



2025

Annual Conference

Springfield, MO

Baker Publishing Group Presents



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- DiAnn Mills,
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WELCOME!

Welcome to the 2025 ACFW National Conference!

The ACFW Executive Board and Staff welcome you to beautiful Springfield, Missouri in the heart of the Ozarks. While great care and many prayers go into planning every conference, this one is extra special because the ACFW family is celebrating a very important birthday and we're so glad you're here to celebrate with us.

Twenty-five years ago, the American Christian Romance Writers, as we were called back then, was born. Back then our family was small—just a dozen or so authors who loved Jesus and writing books. Our guiding scripture was Psalm 45:1: “My heart is stirred by a noble theme as I recite my verses for the king; my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.”

As most families do, ours has grown and changed over years to embrace other Christian genres and a new name that reflected the varied genres of our members. The one thing that hasn't changed is our focus on training up generations of writers whose talents have been given to them by God and whose words will become books that change lives.

Whether you're new to the family or have been a member for decades, you're going to fit right in. Are you at the beginning of your writing career? Great! We've got classes as well as a special orientation gathering just for you.

Don't know many ACFW family members? No worries! We've made sure there are plenty of opportunities for meeting other writers with similar interests to you both in classes and at mealtimes. Cue the genre night pizza party!

For conference veterans, you'll find we listened to you and mixed things up a bit this year. From the variety of deep dives offered prior to the official beginning of

the conference to the classes we're offering and speakers who will be attending, we hope you will be inspired and uplifted by the changes we've made.

One thing that we have not changed is our focus on Christ and worship. There will be many opportunities to give Him praise during worship times or perhaps to offer Him your prayers for settling an anxious heart or offering joyous gratitude. We truly believe in the saying “find a member; find a friend” so don't be afraid to offer a smile, a word of encouragement, or maybe a hug to someone who might need it.

And if you're that someone who's having a moment, know we've all been there and rest assured you're among family and future lifelong friends. Please know that you have been prayed over before you ever made the decision to attend. You are where the Lord meant you to be. Just wait and see!

So as you walk through the coming days, never forget you are a valued member of the ACFW family. We put this reunion together just for you! How else were we going to meet you and welcome you into this international family of writers united in our love of the Lord and our desire to write for Him?

So once again, enjoy your time here at conference. Soak it all in and learn. Make friends and keep your focus on the Lord. Above all, we hope you'll have a wonderful God-filled experience at our birthday family reunion.

Your ACFW Executive Board and Staff

ACFW 25TH ANNIVERSARY -

Where Faith and Family Meet — One Signature at a Time

Welcome!

At ACFW, our writing journey is enriched by the faith and friendships we build. This Scavenger Hunt is a fun way to meet new faces, deepen connections, and celebrate the beautiful family of Christian writers we are privileged to walk alongside.

How to Play:

- Find attendees who match the categories below.
- Have them sign next to the category that fits them.
- Each person may only sign your sheet once.
- When you meet someone, take a moment to introduce yourself and share part of your writing story—you never know what friendships might bloom!
- Return your completed sheet by noon on Saturday. Hand it in at the conference office.

Prizes:

- First to complete the hunt
- Most categories completed
- Random drawing for anyone who completes at least 15 categories

Notes:

- You do not need to complete the entire sheet to participate—just join the fun!
- Focus on fellowship over formality. We're a family first and foremost.
- Smile, share, and celebrate one another's stories.

Category	Signature
A current or former board member	
Someone from your chapter zone	
Someone who got their first contract through an ACFW conference	
A first-time conference attendee	
A multi-published author	
A debut author (first book published in the past year)	
An agent or editor attending the conference	
A winner or finalist of a major writing award	
A mentor in the ACFW mentorship program	

- CONFERENCE SCAVENGER HUNT

Category

Signature

A conference presenter or workshop leader

Someone who self-published a novel

Someone who writes in your genre

Someone who writes in a different genre than you

Someone from a different state than yours

Someone from outside the U.S.

Someone who has attended five or more ACFW conferences

Someone who has been an ACFW volunteer in the last 5 years

Someone who has written a book set in your home state

Someone who writes historical fiction

Someone who writes speculative fiction

Someone who writes contemporary fiction

Someone who has participated in NaNoWriMo

Someone who has collaborated on a novel

Someone who writes under a pen name

Someone wearing an item with Scripture on it

Someone who is so excited they couldn't sleep last night

Someone who looks a lot like you!

Someone born in the same year as you

Someone with the first name of your WIP's protagonist

Someone who gave you a hug today!

WILD CARD: Someone who inspired you at this conference (write their name & why!)

ACFW KIDLIT ONLINE CHAPTER

ACFW KidLit

- Monthly Speakers - Most every 4th Tuesday of the month except December and during ACFW Conference months.
- \$11 annual dues for KidLit Chapter.
- ACFW National Membership required.
- Annual KidLit Writing Contest.
- Exclusive private FB group.



An ACFW Online Chapter Specifically for Writers & Authors of Children's Literature

Membership Application:

<https://www.acfwkidlit.com/board-and-membership>

acfwkidlit@acfwchapter.com



ACFW KIDLIT Annual Summer Contest

ACFW KidLit



<https://www.acfwkidlit.com>

<https://www.acfwkidlit.com>



Kingdom KidLit Contest

ENTRIES OPEN JUNE 1st

Sponsored by the
ACFW KidLit Online Chapter

acfwkidlitcontest@gmail.com



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

ROBIN JONES GUNN

Robin Jones Gunn is the bestselling author of over 100 books with several award-winning fiction series including the timeless Christy Miller, Glenbrooke and Sisterchicks® novels. Her newest series is the bestselling Suitcase Sisters collection.

