




SCBWI



Nebraska Region
Prairie Song
Newsletter

February 2024

Spotlight



**Featured
Illustrator**

CHLOE BURGETT

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Upcoming Events

Virtual SCBWI Winter Conference, February 23-24

Meet & Pitch, March 14 @ 7pm CST

Marvelous Midwest Conference, April 12-14

Regional Meeting, March 10 & May 5 @ 4pm CST

Shop Talk March 18 & May 13 @ 7pm CST

Explore All Regional Virtual Events

Conference Q & A

Not sure what to expect at the SCBWI Marvelous Midwest Conference? Join us for a Q&A webinar on FEB. 26th at 7:00pm EST to find out. Bring your questions and the MMW planning team will answer them. [Click here](#) for more details on how to join the webinar.

GIVEAWAY ALERT! If you join the Q&A webinar you could win 1/2 off your early bird registration!

A Word from Our Regional Team



Alison Pearce Stevens
Regional Coordinator

I want to take my last note from the Regional Team (sniff) to wax poetic about the incredible experiences I've had—and watched others enjoy—as part of SCBWI. You don't have to be a Regional Advisor to get big benefits out of this organization. But the more you put in, the bigger the returns. That I can say with absolute certainty.

I've watched new illustrators (people who previously made art but were new to illustration) throw themselves into illustrator-themed events. They signed up for every webinar and workshop. They got their work critiqued, even when it was scary to do so. They joined—or formed—on-going critique groups to not only improve their own work but also pass what they've learned on to others following the same path. They listened to the feedback they received and used it as an opportunity to grow.

These illustrators attended conferences and showcased their artwork in portfolio showcases. They entered contests. And it wasn't long before all of their effort paid off in spades. Their work began to get a lot of interest from indie authors looking for someone to illustrate their book (which is a paid gig, to be clear). They began to get interest from agents and art directors. They started to get traditional book deals, illustrating work by others. They even decided to continue their education by diving into writing, so they could continue to grow and transform their work. They turned their interest into a career in children's literature. I've seen authors do the same.



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A Word from Our Regional Team *continued*

Speaking personally, I can attest to the value of in-person events. Many of you may not have experienced an in-person SCBWI conference, but they are far and away the best way to network. They're a great way to meet other writers, find new critique partners, and create long-lasting friendships. And where else will you get a chance to sit and chat with an agent, publisher, or art director? Not in a virtual event, that's for sure.

What's the potential reward for putting yourself out there at an in-person conference like *Marvelous Midwest*? For me, it was a book deal that turned into two—then three. All because I sat down next to an editor and struck up a conversation (I was NOT pitching at her). At another conference, a friendly chat while standing in line led to me signing with my agent. That was five years ago. Since then, she's negotiated five book deals for me. I'll be honest, I had no idea who either person was when I started talking with them. Maybe that's what led to genuine conversations and connections that have lasted for years.

What can YOU do to help yourself along the path toward publication? I highly recommend attending *Marvelous Midwest* in April if you can. Don't go into it expecting anything other than to learn. Get to know the other attendees. Attend breakout sessions and intensives that will help you grow in new directions. And don't hesitate to strike up a conversation. You never know where it will lead.



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Agent's View



Lynette Novak

Agent, The Seymour Agency

Prior to joining The Seymour Agency, Lynette Novak spent seventeen years freelance editing. She worked with new writers, advanced writers, as well as New York Times and USA Today bestselling authors. Lynette earned a bachelor of education degree from the University of Manitoba, where she specialized in English and French. She excelled in Advanced Creative Writing in university and studied writing for children and teens through the Institute of Children's Literature. She was a Pitch Wars mentor in 2015 and 2016, and both of her mentees acquired agents. Lynette has since closed her editing business and is excited to bring her passion for the written word to agenting.

Although Lynette was born and raised in Manitoba, Canada, she now lives in Minnesota with her husband, twin girls, and many pets. Her personal interests include reading, writing, exercising at the gym (okay, that's a love/hate relationship), working on an assortment of crafts, all things having to do with animals (if she could own a farm, zoo, and animal shelter, she would), and enjoying time with family and friends.

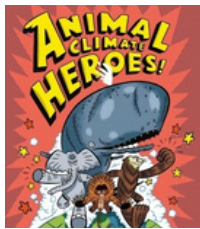
She loves dark and suspenseful, mysterious twists, unique worlds, light and funny, a good love story, and lots of voice. She's currently looking for fiction and nonfiction picture books (non-rhyming preferred) as well as middle grade and YA novels. For MG, she's looking for horror, contemporary, mystery, magical realism, and contemporary/grounded fantasy; for YA, she's interested in horror, rom-com, thriller, romantic fantasy, fantasy, and magical realism.

