

FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS



Our mission shall be to encourage new, talented writers associated with the Midwest and to promote the arts, especially literature, among our members.

July 13, 2021 - Fawchicago.org

Message from FAW President – *Tammie Bob*



Dear Friends of American Writers,

I hope your summer is going well as the world returns to normal. It was good to see so many of you at the Awards Luncheon in June, good to be able to meet some of our Literature Award winners, good to be together at the Fortnightly.

FAW members should have received, by mail, your membership renewal forms and solicitations for FAW's various funds. We have asked for the return of the membership renewal form by July 20. Please try to put that on your to-do list if you have not yet sent it in. Sometimes it's hard to keep track of what each fund does. Like most people, I am not that comfortable asking for donations, so I will remind you why I do.

The Patrons Fund is the source of the prize money awarded to winners of our Adult Literature and Young People's Awards. You need only check past winners on our website to see that we've given many famous writers a step up when they first needed it. Many of our winners travel to Chicago at their own expense to participate in our awards luncheon, so we've been happy to be able to award them a bit more money (usually around \$1500 to \$2500) than in years past, due to our members' generosity. If donations go up, so will our prize pool as well as awareness and prestige of our literary contests.

The Foundation Fund is an endowed fund that provides scholarships to promising Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing or English students. We work with Chicago area colleges and Universities and have faculty groups choose their scholarship winner. Currently, we are partnered with Columbia College of Chicago, which has a good track record in producing successful writers. The student is invited to our luncheon in November and awarded a scholarship of several thousand dollars. If donations to this fund increase, we can either award more meaningful scholarships or increase the number of recipients.

These funds fulfill the purpose of our organization, to promote and support the careers of early-stage Midwestern writers. Please continue to be generous.

September will be here very soon, and before that we'll have news for you about our programs for this coming year, our Centennial. Many of you brought potential new members to the June luncheon and I hope you will continue to do so. We grow by word of mouth and invitation, so continue to spread the word. Have a great summer!

Adult Literature Awards

TIFFANY MCDANIEL for *Betty: A Novel* (Knopf, August 18, 2020) \$2,500

LIZABETH WETMORE for *Valentine: A Novel*, (Harper, March 31, 2020) \$2,500

Young People's Literature Awards

LINDSAY CURRIE for *Scratch Scratch*, (Sourcebooks Young Readers, Sept 1, 2020) \$1,650

CAROLE LINDSTROM for *We Are Water Protectors*, (Roaring Brook Press, March 17, 2020) \$1,650

LINDSAY H. METCALF for *Beatrix Potter, Scientist*, (Albert Whitman & Company, Sept 1, 2020) & *Farmers Unite!: Planting a Protest for Fair Prices* (Calkins Creek, Nov 10, 2020) \$1,650

More FAW Excellent Literature Award Contenders

Adult Literature



American Harvest: God, Country, and Farming in the Heartland

By Marie Mutsuki Mockett

When I picked up this giant book to review for our awards committee, I figured I'd slog through the required 50 pages and disqualify it as dull, pedantic, or unsuitable as a prize winner. This was based on the title, a collection of topics that did not interest me at all. But well before fifty pages, I was enthralled by a lyrical, unique narrator and a window into an unfamiliar world. This non-fiction book turned out to be quite a story.

For over one hundred years, the Mockett family has owned a seven-thousand-acre wheat farm in the panhandle of Nebraska, where Marie Mutsuki Mockett's father was raised. Mockett, who grew up in bohemian Carmel, California, with her father and her Japanese mother, knew little about farming when she inherited this land. Her father had all but forsworn it.

In *American Harvest*, Mockett accompanies a group of evangelical Christian wheat harvesters through the heartland at the invitation of Eric Wolgemuth, the conservative farmer who has cut her family's fields for decades. As Mockett follows Wolgemuth's crew on the trail of ripening wheat from Texas to Idaho, they contemplate what Wolgemuth refers to as "the divide," inadvertently peeling back layers of the American story to expose its contradictions and unhealed wounds. She joins the crew in the fields, attends church, and struggles to adapt to the rhythms of rural life, all the while continually reminded of her own status as a person who signals "not white," but who people she encounters can't quite categorize.

American Harvest is an extraordinary portrait of our land and a thoughtful exploration of ingrained beliefs, from evangelical skepticism of evolution to cosmopolitan assumptions about food production and farming. With exquisite humanity, this book attempts to reconcile competing versions of our national story. I highly recommend this! ~ *Reviewed by Tammie Bob*



Notes on a Silencing: A Memoir

By Lacy Crawford

Ultimately this book didn't win our prize, but it certainly was the book most discussed by the Adult Literature reading committee. This is a novelist's account of how she struggled to come to terms with a traumatic sexual assault that the boarding school she attended actively tried to cover up.

