

# SouthWest Sage

June 2012 [www.southwestwriters.com](http://www.southwestwriters.com)

## Censorship Destroys Free Exchange of Ideas

by Shirley M. Gallegos

"Where they have burned books, they will end in burning human beings." —Heinrich Heine, journalist, poet, essayist, German expatriate (1797-1856), stated almost 100 years before the Nazi regime.

Self-censoring and book banning may not seem related, but they both stem from fear. Its milder form is apprehension. In either instance, the result is not good.

I experienced apprehension during my time as a journalist reporting for small community newspapers. Somewhere in that process, it occurred to me that I was self-censoring my articles, filtering out points of view I knew wouldn't make it past the editor's desk, couching my words when it came to these sacred cows—whether an issue or a person. It was at that point I realized I had compromised my principles as a journalist, and I might as well be paid to be an advocate. I became a public relations professional.

I recalled my career decision when I heard about the recent Tucson Unified School District's (TUSD) book banning in its Mexican American Studies program.

As a curious child, I sought out everything and anything to read. I became a critical thinker because my teachers opened the world to me without restrictions on content. Most importantly, they allowed discussion on the content of books and issues of the day. I wondered how the Tucson school district could call itself a school when it bans books? To me, as to most Americans, schools are meant to foster an open exchange of ideas.

The rationale, according to news reports, is that the superintendent believed the banned books portray the white race as oppressor, citing an Arizona statute. Among the books banned are: *Critical Race Theory* by Richard Delgado; *500 Years of Chicano History in Pictures* edited by Elizabeth Martinez; *Message to Aztlán* by Rodolfo Corky Gonzales; *Chicano! The History of the Mexican Civil Rights Movement* by Arturo Rosales; *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Fiere; *Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years* edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson; *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos* by Rodolfo Acuña.



Curtis Acosta, the teacher who designed the curriculum for TUSD'S Mexican American Studies program, told the *Huffington Post* that the program, which is 13 years old, was intended, not only to reflect the cultural experiences of Mexican Americans, but "to serve as a window to the experiences of others." Thirteen years later, he was asked to "avoid texts, units, or lessons with race and oppression as a central focus."

As writers, we know that avoiding such things eliminates almost all books because the human experience is about conflict, much of which stems from race or oppression of some kind.

My friend Kay Prather is a retired librarian who described the rigorous process by which books are reviewed for appropriateness for school libraries, but, she adds, "These policies were guided by such standards as appropriateness of materials for student population, fair and balanced information, and whether it represents varying points of view and fulfills needed information for a well-rounded collection."

Prather also says, "In comparing progressive democracies with repressive regimes, censorship falls on the wrong side of what we as Americans stand for and what we must stand up for if we want to preserve and protect our great democracy."

The Tucson case is not simply about books, however, it's about the free exchange of ideas that books generate. There were few things I enjoyed more as a student—or today as a citizen—than a lively conversation or debate over ideas that a book, a movie, music or art generated. Even as a public relations consultant, I enjoyed bringing together people with different points of view and working toward a common solution.

It's ironic to me that, at a time when the Internet, social media, e-books and mobile apps have ushered in the "next gen" in access to information and knowledge sources, some are trying to close the barn door, anachronistically, and prevent

(Continued on page 4)



Here at SouthWest Writers, we try to balance speakers, workshops and classes between writing and the business of writing, between craft and publishing, between creative expression and marketing. Or as I like to call it, between joy and bamboo-under-the-fingernails-waterboarding torture.

Pardon me, my biases are showing. I don't know about you, but when I hear the word "platform," I think of the wooden structure they used to hang horse thieves from. I don't have to explain to you what the word "branding" brings to mind.

Authors are faced with some very difficult challenges balancing the writing life and the business life. There are dozens of books extolling the benefits of social media, identifying marketing strategies, and developing a self-promotion action plan. However, if a writer were to actually attempt to do all those things, he or she would never have time to write another word.

If you are too busy to write because you are setting up a radio interview with someone named Afruza in Uzbekistan, then you should read Jeff Vandermeer's *Booklife* (2009). The author splits the book into two sections. He dedicates the first half to the external/public book life (goals, platforms, new media, blogs, etc.) and the second to the internal/private book life of actual creation.

The book is realistic and useful, but can be somewhat depressing if all you really want to do is write. Thus, the author spends a significant portion of the text suggesting ways to protect your writing time and to bring back the pleasure of putting words to paper.

Let me help you do that right now, to find a moment to write and to enjoy it. Imagine that I have in my possession a tiny flacon of StopTime®. If you were to dab a drop behind each ear and your due dates stopped creeping up and your bills no longer accrued late fees, what would you write?

What makes you giggle? What scares the pee out of you? What makes you fall in love again or feel like you can save the world? Do the Universe a favor and spend the next hour writing whatever the heck you want. I give you permission.

You're welcome.

*Kathy*

### IN THIS ISSUE

- |    |  |                     |
|----|--|---------------------|
| 1  | Censorship Destroys Free Exchange of Ideas | Shirley M. Gallegos |
| 3  | Members Seeking Critique Groups            |                     |
| 3  | Welcome New SWW Members                    |                     |
| 5  | On Searching for Purpose                   | Bentley McGrath     |
| 6  | Taking Notes (Or Something) in Mexico      | Betsy James         |
| 7  | SWW Meetings                               |                     |
| 8  | June/July Classes                          |                     |
| 9  | June/July Workshops                        |                     |
| 10 | Perfect Pitch                              | Pat Browning        |
| 10 | Writer's Muse                              | Olive Balla         |
| 11 | The Writing Life: The Joy of Interviewing  | Sherri Burr         |
| 12 | Member Successes                           |                     |
| 13 | Announcements                              |                     |
| 15 | Student Scholarship Application            |                     |

*Once, when  
Oscar Wilde was asked  
what he had done that day,  
he said, "I was working on  
the proof of one of my poems  
all the morning, and took out  
a comma. In the afternoon  
I put it back again."*

~ Richard Goodman

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Join us first Saturday, 10 am-Noon and third Tuesday, 7-9 pm  
New Life Presbyterian Church, 5540 Eubank NE,  
Albuquerque, New Mexico



## SouthWest Sage

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## Members Seeking Critique Groups

