think about whether a child would like to read what

I'm writing. I study books that are popular and try to figure out why kids like them. I ask kids which books they like and why. Their answers can be enlightening and surprising. If you don't have kids or if your kids are grown, volunteer at a school or take a friend's children off her/his hands one afternoon. Kids are our audience. We need to know who they are, what they're looking for, what they like to do, what they think is funny, embarrassing, scary. And most of all, we need to get in touch with the emotions of our own childhood. Being around kids can help with that too!

The updated SCBWI national website, [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org), is very interactive. PUBLISHED AUTHORS: YOU MUST UPDATE YOUR OWN PROFILE if you wish to be a PAL [Published and Listed] member. With PAL membership you can choose to be included in the searchable Speaker's Bureau on the main website.

In 2010, SCBWI Carolinas will host events targeted specifically to PAL members. Future events include a meet and greet with Media Specialists, learning about marketing, and school visits. Getting Career 101 advice from an agent as well as a PAL Intensive at the Fall 2010 Conference!

The SCBWI LA Conference was amazing, starting out with Sherman Alexie and ending with Kathleen Duey. Go to [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org) for the LA Conference Blog and to read about all the presentations and keynote speakers.

Keep watching [www.scbwi.org](http://www.scbwi.org) as they add on new features:

1. Regional News Blog where announcements, news, last-minute updates, success stories, and much more will be available to regional members.
2. Upcoming Events will be posted on the Regional Chapter Home Page. SCBWI Carolinas will keep our own regional website, but you will be able to see what other regions are planning for conferences, workshops, and other SCBWI events.

# Critique Groups

Writer's Well by Steve Matchett

In Charlotte, we have the benefit of an SCBWI critique group well-run by the energetic and capable Carol Baldwin. We meet the first Saturday of the month, but last month Carol was out of town and asked me to sit in her chair.

Here I must make a confession: I

didn't always understand the function and operation of critique groups.

Example:

When living in California, my girlfriend asked me to accompany her to her creative writing class at the local junior college.

No problem. I was editor of a national monthly trade publication

at the time, so I figured I knew everything there was to know about the writing biz. Keep in mind my day job paid me to voice my opinions, often vociferously, about possible articles, stories, etc. So off we went, and the first person to stand and read pages for class critique bored me witless. IMHO at the time, everything about the piece was wrong. When the reading was mercifully over and the teacher asked for comments on the piece, I, the non-enrolled guest, blurted out that it was the biggest load of

rubbish I had ever heard. In my mind I was trying to be helpful, but the resulting pandemonium ended up a lot like one of those political street riots on CNN. Not only was I instructed never to return, my totally innocent girlfriend was almost thrown out as well.



**Barbara Barber © 2009**  
**"Booda Wants to GO"**

I've learned since then. Before I take pages to our Charlotte SCBWI group, I polish them until I know they are perfect. Flawless. Yet after every single meeting I come back with notes that make my work better. Without fail. I've also made several kindred-spirit friends and met some truly eye-opening writers and illustrators, people whose

viewpoints and understandings have been the fertilizer that has helped my fledgling storytelling efforts grow—and I mean 'fertilizer' in the best possible sense.

In art there are no wrong answers. The exact same picture or description of a tree can make as many different statements about that tree, or about life, as there are people in the audience. And all statements will be correct. Art's beauty is that it isn't math. It's subjective to each and every

individual. As Michael J. Fox said on Inside the Actors Studio, "If two plus two always equals four, what good is it?" When two plus two equals five, that's art.

A good critique group helps the participants with their art, be it illustration or writing. In my case, I use paragraphs of words to build scenes, characters, and actions, striving for maximum clarity and impact. When I think I've got my pages absolutely 100% right, I take them to the Saturday group. They read. They react. They comment. I listen and make notes. The result is they make my work more effective. And more effective is more better.

