

## INTO THE WORDS

Into the Words is just two weeks away on Saturday, August 19th, 2023!

There will be four sessions and a keynote speech by USA TODAY best-selling author, Paula Munier.

This email is to help you plan ahead for this marvelous event. We are honored to be part of your writing journey this summer and throughout the coming year!

**9:30-9:45**     **Welcome (Barn)**

**9:45-10:45**     **Session One (You may attend one of the following three)**

**1. Finding the Discipline to Write “Set the Kitchen Timer if you have to!” (Schoolhouse) Stephen Russell Payne is presenting**

This is an interactive presentation discussing what motivates us to write and how to encourage ourselves and each other to keep at it despite the vagaries of life that swirl around us. We'll talk about why each of our writings are valuable in their own right. When our pen or keyboard falters, we need to ask ourselves: “Do I *really* want to be a writer?” If the answer is “Yes,” then we’ll explore how to support that inner passion.

We’ll discuss how to cut distractions out of our writing life and what a remarkable difference that can make in our productivity and satisfaction. How do we keep going when changing the cat litter or cleaning lint from the clothes dryer seem more interesting than furthering our own story?

This topic is a serious issue for authors that makes for a lively (and often humorous) discussion. I think it can also be of real help to all of us when we’re sitting alone in our writer’s garret staring at an empty screen.

**Stephen’s Bio:** Stephen is a native of the fabled Northeast Kingdom. He has been writing since childhood and has published three novels, including the award-winning, *Cliff Walking*, and the sequel, *Life on a Cliff*, both set on the Coast of Maine. He is also the author of the musician biography, *Riding My Guitar – The Rick Norcross Story*, and a short story collection, *Ties That Bind Us*. Stephen has worked as a deputy sheriff, and for 34 years as a general surgeon. He wrote for *Vermont Life* magazine for many years. He brings a breadth of life experiences to his stories and is a very engaging speaker.

**2. Revision: The Seemingly Endless Task (Barn) Celia Ryker is presenting**

Celia will share her thoughts about how to attack the arduous chore of revision. She will share tricks she learned from her first creative writing class at Oakland University in 1975, ideas from numerous classes and writing seminars over the years, hours of working with other authors in workshops, and recommendations from the many books she has studied on the craft of writing.

There are many avenues to the finished manuscript. Celia will share the revision methods that have worked for her, getting her first three books ready for publication. She will also share ideas that did not work for her, but may be to your liking. Each writer has their own voice and path to their completed work. This session will help you look at the revision process with a positive mind set. Revision begins with small steps and ends with pride in a finished product that you can submit with confidence.

**Celia's Bio:** Celia's first career was with horses. She trained horses and taught students on Southeast Michigan's hunter jumper circuit for more than 30 years. Her second career sent her back to school to study gardening fine arts and landscape design. They were not just careers, they were passions and when life left room for a new passion she began to distance hike.

Celia has kept journals and written short stories and poems all of her life. She has attended classes at local universities and writing seminars and has written articles for newsletters, local newspapers, and The Vermont League of Writers; she has been working on her craft for decades.

Celia's first book, *Walking Home: Trail Stories*, a memoir about hiking Vermont's Long Trail was a Gold Winner in the 2022 Human Relations Indie Book Award in Travel. Augusta, published in 2023, is a historical novel based on the tumultuous life of Celia's grandmother.

### **Creative Research: A Full-Body Approach to Writing Historical Fiction and Family History (Sugarhouse)** **Louella "Ellie" Bryant is presenting**

Historical fiction accesses the minds, emotions, psychology, and physicality of characters who inhabit the past to make the reader feel we're part of their world. To bring the past to our present, authors reach for verisimilitude through experiential research to give an honest portrayal of the lives of characters in a story. This workshop will cover ways to "get inside the body" to help characters ring true.

