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The Window

Official Newsletter of Panhandle Professional Writers
d/b/a Texas High Plains Writers



HIGH PLAINS WRITERS

July 2016

A Bi-Monthly

Newsletter

From the President

Kimberly Black

How many times have you heard the phrase, *Success depends greatly on who you know*? To an extent, that's true. Seldom does a hermit make a big success of his life. We need each other.

I'm not talking about name-dropping or pretentious social climbing. I'm referring to making savvy connections that benefit both associates. This is one of the wonderful benefits of participation in Texas High Plains Writers.

Every meeting presents opportunities for our members to meet new people in the writing industry. Whether it's the person sitting next to you or the guest speaker, you have the chance to make a new friend. And it's all up to you to do it.

Within our own organization, we have writers (of nearly every type and genre), editors, publishers, illustrators, and consultants. Even those who don't still actively pursue their careers have tons of experience and advice.

Our program presenters offer information about what they do, what they've done, what has worked for them, and what hasn't. They are up on the latest trends. They know the ins and outs of project success. It's all there for the asking, but will you make the connection?

I want to challenge every member to intentionally look for someone new to meet at

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back home, remember to tell your friends about our meetings and invite them to join you for the next one.

That's how we grow in numbers and in success. Together.

July Program

Jennifer Archer and Marcy McKay

"Bringing Your Characters to Life" is this month's program and is being presented by two very talented ladies who have a whole lot of writing experience. Both know what it takes to tell a good story and keep a reader turning the pages.

Jennifer Archer and Marcy McKay will show you how to create realistic, compelling characters through perspective and point of view. By the time they're finished, your story will leap off the page and into the reader's heart.

Often we forget to make our characters human—or as close as we can. We give them hair color, eye color, height, and a few good qualities from a list and think we're done. But we're not. Characters need to be as complex and three-dimensional as we are. We need to know everything we can about them—their flaws, how they view life, and what things they will do and absolutely won't do. What makes them laugh or cry. Jennifer and Marcy will show us how to dig deep down where the juicy secrets lie and pull them out.

Award-winning author Jennifer Archer has written numerous fiction and non-fiction books. Texas Library Association selected her debut young adult novel, *Through Her Eyes*, for their first Spirit of Texas Reading Program – Middle School, and for the TAYSHAS High School reading list.

Marcy McKay is an award-winning short story author and copywriter as well as a freelance journalist. Her work has appeared in numerous publications. Her debut novel, *Pennies From Burger Heaven*, won critical acclaim.

PLEASE NOTE: THERE WILL NOT BE A CRITIQUE SESSION FOLLOWING THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM..

Upcoming Programs

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September: Kimberly Willis Holt

November: Robyn Conley, The Book Doctor

Raffle & Youth Writing Contest Awards Ceremony

Help Us Welcome the Authors of Tomorrow

At our July 16 program and prior to the awards ceremony, we will be selling raffle tickets for a Samsung tablet. The funds generated from this raffle will help defray the cost of our youth writing contest. The tickets are \$5 each or six for \$20. The drawing will be held immediately after the awards ceremony. The winning ticket holder need not be present to win.

The awards ceremony starts at one o'clock following the "Bringing Your Characters to Life" program.

It was a great year for the youth writing contest as we had over 200 entries. Please come to our July meeting and stay for the awards ceremony to cheer on the authors of tomorrow.

THERE WILL NOT BE A CRITIQUE SESSION FOLLOWING THIS MONTH'S PROGRAM.

Workshop

Tex Thompson

Mark your calendars for Saturday, August 27, for an all-day workshop with Tex Thompson. The morning session, "The Plate Tectonics Theory of Dialogue", will start at 9 a.m. The afternoon session, "Prose P90X", will start at 1 p.m. Following the afternoon session, Tex will be giving one-on-one critiques of the first five pages of attendees' writings. These critiques will be "public", meaning others can listen and learn as well. Critique sessions will end at 6 p.m. The location and other details will follow in a future email announcement.

Member Spotlight on . . .

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Writing has always been my thing. It was writing papers that saved my grades back in school, and it was my writing ability that helped further my career. So when my son was born, I decided to stay home and make a real go of it. Because who has more free time than stay-at-home parents, right?

That was six years ago. My writing has come a long way in that time. I've published articles and short stories, made money freelancing, and self-published one novel. Last month, supporters helped me raise the funds on Kickstarter to publish my next book, complete with professional editing, custom drop caps, and gorgeous illustrations. I'm not where I daydreamed I'd be—are any of us?—but I wanted to share some thoughts that have helped me along the way.

Join a local critique group. If you can't find one, start one. Meeting with other writers on a consistent basis has brought my writing to another level. You wouldn't believe the difference in confidence when I submit something, knowing my group's hivemind has worked on it. I hear Mike Akins in my head while I'm typing away. *That sentence doesn't make sense. Passive voice—revise. That's out of the character's point of view!* It's as helpful as it is terrifying.