Robin's popular nonfiction includes her memoir, *Victim of Grace* along with *Praying for Your Future Husband* co-authored with Tricia Goyer. She also has ten giftbooks and devotionals published along with fourteen children's books and fifty articles. Sales of her diverse collection of books top 6.5 million copies.

Four Hallmark Christmas movies were created from her novels. The three Father Christmas films starring Erin Krakow, Niall Matter and Wendie Malick, premiered as the Most Watched and Highest Rated films on the Hallmark Movies and Mystery channel. A Glenbrooke Christmas, inspired by her novel, *Secrets*, re-airs frequently on the Hallmark channel.

Robin's passion for speaking and teaching has taken her around the world where she's keynoted in Africa, Brazil, Europe, England and Australia as well as Canada and throughout the US. Robin served on the Board of Media Associates International and currently co-hosts the popular Women Worth Knowing podcast and radio program with Cheryl Brodersen.

Many of Robin's books have appeared multiple times on the ECPA bestseller list and have been both finalists and a winner of the Christy and Gold Medalion awards. She was honored to receive the Readers' Choice Award twice from FHL of Romance Writers of America.



GETTING THE MOST FROM YOUR CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE

Wear Your Name Badge at All Times:

Your name badge is essential for networking and identifying you as a registered attendee. It also serves as your meal package ticket. Admittance to sessions or meals will not be allowed without your name badge.

Attending Sessions:

Room assignments for each session are made according to the number of attendees registered for each session. Please arrive on time at your appointed workshop so you can find a seat without interrupting the presenter. You should have received an email with handouts for your specific sessions you signed up for. The schedule is tight to maximize your learning opportunities, so please respect the speaker's time when the class is over. They most likely have responsibilities immediately following, and the conference staff will need to clear the room to prepare for the next presentation.

Appointments:

Conference Appointment Coordinator, Casey Miller, will be available to answer your appointment questions and provide assistance. Please report to the appointments desk prior to your appointment time. Staff will direct you from there.

Appointments take place during workshop times, and presenters understand you may have to leave or return during their presentation, but please do so quietly so as to not disrupt the speaker or attendees. Please be considerate of your appointment times. Arrive a little early so you don't keep anyone waiting. It's imperative that you comply with the time allotment and the time keepers' instructions. You don't want to infringe on another member's appointment time. Etiquette during appointments speaks highly of you as a professional.

No Faculty-Hosted Meals:

Due to the sheer size of the conference, there are no faculty-hosted meals this year. Most of the agents, editors, mentors, and industry professionals make themselves available in the lobby areas after the day's events are concluded.

Babies and Children:

The ACFW conference is a professional event. Babies (even nursing infants) and children are not allowed in any general sessions, meals, worship sessions, workshops, or spotlights.

Session Recordings:

The conference sessions will be available for purchase, inclusion of all Early Bird sessions options. If you didn't utilize the option during registration, you may visit the ACFW website and order the conference recordings later. Because of

our contract with the hotel, recording and/or videotaping is only allowed by ACFW or ACFW's contracted audio/video company.

Thursday Night Pizza Genre Party:

Finally, a pizza party option from ACFW! We'll break off into separate groups based on your genre of writing. This is a fun way to connect with other writers in your own genre. After pizza, there will be a hosted discussion and lots of fun, focused on the various genres.

If pizza isn't your thing, you may also do dinner on your own. At the hotel, there's Q Street Perk, which offers light bites, salads, sandwiches and pastries, plus fresh brewed coffee, of course. Or the on-site restaurant is the Terrace Grille & Lounge, offering contemporary cuisine, and favorites like burgers, flat breads, steak and more. Whether you join in for the pizza party or do dinner on your own, you're welcome to join the fun of the genre group gatherings after the pizza party.

Friday Zone Lunch:

Lunch on Friday is designated as the Zone Lunch. Make face-to-face connections with ACFW members from your area. Tables will be designated and labeled by zones for this meal. Swap stories and contact information, share local research interest, and establish friendships are the beginnings of new ACFW local chapters.

Friday Night Milestones Dinner:

Friday night will be a special night at the conference, because it's the Milestones Dinner. In previous years this has been on Thursday night. ACFW will bestow another honor for member novelists whose careers have reached significant publishing milestones. This special recognition will be awarded to novelists who have reached landmarks of 25, 50, 75, 100, or 100+ published novels (traditionally, QIP*, or a combination), and they will receive a beautiful ACFW pin marking that accomplishment. This is a wonderful night of celebration and encouragement.

Saturday State of the Industry Lunch:

State of Industry panels with agents and editors in the general session, followed immediately by lunch.

Saturday Awards Gala Dinner:

It's the highlight of the awards season for Christian Fiction. We'll announce with winners of the Carol Awards, Genesis Contest, plus Agent and Editor of the Year and more. It's a very special evening to wrap up ACFW's national conference. Don't miss it.

EARLY BIRD SESSIONS

Thursday, September 4, 2025

Early Bird #1

Deep Dive with Angela Hunt

The Master Storyteller's Workshop: Take Your Manuscript to the Next Level

8:00 am - 3:00 pm

Have you ever wished someone would stand beside you, asking specific questions, forcing you to check your plot, deepen your characters, enliven your dialogue, and take your manuscript to an entirely new level? If you have at least a first draft of your work in progress, this is the workshop for you! Angela Hunt will guide you through an intensive examination of your manuscript, giving you tools to go deeper, write better, and uncover layers you never knew existed.

Come to this project with your manuscript and your laptop, and be prepared to give your WIP the depth and polish it needs to succeed.

