



The Write Touch

RWA Chapter 13
Volume 101, No. 1
January 2008

Get ready for FAB 5 2008!

by Mary Jo Scheibl

January is here, which means unpublished authors need to be polishing up the first 10 pages of their manuscripts to get them ready to submit to the FAB 5. We want to hook those first round judges with our opening page and leave them wanting more with our last page. If we're good enough, if the moon is in the right place, and if our luck is bubbling strong, those pages will score high enough to final in whatever category you entered, and the finaling entries will get sent on to our fantastic final judges. Then we get to bite our fingernails for the next five weeks or so until the WisRWA conference in May when the winner is announced.

Those final judges are a pretty spectacular group.

- Historical, Shauna Summers, Senior Editor, Bantam Dell Publishing.
- Series Contemporary Long/Short, Wanda Ottewell, Senior Editor, Harlequin SuperRomance
- Single Title, Deb Werksman, editor, Sourcebooks Publishing
- Women's Fiction, Hilary Teeman, editor, St. Martin's Press
- Romantic Suspense, Kim Whalen, agent, Trident Media
- Paranormal/Fantasy/Futuristic/Time Travel, Nephele Tempest, agent, The Knight Agency
- Erotic Romance, Diane Carlile, associate editor, Wild Rose Press

The category coordinators for 2008 are:

- **De Anne Wildes-Michelson**—Erotica
- **Marilyn Auer**—Historical
- **Ann M. Curtis**—Paranormal
- **Jamie Kersten**—Romantic Suspense
- **Helen Johannes**—Series Contemporary Long/Short
- **Karen Miller**—Single Title
- **Jody Allen**—Women's Fiction

You can find entry forms, rules and more information about FAB 5 2008 at the WisRWA Web site, www.wisrwa.org. Click on the Contests link. Then click on 2008 FAB 5 link.

In addition to working on those 10 pages, or for those of us who are published, please use these January days to think about and talk yourselves into volunteering to be a first round judge. Many of you who've judged before have already stepped forward, but we can always use more judges. In looking over the WisRWA membership lists I see many new names. Please consider volunteering for this important service. You can always e-mail me at mjscheibl@wi.rr.com.

FAB 5 has earned an excellent reputation for good feedback and good judging, for being organized and for following timelines. The fees our entrants pay help to fund many of our activities. FAB 5 needs you. Please volunteer to judge and/or submit an entry. Maybe 2008 will be your FABulous year.

Are you on alert?

Please be sure you are set up on the WisRWA Alert Loop, and that it is working for you. The Board uses the Alert Loop for quite a bit of essential information, including the upcoming bylaws changes, and we want to be sure you are receiving everything! If you are having trouble with the Alert Loop, or are not on it yet, please contact Jamie Kersten at kerstens@charter.net

Board of Directors

President

Mary Jo Scheibl
mjscheibl@wi.rr.com

Vice President

Meagan Hatfield
meaganhatfield@charter.net

Secretary

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kerstens@charter.net

Treasurer

Sandra Turriff
SandraTurriff@msn.com

Area Contacts*

Greater Green Bay

Donna Kowalczyk
Paulck1225@aol.com

Stacey Netzel
snetzel@peoplepc.com

Madison

Bobbi Dumas
bobbidumas@charter.net

Milwaukee

Ilona Fridl
lockup48@aol.com

Maureen Welli
maureen.welli@cexp.com

NW/Chippewa Falls

Peggy Strand
peglet@execpc.com

Wausau

DeeAnne Wildes-Mickelson
dr67tm66@yahoo.com

The Board of Directors meets twice a year, in spring and fall.

*Area Contacts are the liaisons between the general membership and the executive board.

The *Write Touch* Newsletter is published quarterly. For more information, or for reprints, contact Rachel Berens-VanHeest, Newsletter Editor at reberens@charter.net.

The chapter's Web site, www.wisrwa.org, is updated monthly. Submit changes and new information to the Web site coordinator, Meagan Hatfield, at meaganhatfield@charter.net

President's Report

by Mary Jo Schiebl

January in Wisconsin, a month many would love to avoid and a time when some are lucky enough to escape to warmer, sunnier climates. But wait, just this past Monday many parts of Wisconsin broke records with high temperatures. In my part of the state we endured two tornadoes; the smaller one, still nasty and strong, skipped right over my 88-year-old mother's apartment complex. New homes just to the north of her were battered and some destroyed. Now I'm hearing huge snowflakes batter my office window and arctic temps are promised in a few days.

