League Lines
The Newsletter of the League of Vermont Writers
LEAGUE OF VERMONT WRITERS, INC

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2026-No. 3, July

SAVE THIS DATE: September 12, 2026
IN PERSON – LIVE PEOPLE
LVW Special September Event
"THE NEW WORLD OF MARKETING for WRITERS"
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
More information coming soon in emails.

Table of Contents

SAVE-THE-DATE: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12TH FOR A SPECIAL LVW EVENT: THE NEW RULES OF MARKETING FOR WRITERS IN MIDDLEBURY, VERMONT. 2

"The New Rules of Marketing for Writers" will be presented on September 12, 2026 2

UPCOMING FREE ZOOM EVENTS 2

Book Group – Hosted by Shawn Anderson 2
Open Mic – Hosted by Gail Wind 2

LIBRARIES AND BOOKSTORES NEWS 3

Green Mountain Books and Prints, Lyndonville, Vermont 3

NETWORKING – "FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOLLOW-UP" 4

Onion River Press Query 4
League of Vermont Writers had a Table at Bookstock 5
Carl Nyberg was our unofficial photographer at the Annual Business Meeting this year. 5

KUDOS KORNER 6

GiGi Desaulniers publishes *Shombov the Possible* 6

PROSE CONTRIBUTION 6

Barn Cat by Susan Smith 6

CURRENT WRITING CONTESTS 9

Current Contests: 9

AMAZING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS 10

1. Educational Series with Alyssa Berthiaume: 10
2. A Special Program with Joni Cole: 11
3. Upcoming Webinar: Demystifying the Book Publishing Process with Tracie Ashman 12

ANOTHER SPECIAL AUTHOR IS IN THE BIG LIBRARY IN THE SKY 12

About Peggy Sapphire, by Jerry Johnson 12

AI--- AND YOU DON'T EVEN WANT TO GO THERE 13

I googled 'What is the Shy Girl Scandal' by Gail Wind 13

CAN ANYONE GET A BOOK DEAL? WHAT IT TAKES TO BE A NOVELIST IN 2026. 13

"From Pitch to Publication" is a series taking readers behind the curtain of modern publishing as a business. 13

SAVE-THE-DATE: Saturday, September 12th for a special LVW event: THE NEW WORLD OF MARKETING for WRITERS in Middlebury, Vermont.

"The New World of Marketing for Writers" will be presented on September 12, 2026

This program will be held at the Town Hall Theater at 72-76 Merchants Row, Middlebury, VT 05753

This still developing program is currently scheduled for 10:00 am - 2:00 pm and will feature a presentation by Vermont Book Award winner, Helen Whybrow.

It will also include a panel discussion with Samantha Kolber, owner and publisher of Rootstock Publishing, and editor, publisher, Pat Goudey O'Brien.

We are working on additional special guests and program highlights.

Marketing has changed significantly over the years. What worked to sell books five years ago may not work today. Furthermore, authors – even those with major publishers – are expected to shoulder more of the marketing burden.

Join us, along with our special guest for a day of discussion about what works in book marketing today, and what authors can do to aid in their book's success.

Member authors are invited to display their books for sale.



Keep an eye on your inbox for additional details to come.

Upcoming Free Zoom Events

Book Group – Hosted by Shawn Anderson

by Shawn T. Anderson

In 2026, the LVW book group will continue to meet on even months to discuss books on publishing, creativity, motivation, and writing craft. We usually hold meetings on Thursdays, late into the month, so our next meeting will be at the end of August.

If you would like to invite friends to join an evening of book group, please have them email the league at lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org and put "LVW book group" in the subject line. We will add them to the email list.

For our June book, we read THE ART OF BREVITY by Grant Faulkner. Grant reached out on Instagram and reminded me it's National Flash Fiction Month!

Here are the other books selected for 2026:
August: *DEAR WRITER* by Maggie Smith
October: *NOVELIST AS A VOCATION* by Haruki Murakami

Open Mic – Hosted by Gail Wind

The next Open Mic will be July 23

Open Mic is held on alternating months with Book Group. Open Mic is odd moths: January, March, May, July, September, and November.



Book Group is even months: February, April, June, August, October, and December. Our net open mic will be August 26th, 2026.

Emails are sent out prior to each open mic, but if you want to secure a spot, contact Gail Wind at gailinvermont@outlook.com.

Each reader, (depending on how many participate) will have 5-7 minutes to introduce themselves and read. A featured writer will have 10-12 minutes.

We encourage all members to attend, even if they don't read. Share the link and bring your

December: *WRITING CREATIVITY AND SOUL* by Sue Monk Kidd.



We hope you can make it!
Shawn

friends for moral support! Listen to and support these courageous presenters.

When you publish, presenting your work in public is part of advertising your work.