Early Bird #2

AI Automation for Authors:

Streamline, Automate, and Save Time with Kate Angelo

8:00 am - Noon

Are you spending hours on social media instead of writing? Marketing and growing your author platform shouldn't take away from your writing time. In this deep dive, fiction authors will develop a customized, one-click content creation system complete with images, SEO-rich captions, hashtags, a drag-and-drop social media calendar, and a seamless approval process. Attendees will utilize a simple spreadsheet, AI, and automation tools to streamline their content strategy, eliminate busywork, and free up hours each week.

Whether you're tech-savvy or a complete beginner, the step-by-step guidance and troubleshooting support included in the session will ensure that everyone stays on track. By the end, each attendee will leave with a ready-to-use workflow they can implement immediately, along with the knowledge to build and customize even more automation systems in the future.

Please bring your laptop and credit card with at least \$5.00 to spend.

Early Bird #3

The Author's Design Toolkit:

Using Canva for Social Media & More with Pepper Basham

8:00 am - Noon

Pepper Basham gives a step-by-step introduction to ways authors can use Canva for marketing/promotion, social media, and even book covers. Having used Canva for years for various social media and bookish creations, she hopes to share some of the beginning elements of Canva with you to help make how you visually present your books (whether on-line or print) in professional and cost-efficient ways. The class will offer hands-on practice of making your own promotional graphics/visuals so make sure to bring your computer with you.

Early Bird #4

Polish Your Proposal Before You Pitch

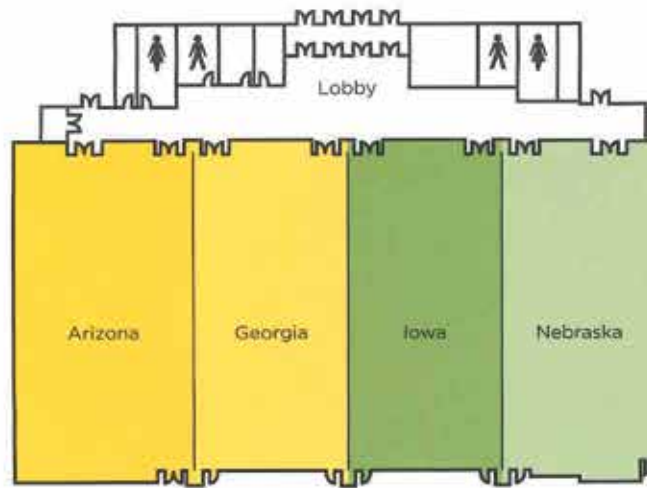
with Rachel Hauck and Cara Putman

8:00 am - Noon

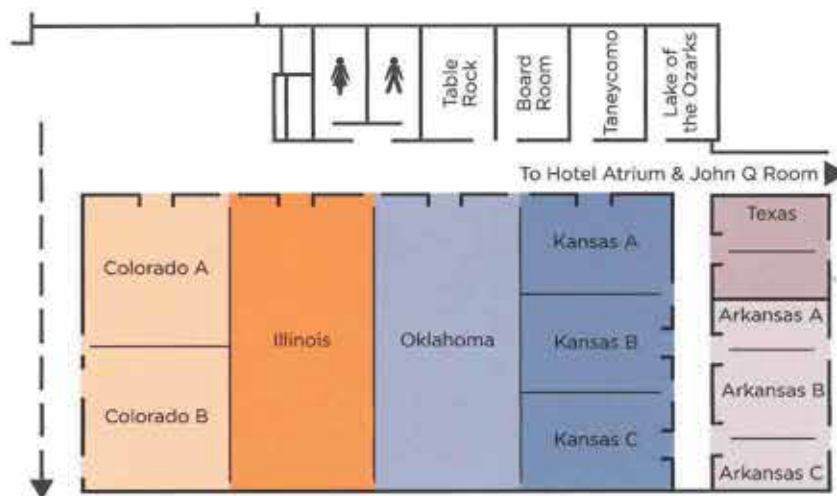
Before you pitch your next great idea, let's go for a homerun! Join bestselling authors Rachel Hauck, award-winning and New York Times bestselling author, and legal expert Cara Putman, also an award-winning author, for a Deep Dive workshop on how to elevate your proposal pitching game. Come prepared for hands-on exercises and personalized feedback. You'll learn how to avoid clichés and distill your story's essence down to the hook and high concept editors and agents will find irresistible. Whether you're a beginner or a seasoned writer, this workshop will empower you to confidently pitch your work in this madcap writing game.



HOTEL FLOORPLAN



Convention Center



Grand Ballroom

CONTINUING EDUCATION SESSIONS

CE 01

Exploring Kidlit's Many Faces

Presented by: JPC Allen, Bettie Boswell, Victor Hess, Bitsy Kemper, Annika Klanderud, and Julie Lavender

Whether you are only thinking about writing for children or are a published Board Book through Young Adult author, this workshop has something for you. Experts from each level will start with the basics and address hot topics. Valuable tips for use in multiple levels will be highlighted after each mini-presentation. A time for Q & A and making personal connections in small groups are included. Participants will also learn more about ACFWKidlit's chapter.

CE 02

Kickstarter: The what, why, and how of crowdfunding your books!

Presented by: Emilie Haney

A class on what Kickstarter is, how to use it as an author, and why you might want to consider it to launch your books.

CE 03

The Author's Blueprint: Building Buzz Through Tours and Tech

Presented by: Colleen Coble

Unlock the secrets to amplifying your author platform and connecting with readers like never before in The Author's Blueprint: Building Buzz Through Tours and Tech. This dynamic workshop is designed for writers ready to take their careers to the next level by mastering the art of promotion

through live events, digital strategies, and collaborative opportunities. Whether you're an indie author or traditionally published, this session will equip you with actionable tools to build your audience, boost your visibility, and create lasting buzz around your work.

