

The Quill

The Monthly Newsletter of the Monadnock Writers' Group
September 1, 2024

Supporting Writers Since 1984

The Monadnock Writers' Group is a registered 501(c)(3) organization.
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Welcome to the Monadnock Writers' Group! Since 1984, the MWG has provided community, inspiration, and support to the writers of the Monadnock region. All are welcome! Our membership includes writers of every variety: from poets to journalists, from mystery writers to playwrights, and from career writers to those just getting started. We meet on the third Saturday morning of each month, September through June, at the Peterborough Town Library, unless otherwise noted. Monthly meetings start at 9:45 a.m. and go to about 11:30 a.m, but times can vary. Meetings include a 15-minute meet-and-greet, announcements, a ten-minute reading from a member, and a main speaker sharing professional writing experience and answering questions. Coffee and light refreshments are provided. Our monthly Speaker Series is open to the public and free of charge. Our speakers are instructive and inspirational for writers of all literary forms, genres, and levels of experience. For more information, please go to our website at www.monadnockwriters.org, or join our Monadnock Writers' Group [Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/groups/monadnockwriters/).

MWG NEWS

Hello, MWG Writers! Welcome back to another year with the MWG! As always, summer went way too fast. We hope everyone found some time to write, and hopefully time for some reading as well. Our Board has been hard at work setting up speakers for 2024-2025, and we are looking forward to a great season with writers from all different genres. We hope to see you at our first meeting of the season on September 21!

-The Quill Editorial Team—Jesseca Timmons, Susan Gebo, and Deni Dickler

MWG Board Elections. All directors up for re-election were re-elected by unanimous voice vote at the June Annual Meeting: Deni Dickler, Rodger Martin (VP) and Jesseca Timmons (President) for one-year terms; and Tori Haring-Smith, Mary Marchese and Ronnie McIntire for two-year terms. Many thanks to our hardworking Board!

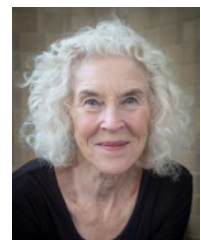
MWG Member Survey Results Are In! We are thrilled that so many of you participated in our first member survey. We received a lot of constructive feedback and good ideas. Please scroll to the bottom of this newsletter for a summary of the results and how we are incorporating your feedback into our operations and programming.

Smoky Quartz Update. The Spring 2024 issue of our online literary magazine has been published! Our dedicated editorial team of Deborah Murphy, Mame Ekborn Cudd, Karen Drew, Deni Dickler, Fred Gerhard, and Sharon Harmon read hundreds of entries from all across New England and beyond to create the most recent edition. Please go to <https://smokyquartz.org/> for some fantastic reading!

2024-2025 MWG MEETING & SPEAKER SCHEDULE

September 21: Meeting at MacDowell, 100 High St., James Baldwin Library, Peterborough. We are delighted that MacDowell, an artists' residency program, will again welcome the MWG for our first General Meeting of the year. Two MacDowell artists-in-residence will read from their works and take questions from the group. Award-winning author **Diana Cao** has had poetry and fiction published in *Ploughshares*, *The Threepenny Review*, *The Yale Review*, *The Georgia Review*, and *32 Poems*. Her debut collection of poems, *Slipstream*, won the 2024 Berkshire Prize at Tupelo Press. Novelist **Joanna Pearson**'s debut novel, *Bright and Tender Dark*, was recently published by Bloomsbury and is an Indie Next Pick. Her story collection, *Now You Know It All*, was chosen by Edward P. Jones for the 2021 Drue Heinz Literature Prize, and named a finalist for the Virginia Literary Awards.

October 19: Young Adult (YA) novelists **Terry Farish** and **Lochan Sharma**, co-authors of the recently released YA novel *Go Home*, will speak to the group about their collaboration and writing process. Farish's other books include *The Good Braider* (an American Library Association and *School Library Journal* Best Book winner), *Either the Beginning or the End of the World* (winner of a Maine Literary Award), and children's books *A Feast for Joseph* and *The Cat Who Liked Potato Soup*. <https://terryfarish.com> **Lochan Sharma** was born in Nepal. His family was registered at Timai refugee camp after they were exiled from Bhutan. Lochan and his family moved to the U.S. in 2009 and live in Concord, NH. He is a pre-med student at Keene State



College. *Go Home*, written with Terry Farish, is Lochan's debut novel. https://www.instagram.com/lotion_sharma/.