If you are curious about what our open mic nights look like, just join the Zoom and sit back. You can leave your video off and just be a "fly on the wall." You will find it a comfortable, sharing space.

We welcome authors in all genres to share their published and/or unpublished work.
Come, read to us!
Gail Wind

Free Writing Webinars:
https://community.prowritingaid.com/c/free-webinars/

Libraries and Bookstores News

Lyndonville Vermont; Cobleigh Library in the News

They Were Featured On WCAX & Magic 97.7! The Cobleigh Public Library made the news!

On June 16th, reporter Lizzie Jensen of WCAX aired a story about our brand-new mobile library, also known as the Edie Bell-Brown Bookmobile! It was a very cool experience for our staff, and if you haven't had a chance to see it, the video link is here: Link to WCAX Story: https://www.wcax.com/…/lyndonville-library-debuts…/

Our Library Director, Kaitlin Wood, was also interviewed by Jeff Garfield of **Magic 97.7** on the morning radio broadcast of June 17th. They discussed how the library offers many valuable services and fun events for people of all ages in the community. Thank you, Jeff, for this wonderful opportunity!





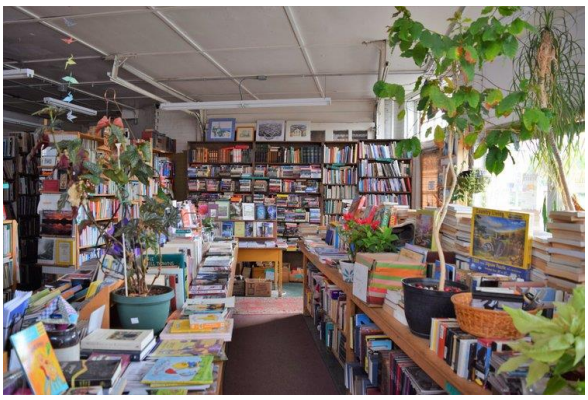
Green Mountain Books and Prints, Lyndonville, Vermont

Green Mountain Books and Prints opened its doors for business in March of 1977. Ralph and Rosemary Secord had a camp in Sheffield where they spent many summers.

In the beginning the store was only open three days a week during the summer months, then the Secord's would head back to Connecticut leaving the store in the hands of Stanley Brill for the winter. Mr. Brill built many of the bookshelves that are still in use today.

Prior to opening Green Mountain Books and Prints Ralph Secord was a librarian and ran a business called The Gilead Hill Bookstore. Ralph and his son also toured around the countryside selling remaindered books to schools. Eventually Ralph and Rosemary bought a house in Lyndonville and took on the bookstore as a full-time venture. [50 years old next year]





Read the full story

Networking – "Follow-up to the Follow-up"

Onion River Press Query

Back in May, a member asked, "I'm wondering if any of your members have used Onion River Press in Burlington to publish their book. I'm considering working with them. Is there a way to ask your membership or do you happen to know someone who has experience with them? Thank you."

We got two replies which we posted in an email.

R.E. said, "I gave Onion River Press an email copy of an earlier Volume ONE to see if they would be interested in printing it. I received a prompt and empathic response, with, "No, sorry, I like the writing but we specialize in children's books, we can't run with your manuscript, sorry."

Another member, whose email went initially to my Junk folder (gotta love it) replied with information for all of us.

E.P. Said, "If no one in Vermont has an answer, I would suggest your member go to the 'Authors Guild' website and either ask that membership outright or check back discussions. They might have to join to access certain discussions, but some pages are open. Members of the Authors Guild constantly post requests for info and answers about nearly every press you can name, large and small. They have an incredible archive about publishers, scams and such things."

Then, a while later, another member wrote, "I used Onion River Press to publish two of my novels: *As Crooked as They Come* (2021) and *Bootleggers, Bullets &* Brothers in the Kingdom (2024). They've been great to work with and—in my case—took care of getting the titles on Amazon and all the related sell-through stuff I didn't want to deal with. (Neither title, by the way, is a children's book.) If you have further questions about my dealings with ORP, don't hesitate to ask. ~~ Phil Jordan, Sunderland, VT

Then, a while later, still another member wrote, "I used Onion River Press when I published my memoir in 2019. (Tales of the Dandelion Commune).I have only good things to say about how Rachel Fisher and the rest of the Onion River Press team treated me.

Rachel was very friendly and answered all my questions promptly. I would recommend her and Onion River Press to anyone. ~~ Rich Graham

This is the kind of collaboration that makes LVW work!

League of Vermont Writers had a Table at Bookstock



Here is a picture of the League's tent at Bookstock 2026. From left to right under the tent are: Edie Jordan, Celia Ryker and Peter Cobb. Compliments of Phil Jordan.

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Carl Nyberg was our unofficial photographer at the Annual Business Meeting this year.

