



GCWA Members - Exciting Programs

GCWA Meeting Updates

Saturday, August 15, is our next GCWA meeting. [Join us at 10:00 am at St. Hilary's Episcopal Church](#). Our GCWA **Vice President of Special Projects Claudia Geagan** will honor the **2026 GCWA Writing Contest winners**. Writers in the Poetry, Fiction and Non-Fiction categories will be reading their winning entries at the meeting. It is always exciting for everyone to spend the morning listening to award-winning writing. We hope you'll join us.

Afterward, we gather for lunch at a nearby restaurant.

2026 GCWA Writing Contest Winners

Special recognition to these winners:

POETRY:

1st Place: **Lara Anderson**; 2nd Place: **Orrin Ladd**; 3rd Place: **Teresa Hiatt**

FICTION:

1st Place: **Richard Drummer (Allen)**; 2nd Place: **Deborah Garofano**; 3rd Place: **Bradley Burt**

NONFICTION:

1st Place: **Linda Saether**; 2nd Place: **Cheryl Lynn Dratler**; 3rd Place: **Christie Zarria**

Member Spotlight: Sharon Wagner

[Sharon Wagner](#) is the award-winning author of [Chorus of Crows](#), (March 2026) which has already received a starred review from Independent Book Review. [The Levitation Game](#), won an INDIES Book of the Year Award for Science Fiction, and her short story, "Default 666," received an honorable mention from Writer's Digest. Sharon is a former children's book illustrator and travel blogger who never stops imagining magical worlds to unravel with words. Read her [full interview](#) to learn about her inspirations and upcoming projects.



Petite Passages

*This month's Petite Passage is taken from the novel **High Ground** by A. G. Conlyn, an architect from southwest Florida whose fiction draws on more than four decades in practice, a lifelong physical disability, and a close understanding of life in a climate-vulnerable region. He is also the author of The Venus Prophecy Books I and II, children's stories, and screen projects. Andrew lives in southwest Florida with his wife of forty-two years and is the proud father of two and grandfather of three.*

High Ground

By A. G. Conlyn

The ocean doesn't stop where it used to.

It sluices through streets that once had names, through buildings that still hold ghosts. Offshore dredging rigs float where dry ground once baked in the sun.

They claw newly submerged seabed to be pumped inland onto the new plateau—high, dry, and expensive. Buildings rise from it like a promise that money can outbuild nature. This is Gloria's and my world.

We design buildings for the city rising beside the carcass of Miami. It is called New Miami.

Gloria believes in building codes, steel, and concrete. She's polite, smart, refined, and beautiful. Then there's me. I'm Nancy Brookes. Loud, outspoken, occasionally crude, and fully capable of dropping an f-bomb when you least expect it. I'm not bad-looking either.

People say we're lovers. Two single women running a business together—of course they do. I'm sitting in my office wondering where Gloria is. Eventually, she appears in my doorway.

Pink blouse. Long red skirt. Hair perfectly brushed despite the humidity. Beautiful as always, though sweat darkens the fabric beneath her arms and along her collar.

"Good morning, Gloria," I say as I lean back in my chair. "Good of you to drop by." She grumbles, "My car's in the shop. I had to take a bus."

I almost ask why they hadn't given her a loaner, then stop myself. Loaners don't come with hand controls. She can't drive without one.

My mind wanders to something Cindy once told me.

She saw Gloria boarding a bus one morning. Gloria waited off to the side, letting everyone go first. People stared as she walked to the bus. The driver offered to lower the ramp. Gloria shook her head and said, "No need, I do this all the time."

I'm deep in thought about Gloria never complaining, never getting angry, and never wanting special treatment, when I hear:

"Hello, Nancy, are you there?"

I jolt back to reality to see Gloria staring at me.

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



The Practice of Showing Up

- *By Sonia Winesette*

For years, I believed books were written in moments of inspiration.

Not literally, of course. I knew they took months, sometimes years, to complete. But I imagined the real work happened when an idea arrived fully formed, when the words flowed effortlessly, when the muse finally decided to pay a visit.

Then I started paying attention to the writers I admired.

Their secret wasn't inspiration. It was something far less glamorous. They simply kept returning to the page.

I've begun to think that writing has less in common with lightning than with tending a garden. You don't plant a seed expecting blossoms the next morning. You water. You pull weeds. You trust what you cannot yet see. Some days the garden looks unchanged, but beneath the surface, roots are quietly taking hold.

Writing asks for the same kind of faith. Most days don't feel remarkable. You add a paragraph, reshape a scene, delete a page that wasn't working, or simply find the right word to end a sentence. It doesn't seem like much in the moment. But over weeks and months, those quiet acts of tending become a manuscript.

We celebrate finished books because they're tangible. We can hold them in our hands, place them on a shelf, and share them with readers. But the finished book is only the visible part of the story. Hidden beneath it are hundreds of ordinary days when a writer chose to begin again.

No one applauds those mornings.

No one sees the false starts, the discarded pages, or the paragraphs that exist only to help us discover what comes next. Yet those unseen hours are where the real work happens. They teach us patience. They teach us persistence. They remind us that writing is less about waiting for inspiration than becoming someone who writes whether inspiration arrives or not.

Perhaps that's what we're really building all along.

Yes, we're writing novels, memoirs, poems, essays, or articles. But beneath every manuscript, we're also building something less visible — practice. Every time we return to the page, we're strengthening the habits that make writing possible: curiosity, discipline, resilience, and trust.

Eventually, almost without noticing, one word becomes a sentence. One sentence becomes a paragraph. Paragraphs become pages. Pages become chapters. And chapters, written one ordinary day at a time, become a book.

The world celebrates the finished book.

Writers know the real work was the practice of showing up.

Celebrations

2026 Florida Authors and Publishers Association Awards!!

Two of our members recently received awards at the Orlando FAPACon Annual Conference.

Julie Moore, author of [I am Their Voice: A Guide for Caregivers and Advocates](#), earned a bronze medal for her revealing look many angles of the caregiving process. Congratulations, Julie!

Lori Swick earned a gold medal at the convention for her moving historical novel, *The Sculptor and the Saint*. Great news, Lori!

We are always looking for milestones to celebrate with our GCWA community. If you would like to have a milestone posted on the website and the Newsletter, under '[Let's Celebrate](#),' **please sign in to your members-only area and complete the accomplishments form.**

GCWA IS SEEKING COMMUNICATIONS VOLUNTEERS

We are looking 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.

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GCWA

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