



SCBWI Montana

by Erika Wilson ©2018



Spring Newsletter • April 2022

Regional Events

Happy Spring!

Your regional team has been busy, busy, busy! We have lots of wonderful programs lined up for you!

On Wednesday, May 4, from 6pm-7:30pm, we will host a webinar with Terry C. Jennings. Terry is the author of the series *Definitely Dominguita*.



photo by Lou Jennings



She will teach us about writing a series, including a proposal and pitch to publishers.

To register for “So You Want To Write A Series,” visit www.montana.scbwi.org/events/. The cost is \$20 for SCBWI members.

Then, on May 14th and 15th, we are hosting our online [Illustrator Extravaganza](#). This virtual event is geared toward illustrators, but writers are welcome to attend. We'll have live portfolio critiques as well as a terrific lineup of presentations given by book designers, an agent, and an art director—and our very own Erika Wilson! To learn more, visit <https://montana.scbwi.org/>. The cost is \$55 for SCBWI members.

You can keep track of our regional events and upcoming webinars on our Facebook page and on Instagram. SCBWI Headquarters is also updating their website to include all of the webinars offered in the entire international organization. You will find the list here <https://www.scbwi.org/regional-webinars/>.

If you are a current SCBWI Montana member, we'd like to share your good news. If you had a kid lit book published between 2021-2022, email your brief bio, a two-sentence blurb about your book, and an image of your book's cover to tiffinspire@gmail.com. We want to share your good news on social media (Facebook and Instagram).

Let's celebrate your accomplishments!

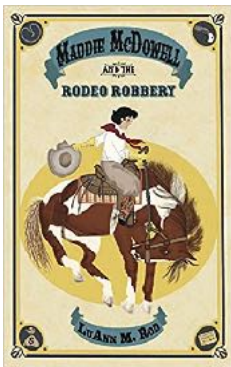
PRECIOUS MCKENZIE -
Regional Advisor, Montana
montana-ra@scbwi.org



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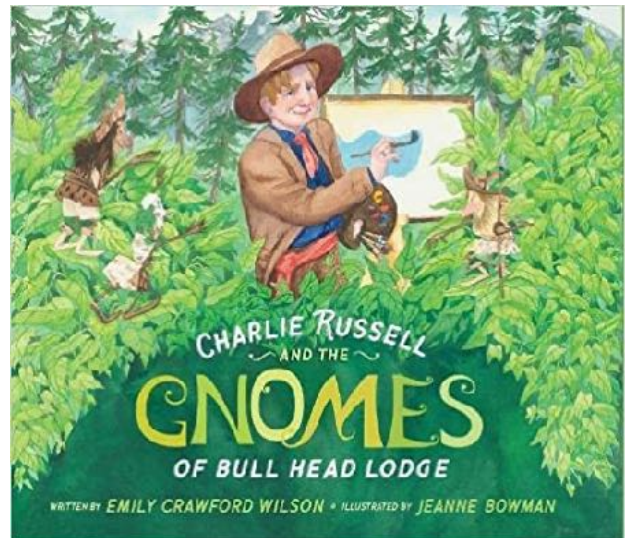
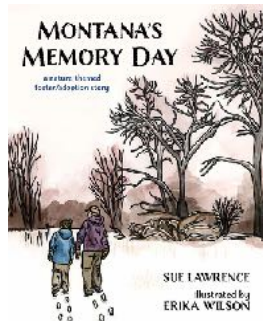
Announcements

And still more wonderful news for SCBWI Montana members!



LuAnn Rod's middle grade novel, *Maddie McDowell and the Rodeo Robbery* (Chicken Scratch Books), is a finalist in the 2022 Western Writers of America Spur Awards!

And, Sue Lawrence, author, and Erika Wilson (illustrator), are finalists in the Children's Picture Book category for *Montana's Memory Day: A Nature-Themed Foster/Adoption Story*.



