

2018 Lakefly Writers Conference – Final Report

The 2018 Lakefly Writers Conference was held May 11 and 12 at the Oshkosh Convention Center.

Mystery writer Lori Rader-Day was the keynote speaker. Other speakers included Patricia McConnell (former co-host of WPR's 'Calling All Pets'); television personality/children's author Silvia Acevedo; Winnebago County coroner Barry Busby; UW-Oshkosh instructor Laura Jean Baker; and the editor of *Oshkosh Independent Magazine*, Miles Maguire.

Attendance this year was 82 people (down from 96 in 2017). We did raise the price of the event by \$15 but the conference is still reasonably priced at \$75 for the weekend; including lunch on Saturday. The lack of available hotel rooms might also have been a factor. Due to flooding in Minnesota, the Cabela fishing tournament was unexpectedly moved from Red Wing to Oshkosh the same weekend as the conference. This increased room prices by about \$50 per night; and most Oshkosh hotels were full by mid-April.

The biggest challenge this year was finding someone to sell books for the event. The Paper Tiger Bookstore had agreed to sell books but then went out of business, and the University of Wisconsin bookstores are apparently no longer able to sell books at non-University events. Luckily, The Friends of the Oshkosh Public Library stepped up and they have some great ideas for next year, including selling journals and related writing items.

Highlights

We sold one advertisement in the conference booklet for \$40 and hope to increase that in 2019.

While we are using the same registration software as in years' past; this year we used the Winnefox subscription and saved \$120.

Based on prior exit surveys, we increased the amount of time attendees were able to shop the marketplace. Of the 15 paid vendors, everyone had at least one sale and several sold four or more copies. This is the first year I felt the marketplace was successful.

There were two agents/editors whom accepted pitches on Saturday, and at least three people were asked to submit a completed manuscript, including a member of the Oshkosh Area Writers Club.

Attached to this report are two blog posts about the conference by first-time attendee Malinda Andrews.

Moving Forward

We distributed an in-depth survey at the event and formed a strategic planning committee to review the survey results and plan for the conference's future. The committee has met twice so far and we are exploring ideas suggested by the survey results. In addition, I had a rewarding conversation with Rader-Day, who co-founded the largest mystery writing conference in the Midwest, and she provided valuable feedback and insight. Results indicate we are doing a lot of things right; promotion seems to be our biggest weakness.

Lakefly 2018 Budget – Final Financial Report

Revenues	
\$4455	Registration Fees
\$40	Advertising in Conference program
\$3454	OPL Programming Fund
\$3440	OPL Memorial Fund
\$11,389	Total Revenue

Expenditures	
<u>Administration</u>	
\$633	Printing - Conference
\$689	Printing - Contests
<u>Speaker Expenses</u>	
\$1000	Keynote speaker Stipend
\$1966	All other speaker stipends
\$1296	Lodging for Speakers
<u>Event Expenses</u>	
4551	Venue and Catering
\$1104	Writing Contest Prizes
\$150	Door Prizes
\$11,389	Total Expenditures

Lakefly Writers Conference 2018

Since Liam was born I had to be honest with myself, and my budget, and realize that going to the large Writers Institute conference in Madison would no longer be feasible for me. I went for three years, and every year learned more and more, and LOVED every minute of it. So, in all honesty I was more than a little saddened by the realization that my new offspring was going to prevent me from doing something I loved. BUT I got over it and realized once baby is old enough Mama will have plenty of opportunities to go to writing events.



A year passes, and I saw that a friend of mine on Facebook clicked "interested" in a writing event in Oshkosh. Enter Lakefly Writers Conference to the rescue!

Some quick searching of their page, a scan at their prices, and a talk with my husband, and I was signing up before I knew it! I was so excited for the conference, and boy, they did not disappoint.

On Friday I got there ridiculously early, like I do, but it was nice since I had no idea where I was going both to get there, and once in the building. Thankfully Ruth, who organizes the entire event was there and made me feel welcome. In fact, every single one of the volunteers who ran it made me feel not only welcome to the event, but that I mattered.

