



Creative TAP

Issue 5
July 2021

Only by staying connected to the world around us do we nurture our creative & personal selves.

From the Editor

Dear SCBWI-WI Members,

I'm not sure about you, but I enjoy my solitude. It's my time to reflect, recharge, and



refocus. Solitude works as a wellspring nourishing my creative self. Alone on a park bench watching children interact. Alone in my car listening to an audio book. Alone at my kitchen table gathering my thoughts.

Reevaluating the Classroom Visit: Yes, it's worth it

By Sandra Nichols

We never saw it coming.

Monday morning, March 9, 2020. Because a weekend attendee to an Osceola, Wisconsin school function tests positive for coronavirus, district leaders and the [Polk County Health Department](#) announce a one-day shutdown to sanitize their facilities. Within days, the number of confirmed coronavirus cases in Wisconsin climbs to 26. By Friday, March 13, [Gov. Evers](#), to stem the spread of the virus, orders all school districts temporarily closed starting March 18.

Welcome to a whole new world of education.

What was believed to be short-term precaution turned into long-term policy as virus cases increased sending school districts, administrators, and teachers scrambling for ways to meet student

However, solitude works as a wellspring only when self-imposed and balanced with community and fellowship. Covid-19 put this balance out of whack. Forced isolation on a massive scale, especially in the first six months of the Covid shut down, strained our bonds with extended family, friends, and our creative community. We need to reestablish these bonds.

This is why when Erica and I started planning the first Creative Tap issue since the Covid shut-down, we knew it had to focus on staying connected. That warm hug, that nurturing comment, that guiding example. We need connections for our creative spirits to soar.

So feed that creative spirit by joining us in this issue of Creative Tap. Connect with your fellow SCBWI-WI authors and illustrators and discover the changing ways we connect with others and nurture our creative selves.

needs while maintaining safe health procedures. The solution—video calls and collaborative apps.

Authors and Illustrators to the Rescue

Zoom, WebEx, and Google Meet were employed by schools to reach at home students. However, not all schools had online learning management systems (LMS) in place and most teachers were unprepared having never created lessons for nor presented in an online format. The result: the kids were suffering.

Authors and illustrators recognized a learning crisis unfolding and stepped in to fill the gap.

Seemingly overnight, author read alouds and even short lessons popped up on You

Tube. Instructional art videos called Lunch Doodles by three-time Caldecott winner Mo Willems became popular. [Willems](#) spoke directly to the kids as he guided them through a lesson. “Grab some paper and pencils, pens, or crayons. We are going to doodle together and explore ways of writing and making.” [Kate DiCamillo](#), two-time Newberry Award medalist, created the first of several short instructional videos encouraging kids to begin writing, “Maybe now is a good time to write a story.”

“You can't stay in your corner of the Forest waiting for others to come to you. You have to go to them sometimes.”

—A.A. Milne, [Winnie-the-Pooh](#)

The New Normal for Author/Illustrator Classroom Visits

Crisis mode morphed into planned attack. As the 2020-21 school year began, the fight against the spread of Covid continued, prompting many Wisconsin school districts to maintain a 100% virtual format. This time, however, schools and teachers were ready. LMS's were adopted, the communication and teaching app kinks

Advice from Kate Messner, author and writing mentor

I always tell writers that when you're planning a virtual visit, it's good to keep in mind a variation on the old wedding rhyme, "Something old..." But instead of "Something old, something new, something borrowed, and something blue," authors offering virtual visits should aim for "Something to see, something to do, something fun, and something True."

In other words, try to make sure each presentation includes some visuals (either props you hold up or images shared via screen-share), some interactive elements, some humor and joy, and something that ties in with the curriculum to add value to your visit.

Check out Kate's workshops at <https://katemessner.com/teachers>.

worked out, and virtual instruction methods improved. When students logged on, each day was scheduled much like the in-person school day creating a sense of normalcy for Wisconsin students.

And yes, schools were booking classroom visits, but the face-to-face visit was gone—in its place, the virtual visit. Some authors and illustrators embraced the new virtual format while others held out, waiting for the return of in-person.