CE 04

The Silent Storyteller: Mastering Body Language in Writing

Presented by: Carrie Stuart Parks

This dynamic, information-packed program empowers writers to wield body language as a transformative storytelling tool. Discover how physical beats—subtle gestures like a clenched jaw, an averted gaze, or a nervous thumb tap—can deepen character development, amplify dialogue, and craft immersive, emotionally resonant scenes. Through hands-on exercises and vivid examples, participants will master the art of using nonverbal cues to convey unspoken tension, attraction, or fear, seamlessly replacing exposition with visual storytelling that “shows, not tells.” The class dives into practical techniques: where to place beats for maximum impact, how to vary gestures for authenticity, and how to avoid over-use while maintaining natural rhythm. Writers will learn to pace dialogue, anchor characters in physical space, and layer scenes with subtext and nuance. By the end, participants will wield this often-overlooked skill to elevate their narratives with depth, realism, and emotional punch—turning silent movements into powerful storytelling allies.



WED/THURS SCHEDULE

Wednesday, September 3, 2025

Time	Event	Location
4:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Registration Desk	Lobby
10:00 am – 9:00 pm	Bookstore Books Dropoff	Iowa

Thursday, September 4, 2025

Time	Event	Location
8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Registration Desk	Lobby
8:00 am – 3:00 pm	Early Bird Session #1: (optional add-on session) – Angela Hunt The Master Storyteller's Workshop: Take Your Manuscript to the Next Level	Oklahoma
8:00 am – Noon	Early Bird Session #2: (optional add-on session) – Kate Angelo AI Automation for Authors: Streamline, Automate, and Save Time	Kansas AB
8:00 am – Noon	Early Bird Session #3: (optional add-on session) – Pepper Basham The Author's Design Toolkit: Using Canva for Social Media & More	Kansas C
8:00 am – Noon	Early Bird Session #4: (optional add-on session) – Rachel Hauck and Cara Putman Polish Your Proposal Before You Pitch	Illinois
8:00 am – 5:00 pm	Bookstore	Iowa
1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Honoree Reception (by invitation only)	Colorado B
3:00 pm – 3:45 pm	First-time Attendees Orientation	Colorado A

4:00 pm – 5:45 pm **Opening of the 2025 ACFW Conference** Arizona/Georgia

6:30 pm – 9:30 pm	Pizza Party & Genre Breakouts	
	Mystery/Suspense/Thriller – hosted by Rick Acker, Colleen Coble, and Cara Putman Opt-in inclusion of a pizza party (ticket required) 6:30-7:30, followed immediately by a fun night focusing on mystery/suspense/thriller	Arizona/Georgia
	Contemporary/Romance – hosted by Pepper Basham, Joy Massenburg, and Kathleen Y'Barbo Opt-in inclusion of a pizza party (ticket required) 6:30-7:30, followed immediately by a fun night focusing on contemporary and romance	Oklahoma
	Historical – hosted by Angela Hunt Opt-in inclusion of a pizza party (ticket required) 6:30-7:30, followed immediately by a fun night focusing on historical fiction/historical romance	Illinois
	Sci-Fi/Fantasy/Allegoric – hosted by Emilie Haney (who writes as E.A. Hendryx) Opt-in inclusion of a pizza party (ticket required) 6:30-7:30, followed immediately by a fun night focusing on sci-fi/fantasy/allegoric	Kansas AB
	Children's/YA – hosted by Bettie Boswell Opt-in inclusion of a pizza party (ticket required) 6:30-7:30, followed immediately by a fun night focusing on Children's through YA	Kansas C

Conference Office Lake of the Ozarks

FRIDAY SCHEDULE

Friday, September 5, 2025

Time	Event	Location
6:30 am – 8:30 am	Breakfast in Hotel	Terrace Grille
8:00 am – 11:45 am	Registration Desk	Lobby
2:00 pm – 5:30 pm		
8:30 am – 9:00 pm	Worship, Devotions, and Announcements	Arizona/Georgia
8:00 am – Noon	Bookstore	Iowa
1:45 pm – 5:45 pm		
9:30 am – 11:45 am	Appointment Desk	Arkansas/Texas Rooms
2:00 pm – 5:30 pm		
9:15 am – 12:15 pm	Continuing Education Tracks CE 01: Exploring Kid Lit's Many Faces - JPC Allen, Bettie Boswell, Victor Hess, Bitsy Kemper, Annika Klanderud, and Julie Lavender <i>Colorado</i> CE 02: Kickstarter: The What, Why, and How of Crowdfunding Your Books! - Emilie Haney <i>Illinois</i> CE 03: The Author's Blueprint: Building Buzz Through Tours and Tech - Colleen Coble <i>Oklahoma</i> CE 04: The Silent Storyteller: Mastering Body Language in Writing - Carrie Stuart Parks <i>Kansas ABC</i>	
12:30 pm – 1:30 pm	Zone Lunch	Arizona/Georgia
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Workshops 1-4 WS 01: Unmasking Perfection - Joy Massenburge <i>Oklahoma</i> WS 02: Winning Readers with Humor - Karen Witemeyer <i>Illinois</i> WS 03: The Story Equation - Rachel Hauck <i>Kansas ABC</i> WS 04: Critiquing: The Art of Being Constructively Nice - Bruce Judisch <i>Colorado</i>	
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm	Workshops 5-8 WS 05: Self Defense and Swords: A "Touch and Try" Workshop - Natalie Nyquis <i>Oklahoma</i> WS 06: Writing Quotable Dialogue - Joni M. Fisher <i>Illinois</i> WS 07: Pinterest Marketing Strategies: A Goldmine for Novelists - Janice Thompson <i>Colorado</i> WS 08: Canva Shortcuts: A Social Media Tool for Writers - Shannon Dunlap <i>Kansas ABC</i>	
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm	Workshops 9-12 WS 09: Avoiding the Pitfalls of the Rising Star - Tracey Bateman <i>Kansas ABC</i> WS 10: Responding to Rejection: The Choice is Ours - Bethany Turner <i>Illinois</i> WS 11: Romance-ology Q&A - Pepper Basham, Mary Connealy, and Julie Lessman <i>Colorado</i> WS 12: Creating a 5-Year Writing Plan - Lisa Jordan <i>Oklahoma</i>	
6:00 pm – 8:00 pm	Milestones Celebration Dinner	Arizona/Georgia
8:30 pm – 9:15 pm	Zone Meeting	Kansas ABC
9:30 pm – 10:30 pm	Worship and Write (Optional Musical Worship/Writing)	Arizona/Georgia
Conference Office		Lake of the Ozarks