I couldn't post them all, but here are a couple choice photos.



Alyssa Kinght's Shawn Anderson



Speaker Joni Cole
~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

Kudos Korner

GiGi Desaulniers publishes *Shombov the Possible*

GiGi Desaulniers is a relatively new member of the League of Vermont Writers. She recently published her first book, *Shombov the Possible* with L. Brown & Sons Printing in Barre, Vt.



Desaulniers says *Shombov the Possible* asks the question, "What if we start our day with possibility?" The book is about "letting go of the doubt of our rocky environment and planting seeds of choice, even if we sometimes feel so overwhelmed by the news around us."

Desaulniers wants her readers to know "there is a whole world of possibility open to us if we just are open to it."

"My biggest influence was my mother," emphasizes Desaulnier. "She was an amazing woman and she never gave up; she really was a true mother." Desaulnier grew up alongside five siblings, and her father passed away shortly after she was born.

Another one of Desaulnier's biggest influences is Mother Teresa. For a period of thirty years of Desaulnier's life, she went back and forth to India, recalling "and was really intent on working with Mother Teresa sisters." She was motivated by the strength of women in villages in rural India, and says, "These women are my heroes; it is amazing to think back on how they changed their villages. Their capabilities were second to none, and I think that changed the way I saw things in the States."

"Shombov the Possible" interweaves all these experiences, from contemporary culture to Eastern civilization, all to stress the etymology of the word "Shombov" which is Bengali for "Possible."

GiGi shared her publishing experience with the League: "It honestly was a great experience. I have done lots of writing for newspapers and a few magazines but this was my first book. I worked with Keith Blow at L. Brown. He was straight forward and made it all seem easy!! He was patient with my questions. My book was small (about 5X7), hard cover (case bound hard cover with silver foil stamp on front and spine) and had a book jacket. I also had pages with illustrations I had provided. All in black ink. I highly recommend them. You can e-mail them at info@lbrownandsonsprinting.com or phone 802-476-3164."

Prose Contribution

Barn Cat by Susan Smith

Every farm needs at least one barn cat, but often has several more, because another one always comes along, and once you have two, well, you know. But you need at least one because they are absolutely essential for keeping rats and mice out of the hay and animal feed.

We had this fancy barn cat once, sleek as a weasel and twice as feisty. She was an orange tiger, who sort of took over like she owned the place. Well, she probably did, as somehow the dogs deferred to her and gave her the right of way, possibly after getting their noses scratched. We called her "Tigress" because no one could think of anything else that fit this Queen.

So, Tigress, as we called her, could be so sweet, cuddling up to us when we were in the barn, and sometimes roaming down to the house and leaping up to us on the porch swing and climbing up onto our shoulders. She could also be snippy and snarly if she didn't find things exactly to her liking, which was fairly often. If we were eating something, she wanted a bite, and if she didn't get a taste, you might get a claw swiped across your knee. She could be especially mean if you had something like a fish-stick and didn't share it. But once I tried to feed her a small piece of salmon, and she swatted it right out of my hand and gave me a look and a snarl

that could kill. *Well, excuse me, Miss Priss, I didn't realize you didn't care for salmon. Let me get you a menu next time.*

She could be most annoying when she wanted to be, especially if you dared to ignore her. If you were resting in the hayloft, she would climb over you and switch her tail in your face, showing her backside to you. Don't bother trying to shoo her off because she knew the hayloft was her special territory.

She went into high gear at milking time, and when she got a chance, she'd sneak right over and suck some of that milk right out of the cow's teat. If Papa saw her, well, she'd get a good kick with his foot. That didn't faze her much. She would just wait for her next chance, even licking it right out of a pail left unattended. If any spilled or splashed onto the floor, it was hers! Don't even try to wipe it up.

Tigress preferred the barn, but felt perfectly comfortable anywhere else on the farm. She could be seen in the field, talking with the cows, dancing in and out of their legs or leaping to catch a bumble bee. She loved rolling around in the vegetable garden, nibbling on a cucumber or playing with a worm like it was a mouse. There wasn't much that she wouldn't try, and she gave us many a good laugh.

That cat seemed to know when Ma and I were going down to the brook fishing, usually after supper and before dark. That's when the best rainbow trout would be hungry. We'd grab up our poles and gear, and head down the back hill to where the path to the waterfalls was easiest. Ma usually caught more than I did, telling me I needed more patience—not my strongest asset, I guess. Tigress would watch and watch, and if we pulled up a fish, she would be right after that thing before it hit the grass. I was keeping my eye on her though, and usually, though not always, I got to it first, before she grabbed it right off the hook and ran like a leopard with it. "Fisher-kitty" Ma called her. Once we had saved up eight or so nice trout, cleaned and frozen, Ma would make Dad's favorite dinner, cornmeal battered trout with fresh muffins and greens.