So often in January we get bombarded with someone's views about how to get motivated after the holidays, how to set goals, achieve goals, not feel bad if we don't achieve those goals—I could go on forever.

Instead, I think what's happened in the past week makes me think that I, and maybe many of us, need to take January and count our blessings for all the experiences, good and bad, that happen to us. These situations become the fodder to feed our creativity and whatever can feed our muse feeds our writers' souls. I urge all of you snuggled in for the winter to take a few moments each day and view the outside world, take stock of the funny things a child may have said, place into memory your baby or grandbaby's first smile, first word, first sentence. Revel in the little things because from them bigger things will grow.

I wear two hats for WisRWA this year, president and FAB 5 Contest Coordinator. The WisRWA board decided last fall to allow electronic entries for FAB 5 this year in

the hopes our profits increase instead of being eaten up by postage costs. WisRWA's two contests have been responsible for helping to fund our conference, keep our fees down, and funding interesting programs for our members. However, our FAB 5 profits have gone down for the past few years, based mainly on postage costs for us and for potential entrants who have said this is an issue. So we are trying this option to see how it works for us. Hopefully if we need more judges for electronic entries you will rise to the challenge as all WisRWA will benefit from FAB 5's success. At least for this year, we are also accepting the traditional snail mailed entries. I'll be interested to see what the percentages are at the March 1 deadline.

The WisRWA board held online meetings during the fall during my recuperation from surgery. This process worked well for us. A bylaws subcommittee will be revising our bylaws to be in compliance with the new RWA guidelines. More about that in our next newsletter.

Related WisRWA board matters:

Our treasurer, Sandee Turriff, indicates that as of 11/30/07 WisRWA has a cash balance on hand of \$18,218.99. Keep in mind that January through May are the biggest outlays of funds for conference, contests and incidental expenses. We hope to update our Member's Only section of the Web site to place full financial reports, board minutes, and other relevant documents for interested members to review.

Jamie Kersten, our secretary, submitted a membership report
continued on page 3

President's column (continued)

dated January 1, 2008. We have 138 members as of the above date. We have 63 published authors in our membership. Sixteen of those made their first sale in 2007.


WisRWA is an organization that relies on its members to step up and give of their multitude of talents. We've been so fortunate to always have excellent volunteers at all levels. What I'd like to do in 2008 is to introduce you to those who volunteer at the Area Chapter level since their efforts may not be known by all of us.

As we have a new chapter,

Wausau, I chose that chapter first. I asked "those in the know" to give me a name of someone always willing to step up and help out. I heard about **Laurel Bradley**. I've heard that she's someone who shares her knowledge of the publishing business; she's always willing to encourage members and their ideas. Her positive attitude has helped get Wausau's chapter up and running.

So I contacted Laurel and asked why she's got this immense volunteer spirit. She told me about the "plant a tree" motto, which came

from her father-in-law. He said: "Plant a tree you'll never sit under." To Laurel that means "helping out even if you won't benefit directly from the action or especially if you won't benefit from the action." As a multi-tasking mother of five, an artist and author, Laurel's had many places to "plant a tree." Right now, Wausau and WisRWA are very lucky to have her volunteering to plant trees for us.

I look forward to meeting Laurel soon and I hope you'll visit her Web site at www.laurelbradley.com. 

New Releases

December 2007

Elysa Hendricks
Star Crash
Dorchester Publishing

January

Jo Schmidt (w/a Anna Schmidt)
This Side of Heaven
Harlequin Everlasting

Jo Schmidt (w/a Anna Schmidt)
Love and Remembrance
Steeple Hill Historical

Liza James
Lying Eyes
Red Rose Publishing (efomat)

Liza James
Game On
The Wild Rose Press (efomat)

Donna Marie Rogers &
Stacey Joy Netzel
Welcome To Redemption
The Wild Rose Press (print)

Laurel Bradley
Crème Brûlée Upset
The Wild Rose Press (efomat)

Lori Devoti
Guardian's Keep
Silhouette Nocturne

Stacey Joy Netzel
Tombstones Could Talk
The Wild Rose Press (efomat)