SATURDAY SCHEDULE

Saturday, September 6, 2025

Time	Event	Location
6:30 am – 8:30 am	Breakfast in Hotel	Terrace Grille
8:00 am – 12:15 pm	Registration Desk	Lobby
1:45 pm – 3:30 pm		
8:00 am – 8:30 pm	Worship, Devotions, and Announcements	Arizona/Georgia
8:00 am – 12:15	Bookstore	Iowa
1:45 pm – 4:30 pm		
8:30 am – 10:00 am	Booksigning	Iowa
1:45 pm – 4:30 am	Appointment Desk	Arkansas/Texas Rooms
10:15 am – 11:15 am	Workshops 13-16 WS 13: Switching Genres & Staying Sane - Sandra Bretting WS 14: The Art of Subtext: What's Left Unsaid in Powerful Fiction - Cher Gatto WS 15: Creating a Series Bible - Cara Putman WS 16: Playing Well with Others - Sarah Hamaker	Oklahoma Kansas ABC Colorado Illinois
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	Workshops 17-20 WS 17: Behind the Pages - Robin Jones Gunn and Janet Grant WS 18: Growing Your Newsletter Round-Robin Style - Sami Abrams WS 19: Mastering Book Marketing: Essential Online Strategies for Authors - Matt Jones of Jones House Creative WS 20: Challenges and Blessings of the Writing Life - Rick Barry	Colorado Oklahoma Kansas ABC Illinois
12:30 pm – 1:45 pm	Lunch & State of Industry Panels State of Industry panels with agents and editors	Arizona/Georgia
1:45 pm – 2:00 am	Gala Ceremony Rehearsal	Arizona/Georgia
2:15 pm – 3:15 pm	Workshops 21-24 WS 21: The Author's Voice Amplified - Melissa LaShure, Rebecca Reed, and Rebecca Yauger WS 22: Career Writing - Kathleen Y'Barbo Turner WS 23: The Architecture of Narrative Structure and Serendipity in Storytelling - Marshall Monroe WS 24: Level Up – Self-editing Hacks to Take Your Writing to the Next Level - Kelly VanHorn	Illinois Kansas ABC Colorado Oklahoma
3:30 pm – 4:30 am	Photo Booths	Outside Arizona/Georgia Ballroom
6:00 pm – ?? pm	ACFW Awards Gala	Arizona/Georgia
Conference Office		Lake of the Ozarks

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

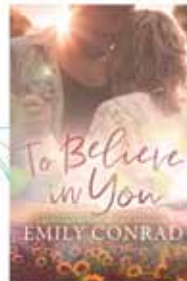
Sunday, September 7, 2025

Time	Event	Location
9:00 am – 11:00 am	Bookstore Close Out and Book Pickup	Iowa

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2024 FIRST IMPRESSIONS WINNERS

The First Impressions contest gives unpublished writers the opportunity to have the first five pages of their Christian fiction manuscript evaluated by an industry professional.

Contemporary

Julie Scorziell

Historical

A.K. Nicolae

Historical Romance

Stephanie Rose Finsterbush

Mystery/Suspense/Thriller

Arabella Takamiya

Romance

Martha Ladyman

Romantic Suspense

Breana Johnson

Short Novel

Caprice Moore

Speculative

S.M. Shijima

Young Adult

Daisy Johnson



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Submissions Accepted June 1
to December 31

ACFW MARTHA ROGERS MEMBER SERVICE AWARD



For more years than we can count, one of our faithful ACFW members has served us by sharing a Verse of the Week and short devotional every Monday. So many times the verse and story she chose ministered very specifically and profoundly to our membership. The impact of this woman and her faithfulness will long resound through the ACFW community. That's one of the reasons we're honoring our friend and fellow author, Martha Rogers, who recently went home to Jesus. Our traditional Member Service Award will now be known as the ACFW Martha Rogers Member Service Award.



2024 Agent of the Year was Kristy Cambron
2024 Lifetime Achievement Award Winner was Deborah Raney
2024 Keynote Speaker was Tosca Lee

AWARDS



*2024 Carol Award Winners
left to right: Becky Wade, Stephanie Landsem, Sami Abrams,
Carrie Turansky, Betsy St. Amant*



*2024 Genesis Contest Winners
left to right: Jeanne Takenaka, Bailey Cornell,
Carrie Hachadurian, J.A. Webb, Kelly Lobato*

AWARDS - 2025 NOMINEES

Mentor of the Year

Nominees:

Susan Baggott
Misty Beller
Bettie Boswell
Barbara Britton
Sara Brunsvold
Brett Harris
Liz Curtis Higgs
Denise Hunter
Lisa Jordan
Deirdre Lockhart
Rachel McDaniel
Janette Melson
Alycia Morales
Carrie Turansky
Mary Lou Tyndall
Rosanna M. White
Jaime Jo Wright
Lenora Worth

Mentor of the Year

Finalists:

Misty Beller
Denise Hunter
Lisa Jordan

Agent of the Year

Finalists:

Kristy Cambron
(Gardner Literary)
Rachel Kent
(Books & Such Literary
Management)
Tamela Hancock Murray
(The Steve Laube Agency)

Editor of the Year

Finalists:

Shana Asaro
(Love Inspired (Harlequin))
Michelle Levigne
(Michelle Levigne Editing)
Rachel McRae
(Revell (Baker Publishing Group))



PENCON

A virtual interactive conference for editors, proofreaders, and writers.