Bottom line: Critique groups rock. It isn't a matter of showing up to learn how to write or draw; it's a matter of seeing how to make your work more effective. You're in a room full of people who all want your work to be the best it can be. It's a win-win deal. So join a critique group. It's a stimulus package that makes sense. And it's free. If some idiot jumps up and says your work is a big load of rubbish, you can throw the bum out. Is this a great country or what?

Steve Matchett has revised his second YA novel, this one set in the world of Texas rodeos. He is a full-time



video producer, which he sees as writing in four dimensions: words, sound, image, and time.

# Setting

Becoming a Serious Writer by Jo Watson Hackl

A richly built setting can add a satisfying dimension to your story. It can create mood, add tension, and, through the details that your narrator notices, it can reveal your narrator's state of mind. Below are some tips I've found helpful in developing setting.

Give as much care to your setting as you do the main characters.

Take time to prepare a setting chart. Questions to answer in the setting chart include whether the action takes place inside or outside and the season of the year. If your story is set outside, details to consider include the weather, if the area is natural or has been shaped by development, the flowers and foliage present, the smells in the air, the insects and other sounds that can be heard, whether this varies at different times of day, and temperature and wind variations throughout the day.

If the action takes place inside, some details to consider include the smell of each room, the size of the rooms, whether they are cluttered or sparse, the style and color of furniture and decoration used, whether the decorations match or are eclectic and are new or worn, the titles of any books or magazines present, and whether the rooms are messy or neat.

You might also ask yourself if any music is playing and, if so, identify

it and describe whether it is soft or loud. Are there other background sounds? What objects are present in the room that are special to the owner, and why are they special? Is there anything in the setting that a character wishes to change or hide? Does the setting change over the course of the story? If so, how?



Once you've put together a chart with every setting detail you can think of, look at the setting through the eyes of your narrator. What details would he or she notice in a particular scene? What details help propel your story forward? Does something annoy the narrator about the setting? Is there something that he or she likes? Does anything in the

setting spark a memory?

Describe the important setting details in the voice of your narrator, keeping your description as brief as possible unless your narrator is a flowery speaker. Describe only the details that the character would notice at that particular time. For example, a character stalling for time in a conversation might notice the pattern of the drapes. In contrast, a character in a hurry is likely to notice only details in his or her setting that create an obstacle.

Jennifer Rolles © 2009 "Moon"

Of course, most of the details you've identified in your setting chart will never make it onto the pages of your book. But taking the time for the behind the scenes work will make sure that the details you do include are telling ones that help develop your story and characters.

I look forward to reading the great settings in the work of fellow SCBWI-Carolinas writers.

Jo Watson Hackl is ARA of the Carolinas chapter and is a founding member of the Upstate Children's



Writer's Group. She can be reached at [jhackl1@charter.net](mailto:jhackl1@charter.net)

# Polishing Your PB

by Maria Nolletti Ross

The Polishing Your Picture Book Conference was held at The Arts Council of Beaufort County in Beaufort, SC, on May 2. Kami Kinard and Jo Hackl did an outstanding job as organizers. The faculty included Maggie Lehrman, an Editor at Abrams books for Young Readers and Amulet Books; Noa Wheeler, an Associate Editor at Henry Holt Books for Young Readers; and Jill Dembowski, Assistant Editor at Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. Author Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen and author/illustrator Phyllis Tildes rounded out the quality conference team. They gave it to us straight.

Writing a publishable picture book is extremely difficult. Selling one is even harder. Selling one in our current economy is worse. Making any real money if you do sell one is highly unlikely. Picture books cost a lot of time and money to produce and rarely make the publishers any substantial profit. Most editors would rather work on YA, middle grade, or chapter books. Whoa.

Thankfully, the conference faculty also shared valuable advice on how to write the successful picture book.

In fewer than 500 words, you must create a humorous, original story from a child's point of view that a child would want to have read to them repeatedly and that a grown-up is willing to read repeatedly.

According to Ms. Dembowski, "Every line should be interesting and every word necessary. Tell a rich story that is visual and exciting."

Ms. Lehrman adds, "Make sure it is easy to read, copy-edited, critiqued, in standard format, and looks professional."

