



Connections

The newsletter of the Connecticut Romance Writers of America
Region One, Chapter One

Letter from the Board

May I safely assume that we're all ushering in spring with our own version of Snoopy's happy dance? Colorful daffodils, crocuses, and tulips not only offer a striking change of scenery from the icy greys of winter, but also inspire a much-needed sense of reawakening.

If you're anything like me, you can lapse into a rut in both your writing and your life. Especially when forced to hide indoors to avoid freezing temperatures week after week after endless week. The question then becomes, how do we break out of those patterns so, like the spring flowers, we can blossom as people and writers?

For me, the answer always comes down to making changes. A small change might be as simple as working outdoors on my laptop for an hour each day. It's amazing how different sights and sounds can unlock my imagination and improve my mood. Or maybe I'll read a book outside my preferred genres. This has become a bit of a rousing adventure now that I'm more knowledgeable about story arcs, writing voice, and character development. I usually close those books having learned something interesting I then try to apply to my own work.

Then there are larger changes, such as volunteering on a committee I've never been involved with, mentoring a newer writer, or tossing out a story idea that isn't working to dive headlong into something new. At first, each of these ideas rather terrifies me! But by stretching beyond my comfort zone, I learn how to adapt, I make new friends, and I feel good about being helpful. Those rewards motivate me to continue tackling new goals, and before I know it, that old rut is in the rearview mirror.

So here is a challenge for you: make one change today to kick-start your own transformation. If you need a suggestion, begin by getting more involved with CTRWA, whether that means submitting an article idea for an upcoming newsletter, volunteering to help on a committee needed to make Fiction Fest a success, or just making one new friend at the next meeting you attend.

Jamie Beck
Treasurer

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Upcoming Meeting

May 9

Stephanie Queen On Anthologies

Bonus Session

Law & Fiction

Jamie Beck takes your questions

Producing an Audiobook

Frances Brown

Don't Forget!

You must RSVP to meetings in order for us to get a head count for which room we'll be using. This affects the chapter's bottom line, so we thank you for your cooperation.

Chapter News

Calendar

May 9

Anthologies with Stephanie Queen. Ever consider writing an anthology? Stephanie Queen talks about the process and why it's worth your time.

Bonus Sessions: Jamie Beck takes your questions on corporate law. Frances Brown walks us through producing an audiobook.

April 27-May 1:

CTRWA College: The Art of the Novella, Jamie K. Schmidt

Looking to fulfill the general membership requirements for RWA? USA Today bestselling author, Jamie K. Schmidt will lead you in planning and writing a romance novella with the goal to being published by an ebook publisher. However, we will touch briefly on self publishing as well. You will leave this workshop with a title, word count goal, a writing schedule, a mini-synopsis, hero & heroine profile, a publishing plan, one sex/romantic scene and a five hundred word head start on your novella. This is a hands-on workshop where you'll do word sprints, brainstorming, and light critiquing. There will be a sign up sheet for those interested in a monthly follow-up with the instructor until their goals from their writing schedule are met and the novella is complete. **To sign up, visit www.ctrwa.org.**

May 26-31: BookExpoAmerica, Javits Center, NYC. Part of BEA is BookCon, open to the general public. Regina Kyle, Katy Lee and Kristan Higgins will all be signing, and Kristan will be talking on a panel about romance, so pop into the city for this very fun event. Also...free books galore! See Member News for signing times.

June 13: Smashwords Webinar

CTRWA Retreat! August 28-30. Get away from it all with your writing buddies. Inspiration, book talk and most of all, quiet time to WRITE in a gorgeous setting. For more info, contact Tracy Costa at tragent@hotmail.com.

All CTRWA meetings are held at the Four Points Sheraton, Research Parkway, Meriden, CT.

