



FEBRUARY 2025

Spotlight



Featured Illustrator

KATY EDMISTEN
[@THEOTHERSIDEOFTHEPAPER](https://www.instagram.com/theothersideofthepaper)

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Upcoming Events

[Shop Talk](#), Feb. 20 @ 12pm CST

[Virtual Winter Conference 2025](#), February 21-22

[PAL Meeting](#), Feb 25 @ 7pm CST

[Regional Meeting](#), March 3 @ 7pm CST

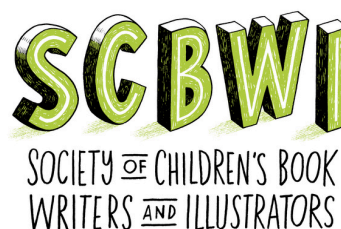
[Self-Pub Quarterly](#), March 11 @ 7pm CST

[Regional Meeting](#), April 7 @ 7pm CST

[Explore All Regional Virtual Events](#)

NEW YEAR, NEW LOGO!

SCBWI has a new look and a new logo to kick off 2025! Watch for this logo on upcoming SCBWI emails, publications, announcements, and online events.



A Word from Our Regional Team



Heather Dawn Torres
SCBWI Nebraska Co-Regional Advisor

Having just returned from the SCBWI Winter Conference in New York City, I can't help but think of connections. The conference keynotes, critiques and creative labs were wonderful however, it was the connections that I made at the conference that stand out the most. Connections with SCBWI staff, regional team members, agents, editors, writers, and illustrators. Just being in one place with so many like-minded creatives was no less than spectacular. I gained inspiration in some way from each person I met. Each story I heard. And these new faces will surely become familiar friends when we meet again at the next conference or SCBWI event. Here's proof...

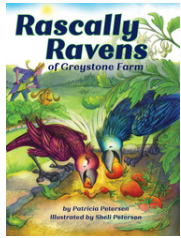
In 2018, I attended a local in-person writing conference as a new writer. During that conference, a fellow conference attendee invited me to sit with her during the social hour. Not knowing anyone else, I did. We struck up a conversation, exchanged contact information and soon became critique partners. Years later, we are still exchanging manuscripts and are now volunteering together as Co-Regional Advisors for SCBWI-Nebraska (wink, wink)!

As writers and illustrators, making connections and building relationships is so important. Making connections helps us to grow our careers, learn new things, and gain fresh perspectives. It can also provide us with emotional support, inspiration and encouragement. Perhaps that new person you meet today will become your best critique partner tomorrow. You never know how someone will impact your journey, so stay open and keep making connections wherever you go. If you attended our Winter Social earlier in the month, I hope that you made a new connection or two. If so, nourish them. Email that person or reach out on social media just to say hello. Ask them how their writing or illustrating is going. Invite them for coffee.

If you haven't attended a SCBWI event in awhile--now's the time! There are some great events both in-person and virtual coming up in our [Nebraska region](#) as well as other [SCBWI regions](#) around the globe. Attend those events and make some new connections. You'll be glad you did!

Heather

Let's Celebrate



Rascally Ravens of Greystone Farm illustrated by Sheli Petersen and written by Patricia Petersen is scheduled for release in February 2025. Their story, based on direct observations of ravens in the wild, features a mischievous raven pair who descend on Hattie Greystone's farm, creating adventures and challenges for Hattie and for themselves. Congrats, Sheli!



The illustrations and book design are complete for Jodi Adams's new picture book, *One Little Squiggle*. It's a rhyming story about a small squiggle's BIG potential, and it's meant to encourage creativity in kids ages 4-8. The book is set to release in May 2025. Way to go, Jodi!



Congratulations to Kathleen Gaden, winner of the 2025 Indi-500 writing challenge! Be sure to read Kathleen's winning submission on the next page. Well done, Kathleen!



Congratulations to Kimberly Glass, winner of the 2025 Indi-500 illustrating challenge! Look for Kim's winning entry on Page 5. Nicely done, Kim!



Kudos to our Indi-500 Challenge Runners-Up, Rachel Backman for her illustration and Tim Hantula for his story. Great work, Tim and Rachel!



Art by Katy Edmisten



Winners of the Indi-500 Challenge



Finding Home Again

by Kathleen Gadeken, Winner of the 2025 Indi-500 Challenge

Ellie was good at saying goodbye—she had to be. Goodbye to houses, goodbye to schools, goodbye to every town she'd ever known. Now, she stood in front of her new house—a big, lopsided thing with a sagging roof and shutters that hung like they'd given up. The front door was split in half, like it belonged on a stable, not a house.

Ellie didn't even bother hoping it would feel like home. She didn't need another goodbye. Her mom popped her head out the top half of the door. "I feel like a horse behind this thing—neigh!" she laughed, then added, "Ellie, I hear kids playing next door! Why don't you go say hi?" Ellie's cheeks burned. "What's the point?" she muttered.

She trudged to the side of the house, finding shade near a row of empty flowerpots. Their chipped paint and faded colors mirrored how Ellie felt. "Why bother meeting new kids?" Ellie whispered. "They always ask where I'm from, like it's weird that we move so much." She scuffed at the dirt with her shoe, then grabbed a stick and started digging. Soon, she'd built a castle surrounded by a winding moat. "Whatcha doing?" a voice called. Ellie froze. Peeking over the fence was a girl about her age.

"Um...just playing," Ellie mumbled. The girl climbed the fence and landed with a thud. "Cool castle! Can I help?" Ellie glanced at the house. Its shutter swayed slightly, like it was nudging her. "Okay," she said finally. "I'm Ellie." "I'm Mia," the girl replied. "Let's make the tower taller!"