Jane Toombs
Moondark
Amber Quill Press

Jane Toombs
Unwise
Crescent Moon Press

February

Liz Kreger
Forget About Tomorrow
Samhain Publishing (print)

Liz Kreger
Promise for Tomorrow
Samhain Publishing (efomat)

Isabel Sharpe
My Wildest Ride
Harlequin Blaze

Jane Toombs
Dance of the Cedar Cat
Eternal Press

March

Laura Iding
*The Firefighter
and the Single Mom*
Harlequin Mills and Boon

May

Isabel Sharpe
As Good As It Got
HarperCollins

Helen Brenna
Peak Performance
Harlequin NASCAR

June

Lori Devoti
Wild Hunt
Silhouette Nocturne

August

Shari Anton
Magic in His Kiss
Grand Central Publishing

December

Carrie Lofty
What a Scoundrel Wants
Zebra Debut

SMART Goal Setting

by Sandee Wagner

In the corporate world, companies have resorted to score carding to keep their organizations on track to attain company-wide goals. The board of directors sets the goals for the organization and then informs the upper management. The upper management interprets those goals for each division and shares that information with middle management. The middle managers take the division goals and break it down into departmental goals. By the time the goals filter down to the lowest level, every employee understands what they need to do to help the corporation be more profitable or successful.

Successful corporations are those that manage those goals and their attainment throughout the year by score-carding. In order to score-card, each group must create goals that are SMART.

SMART goals are: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant or Realistic, and Timely or Time-bound.

For a writer, goals don't have to 'filter down' from the board of directors to a specific employee; however, they do have to fulfill the requirements of SMART. In order to set yearly, monthly, weekly or daily writing goals, every writer needs to focus on the actual words of their goal statements. To measure success, writers can score-card themselves.

Specific

In order for a goal to be specific, it must be definite, precise, distinctive or unique. This is where a facility for language gives writers the edge on corporate employees. Writers are used to searching for the exact verbiage to make a statement. In

setting goals, each goal statement must be precise enough to have no margin for misunderstanding or error. It must be unique enough to be attainable all on its own.

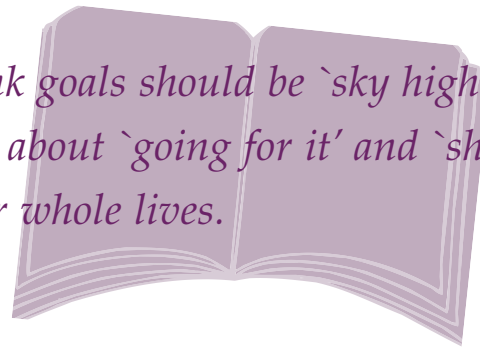
For example, a goal that is not specific might be:

Get published.

A better (more specific) goal would be:

Submit book length fiction to publisher by April 15, 2008.

People think goals should be 'sky high' because they have heard about 'going for it' and 'shooting the moon' their whole lives.



The specification of 'book length' keeps me from trying to pass this article off as a completed goal for the year. It got published right? So now I'm published. The date range creates a window of opportunity--one might call a deadline--for completion of the task. These precise words change a generic goal that could be misconstrued or misunderstood into a more definite action.

Measurable

One of the purposes of goal setting is to track progress. If the goal statements have no element of measurability, then it will be hard to determine if they have been accomplished or not. Measurable goals are easy for writers. Every time you say, "I'm going to write 5,000 words a week" you are setting a very easily measured goal. Now you just have to make sure that you make it specific enough

to keep from counting edits and articles toward a goal that is meant to be for book length publication.

For example, a goal that is not measurable might be:

Get published.

A better (more measurable) goal would be:

Write 5,000 new words of novel length fiction each week.

The measurement of 5,000 is

something that you will either attain, or not. It is something that can be counted and quantified. I might have stated 'write 5,000 words each week' and then counted the words in this article toward my goal. But this article is not really advancing my career, is it? In order for this goal to be measurable, it must have something that can be counted, timed or quantified. Writing lends itself to this type of measurable goal.

Attainable

Goals are only motivational if they are able to be reached. If you constantly shoot for a mark and miss it, you will be demotivated and demoralized. Each goal set must be something that is within your grasp and capacity. You can set 'stretch' goals that are hard to attain, but they must be possible in order to qualify as attainable.

For example, a goal that is not attainable might be:

Get published.

A better (more attainable) goal would be:

Submit two manuscripts to four editors or agents by June 15, 2008.