Please remember to RSVP to all meetings. Meetings run as follows unless otherwise specified:

Critique Group: 9:30
Business Meeting: 11:00
Craft Corner: 11:30
Lunch: 12:00
Speaker 1:00
Bonus Session 2:00
Ask a Published Author 2:30

Please don't forget that we get a discounted room rate if you order lunch through CTRWA. Unfortunately, the Sheraton no longer allows you to bring your own food to the hotel, so if you're not buying lunch through us, you'll need to make plans to eat off-site. We regret any inconvenience this causes.

Upcoming Dates of Note

May 4

RWA University: Starting Your Book in the Right Place with Kristan Higgins

May 26-30

BookExpo America, NYC

June 2

CTRWA College, Laura Moore on Setting

June 13

CTRWA monthly meeting

July 22

RWA National Conference

August 28-30

CTRWA Retreat, Chester, CT

September 11-13

CTRWA Fiction Fest

Member News

Katie Lee and Regina Kyle are both signing books in the RWA booth at BookCon on Saturday, May 30. Kate at 10:00 a.m.; Regina signing at 11:00 a.m.... Season of Love Anthology by CTRWA authors **Marian Lanouette, Stephanie Queen, Gerri Brousseau and Stacy Hoff** along with fellow author Bobbi Lerman, will be released on May 6th. This is the second in the Season Of Anthologies.... **Gail Chianese** is thrilled to report BACHELORETTE FOR SALE received its first review on Goodreads. The lovely reviewer gave her 4 stars and said she couldn't wait for the next book. However, from here on out, Gail's assigned her assistant (aka her daughter) to read any future reviews and only tell her about the nice ones....**Julia Gabriel** spent spring break in the Bahamas, where she did not think about writing once but did finish reading several books (including *Feta Attraction*). In real news, her book *Drawing Lessons* garnered a lovely Crowned Heart review from InD'Tale Magazine: "What a sigh-worthy tale! The relationship between Marie and Luc is a slowly growing burn. One that isn't an insta-love relationship, it builds with each lesson, making it much more romantic ... There are twists and turns in this story that one will not expect, which is a delightful surprise. Ms. Gabriel does an amazing job of making the reader want to turn every page and savor it." Kirkus was more meh about *Drawing Lessons* but did say that, "Gabriel paints white hot sex scenes."...**Deborah Ann Davis** and Carole Ann Moleti will be signing books at the Kids Fest at the Brewster in Bloom event in Brewster, MA on May 2. This kicks off their Novel Fun in the Summer Sun Book Tour on the Cape this summer. A portion of their proceeds will be donated to charities they have each chosen....**Denise Smoker** got a nice four-star review

from RT (the only Blaze this month to get four stars)....**Kate Rothwell**, writing as Summer Devon, has a book coming out May 5th with Samhain called *Releasing the Shifter*. Sometimes it seems as if Summer Devon/Kate Rothwell title out every other week, but she won't have another book out for six months (A Bonnie Dee/Summer title out in September doesn't count because that's more like a novella)....**Kristan Higgins** had palpitations when her editor informed her that she will be featured at this year's BEA with a banner of her upcoming book, four signings and a panel discussion with Meg Cabot. Check Kristan's website calendar for specific times at www.kristanhiggins.com/KH-

[Calendar.html](#) ...**Nikki Woolfolk** (Thiamba!) will have another book signing of my print books at the Mark Twain house May 30th. Chocolates, musicians, tea and signing at this Steampunk gathering as well as at the NJ's Steampunk World's Fair May 15-17.... **Jeannie Moon** recently started writing the final book in her Forever Love series. The book, entitled *Because I Love You*, will be published in November 2015. And finally, **Gail Ingis**, who's been writing so hard for so long, is thrilled to announce she's signed a contract with Soul Mate Publishing and is now a member of PRO!

