



Let's Get to Know Each Other

Hi, all! I'm Christie Zarria, your new president! I have been a member of GCWA for almost seven years, having joined back in the fall of 2019, right before the world changed with COVID. GCWA has gone through quite a metamorphosis since then, but I have immersed myself in this group because at every meeting I am encouraged, challenged, and always leave with a renewed desire to pursue this crazy pastime called writing.

A Little Bit About Me...



My appetite for this pursuit started with my first poem which won a PTA award in third grade. At the tender age of eight, I realized the immense satisfaction of someone validating my work and I was hooked. Although my writing journey took many twists and turns over the years, it eventually led me to GCWA when I was searching for help with a ghostwriting project (that has since fallen by the wayside) and had no idea where to start.

My first year, I entered the annual writing contest and took third place in nonfiction. My writing passion was rekindled and I've been

darkening the GCWA meeting doors ever since!

A native Texan, my spouse and I raised five rambunctious kids who have provided us fifteen grandchildren, two "greats," and counting. I spent twenty-two years as an event planner and executive assistant to the CEO of a large professional liability company. All of which probably explains both my organizational instincts - and my occasional uncanny need to control things! Upon my retirement fourteen years ago, we moved to Florida where our home quickly became known as the "Zarria B&B" to our large circle of family and friends who often visit. Our household is rounded out with three elderly rescued fur babies and a feisty double yellow-headed Amazon parrot named Josie.

A Little Bit About You...

If you have been a member of GCWA for more than a few years, you know that we've seen some lean times in the not-so-distant past, thanks to COVID, followed by a monster named Ian. But we are resilient and with the fearless determination of leaders like past presidents Irene Smith and Mary Charles, as well as many loyal volunteers and some technical innovations like Zoom, we have not only survived, but we have thrived and are now growing at light speed. We have added twenty-two new members since the beginning of this year and are continuing to welcome folks almost daily. Thanks to our new and improved website and our dynamic Facebook page, more local writers are showing up monthly to check us out. Many of you have already stepped forward to share your skills and talents in our efforts to ensure that GCWA continues to be for you and about you. I think the appropriate phrase is: "it takes a village..."

Growing Pains...

As you can imagine, with this kind of expansion, there are challenges. To help us better serve you, we would *very much* appreciate two things from you:

- **Task #1:** Please BE SURE you stop at the sign-in table at each meeting so that your presence is documented for our records. If you are new, we want to acknowledge and get to know you a little. If you're a regular, we want to be sure we have the most up-

to-date information on you so that you don't miss a thing – and we have fancy schmancy *personalized* name tags just for you!!

- **Task #2:** We sincerely need a small army of folks at our sign-in area each month to ensure that task #1 is handled quickly and efficiently so that you can go and socialize/network with your fellow penmates – and grab some of those amazing snacks and coffee that Julie Moore and her awesome group have provided for your dining pleasure. So if you have hidden talents in the meet-and-greet department, or if you just like bossing people around and giving directions – WE NEED YOU! Please contact me at president@gulfcoastwriters.org or fill out our [Volunteer](#) form on the website.

What's Next..

For starters, our meeting on April 18th is our first ever Poetry Slam! Join us as our Program VP Lori Swick hosts what promises to be a fun-filled celebration of National Poetry Month, GCWA-style! Lori advises that we have a great line up of verse virtuosos as well as the up-and-coming poetically optimistic. Those of us not performing poetry will be charged with deciding which hopeful rhymers will walk away with some amazing certificates and a free lunch (yes there is such a thing in GCWA 😊).

You won't want to miss our May 16th meeting when we welcome Anne and Robert Jacobs, who are the president and past president of FAPA (Florida Authors and Publishers Association), and owners of Popin Edits, who will be talking to us about industry standards.

Finally...

I want to thank you for bearing with me as I transition into this role (future newsletters will not be so wordy, I promise!). While I'm not new to GCWA, I'm used to be "in the background" operating Zoom and projectors and stuff like that. Thankfully, I am a closet extrovert and am looking forward to getting to know more of you at our upcoming meetings. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time with any questions, suggestions or comments. All of us on the Executive

Committee and Board of Directors are very grateful for each of you and our mission, as always, is to provide the best possible place for you to be encouraged, challenged and inspired to keep doing this crazy thing we call writing.

Warmly,

Christie Zarria – GCWA President

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GCWA

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