



Write by the Rails
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BRIEF HISTORY OF WRITE BY THE RAILS

AUGUST 2011 – AUGUST 2021

Write by the Rails (WbtR) aims to raise the profile of the local literary community and explore ways we can nurture, cultivate and help the writing community grow. The area's longest-running literary group with a statewide affiliation, Write by the Rails is the Prince William area chapter of the non-profit Virginia Writers Club which celebrated 100 years in 2018. The following is a brief description of our activities since our launch at Okra's Cajun Creole in Manassas, VA August 8, 2011.

OVERVIEW OF REGULAR ACTIVITIES

- WbtR holds monthly meetings and enrichment events to encourage local writers in their craft;
- WbtR holds full-day and/or half-day writing workshops twice per year;
- WbtR writes and sends newsletters to members and the community at least monthly;
- Meetings are announced on our website, in our newsletter and through our Facebook profiles;
- Chapter members network through regular posts in a closed private Facebook group facebook.com/groups/Writebytherails;
- Announcements are made on our public Facebook page facebook.com/WritebytheRails;
- WbtR sponsors writing contests at least annually.

NOTEABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- WbtR has encouraged and assisted members in getting over sixty books published since 2011;
- Since 2011, members have contributed articles on local authors, books and literary projects to media outlets such as Prince William Living and Haymarket Lifestyle magazines; PotomacLocal.com, Patch.com, InsideNova.com and BristowBeat.com; and Southern Writers magazine;
- Members' books can be found in the local libraries and select retail outlets. Our members regularly conduct book signings at a variety of local venues;
- We have hosted "How to Market Your Book" and other panel discussions with local, experienced authors at least annually since 2011;
- We created and distributed an information brochure in 2011;
- We created WriteByTheRails.org (also at WbtR.org) in 2011;
- WbtR became the Prince William Chapter of the Virginia Writers Club in 2012;
- We published an anthology, *New Departures*, by WbtR members in 2012;
- WbtR published a second anthology, *No Additional Postage Necessary*, by participants at Rising Writers Workshop in 2014;

- WbtR started a social media campaign #BackonTrackNow promoting writing by having writers share a short poem, nine-word memoir or Twitter-friendly blurb of creative non-fiction. WbtR shared the posts and then published the 2019 #BackOnTrack anthology with selected works from this project;
- We published Confetti: An Anthology of the Written Word in 2021 to feature WbtR writers;
- Members have participated in book sales, signings and readings at numerous locations (such as Prospero's Books, Richard McKay's Used Books, Barnes & Noble, The Manassas Museum, Books-A-Million and 2nd and Charles, as well as the Mill Street Studio, Staples and J.E. Rice Tru Value Hardware);
- Members have hosted their book launches at various locations (such as Giuseppe's Ristorante, the ARTfactory, Lion & Bull, McKay's Used Books and Manassas Baptist Church);
- We have held several Write by the Rails member Blog Tours to promote our various authors;
- In 2021, WbtR authors coordinated a Summer Reading Book Donation Drive, contributing member-written children's books to be distributed to needy locally communities;
- In 2021, WbtR was featured at the Virginia Writers Club Annual Symposium where member authors presented a panel discussion on writing and marketing children's books;
- WbtR has had a presence at regular events (such as the Arts Alive arts festival and In the Company of Laureates poetry celebration) and works with local businesses such as McCall Studio Gallery to feature member authors.

SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

- Website: <https://wbtr.org>
- Twitter: @writebytherails
- Facebook community page: <https://www.facebook.com/WritebytheRails>;
- Email: writebytherails@gmail.com

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- We conduct public readings, discussions and book signings at businesses and non-profits;
- Members participate in 1st Friday in Old Town Manassas, Manassas Fall Festival and other regional events;
- Members have donated books to fundraisers for the American Red Cross and Rainbow Riding Center, and donated books to stock the Little Free Libraries and the library at the Bull Run Warrior Retreat for wounded service members and their families;
- Members donate books to local schools and participate in classroom reading programs;
- Members have and continue to donate books to children in disadvantaged communities and to non-profits serving those communities;
- WbtR held the Rising Writers Workshop, a one-day workshop for teens and adults, partnering with Woodbridge High School's CFPA Creative Writers Program and member educators (2014-2017);
- WbtR helped organize Fall for the Book's Haute Cuisine at the Hylton Performing Arts Center, an evening event focusing on books and local food, partnering with George Mason University (2013-2015);
- We have been members of the Interservice Club Council of Manassas (ISCC-Manassas.org), the Prince William County Arts Council and the Prince William Chamber of Commerce.

CREATION OF SUSTAINABLE LITERARY WRITING PROJECTS

- In 2014 Write by the Rails launched the Prince William County Poet Laureate Program working with the PWC Arts Council, Tackett's Mill and the Clearwater Foundation. The program was then facilitated by the Arts Council. The Laureates have a visible presence throughout Prince William County. The Board of County Supervisors subsequently designated an official day for the Poet Laureate program and the Laureate;
- Write by the Rails was instrumental in the 2015 launch of Spilled Ink hosted by John Dutton. Spilled Ink is an open mic night that celebrates the written word;

- In 2019, WbtR launched Poems Around Town, an area-wide poetry installation. Member poems are placed in businesses and public buildings and hosts are promoted on the website and through social media;
- In 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic WbtR moved to online meetings. In spite of having to change the meeting format, we successfully promoted and hosted monthly enrichment events with interactive presentations on marketing, building a writing career, writing dialog, ekphrastic poetry, fiction, character development and more.

PROMOTION OF OTHER LITERARY EFFORTS

We have promoted:

- Book Talks by historians at the Manassas Museum
- Open mic nights by Piedmont Writers, Spirit & Lyrics, Poetry Society of Virginia, NOVA Bards, NOVA Writers Club and others
- PWC Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority's annual Red Carpet Event in Manassas Park or Woodbridge (alternating years)
- Book Lover's Bazaar at Tackett's Mill Lakeside
- Memoir Writers, Writers of Adult Lit and Writers of Children's Lit, which meet at Bull Run Regional Library, as well as other genre groups (screenwriting, speculative fiction, romance)
- The National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) regional group
- Visiting writers at Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA)
- Local retreats and conventions for writers
- Workshops for senior writers through the Lifelong Learning Institute-Manassas
- George Mason University's Northern Virginia Writing Project for educators
- George Mason University's week-long annual Fall for the Book Festival at locations throughout Northern Virginia
- Free Little Library project
- Write Turn young adult writing workshop
- Poetry Society of Virginia Poetry Festival
- Virginia Writers Club Author Takeover, annual symposium and annual meetings
- Prince William County Poet Laureate program and projects

AWARD HIGHLIGHTS

- Seefeldt Arts Excellence Pioneer Award, Prince William County Arts Council, WbtR Founder Cindy Brookshire, 2012
- Special Achievement Award, Virginia Writers Club, WbtR Founder Cindy Brookshire, 2013
- Lily Foundation Grant, Highlights Foundation Workshop, Chautauqua, NY, WbtR member Stuart Schadt, 2013
- Outstanding Chapter of the Year, Write by the Rails, Virginia Writers Club, 2014
- Best Writer in Prince William County by readers of Prince William Today, WbtR member Dan Verner, 2014
- State-wide Virginia Writers Club Golden Nib awards, 2015 and 2019
- Best of Prince William author award by Inside Nova, WbtR Founding Member and President Katherine Gotthardt, 2019 and 2020
- The Prince William Poet Laureate Circle and Prince William County Arts Council 2020 Outstanding Poetry Project Award for WbtR's poetry installation, Poems Around Town
- Seefeldt Award for Arts Excellence, Individual Artist, Founding Member and President Katherine Gotthardt, 2021