Crawford entered the prestigious St. Paul's School when she was 14. The daughter of socially ambitious upper-middle-class parents who believed in "the value of education," she immediately felt out of place among her privileged, preternaturally sophisticated classmates. On the first day of school, she discovered that many of her age-mates already had older lovers whom they visited without their parents' knowledge.

Other aspects of St. Paul's—racism, social hierarchies, and faculty sexual harassment of female students—also disturbed the author, who was diagnosed with clinical depression, but left her parents "unmoved." The year after she started, Crawford was forced to perform oral sex on two popular senior athletes who threatened to report her for breaking school curfew. She developed a bleeding sore throat the school infirmary diagnosed as stemming from canker sores.

Crawford later learned that the school doctor had noted she suffered from herpetic lesions. Branded overnight as a “whore” by fellow students, the author soon found herself excluded from female peer groups and scornfully pursued for sex by male students. When her parents became involved, school administrators told them that the “encounter...had been consensual,” implied that Crawford already had herpes, and threatened to destroy her Ivy League future if she did not remain silent.

Even after detectives found proof of the school’s wrongdoing more than 20 years later, Crawford’s case was dropped because St. Paul’s influence extended deep into New Hampshire state government. Trenchant in its observations about the unspoken—and often criminal—double standards that adhere in elite spaces, Crawford’s courageous book is a reminder of the dangers inherent in unchecked patriarchal power. ~ *Reviewed by Tammie Bob*



Farm Girl: a Wisconsin Memoir

By Beuna Coburn Carlson

One of our earliest received submissions last year was a memoir by 94-year-old writer, Beuna Carlson. Her clear vignettes of farm life in Wisconsin during the Great Depression were favorably reviewed in the *New York Times* as well as by our committee. Each selection features a picture of some ordinary activity of the time such as laundry, walking to school in the snow, or the vital Milking, so important it is capitalized. All the images reveal the work ethic of her family and the strong community that gave her a basis for an honest and solid life.

Many of our committee members enjoyed the book because it reminded some of us of our own or our parents’ agricultural backgrounds and their own stories. Although her sentences are short and simple, they are carefully crafted and her words well selected. This is a quick but thoughtful read. ~ *Reviewed by Karen Pulver*

Young People’s Literature

The Young People’s Literature Awards Committee absolutely loved our winning authors from this year! We also wanted to share three more recommendations from last year’s set of contending books. All three of these books were finalists.



Big Papa and the Time Machine

By Daniel Bernstrom

Big Papa and the Time Machine is a picture book about being brave when we don’t know what’s going to happen next. Every very young boy faces uncertainty over many circumstances. Big Papa shows his grandson why he must be brave and go ahead with life. Each example shows the bond the two share, the deep love and concern they have for one another, and the support that can come with ‘being brave’.

When his grandpa starts his “time machine”, his grandson asks Big Papa if he must go to school. His grandpa asks, ‘Are you scared?’ ‘Scared I’ll miss you,’ the boy replies.

The book then follows Big Papa’s grandson seeing every major stage in his grandpa’s life via the “time machine”. Each life event makes him ask, ‘Were you scared?’ and his grandpa always answers that he was, but he adds wise counsel, e.g., when Big Papa leaves *his* mama: ‘Sometimes you’ve gotta lose the life you have if you want to find the life you want.’

The story doesn’t skip tough circumstances, as when Big Papa’s daughter leaves her infant ‘and she never came back’ or when Big Papa admits he’s scared now because his grandson is ‘. . . growin’ up too fast.’

This tender story will have particular meaning for the many children – an estimated 2.6 million in the U.S. today-being raised by grandparents today.” ~Reviewed by Sally



Black is a Rainbow Color

By Angela Joy

Black is a Rainbow Color by Angela Joy is a picture book that promotes black history, culture and pride through the use of the word Black. In *the text*, the narrator describes many of her favorite things that are the color black: “Black are the braids in my best friend’s hair. Black are the bottoms of summertime feet. Black are soft circles that spin-nnn down the street. My color is black.”

Many Black figures and their importance to Black history and culture are interwoven throughout the book. “Black was the man who gave the WORLD his dream.”

The author also instills a sense of hope for the future of African Americans by creating symbols such as the feather and sunflower to promote it-- “Black is a feather on white winter snow. Black is the dirt where sunflowers grow.”

