



December 2024

Spotlight



Featured Illustrator

SUSY KOWSKIE
[WWW.SUSYKOWSKIE.COM](http://www.susykowskie.com)

- COVER ILLUSTRATOR 1
- A WORD FROM OUR REGIONAL TEAM 2
- CRAFT CORNER..... 3
- LET'S CELEBRATE 4
- MEMBER SPOTLIGHT..... 5
- COMING ATTRACTIONS 6
- MAXIMIZING YOUR MEMBERSHIP 7
- SHOP TALK RECAP 8
- FOLLOW US ON SOCIAL MEDIA 8
- VOLUNTEERS..... 9

Upcoming Events

Shop Talk, Jan 13, 7-8pm CST

Indi-500 Challenge Kick-off, Jan 17, 7-8pm

In-Person Winter Social, Feb 8, 4-7pm @ Vino Mas

In-Person NY Conference 2025, Jan 31 - Feb 2

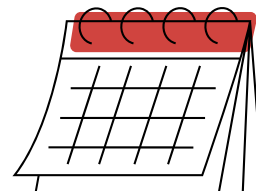
Virtual NY Conference 2025, February 21-22

PAL Meeting, Feb 25, 7-8pm

[Explore All Regional Virtual Events](#)

Let's Get Social!

Mark your calendar for our In-person Winter Social on Feb. 8th from 4-7pm at Vino Mas in Omaha. Please register in advance so we know how many to expect.



There's nothing like a dark, cold wintry season to make you want to warm up with friends, both old and new. Let's get together and support each other in our creative pursuits. We hope to see you there!

A Word from Our Regional Team



Jennie Gollehon
SCBWI Nebraska Co-Regional Advisor

As we approach the end of this year and the beginning of the next, I often find myself wanting to reflect. Do you do this as well? If not, take a minute, or five, and appreciate where you are at in your writing or illustrating journey.

Are you full steam ahead, taking advantage of classes and community? Did you reconnect with old acquaintances or make new friends? Did you add something new to your writing or illustrating toolbox?

Maybe your path took a tangent this year. If so, what amazing things did you find along the way? Joy? Inspiration? A new creative process? Were there moments of pause, times when you needed to let your creativity rest and recharge? Did you flounder? And if so, were you able to resurface and refocus?

For me, I can say yes to all of these. In some areas, I floundered and in others I flourished. Even better, I'm okay with that. And you should be too. This journey of writing and illustrating is quite regularly, not a liner one.

So where does that leave us? For me, it's setting new goals for the New Year based on a word (or words) that I feel will best guide me from 2024 experiences into 2025. My word for 2025 is Balance. It will allow me to grow in areas that need strengthening, pause when I need to, and take the ever-surprising tangent path and see where it leads; all while remaining focused on my over-arching goals. What will be your word for 2025?

As we close out 2024 and our inaugural months as Co-RA's, Heather and I want to wish our SCBWI family a Happy Holiday Season. May the New Year be one of balance and success for each of you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennie".



Collecting Ideas to Last a Year

by Judith Snyder

Critique Group Coordinator

I hibernate at this time of year. I curl up in front of the fire and wish for summer's warmth—but only until Winter Solstice, when days once again grow longer.

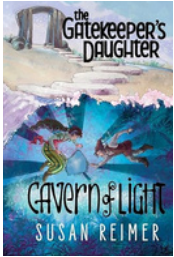
It's the time I revisit *Big Magic* by Elizabeth Gilbert, a book for creatives about inspiration, curiosity, and ideas. Gilbert says, "The universe buries strange jewels deep within us all, and then stands back to see if we can find them." Hunting for those jewels is our act of creativity. The enchantment we experience on the journey elevates our existence from mundane to exotic. And when we find our treasure, the magic explodes into all parts of our lives.

Rereading this book each year reignites that creative spark, reminding me of the importance of the creative journey. To find those ideas—those jewels, we must clear our minds and be willing receptors. Taking tiny moments each day to do this encourages the magic to take hold. Maybe it's a red leaf on a snowdrift, or a child's comment, or an enchanting word that catches your imagination. Remember, ideas are ephemeral, so stop and take note. I mean really—write a note or type it in your phone. Don't let that idea get away. Those unbidden ideas are true inspiration.

It's other times, when ideas are elusive that I rely on my treasure chest of ideas collected during my involvement in [Tara Lazar's Story Storm online event](#). For the entire month of January, (It's FREE!) I get to read daily blogs by writers/illustrators sharing their creative idea generators. Participants have a chance to win books or critiques by professionals. The challenge is to write down 30 new ideas or seeds of ideas during the month. (These can be for picture books, chapter books, early readers, or middle grade books.) Sign up doesn't start until the last few days of December, so check back in.

Begin a hunt for those jewels hidden inside of you. Stay curious. Be open. Accept the unexpected. Make your list and spend the rest of the year sorting and choosing the ideas that capture your imagination. Then make big magic happen in your life.

Let's Celebrate



We are celebrating Timothy Hantula, who illustrated the cover for the new book *The Gatekeeper's Daughter: Cavern of Light* from Chickenscratch Books. Way to go, Tim!



Alison Pearce Stevens was invited to be on two panels at the Tuscon Festival of Books in March. The panels will focus on Animals Struggling to Survive in a Dangerous World & Connecting Youth to Nature through Literature. Both tie in to her book *Animal Climate Heroes*. Keep up the great work, Alison!



Alison Pearce Stevens is on a roll! Her book *Animal Climate Heroes* made the list of "[20 Environmental Books to Inspire You in the Year Ahead.](#)" Huge congratulations, Alison! We're so proud of you.