Another meal that my farmer Dad loved was tripe. That was the worst thing I ever heard of or smelled in my entire life—pickled cow's belly. Tigress and I wanted nothing to do with that stuff. No sir. I'd rather eat chicken liver, though I wasn't too fond of that either. I'd rather smell a pig farm or a barrel of rotten potatoes. But the rule around the farm was that we don't waste any part of the animal. My folks ate calves' brains and tongues, chicken livers, turkey hearts. "Every part helps a part", they said. My mother was born with a heart defect, and as a child, always had to eat the heart of the turkey, so we at least had to try things. That cat would eat anything except the tripe.

Well, Tigress was alone on her throne for quite a while, until a handsome black half-Siamese prince came along, showing off his fancy moves. One night all we heard outside was the wailing of cats on the stone wall. It wasn't long before we had a big litter of eight black and orange kittens, some of them calicos. That took care of any mice that wanted a free meal in our barn.

Well, Tigress didn't seem to be very maternal, often getting annoyed with her rambunctious brood. Once they were eating on their own, she swatted them away at any attempt to go back to the nipple.

Of course, all of the cats had free reign of the farm, except for the house. They'd show up in the funniest places. I once found a calico kitten nestled under a hen that tried to hatch it. One orange kitten, Baby Tigress, got itself stuck up in a tall lilac bush, hanging by her neck from a vee in the branches screeching her little head off.

An all black one, like his dad, fell into a pail of milk and couldn't get out. Tigress did intervene that time, snatching that kitten out in her teeth, shaking it off, and tossing it about three feet away from the pail. Then she pushed the pail over as if to tell Dad, "take that."

Tigress thought she had a right to do anything and she certainly tried. Jumping up on a moving tractor, or on top of a load of hay bales, was just her own style of entertainment. The rototiller scared me to death though. She'd sit on the hitch between the tractor and the tiller, as if daring those things to touch her. Sometimes she would swipe her paw at them like they were a ball on a string.

In June one year, Tigress went missing. We looked for her everywhere, over a couple of days, but had too much to do to worry about it. On the 4th day, a Saturday, I took my little brother Mikey with me to the brook to teach him to fish. There was an elderly neighbor down there, Jeb Rushford, just pulling an eleven-inch trout up out of the water. Sure enough, Tigress was there, about to leap on it, when old Jeb pulled a rock from his pocket and threw it straight at Tigress.

"Damn cat," he yelled, and looking up at me, "This your cat?"

"Yes, sir," I answered, "she does have a bad habit of stealing fish."

"Well, she got three of mine in the past few days and I'm about done with that. I figure one good hit with a rock and she'll quit."

"Well, don't hurt my cat, please," I answered, "I'll take care of her." I picked up Tigress, incurring a few scratches on my arms, and carried her up to the house.

"You may be getting yourself locked up for a while, Miss Queen." I said to her, bringing her to an old empty chicken coop and locking her in.

"There, think about that for a while." Tigress hissed at me and leaped at the wires of her cage, more ferocious than I had ever seen her. I left her there, went in for Mother's blueberry pancakes and asked my Mother for suggestions in coping with that cat. I have to admit that I admired her feistiness.

"Well," Mother said, "I've found that animals with an attitude like that often get what they ask for."

I waited a few hours and went to let her out of the coop, but she was gone. I forgot to latch the trapdoor on the top, and she figured that out pretty fast. *Oh well.*

Several more days went by, and I was worried. I thought maybe she was so mad at me that she had left forever.

Mikey was begging me to take him fishing every morning and evening, but I didn't have a heart to do it, not without Tigress coming along. Finally, he whined enough that I took him. We saw Mr. Rushford fishing our favorite pool, so we walked further down the brook to another nice spot under a waterfall.

We were just baiting up our hooks when I saw Tigress stuck in some rocks where fast water rushed through. Her dead body was disintegrating, but I knew it was her. No mistaking that orange hair. I told Mikey to reel up his pole, and come home with me.

"I just don't have the heart for fishing today." I told him.

Current Writing Contests

Current Contests:

Vermont Writers' Prize: Organized by Green Mountain Power and Vermont Magazine, this contest challenges writers to explore Vermont—its people, places, values, or history. Open to Vermont residents and students.

- Deadline: January 1, 2027
- Prizes: $1,250 for both the Prose and Poetry winners, with publication in Vermont Magazine
- Apply via: Vermont Writers' Prize on Submittable [1, 2, 3, 4]
-

Poetry Society of Vermont (PSOV) Contests: PSOV hosts multiple seasonal and member contests throughout the year. Their annual Summer Contests run through the end of July, and they host various workshops and online groups for local writers.

