



Prairie Song
Nebraska Regional Newsletter



August 2022

Spotlight



**Featured
Illustrator**

BROOKE SPERRY

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Upcoming Events

September 7 – Shop Talk, online 7:00pm
 *Note the new day and time! Shop Talk is now monthly.

September 10 - Online Nonfiction Conference, Iowa Chapter 9am-4pm

September 11 - Regional Meeting, 4pm-5pm

October 15 - Fall Social, 1pm-4pm

October 22 - Reverse Outlining Using the Story Endings Matrix, 9am-12pm

November 12 - Illustrator Intensive 9:30am-5:30pm

**Ezra Jack Keats Showcase
Prize for Illustration**

In honor of Ezra Jack Keats, the legendary author and illustrator of *The Snowy Day* and *Peter's Chair*, SCBWI will award one cash prize of \$2,500 to a promising BIPOC illustrator. The money can be used to advance professional artistic development and growth and can include supplies, equipment, research, learning experiences, travel, creative sabbaticals, child care, or any legitimate expenses that allow the winners to develop or improve their art. Submissions are currently open.

A Word from Our Regional Team



Sheli Petersen, nebraska-ic2@scbwi.org
SCBWI-Nebraska Co-Illustrator Coordinator
Visual Storyteller: spetersenillustration.com
Texas Woman's University Professor of Art, Graphic Design

Hello, All. Nice to meet you! I'm thrilled to announce that this coming year I will step into the role of Co-Illustrator Coordinator with author-illustrator Dianna Carda. Dianna will "shadow" me, learning the ropes to serve as Illustrator Coordinator starting Fall 2023. As a dedicated SCBWI service-leader, I bring extensive experience in event-planning, portfolio reviews, hands-on workshops, and presentations for our Nebraska, Southwest Texas, and New England chapters. In my creative practice as an author-illustrator and designer of children's books, I combine the research and detailed accuracy of scientific illustration, which I teach at the college level, with my love of world-building, character design, lively interaction, and a whimsical humor that appeals to young audiences.



Dianna Carda, nebraska-ic@scbwi.org
SCBWI-Nebraska Co-Illustrator Coordinator
Dwarf Artist Coalition (DAC)
LPA Today Magazine Contributor, author and illustrator

Hello, everyone. I am an entrepreneur of skills and education, an equestrian of 21 years, a writer and illustrator with dreams, and a swimmer achieving records. As a member of the Dwarf Artist Coalition (DAC), a group of artists with dwarfism, I am able to create from my own "safe place" and hope to affirm that there is creativity in every corner of the world and in many different packages. I recently exhibited my charcoal illustrations at the Spokane Little People of America (LPA) National Convention. As Co-illustrator Coordinator, I will work on bringing awareness of the needs of all SCBWI illustrators to the board meetings and team groups in which I will be involved. I have been given this opportunity as Co-IC to serve others, learn new skills, and make new friends as I move further into the kid lit arena. I look forward to working side-by-side with our illustrators this fall at the November Illustrator Intensive that features Lauren Rille, Art Director at Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.

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In addition to our Intensive, we have more exciting events in store for illustrators this year, including Shop Talk content, opportunities for agent and editor pitches, and professional networking during our monthly regional meetings. Also, mark your calendar for our multi-regional Marvelous Midwest Conference in Spring 2024, with opportunities for portfolio reviews and participation in our Portfolio Showcase (yes, 2024!). Dianna and I look forward to serving you this year. Please reach out to share good news and/or ask questions. We would love to hear from you!



Email Marketing for Authors: 6 Messages to Send Your Readers



Did you happen to read some emails today? If so, you are in good company. Reading email is a daily occurrence for many of us.

As an author and marketing professional, I'm often asked about social media. I think social media is great because it can help you get people onto your email list. And if I had to choose between a huge social media following and a huge email list, I would choose email every time.

Here's why: the social media algorithm is always changing, and we have very little control over who sees our content and when. But with email, we can control when content is distributed, who receives it, and we can track open rates, engagement, etc. Don't yet have an email list? You can start by sending messages to your friends, family, and other contacts. It doesn't have to be fancy; it just needs to happen.

Get ready to hit "send"!

Email #1 - Behind the Scenes: Sharing behind-the-scenes content is a great way to connect with readers. It gives them insight into your process, who you are as an author, and even teases upcoming news without screaming, "buy my book!". I've sent behind-the-scenes emails about why I love to sign each copy of my book, sharing news of getting a local bookstore contract, and other small glimpses into my life as an author and marketing coach.

Email #2 - Reveal: When you've hit an exciting milestone with your book, like starting to draft illustrators or finalizing the cover, let people know! You're taking people along on your journey and getting them excited for your launch.

Email #3 - Special Bonus: At least once a year, plan on having a special bonus. This may be tied to a book launch or announcing pre-orders, but it doesn't have to be. The special bonus is all about something extra people can get when they buy your book.

Email #4 - The Reviews are In: I'm a big proponent of getting and SHARING your reviews. Reviews that just sit on Amazon have some value, but you have the ability to really maximize their impact when you share them on social media and through email.