And, the [Spur Award](#) for Children's Picture Book went to author Emily Crawford Wilson and illustrator Jeanne Bowman's *Charlie Russell and the Gnomes of Bull Head Lodge* (South Dakota Historical Society Press).

Spur Awards will be announced at the conference in Great Falls in mid-June. For details, visit <https://westernwriters.org/>.

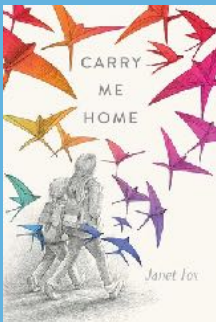
How amazing is that? I am so delighted and proud of all the creative people we have in our region! Way to go! And many, many congratulations!



Artwork by [Ashley Mitchell](#)
on [Instagram @artwithmissmitchell](#)



Announcements



The SCBWI Crystal Kite Members Choice Awards are underway.

We have two Montana members whose books made it to the second round! Janet Fox, for *Carry Me Home*, and Bruce Smith's *Legend Keepers*.



Winners for each region will be announced this summer! Good luck to both Bruce and Janet!

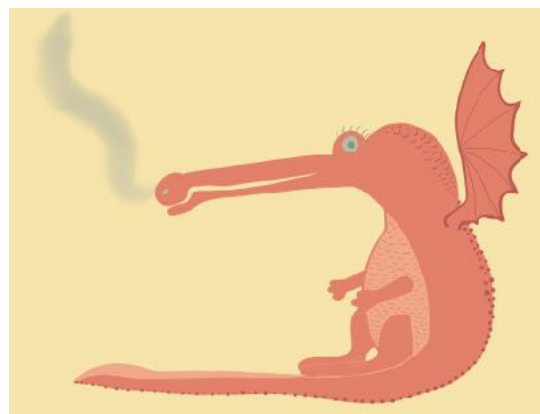


Montana Kid Lit Festival

Mark your calendars for the Montana Kid Lit Festival coming to the Billings Public Library June 8-11.

While this event is not organized by SCBWI, you will see works by many of our Montana regional members. Bring the kiddos as they will get a chance to hear local writers and illustrators talk about their creative process.

This event is sponsored by This House of Books. Visit their [website thishouseofbooks.indielite.org](http://www.thishouseofbooks.indielite.org) to learn more.



Artwork by SCBWI member [Santral Lusin](#)



Artwork by [Jensen Collins](#) on [Instagram @jennypennypaper](#)

Montana Sparks!

Inspired by the SCBWI-NM Enchantment Show and Erika Wilson's Montana Two-Step Contest, **Montana Sparks!** is a new exhibition debuting at the Kid Lit Festival in Billings, MT on June 11th. Twelve writers and twelve illustrators have paired up to create a single work based on the theme: *Curiosity*. In a reversal of the usual publishing process, artists have been asked to create a piece of artwork that is then passed to the writers to pen a single page story or poem inspired by the artwork.

Each pair will be exhibited together during the **Montana Kid Lit Festival** with a reception for the artwork happening at 3-4pm on

Saturday, June 11th in the Billings Public Library Community Room. Authors present at the event will be invited to read their work if they so wish, and illustrators may explain the inspiration behind their artwork.



Artwork by [Jennifer Ard](#) on [Instagram @jennifer.ard.art](#)

We hope that this will spark future collaboration, including another show later in the year. For those who are unable to attend the live exhibition, plans are being formulated to hold a virtual show after the event. If you have any questions about the event please contact Jeanne Bowman at jeanneillustrates@gmail.com.



Character Design: Girl

CELEBRATION CORNER!