- **Deadline:** Summer contest submissions close July 31, 2026
- **Apply via:** Poetry Society of Vermont Submissions [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]
-

Writer's Digest Annual Writing Competition: Open to various categories including genre, memoir, poetry, and flash fiction. Grand prize is typically $5,000 plus publication and an agent meeting. Check deadlines and requirements on Writer's Digest Competitions. [1]

The Ghost Story Flash Fiction Contest: Biannual contest with a $1,000 top prize and publication for supernatural or magical realist stories up to 1,000 words. The summer deadline is July 15, 2026. Submit through Poets & Writers Grants and Awards. [1, 2]

New York Times Summer Reading Contest: Open globally but highly popular with US writers, this contest asks teenagers (ages 13–19) to write a short essay (or record a 90-second video) about an article they loved in the *Times*. Submissions close August 14, 2026. Details are available on the New York Times Learning Network. [1, 2]

Muriel Craft Bailey Memorial Poetry Contest: Annual competition awarding $1,000 for a single poem up to 60 lines. The deadline is July 15, 2026, and submission can be completed via Poets & Writers Grants and Awards. http://comstockreview.org/annual-contest/ Hurry, closes soon!

Next Generation Short Story Awards A not-for-profit international awards program for authors of short stories. https://shortstoryawards.com/enteryourstory.php

Amazing Events and Workshops

While LVW cannot as 501(c)(3) organization specifically "promote" these events, we feel it is important to share these THREE GREAT opportunities with you!

1. Educational Series with Alyssa Berthiaume:

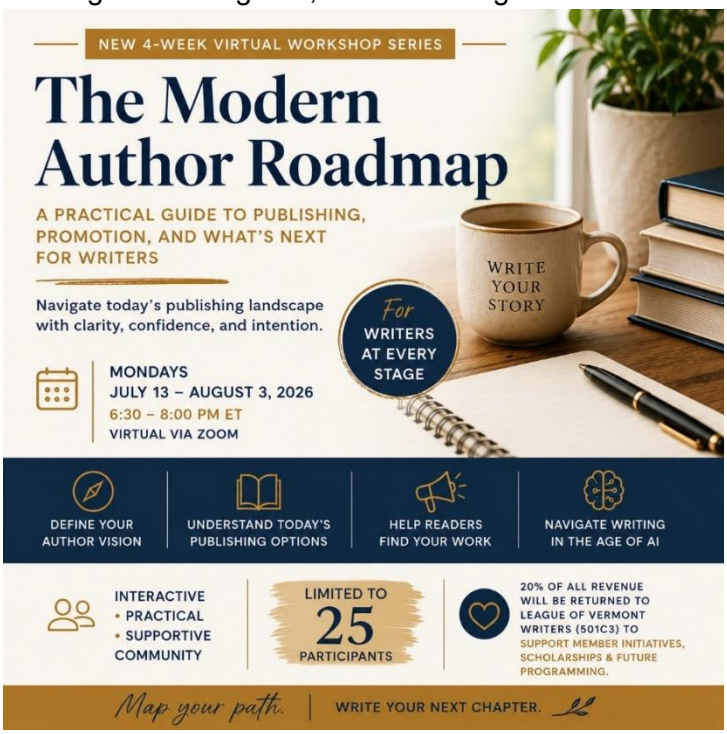
Dear League of Vermont Writers Members,
We're excited to share an upcoming educational series that is being led by LVW's Immediate Past President and author, speaker, and writing coach, Ally Berthiaume.

Beginning July 13, Ally will lead **The Modern Author Roadmap: A Practical Guide to Publishing, Promotion, and What's Next for Writers**—a four-week virtual workshop designed to help writers navigate today's rapidly changing publishing landscape.

This isn't like your typical writing workshop.

It's a four-week conversation about becoming the kind of author you want to be—and making intentional decisions about publishing, visibility, promotion, and the future of your writing life.
Whether you're preparing to publish your first book, promoting an existing one, or considering what comes next in your writing journey, this series offers practical guidance on:

- Defining your vision as an author (Week 1)
- Understanding today's publishing options (Week 2)
- Helping readers discover your work (Week 3)
- Navigating the opportunities and challenges of writing in the age of AI (Week 3)



Special LVW Member and Organization Benefits

As a League of Vermont Writers member, you are eligible to register for **$97** (regularly priced **$197**)—a savings of $100.

Even better, **20% of all registration revenue will be returned to the League of Vermont Writers (a 501(c)(3) nonprofit) to support future organizational initiatives.**

By participating, you'll not only invest in your own writing journey—you'll also help strengthen opportunities for our writing community.

Mondays, July 13–August 3 from 6:30-8:00 pm Virtual via Zoom

Learn more and register here: https://hello.dubsado.com/public/form/view/6870068a728f8695e00be291

We hope you'll join Ally for this thoughtful and practical exploration of what it means to be an author today.