November 16: Award-winning *New York Times* bestselling author **Helen Fremont** writes memoirs, essays, and short stories. Her memoirs *After Long Silence* and *The Escape Artist* were both best-sellers. *After Long Silence* describes her emotional journey upon discovering as an adult that her Eastern European emigre parents were Jewish, not Catholic. *The Escape Artist* was selected as a *New York Times* "Editor's Choice" in 2020, recommended as one of the "Best New Books" by *People* magazine, and named a "Reader's Choice" by BookPage. Her short stories and essays have been published in *The Harvard Review*, *Ploughshares*, and *The Marlboro Review*. <https://www.helenfremont.com>.

December 21: Come to one of our two yearly **Member Read-Arounds**. The format is straightforward: show up, share your writing if you like, and keep your selection to ten minutes so everyone has a chance to read! Our Read-Arounds are always surprising, humbling, entertaining, and inspiring. Come learn what your fellow MWG writers are working on while testing out your own material!

January 18: Rebecca Dinerstein Knight is the author of novels *Hex* and *The Sunlit Night*, the bilingual English-Norwegian collection of poems *Lofoten*, and the forthcoming nonfiction project *Notes to New Mothers*. Her screenplay adaptation of *The Sunlit Night* premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and is now a major motion picture starring Jenny Slate, Gillian Anderson, and Zach Galifianakis. Knight has reviewed novels for *The New York Times Book Review*, and her essays have appeared online in *The New Yorker*, *The Paris Review*, and *The New York Times*, among others. <https://www.rebeccadinersteinknight.com/>



February 15: Journalist and novelist **Paul Hertneky** is the author of the memoir *Rust Belt Boy: Stories of an American Childhood*. Over 34 years, Hertneky has written stories, essays, and scripts focused on culture, food, travel and the environment, for *The Boston Globe*, *Athens News*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *New Hampshire Union Leader*, *NBC News*, *The Comedy Channel*, *Gourmet*, *Eating Well*, *Traveler's Tales*, *The Exquisite Corpse*, *National Public Radio*, *Public Radio International*, *Adbusters*, and many more. <https://paulhertneky.com/>



(March - June speaker information still to come.)

FALL FESTIVALS FOR WRITERS

The Keene Sentinel 225th Anniversary Community Celebration will recognize more than two centuries of journalistic excellence from *The Keene Sentinel*. The newspaper has served the Greater Monadnock Region since 1799! To celebrate, the publisher will host a day-long celebration on **September 7** from 10:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., which will include a sidewalk sale, live music on two stages, special restaurant events, food trucks, antique and classic car and truck show, a community history series at The Keene Library, an art fair, a celebrity softball game, and a fireworks display. <https://www.sentinelsource.com/>



The first annual **Writing Festival at the Fells** will be presented by The John Hay Lyceum on Tuesday, **September 17**, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the John Hay Estate at The Fells in Newbury, NH. The festival will include workshops, panel discussions, networking opportunities, book sales, and a buffet lunch. For more information and to register, go to: thefells.org/writing-festival.



The **New Hampshire Book Festival** will be held in downtown Concord, NH, on **October 4-5**. The event brings authors together with readers to celebrate literacy, conversation, and community. The festival features live presentations, panels, and book signings by 40+ nationally recognized authors including Claire Messud, Lori Haskins Houran, Evan J. Griffith, Lita Judge, Jennifer Millitello, Matt Tavares, and many more. Keynote speakers are bestselling children's author Kate DiCamillo and bestselling thriller author Jean Hanff Korelitz. <https://www.nhbookfestival.org/>



The **23rd Annual Brattleboro Literary Festival** will take place **October 18-20** in downtown Brattleboro, VT, with events scheduled in various venues throughout the area. Friday night kicks off with a Books to Looks Fashion Show. Authors and presenters include Amy Jo Burns, Juliet Grames, Gary Gulman, Samuel Koléwolé, and Neil Shepherd. <https://brattleborolitfest.org/>