By May of 2021, all Wisconsin school districts had returned to in class instruction with plans for in class instruction this fall. It seems apparent that in person visits will certainly happen moving forward.

However, the experience over the past year has established more now than ever the virtual visit as a classroom fixture, and looking forward, smart authors and illustrators will embrace this model.

The Value of Author/Illustrator Classroom Visits

While few studies have tracked the long-term impact of author/illustrator classroom visits, teachers recognize the intrinsic value of an author or illustrator classroom visit in any format on student learning and self-esteem.

[Elizabeth Jorgensen and Nancy Jorgensen](#), both educators and now authors of *Go, Gwen, Go: A Family's Journey to Olympic Gold* (2019) have witnessed the impact an author or illustrator classroom visit has on students. "In both scenarios—as teachers hosting writers and writers presenting to classrooms—we found that students were inspired to analyze, create, and perform. Hosting authors can be useful for any grade level or subject matter and can inspire creativity, teach writing, and inform content."

[Jarred Amato](#), high school teacher, author, and founder of Project LIT Community, a national literacy movement, argues that the connection students make with authors goes beyond the classroom content, impacting how students see themselves and their role in the world. Proof of authors

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Dodge Cummings. "Young people are smart and funny and brimming over with great ideas and questions." Judy, as with all writers and illustrators, works in isolation making the classroom visit all the more valuable. "I craft stories that I believe (hope) will speak to young people, but the only way I really know if that happens is when a reader tells me so. But that doesn't happen for me very often because most of my books are educational nonfiction, not the kind of story that motivates a kid to write a fan letter to me. So, when I speak directly to young readers during an author visit, I get to directly hear and see readers' reactions to my stories. It's the best kind of feedback."

The school visit also promotes the author's or illustrator's work. Teachers have students read an author's or illustrator's book or books prior to the visit. This builds a loyal following and name recognition.

While an author or illustrator gains feedback and recognition from any form of classroom visit, virtual classroom visits offer a key advantage over face to face: no travel time. Connecting with students from the comfort of home frees up more time for creative work AND more time for multiple classroom visits across a wide geographical area. It is now possible to book a classroom visit at 10:00 am in Schaumburg, Illinois and a 1:00 pm classroom visit in Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin.

And the school districts gain from virtual visits, too. Authors and illustrators arranging virtual school visits far from their home bring more options to school districts while saving the school districts travel costs.

influencing a student's sense of self are voiced by Amato's own students. The students who heard the *Ghost* author Jason Reynold discuss his background and struggles growing up voiced this intangible author impact. "It gave me another view on life, and it inspired me to do what I love," one student wrote. Others stated, "I think it was awesome to meet him and it words were very inspirational to me," and "It doesn't matter where you're from, you can make it."

Not only does the author or illustrator visit whether in person or virtual inspire the students, students inspire authors and illustrators. "An author visit is like a shot in the arm of my creativity," says SCBWI-WI member and published author Judy

However, Alexis O'Neill in the January SCBWI Insight article "[What Will the Kidlit Market Look Like in 2021?](#)" points out the disadvantage to the travel savings is the increased competition for virtual classroom visit opportunities.

Book Those Visits Now

To avoid the competition for classroom visit opportunities, prepare now for the 2021-2022 school year. Contact teachers and administrators that you've worked with before.

"The world was almost at the point of forgetting what a fine time people can have helping one another."

- Alice Walker, [Now is the Time to Open Your Heart](#)

If you've never done a classroom visit, familiarize yourself with Zoom and Google Meet, the two most common virtual presentation platforms used by schools, and begin networking. Research the names of teachers and principals on school websites and send a letter of introduction or an introductory phone call.

Don't be shy to ask for payment for that classroom visit advises O'Neill. Authors are lowering for virtual visits from what they had charged for in person visits, some by as much as 50%. However, experts caution against offering free visits. While authors and illustrators who generously provided free virtual visits during the spring 2020 Covid19 shutdown were helping teachers and students in crisis, to continue offering free visits now that school districts are getting back to a new normal only undermines a source of income many authors and illustrators depend upon.

