



LEAGUE OF VERMONT WRITERS, INC.

League Lines

The League of Vermont Writers Newsletter

Join us!

**April 18,
2015:**

**Franklin Howe
Conference Center,
Rutland**

8:00am-2:30pm

SPRING 2015 PROGRAM

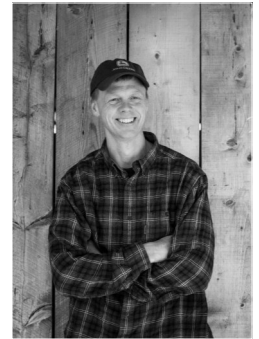
BEN HEWITT

PRESENTING:

Real Life Writing

Continued on page 6

At once humorous, inspiring, and entertaining, Ben's presentation will explore the rules of good writing. These rules are not what you think, and you'll come away with a new perspective on the craft. Ben will also discuss the challenge of fitting writing into our busy lives and how form informs content, particularly in relation to the digital age. There will be plenty of time for questions and discussion, so be ready to engage!



JOANNA TEBBS YOUNG

PRESENTING:

Find Your Story, Find Your Voice: Writing Beyond the Script

Continued on page 6

How do you find your story beneath the scripts given us by family and society? How do you find your own voice? How do you write from a place of personal truth that will resonate with readers as universal?

Joanna will share some of her experience with writing a memoir and the skills she uses in her everyday life. She will also introduce expressive writing techniques and prompts that will help you begin unpeeling the layers of your story.



CHERYL YOUNG

PRESENTING:

How Stories Find You!

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A good story comes in many ways, expected and unexpected. The stories that Cheryl has been closely aligned with began with being hit over the head from a falling book, a cup of tea with a friend, and a gathering at the dedication of an historic marker.

What do these seemingly unrelated events have in common? You will find out, as Cheryl is a persistent and passionate storyteller who loves telling how these and other stories came into her life. Her talk will tell the story behind the stories, and the rewards and challenges they brought with them.

Everyone has a wealth of stories to write about but sometimes they're not revealed until a catalyst, something unexpected, ignites a passion for sharing. Cheryl will bring out the storyteller in all of us, demonstrating the joy we feel when stories take us to amazing places and unexpected adventures.



Letter from the President

Dear Members,

There has been no shortage of hustle and bustle this first quarter of 2015. We have implemented monthly e-newsletters (which we hope you all have been receiving), recreated our Twitter page and have turned a new energy towards this and our Facebook page in hopes of enlivening our online presence. We hosted a successful workshop on Author Platform with Barnes MacQueen Publishing Resources, began orchestrating a new member-focused summer event (see page 6), re-instated our marketing committee (growing it from 1 member to 4!) and, most importantly, the board has determined this year's goals, placing an emphasis on foundation and infrastructure.

This is particularly timely given that all of us during the first months of the new year make New Year's resolutions. 'Resolutions' is a very fitting word for this year's focus, as we hope to resolve some of the issues that seem to reoccur within our organization—disorganized registration at programs, missed renewal notices and members not knowing when their membership dues are owed, last-minute planning and marketing of programs, to name a few. Anything that interrupts our members' satisfaction requires assessment and diligence in correcting these problems. As a part of attending to these matters, the Board will be performing a thorough review of the systems and operations of our committees – programming, marketing and membership – to de-

termine where we can improve and will suggest new strategies to these committees to help our 'ship sail more smoothly.' Setting our course right will mean needing more 'hands on deck' (seems I should stick with this metaphor now that I've begun), so there will also be an emphasis this year on encouraging more members to volunteer and getting people invested in the behind-the-scenes work that is essential to the League's overall operations, and its success. Additionally, we will also be creating a budget for the organization and reviewing our Section 2-Purpose (found in the bylaws) to ensure our activities still align. Both the budget and our purpose will become a part of the agenda for the annual business meeting next January.

I can't say that I find any of these goals particularly thrilling – at least not when you compare it to designing a new website (still in progress) or starting up an internship program (our current intern, Kara, is phenomenal) – but they are necessary to securing a solid foundation and a sustainable future for the organization. And, I am proud to say that we have already begun our reviews, we have already started to draft a budget, we already have one new idea to implement in getting more volunteers involved, and we have action steps and deadlines in place. In short, we are working hard and already making great progress. I am confident that this year, though it be a year of growth and development, will be a great year nonetheless, and

we will come out at the other end of 2015 stronger and better than when we began.

