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Leanne Banks

PPWC Keynote Speaker Advocates Self-affirmations

By **Chris Olson**

Even with her success as a *USA Today* bestselling author and popular workshop speaker, Leanne Banks understands how easily self-doubt can take over a writer's life. She's a firm believer in the power of a daily dose of self-affirmations. After interviewing her, I decided that a combination of self-affirmations and a session reading her romance novels while on the treadmill would leave one with a sparkling, positive outlook every day.

You need to spend only a few minutes with Leanne to understand why she has become so successful. I left the interview wanting to hire her for my own life coach. Read what this gorgeous, spirited, and funny romance novelist has to say about writing under pressure, defying negativity, and the creativity that flows when you begin to believe in yourself. Our interview went like this:

Olson: You are a number one best-selling author of romance novels and a popular speaker, but I've read your article about the unglamorous "deadline look." How do you keep writing when the pressure builds?

Banks: I do several things. I order pizza and pull meals I've

previously prepared from my freezer. I don't watch television during the day. I avoid answering the phone. I prioritize and I choose activities based on whether they're going to add something positive, or suck the life force out of me. I have this philosophy that there are people and things that put pennies in my jar and people and things that take them out. I find that although I can't eliminate people and things, I can limit them.

Something else I do is have a "book-it buddy." On a daily basis, via e-mail, a writer friend and I report our goal and progress and share a quote along with some encouraging words. No fussing allowed.

Olson: Why do you think self-affirmations are important to writers?

Banks: Because we need to have our brains washed out. Because so many of us suffer from a fraud complex. This is a tough profession before and after you sell. Before you sell, you suffer rejection. You suffer from wounding critiques if you ask others to critique your work. After you sell, you worry about sales. You struggle with revisions, reviews, and the deadly trap of comparing your career to someone else's. All this negativity skews my perception, so I need a good brainwashing.

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Busy Year Planned for PPW Members

PPW kicked off a full year of member meetings with "Ask An Author" on February 8. If you missed it, don't worry—there will be a two-hour member meeting on the second Tuesday of every month. Meetings are combined with Write Brain Sessions and include a variety of interactive activities, guest speakers, discussions, and networking.

All meetings will be held in the communi-

ty room at the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) Falcon Station, 7850 Goddard Street near Chapel Hills Mall—just south of I-25 and west of Academy Boulevard. (Visit www.PPWC.net for a map.) Please park on the street rather than in the CSPD parking lot. Bring photo identification—everyone must sign in and show i.d. to enter the building. (Note: Other PPW events, such as the conference and for-fee workshops, will be held at different venues, so pay attention to announcements and check our Web site frequently for updates.) Write Brain sessions and member meetings are a benefit of membership, free and open to members only. If you wish to bring guests, they may attend one meeting while deciding whether

to join PPW. Please identify guests to the PPW Registrar upon your arrival.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

March 8, 6:30 p.m.
"Improv for Dialogue"
CSPD Falcon Station

Local actors will perform a series of improvised scenes to illustrate casual, everyday speech. Interactive exercises illustrate how to more effectively identify and use common speech patterns and create tone in written dialogue. This is a rare opportunity to observe and analyze conversation in a controlled environment where we can change the parameters—like "people watching," only better! The exercises promise to be a fun and useful way to

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"Words are all we have."

—**Samuel Beckett**

From the Editor



If you're still contemplating the pros and cons of joining a critique group, let me give you some new reasons to join. I recently submitted a first draft of a short story to my critique group and the feedback not only helped me improve the story, it taught me some important lessons about tuning one's ear toward the reader.

The story was about an eight-year-old girl whose Chickasaw Indian grand-

mother decided to teach the child a lesson about dipping snuff, with the intention of curing her of the desire. In the story, I casually mentioned the Lone Ranger and Tonto, his Indian friend, who were movie heroes when I was a child.