Amy Torres in *The Writing Cooperative* says "You are not a truly creative writer unless you tune in to the myriad of experiences you are having every single second *in your body*. The most logical place to begin is with your breath. Why? You can survive for about three weeks without food, three days without water, and 10 days without sleep. Stop breathing for three minutes and it's all over." We'll begin the workshop with a brief breathing exercise and a quick writing based on the experience. Be prepared to think about and discuss what your body tells you about the emotions of fear, elation, anger, anxiety, and other feelings. Also think about how your body communicates physical conditions like fatigue, hunger, cold, heat, touch, smell, pain, and other sensory responses. We'll study examples from some published writers who have mastered writing from the body and discuss how they might have accomplished a sense of being there. Then we'll try our hand at making a moment come alive in our own writing.

**Ellie's Bio:** Louella Bryant is author of nine books, including novels, stories, memoir, biography, and a picture book. Her award-winning stories, essays, and poems appear in anthologies and magazines. Her 1996 debut novel *The Black Bonnet* was awarded the Vermont NEA Human and Civil Rights Award. Formerly on the faculty of Spalding University's MFA in Writing faculty, currently Bryant runs a writing workshop and works as an independent editor. Visit her website at <https://louellabryant.com>.

**10:45-11:00 Break**

**11:00-12:00 Session Two (You may attend one of the following three)**

**1. Plotting and Researching Murder, While Not Killing Each Other (Schoolhouse) Jerry Johnson and Pat Goudy O'Brien are presenting**

Jerry Johnson and Pat Goudey O'Brien will discuss their process for plotting and researching their mystery novel, *Murder in Mill Hollow*.

Putting their heads together, they found a way to weave two people's thoughts into one narrative, hoping it would make sense to their readers. They'll talk about Jerry's network of resource people all around the Northeast Kingdom who answered a zillion questions about what life was like in that distant corner of Vermont a long time ago, well before Jerry arrived in the Kingdom in 1970. Not only what it was like, but what could have happened there back in the Depression. They didn't want someone talking into a cell phone in 1933. When it comes to research, Jerry goes into super hero mode—talking to people, visiting libraries and museums, reading books, and the internet, the internet, the internet. The co-writers will read passages from their manuscript that display some of the fruits of this research.

Jerry and Pat will also talk about their plot and how it grew from an idea Jerry had been knocking around for a couple of years, talking about it with Don Poutre and Howard Frank Mosher. Jerry shared his idea with Pat and asked her to collaborate on writing the book. They expanded on Jerry's initial idea and discovered that adding new characters pushed the plot in new directions. A literary agent suggested putting a modern day hook into the narrative, and that opened up all kinds of intriguing possibilities. Without giving away too much of the plot, they'll read some scenes that reveal some of these characters.

**Jerry's Bio: Jerry Johnson [www.JerryJohnsonVT.com](http://www.JerryJohnsonVT.com)**

Jerry is a retired professor from Fitchburg State University where he was a finalist for the school's excellence in teaching award. He has been a top-10 New England tennis player, civil engineer, carpenter, artist, freelance writer and editor.

Jerry graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst where he received the school's top scholar-athlete award. He earned his master's degree from Purdue.

His books include *Up the Creek Without a Saddle*, available with several poems set into song by master musicians, Jon Gailmor and Pete Sutherland. Also *Noah's Song*, a children's picture book, available with Jon Gailmor singing "Noah's Song."

Jerry is currently working on a Vermont mystery novel, a children's picture book, a book of humor, and two poetry books.

**Pat's Bio: Pat Goudey O'Brien [www.thetamaracpress.com](http://www.thetamaracpress.com)**

Pat Goudey O'Brien is a journalist, freelance writer, editor, and publishing consultant, owner of The Tamarac Press and PGO Editorial Resource. She cut her teeth in publishing at Prentice-Hall, Inc., more than forty years ago, was a community newspaper editor in Massachusetts and Vermont, and now focuses her attention on editing both fiction and non-fiction manuscripts for new and established authors.

She has written several books of non-fiction for Random House, John Wiley & Sons, and the Countryman Press at W.W. Norton. Under the Tamarac Press imprint, she has published memoir, short stories, and historical fiction for others.

