



Prairie Song

Nebraska Regional Newsletter

December 2022

Spotlight



Featured Illustrator

LINDA STEPHEN

WWW.LINDASTEPHEN.COM
WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/LINDASTEPHENORIGAMIART/

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Upcoming Events

[In-Person NY Conference 2023](#), February 10-12

[MG Agent Critique Roundtable](#), February 18

[Virtual New York Conference 2023](#), February 25

[Shop Talk](#) Jan 4 and February 1, 7pm-8pm CST

[Regional Meeting](#), Jan 8 and Feb 19, 4pm-5pm CST

[Explore All Regional Virtual Events](#)

New Look in 2023

You've probably seen the rebranding from SCBWI headquarters (love that owl!). Starting in January, our region will be incorporating our meadowlark logo (designed by Co-IC Sheli Petersen) into the new style. Keep an eye out for the new design soon. It will be a fun way to kick off a new year!



A Word from Our Regional Team



Dianna Carda
Regional Illustrator Co-Coordinator

I am thrilled that I immersed myself in the three-month Illustrator Intensive with Lauren Rille (Simon & Schuster Art Director) as both a participant and Co-IC. I was able to experience for the first time what it felt like to have three months to create a nine-sketch narrative arc using no words—illustrating a character depicting emotion in setup, conflict, and resolution. Lauren's value statements helped guide me in choosing my characters and experiences. I was to “draw what I love, draw what is me, and do what works for me in choosing traditional or digital.” I chose my two-year-old colt as a model. I also chose traditional illustrating, using a mix of light charcoal, dry and wet colored pencils, and basic watercolors.

Giving myself daily set times helped me finish. One drawing experience that really stood out for me was when I saw my first character sketch come alive on paper. Possessiveness and excitement slowed my mind and hand, so I didn't want to move onto my next sketch. It helped to remember advice from one of our own published Nebraska illustrators, Chloe Burgess, who has mentioned that it is “better to finish each sketch, move on, and not worry about perfection.” During the final presentation with Lauren, I shared this possessive feeling with



each of my illustrations. She said that later in my illustration journey, loving what I am drawing will be a good thing because I may be drawing my character 100 times or more before an editor takes it to be published.

Intensive participants attended from Australia, Canada, and all parts of the U.S. They commented that our Zoom Intensive was the most educational and well-run workshop they have attended. Participants noted that Lauren gave specific and helpful critiques on their work. Thank you Sheli Petersen, my mentor, for your exceptional organizing skills. I am learning from the best! I leave you with Lauren's most important piece of advice, “Don't should.” I am thrilled that “I did” sign up and complete my first-ever illustration workshop!



Tips for Identifying a Character's Voice

Sandy Mickey

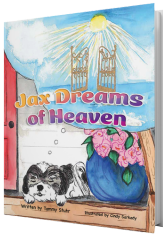
Regional Newsletter Coordinator

As a Park Ranger for 15 years, I slid in and out of costumes and personalities from historical pioneers to an imaginary Blue Goose. I got quite adept at capturing character voices. There's nothing like BEING a character to get their perspective. I learned a few tips across the years. A few of my favorites are below.

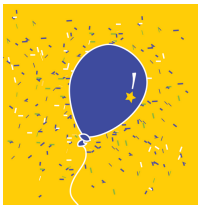
- There is a reason Method Acting is such a successful tool for actors; immersing yourself in the character creates sincere and expressive performances because you can identify with and understand their inner thoughts and emotions. Create a scene that does not exist in your manuscript but does involve your characters. Act it out without planning it. Pay attention to how your character(s) react and what underlying emotions exist in that moment. Putting them into situations that don't exist in your book can be eye-opening. Acting it out without planning gives you an authentic view into the character.
- Select a scene with your antagonist and copy/paste it into a blank document. Replace your antagonist with your main character and rewrite the scene. You can also replace your protagonist with someone else. Another option is to grab a passage from a similar, published book and replace a character in it with yours. I like to replace Harry Potter characters with mine to see what happens.
- Read your character's parts in the voice of an actor or character who mirrors them. Are they James Earl Jones or Fran Drescher? Luke Skywalker or Severus Snape? George Bailey or Lisa Simpson? What are their characteristics that are similar to your character?
- Write a letter from your character to Santa Claus (or similar figure). What would they ask for? What are their deepest desires? Are they wanting essentials like clothing or a family or do they want the best iPhone? Do they believe in this person? Who do they care about?

A helpful guide for defining voice is Tone + Terminology + Tempo. Tone describes how a person feels. Terminology is the complexity and length of the words, and tempo is the speed and rhythm of the voice. I hope you give some of the activities above a try!

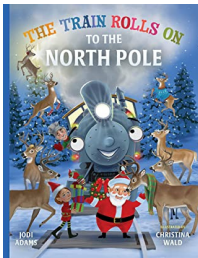
Let's Celebrate



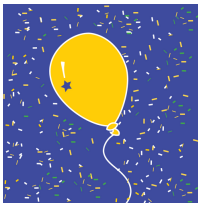
We are celebrating Tammy Stuhr, who had her first book published titled *Jax Dreams of Heaven*! She also experienced her first book reading, signing, and stop on her book tour! We are so thrilled for you, Tammy!



Sheli Petersen's illustrations for "Mochitsuki," a creative nonfiction short story about the Japanese New Year tradition by Lauren Ino, will be published in the January 2023 issue of *Spider Magazine*. Way to go, Sheli!



Jodi Adams' second book in *The Train Rolls On* series was released on October 18th! *The Train Rolls on to the North Pole* is a rhyming picture book that celebrates Christmas and teaches children perseverance and teamwork. Many congratulations, Jodi!