A very sharp critiquer let me know that the name "Tonto" means "fool," and "Quimosabe" means "one who knows more than anyone else." She also told me that the theme of my short story could be summed up as "Indians are sneaky, prejudiced against their own families, and have unhealthy practices." I had to ask, "Did I really write that?" It wasn't the message I intended to send.

Another critiquer let me know that

the grandmother's teaching methods amounted to child abuse. Finally, I was told that my story really started on page three.

What does one do with such criticisms? I went back to the drawing board and dropped the section about the Lone Ranger and Tonto. I would have no ethnic caricature nor smart-assed white man in my story. I made the grandmother the bright, caring teacher that she was. I put page three information at the front, which started my story with a hook.

Thanks, gang. Four heads are better than one. See you Friday.

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PPW Keynote Speaker—Leanne Banks

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Olson: Why did you become a writer?

Banks: Wow! What a question! My first response is I'm a writer because I'm otherwise unemployable. Now that I've been doing this for awhile, however, I see that I'm able to use a lot of different aspects of myself in my writing career. I majored in psychology and I use that. I have a minor in business administration, so I'm able to grasp some of the business and marketing aspects of the publication industry.

Olson: Do you have a routine or ritual you follow when you write?

Banks: I drink iced tea and always put on my wrist brace. I do NOT get dressed for the public before I get started. This has caused me to sometimes be in my jammies at 6 p.m. It's really tough explaining that to my neighbors when I have to chase after my dog.

When I'm on deadline, I like to write in "sessions." Sessions for me are only about three pages. On a very intense day, I'll do three or four sessions.

Olson: What can you tell us about your new novel?

Banks: It's fun! My next single title, *Feet First*, from HQN, hits the stands in September. The story features a she-ro who has doodled her way through life and finds herself in the position of designing wedding shoes for the wedding of the year, which will be filmed for a reality television show. The she-ro must interface with the vice president of her shoe company. On her birthday, she promises herself that she will bed the gorgeous VP. Now she has to figure out whether she can—and if she can, then how?

Olson: Sounds like a great read. I'm looking forward to seeing you at the PPWC in April. Thanks for taking the time to do this interview.

—Chris Olson, a former book and magazine editor, is the 2005 PPWC faculty coordinator and member of PPW board of directors. She is the owner of COCO Media, a creative agency specializing in advertising and public relations. She may be reached at Chrisococmedia@aol.com.

Busy Year Planned

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improve dialogue writing skills. Use this opportunity to explore existing characters or develop new ones, refine your craft, interact with fellow writers, and share a few laughs.

April 12, 6:30 p.m.

"Pitch Practice and Conference Tips"
CSPD Falcon Station

Published authors and conference veterans discuss proper etiquette for talking with editors and agents, and present methods for pitching a manuscript. Learn from others' experience and insight how to make your pitch more professional and memorable. At the end of the presentations, attendees have the opportunity to practice pitching with experienced pitchers. The PPW Conference director will reveal exciting plans for PPWC 2005, share tips for making the most of your conference experience, and answer questions. Even if you won't be attending PPWC, don't miss this opportunity to learn how to concisely and effectively pitch your writing. You never know when you'll need to present the gist of your manuscript in two minutes or less!

How to Get Your Manuscript Noticed

By Chris Olson

There are dozens of ways to get the attention of an editor or agent. Which option best describes your situation?

1. You're confident you'll get the best editor because you recently completed a book and already your agent is talking about auctioning it.

2. You just got a seat on a plane next to that elusive agent and now you have two uninterrupted hours to pitch your story.

3. Your sister's boyfriend's plumber fixed Grisham's agent's toilet. Next time his toilet clogs the plumber thinks he will be able to score an appointment with the agent. Give the plumber your card, but make sure it's laminated.

4. You register for the 2005 PPWC and sign up for an editor/agent pitch meeting. (You'll find the details on your registration form, or check our Web site at www.PPWC.net to get the details).