## **2. Landing an Agent (Barn) Riding the Rollercoaster: How I Got My Agent Shawn Anderson is presenting**

Every path to publication is different, but we can gain so much by sharing our experiences. Fresh off the ride, Shawn will host a no-holds-barred conversation about his experiences in the query trenches. From the first query going out on February 15 to “the call” on May 30 and signing the contract on June 14, Shawn will break down the process with specifics from his journey. He will touch upon using Query Tracker, the art of hurry-up-and-wait, dealing with the sting of rejection, the surprises along the way, and how to make the process as fun as you can. He will also share elements of his query package, including the query letter which got him requests for the full manuscript and eventually secured him an agent. Participants are encouraged to bring questions and topics for the group to unpack and discuss during the session. Step right up and grab your ticket to ride!

**Shawn’s Bio:** Shawn T. Anderson is a writer of sci fi, fantasy, and horror for young adults and children. He lives in Barnet Vermont with his husband Walter, a dachshund named Napoleon, and a German shepherd named Kahlo. He recently signed with literary agent Sera Rivers at the Speilburg Literary Agency and is looking forward to going out on submission with his young-adult space opera about a boy who is abducted by a creepy space circus. Shawn is the League’s Past President and is a marketing copywriter and branding specialist.

## **3. How to Conjure up the Muse by Accessing Your Subconscious Mind and Muse (Sugarhouse) Linn Aspen is presenting**

When Linn Aspen wrote her book, *The Dreamtidings of a Disgruntled Starbeing*, she utilized many of the tools she’d learned, both as a hypnotist and as a Reiki- and Shamanic-practitioner. Tools that helped her access both a wider truth and a deeper knowledge than her regular state of mind would allow. Tools that she will share with us today.

She will begin with a quick overview of the scientists’ understanding of our subconscious mind, such as it is. Then, Linn will share the tools she uses to access an open and receptive state of mind when writing. Finally, she will lead us in an easy meditation for us to gain access to one of these tools.

No previous experience of meditation needed.

**Linn's Bio:** Linn Aspen grew up in northern Sweden. She has a degree in chemical engineering and, afflicted with an insatiable curiosity of the workings of things, has ended up spending many years as a hypnotherapist, Reiki master, and shamanic practitioner...

Which is one way to write her bio. However, Linn's subconscious muse would like a word and, as this is to honor said muse, here is a second bio:

The soul, presently incarnated as Linn Aspen, came to earth some sixty years ago from a galaxy far, far away. She's not sure why she came, though she suspects she was bored. Since arriving, Linn has explored philosophy, metaphysics, and psychology as a means to better understand this place. She hopes to soon make some headway. In any regard, she's no longer bored. To learn more about Linn Aspen, please visit [Linnaspen.com](http://Linnaspen.com)

## **12:00-12:30 Lunch Break**

### **12:30-1:15 Paula Munier: Keynote Speaker (Schoolhouse)**

#### **The Writer's Guide to Beginnings: How to Craft Story Openings That Sell**

The best beginnings possess a magical quality that grabs readers from the first word and never lets them go. But beginnings aren't just the door into a fictional world. They are the gateway to the realm of publishing--one that could shut as quickly as it opens. In this presentation, USA TODAY bestselling author and literary agent Paula Munier talks about the dos and don'ts of crafting flawless beginnings that impress agents, engage editors, and captivate readers—in short, how to give your story its best start! Using lots of examples from bestselling novels from different genres, Paula reveals the secrets that you can use to lure your readers in with your opening pages--and convince them to stick around for the ride.

**Paula M.'s Bio:** PAULA MUNIER is the Senior Agent and Director of Storytelling for Talcott Notch Literary and the USA TODAY bestselling author of the award-winning Mercy Carr mysteries. The fifth book in the series, *HOME AT NIGHT* (November 2023, *Minotaur*), was inspired by her volunteer work as a Natural Resources Steward. She's also written three popular books on writing: *Plot Perfect*, *The Writer's Guide to Beginnings*, and *Writing with Quiet Hands*, as well as *Happier Every Day* and the memoir *Fixing Freddie*. She lives in New England with her family, three rescue dogs, and a rescue cat. For more, check out [www.paulamunier.com](http://www.paulamunier.com).