Consider self-publishing. If you've created something you're proud to put your name on, it should be out there. If you go the traditional route of queries and submissions and come up empty, don't put that manuscript in a box and forget about it. Let your work find its audience. You can help by getting it professionally edited, and for goodness sake pay for a quality book cover. The market is changing, and self-publishing won't kill your book deal down the line. It might even be what lands you the opportunity.

Speaking of opportunities, make your own. A great way to do that is getting involved with Texas High Plains Writers. The majority of my paid work comes from networking with local writers, and THPW is where they gather. Attend meetings, mingle with your fellow creatives, and pitch in where you can. I've made some amazing friends through this organization. If it wasn't for THPW, I wouldn't know how much fun it was to write a play and see it performed.

Thanks for the opportunity to be a part of this wonderful group. If you want one more piece of advice on how to finish your first drafts, [check out my blog](#). My new novel, *Four Color Bleed*, is up for pre-order [on my website](#) until its November release. In the meantime, let's be thankful we all have a place to belong in the Texas Panhandle.

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James Quiggle

Congratulations to member James Quiggle on the publication of his book *FIRST STEPS, Becoming a Follower of Jesus Christ*, a self-study Bible course with Teacher's Guide for group study. More information about James and his book can be found on [Smashwords](#), [CreateSpace](#), and [Amazon](#), as well as iTunes/Apple Store; Barnes & Noble, and other online epub retailers.

This is where we brag on our members and their accomplishments. If you know someone we should be bragging about, let us [know](#).

Writing Tip - Raising the Stakes

Linda Broday

One single principal is central to almost every piece of fiction—Raising the Stakes. There are two kinds—personal and public. The public ones place the fate of the world, city, country in the balance so these are very high. In personal stakes it's a need, yearning, dream, or goal that matters immensely to your character. The greater the risks, the more riveting the story.

Are the stakes in your story as high as they could be? Make losing something that will jar the character and change his/her life. In thrillers, losing puts the protagonist's life in jeopardy.

Then as the reader starts to get comfortable, you can also Escalate the Stakes—raise them even higher. This is a great technique for keeping a reader on the edge of his/her seat. Often as the story progresses, the stakes change as the character grows. Escalating things in the middle of the story will keep it from sagging. Using stakes effectively will make any story more powerful.

Member Writing Contest

Below is a list of this year's writing contest prompts and their postmark deadlines:

- "A twinkling eye can mean many things. Start with a twinkle in someone's eye and see where it takes you." July's contest has a September 1 postmark

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(silver lining) in it." September's contest has a November 1 postmark deadline.

- "He turned the key in the lock and opened the door. To his horror, he saw..."
- November's contest has a January 3 postmark deadline.

Your entries can be a short story of any genre or a poem. For details go to our [website](#).

Centennial

It will be upon us before we know it. In a few short four years from now, our organization will be celebrating its 100th anniversary. How many writing organizations can say that? Very few. We need volunteers to join the Centennial Committee. Please [email](#) us if you'd like to be a part of the planning and implementation of such an historic event.

Passing of Former Members

Mackie Aline Allgood and Avlon Conwell "Mike" Anderson Taylor

Former member Mackie Aline Allgood passed away May 23, 2016. Mackie was born September 21, 1926, in Lockney, Texas. She attended Texas College for Women in Denton and majored in pre-medicine/biology in 1947. Later she enrolled in the University of Oklahoma School of Medicine where she received a Masters degree in Medical Microbiology. In 1975, she bought a farm in Armstrong County, Texas. She joined Panhandle Professional Writers and attended many Frontiers in Writing conferences, assisting as needed. Her complete obituary can be found [here](#).

Avlon Conwell "Mike" Anderson Taylor died Wednesday, January. 13, 2016. Avlon was born December. 14, 1925, in Warrenton, Fauquier County, Virginia. She graduated in 1948 in advertising art from Richmond Professional Institute, an extension of College of William and Mary. She and Edward Pitts "E.P." Taylor married in 1950. They moved to Amarillo in 1961. Mike's avocations included reading, writing, pencil drawings, watercolors and needlework. She had been a member of Panhandle Professional Writers. She joined her husband in operating a bookstore in 1993. The store, located in West Hills in Amarillo, was named One More Time. Her complete obituary can be found [here](#).

Austin Film Festival

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In an effort to share with our members potential writing opportunities, below is a copy of an email we received. We have not verified its legitimacy, so be sure to do your homework before parting with any of your hard-earned money.

I'm writing on behalf of the [Austin Film Festival](#) to see if our organization might be a good resource for the important work the Panhandle Professional Writers is doing.

At AFF, we strive to creatively advance the art of storytelling by championing artists. With each hosting of our annual festival, it is our goal to expand our outreach and overcome industry established obstacles. This year we are thrilled to launch our **inaugural Playwriting Track** and are also excited to introduce our ***Diversity Focus Program***.

Our Playwriting Track will focus on how specific elements of the craft can help hone one's approach to the art of dramatic writing. Our *Diversity Focus Program* is just one of our initiatives to offset industry standards with the goal of bringing greater recognition to women and minorities in film and television by celebrating their work at the Festival. Our participating awardees and panelists this year include Michelle Ashford, Nicole Bernard, Wendy Calhoun, Katie Dippold, Lindsay Dora, Marta Kauffman, Elizabeth Meriwether, Nancy Meyers, Pamela Ribon, Nicole Perlman, and many others.