My advice is to try option number four. Attend PPWC and sign up to pitch to an editor or agent who represents your writing genre. Follow these tips for success when you pitch.

Select the best agent or editor for your project

If you have written the next great action adventure blockbuster, you don't want to waste your time pitching your book to an editor looking for chick lit. Each agent and editor has specific interests. How do you choose the best person? Do some research.

Jump online to get the facts

Treat your opportunity to pitch like a job interview. You probably spent weeks, months or years writing your book. Even though you are excited to present your book, selecting an editor or agent is not the time to make a rush decision. Go online and check out the agency's or publisher's Web site. What books have they sold? You can also go to the bookstore, library, or to Amazon.com and read more about the books on the agent's or editor's list that are similar to your project. When you are online, read the submission guidelines at the agency or publisher. On pages four and five of this *NewsMag* check out our quick guide to what the agents and editors at PPWC want.

Tips for preparing your pitch

Imagine that you have a killer idea for a YA series. If the agent likes your pitch, you have it made, but there is one tiny problem—you don't know what to say. Your book took more than a year to write and trying to distill all the amazing details into one thirty-second pitch seems impossible.

Grab a three-by-five card and start writing down the basics: your name, book title, genre, approximate word count, and a twenty-five word premise or book log. This card can be a useful tool to give the agent or editor at your appointment.

Here are some tips to get your pitch started: The pitch should be a short, punchy presentation that makes the editor say, "Great. Tell me more." In your pitch, mention the genre. Set up the main character's world, goal, and flaw. Finish the pitch with the hook. If you want to sell your idea you need a hook—a special plot detail or a twist that grabs the agent's attention and makes her want to hear more. You can find dozens of winning pitches online in the deals section in "Lunch Weekly" by Publishersmarketplace.com. If you need more help writing your pitch, here's a list of books you should check out:

- *Writing the Breakout Novel* by Donald Maass
- *Writing the Fiction Synopsis* by Pam McCutcheon
- *Your Novel Proposal* by Blythe Camenson and Marshall J. Cook

Test drive your pitch

Before you arrive at the conference, practice giving the pitch to your cat, your friends, or your writing group. Still wondering if your pitch is effective? Did their eyes glaze over when you gave your pitch? If your pitch is working, your friends will be asking for more detail about your project. An effective pitch has just the right amount of detail and is delivered in a smooth, entertaining way.

A pitch session lasts more than thirty seconds, so be prepared to answer the editor's or agent's questions. Here are just a few of the discussion points you may want to consider. Describe the key plot points. What are the emotional and physical stakes? Can you describe what your hero learns? How does the story escalate? Who is the antagonist? Describe the challenges your protagonist faces. Don't be disappointed if all agents aren't interested in this longer discus-

sion of your work. Some may prefer to have you ask about their interests. (See Jessica Faust's comments below.)

Congratulations

After the appointment is over, reward yourself for meeting an impressive goal. While you indulge in a Starbucks coffee or Hagen Daz, take the time to jot down a few notes about what the editor or agent said during your meeting. If the agent or editor asked to see more of your manuscript, make the changes he suggested and follow up quickly while the meeting is still fresh in his mind.

—Chris Olson, a former book and magazine editor, is the 2005 PPWC Faculty Coordinator. She is the owner of COCO Media, a creative agency specializing in advertising and public relations. She may be reached at chriscocomedia@aol.com.

Jessica Faust, editor with Book/Ends, LLC., forwarded the following information which did not fit into the chart, but it is so helpful we're passing it on to readers:

"Authors should use their pitch session with me to learn about publishing and about BookEnds as much as they should pitch their books. The pitch itself should take no more than two or three minutes and a couple of sentences. Tell me what genre your book fits into and your book's tagline. In other words, what's exciting about your book that makes it different from every other cozy mystery or chick lit that I'll be hearing about?"