The **Boston Book Festival** is scheduled for Saturday, **October 26**, from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Copley Square, Boston. Celebrating the power of words to stimulate, agitate, unite, delight, and inspire, the annual festival promotes a culture of reading and ideas and enhances the vibrancy of the city. Keynote speakers include Louise Erdrich, Jeffrey Deaver, and Isabella Maldonado. The event kicks off with an Evening With Malcolm Gladwell on Friday night, October 25, at the Back Bay Events Center. For more information, please go to <https://bostonbookfest.org/>

LOCAL EVENTS FOR WRITERS

The **Untitled Writer's Group** meets at the Keene Toadstool Bookshop the **first and third Wednesdays** of the month from 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. This is a writer's group for those with a love of the written word. Come for feedback, fellowship, support, inspiration, and information. <https://toadbooks.com/>

Poetry at The Root, an open mic night for poets in Temple, is hosted by poet Brian Evans-Jones, former Poet Laureate of Hampshire, U.K., and winner of the Maureen Egan Award from *Poets & Writers*. He writes about poetry and creativity at [The Poetry Place](#). Event is the **last Thursday of every month** from 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. Read your own poems, read poems by your favorite poets, or come to support the poets by listening to the poems—everyone is welcome! You can warm up at the fire, listen to the live music, hang out with other poets and poetry lovers, and enjoy the night. <https://www.writebetterpoems.com/poetry-at-the-root>.

Monadnock Underground Open Mic. The Peterborough Town Library and Monadnock Underground host a monthly open mic night for writers of all genres and levels of experience. Poetry, prose, something you're not even sure what it is—bring it on down! You can sign up when you arrive at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, **September 12**. In an effort to keep things relaxed, loose, and informal, they try to avoid fixed rules like maximum length, and simply ask that readers be mindful of how many others are signed up to read and the fact that they have a hard stop at 7:00 p.m. <https://peterboroughtownlibrary.org/event/11040952>

The **High School Creative Writing Club** is run by Avenue A Teen and Community Center, a project of The Grapevine in Antrim. The Creative Writing Club is open to all teens. Students are encouraged to express themselves, tackle difficult issues, and offer support to one another. The club also supports performance, bringing art into the community by hosting readings of student work in local bookshops. <https://avenueatc.org/>



The **New Dawn Writers Group at the New Dawn Arts Center**, 84 Main Street, Ashburnham, MA, holds **Tuesday night** workshops on fiction, memoir, and poetry, plus open mic nights, from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. MWG member Fred Gerhard runs the poetry workshop. Please click the link for more details on specific dates. <https://www.newdawnarts.org>

MacDowell Downtown is a free series of presentations by MacDowell Fellows that are open to the public. They take place on the first Friday of the month from March to November in downtown Peterborough. Each season of MacDowell Downtown features a wide array of programming, including film screenings, readings, artist talks, interviews, musical performances, and more. MacDowell Downtown begins at 7:30 p.m. typically at the Monadnock Center for History and Culture in Peterborough. <https://www.macdowell.org/events/2024-macdowell-downtown>

MEET A MEMBER

We're taking a break from Meet A Member for this issue so we can bring you the highlights of the Member Survey. But this relatively new feature is proving popular and we will resume with the October *Quill*. Thanks to all our writers who agreed to be featured in our MEET A MEMBER section last year! We are now looking for members interesting in answering our Quill Questionnaire and sharing some of their work in each edition of this year's *Quill*. Please email jesstimm17@gmail.com if you would like to participate!

ALL ABOUT MWG

- **Submit your bio as a member of MWG.** Are you a member? If you would like your bio added to the [About Our Members](#) page on the MWG website, please send it to Mary Marchese at mwgwebmaster@gmail.com. Maximum 200 words, written in third person, and feel free to include links to your website, most recent publication, listing on Amazon, and social media.
- **Volunteer!** If you would be interested in bringing refreshments, being our ten-minute reader or have ideas for speakers or events, please let us know at monadnockwriters@gmail.com.
- **Send your writing news or announcements to *The Quill*.** If you would like to submit to our monthly newsletter, please contact Jess at mwg.quill@gmail.com at least a week before the end of the month. As a member, you may include your author events and announcements.
- **Who are we at MWG?** Established in 1984, the primary mission of the Monadnock Writers' Group is to offer fellowship and support to professional writers and to those actively engaged in developing their writing skills. To learn more: www.monadnockwriters.org/about-us
- **Please explore MWG online.** Visit our website, www.monadnockwriters.org, for news, member profiles, speakers series information, contests, publications, and more. Find us on Facebook under Monadnock Writers' Group: www.facebook.com/groups/monadnockwriters/
- **Monadnock Writers' Group membership information:**
 - Annual membership fees are \$30, or \$25 for students and seniors, \$50 for Patrons, \$100 for Benefactor, and \$250 for a Corporate membership.
 - Individual members are encouraged to announce their own projects such as workshops, social gatherings, group support sessions, or whatever the writing-related endeavor. Feel free to take the floor at the monthly meeting, or contact the newsletter editor at mwg.quill@gmail.com to send an announcement to the membership in the monthly newsletter.