At other conferences they were so large it almost made me feel like a fly on the wall. Just a number. A faceless writer who paid their dues. But not so here. Here I was not only an attendee, but I was a person who was important. They were genuinely pleased to see me there, and Ruth even greeted me by name (Before I put the tag on)! She had seen my Tweets about attending this year and made a point to be there to take my picture and Tweet about me. ME! The small town writer mom, who tweets sparingly, and doesn't have thousands upon thousands of readers.

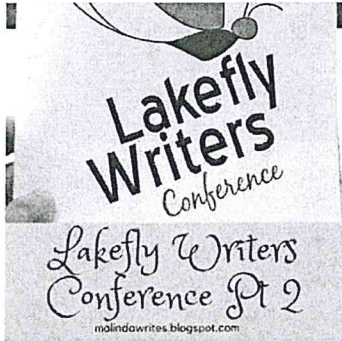
It definitely made my day!

The first session I attended was by Dionne Kelm, author of the childrens' book series *Grandma Hearts*. Once again, she and her husband continued the theme of sincere kindness and friendliness. There was a lot in her time slot, but the main take away I had was to own your brand. To use that brand in everything, and anything you can think of! Including placing graphics on your car/camper, making everything cohesive design wise, and even in your email signature. I should have thought about the email signature angle after working in the "professional" world and having a few signatures of my own. She was a true delight.

The second session was led by Barry Busby the Winnebago County Coroner. What a fascinating topic! I attended this one because I eventually have plans to write a 13 book urban fantasy detective series and thought it would be good to learn when I have the opportunities. This was way more than I bargained for! Everyone in that room was enraptured in what he had to say, and we wish he could have gone on longer.

The last session I decided to visit was one about Blogging. Yes, Blogging. That thing that all authors are "Supposed" to do and I have done with consistency in the past. I know I needed to reinvigorate this blog, and this was just what the doctor ordered! Rex Owens had some fantastic advice, and was very informative and inspiring. Thankfully it seems that I have been on the right path for blogging, I just need to be more consistent and open up with more possible topics. I had some ideas for topics both in the session, and once I got back to my hotel room for the night, so I am looking forward to sharing them soon.

Lakefly Writers Conference 2018 Pt 2



Welcome to part two of my Lakefly Writers Series!

Last blog I covered day one of the conference, this post is going to be all about day two, Saturday.

The day started out a little strange, and not as planned. But thankfully because I am a person that likes to be prepared, it was easily overcome. Once again I arrived early, which allowed me to have almost the pick of the tables! There were a few other writers there to set up at the same time, but

I was able to select a prime spot to set up. Right by the doors, with a clear view of the stage across the room,

I realized that after I publish a few more books I'll need a better rack for displaying them! It was an amazing feeling to see all seven of my book babies sitting out on the table. Instead of having one or two novels on the table, it was full! I felt like amidst the other authors I actually belonged. Imposter syndrome is real, and sometimes we just need an outside trigger to make us realize we are, in fact, "real" authors.

My best writing friend, [Rebekah Bryan](#), and I ended up sharing a table. Like we pretty much always have, it just seems easier to get through events with a buddy. And look! We even had time to sneak in some writing sessions. Good little worker bees typing away on our keyboards.

Though, let me tell you, it was highly motivating to be selling and talking about *Wolf's Blood* while working on *Wolf's Bite*! There was something urgent about realizing my readers were *right in front of me* that made it easier to clack away at the keys.

I'm not sure if it was the environment, people, or the fact that this is my third year self publishing, but it was so much easier to talk about my books and "sell" them. It was **gasp* fun!* This was a first for me, and made me want to do events more often as I had my best sales ever. I am looking forward to connecting with these new readers and writers.

In fact the entire weekend was inspiring and motivating. My husband and I are already planning on logistics for next year!