Write funny stories about likeable trouble makers. "Don't write a story about random nonsense," advised

20 Fall 2009

Ms. Wheeler. To have a framework, stick with only one peculiarity such as in *CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS* by Judi and Ron Barrett.

Don't start with dialogue. Set the stage with the first sentence for the young readers. Author Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen agreed. "Use the beginning to introduce main character and setting and hint at the problem."

The main character must drive the story, be likeable, and flawed. He might attempt something, but he fails. He tries two more times, but he fails again. The tension builds. Then you shift gears with transition, introspection, and the ending. Draw the moment out. You can keep the character alive after the ending with a twist, such as in the picture book *HOG PRINCE* by Sudipta Bardhan-Quallen, illustrated by Jason Wolff.

Ms. Bardhan-Quallen said she didn't begin submitting until she had six picture book manuscripts completed.

Once she sold one, she used the publication credit to sell the others.

Author/illustrator Phyllis Tildes echoed this sound advice. "Have multiple picture book manuscripts or dummies ready at all times. When you sell one, you'll have the others available to offer."

She should know. Years ago, an editor called to tell her that he liked

her work but not the book she submitted. He was really looking for a counting book. How fortunate that she just happened to have a complete dummy of *COUNTING ON CALICO* sitting in her filing cabinet. This became her first sale of a table full of her published author-illustrated books.

Motivation indeed!



Roxann Lewis © 2009 "Dog and Cat Toot Their Flutes"

# Caption Contest

Receive a \$10 Barnes & Noble Gift Card

Anne Runyon © 2009



Previous issue art with winning caption:



Kit Grady © 2009

"Possession: 9/10ths of the claw."

Congratulations to Donna Sink and Anne Runyon, winners of \$10 B&N gift cards! Donna submitted the winning caption for the previous issue, and Anne submitted the selected art for this issue.

Get in on the action! Caption writers submit suggested text to [jlbell@yahoo.com](mailto:jlbell@yahoo.com). Please use subject line "Fall 2009 P&P Caption Contest." Illustrators submit art in need of text to [bonnieadamson@att.net](mailto:bonnieadamson@att.net). Please use subject line "Winter 2009 Caption Contest." Deadline for both is October 15.

# Book Fairs

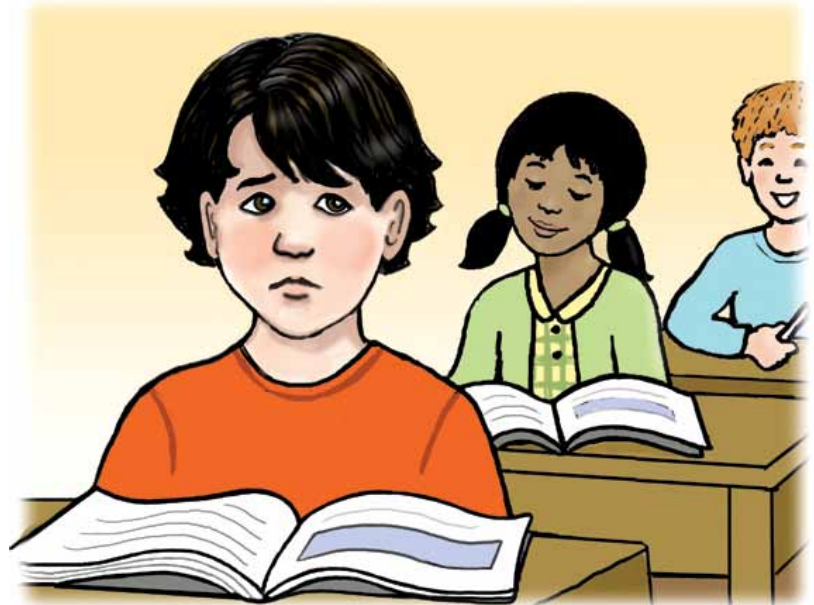
by Lionel Bender

Many people believe there is little to be gained by freelance authors, editors, and illustrators visiting book exhibitions or fairs such as Bologna, Book Expo, IRA, or ALA events. They are only for sales and marketing people to sell to bookshops, libraries, schools, and to co-edition publishers. I disagree completely. In November, the American Association of School Libraries (AASL) is holding a book exhibition in Charlotte, NC, Nov. 5-7. I strongly recommend you visit. But only if you have prepared in advance, work hard on the day, and follow up after the event. [www.aasl.org/ala/charlotte](http://www.aasl.org/ala/charlotte)