12 Ways to Get Motivated to Write

by Kristan Higgins

1. Create deadlines and word counts, and stick to them.
2. Set a timer and reward yourself with a break when the time is up, but do nothing else but write during your set time.
3. Stop waiting to feel in the mood. Remind yourself that even if you don't feel it right now, you'll feel it a lot more if you actually sit down and write. Don't wait for the mood to strike. Tell yourself you'll write for 20 minutes. If it turns into a couple of hours, that's pretty great, too.
4. Write with a buddy. Like exercise, it can be more fun with a friend.
5. List three positive things that will happen if you write (closer to publication, won't feel guilty, will have something for critique partner).
6. Remember that you chose to write for a reason. It's part of who you are. Honor that, even when you're feeling sluggish.
7. Put your writing time on your calendar. It's easier to write if the time is blocked out.
8. Have a space designated for writing. Go there. Habits can be powerful tools.
9. Make a playlist for your book. This can help get you in the right mindset almost immediately. But don't spend too much time on the playlist and not enough on the book.
10. Tell people you're writing a book. If you commit to the idea publicly, you're more likely to follow through on it privately.
11. Don't punish yourself for not writing. A lot of times, it's easy to feel worse about not doing it, the way a dieter feels bad about cheating...which only leads to more cheating.
12. Reward yourself for writing. Have a cookie. Cookies are delicious. Go to the movies for another form of story telling. Take a nap and rest your worthy brain.

Member of the Month: Denice Alicea

Tell us about what you're working on these days.

I've been working on a poetry book which features a lot of poetry I wrote growing up. I've also been working on my Paranormal time travel romance novel, time travel romance short stories, and a children's book.

What's the next major step you need to take in your writing?

To finally publish a novel. I've been published in poetry and short stories at the moment, so that's a goal of mine.

What's the hardest part of the writing process for you?

Finding the time to write in between working a full time job, volunteering for RWA, and running my own business.

What's your favorite part of the writing process?

Just writing out all my thoughts, dialogue and ideas.

Any quirks or special talents you'd like to share?

I love technology and drawing. I worked for Apple for over six years, the IT industry, and now a social media company.

Have you been given any great advice on writing fiction, or do you have any to impart?

I would say never give up writing, join a writing community and seek help from your fellow author friends. Everyone has something to learn and teach.

Who are some of your favorite authors?

I'm a big fan of many authors, some of my favorites are Morgan Llwylen, Lori Foster, Belle Andre, Danielle Steele, J.R. Tolkien

Best CT restaurant, in your humble opinion? I'm from Stamford, So I love Remos.

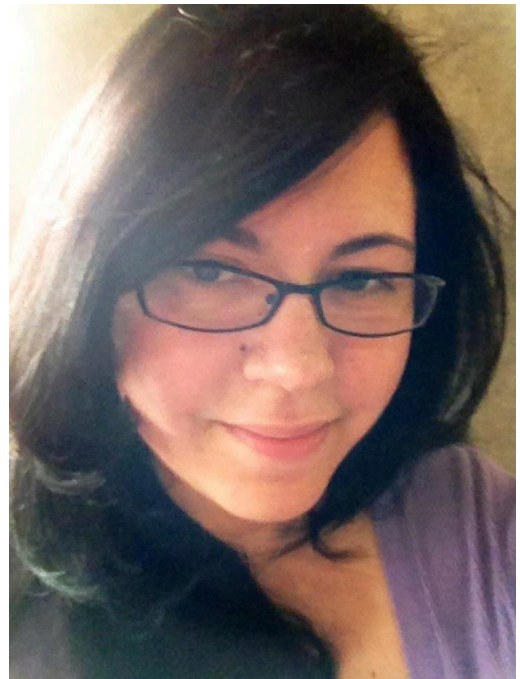
Who's your fictional boyfriend/girlfriend right now? (In other words, does your hero look just like RDJ or Tom Hardy? Is your heroine based on Amy Adams or Cate Blanchett?) Any one of the guys from Lori Foster's Ultimate series. I would say they look like Sam Heughan.

Where can we find you online?