"Remember, I'm going to be hearing many, many pitches so your goal is to make your book stand out in my mind so that I'm still thinking about it when my plane lands back in New Jersey. The rest of your time with me can best be used allowing me to ask questions about you, your writing and your work—and you asking questions about publishing. Is there anything you'd like to know? Was something said in another workshop that you are curious about or have more questions about?"

What PPWC Editors and

Agency/ Publisher	Genres you are most interested in pursuing at PPWC	Do you read a portion of the manuscript at the session?
Kathleen Anderson <i>Anderson Grinberg Literary Management, Inc</i>	Women's fiction, literary fiction, historical fiction, psychological suspense, journalism, memoir, young adult, travel/nature writing, history, science, biography, anthropology	No
Jessica Faust <i>BookEnds LLC</i> ***See article on page 3.	Cozy mysteries, romance (especially romantic suspense, erotic romance, romantic comedy and anything that pushes the limits of romance), chick lit, women's fiction, self-help/how-to nonfiction with a strong author platform	No
Lilly Ghahremani <i>Full Circle Literary, LLC</i>	I'm eager to pick up some more fiction, so I'm very excited about PPWC. Mainstream fiction that doesn't fall specifically in a genre—particularly women's lit, chick lit, creative nonfiction, anything with a new or multicultural angle, YA and children's, (no sci fi, fantasy, western). I don't take mystery/suspense, etc, but spectacular writing will break my "rules" if it is unusual	Material changes so much following a conference, probably not. I like to talk with the author and their vision and see how they present their work in discussion. How many pages? 10-20 to take with me
Kristin Nelson <i>Nelson Literary Agency, LLC</i>	Fiction: Literary, commercial mainstream, women's fiction, chick lit, romance (all categories), science fiction and fantasy. Nonfiction: Story-based only such as memoir, narrative nonfiction, biography, history, women's issues. We do not represent mystery, thriller, horror, Christian, YA, children's or screenplays. Please visit our Web site for clear submission guidelines	No
Jim McCarthy <i>Dystel & Goderich Literary Management</i>	Commercial and/or literary fiction; memoir; narrative history; urban issues; women's issues; popular culture	Any material I'd like to see could be sent to me by mail or e-mail after the conference
Lori Perkins <i>L. Perkins Agency</i>	I specialize in dark fiction and popular culture nonfiction. In genre fiction I represent horror, dark fantasy and social science, as well as literary fiction with a dark undertow. My books on pop culture cover the gamut of music, TV, art, entertainment and cultural events	
Stacey Barney <i>Amistad/ HarperCollins</i>	Serious narrative nonfiction, pop culture, literary fiction, themes of race, class, gender, women's stories, family stories	No
Allison H. Dickens <i>The Random House Publishing Group/Ballantine</i>	Commercial women's fiction with a particular focus on either the twentysomething market or the reader's group market	I'd prefer not to because I don't know that I can read and effectively evaluate a manuscript in ten minutes
Tracy Gates <i>Viking Children's Books</i>	Sports-themed, adventure, contemporary middle-grade and YA fiction, historical fiction, middle-grade, fantasy	Yes. First chapter of novel or first few pages of a picture book manuscript
Nancy Siscoe <i>Knopf Books for Young Readers</i>	Picture books to YA—prefer fiction, but am open to narrative nonfiction as well. I especially like middle grade and YA mysteries. Also, humor and intelligent romance	Sure, I'll read one or two pages

