

SCBWI MONTANA

WINTER 2019

Hello fellow Montana writers and illustrators of kidlit. I hope you're staying warm this season. Grab a cup of something hot and cozy up as you read our winter 2019 edition of the SCBWI Montana newsletter. This one's a little long, but I think you'll be inspired by the creative energy of our local illustrators and by the bio of an amazing award-winning author we get to call our own. Then be sure to scroll all the way down to see when and where you can gather with fellow members at the upcoming events happening around the state including hobnobs, critique groups, webinars and the retreat in Ennis.

ILLUSTRATOR'S CORNER

BY ERIKA WILSON

Hi everyone!

I am excited to report on our first Illustrator Meet-Up which was recently held this November. We had a great turnout and learned a lot from each other by diving into Procreate together.

It was so nice to get to spend actual time together in the same room--you could just feel the collective creative energy buzzing!

We spent some time flipping through some of my favorite picture books and discussing the different styles, and we also got to admire each other's artwork. I feel very blessed to have a vibrant and growing illustrator community in our state, and I can't wait to host our next Meet-Up!



We are tentatively planning to meet January 5th. It will again be held at my new print shop in Billings. I will keep everyone posted online as we firm up the date and time.

Lastly, if anyone is planning to go to the **New York City Winter Conference**, please reach out to me if you have any questions or need any help getting your portfolio or postcards ready! My trip was an incredible experience, and I would love to give you any tips I can offer. Make sure to watch our Facebook page for info on our next Meet-Up, and happy creating!

Erika montana-ic@scbwi.org

PROFILE: DOROTHY HINSHAW PATENT

BY JOANN HOWETH

For our winter newsletter, I had the pleasure of interviewing Dorothy Hinshaw Patent - author of over 140 books for children and member of the SCBWI since 1975. I haven't been able to verify this, but I think Dorothy holds the honor of being our region's very first member. In 1980 she won the prestigious SCBWI Golden Kite Award for "The Lives of Spiders."

Dorothy has won an impressive number of other awards as well, including the Lud Browman Award for Science Writing from the Friends of the Mansfield Library, University of Montana; the Washington Post/Children's Book Guild Award for Nonfiction Writing; the Regional Book Award from the Mountain & Plains Independent Bookseller's Association; and the Edward O. Wilson Biodiversity Technology Pioneer Award.

Additionally, Dorothy's books have appeared on many lists of best books of the year, including those from Scientific American Magazine, the New York Public Library, the Chicago Public Library, the Bank Street College of Education, the National Science Teachers' Association, The John Burroughs List of Nature Books, and School Library Journal.

So, Dorothy! Tell us how this impressive writing career of yours began: Where were you born and raised:

I was born in Minnesota and grew up in Marin County, California.

What is your educational background: *I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Biology from Stanford University and a M.A. and Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of California, Berkeley.*

Family: *My husband, Greg, and I live in Missoula, Montana. We have two adult sons who are both married and have provided us with five lively grandchildren.*

Hobbies: *I love traveling, hiking, photography, and watercolor painting.*

It's obvious from the titles of your books that nonfiction is your passion.

I love writing nonfiction because it gives me an excuse for learning new information - my favorite activity - and sharing it with others. Since childhood I've loved nature, wildness, and dogs. As a kid, I immersed myself in books

about animals and nature. As an educated biologist and a mother, I opted to make my career sharing my love and knowledge of the living world with young people through writing. Our world is so amazing, beautiful, varied, and abundant! I want kids to get personally involved with the nature that surrounds them and contemplate our planet's interconnected forests, seas, and landscapes that are exotic and entrancing. I hope to lead them to wonder at the power of living things to survive and thrive but also to realize there are things we must do in order to help nature stay healthy.

Your first book was published in 1973, and you've often published more than one title every year since. With such a prolific track record, what does your typical writing day look like?

I don't think there's a typical day, but if I'm working toward a deadline and "into" one project, my ideal day would start by waking up naturally, no alarm, having a mug of coffee and sharing a banana with my husband as I ease into the day by working on a word puzzle propped up in bed. I'd fix our breakfast, then go back upstairs to my study to work on the book. I write best in the morning so would work 2-3 hours or so on the manuscript. After lunch, "do" email and research on a book topic. Exercise fits in almost every day; dance and fitness classes at the gym, a walk on the meadow across the street on a nice day.

What is the most rewarding aspect of writing children's lit for you?

That's hard to say. Being my own "boss" is key—I wouldn't make a good employee—getting to choose interesting topics and learn about them; meeting the challenges of figuring out how to explain sometimes complex information to young readers; getting kids excited about the natural world and loving it.

You obviously love dogs since seven of your books feature them exclusively. I'm guessing you must have a dog or two in your home?



My family had a wonderful English cocker spaniel in Minnesota, and American cocker Buffy was my best friend as I grew up in Marin County, CA. Here in Montana, a puppy followed our boys home from school one day, and she—Lena—helped them grow up. After that, Greg and I enjoyed our doggy daughters, sisters Elsa and Ninja, for almost 15

years. We decided not to have any more dogs after that since we travel so much and try to spend our winters away from the cold.

Have there been any unique challenges to writing any of your books?

That's a great question! I can't think of any single challenge, but often getting the opportunity to experience the animals in their natural environment has created challenges—crossing a fast river in an unfamiliar canoe while keeping my camera dry to visit a grizzly bear researcher and driving an old pickup truck with a cracked windshield along remote prairie roads slick with mud to reach the black-footed ferret research location come to mind. Sometimes finding the right way to write about a complex science topic in a way that maintains the truth while avoiding a scientific “can of worms” can be a big challenge. I find that my training as a scientist really helps me at times like that.