Submit to Lynette via [this Query Manager link](#) between February 15 and April 15, 2024.

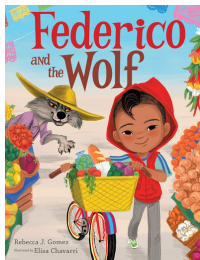
Let's Celebrate



Kimberly Prey recently published her third children's book! *Hello God! You Give, We Receive!* is a faith-based book for children and families. This simple and inspirational book can be shared again and again for generations to come. Way to go, Kimberly!



Alison Pearce Stevens and her book *Animal Climate Heroes* will be featured on Betsy Bird's Fuse 8 blog (date to be determined). Congratulations, Alison!



Rebecca J. Gomez received The Star of the North 2023 Picture Book Award for her book *Federico and the Wolf* from the Minnesota Youth Reading Awards. We're thrilled for you, Rebecca!



Congratulations to Wendy Weitzel, winner of the Indi-500 writing challenge! Be sure to read Wendy's winning submission on the next page. Well done, Wendy!



Congratulations to Chloe Burgett, winner of the Indi-500 illustrating challenge! Look for Chloe's winning entry below. Nicely done, Chloe!



Kudos to our Indi-500 Challenge Runners-Up, Alissa Hansen for her illustration and Judith Snyder for her story "Each Tiny Ant." Great work Alissa and Judith!



Winners of the Indi-500 Challenge



Virtual Memory

by Wendy Weitzel, winner of the Indi-500 Writing Challenge

Sid peered around the corner toward the only exit. Soldiers lined the doorway, guns held at the ready. How had he gotten here? All he'd wanted was to get his parents back. Creating virtual reality technology to relive actual memories seemed perfect. He could alter the past. He could go back to that day, ten years before, and avoid the head-on collision that had killed his parents.

But he'd miscalculated, and now Mal was gone, too. Instead of saving his parents, he'd killed his sister. He needed to get back to the control room, to Mal's original memory bank, and change things one more time. This time it would work. His parents would survive; Mal would live again. He would have his family back.

"I've got a livescan reading on him. He's still here."

Jairus. Who else would think to scan for Sid's carbon meter? Who else, despite the literal collapse of The Company, would hunt down one insignificant cog in the wheel? Only Jairus. Because Jairus knew that Sid wasn't just another programmer; Sid was the programmer. The one who'd started it all. And now the one trying to destroy it all.

Sid had to move. He looked at his watch: 9:47 AM. He had seven minutes. He breathed in once. For Mal, he told himself. He stood up, readying himself to rush the soldiers, but just as he took his first step, an explosion knocked him back against the wall. It took him several seconds to regain his composure. He felt his head. Blood.

He leaned around the corner. The soldiers lay scattered on the floor. Jairus wasn't among the bodies. Sid ran. Just as he reached the stairs, shouting erupted behind him. "There! At the stairs!" Sid ignored Jairus and ran down, into the darkness.

"Eleanor!" Sid called out as he burst through the control room doors.



Winners of the Indi-500 Challenge



The room was empty except for two desks, a wall full of monitors, and a VR headset. The guards charged down the stairwell. “Sid?” A voice called from underneath a desk. Eleanor’s curly hair poked out, followed by her enormous glasses that gave her a bug-like appearance.

“Eleanor! Protocol 421B.” Eleanor joined Sid at the control panel and they both began typing. Seconds later, Eleanor said, “I’ve accessed the core memory. You can’t save everyone, but you might be able to save Mal.” The screen flooded with images of Sid’s life. Of Mal’s life.

Eleanor turned to Sid and smiled, just as bullets flew across the room and caught her in the chest. The guards stormed in from the stairwell. Eleanor slumped, then fell to the ground. Sid turned in horror to see Jairus.

9:54 AM. Sid didn’t hesitate. He grabbed the VR set and slammed it onto his head, aligning the memory pad to his frontal lobe. “You’re a hard person to catch, Sid,” Jairus crooned.

Sid didn’t hear him; he collapsed into a chair, spinning wildly through his memories, determined to change the past one more time.



Ant Race by Chloe Burgett, winner of the Indi-500 Illustrating Challenge

Member Spotlight



Kimberly Prey



Let's meet Kimberly Prey!