- Bring a friend to one of our monthly meetings, and if they join MWG, you will receive a \$20 gift certificate for the Toadstool Bookshop!
 - See the full list of membership benefits here: www.monadnockwriters.org/membership
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The MWG 2023-2024 Board of Directors

President: Jesseca Timmons, *Vice President:* Rodger Martin, *Treasurer:* Carl Mabbs-Zeno, *Secretary:* Susan Gebo, *Members at Large:* Deni Dickler, Tori Haring-Smith, Maura MacNeil, Mary Marchese, Ronnie McIntire, *Emerita:* Ann Day.

MEMBER SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Thanks to all who completed our Member Survey in June! A full 40% of you took part, almost evenly divided between relatively new members (0-5 years), people who've been members for 6-10 years, and those who have been part of the MWG for 10+ years, which gave us a great range of perspectives.

We're pleased to say many of the findings and the feedback from write-in comments validated the MWG's current approach, which focuses on high-quality speakers at monthly meetings, *The Quill*—this informative monthly newsletter, and *Smoky Quartz*—our online journal. We truly appreciate all of the positive comments you submitted.

We promised to share the findings with you. Here they are. Mixed in is information on a few changes we're making as a result of your input, noted in green for easy reference.

YOU & YOUR INTERESTS

Survey respondents represented a nearly equal mix of fiction, nonfiction and poetry writers.

64% have been published in “traditional” outlets and 25% have self-published your work.

You are most interested in these genres/topics:

- 71% Literary/General Fiction
- 64% Historical Fiction
- 64% Short Stories/Flash Fiction
- 61% The Publishing Industry
- 57% Memoir/Autobiography 54% Poetry

YOUR VIEWS ON THE MWG

The overwhelming reason people gave for joining the MWG was to connect with other writers, followed by furthering one's craft.

The top 5 services you want from us are:

- 93% Newsletter
- 86% Speaker series
- 71% Publications
- 60% Online bookshop for member books*
- 50% Writing contests

*As a result, we are in talks with Toadstool Bookshop in Peterborough about collaborating on an online bookshop of some kind.

MEETINGS

89% attend some of the monthly meetings, ranging from those who attend only when interested in the speaker to those who try to always attend.

The following percentages find these parts of the meetings Useful or Very Useful:

- 96% Main speaker
- 85% Announcements
- 82% 10-minute reading
- 67% Attendee introductions**
- 63% Informal meet and greet at beginning
- 45% Refreshments

**We curtailed going around the room and having each member introduce themselves a few months ago, because the process was getting too long, sometimes cutting into the guest speaker's Q&A time by 15-20 minutes. But enough people mentioned this in the survey that we will try an abbreviated version, and invite people attending for the first time to say a few words about themselves.

The recent re-introduction of name tags at meetings was appreciated. To be more welcoming, we will place greeters at the room entrance and Board members will continue introducing themselves to a few new people each month.

MWG PUBLICATIONS

75% read *The Quill* newsletter every month or most months. All sections of the newsletter are considered Useful or Very Useful by a majority of respondents.

82% read the *Smoky Quartz* online journal.

The following percentages rated these publications/contests Important or Very Important:

- 68% *Smoky Quartz*
- 57% Periodic anthologies
- 43% 3-minute Fiction Slam***
- 32% Poetry in the Pines***
- 29% Six Word Novel Contest***

*** We will stop offering Poetry in the Pines and the Six-Word Novel Contest. We will keep offering the 3-Minute Fiction Slam, which is part of the New Hampshire Writers' Project statewide competition, as it offers winners an opportunity for considerable visibility and it attracts new and younger writers (something several respondents noted as a must for any organization).

We are also considering new contest ideas, so if you have suggestions, please let us know.

Thank you again for participating in the survey, and for your helpful comments!