Agents Want in a Pitch

Books Worth Reading	Requests Proposal	Requests Synopsis	Web site
Psychological suspense: Helen Dunmore, <i>Talking to the Dead</i> ; Women's fiction: Sue Miller, <i>The Good Mother</i> , and Rosamunde Pilcher; Historical fiction: Emma Donoghue, <i>Slammerkin</i> ; Journalism: Charles Bowden, Mark Singer, George Packer; Memoir: Anna Oliver, <i>Assembling my Father</i> ; Young adult: Garth Nix; Travel/nature writing: Craig Childs	Yes	Yes	Not available
Authors I would love to have on my list or see books that are similar to include Nancy Martin mysteries, Karin Slaughter, Mary Janice Davidson, Lori Foster, Jennifer Weiner, Laura Childs (but don't compare your book to any of these authors in your appointment)	No	No	www.bookends-inc.com
No comment	Yes	Yes	www.fullcircleliterary.com
<i>Dress Rehearsal</i> , by Jennifer O'Connell, NAL/Penguin Group; <i>Enchanted Inc.</i> , by Shanna Swendson, Ballantine; <i>Siren</i> , by Cheryl Sawyer, NAL/Penguin Group; <i>Into His Arms</i> , by Paula Reed, Kensington. The best way to understand what we are looking for is to read the work of our current clients	No	A short blurb like the back cover of a book—one or two paragraphs	www.nelsonagency.com
No comment	Send material by mail or e-mail after the conference	Send material by mail or e-mail after the conference	www.dystel.com
No comment	No comment	No comment	Not available
No comment	Yes	Yes	www.harpercollins.com/imprints.asp?imprint=Amistad
Twentysomething market: I recommend Clare Naylor, <i>Dog Handling</i> , or any of the Jane Green novels. Reader's Group Market: I am looking for novels in the vein of anything by Lorna Landvik, Adriana Trigiani, Louise Shaffer, or Monica Wood	Yes	Yes	www.randomhouse.com
Sports themed: Rich Wallace, <i>Restless</i> ; Historical fiction: Elisa Carbone, <i>Stealing Freedom</i> ; Adventure: Ron Woods, <i>The Hero</i> ; Fantasy: <i>Mirror</i> , <i>Mira</i> ; Contemporary/Middle-grade: Sally Warner, <i>This Isn't About the Money</i> ; Picture book: Carole Lexa Schaefer, <i>Someone Says</i> , and Grace Lin, <i>Robert's Snow</i>	Not necessary	Yes, if it's a novel	www.penguingroup.com
<i>Hoot</i> by Carl Hiaasen and <i>The Playmaker</i> by J. B. Cheaney offer a range of what I like in mystery, from contemporary to historical. <i>Flipped</i> by Wendelin Van Draanen is a thoughtful and funny young romance	No, mailing it to my office is easier for me	Not necessary, but might be helpful	www.randomhouse.com/kids/ Web site says we don't accept unsolicited mss—will read anything from a PPW conference, prefer to see completed mss

Greasing the Process

By Linda Rohrbough

I used to make New Year's resolutions until I discovered it was self-defeating, guilt producing behavior for me. So I stopped willy-nilly firing off a list of shoulds every year and switched to one or two goals. In 2004, I decided to increase my output. I'm happy to report I've done that and I'd like to share what I've learned.

I discovered I had a number of unrealistic expectations about writing. One is I expected if I had, say, eight units of talent, I would have all eight units available to me every day. Not true. Some days I feel I write pretty well; others it's like "this so sucks." There doesn't seem to be any way to predict when either will occur. I'm realizing my moments of writing ecstasy come about as frequently as those moments of ecstasy when I'm doing the dishes.

Interestingly enough, after three national awards for my books, I was reminded that I wouldn't be able to tell by looking at my work when I had felt brilliant and when I had felt like I had to scrape myself up off the floor to get the work done. And that's true. I cannot tell. I must say, this is a huge comfort to me because the times I feel ecstatic are way fewer than the times I feel ordinary or even crummy.

One of the most helpful things I've done for my productivity is to visually change the environment when I write. I love the color of water in a pool, so I went to Wal-Mart and bought a couple of paper notebooks that color. I stand them open on each side of me during my writing time. I close my eyes and relax for a minute or two to transition. This is a way to "fool" my brain into going into writing mode, and it works.