Denisealicea.com – author website

Thepenmuse.net – Book Blog website

Moonsstardustdesigns.com – Business website.



from Denise's short story, The Lucky Valentine

Marcus gave a carefree shrug that was proven a lie by the shadows in his eyes. "I'm just a poor Sargent in the British army, all I know is what I see at the flicks. Oh it's safe enough now, the raids over. Didn't you hear the all clear? Sounds like you need a drink lass. I know I could do with one." Marcus touched her on the shoulder and motioned to follow him as he lead her briefly down some winding streets until they came up in front of an old Victorian pub sadly in a state of disrepair.



Post Mortem for a Writing Project

by Peter Andrews, CTRWA member

What went right? What went wrong?

In the lab and later in consulting, I was taught the value of looking over a project when I completed it. Asking a series of specific questions after finishing a work of prose (novel, short story, article, script, speech) can also be valuable, and it is a great way to gain efficiencies that will help you be more productive.

When you do a post mortem presents interesting choices. I like to do them after I've sent a manuscript into the world, when there is potential for a check coming back. But you can do a post mortem just before you submit it to a critique group or when you decide to shelve it or when you decide it should be shredded.

A good post mortem starts with the question at the top of this post. Begin with the positive, so you don't fall into a guilt spiral. Even the most disastrous work has some successes, and it is easy to forget them unless you intentionally call them out. On the other hand, what went wrong may be driven by the actions of someone else, but you can always look to yourself for a deeper understanding of where you may have let the wrong person in too soon, pressed the wrong button, or signed up to work with the wrong people.

Beyond these general questions, here are the specific ones I use when I do a post mortem.

Was this project worth my time? Did I make the right choice in taking it on? I have at times become enamored with a second rate idea. At other times, I've accepted an assignment that was a drudgery. Bad choices in both cases (except the time I did a tedious assignment at ten times my normal rate).

Did I succeed in what I intended to do? Did I explain something, illustrate a theme, create an emotion, or bring a fascinating character to life?

Did I succeed in bringing the ten things I love most to my audience? (I always list the things that make me passionate about a project before I begin it, and often as a step along the way. I'll write more about this in a future post.)

Did I find a practice I should adopt or did I vary a current practice in an interesting way? This is often where my process book gets a new entry or a reliable process gets retuned so it becomes more effective. It was a post mortem that added text to speech as a part of my regular proofing process.

Did I learn a new skill? Did I try something new? You don't get better if you don't put into practice what you learn and find opportunities to stretch. One of the hardest things I did was write a novel from a single point of view. All the energy I got from switching between different characters and leaving them in cliffhanger situation was gone and I had to find new ways to build tension -- ways that have served me well since.

Did I go off course? Sometimes a yes here means I wasted time -- time I might save in the future. Sometimes going off course is a good thing.

Did I leave something undone or underdone? No poem is finished, it's abandoned, right? If I had more time, what would I work on and why?

Was I the right person to do this project? A tough but necessary question. There are many works I admire that I would make a hash of.

Is there an aspect that I'm not ready to do yet? On the other hand, if I keep at this writing thing, I may be able to write scenes and arguments that are currently beyond my grasp. I met a writer who, every year or so, wrote from the point of view of a black man. (He is white.) These attempts ended up in a drawer. Then I read a story where he pulled it off brilliantly. He had developed empathy and knowledge because of many years of trying.

Did I improve as a writer? I hope the answer is always yes. Truthfully, it isn't. But I keep asking.

These questions represent a mix that leads to positive and negative answers, and answers that probe the art, the craft, and the professional processes. Together, they encourage me to grow and learn. I write the answers, and I take a hard look at what I've written. This work doesn't count as my writing for the day, but it is essential to my productivity.

Peter Andrews is a full-time, independent writer. He has also worked as a web producer, speechwriter, and radio producer. He creates short stories, speeches, and articles.

Check out his blog at howtowritefast.blogspot.com

5 Tips for Managing Neck Pain

by PJ Sharon, CTRWA Member



Take time to breathe:

One of the simplest treatments for pain of any kind is deep breathing.