I will continue to keep you all abreast of our developments through my president's letter and hope that you will be in support of all we have planned.

For the good of the cause,
Alyssa Berthiaume



Help Support Kara with a School Project!

League of Vermont Writer's Intern, **Kara Joyce**, is leading a project to produce an anthology of stories from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, as well as produce journals and stickers as educational tools for the students of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts is home to 13 different indigenous people, each with its own history, cultural traditions, genetic identity, and language. The region's schools teach exclusively in Bangla, which is not the first language for most of the region's children. More than a third of students do not complete second grade; by fifth grade the drop-out rate has reached 65 percent. Only 2 percent complete their education.

Anyone interested in supporting the students' cause or who would like to get more information, contact Kara Joyce at:
kara.joyce@mymail.champlain.edu.

Stephen Kiernan: The Almost Right Word

By Annalisa Parent

The basic building block of writing is, of course, the word. As famous British poet and critic Samuel Coleridge once wrote, “Prose is words in their best order – poetry is the best words in the best order.”

As writers, therefore, regardless of genre, we have an obligation to our readers to choose the best word *and* the best order. But how?

Stephen Kiernan, author of *The Curiosity* and *Last Rights*, gave some insight on this quandary in a talk to the League in January. Kiernan’s talk addressed both the importance of sound and of specificity in language.

“Sound is a part of what you’re doing,” he told the writers present. “We’ve got some kind of internal trumpet that helps us hear the sound of words.”

As an illustration, he asked volunteers to give two opposite words in a non-English language. Based on sound

alone, he encouraged participants to guess the meaning of the words. For example the French *grand* (big) has an open sound, a big sound, whereas its opposite *petit* (small) has a closed, small sound.

Kiernan encouraged writers to consider the sound in words chosen to convey ideas. He argued that sound alone, with its deeper linguistic underpinnings, could determine the best word for a given writing piece.

He traced the painstaking process of choosing the right word in his own writing, for sound and for specificity. In a scene in an upcoming novel, *The Hummingbird* to be released September 8, 2015, Kiernan traced the process of determining the right composer to express melancholy. Was it Brahms? Bach? He considered not only the works of the composer, but also the feel of that musician’s name within the context of the scene.

This work, he said, is the painstaking work of rewriting. “I’m a much better rewriter than a writer,” he said.

But it can also be fun. On an easel, LVW President Alyssa Berthiaume took dictation from audience participants on words with a quality of specificity and sound. “I like the word hurricane be-

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cause it’s raising Cain in a hurry,” one participant contributed.

Kiernan urged writers to choose the most descriptive word possible as the group brainstormed synonyms for the act of moving forward. Investigating the difference between words like run and gallop, Kiernan pointed out “gallop gives the reader a place to go and they can do the imagining.”

“It’s an enormous privilege, writers, that readers let you in,” Kiernan summarized, echoing Coleridge’s call over a century ago. “We have a responsibility to be fastidious. We take white paper, and we make dark marks on it, and that makes us cry.”

Kiernan referenced these works in his talks:

The Waters, William Matthews
Book of My Nights, Li Yung Li
For Desire, Addonizio
Politics and the English Language, George Orwell.

You and Your Credits

Annalisa Parent: published installment #1 of series, novel *No. 2 Inc.* with co-author Nate Herzog. Review of *How to Write What You Want and Sell What You Write*, by Skip Press, in Australia’s *Writer’s Edit*. Conducted workshops in Memoir this winter in Hinesburg.

Kathleen McKinley Harris: historical article in Summer Issue, 2014, *Chittenden County Historical Society Bulletin*, “Mother Prindle, Almira Greene Prindle.”

Shawn Anderson and Shannara Johnson: short stories published in Reuts Publications’ 2015 Anthology. These are their first publishing credits!

Alec Hastings: published his novel, *Otter St. Onge and the Bootleggers*.

Ted Tedford: published his historical novel, *Incident at St. Albans*.

Joe Nelson: author *Vermont’s Covered Bridges Spanning Time*, published new young reader’s book, *The Hemlock Frond*.

Dan Close: published two poems in *Pulse*, a medical e-magazine

Deb Fennell: published article in winter 2015 *Explore Smuggs*. Covering snow sports for the *Stowe Reporter*.

Sarah Ward: publishes a fiction and poetry blog on Wordpress.

Tammy Flanders Hetrick: novel to be released April 21, 2015 – *Stella Rose*.