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2025 CAROL AWARD FINALISTS



The Carol Awards are ACFW's recognition for quality fiction published in the previous calendar year.

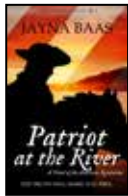


Contemporary

Reaching for Grace by Anna Daugherty
Black Rose Writing
Editor – Katy Schlomach

A Year in the Room by Steven Rogers
Elk Lake Publishing
Editors – Deb Haggerty and Cristel Phelps

When the Wildflowers Bloom Again by Donna Jo Stone
Independent Author
Editor – Anne Victory



Historical

Patriot at the River by Jayna Baas
Independent Author
Editor – Robert Siedenburger

Where Trees Touch the Sky by Karen Barnett
Kregel Publications
Editor – Janyre Tromp

Up From Dust by Heather Kaufman
Bethany House (Baker Publishing Group)
Editors - Rochelle Gloege and Jennifer Veilleux



Historical Romance

The Girl from the Hidden Forest by Hannah Linder
Barbour Publishing
Editor – Becky Fish

Of Love and Treason by Jamie Ogle
Tyndale House
Editors – Elizabeth Jackson and Sarah Rische

Above All Dreams by Naomi Rawlings
Independent Author
Editor – Erin Healy



Mystery/Suspense/Thriller

Fatal Domain by Steven James
Tyndale House
Editors – Sarah Rische and Karen Watson

When All the Birds Sing by Suzie Peace Pybus
Independent Author
Editor – Lynne Lloyd

The Burning of Rosemont Abbey by Naomi Stephens
Bethany House (Baker Publishing Group)
Editors – Luke Hinrichs and Jessica Sharpe



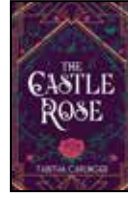
Novella

Downfall (Cornered novella collection)
by Lynn H. Blackburn, Revell
Editors – Kelsey Bowen and Jessica English

Jingle Bell Matchmakers (A Match Made at Christmas collection)
by Lori DeJong, Scrivenings Press
Editors – Linda Fulkerson and Elena Hill

Sleigh Bells and Stalkers (Christmas in Nutfield collection)
by Robin Patchen, Independent Author
Editors – Ray Rhamey and Pegg Thomas

2025 CAROL AWARD FINALISTS



Romance

A Healing Touch by Suzanne Woods Fisher
Revell

Editor – Andrea Doering

The Heart of Sugarcreek by Serena B. Miller
Independent Author
Editor – Brenda Kallner

Cole and Laila Are Just Friends: A Love Story by Bethany Turner
Thomas Nelson Fiction (HarperCollins)
Editors – Leslie Peterson and Laura Wheeler

Speculative

The Castle Rose by Tabitha Caplinger
Blue Ink Press

Editors – Christa Leonhart and Liz Sheth

Lightshed by Crystal D. Grant
Quill & Flame Publishing House
Editor – Meghan Kleinschmidt

Drawn by Light by John W. Otte
Independent Author
Editor – Megan Gerig



Romantic Suspense

Lethal Danger (Guardians Unleashed #4) by Jerusha Agen
Independent Author
Editor – Julie Agen

Never Fall Again by Lynn H. Blackburn
Revell

Editors – Kelsey Bowen and Robin Turici

Double Take by Lynette Eason
Revell

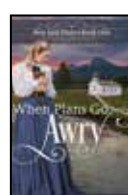
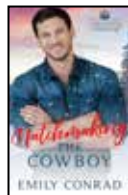
Editors – Barb Barnes and Andrea Doering

Young Adult

The Nightmare Virus by Nadine Brandes
Enclave Publishing (Oasis Family Media)
Editors – Sarah Grimm and Lisa Laube

Rift by Steven James
Sky Turtle Nova (Oasis Family Media)
Editor – Rebecca Reynolds

Mortal Queens by Victoria McCombs
Enclave Publishing (Oasis Family Media)
Editors – Sara Ella and Lisa Laube



Short Novel

Twenty-One Stones by Janice Boekhoff
Independent Author, Editor - Linda Yezak

Matchmaking the Cowboy by Emily Conrad
Independent Author

Editors – Brandi Aquino and Judy DeVries

Waiting for Gilbert by Tasha Hackett
Independent Author

Editors – Crystal Nielson and Megan Schaulis

Amish Witness to Murder by Dana R. Lynn
Love Inspired (Harlequin), Editor – Tina James