Kimberly was first drawn to writing as part of a 3rd grade assignment when she wrote a poem about her grandfather and was asked to read it in front of the school on grandparent's day. Later, during her college years, Kimberly took a children's literature class and dreamt that someday she would publish her own books for children.

Kimberly grew up outside Perrysburg, Ohio. She received her Bachelor's Degree from Concordia College in Ann Arbor, Michigan and her Master's Degree from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oklahoma. Kimberly's husband served in the United States Air Force for 30 years, so the family has lived all over the world and the Air Force is what brought them to Nebraska.

In 2020, Kimberly's publishing dream came true when she published *It's Bumpy at the Back of the Bus*. The story was inspired by bus rides with her three-year-old son while living in South Korea. Since then, Kimberly has published a double story book titled *Bikini Watches the Weather and Sarah Watermelon Sings* and most recently, *Hello God! You Give, We Receive!*

Kimberly feels that the printed words of children's literature create lifelong memories, and some of her greatest joy has been sitting together reading books with her son. She is so thankful that she has been able to publish books for children that hopefully are wonderful memory makers for others.

When Kimberly is not writing, she loves traveling, baking, reading, spending time with family and friends, and supporting her son's school activities. She works as a paraprofessional at a local high school.

You can follow Kimberly's author page on [Facebook](#).

Coming Attractions

Meet & Pitch, March 14

Mark your calendars for our next MEET & PITCH event with Lori Steel of Red Fox Literary Agency on Thursday, March 14th from 7:00-8:00pm CST. The 90-minute format will follow an introduction of the agent and agency, manuscript wishlist, Q&A, and a pitch session with participants. Cost is \$15 for premium members. Lori will offer 10 critiques following the Zoom event, and she will be open to submissions from participants for a three-month window. [Click here to register.](#)

Marvelous Midwest Conference, April 12 - 14

Don't delay! Early-bird registration for the Marvelous Midwest conference ends February 29th. The conference is a joint endeavor of six SCBWI chapters: Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, Wisconsin and will take place April 12-14, 2024 in Davenport, Iowa. The weekend will be jam-packed with amazing events for writers and illustrators at every stage of their creative journey. Get ready for some marvelous keynotes, panels, breakout sessions, intensives and more!

[Click here](#) for full conference details, schedule, and registration info.



Maximizing Your Membership

What better way to maximize your membership than to volunteer! We currently have two open volunteer positions. If you've been considering getting involved with the Nebraska SCBWI region, this is a great time to do so.

Newsletter Coordinator - This position involves overseeing incoming newsletter content contributed by others, writing up content focused on upcoming events, and putting it all together in an easy-to-use Canva template. Strong editing skills would be a plus for this role.

Retreat & Social Gatherings Coordinator - This position works with the RA to plan, schedule, and organize the annual retreat and other social gatherings.

You can find the [detailed position descriptions here](#). The Regional Team is always available to support you, as needed. Interested? Email nebraska-ra@scbwi.org and we'll send you a link to the application form.

Volunteers attend monthly advisory board meetings, receive free membership, and get to be a part of a fun, energetic group of people who enjoy helping others.

Nebraska Critique Groups

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

Join a critique group today!

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

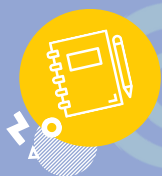


Illustration Submission

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

Please send to: Dianna Carda at nebraska-ic@scbwi.org

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



Shop Talk Recap



Ashley Karges
Shop Talk Co-Coordinator

January – Making Book Trailers

Shop Talk opened the year discussing book trailers in our January meeting.

Book trailers are short videos, similar to movie trailers, that promote a book. They are becoming a common marketing tool for authors and illustrators. Book trailers are easy to post and share and can create a lasting impression of your book. Using the right music, animation, photos, or videos can help your story come to life.

In our January meeting, we created a book trailer together using the free video-making tool in Canva, for the book *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak.

If you are new to Canva, there is a learning curve. However, online tutorials can help you get started. Exploring Canva's templates, menu bars, and tools will help you become familiar with all the fun of creating.

Tips for making a successful book trailer:

1. Keep it short (20-60 seconds is a common length)
2. Match the music and art to the tone of your book
3. Remember your target audience-kids, teachers, librarians, and parents
4. Keep it engaging, but don't give away the ending; think of a book trailer as your visual pitch
5. Search current book trailers online to view examples and find what you like

Happy creating!

Upcoming Shop Talks, 7pm-8pm CST:

March 18 - Blog Tours

April 15 - No Shop Talk *See you at Marvelous Midwest in Davenport, Iowa!

May 13 - Submission Package

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



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