## **1:15-1:30 Break**

### **1:30-2:30 Session Three (You may attend one of the following three)**

#### **1. Sell Your Book: How to Write a Proposal that Grabs the Attention of Editors and Agents (Schoolhouse) Paula Diaco is presenting**

Publishers are in the business of making money. And your book proposal is a sales tool that captures agents' and editors' attention. It's meant to not only show how well you write (sample chapters!), but perhaps more importantly, why your book is the best investment the publishing house's editorial team can make. Learn what makes up a proposal and why.

**Paula D.'s Bio:** Paula Diaco is a book and writing coach who helps her clients write book proposals they can pitch to agents and editors. Paula's goal is to help authors discern what exactly they want to write and match that to the needs of the nonfiction marketplace.

## **2. Improvisation for Writers (Barn) J. S. Grant is presenting**

This will be a lively workshop. Everyone will participate in a variety of theatre games that foster launching into scenes with little to no preparation, creating CROW (character, relationship, objective, and where) within seconds, and going with the narrative current without stopping to think. The number of people in the workshop will determine which games are played, but they may include games such as One Word Story, where each person adds a word to the story in turn; Blind Offers, where two people create a three-sentence scene based on a physical stance; and Three Things, where partners create a scene incorporating the items listed on three slips they pull from an envelope. After “pantsing” publicly, we will brainstorm ways in which improvisation can be used as a writing tool. Shy people need not avoid the fun. We may attempt to cajole you into giving it a go, but we definitely won't force you. After all, audience members are active participants too.

**J. S.'s Bio:** J.S. Grant, an Emerson graduate, taught theatre arts, public speaking, and English for thirty-three years at BFA in St. Albans, directing 142 productions in the co-curricular program there also. She has presented workshops at the Vermont State Drama Festival, the New England Drama Festival, the New England Theatre Conference, and at Into the Words. Enjoying retirement, she volunteers for the League of Vermont Writers and Age Well, writes fiction, and smells the roses.

## **3. Imaginary Characters Moving in the Real World: Engaging Readers' Mirror Neurons Immediately through Setting, Senses and Synesthesia (Sugarhouse) Sharon Darrow is presenting**

In this workshop, we will talk about what engages us as readers at the beginning of a story or novel—or even personal essay—and how we as writers can use various aspects of our characters' surroundings, their sense perceptions, and find strong and evocative verbs to show those details in order to do the same for our readers. For instance, if you were asked whether you could discern more from sitting across from someone for half an hour and asking them about themselves or be given the opportunity to spend that time in their living spaces, which would you think might be more revealing?

Why?

What might they be unwilling to talk about that they live with every day? What activities might they want you to know about; what would they hide? What senses would their rooms activate in you and what overlap of sensations might you experience when you encountered their “lemon-yellow” walls?

We will talk about each idea (Setting, Sensation, Synesthesia), and we'll do some writing and have a brief discussion of what we have written. We'll hope to go home excited to go more deeply into our imaginations in new ways, as well as have a larger repertoire of possibilities to use as we incorporate the real world into our characters' lives and stories, a world that will engage our readers immediately with interest, empathy, and tension.

**Sharon’s Bio:** Sharon Darrow, a member of the writing faculty of Vermont College of Fine Arts for over 20 years, is the author of fiction and poetry for children and adults. Her poems, short stories, interviews, and personal essays have appeared in literary journals *Rhino*, *Folio*, *Whetstone*, *ACM (Another Chicago Magazine)*, *Columbia Poetry Review*, *Great River Review*, *Other Voices*, *The Writer’s Chronicle*, and *In the Middle of the Middle West*. Currently working on memoir and speculative fiction, her two most recent books are *Worlds within Words: Writing and the Writing Life* and *now in a far sky: Vermont Poems*.

