

20th Annual Cedar Falls Christian Writers Workshop



KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Mary Potter Kenyon

Mary Potter Kenyon graduated from the University of Northern Iowa and is a Therapeutic Art Coach and Certified Grief Educator trained under world-renowned grief expert, David Kessler. Mary is an author widely published in newspapers, magazines, and anthologies, with essays featured in ten *Chicken Soup for the Soul* titles. Her seven books include the award-winning *Refined By Fire: A Journey of Grief and Grace* and *Called to Be Creative: A Guide to Reigniting Your Creativity*. Her children's book on grief will be

released in April 2024.

Mary has been doing public speaking and conducting workshops for spirituality centers, community colleges, women's groups, churches, and libraries since 2011. She founded the annual Hope & Healing grief retreat and a Faith Writers conference in Dubuque.

RECENT MEDIA MENTIONS:

Finding the Good Life TV: [Mary Potter Kenyon – Finding The Good Life TV Show](#)

Holley Gerth podcast: [Is Everyone Creative? Yes, and Here's Why That Matters Now \(holleygerth.com\)](#)

Authority Magazine, Why We Are All Designed to Create: [Author Mary Potter Kenyon: Why We Are All Designed To Create | by Authority Magazine | Authority Magazine | Medium](#)

Talk of Iowa, Iowa Public Radio: <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/show/talk-of-iowa/2020-10-26/finding-your-creativity-with-mary-potter-kenyon>

Medium, Authority Magazine: ["Social Impact Authors, How and Why Mary Potter Kenyon is Helping to Change Our World"](#)

Fast Company: ["Now is a Great Time to Make Some Mediocre Art"](#)

Authority Magazine: ["How to Develop Mindfulness and Serenity During Stressful or Uncertain Times"](#)

Mary's sessions:

Seven Steps to a More Creative You

Twelve years ago, Mary Potter Kenyon braved the doors of the Cedar Falls conference, certain she didn't belong. Three days later, she left a changed woman with a vision for her future writing. Never would she have imagined seven book contracts in her future. Do you have a vision for your writing life? Research shows that we are more likely to accomplish our goals when we picture them clearly and write them down. But to realize our vision, we need to take action, and that requires a skill set that might not come naturally to us. Mary encourages and inspires with an actionable plan to develop your creative skills.

Breaking Into Publication by Writing Shorts

Whether your goal is to write a book, or you just want to see your work published, Mary walks you through the basics of breaking into publication with shorter pieces. With more than 700 clips published in magazines, newspapers, and anthologies, she'll share concrete examples as well as ideas for markets.

Book Proposal Basics

A book proposal is the business plan that sells a book concept to a publisher or agent. Usually required to sell a non-fiction project, more and more publishers are asking for book proposals for fiction works. This condensed version of Mary's three-hour intensive book proposal workshop highlights the main sections of a proposal, with step-by-step instructions. You will leave this workshop with your own book synopsis and generous handouts.

Uncommon Sense

What happens when God asks you to do something that doesn't make sense? When He asks us to do something outside of our comfort zone, we can face the fear and trust in Him or ignore the promptings of the Holy Spirit and stay in the safe zone, potentially missing out on God's perfect plan. Following the death of her husband in 2012, Mary Potter Kenyon developed a personal relationship with her Savior. In the process, she learned to listen and discern God's voice. Sometimes what we want in our writing isn't what God has planned for us. This inspirational presentation demonstrates what can happen when we step out in faith in our writing and our life.



FEATURED SPEAKER: Daniel R. Bernstrom

Daniel R. Bernstrom is the critically-acclaimed author of six picture books, including *One Day in the Eucalyptus*, *Eucalyptus Tree*, and the Minnesota Book Award winning *Big Papa and the Time Machine*. His books have been on a number of notable lists, including the Banks Street College of Reading Best Books of the Year, CCBC (Cooperative Children's Book Center), and the American Library Association. His books have been nominated for the Cybils Award in addition to several state awards, such as Minnesota, Iowa, Arizona, and Illinois. His latest book, *Big Papa and the Time Machine*, was one of several books selected for the PBS virtual Let's Learn program.