Your ability to submit a manuscript is attainable, whereas your ability to guarantee publication is not. Your locus of control is what needs to be outlined in this part of the goal. You cannot control whether or not a book is published, you can only control your portion of the process. In order for the goal to be attainable, it has to be something that you can control or effect by your actions.

Realistic or Relevant

In most attempts at goal-setting, the failure of verbiage in goals can be attributed to realism. People think goals should be 'sky high' because they have heard about 'going for it' and 'shooting the moon' their whole lives. When we look at our child as we tuck them into bed, we assure them that they can be anything they want to be.

They can be astronauts, president, whatever. But realistically, when they are in high school and convinced that they will be the next NFL player or rock and roll star, we encourage them to go to college and get a degree 'as a backup' in case their dreams don't pan out. You can dream big. When you goal set, you need to think realistically.

A goal that is relevant to your career as a writer should have something to do with actually writing.

For example, a goal that is not realistic might be:

Get published.

A better (more realistic) goal would be:

Enter four contests by September 30, 2008—1) hook or first lines, 2) hero/heroine characterization, 3) synopsis or query letter and 4) genre specific to the book.

Setting a realistic goal means finding something that you can accomplish and requiring yourself to push your comfort envelope or stretch. For most writers, that means putting our words in front of people who don't know us or love us. Realistic goals are practical. They have a pragmatic or common sense value.

Timely or Time-bound

Possibly the biggest challenge in setting goals is making the goals timely. Experts disagree on the timeframe that is best for most people; however, it is clear that researchers found value in busting goals down into reasonable time periods. Earlier, when discussing measurable goals, I used the example of writing a certain number of words per day, week, month and year. By dissecting the goal into timely increments, it makes it easier to attain, and progression for a period of time leads to the next level of goal attainment.

For example, a goal that is not timely might be:

Get published.

A better (more timely) goal would be:

Critique at least 15 manuscript pages 10 times (monthly meetings) with group and weekly with writing partner.

By adding a timeframe in which a goal has to be accomplished to be checked off the list, the goal setter actually creates a sense of urgency for completion of the task. Timely goals are opportune or well timed.

Time-bound goals have a specific time period stated in the goal that sets an actual deadline. Most of the examples of previous goals have some sense of time boundary applied to the goal verbiage. A writer can set goals that are time-bound (meeting weekly for a critique with 15 mss pages in hand) or can interpret the timely goal to mean that the goal's output must fall within a deadline period, or date. A lone writer often has to find ways to stay motivated and challenged throughout the year. Setting SMART goals is one way to ensure that you have direction for your writing during the coming year. The New Year is a time for goal setting, but also, it's a time to look back over last year's goals and determine where you hit the mark and where you fell short.

Most corporate folk will tell you that part of the challenge of goal setting is knowing when goals need to be re-evaluated and re-stated. At some point during the year, you may realize that you have set a mark too high, a goal too difficult to attain. Does that mean you don't try? No, it means you readjust the verbiage on the goal and make it possible. Goal setting for a writer is a very personal experience. Some authors may have actual contractual deadlines that they must make in order to be on good terms with their editors and publishers, but for the majority of writers, goal setting is subjective and under our control.

When you set your goals for 2008, make sure each goal is specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timely. ■

This article first appeared in the January 2008 issue of Inklings, the newsletter of Romance Writers Ink (Tulsa, OK).

Author News

Two anthologies featuring stories by **Christine DeSmet** are EPIC finalists. The stories are "Mrs. Claus and the Moonstone Murder," in *Tales from the Treasure Trove, Vol. 3*, and "When the Dead People Brought a Dish-to-Pass," in *Shadows in the Heart, A Jewels of the Quill Halloween Anthology*.

Unbound by **Lori Devoti** is an Eppie finalist for Best Paranormal/Fantasy Romance.

Ann Curtis's essay "A Mother's Instincts" in the anthology *Special Gifts: Women Writers on the Heartache, the Happiness and the Hope of Raising a Special Needs Child*, compiled and edited by Arlene Schusteff placed as a "Finalist" in the Parenting/Family: General category of USABookNews.com's Best Book of 2007. The book tells what it is like to be a mother of a child with an emotional, behavioral or developmental disorder such as ADD, Asperger's syndrome, Autism, Bipolar Disorder, Non-Verbal Learning Disability, PDD, and others.