And a request to have your books purchased ahead of time for signing is not unrealistic. Sometimes a local bookstore or the author's or illustrator's publisher can arrange for books at a reduced price. Prior to the coronavirus shut down, [Rita Platt](#), educator and media specialist in St. Croix, Wisconsin, said some authors requested she send home order forms in exchange for a reduced price or free Skype visit.

The Covid school shutdowns is a wake-up call. Children's lit authors and illustrators need to respond to the increased use of apps and virtual communication in and out of education by upping their technology game. This includes rethinking the classroom visit format.

Our Voices

Members' Survey Responses

Thanks to the authors and illustrators who responded to the ListServ Virtual Classroom Visits survey sent out in April.

The response makes clear many of our members have been busy this past school year doing virtual classroom visits. So how was the experience?

Most who responded say they did at least one, free virtual classroom visit this spring in conjunction with World Read Aloud Day held on the first Wednesday in February each year.

But not all virtual visits were in conjunction with World Read Aloud Day or provided for free. Many authors and illustrators do visits to connect with readers, promote their books, and supplement their income.

[Karla Manternach](#), author of *Meena Meets Her Match* and *Never Fear, Meena's Here*, points out the author/illustrator needs to be considerate of others when setting fees, and sometimes to



charge or not depends on the length of visit: "Price and plan according to your own investment of time! Be conscious of undercutting authors who count on making

some of their income through classroom visits...I will do short Q& A [virtual] visits. If someone were to approach me about a formal presentation, I would charge."

[Kathleen Waldvogel](#), author of *Spies, Soldiers, Couriers, and Saboteurs: Women of the American Revolution*, charges a negotiated fee or negotiate a more creative pay arrangement: "I arranged this [virtual visit] with the school offering a flat fee or the arrangement of the school purchasing some copies of my book."



Some authors have done a virtual visit just for the feedback. Jessica Kopecky while working on her upcoming indie children's book [Secret of the Starflower](#) reached out for beta readers and the result was a virtual classroom visit. "It was actually my daughter's teacher's idea. I asked if she'd be willing to find beta readers within her classroom, and then my husband and I did a book reading to the whole class instead. Only the first two chapters though. After that I met with all 3 second grade classes virtually for kids' Q&A on being an author, which fit in with their curriculum because they were learning how to build stories."

Our members say the advantages to the virtual visit center around time and flexibility.

- “The virtual visits are quick and easy, and I like connecting with students without having to give over a whole day plus prep time.” Karla Manternach
- “You can speak to many more students and there isn’t any travel.” Amy Laundrie
- “I really enjoy the fact to face presentations, but the virtual visits allowed me flexibility in visiting schools in other states.” Kathleen (K.M.) Waldvogel

And even though the virtual can’t replace the tangible face to face experience, all agree virtual classroom visits are worth the effort.

Kathy Nieber-Lathrop, former middle school counselor and author of the recently published picture book *Ginko Finds Her Forever Home* finds joy in visiting the classroom, even if it is virtual. “The kids and teachers love hearing authors read their own books. But I think I loved it more—that and the Zoom interactions...I love working with kids. They absolutely made my day, week, year.”



Kathleen Waldvogel agrees. “The students made me reflect on my writing career and goals. After my presentations I felt invigorated, that I wanted to work on my writing projects and polish them as much as possible. They gave me the “boost” I needed after dealing with the restrictions/concerns that Covid presented.”

Lessons Learned

As you take steps to book a virtual classroom visit for this upcoming school year, grab some advice from the 2014 Midwest Book Independent Publishers Award for Children’s Fiction! author [Sandy Brehl](#). Sandy’s been doing classroom visits both face to face and virtually for quite some time now.

“Communicate thoroughly with the teacher(s) in advance to be sure what they are wanting/ expecting, and to actively coach the teacher on what will be helpful for them to have/done in advance. Be sure you are clear about parameters— are they all at home, hybrid, all in classroom?”

Other bits of advice:

- “Prepare!” Sandy Brehl
- “Make contact with the teacher/school ahead of time and exchange phone numbers in case of any issues with technology.” Kathleen Waldvogel
- “Do a test run of technology you haven’t used before.” Karla Manternach

- “Prepare materials for twice as long as you think in case you didn’t judge the time accurately.” Amy Laundrie
- “Pause to assess and engage... it’s even more important now because you can’t always see their faces.” Jessica Kopecky
- “Enjoy the kids; let them ask you questions and ask them questions. You’d be surprised by the answers.” Kathy Nieber-Lathrop

Did You Know?

