




SCBWI



Nebraska Region
Prairie Song
 Newsletter

August 2023



Featured Illustrator

BROOKE SPERRY

[HTTPS://WWW.SPERRY
STUDIOS.COM/](https://www.sperrystudios.com/)

Spotlight

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Upcoming Events

Graphic Novel Workshop begins Sept. 9

Regional Meeting, Sept 10, 4-5pm CST

Shop Talk "School Visits," Sept. 18, 7-8pm CST

PAL Quarterly Meeting, Sept. 28, 7-8pm CST

Fall Retreat, Oct. 6 - 8, Aurora, Nebraska

Illustrator Intensive, Nov. 11

[Explore All Regional Virtual Events](#)

NEW WEBSITE

If you haven't yet checked out the new website, it's time to do so! Regions around the world are offering some amazing events and the best way to find out about them is via your News Feed--an exciting new feature of the updated site. After you log in, you will need to select which regions to follow. Naturally, you'll want to follow Nebraska! But you can also follow other regions, so you get their announcements right in your news feed.

Want to know when Rocky Mountain has their next conference? Follow their region. Same for any other region of interest. Watch your email for details on how to get logged in if you haven't already done so.

A Word from Our Regional Team



Dianna Carda
Regional Illustrator Coordinator

My first task as the solo IC for our region was to facilitate our June SCBWI Nebraska Portfolio and webinar featuring agents Ethan and Heather Long. They provided feedback on submitted portfolios and highlighted the kinds of art that stand out to them as acquiring agents.

As a relatively new volunteer in our Nebraska group, I am simply amazed by how much I am improving on my writing and illustration journey. I have come to the conclusion that spending volunteer time with our diverse Nebraska administrative team and reaching out to help other writers and illustrators gives me the needed encouragement and understanding towards my own writing, illustrating, and publishing goals.

Attending the SCBWI events, I also find that I am encouraging new SCBWI members, remembering it wasn't so long ago that I was directed to our Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators website. Through my volunteer position as your Illustration Coordinator, I have the great privilege to work closely with our Regional Advisor Alison Pearce Stevens, Newsletter coordinator Heather Dawn Torres and the other behind-the-scenes volunteers who keep our Nebraska group running – volunteers who are also writers and illustrators.

One of the benefits of SCBWI is the connections we make, and I find that members are available in any capacity to bring encouragement, guidance, and friendship. My worst fear when I first volunteered was of being left alone to facilitate a webinar or team meeting. My fears quickly dissipated, as I became closely involved with the SCBWI event teams, listening and watching groups of people supporting each other with time, kindness, and understanding. I spent my first year as Illustrator Coordinator being mentored into my responsibilities by Sheli Petersen before taking on the IC role by myself. As a first-year volunteer, my knowledge and understanding of the mission of the SCBWI and the support they give to authors and illustrators has now become so much clearer, and I am so excited to help others in our Nebraska group achieve their own goals.

Volunteer opportunities are diverse, from coordinating social events and quiet writing/illustration times, facilitating a critique group, or planning large, involved events featuring industry professionals. I find that spending a few hours coordinating an event or even just showing up for events helps me accumulate new ideas. I am gaining the needed building blocks to help achieve my publishing success and help others. Ask, be involved, learn and have fun volunteering within the Nebraska SCBWI groups.



Craft Corner



Chloe Burgett
Author-Illustrator

Let's talk about one of my favorite elements in visual storytelling; composition! We've all heard of the rule of thirds, eye flow, and triadic use of repetition – but how to use them effectively to communicate to your viewer? That's another story!

Recently I watched a great [video](#) by [Kyle Webster](#) (brush creator for Adobe) summarizing the use of composition for illustrators. In it, he analyzed several master works and talked about the intentional visual choices each artist made. When he talked through a piece by Andrew Wyeth my jaw DROPPED.

When I start a drawing, I sometimes get caught up in the surface level finish of the illustration. Sometimes we forget that when we design an image, we can bend each branch to our will, we can manipulate colors to serve the story, and viewers are counting on us to show them where to look.