Carrie Lofty won the Vintage (1950s-60s) category of The Wild Rose Press's "Through the Garden Gate" short story contest. The winning entry "Sundial," in which a modern woman finds herself in 1958 Italy and falls in love with a fellow time traveler from 1987, was a December 2007 release from TWRP.

Rowena Cherry's alien romance *Insufficient Mating Material* was a Finalist in the Fiction and Literature: Romance category of the National Best Books 2007 Awards. *Insufficient Mating Material* was also voted Second Place in the Fall

Night Owl Romance Awards, for Best Fantasy/Sci-Fi Romance. The book is also a CAPA Award nominee for best Fantasy and a LASR Award nominee for best long print Romance, as well as a finalist in the 2008 FANTASM Awards.

DeeAnne Wildes-Mickelson sold her first novel, *Duality*, to Samhain Publishing.

Jodi Allen is teaching two online classes for the online RWA Chapter Hearts Through History Romance: "The Other Scotland: Lowlands/Borders" February 4-March 14, 2008; and "Her Story: Scottish Women" April 1-29, 2008. For a description of the classes please go to www.heartsthrough-history.com/class.htm.

Heather Logan Kaufmann, w/a Eden Rivers, signed a contract with Loose Id for a paranormal erotic romance, *Nature's Pentacle*. The release date is April 1, 2008.

Lori Handeland, Kathryn Springer, Linda Wichman, and Kathryn Albright will be signing books at the Barnes & Noble in Grand Chute (Appleton) on Sunday, February 10, from 2 to 4 p.m. It is the fourth year WisRWA authors have participated in the store's pre-Valentine Day event. As usual, there will be coffee, tea, cookies and chocolates.

Donna Marie Rogers sold a contemporary western novella titled *Golden Opportunity* to The Wild Rose Press. This is Donna's 9th contract with them in less than a year.


Dragonfly Dreams by **Stacey Joy Netzel** was nominated for LASR

Best Short E-Book 2007. This Christmas novella has received a 5 *Star* review from both LASR and Fallen Angels Reviews.

Lynnette Baughman's first romance, *Love with a Welcome Stranger*, will be available from The Wild Rose Press in the summer of 2008 and will be available in print six months after that. This book, formerly called *Mandy, Remembered*, was a finalist in Knock Our Socks Off and Emerald City Opener and placed second in the Golden Pen Contest sponsored by the Golden Network.

Two anthologies featuring stories by **Jane Toombs** are Eppie finalists. The stories appear in *Tales from the Treasure Trove, Vol. 3*, and *Shadows in the Heart, A Jewels of the Quill Halloween Anthology*. Additionally, Jane's book *Flag* is a nominee.

Debra K. Maher's *Hearts in Winter* won First Place in the historical category of Missouri Romance Writers' "Gateway to the Best" contest. She also placed third in Valley of the Sun RW's "Hot Prospects." *Hearts in Winter* is also a finalist in River City Romance Writers' "Duel on the Delta" contest and is being sent to Berkley editor Allison Brandau for final ranking. Another of her historical manuscripts, *Claire's Crossing*, has finalized in From the Heart RW's "Wallflower" in the all-author historical category.

Helen Brenna's second book *Dad for Life* has been nominated for Romantic Times Reviewer's Choice award for best SuperRomance of 2007. 

Survey says: Romance writing can be good for real life relationships

by Laurel Bradley

In October, my husband and I celebrated our 23rd anniversary. I posted this to one of the romance writers' loops and found that many other writers had recently celebrated anniversaries as well—23, 24, 20, 17. Pretty good in an age where 55 percent of marriages don't survive past the seven-year-itch stage.

Marriage longevity, strong spousal relationships, active sex life—this wasn't the first time these topics had come up on the loop. This should surprise no one; after all we read and write romance, we think relationships, we see both sides of conflicts, we know and love flawed characters. But does that make us better partners?

Maybe, maybe not, but it does bring up an interesting question. Does reading and/or writing romance novels yield a better romance life?

It's undeniable that reading stimulates the biggest sex organ there is—the brain. A quick spin on the net showed several dozen articles that state that romance is the result of neurochemistry. Three chemicals are responsible for infatuation—PEA (phenylethylamine), Dopamine, and Norepinephrine. According to WebMD, Hector Sabelli, MD, PhD, said he believes PEA to "be the hormone of libido." And then there's Theresa Crenshaw, author of *The Alchemy of Love and Lust*, who claims reading romance novel increases the level of PEA. Interesting.