BETTY VANDERWIELEN

Book: *Raccoon Summer*

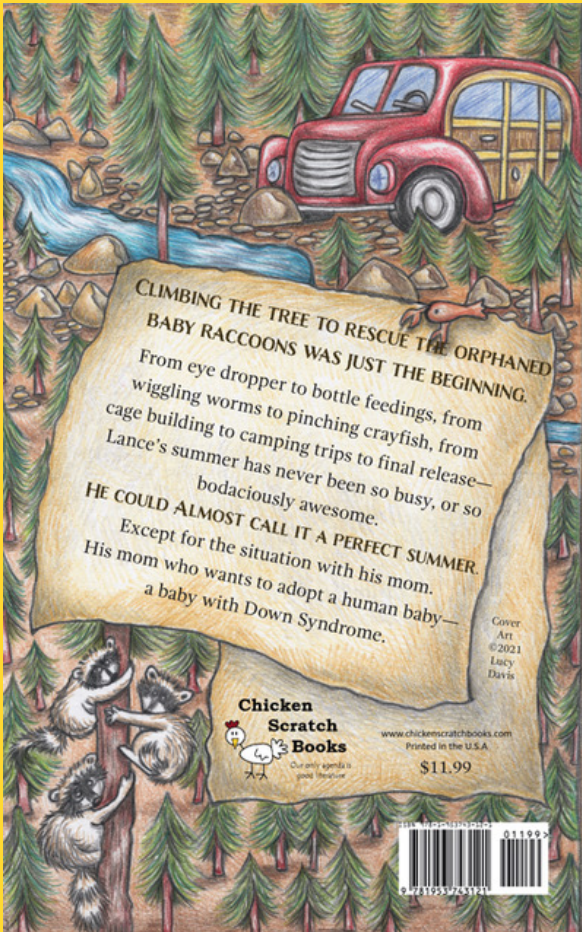
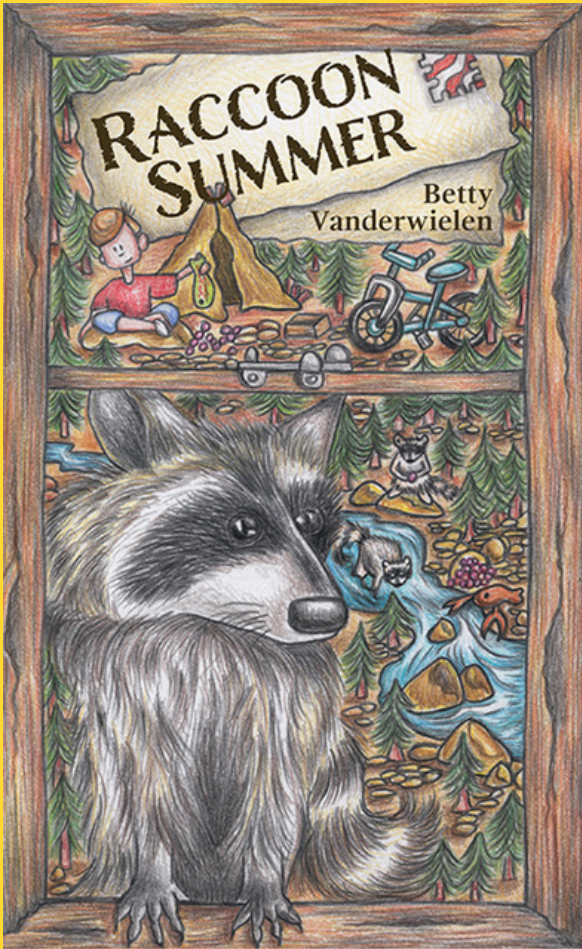
Publication: Spring 2022 by Chicken Scratch Books

From the Author:

For more than 10 years, my family and I raised orphaned baby raccoons through a volunteer program at the nature center in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

I now live in Seeley Lake, Montana. The only raccoons I have raised here are those in my book, but that has been every bit as consuming and wonderful as raising real ones.

Learn more about Betty and Raccoon Summer at www.bettyvanderwielen.com



ABOUT THE BOOK:

Climbing the tree to rescue the orphaned baby raccoons was just the beginning.

From eye dropper to bottle feedings, from wiggling worms to pinching crayfish, from cage building to camping trips to final release-Lance's summer has never been so busy, or so bodaciously awesome. He could almost call it a perfect summer.