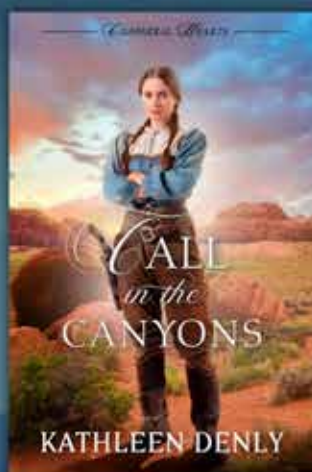
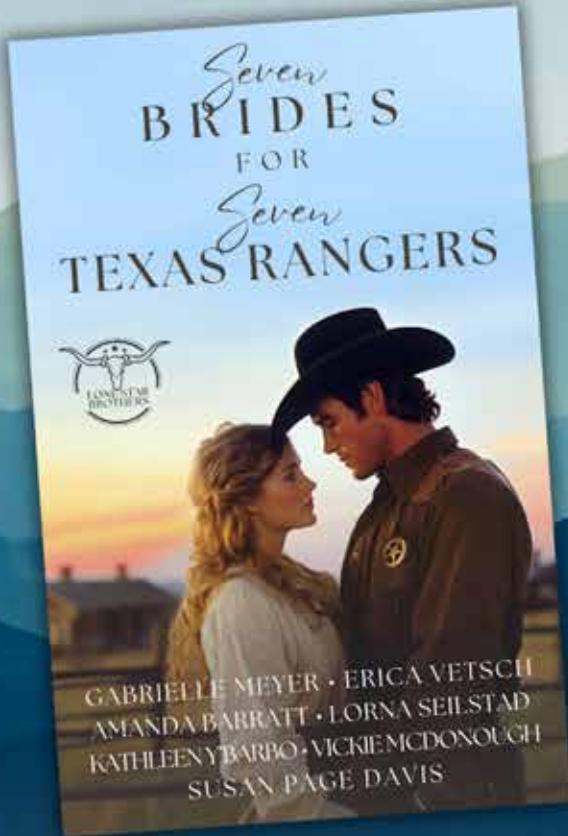
Debut Author

When Plans Go Awry by Denise M. Colby
Scrivenings Press
Editors - Linda Fulkerson and Regina Merrick

CORE Deception by Jeremiah Friedli
Independent Author
Editors – Jon Tilton and Jeanette Windle

Protector by Megan Schaulis
White Crown Publishing
Editors – Janelle Leonard and Marisa Stokley

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Deena Adams
Elizabeth Daghfal
Betsy Davies
Tiffany Link
Shelli Littleton
Ruth Schmeckpeper
Michelle Wrigley

Historical

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Hannah Benson
Sarah Heatwole
Daryl Lott
Jacinta Meredith
Sophie Neville
Shannon Skaer

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Tammy Adams
Bethany Cox
Naomi Currie
Jessica Gustafson
Ginger R. Takamiya
Lorinda White
Donna Yarborough

Mystery/Suspense/ Thriller

Mollybeth Corr
Jeremy Gayed
Lakeisha Heeringa
Renda Knapp
Christina Lombardi
M. J. Pearson
Deborah Schulte

Novella

Tiffany Burgess
Melissa Burlock
Jonni Sue Hovan
Harry Johnson
Daniel Lewczuk
Audrey Wyatt Shrive
Laura M. Wallace

Romance

Courtney Dailey
Renee Gentry
Kelly Lobato
(Double Semi-Finalist)
Ruth Schmeckpeper
Kelly Scott
Madison Unruh

Romantic Suspense

Alison Brock
Courtney Dailey
Carol Filomena
Breana Johnson
Pam Langston
Brittney Peek
Beth Worcester

Short Novel

Linda B. Breeden
Tracy Del Campo
Beth Gooch
Louise Braswell Martin
Suzanne Montgomery
Caprice Alizah Moore
Jessica Sizemoore

Speculative

(tie for final spot)

Julia Casselman
Kimberly Cornelius
Cynthia Zager Godwin
Heather Griffin
Elise Haroldson
A. R. Harrison
David Mears
Nicole Raman and
Colette Wasserman
(co-authors)

Young Adult

Heather Griffin
Sharon Jeong Ide
Elizabeth Anne Myrick
Lisa Phillips
Julie Scorziell
Hannah Sharpe
Julia N. White



FRIDAY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Workshop Elective Session 1: Friday - 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm

WS 01: Unmasking Perfection

Presented by: Joy Massenburge

Writers explore practical strategies to overcome perfectionism, celebrate their unique journey to publication, and cultivate a life of balance and joy.

WS 02: Winning Readers With Humor

Presented by: Karen Witemeyer

No matter what genre you write, humor can add a spark of life to your manuscript that will gain an editor's notice and win your readers' hearts.

WS 03: The Story Equation

Presented by: Rachel Hauck

Setting the Stage for a Dynamic Character Journey

WS 04: Critiquing: The Art of Being Constructively Nice

Presented by: Bruce Judisch

Effective critiquing or beta-reading a manuscript is as much an art as it is a science.

Workshop Elective Session 2: Friday - 3:15 pm - 4:15 pm

WS 05: Self Defense and Swords: A "Touch and Try" Workshop

Presented by: Natalie Nyquist

A hands-on introduction to (1) realistic self defense for your characters and (2) caring for and training with swords to enhance accuracy and sensory detail in your writing.

WS 06: Writing Quotable Dialogue

Presented by: Joni M. Fisher

Learn ten techniques screenwriters rely on to upgrade dialogue from blah to quotable.

WS 07: Pinterest Marketing Strategies: A Goldmine for Novelists

Presented by: Janice Thompson

Novelists will learn how to use Pinterest as a powerful marketing tool by creating engaging boards, eye-catching pins, and reader-focused strategies that attract book lovers and drive long-term traffic to their books.

WS 08: Canva Shortcuts: A Social Media Tool for Writers

Presented by: Shannon Dunlap

Promote your writing and build your author platform by creating high-quality graphics, posts, QR codes, and more in Canva.



FRIDAY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

(continued)

Workshop Elective Session 3: Friday - 4:30 pm - 5:30 pm

WS 09: Avoiding the Pitfalls of the Rising Star

Presented by: Tracey Bateman

From her own experience, Tracey shares how to recognize when Godly dreams become corrupted by vain ambition and what steps a new to publishing author can take to avoid the traps.

WS 010: Responding to Rejection: The Choice is Ours

Presented by: Bethany Turner

In this workshop, we'll explore five ways we can choose to respond to rejection and even discover why we, as writers, should be proud of (and even grateful for) our mountains of "thanks, but no thanks" letters.