2. A Special Program with Joni Cole:

Hi! I so enjoyed the opportunity to give a talk the other month about why our stories matter now more than ever. I'm writing now because I am asking if you could spread the word about my upcoming program, THE END GAME, a 9-Month Challenge to Develop and/or Complete Your Manuscript: September 8, 2026 – June 22, 2027. Applications will be reviewed by mid-July. I have a few spaces left.

If people would like an application, or simply want more info, I'm happy to oblige. Folks can reach out to me at jonibethcole@gmail.com. Or visit www.the https://www.thewriterscenterwrj.com/about/ . Thanks for your consideration in spreading the word. And happy summer. Joni



The END GAME PROGRAM brings together a small, select community of writers (10-12) who are committed to advancing or finishing a full draft of a work of fiction or narrative nonfiction.

The End Game program includes:
- Seven Sprints. (5-weeks each). These 5-week online workshops are grounded in narrative craft. Each session provides consistent deadlines, instruction on narrative techniques, and quality feedback to keep you writing forward. Come to each meeting with 250-500 words of new or revised material to read aloud for quick critiques. (Meetings are held Tuesdays, 6:30 – 8:15 p.m. EST.)

Accountability. The last week of every "Sprint" we devote time to a look back and look forward. In these meetings we'll take stock of your progress. What served (or didn't serve) your creative process? What have you learned about your work or yourself as a writer? You'll also set interim goals to stay focused and counter any feelings of overwhelm.

Pop Ups. Each Sprint, you have the opportunity to register for a "pop-up" workshop to share ahead 2 – 4ish pages (about 1000 words) for review. These optional opportunities outside our regular Tuesday meetings allow you to get more in-depth feedback on a submission, as well as stay current with the work of your peers.

1:1 Consultations (by appointment). Need a crash course on craft? Experiencing a crisis of confidence? Want to brainstorm your narrative arc? Eager for a quick critique of up to 1000 words? Schedule a once-a-month 1:1 consultation with the instructor to elevate the quality of your writing and/or your spirits.

Friday Feed. Believe it or not, a lot of manuscripts have emerged almost entirely from prompts, which almost always inspire "flow" and meaningful material. Expect a new prompt to hit your inbox at least once a week.

TAD Talks. During the program, participants are asked to give a brief presentation (12ish minutes) to the group on whatever subject of writing craft or creativity they wish. These talks provide a more in-depth way for participants to share their knowledge and experience, and for the group to pool its wisdom.

Caffeine Club: It's weird how motivating it can be to gather silently to simply…write. Join our weekly Zoom meetings on Thursdays from 7 - 8 a.m. EST. Each session starts with a few minutes of coffee-talk; then we write for 55ish minutes, followed by a brief debriefing.

Guestperts: During the last three Sprints of the program, the End Game invites a few guest authors,

teachers, and publishing experts to share their wisdom with the group.

bETA BUDDIES is an exchange program where you'll have the opportunity to swap up to 5000 words of your manuscript with another End Gamer for verbal feedback. This is a unique opportunity, given submissions are limited to 1000 words during our regular programming and the 1:1 consultations with me. (bETA BUDDIES happens in the final third of the End Game program.)

3. Upcoming Webinar: Demystifying the Book Publishing Process with Tracie Ashman

First, watch the YouTube Interview: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LakKt9mDYhM&t=5s

Pam Ladds, host of "NEK VT Rocks!", interviews Tracie Ashman, owner of NEK Editing and the creator of the upcoming webinar *Demystifying the Book Publishing Process*.

Tracie helps authors navigate editing, publishing, and book production with clarity and direction. She's also the author of *9 Writing Elements for Great Storytelling*, a guide that helps writers strengthen their craft and build compelling stories.

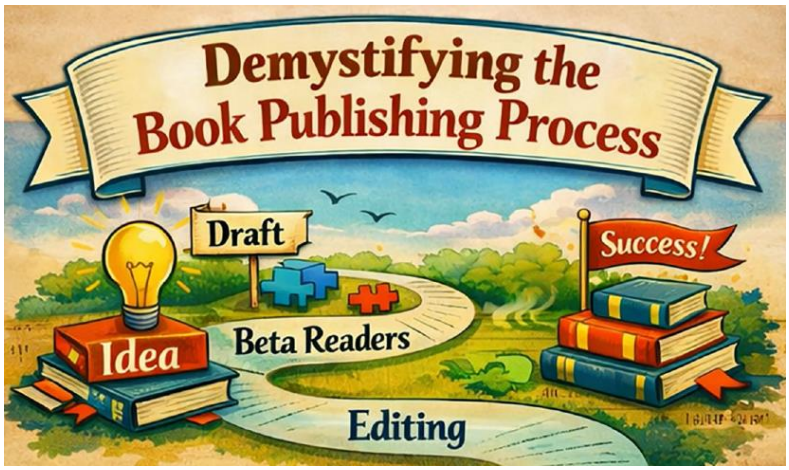
Then, sign up for the Webinar

This webinar takes place on Saturday, July 25, 2026, at 10:30 AM (EST) and is presented by NEK Editing.