Daniel currently works as an English Faculty member for Minnesota West Community and Technical College in Worthington Minnesota, teaching Literature and English Composition.

He received his Bachelor's in Electronic Media Communications from the University Northwestern and his MFA (Master of Fine Arts) in Writing for Children and Young Adults

from Hamline University. He currently lives in Worthington, Minnesota with his wife Heather and five children.

Daniel's sessions:

The Picture Book: how to learn from mentor texts.

As Stephen King famously said, good writers write and good writers read. But how does one read? Reading as a writer is the untold secret of writing. In this lesson, learn how to read as a writer, find universal story structures, unpack patterns, and extract the devices children's book writers use to tell unforgettable stories.

What Writing Seven Unpublished Novels Taught Me

I have written seven novels over the last fourteen years. Not one has been published. Two have come close, but not one book has sold. I've met some success as a picture book writer, but I long to publish a novel. No matter what I've tried, I've failed. So why am I writing my eighth novel? Why do I keep trying? Because I love writing. And writing has changed me, because I have learned that even if I was the only one who needed that novel, it was enough. Learn what I've discovered about story and the heart of writing. Learn what I've learned about writing to heal.



FEATURED SPEAKER: Shelly Beach

As founder and Executive Director of Shelly Beach Communications, Shelly provides editing, mentoring, co-writing, and creative services to individuals working to bring their books to life.

Shelly is the recipient of the Christy Award for fiction, the Selah Award for inspirational nonfiction, and the Reader's Favorite Award Gold Medallion for devotional books, and the Golden Scroll Award for nonfiction.

Shelly served as managing editor for the *NIV Hope in the Mourning Bible* (Zondervan), was one of three writers for the *NIV Stewardship Bible* (Zondervan), and was a contributor to the *Mosaic Bible* (Tyndale) and the *David Jeremiah Study Bible* (Worthy).

She is the co-founder of the Breathe Writer's Conference in Michigan and the Cedar Falls Christian Writer's Workshop in Iowa. She and her husband Dan live in Cedar Fall, Iowa, and have two adult children and six grandchildren.

Shelly's sessions:

Conquering Queries

Learn the in's and out's of writing query letters to agents and editors and how they differ. This session teaches common content that causes authors' queries to be tossed in the trash or rejected with a quick "Not Interested." Conquering the basics

of excellent query letters puts you ahead of the crowd and tells agents or editors that you know your stuff and are ready for an assignment.

The Art of the Title

What makes a title appealing to a reader and an editor? How do you know when you've crafted a good title? Should an author write a title first or after their piece is finished? When is it appropriate to use subtitles? This session presents tools and tips that will help you create memorable and engaging titles that will draw readers into your books.

Secrets of Writing Great Marketing Material

How can writing marketing materials shape your book? And why does great marketing copy in your proposal help sell your book to the pub board? Learn how to write great marketing copy and grab the attention of editors, pub board members, and potential readers.



Gail Kittleson:

A former farm girl-turned college writing instructor, **Gail Kittleson** and her retired Army chaplain husband enjoy grandchildren, gardening, and learning about history. Her World War II women's fiction, memoir, and non-fiction honors the make-do folks of the Greatest Generation. No matter how dire the circumstances, you can count on heroines and heroes to discover new strength and move forward in faith.

After authoring seven World War II women's fiction novels from her northern Iowa home, Gail co-wrote two non-fiction books about holidays and food during the war. She then co-authored *Country Music's Hidden Gem*, with Billy Rae Stewart, the son of the author of the lyrics to the Tennessee Waltz, Redd Stewart,

In March 2021, her Civil War era novel, *Secondhand Sunsets*, released. Gail's next novel takes the reader back to World War II through the perspective of a British immigrant to the United States.