In Wyeth's piece, the primary and secondary focal points are in areas of highest contrast (intentionally placed along the rule of thirds). But he also shows you where to go afterwards. In the primary focal point, the character's face, you follow his line of sight to a figure in the background. The figure then points you up to the dark branches, which through the diagonal shadows on the tree, swing you back around to the main character's face!

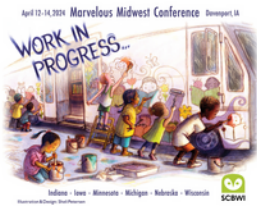
This video is just a taste of what Wyeth is doing. Don't even get me started on the vertical lines he uses in the piece!! (They're everywhere.)

BONUS: I've recently revisited one of my favorite books on composition, [Mary Bang's Picture This; How Pictures Work](#). A great read for a scientific look at how composition tells stories!

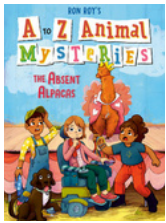
This kind of talk has me hankering to draw some thumbnails! Who's with me?

Chloe Burgett
www.chloebartistry.com

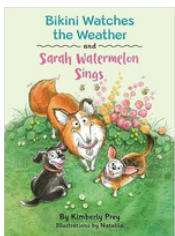
Let's Celebrate



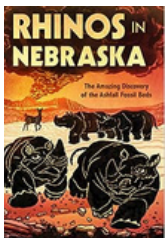
Sheli Petersen was selected as SCBWI's July 2023 featured illustrator! Her artwork was showcased on the SCBWI website along with an [exclusive interview](#). We also want to thank Sheli for her work on the graphic for the upcoming Marvelous Midwest conference. Great work, Sheli!



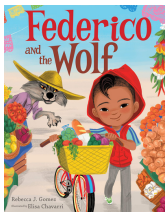
THE ABSENT ALPACAS illustrated by **Chloe Burgett** released on July 4! This is Book One of the series, A to Z Animal Mysteries where young clue hunters Abbi, Daniel and Lydia sniff out the mystery behind a group of missing alpacas at the Maine State Fair. We're so proud of you, Chloe!



Kimberly Prey recently published her second children's book! BIKINI WATCHES THE WEATHER AND SARAH WATERMELON SINGS is a double story book featuring silly dogs and their enjoyable antics with a focus on weather and music. Amazing work, Kimberly!



Alison Pearce Stevens recently returned from the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C., where she was the children's author representative for the state of Nebraska, featuring her book RHINOS IN NEBRASKA. Well done, Alison!



FEDERICO AND THE WOLF by **Rebecca J. Gomez** was a Kohl's Cares selection this year and is now available for purchase at Kohl's stores around the country. Way to go, Rebecca!



THE TRACTOR SQUAD written by **Heather Dawn Torres** was recently acquired by Michael Green at Marble Press. Publication for Book One is planned for Fall 2024. Congrats, Heather!

Featured Member



Ashley Karges



Ashley Karges has been writing stories since grade school, through college, and even now with her own kids. It wasn't until a few years ago, however, that she decided to merge her love of writing with her love of children and enter into the world of children's writing.

Ashley writes picture books that make readers giggle and ponder and adds a little dash of heart to each story.

Ashley grew up in Nebraska and spent time as both a "town" kid on weekdays and a "farm" kid on weekends. After college, she traveled the world and lived in Sydney, Australia while working for a television research company. Back in the United States, Ashley worked in advertising, communication, and fundraising for her alma mater. Eventually, Ashley followed her heart home to raise a family with her high school sweetheart. Ashley is currently a stay-at-home mom with two sets of teenage twins!

When not writing, you can find Ashley volunteering at school and church, experimenting with new recipes in the kitchen and bouncing between kids' activities - all the while brainstorming the next big picture book idea!

This year has been an especially fun writing year for Ashley as she received an honorable mention and was named winner in Twitter's #SpringFlingKidlit and #KidLitVibes writing contests. In June, Ashley traveled to Tuscany to participate in The Art of Picture Book Writing with agent Adria Goetz. Highlights of the trip were the gorgeous setting and networking with other writers from the U.S., Canada, and Australia.

