



## GCWA Members - Exciting Programs

### GCWA Meeting Updates

**Saturday, April 18** is our next GCWA meeting. [Join us at 10:00 am at St. Hilary's Episcopal Church](#) for our fun and fast moving [Poetry Slam](#), recognizing April as National Poetry Month and honoring our poet members!

Afterward, we gather for lunch at a nearby restaurant.

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## JUDGES ARE READING!

### 2026 GCWA Writing Contest

One longstanding hallmark of the Gulf Coast Writers Association is its [annual writing contest](#). Submissions closed March 15, and judges are reading and rating submissions. Winners should be determined by the end of April, and announcements and readings of winning entries will be forthcoming.

Awards are presented in three genres:

- Fiction
- Nonfiction

- Poetry

First-, second-, and third-place prizes are awarded, including monetary awards for the winning entries.

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## Member Spotlight: Jeanne Meeks

April Member Spotlight is member and GCWA Vice President, Jeanne Meeks. An inspirational author of six books, she has written adventure mysteries, young adult fiction, and cozy mysteries. She is currently working on a historical fiction novel. Read her full Spotlight Interview and see her books on [the GCWA website](#). Jeanne has written *Rim to Rim*, *Wolf Pack*, *Gator Bait*, *Killer Serve*, *The Neighbor's Wife*, and most recently, *Freaks, Inc.* Find out more about each on [Jeanne's website](#).



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## Petite Passages

**Editor's Note:** The following passage is from "[It's Okay to Not Eat Your Peas: How Little Moments in Life Leave Lasting Impressions](#)" by member, [Dave Kratzke](#).

Dave has spent more than twenty-five years working in the journalism, public relations, marketing, and advertising arenas.

### Don't Be a Hater By Dave Kratzke

No matter how imperfect the United States may be or how divided our opinions, [our national anthem] is a song of hope and unity even during times of despair.

The lyrics of "The Star-Spangled Banner" were taken from a poem by Francis Scott Key after he witnessed the Battle of Baltimore during the War of 1812. The words were inspired in the midst of conflict about the perseverance of America.

The present American flag has fifty stars for each of the fifty states and thirteen stripes for each of the original thirteen colonies that declared independence from Britain. The flag itself represents our diversity, unity, and struggles in our pursuit of happiness.

So stand unwavering in your beliefs, but always remember that we're all in this together. Regardless of what team you're pulling for or which team you love to hate, don't be a hater. Whether you affiliate with the red states or the blue states on election day, don't be a hater if your candidate doesn't win. Hope for leadership that brings the country together as one.

Don't let hate triumph over love. Remember, we're all on the same team. We're all part of the human race. We're all Americans rooting for the home team and rooting for the game-winning home run.

*Throughout his diverse career, he has written stories to engage a wide range of audiences and has crafted award-winning campaigns to sell numerous products and services. The owner of Big Kat Kreative, you can contact him at [dave@bigkatkreative.com](mailto:dave@bigkatkreative.com).*

**We're always looking for compelling prose or poetry to highlight our members' talent. Submit a 250-300-word excerpt from your work to: [communications@gulfcoastwriters.org](mailto:communications@gulfcoastwriters.org)**

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## BookHighway™ and AI...

*A Perspective on the Use of Artificial Intelligence By Tom Cossie*

**Editors note:** Member, Tom Cossi presents his argument for the use of AI in the publishing process, during this time when all writers must contemplate, weigh, and decide how and how much they personally do or do not embrace AI.

"AI will replace white collar workers', or as Marc Cuban stated on 2 types of AI users: "you're either using it to learn everything" or "so you don't have to learn anything".

Having spent 55 years producing, marketing, and promoting recording artists and now having become a book author myself, I've come to realize the stark similarities between the artist book writer/author and artist song writer/author. AI will have a direct impact on both.

Bringing a record to market over the past fifty years was a complex and resource intensive process, requiring significant investments of both time and money. That process involved booking studio sessions, hiring musicians, managing union requirements, and overseeing recording, mixing, mastering, and pressing of records. Achieving recognition amidst thousands of aspiring artists further compounded these challenges. Today, platforms such as Songer and various songwriting applications have streamlined this process. Users can upload several lines of lyrics and select the direction for their preferred musical genre: Country, Pop, R&B, Reggae, Gospel, or versions of all. Within moments, they receive professionally produced songs complete with vocals and full accompaniment, and the quality and musicianship will be amazing.

Bringing a book to market today involves a challenging series of steps: researching your topic, creating an outline, organizing timelines, writing multiple drafts, securing a reliable editor, formatting, and repeated proofreading, all will happen before you have a completed product. The real challenge comes afterward, as you strive to stand out among millions of other aspiring authors who decide to write a book. I predict that this year, countless new writers with promising ideas, who have always considered writing, will turn to AI and develop their concepts further, letting technology handle most of the process.

Not being judgmental, I applaud AI. I'm sure the same people in the early 1900's who owned a black smith shop, along with horses and carriages, were extremely upset with Henry Ford. Progress and change are hard to accept and come at a price. I propose that the automated, robot-driven book assembly line will succeed. I also acknowledge there may be personal interests involved on my behalf and extend a warm welcome to the many new authors who will have the opportunity to engage as future subscribers to "BookHighway™" and experience the next generation road to market city.

***Post-note:** this article presents the opinion of one member. In a time of accelerated debate and individual decision making, the **GCWA Newsletter** welcomes dialog and respectful counterpoint opinions on a subject each of us must wrestle with. If you want to write an article on your perspective and/or decisions, contact Sonia Winesette at [sonia.winesette@gmail.com](mailto:sonia.winesette@gmail.com).*

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## Let's Celebrate Our Members

[Joni Iraci](#)

[Sharon Wagner](#)

[Akiya Maston](#)

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# GCWA IS SEEKING COMMUNICATIONS VOLUNTEERS

Our current direction is to secure multiple volunteers to take on small, even "byte-sized" Communications roles and tasks. If you are interested in helping once or regularly with a small role for the newsletter, media contact, or social media, please email: [communications@gulfcoastwriters.org](mailto:communications@gulfcoastwriters.org).

***Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless.***

*Sherry Anderson*

## Become a Priceless Part of GCWA - Volunteer Today!

### **GCWA**

P.O. Box 60444, Fort Myers  
United States of America



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