Together they built an entire kingdom. Mia found sticks for swords and shiny rocks for treasure. Ellie laughed when Mia pretended to be a dragon guarding the castle. For the first time in a long time, Ellie felt happy.

As the sun sank low, Mia said, "This was fun, Want to play again tomorrow?" Ellie hesitated. Goodbyes always came too soon.

Mia shrugged. "If I'm still here." Her voice softened. "I'm a foster kid. I've lived in more houses than I can count. I'm never sure if I'm coming or going." Ellie blinked. "You mean you move houses and families?"



Winners of the Indi-500 Challenge



Yep." Mia traced a pattern in the dirt. "It's hard, but I've learned something. No matter where I go, I can find friendship, with people and with houses."

Ellie frowned. "Houses?" Mia grinned. "Yeah. Houses don't judge or ask weird questions. They just listen."

Ellie glanced at the old house. Its shutters swayed gently, as if breathing. For the first time, she wondered if it might have been watching over her all along. As Mia climbed back over the fence, Ellie waved, stood and dusted herself off. The front door opened, both top and bottom, and her mom waved. "Come in, Ellie. It's dinner time!"

Ellie smiled. Maybe this lopsided house, with her family inside and friends just waiting to be found, could finally be home.



Art by Kimberly Glass, winner of the 2025 Indi-500 illustrating challenge

Member Spotlight



Mary Beth Rice



Mary Beth Rice is a retreat facilitator and strategic planner with a passion to write in any crevice of time she can find (or create) in a day. She is actively engaged in her regional SCBWI picture book critique group and the co-chair of the monthly shop talks. She began writing picture book manuscripts in 2019. Participating in Storystorm, the 12 x 12 Picture Book Challenge and the Complete Picture Book Submissions System keeps her motivated and committed.

In 2024, Mary Beth was selected as a PBParty finalist for her manuscript RUBY'S SUNSHOWER ROMP. In addition to honorable mentions in Vivian Kirkland's #50PreciousWords and the Spring Fling Writing contests, her short story ANGEL VOICES, won a place in the 2022 #50PreciousWords competition. She admits to being a picture book-a-holic, believing that they hold lessons and inspiration for every life experience, no matter the reader's age.

Facilitating journaling workshops at SEC and organizing a Literary Festival at St. Peter School for 10 years connected her to a special writing community and planted a seed of desire to write her own stories. A lifelong journaler with a graduate degree in Educational Psychology, her lyrical picture books often have an SEL theme and threads of family tradition and nature. Her four children and two grandbabies give her plenty of material for her picture books. Mary Beth hopes to infuse her own family experiences into her writing to encourage children and their families.

Coming Attractions



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!



APRIL 7, 2025 - REVERSE ENGINEER A STORY

Come learn how agent Natascha Morris reverse engineers a story. From inspiration and MSWL, she will walk you through the outline steps to creating a new manuscript. Whether you are working on a picture book, novel, or graphic novel, this proven method will help you crack the code on how to give editors and agents exactly what they might be looking for. Handouts will be provided, and some pre-class work will be required. This event is free for SCBWI Nebraska Premium Members as part of our Regional Meeting Series!

Maximizing Your Membership

SCBWI VIRTUAL WINTER CONFERENCE, FEB. 21-22

Join us online for exclusive industry panels, hands-on sessions diving deep into the craft of writing and illustrating children's books, and valuable networking with fellow creators. Whether you're looking to sharpen your skills, gain insider knowledge, or connect with other talented authors and illustrators this event is for you! Choose from creative labs on how to turn an idea into a story, how to unlock your creative voice or how to perfectly match pictures and words. [Click here](#) to register!

SCBWI WORK IN PROGRESS AWARDS OPEN MARCH 1, 2025

The SCBWI Work-In-Progress (WIP) Award assists children's book writers and illustrators in the publication of a specific project currently not under contract. Submissions open on March 1, 2025. The Work-in-Progress Award showcases outstanding manuscripts from the members of the SCBWI. One winner in each of the following five categories will be selected: Picture Book Text, Chapter Books/Early Readers/Middle Grade, Young Adult Fiction, Nonfiction (Anna Cross Giblin Nonfiction Award), Underrepresented Fiction or Nonfiction (previously called Multicultural) and the Karen Cushman Late Bloomer Award. [Click here](#) for more information or to apply for the WIP award.

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

Finding Comparative Texts with NoveList Plus

In January we welcomed guest speaker, Elly Roberts, of the Omaha Public Library. Elly guided us on an online tour of the amazing library search tool called *NoveList Plus*.

NoveList Plus generates a list of book titles based on “story elements” that the reader – or in this case author – is looking for. One can generate titles based on genre, theme, date published, or even as specific as tone, storyline, pace, and more. Think “race against time” or “misfits united” or “slice of life.”

Finding the right comp titles can sometimes feel like a daunting task, but *NoveList Plus* narrows the search. If you have struggled with finding the perfect comps, this tool is absolutely invaluable. Most libraries offer this online program. You will need a library membership and can simply log in to your library’s website with your card number. For Omaha Public Library patrons, from the home page, look for *NoveList Plus* in Quick Links or Story Elements. If you need assistance, Elly assured us that librarians are more than happy to help. Just ask!

Upcoming Shop Talks:

- February 20 @ 12pm - Topsy Turvey Revisions & Rewrites
- March 24 @ 7pm - Keeping Up With It All
- April 24 @ 12pm - Querying
- May 19 @ 7pm - Journey of a Published Author



Art by Katy Edmisten

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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 Milliorn, 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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