If you take a moment to notice your breathing as you sit at the computer or drive in the car (any place where your attention is focused on a task), you'll find that your breaths are shallow, your muscles are tense, and that your body has a tendency to slouch. Again, this wouldn't be a problem if we were only in this state for a few minutes, but extend that oxygen deprived, tension packed, slumped posture over hours, and it's no surprise you are suffering from fatigue, headaches, and musculoskeletal pain.

Remind yourself to take 5-10 deep breaths every hour. It will release tension from your body, and revitalize your energy better than a cup of coffee or the chocolate you're craving because you are, in fact oxygen deprived and probably dehydrated. Which leads me to...

Hydrate:

Proper hydration covers a multitude of sins! Water is the courier of nutrients and oxygen to every cell of your being. Without adequate water intake, none of our systems work at optimal levels. Without going into the effects on each system individually, suffice it to say that our waste management is compromised, leading to increased toxic build up...in our cells, in our blood, in our tissues, and in our muscles and joints.

Determine how much water you need per day (a third of your body weight in ounces is a fair measure. Weight divided by 3. For example: 150 pound person should drink at least 50 ounces of water per day).

TIP: Fill a 24 ounce water bottle first thing in the morning and shoot for drinking 2-3 of throughout the day. Not only will this keep your joints and muscles healthier, it will help rid your body of toxins, reduce fatigue and is the #1 weight management tip I give all of my clients.

Keep it Moving:

Lubricating your joints is essential to maintaining healthy range of motion. Movement is key.

Perform gentle range of motion (ROM) exercises hourly. Look right, left, up, down, and tip your ear toward your shoulder on each side, 3-5x, focusing on your breathing and moving slowly so you feel the stretch at end range.

Shrug your shoulders, wiggle your jaw, flex your

fingers and stretch wrist flexor and extensor muscles by extending your arm straight in front of you and lifting your fingers upward to stretch your flexor muscles (the underside of your forearm), and then pressing fingers downward to stretch the extensors (on the upper side of your forearm).

Place your fingers on your shoulders and circle your elbows 3-5x forward and backward to stretch and lubricate shoulder joints.

Correct your posture

Rounded shoulder, forward head posture is the root of all evil when it comes to contributing factors for neck pain. Anterior muscles of the chest and shoulders tighten while posterior musculature (designed to hold us upright) become overstretched and weak. Learn where good posture is and check in frequently throughout the day to find it again. Remind yourself to sit up straight, shoulders back, head in alignment with shoulders and hips.

Stretch pectoral and anterior shoulder muscles by clasping hands behind back and squeezing shoulder blades together. Take deep breaths and hold 10-20 seconds. Repeat hourly to combat the effects of prolonged sitting.

Bank robber exercise: Stand with your back against a wall with your feet six inches from the wall and shoulder width apart. Raise your arms so that your shoulders and elbows are at 90 degree angles and the backs of your arms are resting against the wall. Your hands may not reach the wall at first if your shoulders and chest muscles are tight, but that's okay. Your flexibility will improve over time. Do the best you can to get as much of the back of your arms to touch as possible and then slowly raise and lower arms in a "stick-em-up" motion, maintaining contact with the wall behind you. Repeat this motion slowly, 5-10x, respecting your ROM limitations, and focusing on your breath throughout the movement.

Serving Hors d'oeuvres: Stand up straight with elbows in at your sides and bent to 90 degrees/palms facing up as if holding a tray on each hand. Keep your elbows in and squeeze your shoulder blades together. Rotate your hands

continued on page 8

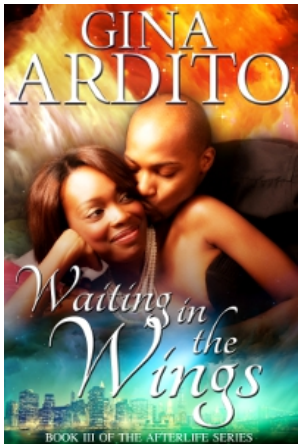
Member Releases!