E.B. White, author of beloved children’s books *Charlotte’s Web* and *Stuart Little*, battled anxiety his whole life. “Much of the story of the life of E. B. White is the story of how he has come to terms with his fears,” wrote biographer Scott Elledge in his 1984 *E.B. White: A Biography*.

Some writers need silence while writing, others play music. Ramona Quimby’s creator Beverly Cleary baked bread. She’d take breaks to punch down the dough between risings and enjoy the aroma of bread baking while writing.

****FREE** Virtual Illustrator Intensive**

“Covering Covers” will be on Saturday, November 6, 2021, from 10:00 am to 12:15 pm. The event will feature Candlewick Art Director Maria Middleton who will present on what makes an eye-catching book cover in today’s market. All SCBWI-Wisconsin members, illustrators, writers, and translators are welcome to attend.

Attendees are invited, but not required, to submit a book cover redesigned in their own style. Pick a classic children’s book, whether it be a picture book, chapter book, middle grade, or young adult, and send it to Rebecca Hirsch at wisconsin-ic@scbwi.org with the subject line “Covering Covers- *YourFirstNameLastName*” before September 1. Maria will choose some to critique during the second hour of her presentation.

Again, this event is FREE and open ONLY to SCBWI-Wisconsin members, so be sure to sign up for your spot today! Registration closes on September 1, 2021. C’mon Wisconsin, let’s shake off the cobwebs of the past year and see what we can do!

SCBWI-Wisconsin members please [register in advance](#) for this meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. The link to join is unique to you.

Illustrators' Gallery



Rebecca Gavney Driscoll
Watercolor
Title: "We are All Connected"

An illustrator of four children's books, Rebecca is a freelance watercolor artist specializing in botanical designs that capture the magic of plants along with whimsical animal illustrations rendering personality and emotion. Rebecca's newest endeavor is her greeting card line "Becky's-Art-Is-Tree." Look for more of Rebecca's art on her Web site: Watercolor Art by Rebecca Gavney Driscoll at www.rgavneydriscoll.com

Theresa Anacker Wohlers
Gouache
Title "Love Electrifies the World"

Winner of the 2019 SCBWI Marvelous Midwest Conference's People's Choice Award, Theresa is an illustrator and author who loves picture books and art supplies. Her childhood spent exploring the family's 84-acre farm in Central Wisconsin instilled Theresa's awe of nature and deep understanding of the joy children feel when they embark on imaginative adventure. You can find more of Theresa's illustrations of playful children and anthropomorphic animals at <https://www.theresaanackerwohlers.com/>





Alyssa Gruenwald

Ink Drawing

Title "Wisdom of the Redwoods"

Professional graphic designer and artist, Alyssa is currently working towards her dream of publishing a children's book. Armed with a B.A. in Graphic Design from UW Green Bay and loads of creative spirit and grit, she is currently honing her illustrator skills. She chose the majestic Redwood trees as her subject for this issue's illustrator challenge: *By staying connected to the world, we nurture ourselves and others.* "My illustration aims to embody the wisdom of Redwood tree," says Alyssa. "Their root systems intertwine with each other, forming a strong foundation to survive and thrive!"

Submission Information for Illustrators' Gallery

Theme: "Don't follow the path. Blaze the trail." — Jordan Belfort

Submission Guidelines:

- Send a JPEG of your artwork to Sandra Nicholas at nichols.five@hotmail.com
- Type "Illustrators' Gallery" in the subject line.
- Include your name, description of your artwork including medium, and how the illustration relates to the theme.
- Include a three-sentence bio describing your artist journey, accomplishments, and goals as well as your illustrator website if you have one.
- Share one unique interest or fact about yourself.
- Submit by Sunday, September 19.
- NOTE: Artists retain all rights to their artwork.

Ready! Set! Write!

Thanks to our authors who submitted for the premiere edition of Creative Tap's Ready! Set! Write!, a photo prompt writing challenge.