### Mainstream Fiction

Christie Keele, ckeele10@hotmail.com  
Prefers an online/email critique group

### Mystery/Suspense

Pete David, cp\_david@msn.com  
prefers: NE Heights  
flexible: day/frequency

### Screenwriting

Eric Schneider, ericaprill46@yahoo.com  
Prefers: Pueblo, CO or by phone/email  
flexible except for Mondays

### All Genres, Fiction/Nonfiction

J. Allen Whitt  
allen.abq.personal@gmail.com  
prefers: Rio Rancho, Albuquerque  
flexible: day/time

## Critique Groups Seeking Members

### Nonfiction

Contact John Egbert or Wally Gordon  
egbertenator@gmail.com  
wallygordon@q.com

## Welcome New SouthWest Writers Members

*Karina Adam  
Suzanne Blazier  
Joseph Bovenzi  
Roxanne Doty  
Yvonne Nunn  
AnnMarie Pearson*

## SOUTHWEST WRITERS MONTHLY MEETINGS

are held at

**New Life Presbyterian Church  
5540 Eubank NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87111**

*For more information,  
call the SWW office at 265-9485.  
To register for classes and workshops:  
sign up at SWW meetings or register online at  
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## SOUTHWEST WRITERS CRITIQUE SERVICE

An experienced critiquer, picked from a panel of professional writers and editors, will be matched with your genre and critique your manuscript for a reasonable price below the usual market rate.

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\$15 - Poetry of no more than 3 pages

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- additional pages are \$3.50/page

SWW critiquers follow genre-specific guidelines, but feel free to include specific questions you want answered and any points you want the critique to focus on (such as point of view, plot structure, etc.).

Go to SouthWestWriters.com for specific guidelines and information on how to submit your manuscript to our critique service.



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## Censorship

(Continued from page 1)

dialogue. It's lack of dialogue that fosters a breeding ground for racism and oppression.

The real loss is that, despite the new sources of information, there is still a digital divide among the world's populations—including many in Arizona and New Mexico—who don't have internet access, a Kindle or an iPad. People in the poorest cities, states and nations generally have younger populations, and the youth are the future of the world. For all, but especially the young who are still forming their values and beliefs, we need to advocate for a free and open access to all sources of information to allow the exploration of ideas. Our world depends on open access to information, even when we don't agree with the content.

\*\*\*

Some sources for additional information on censorship:

UNESCO's Unit for Freedom of Expression and Democracy—the world's largest network of independent freedom of expression organizations, International Freedom of Expression eXchange Clearing House or IFEX ([www.ifex.org](http://www.ifex.org))

Beacon for Freedom of Expression

([www.beaconforfreedom.org](http://www.beaconforfreedom.org))—an international bibliographical database about censorship and freedom of expression.

National Coalition Against Censorship

<http://www.ncac.org/>

Sign a Petition

<http://www.change.org/petitions/tucson-school-board-dont-lock-up-knowledge-return-books-to-students-now>

*Shirley Gallegos is a storyteller from a young age. Honing her skills in high school and college journalism, she's been a news reporter, editor and a public relations professional for over 25 years, earning several awards of excellence and client results during that time. As she heads into retirement, Shirley has resumed the mantle of writer and is working on a memoir and documentaries on family and place. Her interests include sustainability, community, gardening and unraveling the mysteries of human nature via storytelling in various media.*

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I have a confession to make: I don't know what to write. Now, I don't mean that I don't know what to write for this column—although that is a monthly challenge and the source of much teeth gnashing. And I don't mean that I have writer's block—although I have been suffering from an extended period of creative constipation. I mean that I don't know what to write. I have not found my artistic direction or purpose. I am unable to say, "I am a [insert genre here] writer" or "I write [insert form here]" or "I write about [insert insightful thematic topic here]."

In spite of attending conferences and workshops, reading periodicals and following blogs, and in spite of dabbling in several forms and genres, I have yet to experience the creative epiphany to spark my inner artistic tinderbox. The problem isn't really that I am not drawn to a single genre or form, for all of this literary exposure, but that I am drawn to them all. I want to write scholarly articles for literary journals. I want to write whimsical flash fiction, thrilling short stories and mysterious novels. Oh, turn me loose on screenwriting and see what I can do!

So how to go about reining in this scatter-shot enthusiasm to focus enough to get myself some artistic direction? To date, I have tried the following:

1. Write what you know. If you've met me, you know that the thing I know best of all, my one true love and my arch nemesis, is food. And tea—sweet nectar of the caffeine gods. And yet, I would still rather eat than write about eating and cook rather than write about cooking. Don't get me wrong, food is art, but I'm not sure that writing about it is my artistic purpose.

2. Find a platform. If a platform communicates your expertise to others, I have to ask "what am I an expert in?" Again... food. Well, that and having no siblings. So, clearly, these two things should be the foundation of my platform. They should be my purpose and direction, right? And yet, being an expert in a thing doesn't make it your artistic purpose. Maybe my purpose is a genre or topic that I haven't even tried writing yet. If that's the case, then platform goes right out the window.

3. Reflect on prior successes. There have been periods in my life when I was prolific and confident. When I was able to



*Bentley McGrath thinks her artistic purpose may have run away from home. If you happen to find it wandering the streets, alone and bewildered, please contact her through her website at [www.BentleyMcGrath.com](http://www.BentleyMcGrath.com).*

strap a muzzle on my inner editor and just keep my head down and write. I wrote well and was proud of it. Shoot, I even won an award now and then. But looking to those times to find direction and purpose for my writing now—and for the future—invites terrifying questions that breed a certain artistic paralysis. Can I write like that again? Are my best days behind me? Best not to look back, really. Better to keep my nose to the grindstone and other platitudes.

There is a mystery and an alchemy to knowing what you are meant to write. I had a friend once tell me that she found her purpose while gently swaying in a hammock in the mid-summer gloaming. Absently stroking her cat and nursing a mint julep, she merely conjured it from the magnolia pollen and sunset lithium. Nah. Not really. But it does seem to be that easy for some, doesn't

it? That their personal identity and artistic purpose are synonymous. That they embody their purpose. I count amongst these purpose-embodiers my Facebook friends: the horror novelist, the science fiction screenwriter, and the contemporary poet. They all seem to have had that hammock-at-the-gloaming epiphany.