Join Tracie for this focused 30-minute session that gives you the clarity and direction you need to navigate publishing with confidence. Learn what really happens behind the scenes — and what your next steps should be.

Spots are limited, and a recording is included with registration. Cost is 10.00

Here is where to register: https://checkout.mailerlite.com/checkout/19328



Another Special Author is in the Big Library in the Sky

About Peggy Sapphire, by Jerry Johnson

My writer-friend, Peggy Sapphire from Craftsbury, Vermont passed away peacefully on Saturday night, February 7. My heart goes out to her daughters Jill Sapphire and Loren Sapphire and all who knew her. I'll never forget the day I met Peggy at a reading she did with Leland Kinsey in a beautiful old barn in Craftsbury. She and I became friends that day. It was a blessing simply to be in her presence.

I was blessed when Peggy and I did readings together and when we would meet at various events. I remember reading with her at the Craftsbury Public Library, sharing tables with her at the Burlington Book festival, participating with her at a 100 THOUSAND POETS FOR CHANGE at the MAC Center for the Arts Gallery & Shop, reading alongside her and other poets at a Robert Frost Poetry Reading on the shores of Lake Willoughby, being with her at a Vermont Authors Fest in Craftsbury Common. It was such an honor when she was one of the featured poets at a League of Vermont Writers - since 1929 Picnic & Poetry Fest I hosted at my farm and schoolhouse.

Peggy Sapphire's poetry is wonderful. I learned so much from her readings and from reading her terrific books. And I'll forever treasure the blurb she gave me for the cover of my Up the Creek Without a Saddle book.

Peggy's surname certainly befits her ... Sapphire is a precious gem. I won't forget Peggy Sapphire.

AI--- and You Don't Even Want to Go There

I googled 'What is the Shy Girl Scandal' by Gail Wind

So, the AI of the internet gave me this explanation:

The "Shy Girl" scandal refers to the controversy surrounding the horror novel *Shy Girl* by Mia Ballard, which became the first commercially published book by a "Big Five" publisher to be canceled due to overwhelming evidence that it was heavily generated by artificial intelligence.

The Rise and Fall of *Shy Girl*

- *Shy Girl* originally gained popularity as a self-published novel, catching the attention of the horror community on TikTok and eventually landing a traditional publishing deal with Hachette Book Group in 2025.
- As the book geared up for a wider release, readers and literary critics began noticing repetitive language and patterns characteristic of AI software.
- A viral, multi-hour YouTube breakdown, Reddit investigations, and tests from an AI detection company (Pangram) concluded the text was approximately 78% AI-generated

.

The Publisher's Decision

- Following an inquiry from *The New York Times*, Hachette pulled the book from all retailers and completely canceled its release, citing its commitment to original human storytelling.
- This marks a massive precedent in the publishing industry, sparking intense debates about how much due diligence traditional publishers exercise when acquiring self-published works.

The Author's Response

- Author Mia Ballard denied personally using AI to write the novel.
- She stated that an acquaintance who assisted in editing the self-published version utilized generative AI, unbeknownst to her. Ballard noted that the backlash caused significant harm to her reputation and mental health.

Publishers Weekly

Copyright and Cover Art Controversy

Beyond the AI allegations, the book also faced backlash before its traditional acquisition for cover art theft. The original self-published cover featured an unauthorized, cropped image of a painting titled *Dreamer* by artist Whyn Lewis, which Ballard reportedly pulled from Pinterest.

Can anyone get a book deal? What it takes to be a novelist in 2026.

"From Pitch to Publication" is a series taking readers behind the curtain of modern publishing as a business.

Consolidation, fewer imprints and editorial bottlenecks are reshaping how fiction book deals are acquired and developed in today's publishing market. March.

This very in-depth series was created by USA Today's writer Josh Rivera, March 22, 2026

He writes:

> "I'm so accustomed to rejection that I brace myself for every email – even before opening. Even when good news may be waiting after that click. Writers, and all creatives to an extent, have to get accustomed to "no."
>
> About 81% of Americans feel that they have a book in them, according to an often-cited survey reported in The New York Times (from the early 2000s). Many aspire to write and publish a book in their lifetime, but only a small fraction see their work formally acquired and announced each year. A little over 2,000 fiction writers announced deals in 2025 on Publishers Marketplace.