Congratulations to Alison Pearce Stevens, who sold *Detective Dogs are on the Case to Holiday House*. The nonfiction book, which showcases conservation projects involving sniffer dogs, will come out in 2024. We can't wait to read it, Alison!



Featured Member

★ Nancy Sharp Wagner ★



Nancy Sharp Wagner exemplifies the ethos of SCBWI.

Many have benefited from her encouragement and mentoring skills. I am one of those people. She is a key person to my having a published novel.

I had manuscripts from years of writing when I saw an announcement. An author of a children's book would speak at the city library. Nancy talked about her book and her writing process. That interested me.

I spoke to her, and she invited me to a retreat she was coordinating. I joined SCBWI, went to the event, heard information-filled presentations, met other writers, and was inspired to pull a manuscript off the shelf.

Life intervened and the manuscript went back on the shelf, but Nancy kept in touch. She connected me to the leader of a critique group in my town, and the manuscript came down again.

In 2019 I had a life-threatening medical crisis. I'd let my SCBWI membership lapse, but Nancy kept in touch. I was just home from the hospital when my husband saw an email from Nancy about another retreat. My husband decided that was what I needed to motivate recovery. He renewed my membership and signed me up for the retreat, where I received positive feedback and met illustrator Kathleen Gaden.

Then came the pandemic, with Shop Talk on Zoom and Nancy as a frequent presenter. She also led the Novel-focused Writing from the Inside Out Workshop. I began revisions of a second manuscript, and finalized the first one, which was published by Prairieland Press this year.

Nancy is now moving on from the positions of Nebraska Regional Coordinator for Retreats and for the Writing from the Inside Out workshops, but her positive impact within SCBWI and our region remains strong.

Thank you, Nancy.
-Carolyn Zeisset

Coming Attractions

January always brings grants and awards, contests, and a slew of regional webinars to welcome a fresh start to a new year. So grab your art supplies and writers' hats to jump-start 2023!

Deadline December 22: Bologna Scholarship - Awarded to two SCBWI members for a ticket to the Bologna Book Fair, travel fare, and a stipend for accommodations. Winners will also be able to show their portfolio to publishing professionals.

Deadline January 10: SCBWI BIPOC Scholarship for the New York In-Person SCBWI Conference in February. Includes an all-expense paid trip for a writer or illustrator. Runners-up will receive tuition to the virtual conference. Open to non-SCBWI members.

January 10: Writing Fun and Feelings in Chapter Books - This New York Metropolitan Chapter Webinar will help writers balance big emotions like anger or embarrassment with a fun and adventurous story. Hosted by author Kathryn Holmes and editor Erica Finkel from the Class Critters series.

February 10-12: In-Person New York SCBWI Conference - The Winter SCBWI Conference is finally in-person again! Join us as we put on the best one yet with a brand-new format and tons of reunions! Now built around an intensive-workshop model, you'll have opportunities to form lasting connections, get critiques, and even pitch your marketing plan!

February 25: Virtual New York SCBWI Conference - Can't make it in-person? We are thrilled to still offer a virtual option! We'll have Creative Labs immersive craft sessions, a marketing plan pitch-fest, blockbuster keynotes, and the highlight for many, the Golden Kite Awards presentation.

March 16: Finding Your Story as an Illustrator - Part of the Picture Book Crossover event from the Pennsylvania East Chapter, this session is led by Chad W. Beckerman, Illustrator Agent with CAT Agency. Chad will help you find the one illustration that starts a story for your career.

Maximizing Your Membership



January brings the third annual Indie-500 Challenge and we're excited to have two contests again: one for writers and one for illustrators. It's an SCBWI Nebraska event and we'd love to have you participate!

Based on selected themes and prompts, contestants create a 500-word story or spot illustration in only 48 hours. The writer winner receives a free critique of a polished PB manuscript or the first chapter of an MG/YA novel from Atheneum Books for Young Readers editor Feather Flores. For illustrators, the winner gets a free portfolio review from Aram Kim, Art Director at Macmillan Children's Publishing Group.

So polish up those manuscripts and portfolios and get your registration in by January 26. You must be a member of the Nebraska region and you must register.

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



Ashley Karges
Shop Talk Co-Coordinator

November – Searching Comp Titles with NoveList

Erin Duerr of the Omaha Public Library joined us for November’s Shop Talk. She introduced us to the online library search tool, NoveList. NoveList is an easy way to discover those ever-important comp titles for your manuscript. Finding the right comp titles can sometimes feel like a shot in the dark, but NoveList helps narrow the search. By selecting from NoveList's menu of “story elements,” a list of titles is generated with the click of your mouse. The story elements include tone, storyline, pace, and year published, to name a few. Ask about NoveList at your local library. If they have the NoveList program, you can access it from home if you log in with your library card. Omaha and Lincoln libraries offer a guest pass for use in person if you are not a member. Take advantage of this tool, and happy searching!

December – Websites That Keep You Writing

In December, Mary Beth Rice shared nine websites to jumpstart our writing as we approach the new year. These sites feature seasonal writing contests, critiques, mentorships, and tools to keep our creative juices flowing. Here are a few of our favorites!

[Betsy Bird 31 Book Lists](#) (December)

[Julie Hedlund 12 Days of Christmas Online Retreat](#) (December)

[Tara Lazar Storystorm](#) (January)

[Ciara O’Neal Spring Fling Kidlit Contest](#) (Spring)

[Susanna Leonard Hill Would You Read It/3 Holiday Contests/Perfect PB Fridays](#) (Year Round)

Upcoming Shop Talks, 7pm-8pm CST:

January 4, 2023

February 1

March 1

March 29* (moved up a week due to Passover)

May 3

May 31* (moved up a week due to summer break)

FOLLOW US AND FIND MORE ON:



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 Milliom, 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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Discussion Board Moderator

Kim Ziemann