Dana Walrath: novel in verse from Random House Delacorte, Nov. 2014, *Like Water on Stone*

Marshall Hight: YA sci-fi novel *Spare Parts*, from Archway Publishing, fall 2014.

Continued on page 4

Stephen Kiernan: The Biz, Breaking into Publishing

By George Osol

With cold but brilliant winter sunshine outside and warmth and hospitality inside, Stephen Kiernan gave his second talk of the morning titled *The Biz: Breaking into Publishing*.

Using a list of topics on a flipchart, he polled the audience to gauge their level of interest in each and asked for other suggestions. The winning topics included: How to get an agent; Submissions; Publishing Fiction vs. Nonfiction; Editing; and Finding an Audience.

Finding a good agent poses a challenge for many first-time authors. Kiernan suggested making a trip to the bookstore. As the publishing world has entered an 'age of manners,' most novels now include an acknowledgments page where authors thank people, agents among them, by name. If one peruses books similar to one's own, compiles a list of 15-20 agent names, and then queries each one ("obey submission directions on their website to a tee!"), it is reasonable to expect to hear back from two or three with a request for more information.

If you don't hear back from anyone at all, added Kiernan, consider whether you have a salable project, or perhaps move on to a new one.

He shared his own experience with three different agents, which ranged from borderline dysfunctional (patronizing, condescending, slow to respond) to very good for nonfiction but not interested in fiction, to his current agent who is spectacular.

Kiernan also discussed the craft of writing, and explained how his background in journalism shaped his writing habits. He writes most every day and uses a just-get-it down approach for the first

draft. He then goes back and re-writes until it's right.

Kiernan shared a scene from *The Drum Beneath the Skin*, his forthcoming book, and used it as a springboard for discussing the importance of specifics to enliven writing. He also underscored the importance of both productivity and objectivity by saying that he has written five books that have never been submitted because they ultimately did not pass his own personal muster. Sobering.

His previous books were non-fiction. *Last Rights* (about end-of-life legal issues) was successful, while several other ventures didn't do as well. A few years ago, Kiernan wrote a book about individuals "giving back" to society and country. He wanted to call it *Ask Not* but was overruled by an editor who titled it *Authentic Patriotism* instead. This anecdote reminded us that writing is a business after all, and that the editor and publisher may not always be right, as the book did not sell.

Kiernan's most recent book is *The Curiosity*, his first novel, about a man brought back to life after freezing to death in the Arctic in 1906. The book has sold quite well and was recently optioned by 20th Century Fox.

An engaging speaker, Stephen Kiernan stressed the importance of getting to know book store owners on book tours, and of using social media. He concluded by inviting members of the audience to befriend him on Facebook, and described some of the creative things he does with his FB page, such as posting unusual videos (one is the view from a drone flying over Auschwitz), writing a winter story every year for the Holiday season, and posting interesting music. A few more questions from the audience and a hearty round of applause rounded out an informative and enjoyable talk.

You and Your Credits, cont.

Janet Hayward Burnham: worked with a team to research and write Vermont's *Elusive Architect George H. Guernsey*, published by the Bethel Historical Society in late 2013.

Robert L. Hunton: *Coyote-Meeter's Abyss*, the final middle grade novel in the "Borderlands Trilogy" was released in July 2014, joining *Gift of the Desert Dog* (2010) and *Secrets of the Medicine Pouch* (2012), from Open Books Press.

Bill Schubart: published a list of fiction and nonfiction, including: *The Lamoille Stories*, *Fat People*, *Panhead*, *I Am Baybie*, *Photographic Memory*, and *The Lamoille Stories II*. Bill is a public speaker, writer and public radio commentator, former chair of the Vermont Arts Council, Vermont Library Commission, The Vermont Folklife Center, and current chair of the VT College of Fine Arts.

Greg Pahl: article, "Power From the People," published in the February/March issue of *Mother Earth News* magazine.

Ellen Perry Berkeley: conducted memoir workshops in Bennington and Manchester, 2014. Writing her own memoir now.

Burlington Book Festival September 25-27, 2015

For a number of years, the LVW has partnered with the Burlington Book Festival. One of the ways we help out is to offer names and contact information for authors our members think would make good speakers at the Festival.

If you would like to suggest an author, please get in touch with our new liaison with the Festival, Board VP Mary Muncil. You can email her at mmuncil@verizon.net or call her at (518)677-2929 any time.