But for most of us, it seems more accurate to say that we stumble, drunken-college-student-esque, into our artistic purpose. During lunch at the recent UNM Department of Continuing Education Start to Sales Conference, my tablemates all told stories about how they began writing one thing—a memoir, a travelogue, a textbook—only to discover that they were not, in fact, writing a memoir, travelogue or textbook. And it was the new thing, the thing they hadn't started out writing that became their passion and defined their purpose. Perhaps that is all purpose-finding is: serendipity.

So, I will continue to proactively stumble towards my purpose. But, just in case my purpose is in search of me as well, I'll hang my hammock at the corner where serendipity and epiphany intersect.

---

*I have never written a book  
that was not born out of a question  
I needed to answer for myself.*

~ May Sarton

I carry a journal with me, always. Especially in Mexico. We drove out of Ciudad Oaxaca in an old Nissan pickup with no seat belts: myself, another American, and three Mexican teachers intent on providing reading material for indigenous students.

The state of Oaxaca speaks at least fifteen languages. Like the children of minorities in the United States, indigenous kids start school handicapped by an ignorance of the language of instruction—in this case, Spanish. The schools had made little provision for them, and their teachers had begun to make one-off picture books for them in Zapotec, Mixe-Zoquean, Chocholteco. I'd been invited to Oaxaca to observe in a few schools—that's what the truck trip was about—and later, when we got back to the capital, to give a workshop in grass-roots picture book design.

At the teachers' meeting I'd held up my journal and explained, in my own unreliable Spanish, that I always take notes—in Spanish, *fichas*—as I go along.

They looked worried.

"It's just for me," I said. "I'm a writer."

They looked alarmed. Well, my own mother had been alarmed at her daughter's choice of profession.

Five of us squashed into the little truck and climbed out of the cactus flats of the dry interior into the Sierras, on a highway called a highway only because everything else was dirt. We switchbacked through darkening pines, passed women hauling firewood with hempen tump lines, and crested the high, piney ridge just at dusk. Looked east. Stopped the truck.

Beneath us an ocean of cloud rolled to the horizon, vast and shadowy and blue with night. The world had sunk away, and only this endless sea was left: dim, chill, perfectly still except, deep within it, the echoing calls of monkeys and some unknown bird.

"My journal...." It was in my pack, stuffed in a cloth duffel. I yanked out the duffel: not the duffel—a pair of pink bikini briefs.

"That's not a *journal*!" said Ofelia. "That's your *monkey cage*!"

*Mi jaula de changos*. I wrote it down. I take notes, it's what writers do.

The teacherage in Santa María Tiltepec was a clutch of adobe shacks, patchily lined with plastic sheeting. From the kitchen ceiling hung one bare lightbulb and the hammock where a plump grub of a baby slept, stuffed into six layers of poly knit. The lisping three-year-old who had outgrown the hammock told us his name was Mowicio, and thus the adults addressed him, gravely: Mowicio. Supper was stale bread and weak, milky, boiling-hot coffee served in bowls the size of two hands. I got out my journal. Explained about taking notes: *fichas*.

They looked concerned. I thought, they've pegged me for an anthropologist. Writers are misunderstood.

Outside, a familiar smell of roast corn, chile, woodsmoke. And bad drains: that rural Mexico thing of letting funky water run anywhere, mixed with garbage and rotting fruit. The crude outhouse had a hand-sawn seat, the hole chopped with an axe. Smell of excrement—pig, dog, human—mixed with smoke and clear, pine-scented wind.

We slept in our clothes, on grass mats laid on the floor of the fifth grade classroom. It was cold. I wore everything I had. Even my monkey cage.

For breakfast, thick corn tortillas and a caldo of green beans and egg, guacamole, smoky chile and fava beans flavored with an herb I didn't know and didn't like. I took notes. We walked to the tiny school. In the playground a flock of girls lit around me, gaping and smiling and touching my hair. They said, "What's your name?"

"Betsy."

"Padre de Díos!" and they were gone in a rush, like sparrows. The headmaster, after a cough, explained that in Zapotec *betsi* means "head louse."

Possibly I could have remembered that without writing it down. But life passes so quickly, I told the teachers, waving my journal. One forgets things. That's why it's so important to go along taking notes.

They looked appalled. But why should they believe somebody named Head Louse?

I took notes on the school. The preschoolers had painted a mural of their steep village, all canyonside, a strip of blue sky at the top. Two boys had a right fistfight on the floor. Third grade was painful, the panicked teacher as shy as the students. I asked the kids what they would like to write about. Their faces shone. In one voice they shouted, "*Lions!*"

"Keep a journal," I said. "Write stories."

The fifth graders, like preteens anywhere, hid their writing with their bodies. They had been seated boy-girl-boy-girl; they stayed calmer that way, said their teacher, because at this age, in this culture, boys and girls don't talk to each other. They asked my name. "Elizabeth," I said. I explained about my *fichas*.

They looked uneasy. Horrified, in fact.

We crammed into the pickup and headed back to the city. "Journaling is so important for writers," I said. "But everybody here looks at me like I'm nuts. I'm not going to say anything more about taking notes."

"Best not," said Ramón. Politely, of course. "*Ando fichando* means 'I go around picking up men.'"

*Betsy James is the award-winning author of books and short stories for adults, teens, and children. Her most recent fantasy, Listening at the Gate, is a Tiptree Award Honor Book and a New York Public Library Best Book for Teens. Visit her at [www.listeningatthegate.com](http://www.listeningatthegate.com). Betsy is teaching an eight-session class on Working Fiction beginning in July and a half-day workshop for educators on July 14.*

## Meetings

**Saturday, June 2**  
**10:00 am to noon**  
**Members free, guests \$5**

### ***Southwestern Influences on the Neuroscience of Creativity***

**Rex Jung, MD**

Dr. Jung will highlight his (and other) research regarding how creativity might be linked with brain structure and function. He will attempt to dispel many "neuromythologies" that have emerged over the years, while highlighting the emerging picture of the variegated and complex nature of creativity in the human brain.

**Dr. Jung** is a leading scientist in the emerging field of positive neuroscience—the study of what the brain does well. As an Assistant Professor at the UNM Health Sciences Center Department of Neurosurgery, his groundbreaking research led to the first model describing a network of brain regions critically linked together in service of intellectual pursuits. Over the last several years, he has turned his attention to the manifestation of creativity in the brain. The author of over 40 scientific publications, his research has been widely featured in popular media outlets including CNN, BBC, *Psychology Today*, *New Scientist*, *The New York Times*, and *Newsweek*.