"Three Years Since Sunshine" by Rachel Frederick

It's been a long three years. No one could have predicted the mass chaos that would consume the earth on June 8, 2024. I was only eleven when they took over. They weren't aliens. We know that now.

Today is the first day we've been able to play outside as a group and it is magical. I can't stop staring up and laughing with gratitude. The sun is barely visible through the thick yellow clouds. They say the air is finally safe to breathe again, but it still smells like sulfur. I don't mind. At least I'm outside.

It's a miracle we made it through. We had to learn to come together, but was this really the best way? We may never know.

Rachel Frederick is currently seeking representation for her first middle-grade novel, the first in a series that promotes finding one's own adventure in the great outdoors.

Rachel is familiar with the great outdoors, having spent family time growing up outdoors - camping, hiking, canoeing, and gardening in the family's extensive food plot, experiences and memories that shape her characters and the world in which they live.

"My goal for young readers is to learn to love the potential adventure and natural playground that can be found outside of our homes. I hope to inspire a sense of creativity, and imagination for anyone who reads my stories."

People can follow Rachel on Twitter @RachelTheWriter or Instagram @RachelTheWriter06.

7 Reasons to Join a Critique Group



By Amy Laundrie

If you're looking for support, if you're looking for inspiration, or if you're eager to connect with fellow creatives, joining a critique group may be for you.

I've been in both face-to-face and online critique groups. Recently, my face-to-face groups are meeting through Zoom or FB live or Webex. While not the same—we don't get to enjoy great snacks together and chitchat is more stilted—we can still laugh, catch up with one another, and accomplish amazing things. Here are just a few of the reasons critique groups work so well.

1. A Deadline

Many of us are motivated by deadlines. "I would never have finished my book without this group" is a phrase I've often heard. We want to have a submission for our meeting so that we don't disappoint our fellow creatives. Let's face it, finding the discipline to produce, or *butt in chair* as Jane Yolen, author of over 350 books,

“That Summertime Feeling” by Mary De Merle Schams

You know that feeling you get on the first day of summer vacation? School's out and the carefree days of summer stretch endlessly on into the foreseeable future.

What should we do first? Where should we go?

I'm helping my uncle at his bike shop for the summer. My first job is to get these tires from the storage area at the top of the hill down to the shop.

My friends stop by and offer to help.

Ready, set, let's go!

Rollin'

Rollin'

Rollin'

These spheres down the hill.

Feet flying—wind in my hair, sun on my shoulders.

I feel alive!

I feel free!

Faster and faster we go.

My sphere wobbles, it shakes, but I must keep it going...

Mary De Merle Schams has always found joy in reading and writing picture books. “Picture books always bring a happy feeling of love and wonderful memories for me of the very special times I spent snuggled up reading with my now grown-up daughters!” Today, Mary finds writing inspiration in the children's curiosity and kindness at the elementary school where she is an administrative assistant. Mary is an active member of SCBWI, The Mississippi Valley Writers Guild, and a Gold member of the 12 x 12 Writing Forum, and when not writing or working, organizes reading events and book fairs, and leads reading and writing workshops for students.

likes to say, is essential. I've been in groups where we've encouraged one another by setting goals. Accountability is powerful. Another way to punch up productivity is to watch motivational YouTubes such as Ali Abdaal's entertaining [“How Writing Online Made Me a Millionaire.”](#) Ali has helped me meet many of my submission deadlines.

2. Feedback

Critique groups operate best when writers and illustrators employ the sandwich method. Critiquers say what they admire about the work, then offer suggestions or ask questions about specifics, and finally give encouragement for revision. One of my favorite critique group phenomena is what I call the rolling snowball. One member comes up with a suggestion, another runs with it, and the creative ideas build. I like to record both in-person and Zoom sessions so that when I have time to revise, I can simply play the recording back. I use an inexpensive voice recorder and obtain approval first. Since getting feedback can be emotional, we sometimes miss all the advice. It amazes me what I would have forgotten without having a recording.

3. Different perspectives

A writer's background is limited by their ethnicity, age, gender, and experiences. Participating in a diverse writing group gives a writer the advantage of several more perspectives. Phrases such as “The bullied girl never would have said that” or “I've been in that situation and here's how I reacted” help the reader create a more authentic reading

“The Finisher” by Angela R. Grimes

Moua was late to start, just like always.