Join SCBWI at the [2025 Winter Conference in NYC!](#)

Member Spotlight



Carla Ketner



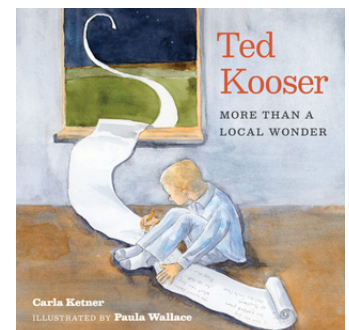
Meet award-winning author, Carla Ketner! Carla is a former elementary school teacher and instructor of college-level children's literature courses. Carla now owns and manages an independent bookstore on the historic courthouse square in small-town Seward, Nebraska.

Some of Carla's fondest memories at the bookstore are of events featuring Ted Kooser reading from his poetry and his picture books.

Carla's debut book *Ted Kooser: More than a Local Wonder* was published in November 2023 by the University of Nebraska Press. The book won a 2024 Midwest Independent Publishers Association (MIPA) Book Award, Paterson prize, and a Nebraska Book Award from The Nebraska Center for The Book. Like Ted, Carla feels most at home among the cornfields and grasses, the wide-open spaces, wildflowers and cows, and the gentle rolling hills of our part of the countryside.

When not reading, writing or connecting readers to books that will touch their hearts and stretch their minds, Carla is likely to be walking her grand dog, looking up the names of local wildflowers, baking anything that lists chocolate as an ingredient, or traveling with friends and family. Carla and her husband live in eastern Nebraska and have two grown sons.

To learn more about Carla and her work, visit [Carla's website](#).



Coming Attractions

JANUARY 14, 2025 - FROM FEEDBACK TO FABULOUS

Join our small regions group for a fabulous presentation by author & educator, Suzanne Morgan Williams. Suzanne will present ways to interpret editor and agent responses, and critique group and reader feedback. Whether evaluating rejections, diving into revisions, or preparing for an editorial call – every writer needs to weigh peer and professional responses. After years of writing, revising, mentoring, and self-editing she's learned a few tricks. No matter where you are in your writing journey, she'll give suggestions for evaluating what works for you and what to ignore.



MARCH 3, 2025 - LET'S CHAT ABOUT CHAPTER BOOKS!

Join us as we chat with Kizzi Roberts about chapter books; What they are, where they fit, and why we need them. Chapter books have long been a staple on the shelves of voracious readers, but what are they exactly? And who are they for? From long-running series spanning over 150 books to new arrivals, we'll explore key features that make a chapter book different from other middle grade books. From beginning readers to those reading above grade level, we'll discuss all the ways chapter books meet the needs of readers ages 6 to 10. This event is free for SCBWI Nebraska Premium Members as part of our Regional Meeting Series!



MARCH 11, 2025 - MARKETING YOUR CHILDREN'S BOOK

Join us as we learn from award-winning author Darcy Pattison about the basics of marketing your children's book with pre-publication tasks, launch strategies, and post-publication maintenance. We'll talk about when and how to use metadata, review copies/arcs, newsletters, social media, interviews, conferences, teacher's guides and more to help you sell more books. This event is free for SCBWI Nebraska Premium Members as part of our Self-Publishing Series!



Maximizing Your Membership



Start your creative engines because January means it is time for our 5th annual Indi-500 Challenge! We're excited to once again have two contests - one for writers and one for illustrators. This is an SCBWI Nebraska race, and we'd love to have you participate! And even better, there is no cost to participate! The live kick-off event will take place on Zoom on January 17 at 7:00pm. Registration closes January 16th at 12pm.

Based on selected themes and prompts, contestants create a 500-word story or spot illustration in only 48 hours. The selected writer & illustrator winners will each receive a critique from an industry professional and both winning entries will be featured in an upcoming newsletter. Runners-up will win a free SCBWI webinar of their choice (up to a \$20 value to be used by the end of 2025).

So...polish up those manuscripts and portfolios and get your registration in! You must be a member of the Nebraska region AND you must register to participate.

Nebraska Critique Groups

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

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 next newsletter?
Please send to: Heather at scbwi.nebraska.newsletter@scbwi.org
Label file as firstname_lastname.jpeg. (no bigger than 8 mb)



Shop Talk Recap



Ashley Karges
Shop Talk Co-Coordinator

Time Management for Creatives

In October, illustrator Chloe Burgett joined us to present her proven method of time management. Chloe referred to *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron as her inspiration and shared her top tips for finding time for your creative work.

CHLOE'S TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING "CREATIVE" PRODUCTIVITY

- **UTILIZE YOUR POWER HOUR:** Your power hour is the time of day when you feel most energetic and productive. Give this time to yourself to focus on your creative craft.
- **CREATE A VISUAL GUIDE:** Create a 24-hour wheel as a visual guide. Fill in each slice of the "pie" (hour) with the parts of your day: sleep, work, childcare, meal-prep, errands, chores, exercise, etc. Remember to reserve a power hour for your creative work as just 1 hour of creative work daily becomes 7 hours at the end of the week!
- **CHECK-IN WITH YOURSELF:** Consider a yearly check-in for large goals; a quarterly check-in for breaking down large goals into smaller tasks; a weekly check-in to complete smaller tasks. Be gentle with yourself and ease into the tough tasks.
- **BE REALISTIC:** Check in with yourself each week to look at what you realistically accomplish during your Power Hours. Make adjustments accordingly to the following week's schedule. Consider creating a 2-week schedule and adjusting as needed.
- **GET ORGANIZED:** An organized schedule can keep you calm and focused while bolstering creativity and flexibility!

Upcoming Shop Talks:

January 13 @ 7pm - Finding Comparative Texts with NoveList Plus

February 20 @ 12pm - Topsy Turvy Revisions & Rewrites



Art by Susy Kowskie

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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