It's actually not such a big trick. Other professions have similar environmental clues. My husband goes to his office where the sights and sounds are different from any place else he spends time. Whether he feels like it ini-

tially or not, pretty soon he's in "work" mode. The same is true for a dentist, or a truck driver, or a welder. I'm simulating the same thing in my writing environment.

These tidbits and several others came from Jerry Mundis's "Breaking Writer's Block Forever" audio tapes. I'd never heard of Jerry before, though it turns out a lot of famous writers and artists have—like Judy Collins. The price of his audio course made me hesitate, but I owe Jerry a huge debt of gratitude. I wasn't blocked, but I wasn't as prolific as I wanted to be. I now imperfectly execute his plan and it has made my writing life more satisfying and productive than I could have imagined. I'd recommend his course as the best investment you can make for 2005, especially if you find yourself struggling with block.

Another book that's helped me a great deal was Steven Pressfield's *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles*. Pressfield talks about resistance. I had it in my head that if I was where I needed to be, resistance wouldn't exist for me. Wrong-o. Resistance is part and parcel of writing, every day. At one point, Pressfield lived in a trailer next door to a writer no one had heard of. Pressfield announced one day he'd finished a book he'd been struggling with for a long time. The man looked at him and said "Good. Tomorrow start the next one."

I recently visited the lovely home of *New York Times* best-selling romance author Jodi Thomas. She has a new oak dining room table. She's held writers' retreats in her home and a friend suggested she get a glass top for the table so writers working with pen and paper wouldn't leave remnants of their stories in the wood. Jodi looked at me and said, "I decided not to. I love the idea of writers leaving the marks of their stories



Linda Rohrbough

in my table." And I thought, here's a woman who loves the process.

I guess what this means to me is that to increase my productivity I must do whatever it takes to grease the wheels of my own process. Nonfiction writing is demanding, but fiction is a much more taxing process for me, filled with a lot more self-doubt and guilt than nonfiction writing ever was. And the rewards are a lot farther apart.

Speaking of rewards being far apart, one of the most encouraging stories I've heard lately comes from Sharon De Vita, an award winning writer earning six-figure advances, who hit a four year dry period with no sales. She kept writing the entire time. What's even more amazing is she talks about using the tools she'd learned to keep herself going during the eighteen years before she published her first book. Now there's someone who understands how to get and keep herself going.

So, my wish for you in 2005 is that you find—if you haven't already—what you need to grease your own process. If you've found what works for you, I hope you'll share with the rest of us. After all, isn't that what PPW is about?

—Linda Rohrbough has been writing about the computer industry since 1989 and has more than five thousand articles and five books to her credit. Her work has been honored three times by the Computer Press Association. She has finished her first techno-thriller novel and is working on a second. E-mail Linda at Linda@PCbios.com or visit her Web site: www.PCbios.com.

Tools and Encouragement for Greasing Your Own Writing Process

1. "Break Writer's Block Forever" set of audio tapes by Jerry Mundis, www.unblock.org.
2. *The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles* by Steven Pressfield.
3. "Desire, Determination, and Discipline" article by Sharon De Vita www.romantictimes.com/data/tips/101.html.

Faculty Substitution

If you registered to pitch at this year's conference to literary agent Jessica Papin, of Dystel & Goderich Literary Management, please note that Jim McCarthy instead will be representing that agency.

McCarthy interned for DGLM for three years while studying urban design at New York University. Upon graduating, Jim real-

ized he would much rather continue working with books than jump to the field of city planning.

As an agent, he is interested in a broad range of literary and commercial fiction—anything that isn't fantasy or sci-fi. In nonfiction, he'd like to see anything narrative, especially twentieth century history, architecture, urban stories, memoir, and women's issues. He is also keenly interested in all things pop culture and anything

quirky, campy, or unusual. Jim was reared just outside NYC and currently lives in Brooklyn.