He plunged after the bouncing tire. Like an eye of molten gold, the sun beamed down on the bare backs of the four boys racing ahead of him. Their legs churned up thick, yellow dust. Moua coughed, tripping over his own feet when they stuck in the sand. He fell and watched his tire roll away. It disappeared into the dust cloud. He heard laughter and his twin, Shoua, shouting his name. Moua pushed himself up and limped down the hill. Grandpa said you should always do your best and finish whatever you start.

The dust cleared. Shoua pranced at the bottom of the hill, two tires raised over his head. One tire was Moua’s.

“I win!”

Angela Grimes is a pre-published fantasy writer from Sun Prairie. She first developed an interest in fantasy in 6th grade, when she read *Through the Eyes of the Dragon* by Stephen King, and *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien and began writing fantasy after reading David & Leigh Eddings’s *Belgariad* series and *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis. Finding inspiration in the beauty of nature and the Bible, Angela’s current project is a Christian portal/epic fantasy called *Wyldling Snare* which takes place on a world with a pre-industrial society where magic is possible. “I want to write for children to impact their lives in a positive, meaningful way while entertaining them by providing examples of relatable teen characters working through realistic problems in a fantastical setting.”

Look for updates on Angela’s work on her author FaceBook page, A.R. Grimes@ARGrimesAuthor, and her website *Cycle of Tehara*.

experience. A younger member once pointed out that my main character wouldn’t have called it a *cell phone*; just a *phone*. The collective life experiences adds authenticity to our characters.

4. Networking

By getting to know fellow creatives, a writer or illustrator can have doors opened. For instance, a critique member was recently offered a speaking opportunity but wasn’t able to accept it. That person suggested someone from our group who was able to step in. Members of one of my groups helped me get an agent. After attending a conference, they told me how this woman’s wish list matched my stories. I queried her, and we began working together.

5. Support

Critique groups are great for offering emotional support, but they can also help with practical matters. Spreading the word when a member’s new book is released and supporting them by activities such as writing a review are just a few examples. We can also share news about publishers, agents, contests, or submission opportunities. I’ve been recommending Austin Kleon’s motivation books, especially “*Show Your Work*” which some of my critique partners appreciate since they need a boost of confidence to market themselves.

A member recently gave me a recommendation for a freelance service which has saved me time. Through [Fiverr](#), I’ve hired people to perform tasks such as making fun activity sheets and a professional YouTube on the inspiration behind my latest picture book, *Follow Me Into the Woods*

Ready! Set! Right! Fall Challenge

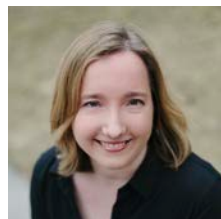
Create a story opening or scene based on this photo prompt:

- Send writing submission to Sandra Nichols at nichols.five@hotmail.com
- Type "Ready! Set! Write!" in the subject line
- Include submission as MicroSoft Word attachment
- Submissions must be between 150-200 words
- Include your name and a three-sentence bio describing your writing journey, writing accomplishments, and goals, and how the photo prompt inspired the scene.
- Share one unique interest or fact about yourself.
- Submit by Sunday, September 19.
- NOTE: Authors retain all rights to their writing.



Erica Dimka/ Newsletter Designer

Erica has been a writer for as long as she can remember, from short stories for her dad to news articles as a former journalist and copy editor. Now, in addition to teaching English, Erica loves writing YA fantasy and science fiction, as well as traveling and hiking. A member of SCBWI since 2017, she enjoys connecting with other authors.



6. Power in Numbers

One of my critique groups came up with the idea to pay an editor to meet with us for a weekend. This has been face-to-face. Last year and this June will be virtual. The retreat is affordable because there are usually 7-9 of us participating and we split the expense. The participants and mentor read entire manuscripts, including young adult novels. During the weekend, we spend about an hour discussing each other's submissions.

7. Friendships

The creative journey has moments of exhilaration sandwiched between frustration and rejection. Friends are there through it all. While receiving a contract or holding your book for the first time are thrilling, creatives soon realize the real prize is connecting to others and the friendships that form along the way.

