

## **2022 Lakefly Writers Conference – Final Report**

After a 2-year hiatus, the Lakefly Writers Conference came back strong in 2022.

Held Friday and Saturday, May 6-7 at the Oshkosh Convention Center, the event had 76 registrations, including attendees from Oregon, Illinois, and Minnesota. (For comparison, 114 people attended in 2019 and 82 in 2018.) Of note were eight members of a Wausau writers group; they were among the 36 Lakefly guests who stayed at the adjacent Best Western hotel.

Concerned about Covid-19, we had extra volunteers and back-up speakers in the event of a cancellation. In addition to protocols maintained by the Convention Center, we put out masks, hand sanitizer and antibacterial wipes.

Dean Robbins, author of children's non-fiction books, was the keynote speaker. Other speakers included mystery writer Patricia Skalka, Oshkosh Poet Laureate Tom Cannon and romance novelist Bobbi Dumas. In all, there were 16 speakers talking on topics such as creating tension in each scene, developing characters using dialogue and building an author platform. In addition to the learning sessions, three editors/agents took free pitches, and on Friday, a website/marketing expert gave free one-on-one 20-minute consultations.

The Friday night open mic at the Library had 28 attendees. Fifteen people shared their work, including a poem written earlier that day in a Lakefly workshop lead by Cannon. Entertainment on Saturday was partially funded by the Wisconsin Writers Association and featured a duo who performed cabaret songs with a twist.

Also on Saturday, the winners of the writing contests were announced. There were 86 entries from 74 individuals. About five years ago, we added a category for young writers who were previously competing with adults who had publishing credits and/or writing degrees. To that end, one highlight of 2022 was that 17-year-old Ejigayehu Case from Arrowhead High School (Hartland) took first place in the all-ages personal essay category. Her classmate, Reilly Mader, took third place in the same category. Both were inspired to enter at the urging of their high school composition teacher, Mrs. Carnell.

Costs were considerably higher this year in the areas of printed materials and food. The planning committee will consider a price increase for 2023 (this year, registration was \$75 but we offered a discount to members of the Wisconsin Writers Association and students).

The committee would also like to revisit how we do supper on Friday night. As in past years, we made a reservation for 15 at a downtown restaurant for those who did not want to eat alone, or did not know what to do between the last session of the day and open mic at the library. Everyone meets in the lobby of the Convention Center and a volunteer stays with the group and ushers them to the Library at the appropriate time for open mic. We normally get about a dozen people but this year, over 35 attended and overwhelmed the restaurant, resulting in a 30-minute delay to the start of the open mic. I spoke with the restaurant manager after the conference and have several options to present to the planning committee to avoid having this happen again.

In summary, the conference had high, positive energy and I expect many will return in 2023. Some unsolicited comments are below:

This was my first writers conference, and I enjoyed it greatly. All of the presentations I attended were informative and interesting. The keynote speaker's message inspired me to keep writing.  
(attendee)

Thank you so much for all of your hard work! You hit a home run with this conference. I plan to attend again next year. (attendee)

Just a quick note to say congratulations on a terrific conference and to thank you for including me. How refreshing to finally be able to meet in person with readers, writers, and colleagues. You and your staff and volunteers deserve kudos for making it happen. (speaker Patricia Skalka)

I'm from Sun Prairie, a first-time attendee of the Lakefly Writers Conference. I had a terrific time, met some neat people and drove back to Madison inspired to sell my first novel to an agent and start writing my second one. (attendee)

It was wonderful to meet you in person and to be part of Lakefly. I was really impressed with the program you put together, and I had a chance to talk with so many nice people, from presenters to organizers to attendees. Thank you for making me a part of it all! (speaker Dean Robbins)

Thank you and all of the others who worked so hard to make this a memorable weekend of writing workshops and talks, meeting old friends, making new friends, and a truly fun time. (attendee)

## **Financial Report**

### **Income**

Registrations	4,592.28	
Library Program Fund (OACF)	<u>10,000.00</u>	14,592.28

### **Expenses**

Accommodations	2,480.77	
Advertising	1,322.00	
Awards	900.00	
Other Expenses	821.27	
Speakers	2,825.00	
Venue Cost/Food	<u>6,041.66</u>	<u>14,390.70</u>

<b>Net Balance</b>		201.58
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Submitted by Ruth Percey, Assistant Director for Public Service

June 23, 2022