Although you are unlikely to place your work at a book fair, there is a huge amount you can achieve. You can i) Identify the most likely publishers for your work. ii) Identify the editors or art editors you need to approach, and get their contact details. iii) Determine publishers' procedures for submissions or applications. iv) Identify non-traditional outlets for your work. v) Get ideas for new projects by reviewing what others are doing. vi) "Network" with other authors, illustrators, and freelancers. vii) Pick up on trends and new developments in the industry.

Even if commissioning staff are not on the booths, you can get most if not all the information you need from sales people—if you are up front, book fair-savvy, and experienced. If you are not yet into book fairs, the AASL is a great place to start—it's local, its inexpensive, and it won't be too frantic. Remember, though, go prepared and with clear objectives and determination.

*Lionel Bender is an author, editor, and director of UK book packager Bender Richardson White ([www.brw.co.uk](http://www.brw.co.uk)). He has exhibited at and regularly visited major book fairs and exhibitions for more than 20 years. He offers professional advice for getting the most from visiting book fairs. Lionel will be visiting the AASL in Charlotte, and will be on Faculty at the SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Fall Conference on November 14. For more information contact [lionel@brw.co.uk](mailto:lionel@brw.co.uk).*



Bicking © 2009 "School"

Coming Next Issue:

First Sale Insights with Tameka Brown

Pursuing the Craft with Maggie Moe

Notes from the Front Lines with Pam Zollman

Winter Issue Deadline: October 15



# The Artists

Submit art for future issues to [bonnieadamson@att.net](mailto:bonnieadamson@att.net)



Barbara Barber majored in fine arts at Baylor and the U of TX, and has created art since 1960. [bbarberstudio@gmail.com](mailto:bbarberstudio@gmail.com)



Laura Lagomarsino has been an artist most of her life, drawing and painting from an early age. [www.ljlaglo.com](http://www.ljlaglo.com)



Jennifer Rolles lives, draws, paints, and writes in Denver, NC. [rollesj@bellsouth.net](mailto:rollesj@bellsouth.net)



Judith Bicking enjoys creating thought provoking art for both children and adults! [illustration@bicking.com](mailto:illustration@bicking.com)



When Brooke Lauer isn't playing the banjo or fiddle, she writes and illustrates picture books. [www.brookelauer.com](http://www.brookelauer.com).



Anne Runyon's artwork reflects her love of the natural world. [www.annerunyon.com](http://www.annerunyon.com)



Jeffrey Duckworth is an illustrator/writer, designer, stay-at-home dad and Duck of All Trades. [www.jeffduckworth.com](http://www.jeffduckworth.com).



Roxann Lewis is a professional artist from the San Francisco Bay area, now in Charleston. [www.roxannlewisart.com](http://www.roxannlewisart.com).



Tina is a writer who wants to illustrate her stories. Her PB was one of 3 Best Family Beach Guides chosen by *Family Fun*.



Margaret James is an illustrator, artist, and educator, bringing life to art and art to life. [cre8good@gmail.com](mailto:cre8good@gmail.com)



Holly McGee lives in Asheville, NC. See more of her work at [www.hollymcgee.com](http://www.hollymcgee.com).



Lori Tussey lives in Raleigh and works for the U.S. EPA. She writes and illustrates MG novels.

Tina Tibbitts © 2009  
"Princess and Dragon"



Billy Edd Wheeler, paints, writes songs, plays, and books, and lives in Swannanoa, NC. [www.billyeddwheeler.com](http://www.billyeddwheeler.com).