McCarthy will be available for pitch appointments on Saturday, April 23. If you are interested, please make your request on your registration form. If you registered for a Papin appointment, you will automatically be transferred to McCarthy.

Volunteer of the Month

By Kirsten Akens, conference director

Each month the Pikes Peak Writers Conference Steering Committee recognizes an outstanding volunteer. We'd like to share a little about each through a Q&A interview.

December 2004 Volunteer of the Month: Martha Lancaster

Current Position with PPW/C: Martha is the office administrator/registrar. Her job consists of a variety of responsibilities, mostly uncompensated. Pikes Peak Writers' central office is currently at her house. She takes phone messages, registers nonconference workshop attendees and conference registration. She is the graphics person and does layout and design work for the *PPW NewsMag* and other printed pieces. Martha does the mailings of the *NewsMag* and conference brochures, as well as keeping track of the databases for PPW/C records.

Q: Martha, how long have you been working with PPW/C? Have you held any other positions in the past and, if so, what have they been?

A: I attended the first PPWC and remained active with the Front Range Fiction Writers. After my husband died and the kids left home, I experienced the empty nest syndrome and badly wanted something to do. I asked Jimmie Butler if he needed

volunteers and, of course, I soon had more to do than I could ever imagine.

My first volunteer position was contest coordinator for two years, then I take over the production work of the conference brochures and printed materials. Next, I became the PPWC registrar. When PPW started in 2001, I was the central office and point person.

Q: What do you do professionally, outside of PPW/C?

A: I'm a freelance commercial artist, working mostly for PPW, and I work part-time for an attorney.

Q: Why do you enjoy working with PPW/C?

A: Working with PPW/C is very rewarding. I previously worked for an association that did bookselling conventions, and working for PPW/C makes use of my previous experience. The most rewarding part is the level of professionalism of people with whom I work. I've enjoyed meeting many people who are so excited about what they do. I enjoy hearing their war stories about becoming published, their dreams, and what they have accomplished by attending PPWC.

Q: Would you recommend others volunteer with PPW/C and why?



A: Yes! You never know when you'll talk on the phone (or in person) with the likes of Donald Maass, Michael Crais or David Morrell. How many opportunities do you have to drive you're prospective editor or agent to the airport?

Q: What do you write and why do you write?

A: I write children's picture books and middle-grade novels. When my children were small, I loved the picture books. With my art background, I like the challenge of putting the puzzle together to produce a beautiful product. I read mysteries and am working on a middle-grade mystery.

Q: What do you enjoy doing in your free time—besides writing?

A: I have a great love of the outdoors. I paint the outdoors, photograph the outdoors; I hike, ski, and mountain bike. Anything that has to do with the outdoors makes me very happy. My biggest thrill last summer was to ride up the ski lift at Keystone with my mountain bike and fly down the mountain. (I did wreck once, but, oh well, what's life worth if your not living it to the fullest!).

Q: Finally, who is your favorite author? Favorite book?

A: I think *Watership Down* is my favorite book. I met the late Paula Danziger at a SCBWI conference and fell in love with her humor and her books. I also enjoy Mary Higgins Clark's mysteries.

The Prez's Gavel

By Laura Hayden

Here's what the PPW board has been doing lately.

In an effort to simplify the organizational structure, the board of directors (BOD) voted in new, streamlined bylaws. Charlie Rush, immediate past vice president will explain those in more detail in the next issue of the *NewsMag*.

There are five mandated positions on the BOD filled by Laura Hayden, president; Kirsten Akens, vice president; Paul Carhart; secretary; Jennifer Webster-Valant, treasurer; and Charlie Rush, immediate past vice president position.

Additional positions appointed to the BOD are conference director, Kirsten Akens; workshop director, Chris M; *NewsMagazine* editor, Maxine Davenport; and member-at-large, Chris Olson.

What does this mean? The same individuals are still at the helm of the organization and conference; the changes are mostly internal.