How to unravel your straightlaced lover...

Gabe Nelson would be a great district attorney, but his public image is too boring to get voters' attention. Tattoo artist Devin Padilla can help him show off his fun, sexy side, but she needs something in return—his legal expertise to track down her missing brother. She's not Gabe's type, but they can't keep their hands off each other, whether it's good for his image or not.

At first, Devin thinks she got the easy end of the bargain. Gabe's the sexiest stuffed shirt in Manhattan, and his kisses practically set her on fire. But every deal has its fine print. As their relationship goes from business to pleasure, Devin realizes this one won't cost her soul...it'll just steal her heart.

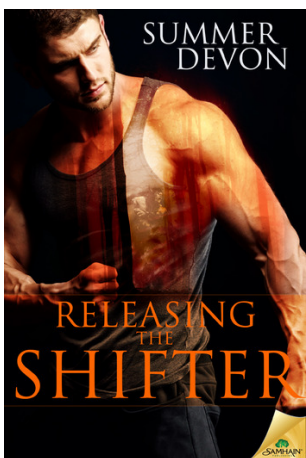


In the third and final installment of the award-winning Afterlife Series, she's got nothing left to lose; he has everything to gain...

A longtime resident of the Afterlife, Xavia Donovan has vowed to do whatever it takes to get out of the realm of the dead and move on. She didn't expect "whatever it takes" to mean counseling the baddest bad boy to cross her path—in life or death.

On Earth, Osiris Cavanaugh spent lifetimes betraying his country, betraying his compatriots, and betraying the one person now assigned to help him become a better soul: Xavia.

With the help of an unusual child on Earth, they'll conquer their pasts. But now that they've come together, will their futures tear them apart?



To save his love he must face his monster and—worse—be nice to people.

Montag is a monster. He doesn't know what sort of creature he would turn into if he ever let himself shift, but he knows it's something predatory and lethal. He fights back the urge to shift every day of his life, and has never dared get close to anyone—not that they want him to. He can literally smell their fear.

Kevin's not scared of monsters. He works for the SSU, the agency in charge of tracking shifters—particularly the dangerous ones. When he and his young niece are kidnapped by her scum-bucket dad, he's grateful to be rescued by Montag, whose curmudgeonly defenses can't hide the kind man beneath.

As they work together to protect Kevin's niece, attraction sizzles between them. But their relationship may not survive if Montag learns who writes Kevin's paycheck—or if Montag dares to confront the inner monster he hates and fears. Solitary Shifter Book 3, a series but they are stand-alone titles."

Community

Neck Pain, continued from page 6

outward as if serving hors de oeuvres to people on either side of you. Repeat 5-10 times slowly, engaging the external rotators of the shoulders to strengthen postural muscles and stave off muscle imbalances. Basically, I give you these silly images to help you remember the exercise. Obviously, no trays—or guests—are needed to complete this activity.

Check your work station

Ergonomics is a huge consideration in the prevention, treatment, and management of neck pain and other posture/biomechanics related pain. Our bodies have a remarkable ability to adapt, but if you're going to put your body in one position for prolonged periods of time, understand that there will be a price to pay. Maybe we can't avoid prolonged sitting postures in today's digital world, but at the very least, we need to be aware of ways to accommodate ourselves for the best outcome.

PJ Sharon is the author of YA contemporary and paranormal romance. Visit her website at www.pjsharon.com



“I would rather spend one lifetime with you than face all the ages of this world alone.”

Arwen to Aragorn, Lord of the Rings

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Contact any board member at

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Your beloved newsletter editor is always looking for articles! Short articles (lists, brief words of advice, fewer than 200 words) are especially appreciated. Share your wisdom! Email Kristan at k.higgins@snet.net.

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