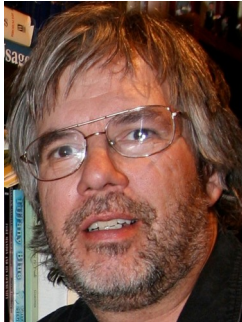
**Saturday, July 7**  
**10:00 am to noon**  
**Members free, guests \$5**

### ***Writing for Young Adults***

**Johnny D. Boggs**

The YA market is growing, and Cross-over YAs (books that appeal to young and older readers) are interesting many publishers these days. Many mainstream adult writers have also jumped to writing for kids. "Think like a kid, but don't treat readers like kids," and other secrets and tips will be shared during this discussion.

**Johnny D. Boggs** has been praised by *Booklist* magazine as "among the best western writers at work today." *True West* magazine named him the Best Living Fiction Writer in its Best of the West Awards. Boggs has six Spur Awards from Western Writers of America: for juvenile novels *Doubtful Cañon* (2008) and *Hard Winter* (2010); novels *Camp Ford* (2006) and *Legacy of a Lawman* (2012); original paperback novel *West Texas Kill* (2012); and short story "A Piano at Dead Man's Crossing" (2002). He won the Western Heritage Wrangler Award for Outstanding Western Novel of 2003 for *Spark on the Prairie: The Trial of the Kiowa Chiefs*. Three more novels and a short story were Spur finalists.



**Tuesday, June 19**  
**7:00 pm to 9:00 pm**  
**Members free, guests \$5**

### ***Secret Agent Confidential Files***

**Lois Ruby**

Most writers intent on publishing want to know how to get and keep an agent from out here on the frontier. At some point, authors might also need to know how to fire their agent. Lois Ruby's discussion includes years of tales about agents, plus recommended sources.

**Lois Ruby** is the author of fourteen books including *The Secret of Laurel Oaks* and *Strike! Mother Jones and the Colorado Coal Field War* (Filter Press, 2012).



**Tuesday, July 17**  
**7:00 pm to 9:00 pm**  
**Members free, guests \$5**

### ***The E-Book Revolution***

**Steve Brewer**

If you feel that e-books aren't "real" books, then you're already behind the curve. The revolution is now, and publishing will never be the same. Authors can control their own careers—pub dates, publicity, pricing, distribution, social media—in ways not possible before. Veteran author Steve Brewer will talk about how things have changed, and give nuts-and-bolts advice on how to self-publish.

**Steve Brewer** is the author of more than two dozen books—17 published the traditional way, and the rest self-published as e-books. His first novel, *Lonely Street*, was made into a Hollywood movie, released in 2009. Two other crime novels are currently under film/TV option. Steve turned to crime fiction full-time 15 years ago after a long career in the news business. For more information, visit Steve's website at [www.stevebrewer.us.com](http://www.stevebrewer.us.com).



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\* Thanks to all of you who bring snacks \*  
\* to share at our monthly meetings. \*  
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## June/July Classes

All classes are held at the SWW Office, 3721 Morris NE, Albuquerque 87111

### MAKING YOUR MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION-READY!

By Joe Badal

6 Sessions:

June 13, 16, 20, 23, 27, 30

Wednesdays: 6 - 8:00 pm  
& Saturdays: 10:00 - Noon

\$240 members, \$300 non-members

Limited to 14 students

Students will submit to the SWW office by noon June 8, 10-20 manuscript pages that the instructor will read, edit and comment on for the first class. The course will involve sequences of rewriting, revision, and feedback from the instructor and other participants. Students will learn how to sharpen their manuscripts to improve their chances of finding an agent, a publisher, and, ultimately, more readers. This is a hands-on course for serious writers who want to hone their craft and who are willing to accept constructive criticism.

**Joseph Badal** has four published suspense novels: *Evil Deeds*, *Terror Cell*, *The Nostradamus Secret*, and *The Pythagorean Solution*. Joe's next novel *Inside Job* is due for release in 2012. He is also completing a non-fiction book about *Relationship Selling* and writes a blog titled *Everyday Heroes*. Joe has also written dozens of articles that have been published in a variety of business magazines and trade journals.



### WORKING FICTION: CHALLENGE & PEER CRITIQUE

By Betsy James

8 Sessions:

July 18, 25 & August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29  
& September 5

Wednesdays: 6 - 8:00 pm

\$320 members, \$360 non-members

Limited to 10 students

This fiction class gets you working. Its manageable assignment size—not more than 1,000 words/week—is adaptable to any form of fiction, from mainstream to speculative, including older juvenile. Hands-on fieldwork looks at structure, point-of-view, dialogue, sentence carpentry. Through editorial conversations, writers at any level learn from the nitty-gritty of each other's work. Respectful peer critique is taught and modeled: weekly, each writer receives a spectrum of response, both professional and general. Highly interactive, the class is limited to ten students.

**Betsy James** is the author-illustrator of sixteen books and many stories for adults, teens and children. She is a visiting author and author-in-the-schools, and her latest novel, *Listening at the Gate*, was a New York Times Best Book for the Teen Age. Visit her on the web at: [www.betsyjames.com](http://www.betsyjames.com) and [www.listeningatthegate.com](http://www.listeningatthegate.com)



### Upcoming Summer Class

**10 Must-Do Promotion Steps  
Before, During & After Publication**

**Gail Rubin  
6:30 - 8:30 pm**

**Mondays: August 6, 13, 20**

**3 Sessions • \$120 Members, \$160 Non-members**

How will someone buy your book if they don't know about it? Cold, hard fact: You, the author, are primarily responsible for promoting your book. Even with a publisher backing the endeavor, you are the face and voice of your work. To make your sales go "ka-ching," you need to know how to effectively promote your book and yourself. If you're a nonfiction writer, you'll want to make your work a calling card for your services. This class will help you sell more books and make more money. While this class will primarily help nonfiction authors, fiction writers can also benefit.

**Gail Rubin** is a public relations professional with more than 25 years of experience. Her book, *A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die* ([www.AGoodGoodbye.com](http://www.AGoodGoodbye.com)), won Best of Show in the 2011 NM Book Awards and was a finalist in the 2010 Book of the Year Awards in the Family & Relationships category.