What's the result? Better communication between board members and a more cohesive, more functional board. As our membership builds, the organization's needs make sure we have a fine-tuned infrastructure in order to support new programs run by new volunteers. Real growth isn't just a matter of measuring our increasing quantity, but, also, a matter of measuring and increasing our quality.

Help us make PPW the best writers organization for YOU.

Behind the Scenes with Volunteers

By Bonnie Hagan

Volunteering often gets an unwarranted bad rap. Admittedly working for no pay seems to be a losing proposition, but in the case of volunteering for the Pikes Peak Writers Conference it isn't true—the rewards far exceed monetary considerations. David Letterman might come up with the following list of *Ten Top Perks for Conference Volunteers*:

10. Preferential placement for pitches.
9. A moderator's invaluable power to tell conference attendees, "I'm sorry that's all the time we have for this session."
8. Getting acquainted with the faculty one-to-one while driving them to (or from) the airport.
7. Learning the layout of the hotel before the conference begins, just in case a quick get-away or head-em-off-at-the-pass is necessary.
6. Dibs on bookstore goodies. Some things go fast.
5. The opportunity to introduce yourself. For example, "I'm your moderator for this session, and just so you know, I write mystery novels to die for."
4. Handing a glass of water to...Donald Maass!
3. Knowing ahead of time where your favorite agent or editor will be seated at lunch or dinner.
2. Networking, networking, networking.
1. The chance to bring your own style and individuality to a successful writer's conference.

Sweet Success

Jan C.J. Jones reports that Forest Rose Productions has contracted to research, write, and produce the Disneyland Fiftieth Anniversary DVD that incorporates the story of "Disneyland, Then, Now and Forever!" Forest Rose personnel left January 4 to begin an exciting three months of meetings with VIPs and celebs including Gov. Schwarzenegger, M. Eisner, Johnny Depp, Julie Andrews, Elton John, Roy Disney, Jr., and many, many more. The agency will have access to all the Disney archives. Exciting stuff, indeed.

Maggie Bonham reports that her heroic fantasy novel, *Prophesy of Swords*, will be published in March by Yard Dog Press, and that she has completed five books in four months. These include three pet books for Wiley (*Dog Basics*, *Cat Basics*, and *A Dog's Wisdom*), plus *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Designer Dogs* for Alpha/Penguin Putnam.

Kathleen Brandt's latest book, *Dangerous Depths*, will be released in May. This is the third in her underwater investigation series, following *Swimming with the Dead* and *Dark Water Dive* published by NAL/Penguin Putnam. Her Web site is www.ksbrandt.com where readers may view her press kit.

Johanna Fallis happily reports that Publish America has accepted her mystery, *The Thorndyke Diaries*, for publication. Her first!

Robin Searle received Honorable Mention in *The Colorado Springs Gazette's* Holiday Christmas contest for her short story, "The Gift." There were more than two-hundred-fifty entries. This was Searle's first attempt at writing short stories.

Pamela Cosel has been chosen as one of two writers who will contribute rotating weekly columns titled "Highlighting Their Service" for the online magazine *Sisters in the Lord*. Her first subject will be a sixty-eight-year old woman in Florida who has been

ministering in prisons and hospitals most of her adult life. Cosel also does freelance assignments for *The Colorado Springs Gazette* in *Parent Magazine* and *Home in CO Springs*. She has been asked to write the monthly cover feature for the special section on real estate.

Meredith Blevins's *The Vanquished Priestess: An Annie Szabo Mystery* published by Forge: Tor has been chosen one of the five best mystery books of 2004 by the *Library Journal*. The first book in this series, *The Hummingway Wizard*, won the same honor for 2003.

Jane Guill, who won first place in the 2001 mainstream category in the Paul Gillette Memorial Writing Contest announces that her book, *Nectar From a Stone*, will be published March 8 by Simon & Schuster/Touchstone. Her Web site is www.janeguill.com. and she may be reached at janeguill@hotmail.com.