Craft Corner



Email #5 - Holiday Special: This one is pretty standard as many of us already think about Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, or Cyber Monday. But there are other holidays that may tie into your book theme. People have come to expect a deal around holidays, so you might as well put together a discount or free shipping offer and email it out to everyone you know!

Email #6 -Thank You: It's really important to take a moment to say thank you to everyone who has supported you during your author journey. This isn't a direct pitch for a sale, it's a moment of gratitude and reflection. Send your readers, friends, and followers a quick message to let them know how much you appreciate them. This act of gratitude goes a long way!

Ready to get started? I encourage you to set a goal of sending out an email in the next 48 hours. Don't overthink it - just see what happens!

Continuing to Build Your Email List

You'll want to continue to grow your email list over time. The best thing you can do is to make it easy for people to sign up! Here are areas to focus on:

Your Website: Ideally, your website would promote your sign-up in three places - as a tab in your header banner, in the footer on each page, and as a display ad that pops up after someone has been on your site for at least 20 seconds.

Social Media: Be sure to put a link to your newsletter sign-up in your social media profiles. You can also direct people to your profile link in your posts. For example, "Want to get updates on my latest book release? Sign up for my email list! Link in bio."

Author Events: Anytime you're at an event, you should have a sign-up sheet available! Better yet, have a giveaway available for anyone who signs up for your email list.

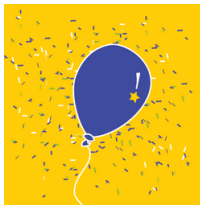
How many people do you currently have on your list? 100? 250? 0? Whatever it is, set a realistic goal for trying to increase it over the next six months. Remember, none of this has to be perfect, so just get started and see how it goes!

[Lauren Ranalli](#) is an award-winning self-published children's book author, the Director of Marketing and Communications for an international non-profit, and the mom of two high-spirited children. [Visit her on Instagram](#) to receive 2 FREE resources, Finding Social Media Success and the Self-Publishing Guide: 5 Resources to Get You Started.

Let's Celebrate



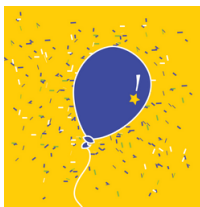
Sheli Petersen was awarded a micro-grant from Greater Denton Arts Council to develop an exhibition showcasing one of her current picture book projects, *Rascally Ravens at Greystone Farm*, featuring full-color and pencil illustrations, research and process, and a printed book.



Jodi Adams shares with us that she recently finished the illustrations and cover design for her second picture book, *The Train Rolls On To The North Pole*, which is due out this October! We can't wait to see it, Jodi!



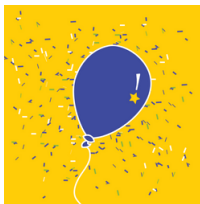
Mary Beth Rice received an honorable mention in the Spring Fling writing contest for her story *Ruby's Sun-Shower Romp*. Well done, Mary Beth!



Kelly Brakenhoff's latest Kickstarter campaign for her fourth book in the Duke the Deaf Dog series was funded in less than 24 hours! She is happy to share recommendations on holding Kickstarter campaigns as a way to cover costs with indie publishing, so feel free to ask her questions. Way to go, Kelly!



Cricket Media's Ladybug magazine offered Stefanie Raszler a contract for her fiction story *Phil And Bert: A Tale Of Two Tree Nuts*. Congratulations Stefanie!



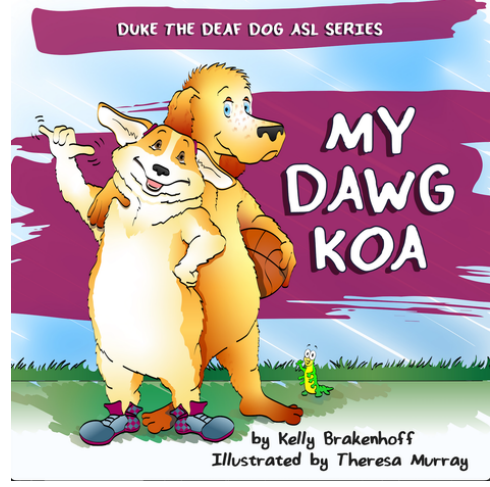
Chloe Burgett will be illustrating Random House's A to Z Animal Mysteries chapter book series by Kayla Whaley. Way to go, Chloe!

★ Kelly Brakenhoff ★

Kelly Brakenhoff published her third book in the Duke the Deaf Dog series in June after a successful Kickstarter campaign that raised almost twice the goal Kelly had set.

As we all know, there is a big hole for diverse books in kid lit. Deaf and hard of hearing children--and really, any child with a disability--want to see characters like themselves in books. Kelly has seen this throughout her career.

Kelly is an American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreter whose motivation for learning ASL began in high school when she wanted to converse with her deaf friends. Kelly has since used ASL every day in her career, which spans more than 30 years!



cover design by Melissa Williams Design

Kelly wanted to write a children's book series that deaf children could feel connected to and that also showed kids who can hear what it's like to hear differently. In addition, many deaf and hard of hearing children don't get to see deaf adults who have exciting jobs, are living their dreams, and enjoy great relationships in their communities.