It would be an immense pleasure to have those involved with your organization join us at this year festival! Whether it be a venture of simple networking or a step toward cultivating essential aspects of the filmmaking industry to extend an invitation to those who share a passion for fantastic storytelling.

The Austin Film Festival takes place from October 13th – 20th in Austin, TX. We offer an array of [Badges and Passes](#) that provide access to various portions of the Festival, and would love to offer your **organization a bulk discount** if you have an interested group. If you are interested, or have any thoughts or questions about our programming, please feel free to give me call at 512-478-4795 or [email me](#) and I'd be happy to chat further!

Best,

Amelia Nichols
Marketing Intern
Austin Film Festival

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Links to Members' Websites

Jennifer Archer

Watch Jennifer's book trailer for her teen fiction, *The Shadow Girl*, on her [website](#).

You can also subscribe to her blog there.

Kim Black

[Subscribe](#) to Kim Black's email list and receive a free story. What kind of writer is Kim? Find out by going to her [website](#) and reading what she writes.

Natalie Bright

Learn about Natalie and the books she's written by visiting her [website](#).

Linda Broday

Visit Linda's [website](#) and sign up for her newsletter and check out her blog and booklist. You can also find information about her book that is being released in October.

Marcy McKay

Learn more about Marcy McKay and what she writes [here](#).

Ryan McSwain

You can get a [signed copy](#) of Ryan's book *Monsters All The Way Down* on his [website](#). His newest book *Four Color Bleed* is coming out in November. You can join his mailing list and get access to free short stories by going to his ["All My Stuff"](#) page.

Phyliss Miranda

Discovery Phyliss's books, what her favorite links are, and check out her new contest [here](#).

Janda Raker

Check out Janda's travel and outdoor recreation articles and photos on her [website](#).

There you'll find sample photos and links to all of her articles. Subscribe and you'll be notified whenever a new article is posted.

Dianne Sagan

Dianne's [website](#) has a free newsletter to announce new books, recipes, contests, and giveaways. You can also find her [Book Club-in-a-Box](#) on her website. Dianne's other [website](#) has a membership section and offers a free newsletter.

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Would you like to include Vicki in your [book discussion group](#)? You can sign up for Vicki's [mailing list](#) and you can read her [blog](#).

Current Board Members

President: Kimberly Black - pennie@steepledog.com

President-Elect: vacant

Secretary: vacant

Treasurer: Karen Gammage - kgamm@earthlink.net

Technical Support: Mike Akins - mike7166@gmail.com

Membership: Molly McKnight - mmc222@ymail.com

Hospitality: Carol Smith - carolsnowsmith@gmail.com

Publicity and Newsletter: Janet Taylor - janetcoopertaylor@gmail.com

Conferences and Workshops: vacant

Programs: Linda Broday - lindabroday@aol.com

Critique Session Guidelines

To participate in the critique session, you do not need to have a piece to be critiqued. The sessions begin at 1 p.m. and, depending on the number of those who have a story or a poem needing to be critiqued, can last up to a couple of hours. We suggest that your material not exceed approximately 750 to 1,000 words. Please bring at about five copies of your story or poem. If possible, it is helpful if you bring a short synopsis of your story so those critiquing have some background. We ask that you format your manuscript as follows:

- 1. Use white 8.5 by 11-inch paper.*
- 2. Double space using either Times New Roman 12 or similar font.*
- 3. In the header, give your last name, a slash (/), and a short title on the left and the page number on the right (at the top of each page).*
- 4. Use one-inch margins.*
- 5. Use one side of the paper only.*
- 6. If possible, use line numbering.*
- 7. Note: Your synopsis may be single-spaced.*

Each person, in turn, will read 1,000 words or less (15 to 20 minutes) or the author will read their own writing, based on preference; then, the group facilitator will ask for discussion from the group. While each person is reading, we urge all other participants to offer written comments on the manuscript. All copies will be returned to each author.

The goal of every critique is: "How can we make it better."

Meetings are held on the third Saturday in odd-numbered months: January, March, May, July, September, and November.

The public and Texas High Plains Writers members are invited to hear speakers on selected writing or

Our meetings/programs follow this schedule:

*Check-In and Meet & Greet
9:30 - 10:00 a.m.*

*Business Meeting
10:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.*

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	<p><i>Hospitality Director between 9:30 and 10:15 or bring a sack lunch. Box lunches are \$10.</i></p> <p><i>Unless otherwise specified, meeting location is at Amarillo Senior Citizens Center 1217 S. Tyler Amarillo, Texas (Note: We must occasionally switch our meeting location, or we may need to change the date to avoid conflicts. So, please check the address and date for each meeting.)</i></p>	<p><i>Box Lunch 12:15 - 1 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>Critique Session 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.</i></p> <p><i>Need to contact us? You can write to us at: Texas High Plains Writers P. O. Box 19303 Amarillo, TX 79114 or email us at: info@texashighplainswriters.com</i></p>



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