### Watch for More Saturday Workshops

**Lisa Hase-Jackson:**

Writing Your Heart Out  
August 11, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

**Marc Calderwood:**

Write Your Screenplay...NOW!  
September 8, 9:00 - Noon

**Chris Eboch:**

The Elusive Voice  
Full-day workshop • \$80  
September 22, 9:00-Noon & 1:30 - 4:30 pm

**Carolyn Handler Miller:**

Expand Your Horizons with Digital Media  
October 13, 1:00 - 5:00 pm

### New Workshop and Class Refund Policy

Full refund if cancellation is received more than 7 days before class. From one week out to 24 hours before class, participant is entitled to select another class. Inside of 24 hours, participant receives no refund or class. For multi-session classes, if you miss a class, you receive no refund. We pay our instructors based on how many students enroll, so you are part of that roll count if you don't cancel as detailed above.



## June/July Workshops

Call the SouthWest Writers office at (505) 265-9485 for information on workshop locations.

### YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH AND BIOGRAPHY

By Melody Groves

Saturday, June 2 • 1:30 - 4:30 pm

*See Workshop Prices Below*

Face-to-face networking can lead to opportunities to sell what you've written. So making the most of limited time is critical. How do you explain your novel's plot, your article's theme, your screenplay's story line in a 30-second elevator pitch? Answer: Knowing what you want to say and practicing it. But what DO you want to say? In this workshop, we'll explore and practice an abridged answer to the question: "What are you writing?"

Another daunting professional task is writing your biography. Bio blurbs appear at the end of articles or on book jackets or anywhere credit is given to the writer. Once you deliver the written work, you'll be asked for a short biography. Sound simple? It isn't. In 20 words or fewer, can you say something meaningful about yourself? It's not easy to condense your life into a few words. In this workshop, we'll evaluate what to say, how to say it, and how to expand or shrink your life story.

**Melody Groves** writes for *New Mexico Magazine*, *True West*, *American Cowboy*, *Enchantment*, *Chronicles* (on line), *Albuquerque the Magazine*, *abqARTS* and *Desert Exposure*.



### MARKET YOUR BOOK IN TODAY'S WORLD: BOOK SIGNINGS AND BEYOND

By Kirt Hickman

Saturday, June 16 • 9:00 - Noon

*Meet at Bear Canyon Senior Center  
4645 Pitt NE, between Morris & Eubank  
See Workshop Prices Below*

Selling a few books is relatively easy. Selling a lot of books is much more difficult. In the first half of this workshop, learn the secret(s) to a successful book signing, including: when to sign; where to sign; what to bring; what to do (and not do); and what to say (and not say). Transform your signings from lonely, depressing ordeals, to fun and profitable events. In the second half of the workshop, learn how to build your platform and market your books to a broad geographic audience using strategies that will: take a small amount of time to setup and maintain; require a minimum investment of money; and target your audience. Get your name and book out there, or your sales will never soar.

**Kirt Hickman**, author of *Worlds Asunder*, *Venus Rain*, *Fabler's Legend*, and the self-editing guide *Revising Fiction: Making Sense of the Madness*, sells thousands of books each year at book signings and elsewhere. His no-nonsense approach to teaching provides students with practical solutions to the tough challenges of today's writing and publishing market. Kirt has taught courses and workshops through the University of New Mexico, SouthWest Writers, and numerous conferences throughout the southwest.



### FICTION WRITING FOR EDUCATORS By Betsy James

Saturday, July 14 • 9:00 am - 1:00 pm

*See Workshop Prices Below*

Teachers stand, every day, in the middle of the richest fictional material life has to offer. Whether you teach children or adults, whether you teach Tolstoy or physics or Legos, you have a career full of experiences—hilarious and poignant—and that's where writing begins. This workshop will spark your imagination, get you smiling and writing, and even help you a bit with that crazy goal of getting published. Hands-on, unexpected, fun for all the senses—you have never seen writing taught like this! You might even bring a few useful chops back to your classroom. This one is for teachers!

### WHAT'S HOT IN TEEN WRITING By Carolee Dean

Saturday, July 28 • 9:00 - Noon

*See Workshop Prices Below*

Learn about the popular subgenres of teen fiction such as novels in verse, paranormal romance, steam punk, contemporary Young Adult (YA), and dystopian fiction. Then learn how to plot your story like a professional, using the presenter's twelve step story analysis method called "The Secret Language of Stories." With this method, based on the Hero's Journey, explore a variety of plot ideas. Come prepared to brainstorm! Don't worry if you don't have an idea yet. You will by the time you finish this dynamic workshop.

**Carolee Dean** is the author of three young adult novels, *Comfort* (Houghton Mifflin), *Take Me There* (Simon Pulse), and the paranormal verse novel *Forget Me Not* (Simon Pulse, October 2012). To find out more about her twelve-step story analysis method go to [www.caroleedean.com](http://www.caroleedean.com) or see her articles at [www.spellbindersbooknews.blogspot.com](http://www.spellbindersbooknews.blogspot.com).



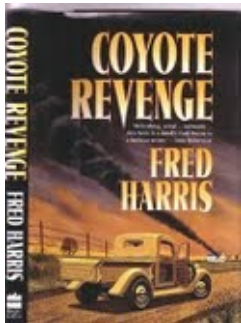
### WORKSHOP PRICES:

**\$40 SWW MEMBERS • \$50 OSHER MEMBERS W/CARD  
\$70 NON-MEMBERS • \$75 AT THE DOOR**

I was going through three days' worth of mostly junk mail when I remembered I was frying potatoes for breakfast. Rushed to the kitchen, lifted the skillet lid. Sizzle, sputter and snap. The spuds were just this side of burned. Dark, dark brown. Just like I like them.

It has something to do with growing up in Oklahoma. I picked up some new eating habits in California, but they didn't always replace the old ones. I still like my steaks well-done and I like my country fries crisp. Don't just drag the potatoes through the grease on their way to my plate. I want them crisp, darn it, CRISP.

Fred Harris wrote the perfect description of old-time Okie cooking in his mystery, *Coyote Revenge*:



*Most of Mama's recipes, if she'd ever written them down, would have probably started out with: "First get the grease hot." All the meat we ate—home-cured ham and sausage, newly killed chicken and meat-locker steak—was salted with a heavy hand and then fried nearly stiff. She salted and fried potatoes and mealed-okra, too, in plenty of lard. And Mama's string beans or a mess of greens always went into the pot with a good dose of bacon drippings that she'd saved in a tin can on top of the stove. Then, salted generously, too, they were boiled to kingdom come.*

Harris grew up in Walters, Oklahoma in the 1930s and '40s, which may be why he nails that time and place. Mostly, though, I think God gave him perfect pitch. I lived in Walters in the late 1930s. Harris's writing fits my memories down to the last fried pork chop. We knew some of the same people.