Except for the situation with his mom.

His mom who is thinking of adopting a human baby - a baby with Down syndrome. Lance learns the power of family, friends, and true acceptance in this heartwarming middle grade novel.

CELEBRATION CORNER!



MOVING WORDS About a Flower

Author: K.C. Hayes

Illustrator: Barbara Chotiner

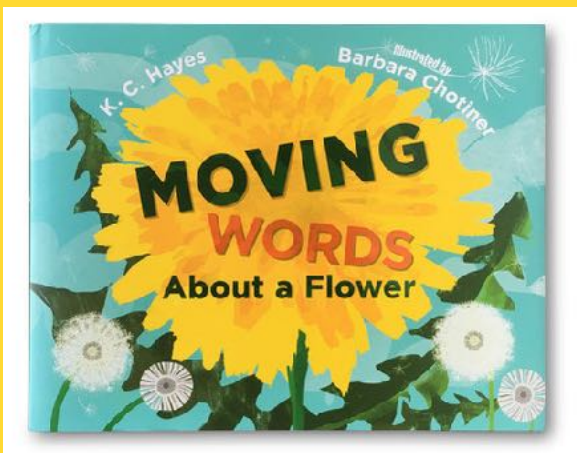
Publication: Charlesbridge, March 2022

ABOUT THE BOOK

Words tumble, leap, and fly in this clever shape poem about a resilient dandelion.

This inspiring story of a dandelion that survives against all odds, ingeniously told through shape poems (also called concrete poems) is full of visual surprises. When it rains, letters fall from the sky; and when seeds scatter, words FLY!

Each playful page will have readers looking twice. The back of the book includes more information about the life cycle of the humble, incredible dandelion.



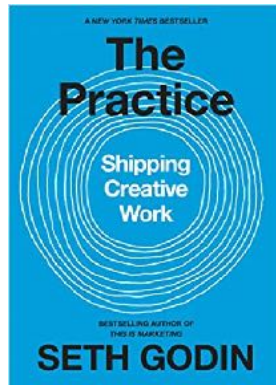
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

K.C. Hayes grew up just outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, near a wooded hill. Then he went to college, and then played guitar in rock bands, and then wrote ads for a living (and greeting cards for fun). Now he writes stories and lives in Missoula, Montana together with his wife and an adorable cat—plus a cat that's not so adorable.

Craft Corner

[*The Practice: Shipping Creative Work*](#) by Seth Godin is a book for all creatives. “It’s for teachers who design original lessons to spark curiosity in their students, for chefs who want to make taste buds sing, for dancers, composers, and comedians, and for writers and illustrators.”

Recently, I had the pleasure of enjoying a performance of Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony by the Billings Symphony Orchestra. It was a moving experience as the standing ovation can attest to. I was grateful that over two hundred years after the great composer’s death, I could still enjoy his masterpiece.



The author Seth Godin defines art as something generous you create that will make a difference for others. I don’t think anyone would argue that what Beethoven created is art.

Beethoven shipped the work.

“Ship the work.” That is Godin’s catch phrase for this book. No matter what creative endeavor you’re working on, if you want to be a professional, you must ship the work. In other words, get it out into the world.

Stop listening to the narrative (either placed on yourself or placed on you by others) that you’re not qualified — “credentialed” as he calls it. Trust in yourself and be willing to fail.

Beethoven didn’t listen to his critics, literally, and he didn’t delve into feelings of imposter syndrome even when he could no longer hear the work he was creating. He trusted that he had something to offer the world, something that would make it a better place. He stuck with the practice of creating – no excuses. He shipped the work.

The author tells us:

“When we require outcomes as proof of our worth, we become brittle, unable to persist in the face of inevitable failure on our way to making a contribution.”

You can’t be worried about outcomes (such as sales or reviews), or you’ll never produce. Every creative project has flaws especially in the beginning. If you’re too worried about a perfect outcome, you’ll never finish the work and share it with others.

