

Mid-Michigan Word Gatherers Writing Group

Lyons Public Library

Karen Bota, new to the Ionia area in late 2007, and familiar with the publishing business, spent nearly a year trying to establish a writing group in the city of Ionia, but did not find sufficient interest and nearly gave up the effort until she met Judith Reynolds. Judith suggested that Karen meet Vicki Reinhardt, Librarian of the Village of Lyons library. She told Karen that Vicki was a dedicated writer of poetry and children's stories and may have an interest in organizing a writing group through the library.

Vicki was more than interested and a partnership was born and became the genesis of this writing group. Uncertain about the level of interest given that this is a small rural village, Karen was delightfully surprised to find that there was not only a sufficient number of folks interested in writing, but that they are very dedicated to the craft. While the numbers who attend ebbs and flows in the range of 6 to 10-12 from week to week, the group wants to and expects to meet weekly except for holidays.

A few members have been published in magazines, and one has a novel published. Several are working on novels and Vicki is seeking publication of a number of children's stories and poetry. Karen has recently challenged the group to become more active in seeking publication of our work. It is a challenge taken seriously by many.

Karen and Vicki have led us through many forms of writing, from essays, reporting, styles of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, song lyrics, etc. Additionally, there are weekly discussions about the aspects of effective writing - styles, voice, tense, descriptive, dialogue and so forth. Each week we write to three to four prompts and provide constructive criticism of each other's work. Most of my short stories have come from these prompts, as well as a number of poems. While I have grown significantly through the educational aspects of our sessions, I enjoy the creative inspiration of having to write to a prompt the most.

I feel I speak for the members of this group in expressing my deep appreciation for the leadership of Karen in particular. Her unselfish dedication to helping us improve our craft is a rare commodity in the hectic world we live in. Maybe someday one of us will hit it big in the world of writing and give her some bragging rights. Let's hope.

The writing group is an open forum in which anyone interested is more than welcome to attend. The core group is made up of: Karen Bota, Vicki Reinhardt, Kathy Gilberg, Judy Vanderveen, Judy Rich, Nikki May, Vanessa Mitchner, Deb Brainard, Lesley Canterbury, Suzann Saterstad, Judith Reynolds and me. There have been a few other men who have come and gone, but I am the only guy who hangs in there. Last summer we had a lady from Alaska who was visiting relatives in Lyons for the summer and joined us. She was a talented writer. Some others have also been with us for a while but left to go to school or because of work situations.