Ashley is an active SCBWI member and currently serves as the Nebraska Shop Talk Co-Coordinator. She loves meeting local writers and illustrators. This Fall, Ashley will be delving into the query trenches in search of an agent. Good luck Ashley!

STORY SPINNERS WRITE- AND DRAW-IN

August 26

Join us at Glacier Creek Prairie Preserve on Saturday, August 26th from 10:00am-2:00pm CST. You'll have the opportunity to enjoy a beautiful location while working on your individual projects or collaborating with other members. If you plan to attend, please email Judith at scbwi.nebraska.critiques@gmail.com.

WRITING FROM THE INSIDE OUT: ONLINE GRAPHIC NOVEL WORKSHOP

Begins September 9

If you're still on the fence about registering for Writing from the Inside Out Graphic Novel Workshop, don't delay-the workshop begins September 9th. There are a handful of spots still available. The workshop is sure to be an amazing experience!

Led by esteemed author-illustrator Rivkah LaFille, this workshop will meet twice a month from September - April (Saturdays @ 12:00pm CST) and culminates in exclusive submission and query opportunities for participants. Both authors and illustrators are welcome!

[Click here for more info or to register.](#)

FALL RETREAT: AURORA, NEBRASKA

October 6 - 8

Fall is right around the corner, and it's time to get serious about writing and illustrating once again! If you need a little time away to focus on your current WIP, the upcoming weekend retreat at the Leadership Center in Aurora, Nebraska is just what you're looking for!

This an opportunity for Nebraska writers and Illustrators to spend uninterrupted time working on their latest projects and connecting with fellow writers. Peer critiques, brainstorming, and networking are all wrapped up in a fun, beautiful getaway. We hope to see you there!

Space is limited so [register online](#) soon!

Maximizing Your Membership

Fall is a busy time for everyone and that's no different for SCBWI! Regional chapters are busy organizing some amazing virtual events. Here are just a few to check out...

Sept 9 - [First Spark to Work of Art Online Nonfiction Conference](#)
(hosted by SCBWI Iowa Chapter)

Sept. 9 - [Writing Biographies & Other True Stories for Kids with Author Andrea J. Loney](#)
(hosted by SCBWI Indiana Chapter)

Sept. 12 - [Plots, Page-turns & Pitch: Picture Book Pacing with Editor Sylvie Frank](#)
(hosted by SCBWI Mid-Atlantic Chapter)

Sept. 23 - [Picture Book Intensive with Holiday House Editor Elizabeth Law](#)
(hosted by SCBWI Western Washington Chapter)

Oct. 24 - [Traditional Publishing Demystified with agent Lynnette Novak](#)
(hosted by SCBWI Eastern Pennsylvania Chapter)

Check out the [Regional Virtual Events Pages](#) for even more opportunities!

Nebraska Critique Groups

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

Would you be willing to critique the work of others?

Join a critique group today!

Email Judith Snyder, Critique Group Coordinator:
scbwi.nebraska.critiques@gmail.com

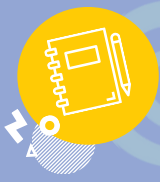


Illustration Submission

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

Please send to: Dianna Carda 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

Shop Talk returns Monday nights this fall! Join us from 7:00-8:00pm CST via Zoom, where we will discuss various kid-lit related topics. Writers and illustrators are welcome. Shop Talk is a wonderful way to connect with local writers. We hope to see you there!

Upcoming Shop Talks:

- September 18 - School Visits
- October 23 - Point of View in Picture Books
- November 20 - Dialogue

Save the Date!

- Dec. 18
- Jan. 15
- Feb. 12
- Mar. 18
- Apr. 15
- May 13



Art by Brooke Sperry

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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 Milliom, Edgar Obregon, Susana Pina, Amanda Tritschler-Tucker | Teaser Layout Designer: Roshad Bonner
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Take Flight With Help From Our Volunteers



LEADERSHIP



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