My personal study was less scientific. I posted the question on several loops and called romance

readers I know asking if reading romance increased the likelihood of sexual relations. I received over two dozen responses. The answers surprised me.

I expected a resounding "yes!" but what I got was as diverse as the romance genres themselves.

Some like it hot

About three-quarters of my responses said that a hot scene in a good romance with characters they really cared about positively affected their personal physical relationship. I wasn't surprised to read the qualifiers "good romance" and "characters they care about." Hot or not, romance novels are about relationships and this unscientific poll seems to emphasize that.

Some like it sweet

Some readers wrote that they skip the hot scenes. Of those, some said it was because there were only so many ways Tab A could fit into Slot B. Others said those scenes were too unrealistic. The chances of reaching fulfillment every time (when statistics show the majority of women do not)—even when the character is a virgin—"is stepping into that door of 'suspension of disbelief.'" Still others, mainly authors, were concerned there might be people, not themselves personally but other people, who could find themselves less satisfied with their own mate because of the unobtainable ideals presented in romance novels. "Why can't it be like in the novels?"


So, apparently three-quarters of us find romance novels...stimulating.

Should we tell our guys?

In some cases they already know. One Texas rancher I know of read romances for a year while he courted the woman he made his missus. From stories I've heard, he learned just what to say and how to say it. I'm not certain what other skills he learned between the covers of romance novels, but I hear-tell his wife is a very happy woman.

Several women responded that they read romance novels to their husbands. One retired lady with one of those large campers wrote that she reads romances to him while they drive around the country. She said they enjoyed the story lines, the characters, and the "naughty bits." According to her, they don't always make the best travel time, but they always enjoy the trip.

Another reader commented that her husband funds her passion for romance novels and then reaps the rewards. "Don't worry. He gets his."

Romance novels are escapist reading. They allow the reader to remember, and in some cases relive, the passion associated with the earlier stages of romance. Some readers find the books light a fire that they share with their mate while others noticed no change. What I concluded through this brief poll is that while women enjoy reading romance for a variety of reasons most find that it adds to the quality and quantity of their romantic interludes. What nearly everyone who answered commented on was the relationships. They read romance for the relationships in the books. How it affected specific aspects of their personal relationships was just an extra bonus. 

Love is in the Cards 2


by Donna Kowalczyk

It's time to start planning for the 2008 WisRWA Write Touch Conference: "Love Is In The Cards 2"!

Join us again in Green Bay on May 16-18, 2008, at the beautiful Radisson Hotel & Conference Center/Oneida Casino. Headlining in 2008 are *New York Times* bestselling author Lori Foster and Kensington Brava author/RWR columnist Dianne Castell. Also joining us is Tor author Susan Kearney.

Once again, we have a great group of editors and agents. Editors Hilary Sares (Kensington), Rose Hilliard (St. Martins Press), and Rhonda Penders (The Wild Rose Press)

are confirmed to attend. All three editors will be presenting workshops: Rhonda Penders on small/electronic presses, Rose Hilliard and Hilary Sares will host our 2nd annual WisRWA's Got Talent workshop. We also have lined up agents Jennifer Schrober (Spencerhill), Laura Bradford (Bradford Literary Agency), and Elaine Spencer (The Knight Agency).

WisRWA's own Harlequin author **Anna Schmidt** will present a workshop, as will as our own **Morganne MacDonald**. Our 2007 conference was a major success—let's make 2008 even better! Hope to see you all there! 

Make SUCCESS your 2008 goal

Study—craft books and attend workshops and chapter meetings.

Use—your writing skills daily.

Create—let your creativity flow onto the page and edit later.

Celebrate—the highs: finishing a first draft; contest final; editor/agent request; sale.

Enjoy—the process and don't get disheartened by a harsh critique or rejection letter.

Stay—the course and stay true to your vision.

Support—your chapter and its members.

Follow these tips and you'll be able to count 2008 a successful year whether or not you sell.

This piece first appeared in the Volusia County RWA newsletter, Novel Notes, Jan/Feb 2008 edition.

The Write Touch Newsletter
438 Jefferson St.
Oregon, WI 53575