Facilitating workshops and retreats provides the "teaching fix" Gail craves, and a chance to cheer on other writers. She also loves meeting history lovers face-to-face, and recently launched a book tour for her latest release, *LAND THAT I LOVE*, set in Texas Hill Country.

<http://www.gailkittleson.com/>

www.facebook.com/GailKittlesonAuthor

<http://amazon.com/author/gailkittleson>

www.twitter.com/GailGkittleson @GailGkittleson

@gailkittlesonauthor (Instagram)

Gail's session:

Lassoing the Power of Fictional Settings

Clearly, authors must pay great attention to character and plot, but neglecting or minimizing setting will downgrade our work. Participants will define and practice creating settings for a scene.



Jean Vaux:

Jean Vaux, Life Design Coach, writer and speaker, helps influencers and communicators align with their design to transform stress into strength, by enhancing body, soul and spiritual health. As a Positive Intelligence mental fitness coach, she helps people shift inner negative scripts so they can uncover their voice and live the life God designed.

Jean has been published in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Messages from Heaven* and *Guideposts' Angels All Around Us*. She will be published in July of 2022 in a collaborative book with master speaker trainer, Arvee Robinson, *The Impact of One Voice: Your Voice, Message and Story Matters* (Hybrid Global Publishing). She was the former managing editor of the *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Magazine* and of the *Cedar Valley Christian News/Iowa Christian Chronicle*. She also helped launch the *Cedar Valley Athlete Magazine* locally and was its Wellness Editor.

Jean has a heart for Riverview, the venue of our in-person workshop over the years. In the 1990's, she worked on a committee to revitalize the conference grounds to rescue it from developers. Passionate about helping communicators express themselves, Jean has been a co-director of the annual Christian Writers Workshop since 2006 and has hosted speaker training workshops in the area. She coaches individuals and groups through workshops, retreats and natural food classes. You can find her on her Facebook page at [JeanVauxCoaching](#)



Sue Schuerman:

Sue Schuerman is co-leader of Cedar Falls Christian Writers Workshop and has led a monthly writing group for the past 13 years. She has been editor and cheer leader for many writers as they authored their debut memoirs. Sue's essays have appeared in a variety of anthologies and magazines. She especially enjoys creating chapbooks designed for specific people or special occasions.

As co-founder of **EarthWhispers** Abbey, Sue leads nature retreats and programs that integrate contemplative practice and creative expression. She feeds and shares her passion for nature, legacy writing (certified legacy facilitator), photography, and a spirit-illuminated life through retreats, workshops, and classes.

Visit her website for a schedule of offerings at glasspenwriter.com

Jean and Sue's session:

Velcro vs Teflon: Overwriting the Mind and the Page

Nothing threatens the ego more than the red pen of an editor. Learn how to shift from the grip of your saboteurs and slide into Sage at the editing stage, so you can grow as a writer and keep your work flowing.



Jolene Philo:

Jolene Philo is the author of several books for the special needs and disability community, including *Sharing Love Abundantly with Special Needs Families: The 5 Love Languages® for Parents Raising Children with Disabilities*.

She hosts the award-winning blog, www.DifferentDream.com. See *Jane Run!*, the first cozy mystery in her series that includes characters with disabilities will be released on June 7, 2022.

Jolene and her husband live in a multigenerational family in Polk City with her daughter, son-in-law and their two young children.

Jolene's session:

Getting and Staying Organized for Optimal Productivity

Writers leave writers' conferences with renewed purpose and beaucoup ideas they want to put into practice. They also leave asking themselves where to start, how to make time, and how to organize materials and resources. In this workshop, Jolene suggests a handful of tips to help writers set priorities, create schedules, and organize electronic files so what you bring home and what you write is easily accessible.

Panel: Author Marketing Favorites

Seasoned authors and speakers will weigh in on their favorite marketing strategies, tips and do's and don'ts. Example: Gail Kittleson – "For a 300% people person, launching a book tour amounts to pure FUN!"