Coming to a bookstore near you: Mr. or Ms. Famous Author, reading from his or her latest novel. Question and answer period will follow; refreshments will be served.

If you see such a notice in the newspaper or on a telephone pole, move heaven and earth to get there, and learn from a pro. Rules Number One and Two: Serve refreshments; drop a famous name if you know one.

Harris is a star of considerable magnitude in the worlds of politics and academia. He's now Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque but he's a former U.S. senator from Oklahoma and a former presidential candidate. He has written 17 non-fiction books, plus a couple of mysteries.

I first met him when he signed copies of *Coyote Revenge* at the Full Circle Bookstore in Oklahoma City. It was another example of perfect pitch. We were seated on the mezzanine, not far from a coffee cart. The host circulated with a carafe of wine. Harris told a couple of funny stories about writing the book



and the tips he got from Tony Hillerman. He opened the book and read the first chapter aloud, then answered questions before taking his place at a signing table.

Blabbermouth me, I told him about my sojourn in Walters, and about the little red-headed boy who chased me into the cloakroom and gave me my first kiss, along about the 4th or 5th grade. I remembered the kid's name, and so did Harris.

Well, some things a girl doesn't forget. I wonder if that red-headed kid is still around....

*An award-winning newspaper reporter and SouthWest Writers member, Pat Browning set her first mystery, Absinthe of Malice (originally titled Full Circle) in California's Central San Joaquin Valley, where she lived for many years before returning to her native Oklahoma. She's now working on her second and third mysteries.*

## Writer's Muse by Olive Balla

Where do writers find their inspiration? That depends entirely upon the writer. What works as a scintillating muse for one, may not even be memorable for another.

As for me, I find a great deal of my inspiration by simply listening to people. I don't mean I exploit what people tell me in confidence. I never believed in telling people other people's business. And I don't—as the late author of *Valley of the Dolls* Jacqueline Suzanne admitted to doing—write whatever juicy tidbits my big-mouthed friends tell me, omitting only their names. On the contrary, my muse often comes to me through the overheard dialogues of strangers chatting openly in public venues.

For example, a few weeks ago I went to east Texas to visit my sister. While waiting for our breakfast at a locally famous biscuits-and-gravy café, I overheard a wizened old cowboy (at least I think he was old—it's hard, short of carbon dating, to determine someone's age who's been working outside in the sun for umpteen years) flirting with the well rounded, fully-packed, middle-aged waitress. The cowboy said, "You ever been married?" The waitress said, "I was once. But I didn't remember it." The cowboy looked thoughtful, and then in a droll voice said, "Seems like that's the kind of thing a person'd want to keep track of."

Pure manna from Heaven.

*A retired educator, Olive Balla is a professional musician who lives in Los Lunas with her husband Victor and their puppy HalfNote. Ms. Balla has authored one suspense novel entitled An Arm And A Leg, and is nearing completion on a second. The first chapter of An Arm And A Leg is on her website: [www.omballa.com](http://www.omballa.com).*



**I**n September 2010, I wrote an article entitled “Mastering the Art of Interviewing” for the *SouthWest Sage*. In that piece, I discussed how to set up, prepare, and conduct interviews. I also urged writers to write up the results immediately and share them with the subject. For this column, I focus on the joy of interviewing.

To maintain a writing life for the long haul, writers need to receive pleasure from the process. The more gratification we obtain from our work, the easier it is to overcome the pain of rejection and keep writing daily, monthly, and yearly. The writers I admire the most are still putting fingertips to keyboards into their eighties.

When I interviewed legendary author Max Evans a few months ago, he was still writing at 87. Evans is working on a book about director Sam Peckinpah (*The Wild Bunch* and *The Getaway*) and interviewing folks who worked with Peckinpah to gain information for his biopic. The day we had lunch, he was trying to reach Ali McGraw to set up an interview to discuss her collaboration with Peckinpah on *The Getaway*. Evans’ face was filled with delight as he discussed his planned attack for interviewing McGraw.

I have felt such bliss numerous times while preparing for or actually interviewing someone. In November 2011, I flew to Los Angeles to question actor Giancarlo Esposito who is known most recently for playing Gus on “Breaking Bad.” As sometimes happens, several attempts to interview Esposito had fallen through. For several years, I tried to obtain him for my television show “ARTS TALK” that I film during the semester so that my Entertainment Law students can interact with the talent they may someday represent. I finally obtained a date from him in early November 2011 only for my students to be disappointed when he had to cancel to film an episode of the new hit, “Once Upon a Time in Canada.”

At the end of November 2011, Esposito and I agreed to meet at his yoga studio during a block of time after he had completed a workout and before his meeting on a forthcoming film project. We drove around searching for a Starbucks and

stumbled upon a gluten-free pastry shop where we were the only two customers. One of my students, Justine Hines, (who was an Esposito fan) had prepared 20 questions, several of which dealt with the role of Gus. Since this was an extremely bad character that killed people, I asked Esposito about preparing for, playing, and ending a role like Gus.

Esposito said he agreed to play Gus because he “shows the devastation of meth in the West. I let roles speak to me, and draw on their organic nature. Gus was unpredictable. Gus was graceful, caring, and polite. He cared about people. He ran a business, an illegal business. He took care to choose people with integrity. That went to the success of Gus.”

The director called in Esposito to inform him that he was killing off Gus at the end of Season Four. The six writers said they were sorry to see Gus go. They told Esposito, “We love to write for you.” Esposito said that is one of the highest compliments that a writer can give an actor.

Esposito found leaving Gus to be hard. He had to take time to shake off Gus. Sometimes he would catch himself walking like Gus and speaking like Gus. Indeed, he wanted to tell Gus to leave him alone. He finally accepted that excising Gus was like a journey and that he needed to compartmentalize the character from his soul.

As I listened to Esposito discuss this character, I was enthralled to be in his presence. To be a writer conducting an interview is to be a witness to the creative processes of others. Most writers craft work in an environment populated by one. When we interview, it allows the extroverted part of our nature, however small or large it may be, to surface and interact with others.