What is your favorite part of a new project?

That's hard to say, but I guess an honest answer would be “learning new stuff’.” I love to read something amazing and be amazed—Nature is full of exciting relationships and ways of functioning. There's always something new and delightful that makes me think, “Wow, I didn't know that!”

You've worked with photographer William Muñoz, who has provided the photographs for 70 of your titles, since 1982. Is working with a photographer similar to having an artist assigned to illustrate one's picture book - in that you never meet one another - or is your partnership a deliberate collaboration?

I'm fortunate to have found Bill. We get along very well, trust and respect each other, and often share in planning the feel and range of the book. Working with a photographer is very different than with an artist, since we need to communicate over time to make sure he covers what's in the text photographically. I've also worked with other photographers and sometimes an illustrator, but with the latter I've been able to collaborate as well.

And if publishing sometimes as many as seven books a year isn't enough, Dorothy is also a founding member of Ink Think Tank, a group of nonfiction writers for children who provide various services, a list of the books of two dozen nonfiction authors that keys their books into the common curriculum standards (www.inkthinktank.com), and Authors on Call, a service that brings nonfiction writers into schools via videoconferencing to help teachers use these authors' books in the classroom both for their informational content and as examples of exemplary writing. iNK also offers a free blog post every school day called the "Nonfiction Minute." Dorothy explains: The authors provide short essays, no more than 400 words each, with accompanying photos, on interesting tidbits of information about intriguing topics. Each "NM" as we call it also has a reading of the piece by the author, so struggling readers can hear it, and a "T2T" link to suggestions for teachers on how to expand on the topic in the classroom. The NM gets thousands of hits every day and has become a favorite of many teachers and curious individuals. The essays are archived and can be searched by author or topic. We "iNKers" love being able to provide this free resource for teachers and learners! You can find several short essays by Dorothy and other iNK authors by checking out the archive at www.nonfictionminute.org.

A big thank you to Dorothy for taking the time to talk to me. It has been a pleasure!

I encourage everyone to check out Dorothy's website, <https://dorothyhinshawpatent.com/>, which is packed with interesting content and features some fascinating travel stories. Dorothy also works as a freelance content editor for anyone with an online website who can use advice honing their text to make it more appealing to readers or prospective clients.



WRITING RETREAT

BY PRECIOUS MCKENZIE, REGIONAL ADVISOR

Join SCBWI Montana for a spring writing retreat in beautiful Ennis, Montana.

Guest faculty member Talia Benamy is an associate editor at Philomel Books, an imprint of Penguin Books for Young Readers. She is also on the faculty at the Highlights Foundation.

This writing retreat will focus on perfecting your own voice—in your pitch and in your stories. Talia will lead us through craft discussions as well as her insights into the publishing marketplace. This retreat is for picture book writers, middle grade writers, and YA writers. For more information about Talia, visit <https://www.penguin.com/publishers/philomel/>

When: May 15-17, 2020

Location: El Western in Ennis, Montana

To reserve a room, visit <https://elwestern.com/>

To register for the writing retreat, visit

<https://montana.scbwi.org/events/authentic-voices-writing-retreat/>

If you want to carpool or share a room with another attendee, please email montana-ra@scbwi.org.

SCBWI WEBINARS

BY PRECIOUS MCKENZIE, REGIONAL ADVISOR

Webinars are a terrific resource for your professional development. You can learn about craft, the book market, illustration, the pitch, query letters, and so much more—without ever having to leave home. Most webinars use Zoom. Webinars last between one and two hours. SCBWI hosts many webinars each month. Some are free whereas others charge a registration fee. Your regional Montana team has hosted a few webinars. Our attendees came from all over Montana as well as Michigan and the east coast. We have more webinars planned for 2020!

For more up-to-date information about SCBWI webinars, check our Facebook page for details. Or visit SCBWI Nevada's website <https://nevada.scbwi.org/webinars/> for a full list of webinars.

HOBNOBS & MEET-UPS

All Hobnobs are free and open to the public. Encourage friends to drop by and see what SCBWI is all about.

Missoula

January 17, noon to 2pm, UM University Center, 2nd floor.

Topic: Character Development

RSVP to Wendy Parciak if you're planning on attending:

wendy@monkeyflower.net.

Directions: The UC is located on the east side of UM, and is best reached by taking Beckwith Ave along the perimeter of campus (it turns into Campus Drive)

toward the "M" Mountain. Just past the underground parking garage, there is an hourly pay lot, which would work for easy access to the UC, located beside the Mansfield Library. They'll meet in one of the conference rooms on the second floor.

Bozeman

January 2, noon to 2pm, The Country Bookshelf. Bring your dialogue pages for critique.

February 6, noon to 2pm, The Country Bookshelf

March 5, noon to 2pm, The Country Bookshelf

April 2, noon to 2pm, The Country Bookshelf

Billings

January 5, 1-4pm, Illustrator Meet-Up at The Windy Mill Studio, 1500 Poly Drive, Suite 113

January 21, 5:30-7pm, Critique Group at This House of Books

STAY WARM THIS WINTER AND KEEP CREATING FOR KIDS!

BY TIFFINY SPIRE, NEWSLETTER COORDINATOR