

2024 Lakefly Writers Conference

Final Report

Writing Contests

Prior to the conference, we offer writing contests which open mid-January and close at the end of February. Cash prizes are awarded in each category; \$100 for first place, \$75 for second, and \$50 for third and the winning entries are compiled into a Contest booklet and the pdf is posted on the Lakefly website.

The contests drew 124 entries from around the state. The winning entries can be viewed at

<https://lakeflywriters.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-Lakefly-Winners.pdf>

Conference

The Lakefly Writers Conference was held May 3-4 at the Oshkosh Convention Center. Total registration was 148 and included 28 speakers, 15 volunteers and 17 vendors. Approximately 42 people spent the night, with the majority staying at the Oshkosh Waterfront Premiere, but also Fairfield Inn.

This is on par with 2023, despite a 12% increase in the registration fee. Of those who took a survey at the end of the conference, 98% felt the fee was justified by the quality of the conference; 58% of attendees have previously attended and 42% were first-timers.

Groups included members of the North Fond du Lac Writers Club and the Waukesha Area Writers Club.

Speakers

Per a condition of a Wisconsin Arts Board/Oshkosh Foundation grant, eight of our speakers had to be in the Foundation's service area (Winnebago and Green Lake counties, and the city of Ripon).

Holly Day, a prolific freelance writer from Minnesota, was the keynote speaker. In addition to the keynote, we offered 20 break-out sessions. Notable speakers included USA Today bestselling mystery writer Beth Amos (writes as Annelise Ryan); graphic novelist Shaun Harris; inspirational writer Carmen Leal, children's author Kate Penndorf, young adult author Nicholas Chiarkas, and Bram Stoker nominee Sarah Read.

Add-ons

This year we offered five add-ons. Four were free: pitch sessions; website coaching; social media for beginners; and writing coaching sessions. For an extra \$85 fee, conference attendees could book a session with a make-up artist and professional photographer and get five digital headshots to be used on book jackets, websites, etc.

Dinner

Many people come to the conference alone and are from out-of-town, so on Friday evening, we offered a choice of four downtown restaurants where we had advanced reservations; 45 people signed up and were escorted by a volunteer to their chosen restaurant.

Open Mic

On Friday evening from 7 to 9 p.m., we held Lakefly After Hours open mic under the Dome of the Oshkosh Public Library. The event was free and open to the public. Refreshments included OshPop Lakefly Crunch flavored popcorn, which was popular. Approximately 20 people read and a total of 44 people attended.

Lakefly Book Fair

In past years, we've had the Lakefly Marketplace for conference attendees to buy/sell amongst themselves. To increase vendors' customer base and see if there is community interest in a book fair, in 2024 we replaced the

Marketplace with the Lakefly Book Fair. While adjacent to the conference, the event was promoted as its own entity and open to the public from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 4th.

The book fair had an availability of 50 tables; two were unsold.

Prior to the event, authors signed up for a 30-minute meet/greet with the public. The completed schedule was promoted in advance to highlight the book fair authors, and aid readers who could then know what time to come to get an autograph, etc.

Forty-four community members attended the book fair.

Financial

Revenue

Registration Fees	8397.41
Oshkosh Foundation/Wisconsin Arts Board Grant	750
HenshelHaus donation	150
Endowment Funds (\$8000 allocated)	<u>4067.92</u>
	13,365.33

Expenses

Writing Contest Awards	675.00
Speakers	4192.89
Winnefox Print Services	115.50
Office supplies (name tags, labels)	109.74
Park N Print	755.75
Lakely Website url renewal for 10 years	231.70
Two refunds	190.00
Door Prizes	224.72
OshPop	184.50
Oshkosh Convention Center	<u>6685.53</u>
	13,365.33

For comparison, the total cost of the 2023 conference was \$13,789.97, and was funded with \$7251.08 from the endowment fund.

Surveys

We conducted two short online surveys at the conclusion of the conference, one for the conference and one for the book fair. The questions were designed to identify further cost-saving measures, improve the book fair, and get a general feel for planning future events.

Two of the biggest expenses are the keynote speaker and formal lunch. Survey results showed that 54.9% felt that a keynote speaker “was essential to my conference experience” and 62.7% indicated that the formal lunch “was essential to my conference experience.”

Regarding the book fair, 54% of conference attendees felt the book fair “greatly enhanced my conference experience.” Only 23% of book fair vendors felt the adjacent conference “greatly enhanced my book fair experience,” yet 38% said their sales were better than expected, while 53% felt their sales were what they expected.

The survey results indicate we are hitting all the high notes, and 98% felt the fee was justified by the quality of the conference. Almost all comments were positive; the exceptions were a request for more signage and things related to the facility, like room temperature.

2025

The 2025 conference is scheduled for May 2 and 3. The Planning Committee will begin their work in September of this year; it is our intention to recruit more volunteers and create three committees to oversee the writing contests, book fair and conference.

Respectfully submitted by Ruth Percey

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