Take time to conduct interviews. It enhances and brings joy to your work and life.

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*I continue to find  
my greatest pleasure,  
and so my reward,  
in the work that precedes  
what the world calls success.*

~Thomas A. Edison



**Sherri Burr** is a Yale Law School-educated law professor at the University of New Mexico. She has received several awards for her interviews, most recently earning First Place in the NM Press Women Contest for Television Talk Show for an ARTS TALK interview she did with Actor John Corbett (“Sex in the City” and “Northern Exposure”). These interviews are available through her website [www.sherriburr.com](http://www.sherriburr.com) and on [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).



## Member Successes

The University of St. Francis is now using medical case scenarios written by **Cliff Gravel** in training their Physician Assistants. Cliff has been requested to write a series of webisodes for Unexplained Productions.

The screenplay *Love Your Local Ghost*, written by SWW members **Cliff Gravel**, **Melody Groves** and **Judy Avila**, was requested for consideration by the Executive Producer of K-Jaya Productions of Singapore.

**Roger Floyd** has just had a poem selected for publication in the online journal *The Barefoot Review*. The poem, entitled "Then She Went Away," will be published in the June 20, 2012 issue. *The Review* publishes twice a year, on the Summer Solstice, June 20, and on the Winter Solstice, December 21. *The Review* publishes poetry and short prose from people who have had physical difficulties in their lives, as well as from families, caretakers, doctors, nurses, therapists, and friends of those with physical ailments.

**Sylvie Larimore de Lara** has published her novel, *Guana-colía*, which is available on Amazon.

**Nancy Marano** received several awards in the New Mexico Press Women 2012 Communications Contest:  
1st place, Personality Profile: "Ralph and Celina Levine: Animal Advocates"—*PETroglyphs*  
2nd place, Publications/Editing—*PETroglyphs*  
2nd place, Columns/General: "Bill Nelson: Cat Whisperer" and "Darlene Arden: The Cat's Meow" in Cat Chat a regular column in *PETroglyphs*.

**Marriah Nissen** was the 2012 first place winner in the New Mexico Press Women's awards for best informational blog on a specific topic. Her winning post, "Interview with Western Author Melody Groves," and her co-author's winning post, "To Err Is Human, to Learn Divine," can be found on the blog Divine Secrets of the Writing Sisterhood.

**Annmarie H. Pearson** had a book signing and reading from her poetry/photography novelty book *Nature Rhymes with Natural Impressions* at Alamosa Book Store on May 20. On Tuesday, June 26, she will talk about her mystery novel *The Fetish Ruby* as the guest speaker at the Albuquerque Croak & Dagger chapter of Sisters in Crime (James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Police Substation, 12700 Montgomery Blvd. NE, one block east of Tramway) from 7:00-9:00 pm. Check out both of her books at her website [www.abpearson.com](http://www.abpearson.com).

**Gail Rubin's** article "Using humor and movies to help talk about death and preplanning" ran in the March/April 2012 issue of *ICCFA Magazine*, the trade publication of the International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association. *The Cremationist* magazine ran a review of Gail's book *A Good Goodbye: Funeral Planning for Those Who Don't Plan to Die*.

### 2012 Third Bi-Monthly Writing Contest Anything Goes Poem

Send us your best poem about any subject, any format, and any length up to two pages. **Postmark deadline: June 30, 2012.**

Please include your contact information (address, phone and email) and permission to publish or not on a separate sheet. Do not include any identifying information on the manuscript itself.

All entries \$10. Prizes: \$150/1st prize; \$50/2nd prize; \$25/3rd prize. Mail entries to SWW Bi-monthly Contest, 3721 Morris NE, Suite A, Albuquerque, NM 87111.

### You Can Write for the Sage

Submissions focusing on all aspects of researching, writing, and publishing are welcome. See past issues of *SouthWest Sage* for the type of article we publish. Payment is made in bylines and clips. All rights remain with the author. Submissions may be edited for accuracy, readability and length. Deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the next issue. Article lengths from 300-1000 words. Send questions or submissions to Kathy Wagoner at [justwritesww@gmail.com](mailto:justwritesww@gmail.com).

***If you are a SouthWest Writers member with a success or announcement you would like to share with newsletter readers, send it to Kathy Wagoner, SWW Sage Editor, at [JustWriteSWW@gmail.com](mailto:JustWriteSWW@gmail.com).***



## Announcements

**Professional Writers of Prescott Writing Contest, Deadline: June 4, 2012.** Fiction and Nonfiction entries not to exceed 3000 words. Poetry limited to five pages per entry. Member entry fee is \$10, non-member is \$15. Prizes in each category: First Place (\$150), Second Place (\$75) and Third Place (\$50). For more info: [www.prescottwriters.com](http://www.prescottwriters.com).

**2012 Jeff Sharlet Memorial Award for Veterans.** This writing contest for U.S. military veterans and active duty personnel is hosted by *The Iowa Review* and made possible by a gift from the family of Jeff Sharlet (1942–69), a Vietnam veteran and antiwar writer and activist. The contest is open to veterans and active duty personnel writing in any genre and about any subject matter. **Deadline: June 15, 2012.** Go to <http://iowareview.uiowa.edu/veteranswritingcontest>

**Crested Butte Writers Conference, June 22-24, 2012.** Nestled in the beautiful West Elk Mountains of Colorado, this small conference is designed to be friendly and cozy with the caliber of a large conference and includes casual, small-group workshops that encourage personal connection. For more information: <http://thesandy.org/conf.php>.

The **Whispering Prairie Press** writing contest recognizes talented writers across the nation and is a fundraiser to assist with their operating expenses. Flash Fiction: 1,000 words or less. Non-fiction Personal Essay: 1,000 words or less. Poetry: Line limit one page, single spaced. Any style, any subject. Rex Rogers Formal Poetry Contest (sonnet or villanelle, only). Entry fee: \$10 for each individual entry, 2 entries for \$18, or 3 entries for \$25. **Deadline June 30, 2012.** May mix categories. See website for more information and to enter: [WhisperingPrairiePress.submishmash.com/](http://WhisperingPrairiePress.submishmash.com/) submit.