PROGRAM
RECAPS

Review of Christopher Lehmann-Haupt

by Bobbi Jo Davis

Keynote speaker Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, a previous New York Times journalist, editor, and book reviewer, talked about the changing culture of the written word, and the impact of adapting books to movie and video. He began by fondly recalling a time he spent in the Putney, Vermont, area and working on a farm in Manchester. Back then, visual media was not as big a draw for Christopher as a good book was. He joked with friends when they ask if he had seen this show or that, saying, "No. It isn't a book."

He went on to explain how, over time, his perception would change.

Christopher spoke of the time he began watching movies based on books, or "watching books." The more he watched, the more he saw how each medium could enhance the other—though not in all cases. He joked that books are like wine: when you read/drink a lot, you start to see the differences. Beyond the joke, the message that rang through was: You start to spot the quality of good authors. He expanded on this, talking about how "watching books" [in movie form] can enhance the appreciation of the book itself. It's a balancing act that allows a book and movie to co-exist, creating a wider audi-

ence for each, tapping into the way they play to different senses.

Christopher noted how language is important to each experience. Each medium has a unique wording based on the way the messages are being delivered, written word (book) vs. spoken word (movie). Within the book, words allow the reader to paint the image they see in their mind's eye; in a movie, the visual images can support the spoken word. He also mentioned how visual images in movies can be so strong that they change the impression of the viewer, just as too few descriptive words can change the flow of a book.

Christopher reassured his audience that the written word is not disappearing in the age of computers and the Web; there's just a paradigm shift he likened to Gutenberg's effect on the written word. But story is still critical, and people need to tell stories. Perhaps the next shift he will have the chance to experience and speak about, he said, will be called the "Pixelation Paradigm."

Christopher Lehmann-Haupt was a vibrant speaker, noticeably knowledgeable at all points of his presentation. Definitely worth the price of admission. The only thing missing was popcorn at the tables.

PROGRAM RECAPS

We are looking for volunteers!

If you have a little extra time and would like to get more involved with the League, we could use your help.

Anyone and everyone is welcome. Skills in Microsoft office programs, InDesign, and Photoshop, and familiarity with social media are huge PLUSES!

Email

lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org

As a member of the League of Vermont Writers you have access to a *free manuscript critique service!*

Visit the website for more details.

Please note that the address for sending your manuscripts has changed.

Please send to:

LVW Manuscript Critique Service
Director c/o Sharon Putnam
108 Waterford Lane
North Springfield, VT 05150

TELL YOUR FRIENDS ABOUT THE LEAGUE!

HAVE THEM VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT:

www.leagueofvermontwriters.org

Enjoy Music with LVW Member Mark Pendergrast

Longtime LVW member Mark Pendergrast invites you to celebrate the coming of spring at a performance of the Social Band. Several performances are scheduled in the coming month.

April 11, 7:30 pm- Richmond Free Library

April 12, 3:00 pm- First Unitarian Church, Burlington

April 18, 7:30 pm- Hinesburg United Church

April 19, 3:00 pm- Charlotte Congregational Church

You can buy tickets for \$12 from **Mark Pendergrast** (contact him at markp508@gmail.com), or for \$15 at the door.

2015 Spring Program, continued

ABOUT BEN HEWITT

Ben Hewitt was born and raised in northern Vermont where he currently lives with his wife, Penny, and sons Fin and Rye. The Hewitt family runs a small-scale, diversified hill farm that includes pigs, sheep, chickens, copious gardens, an orchard, and a pick-your-own blueberry patch.

A high school dropout, Ben is the author of five books, including *Home Grown: Adventures in Parenting Off the Beaten Path*, *Unschooling*, and *Reconnecting With the Natural World*, and, most recently, *The Nourishing Homestead: One Back-to-the-Land Family's Plan For Cultivating Soil, Skills, and Spirit*. Ben blogs at www.benhewitt.net. He consults frequently on unschooling, writing, and homestead design/implementation.

ABOUT JOANNA TEBBS YOUNG

Joanna Tebbs Young is a Writer and Transformative Writing Facilitator and Coach. She holds a Masters degree in Transformative Language Arts from Goddard College and is a certified instructor through the Center for Journal Therapy. Joanna writes weekly columns for the *Rutland Reader* and *Rutland Herald*, and has a story in the latest edition of *Rutland Magazine*. Joanna offers expressive writing workshops and private coaching at her writing center in Rutland. Her blog and coaching information can be found at <http://wisdomwithinink.com>.