This year, one of those deals announced is mine: My debut young adult novel, “How to Kill a Chupacabras," was acquired by independent publisher Tiny Ghost Press. I almost dismissed the email confirming the offer as another rejection.

I started writing this novel in 2021. My father, who inspired it, landed in the hospital as I was drafting the outline. He developed complications from cancer. I wrote the book at home, before work shifts, on weekends, beside my dad’s hospital bed.

That 2021 idea was ultimately acquired in 2024, announced in Publishers Marketplace this week, and expected to publish in the summer of 2027.

That’s six years from spark to publication date. And that’s not unusual. Two yearsfrom acquisition to publication is considered a “normal” timeline.”

Read this installment at https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/2026/03/22/how-to-be-a-novelist-author/89199046007/?utm_source=usat-DailyBriefing&utm_medium=email&utm_%E2%80%A6

2026 LVW Events to Date

Date	Event	Description
1/31/2026	Winter Presentation	Audio Books with Mary Cathrine Jones / Zoom
1/22/2026	Open Mic	Seven attending- Liz Gauffreau was our Featured Reader
2/26/2026	Book Group	*THE SECRETS OF STORY: Innovative Tools for Perfecting Your Fiction and Captivating Readers* by Matt Bird
3/26/2026	Open Mic	Eight attending – one guest.
4/16/2026	Book Group	*Fear Less: Poetry In Perilous Times* by Tracy K. Smith
4/11/2026	Annual Meeting	Annual Meeting and Writers’ Presentations with Joni B. Cole and Jennifer Belton at Bridgewater Community Center
5/21/2026	Open Mic	Eleven at the event, Michael Cahlin was our featured reader
6/25/2026	Book Group	*THE ART OF BREVITY* by Grant Faulkner – Six members joined the discussion

Review of 2025 Events at LVW

Date	Event	Description
1/25/2025	Annual Meeting	Business Meeting and Guest Speaker – Nadia Colburn
1/30/2025	Open Mic	Seven Readers – Cynthia Bogard Featured Reader
2/13/2025	Book Group	*The Creative Act, a Way of Being*, by Rick Rubin
3/20/22025	Open Mic	Five Readers – Louella Bryant Featured Reader
4/10/2025	Book Group	*Worlds Within Words,* by Sharon Darrow
4/12/2025	Spring Event	IN PERSON! Underhill Town Hall. 5-Panel Discussion and Breakout Sessions, “The Job of the Author to Help a Book Succeed.”
5/08/2025	Town Hall	Open discussion of the future of the League
5/22/2025	Open Mic	Seven Readers – Celia Ryker Featured Reader
6/12/2025	Book Group	*Before and after the Book Deal: A Writer's Guide to Finishing, Publishing, Promoting, and Surviving Your First Book,* by Courtney Maum.

7/10/2025	Open Mic	Six Readers- Nancy Kilgore Featured; 18 in the audience -total of 24!
8/23/2025	Summer Event	Into the Words – 9 teachers, Beautiful Day – Great Fun
8/25/2025	Book Group	*1000 Words* by Jami Attenberg
9/25/2025	Open Mic	Seven Readers and four extras in the audience – Super!
10/23/2025	Book Group	*Never Say You Can't Survive: How to Get Through Hard Times by Making Up Stories* by Charlie Jane Anders.
11/1/2025	Fall Event	"Fall into Flash" with Grant Faulkner
11/13/2025	Open Mic	Seven Readers – Peter Cobb was our Featured Reader
12/16/2025	Special Meeting	Discussion of Bylaws to Change date of 2026 Annual Meeting

Our Basic Information

LVW Board:

- President, Melissa Lindberg
- Vice President, Tom Carroll
- Secretary *pro-tem*, Tom Carroll
- Treasurer *pro-tem*, Gail E. Wind
- Immediate Past President, Alyssa Berthiaume

Board Members at Large:

- Pat Goudy O'Brien
- Jeniah Johnson
- Celia Ryker
- Barbara Tanner-Wallace

Spread the word:

Do you have a personal website or Facebook page?

→Tell your friends about the league!

It's easy. Just copy and paste this:

Check out the League of Vermont Writers at https://leagueofvermontwriters.org/

And, here's the link to our Newsletters

To be included in Kudos Korner: Send information about your recent publication successes, public readings, or any writing awards you might receive to gailinvermont@outlook.com with a subject line Kudos Korner.

Please send submissions in a "press release" format. Write a nice, concise, third-party article that is press-ready.

A picture of your book is great, a headshot of you is welcome!

For other League Lines questions, corrections, or contributions:

Please submit these to the editor Gail Wind at:

gailinvermont@outlook.com; subject line re: League Lines 2024.

General questions: contact the League at lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org

Membership questions: please contact Tommy Walz at twalz@aol.com

Snail mail: League of Vermont Writers, PO Box 1253, Burlington, VT 05402

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