The international **Cat Writers' Association (CWA)** is now accepting entries for its 19th annual Communications Contest with more than \$12,000 in prize money. Competition is open to work published between June 16, 2011 and June 15, 2012. Categories cover feline-oriented articles and columns, short stories, poetry, books, photography and video/audio tapes. Entries must be published in magazines, newspapers, newsletters and online or on the air. Fees are \$15 per entry. **Deadline July 1, 2012.** Rules and entry forms are available at [www.catwriters.org](http://www.catwriters.org).

**Scare the Dickens Out of Us** ghost story contest offers cash prizes and trophies for ghost story entries of 5,000 words or less (written in English) for an entry fee of \$20.00. First place: \$1000.00 and a trophy. Second place: \$500.00 and a ribbon. Third place: \$250.00 and a ribbon. **There is also a Junior contest for writers ages 12-18.** The same rules apply

to both contests. First prize for the junior contest is \$250.00 and a ribbon. All other top contenders receive a prize ribbon. The junior contest entry fee is \$5.00. Entries accepted from **July 1-October 1, 2012.** Full rules and entry forms are at <http://clarklibraryfriends.com>.

**Prairie Schooner** has announced its inaugural Creative Nonfiction Contest, judged by author Steven Church. The winner receives \$250 and publication in *Prairie Schooner's* Spring 2013 issue; \$5 to enter. **Deadline: August 31, 2012.** You can find more details at <http://prairieschooner.unl.edu/?q=submit>.

*Western Writers of America Invites You to the*  
 **2012 WWA Convention**  
June 12-16, 2012  
**Albuquerque Marriott**  
[www.westernwriters.org](http://www.westernwriters.org)

### Albuquerque Area Writing Groups

The **Albuquerque Croak & Dagger** chapter of Sisters in Crime welcomes mystery fans who enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship and sensational speakers. Fourth Tuesdays of the month, 7:00 pm, police briefing room, James Joseph Dwyer Memorial Substation, (one block east of Tramway on Montgomery). [www.croak-and-dagger.com/](http://www.croak-and-dagger.com/)

**Duke City Screenwriters** meets downtown at the Flying Star on 7th & Silver, every other Thursday (email for next date) from 6:00-8:00 pm to discuss film and critique screenplays. Contact Marc Calderwood at [marc-calderwood@hotmail.com](mailto:marc-calderwood@hotmail.com).

**SCBWI: Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators** has monthly schmoozes in Albuquerque on the second Tuesday of each month, from 7:00-8:30 pm at Alamosa Books, 8810 Holly Ave NE, Albuquerque, NM 87122, phone (505) 797-7101. Schmoozes feature short workshops /discussions, followed by social time. Pre-schmooze dinner at the Dion's on Wyoming and Paseo from 5:30-6:45 pm. Contact [schmooze@scbwi-nm.org](mailto:schmooze@scbwi-nm.org) for more information.

**Writers2Writers** meeting, the second Monday of every month, 6:30 pm at the west side Hastings at Coors and Montaño. Monthly speakers. All genres welcome.

# SALE

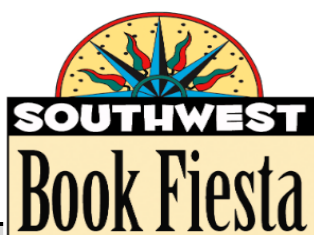
## Used Books Flower Pots and Plants

New Life Presbyterian Church  
5540 Eubank Blvd NE  
Saturday, June 9, 2012  
9:00 am - 3:00 pm

If you have used books, old flower pots or plants to donate, bring them to the SouthWest Writers meeting, June 2.

For more information,  
call Sharron (206-1600) or Bobbie (918-0240)

This is a New Life Presbyterian fundraiser  
with proceeds going to the purchase  
of a new storage shed for the church.



The first Southwest Book Fiesta will be in the Albuquerque Convention Center on Mother's Day weekend, **May 10-12, 2013**. In addition to the trade area of booths and tables, the floor will also have a food stage and another stage to feature poetry and children's books. There are five workshop areas that will have talks by WordHarvest, SouthWest Writers, New Mexico Book Co-op, and will feature topics on ebooks, marketing, Centennial Authors, writing, children's books, poetry, publishers' panel, and authors. The Convention Center is hosting a Mother's Day Brunch during the festival. This will be a true family activity to celebrate the book and reading. Show management is handled by Sunbelt Shows, the producer of the National Fiery Foods & Barbecue Show, the largest show in New Mexico for 24 years. Proceeds from the event will be donated to literacy groups and the New Mexico Library Foundation.

If you want to show off your books at the Southwest Book Fiesta next year, now is a great time to make a reservation for a booth. If you are thinking about participating, you can save 10% if you sign up between now and September 1. Plus, you only have to pay for half of it now (the remaining balance will be due no later than March 1, 2013). Tables start at \$150 for authors and booths are just \$400. Space sharing is permitted. The choice locations may go quickly. So don't delay. Go to [www.swbookfiesta.com](http://www.swbookfiesta.com).

## SOUTHWEST WRITERS OFFERS STUDENT MEMBERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

SouthWest Writers is seeking deserving high school or college students for one-year scholarship memberships in our organization. Four scholarships remain to be awarded.

To be eligible, an applicant must be enrolled in high school or college.

If you know someone with the interest and desire to pursue a writing career or if you wish to apply yourself, please print the application form on the next page and mail it to:

*SouthWest Writers*  
**3721 Morris NE Suite A**  
**Albuquerque, NM 87111-3611**

## Critique Groups Seeking Members And Members Seeking a Critique Group

At SouthWest Writers, we love helping authors connect with each other. If you're a current member of SWW and are searching for a critique group, or are looking for another member to join your already existing circle, please email Kathy Wagoner at [justwritesww@gmail.com](mailto:justwritesww@gmail.com) and we will publish your request.

Please include in your email:

1. Your name
2. Email address and/or phone number (this will be posted publicly in both the *Sage* and on our website)
3. Whether you prefer fiction/nonfiction or a mix of both
4. Which genres you are looking for
5. Geographic location (Belen, NW Heights, near UNM, etc.)
6. Anticipated frequency and date of meetings if known (i.e. second and fourth Tuesday, evenings)



# Student Scholarship Application

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-Mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Current Level:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Area(s) of Interest:** \_\_\_\_\_

**(In 250 words or less tell us why you would like to be a student member of Southwest Writers):**

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

**Recommended by:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact (phone/e-mail):** \_\_\_\_\_

***Send this application to SouthWest Writers, 3721 Morris NE Suite A, Albuquerque, NM 87111-3611***