I'd encourage you to join a supportive, inspiring critique group. SCBWI offers them for picture book authors, illustrators, middle grade and young adult. If interested, contact Sue Twiggs, the coordinator, at setwiggs@gmail.com.

Amy Laundrie, former teacher and nature enthusiast, is the author of the Kayla Montgomery YA series as well as MG books *Noah's Ark Pet Care Club* (2009), *Whinny of the Wild Horses* (2016), and the first in a her new Follow Me series *Follow Me into the Woods* (2020).

Check out Amy's weekly musings on life with animals and exploring nature at <https://www.laundrie.com/>

PUBLISHED AND LISTED

By Sandy Brehl

How many times have you heard someone say that the months-long impact of Covid isolation has yielded some nuggets of positivity among the tally of losses we all experienced? I'm your volunteer PAL coordinator, and I'd like to share one of those positive outcomes.



My role is to spread the word about current releases that meet [SCBWI.org criteria as Published And Listed](https://www.wisconsin.scbwi.org/criteria-as-published-and-listed). Our members' seasonal releases are gathered in advance to share through established contacts, on our website and media outlets, at SCBWI regional events, and at public outreach events for target audiences (educators, librarians, bloggers, bookstores, and literary festivals).

Most of those outlets were closed to us for more than a year, although the digital productions and distributions continued as before. Silvia Acevedo suggested to me that we might schedule and host monthly

ZOOM sessions to highlight creators of releases for each month, and with the help of our fearless and flawless ZOOM volunteer, Joyce Uglow, we began in January 2021.

The list of those who've joined us from the Spring 2021 season will follow. First, though, this is an opportunity to give shout outs and thanks to the volunteers who make it all happen, people who too often aren't recognized because their work is not as public-facing as my "megaphone" role.

Leah Danz DiPasquale creates magic on the design front, producing the fliers, banners, and monthly announcement visuals. I hope you've noticed the many professional and special touches she incorporates, like categorizing and labeling the titles and the little Wisconsin logo next to the members' names when there is more than one creator, as with picture books.

Maria Parrot-Ryan, our volunteer webmaster makes those fliers available on our webpage, featuring download-files on the right hand menu bar and inserting Leah's web-friendly files into our banners. She also adds each event onto the calendar, and joins in to events when available.

Liza Wiemer shares those glorious banners and fliers on our social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram). She does a remarkable job of scanning public outlets to “find” good news, but she is a PR benefit of membership that requires you, the members, to inform her of your SCBWI events and successes. She often calls for you to connect and share, and it’s part of your professional role to make her aware of your news. She’s eager to cheer you on, including her “Newsday Tuesday” for victories of any kind, even breaking through a writers block!

All of the above help me to spread the news about those ZOOM sessions, too. If you aren’t monitoring out listserv, Melea Richardson welcomes requests for help to get you into the loop. That’s where I share the news and links about the programs. Through the expertise of ZOOM-guru-volunteer Joyce Uglow you can get a recording of the sessions a day or two later, even if you aren’t available to watch live. That ONLY goes to those who register, so don’t miss out!

Here’s our stellar line-up from SPRING 2021:

JANUARY RELEASES: (Actually took place on Feb. 3)

Michael Leannah, author of PB MOST DAYS

Janet Halfmann, author of MG THE CLOTHESLINE CODE: The Story of Civil War Spies Lucy Ann and Dabney Walker

FEBRUARY RELEASES: (Feb. 24)

Baptiste Paul, author (with Miranda Paul) of PB PEACE/PAZ and of PB TO CARNIVAL

Nancy Dearborn, author of PB HUGGA LOULA

Cindy Shumerth, author of PB POP POP POPCORN

MARCH RELEASES: (March 31)

Anuradha Rajurkar, author of YA AMERICAN BETIYA

JoAnn Macken, author of PB poetry GROW!

APRIL/MAY RELEASES: (May 11)

Miranda Paul, author of PB BEYOND

Marlys Honeyman, author of PB I AM

MaryLee Flannigan, author of PB THE HOPEFUL HODAG