And sharing it with others is the ultimate goal. Why do the work (at least in a professional sense) unless you want to share it with others? You’re looking to create some positive change and to serve your people. People who want what you have to offer. Give it to them. Stop coming up with excuses, and ship the work.

Fear of criticism commonly keeps artists from committing to or completing a project. If this is you, try to change your mindset about criticism. If it’s “generous criticism,” you can view it as helpful feedback about what is or is not working for your audience. If it’s not constructive, or even harmful, that just means, those critics aren’t your people and what you have to offer isn’t for them.

Most importantly, don't fall into the trap of trying to appeal to everyone just to avoid criticism. This just makes you generic. You need to be outstanding in your little corner of the world. You don't need to appeal to everyone; just to those whom you're looking to serve. Beethoven isn't for everyone. Neither is the work you create.

Figure out who your audience is. And figure out how to serve them. How can you add value to their lives? What are you trying to contribute that will make their world a better place?

And commit to the practice of making and shipping your art. Choose to commit to the journey.

I feel like the following quote is the entire point of Godin's book.

"We have unlimited resources to hide our work and only one reason to share it: to be of service."

For some reason, we're very good at finding reasons for not getting the work finished and out into the world. The author addresses many of these excuses one by one to show us what is actually behind our inaction.

This book has a whole section called, "There's no Such thing as Writer's Block." That's a bold claim that will get under people's skin. Godin asserts that while writer's block feels very real, it's imagined and therefore changeable. He explains that

the search for certainty and the fear of making a mistake is at the heart of our block.

The author lists 45 ways we sacrifice our work to our fear. I will only list five here.

- Refuse to listen to generous critics.
- Eagerly listen to well-meaning chickenhearted critics.
- Compromise on the hard parts.
- Work only when inspiration strikes.
- Polish your excuses.

Do any of these sound familiar?

If we're to get our work out in the world for the benefit of others, we must stop hiding behind fear and excuses. We need to trust the results will come if we just continue the process and keep our focus where it needs to be; not on the outcomes (sales), but on the practice of making art.

"Committing to a practice that makes our best better is all we can do."

Be like Beethoven. Be deaf to the critics, including your inner ones. And ship the work.

Godin lists several elements of the practice we should develop to help us be consistent in our work.

Again, I'll only list five.

- Dance with fear
- Seek joy
- Understand genre
- Avoid reassurance
- Learn from what you ship

"We have unlimited resources to hide our work and only one reason to share it: to be of service."

Seth Godin

"There's no Such thing as Writer's Block."

Seth Godin

The author explains each element in detail. He also makes many more points that are worth reading and pondering. I can't cover them all here. Instead, I'll end with another of Godin's quotes.

"Better is possible. But not if we continue to settle, continue to hide, and continue to scurry along the same paths. We have more to do."



Seth Godin is a best-selling author, inspirational speaker, and marketing guru. You can learn more about him and his 20 books at sethgodin.com.

TIFFINY SPIRE
Newsletter Coordinator
tiffinyspire@gmail.com



Artwork by [Jensen Collins](#) on Instagram [@jennypennypaper](#)



Artwork by [Jenn Prinzing](#) on Instagram [@nachofied](#)

Illustrator Extravaganza

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ILLUSTRATOR EXTRAVAGANZA May 14 -15

SATURDAY • May 14th

8:00-8:45 a.m. (MST)

Coffee and Meet & Greet with Illustration prompt

Session 1 TAYLOR ABATIELL

Children's Book Designer • Penguin Random House • 9:00-10:30 a.m. MST

"DECONSTRUCTED WORK IN PROGRESS:"

A detailed breakdown of the illustrator's responsibilities and timeline during a children's book project. Featuring examples and tips for interpreting art notes, revisions, and final presentation of commissioned art."

Session 2 CHAD BECKERMAN

Agent the CAT Agency Inc.
11:00-12:30 a.m. (MST)

FINDING YOUR VISUAL VOICE

How to build your "visual voice" into your brand as an Illustrator/Creator to get noticed by agents, editors, and art directors.