ABOUT CHERYL YOUNG

Cheryl Young is an author, publisher, book coach, educator, and producer. She has taught at all levels including college and graduate university courses, as well as Middle and High School Social Studies in Brattleboro, Vt. She has written a children's book about a Woman Airforce Service Pilot (WASP) and an oral history of Elizabeth Wall Strohfus, WASP of WWII, *Love at First Flight*. Cheryl has also taught in public and private schools in Germany and Cameroon, West Africa. She holds a masters degree in Cross Cultural Communication from the School for International Training in Brattleboro. Currently, she is the community coordinator for a cinematography project with Bill Muench's class at Burr and Burton Academy in Manchester, Vt., seen at voicesofvermont.net.

WE'RE PLANNING A MEMBERSHIP SHOWCASE FOR THE 2015 SUMMER PROGRAM!

CALL FOR MEMBERS TO OFFER PRESENTATIONS AND WORKSHOP, LEAD DISCUSSION GROUPS,
AND FACILITATE WRITING EXERCISES

Save the date: July 18, 2015

LVW President Alyssa Berthiaume wants to focus this year's Summer Program on LVW members and their skills and accomplishments. Every other year, the LVW hosts a Writers Meet Agents event helping members and non-members alike to pitch their work to literary agents.

In the 'off' years, we'd like to start a new biennial tradition to showcase members' work and talents. Alyssa and a special Summer Program Committee are designing a festival-like, day-long retreat at which members can exhibit their work, participate in open-mics, go off to write alone or with friends, network with members they've never met before, eat, drink, and carry on.

Also throughout the day, members will offer workshops or presentations, lead discussion groups, and facilitate writing exercises. If you'd like to help out and be a presenter, that's fine. If you'd like to simply attend and enjoy, that's fine, too.

To gauge interest in this type of event among our membership, and to find out who'd like to take an active part in the presentations, the committee is putting out a call for member involvement. We want to get a sense of how many members would like to present or lead groups for such an event, so we can plan the day in general.

Additional notices and updates about the event will be forthcoming in future Mail Chimp emails.

If you would like to be involved, offer a presentation or workshop, lead a discussion group, or facilitate a writing exercise, let us know by emailing lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org.

Registration Form

LVW 2015 Spring Program, Franklin Howe Conference Center, Rutland

Register online at www.leagueofvermontwriters.org or fill out the form below and mail with a check to:

League of Vermont Writers Registrar, PO Box 172, Underhill Center, VT 05490

Make check payable to: *LVW Spring Program*

Registrar: info@leagueofvermontwriters.org

DATE: April 18, 2015

TIME: 8am-2:30pm

LOCATION: Franklin Howe Conference Center
1 Scale Ave # 92, Rutland, VT 05701

Directions: Visit them online for directions:
<http://www.franklinconference.com>

Schedule at a glance:

8am-9am: registration, meet n' greet
and refreshments

9am-10:15am: Ben Hewitt

10:15am-10:30am: Break

10:30am-11:45am: Joanna Tebbs Young

11:45am-12:00noon: Break

12:00noon-1:00pm: Lunch (buffet)

1:00pm-2:15pm: Cheryl Young

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Members: _____ @ \$45 ea. registration = \$ _____

Nonmembers: _____ @ \$55 ea. registration = \$ _____

[Students, ask about our student discount]

Tax deductible donation: \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Check # _____

Do you have special dietary needs? _____

LVW Board: Alyssa Berthiaume, president; Mary Muncil, vice-president; Julia Hoover, secretary; Deb Fennell, past president; Elizia Meskill, treasurer; Pat Goudey O'Brien, Sharon Putnam, Wendy Heilig, Bobbi Jo Davis, and Lisa Halvorsen, at large.

Membership: Tommy Waltz; Critique service: Sharon Putnam.

LVW Volunteer Opportunities: Pat Goudey O'Brien is looking for someone with editing and graphics skills to help out with (and eventually take over) the workings of *League Lines* and the League's web site. If you'd like to put your skills to use for the League (or work with Pat to learn new skills), drop us a line at lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org.

In general, the League needs volunteers for marketing and publicity purposes as well. Please email the same address if interested.

League Lines is published four times per year, in January, April, July, and September. Questions or information can be emailed to us at lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org

Tommy Waltz
157 Camp St.
Barre, VT 05641