WS 011: Romance-ology Q & A

Presented by: Pepper Basham, Mary Connealy, and Julie Lessman

Calling all romance writers—this is your opportunity to pick the brain of three award-winning romance authors on the pros and cons of writing romance and if time permits, on-the-spot opening-paragraph critiques and paperback giveaways plus free e-copy of Julie Lessman's writer's workbook, ROMANCE-ology 101: Writing Romantic Tension for the Inspirational and Sweet Markets.

WS 012: Creating a 5-Year Writing Plan

Presented by: Lisa Jordan

Creating a five-year writing plan will help writers define their writing goals and show how to turn their long-term writing dreams into a clear, actionable plan with achievable steps so they will have a clear roadmap for their writing journey as they build a sustainable career.



SATURDAY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

Workshop Elective Session 4: Friday - 10:15 am - 11:15 am

WS 13: Switching Genres & Staying Sane

Presented by: Sandra Bretting

Learn the pluses and pitfalls of switching from one genre to another, and discover how to make the move as seamless as possible.

WS 14: The Art of Subtext: What's Left Unsaid in Powerful Fiction

Presented by: Cher Gatto

Unlock the secret power of subtext in fiction—learn how to craft dialogue, action, and setting that reveal hidden emotions, unspoken tensions, and deeper meaning without saying a word.

WS 15: Creating a Series Bible

Presented by: Cara Putman

A series is a great way to hook readers. This workshop by multipublished author Cara Putman will help you figure out what to include in your series bible to make sure you get your details right.

WS 16: Playing Well With Others

Presented by: Sarah Hamaker

How to leverage the power of group promotions as part of your marketing strategy.

Workshop Elective Session 5: Friday - 11:30 am - 12:30 pm

WS 17: Behind the Pages A Q&A with Robin Jones Gunn and Janet Grant

Presented by: Robin Jones Gunn and Janet Grant

Join bestselling author Robin Jones Gunn and her longtime literary agent Janet Grant for an exclusive “Ask Us Anything” writers workshop! With over 100 books and 6.5 million copies sold, Robin, alongside Janet’s expert guidance from Books & Such Literary Management, will pull back the curtain on their decades-long partnership. From crafting unforgettable stories to navigating the publishing world, this dynamic duo will answer your burning questions, share insider tips, and inspire you to take your writing journey to the next level. Whether you’re an aspiring author or a seasoned scribe, don’t miss this chance to learn from two trailblazers who’ve turned dreams into page-turning reality!

WS 18: Growing Your Newsletter Round Robin Style

Presented by: Sami Abrams

Organically increase your newsletter subscribers who will want to stick around.

WS 19: Mastering Book Marketing: Essential Online Strategies for Authors

Presented by: Matt Jones - Jones House Creative

In this presentation we will cover:

- Definition of Marketing
- Marketing Tips for Your Author Website
- Leveraging Social Media for Marketing
- Creating and Utilizing a Mailing List

WS 20: Challenges and Blessings of the Writing Life

Presented by: Rick Barry

This workshop will discuss many of the typical ups and downs that occur in a writer’s life to prepare that creative soul mentally, emotionally, and spiritually for both the challenges and blessings.



SATURDAY WORKSHOP DESCRIPTIONS

(continued)

Workshop Elective Session 6: Friday - 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm

WS 21: The Author's Voice Amplified

Presented by: Melissa LaShure, Rebecca Reed, and Rebecca Yaeger

This session aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the advantages podcasts offer to authors, encouraging them to explore this dynamic medium, as well as practical tips on hosting and setting up a new podcast and the ins and outs of being a sought-after guest.

WS 22: Career Writing

Presented by: Kimberley Woodhouse

Let's tackle some of the hurdles we face as career authors—many that change rapidly in our ever-changing industry.

WS 23: The Architecture of Narrative Structure and Serendipity in Storytelling

Presented by: Marshall Monroe

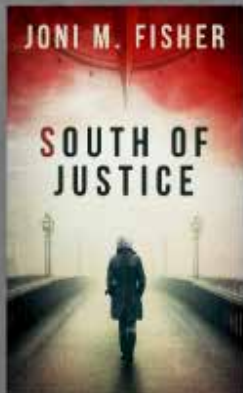
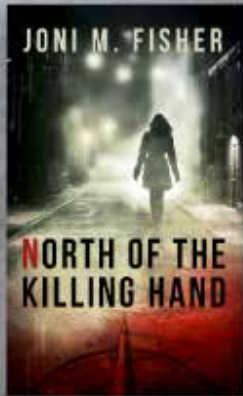
Practical insights and methods for developing and deploying stories from a veteran of experiential and media forms. This is a presentation and conversational workshop designed to inspire and inform with a veteran creator and producer, touching on the timeless art of narrative and the latest tech, including thoughts on AI. The session will include an overview of key concepts Mr. Monroe has developed over nearly 40 years working at the highest levels of narrative industries, with suggestions and feedback to help others bring new ideas into the world.

WS 24: Level Up – Self-editing Hacks to Take Your Writing to the Next Level

Presented by: Kellie VanHorn

In this hands-on workshop, we'll go over simple tips and tricks to line edit your own writing and bring it up to the next level to impress agents and editors.





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ACFW Charlotte	Charlotte, NC	Southeast
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Patricia Tiffany Morris
Tiffany Inks Studio LLC
TiffanyInksStudioLLC@gmail.com




Patricia Tiffany Morris



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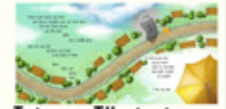
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Fiction Town Map



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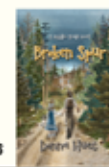


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