Session 3 ERIKA WILSON Artist
1:00-2:30 p.m. (MST)

*IF I CAN ILLUSTRATE IN
PROCREATE, YOU CAN TOO!*

Are you a traditional artist who wants to cross over, but you find the technology daunting? Are you considering an iPad purchase, but are unsure where to start? This webinar is for you! You CAN illustrate in Procreate!

Erika Wilson is a techno-shy, analog-loving printmaker from Montana, who has illustrated award-winning children's books both traditionally and digitally. If SHE can do it, you can too! In this webinar you will learn her favorite Procreate tips and tricks; from textures to type, file formatting to full-bleeds. If you are more comfortable with a #2 pencil in your hand than a stylus, this webinar is for you!

Session 4 KRISTEN NOBLES

Art Director Charlesbridge
3:00-4:30 p.m. (MST)

THE ILLUSTRATOR AS ILLUMINATOR

The origin of the word illustrate includes wonderful synonyms such as illuminate, make clear, give glory. What great phrases to explain the illustrator's role in children's books! As an art director, I work with illustrators to shed light on emotion, clarify story, and ultimately deliver glorious images. I'll exemplify the elements of excellent book illustration including (but not limited to) pacing, character, and style; and share Charlesbridge's process of pairing an illustrator to a text.

Closing Session Open Forum
5:00-6:00 p.m. (MST)

Time to visit and wind down – cocktails and door prizes

SUNDAY • May 15th

4 Blocks of Live Critiques • portfolios or dummies



Illustrators' Corner

Hi everyone!

I've been thinking a lot about what to write for this newsletter — being IC still feels so new to me.

I managed to watch almost all the video replays from the SCBWI winter conference before they expired on March 31st. Without a doubt, the biggest takeaway was the hope they spread. 'You Will Succeed' if you just keep working, submitting, and learning.

My other favorite takeaway came from [Chad Beckerman](#) of the [CAT Agency](#). In the class Chad teaches, he requires his students to make a list of 100 things they love to draw. Then they must illustrate the list. It's from a book he recommends by John Hendrix called [Drawing Is Magic: Discovering Yourself in a Sketchbook](#).

It wasn't easy for me to come up with 100 things I like to draw and took me a few days to complete. I intend to put my list on a large sheet of paper and hang it by my desk. Chad says when you are stuck, look at your list, and incorporate these objects into your work.

I encourage you to give it a try, and I think it would be fun if everyone posted their list in the [SCBWI Montana Facebook group](#) or on [Instagram](#) and tagged [@scbwimontana](#) so we could see, and be inspired by, each other's ideas.

Also, the amazing [Joann Howeth](#) has managed to secure Chad Beckerman for our upcoming [Illustrator Extravaganza](#) this spring — I hope you are signed up for a review with him or one of the amazing art directors.

I have two resources I want to recommend; both are podcasts. The first is [The S**t No One Tells You About Writing](#), and I feel like

it is so true to its name. I just started listening recently but feel like I have learned so much already. At the end of each episode, they look at a book summary sent in by a writer and suggest comparable books to include in the writer's query letter. They also interview booksellers, review query letters and hooks, and so much more!

The second podcast I want to recommend is [Nothing Much Happens](#) where Kathryn Nicolai reads bedtime stories for adults in her soothing voice. I mean she actually trains your brain by reading the story two times and

talking you through some relaxation techniques that I find I just have to turn the podcast on and practically fall over anytime I'm struggling to get some ZZZs. I think you can learn a lot about everything from storytelling to how to fall asleep from listening. She also just came out with a book, and her [Instagram](#) feed is full of delightful images.

Well, I hope something here helps! Looking forward to the [Illustrator Extravaganza](#) coming soon! Hope to see you there!

JACKIEMARIE BEYER
Illustrator Coordinator
montana-ic@scbwi.org



You
WILL
Succeed!