**2:30-2:45 Break**

**2:45-3:45 Session Four (You may attend one of the following three)**

**1. Making the Visual Verbal: Ekphrastic Poetry as Practice and Play: (Schoolhouse) **Kathy Quimby-Johnson is presenting****

Ekphrastic Poetry is a poetic response to a work of art—think Keats’ “Ode to a Grecian Urn.” It may, but doesn’t have to connect to the poet’s experience of that work of art. In this workshop, we’ll look at a handful of examples of published ekphrastic poetry, I’ll share the role ekphrastic poetry plays in my own writing practice (and volunteer work), and then we’ll dive into experimentation. A variety of art books, postcards, and posters will be provided as prompts. As time allows, there will be multiple writing sessions, with opportunities to share after each.

Participants are invited to bring a photo of their favorite work of art, if they think they’d like to use it for inspiration. It should be in print or on your phone, as past experience has shown connectivity at “Into the Woods” can be spotty.

**Kathy’s Bio:** Katherine Quimby Johnson has been playing with words and their sounds since she first put red crayon to yellow lined paper at age five. She retired from teaching at Champlain College in May 2020, but continues to work as a freelance editor and to write for the (Morrisville) *News and Citizen*. Kathy holds an MFA in Writing for Children and Young Adults from VCFA, and is currently working on several young adult and picture book projects.

**2. Stepping Out There (Barn) **DonnaRae Menard is presenting****

DonnaRae is an international award winner in Competitive Speaking and Table Topics. She works with reclusive writers, office workers, even teachers. This program is about pitting yourself against the customer, letting them know you have something they want. It’s also about building the confidence to do that.

People are afraid to get out there and sell themselves. The only way to get past that is to prepare, practice, and participate. This module gives baseline subjects a knowledge of working exercises they can do alone, with help of friends, in their own time. They are also told they can contact DonnaRae as needed.

In addition, there is a short segment about the “medic” bag to do cold calls, for conventions, and even presentation skills.

**DonnaRae’s bio:** DonnaRae Menard began writing in junior high school and has been scribbling since. She is the author of the An It’s Never Too Late Mystery series. A 1970’s suspense featuring Katelyn Took and 17 cats. The Woman Warrior’s series, historical fiction from time periods she remembers, Detective Carmine Mansuer series, set in Boston, Mass. Dropped from the Sky, It takes Guts, Willa the Wisp, and several short stories. She splits her time between Vermont and New Hampshire, has an affinity for odd jobs, and rescued cats. She’s also always willing to explain about her 450 pound lap pig.

### 3. Nature Journaling Informs Craft (Sugarhouse) Amy Braun is presenting

You do not need to be an artist or naturalist to join in on this session which is based on John Muir’s laws, books by Claire Walker Leslie, and the words of Robin Wall Kimmerer. Bring just yourself to the Sugarhouse. A notebook(yours to keep) and a pencil is provided. A light walk will be part of the session and the ability to stand/sit outside (rain or shine) is necessary). Nature Journaling is collecting and organizing observations, questions, concerns on the pages of a notebook using words and/or pictures and you will learn to connect nature to your current work in progress during this session.

**Amy’s Bio:** Amy Braun has been a teacher for 28 years and currently teaches outdoors in rural Vermont (yes, it gets cold but she has good coats/boots). She volunteers as a Grubbie for Grub Street in Boston and a Graduate Assistant for Vermont College of Fine Arts. Amy serves as the current president of the League of Vermont Writers. Her published nonfiction and fiction include: “Church Window” forthcoming for Colectivo Tabú summer 2023, “Skid Mark” for *On The Run*, “The Plastic” for *Apple in the Dark*, “A Passing Glimpse” in *The Heart of New England* magazine, “Solstice Saturday” on ESSAYDAILY.org, and “Vanilla” for *Brilliant Flash Fiction*. She is waiting for one of three agents to decide to represent her first novel and is feverishly at work on a second one.

**3:45-4:00**      **Closing gathering/Amy Braun (Barn)**