My Dawg Koa is about deaf friends Duke and Koa. Through the story, Duke learns there are similarities and differences between friends and families. Houses may be different and parents may have different expectations, but one thing families share no matter what is LOVE.

Throughout the story there are photos of 11 ASL signs so kids and parents can learn while reading. Children can also watch videos from a deaf instructor on how to sign the vocabulary words and practice signing the complete story in ASL.

Readers will find plenty of inspiring role models who show that deaf children can become deaf adults with great educations, families, hobbies, careers, and more! Congratulations on such a successful series, Kelly! We can't wait to read more!



Coming Attractions

New Regional Meetings Added

Our new monthly Regional Meeting provides an opportunity to learn about upcoming chapter events and regional news, listen to a topic from a presenter, and ask questions of the Regional Team (RA and Co-ICs). These new meetings bring our regional offerings in line with those of other SCBWI regions to ensure all members have the same general experiences and opportunities within their chapters.

Upcoming topics for Regional Meetings:

August 14 – Trends in Children’s Publishing

September 11 – Building a Creative Career with Balance and Believing

October 9 – Taking the Emotional Journey

So what’s the difference between Regional Meetings and Shop Talk? Shop Talk allows for the exploration of creative expression, deep discussion, and interaction between members. Topics are focused on improving your craft, the journey of writing and illustrating, learning about the world of kid lit, and honing your skills. Regional Meetings are an opportunity to interact with the Regional Team and learn more about SCBWI events, news, and opportunities.

Regional Meetings will be held the second Sunday of every month from 4pm-5pm CST on Zoom. We’d love to see you there!



illustration by Dianne Carda

Maximizing Your Membership



We are excited to announce a new benefit to your Nebraska chapter membership! Starting in August, new members will be connected with a New Member Liaison. Becoming a member of SCBWI can be overwhelming—there are webinars, conferences, listservs, Facebook groups, and more. We are proud to offer such amazing resources, but it can also be daunting!

We wanted to help lighten the load - after all, joining SCBWI should be a watershed moment in your author or illustrator career! Our Liaisons will provide support and guidance for finding resources, navigating conferences and meetings with a pal, and answering any questions that come up. Liaisons are also a friend you can reach out to for anything in the kid lit journey...as we know, writing and illustrating can feel lonely at times. Having a trusted person to reach out to for accountability, advice, or even to scream into the phone at (positive or negative screams allowed!) can be the difference to attaining a successful kid lit career.

Our New Member Liaisons are:

Sandy Mickey, Kelly Brakenhoff, Parker Adair, Gaye McCallum, Mary Beth Rice, Ashley Karges, Kathy Crable, Heather Torres, Jodi Adams, Betty VanDeventer, Paula Ray, Rosalind Reloj, and Becky Swanberg.

If you are a new member, Alison Pearce Stevens will reach out within a few weeks to introduce you to your Liaison. If you're a new(ish) member and want to connect with a Liaison, [let Alison know!](#) Thank you to all of our Liaison volunteers for making our chapter a welcoming and friendly atmosphere!

Nebraska Discussion Board

Are you looking for someone to critique your hook, pitch, logline, or query letter?

Search no more!

You will find one or more of your Nebraska Kidlit colleagues to share their expertise.

Post your work on our Nebraska Discussion Board.

[Click here to post.](#) (Log in first!)



Illustration Submission

Would you like for your art to be featured in our future newsletter?

Please send to: Sheli Petersen at nebraska-ic2@scbwi.org

Label file as firstname_lastname.jpeg. (no bigger than 8 mb)



Shop Talk Recap



Written by Mary Beth Rice

Join Us for Talk Shop!

Mark your calendars for the new monthly Shop Talk format on Wednesdays from 7 pm - 8 pm (Central). Topics cover all things kid lit—writing, revising, illustrating, publishing, marketing, and more.

The kick-off topic on September 7th is author websites. Join us as author Alison Pearce Stevens talks about why you should have a website, how to go about creating one, and some of the important features you'll want to include. Not published yet? All the more reason to tune in. Check out this link for an overview of author websites and bring a link to your favorite author website for discussion and/or plan on sharing your own if you have one.

Then on September 28, we'll continue our discussion, focusing on writing contests, critique opportunities, brainstorming, and other programming experiences offered by authors and illustrators through their websites. Bring your favorite to share!

Other Shop Talk dates: November 2, December 7, January 4, February 1, March 1, March 29, May 3, and May 31.

Mary Beth

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Credits: Fall 2021 Texas Woman's University Community-focused Design Studio

Layout Design: Nely Martinez, McCrae Milton, Simran Prasai | Banner Design: Roshad Bonner, McCrae Milton |

Feature Title Designers: Kelly Milliorn, Edgar Obregon, Susana Pina, Amanda Tritschler-Tucker | Teaser Layout Designer: Roshad Bonner

Art Director: Professor Sheli Petersen

Take Flight With Help From Our Volunteers



LEADERSHIP



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Kim Ziemann