Angela Joy emphasizes that the color black, just like its people, is uplifting and inspiring. “Black are the branches that carry my name: weaving, wrapping, lifting, laughing, hoping, grasping, quiet, strong.” *Black Is a Rainbow Color* creates a wonderful world for all of us to live in by celebrating love and acceptance of one another.

Tanya from our committee wrote: “*Black Is a Rainbow Color* reminds us during this time of racial reflection that we can use a book to open discussions with children/students across age/grade levels. A perfectly lovely tool for parents, teachers and librarians.” ~ Reviewed by Angela Gall



Dancing at the Pity Party

By Tyler Feder

Dancing at the Pity Party by Tyler Feder is a graphic novel that details the true event of her mother dying of cancer when she was only a sophomore in college. As Roberta from our committee expressed, “I was impressed that the author not only wrote the words but drew the pictures. And I liked the gentle humor with which she approached this somber subject.”

Sally from our committee further stated, “Today there are more people facing grief at the same time than ever before in our nation’s history. As of today, there have been over 20,000 deaths just in Illinois. Because the pandemic has killed so many of our aged population, odds are that those left to grieve are often young, and perhaps not well acquainted with grief. Tyler was in their shoes at 19 and writing and illustrating this memoir is a love offering that young adult reader-viewers will welcome on their journey. Tyler writes that grief is not only MESSY, but it also follows no rules. She says: “It’s like a traveling carnival ride: NOISY and DARK and CONFUSING and SMELLY and WEIRD. And, like a rickety traveling carnival ride, it’s a lot less scary when you’re not alone.”

FAW NEWS

The FAW Program Committee has been hard at work lining up terrific programs for the upcoming year. These will be luncheon program meetings at The Fortnightly of Chicago. Below are the meeting dates for the 2021-2022 year. Watch for program details!

Sept. 8, 2021	Oct. 20, 2021	Nov. 10, 2021	Dec. 8, 2021	Jan. 12, 2022	Feb. 9, 2022	Mar. 9, 2022	Apr. 13, 2022	May 13, 2022
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Remember, 2022 ushers in the 100th Birthday celebration for FAW! Join us for this historic year.

SAVE THE DATE: During the 2021-22 year, Friends of American Writers will be celebrating its centennial in several ways, the most festive of which will be a Gala on Thursday evening, May 12, 2022, at the Woman's Athletic Club.

The WAC, which dates from 1898, hired the renowned architect Philip B. Mayer to design the gracious building which is still their home at 626 Michigan Avenue. With its elegant Ballroom and stylish Art Deco décor, it's the perfect place for celebrating our 100-year anniversary!

Many thanks to Kathy Katz, a member of both FAW and the WAC, for hosting us at this truly special venue!

Centennial Committee members: Diana Adams, Tammie Bob, Karen Burnett, Angela Gall, Roberta Gates, Joan Gordon, Kathy Katz, Vivian Mortensen and Karen Pulver.



FAW would like to recognize some outstanding members. Vivian Mortensen has been a member of FAW for 35 years and served on the board and committees more times than we can count. Thank you, Vivian for all you do for FAW.



Another long-time FAW member, Pat Adelberg, is retiring from the FAW board as Chair of the Yearbook and Awards Program. Pat has been the force behind the committee responsible for the compilation at printing of our FAW booklets and award programs for a very long time. Pat celebrated a milestone birthday recently. Happy Birthday, Pat! Thank you, Pat, for your dedication to FAW.



Time to renew your FAW membership or join us as a new member. If you have misplaced or did not receive a membership renewal form, fill out the membership form at the end of the newsletter and send in your dues for the year.



READING SUGGESTIONS

***Then She Was Gone* by Lisa Jewell**

Mystery

This was a Summer reading find at the used bookstore. I did not mind that it was a few years old as I always like a mystery, and Lisa Jewell is a bestselling author. The story begins from the point of view of Ellie Mack, the youngest daughter in the Mack family. Ellie is young, beautiful, smart, and on the brink of an outstanding year, then she goes missing. Ellie's narrative is followed by the grieving, stunned mother, Laurel Mack, which fills in many details about the family and how the disappearance of Ellie has torn the family apart. As the story unfolded, I imagined how this plot would play out. This is OK if you know where the story is going as the writing is great and the characters engrossing. Each main character adds their perspective to the story. You can hardly wait to get the full detail of how it all plays out. A fine and quick Summer read. ~ Karen Baker

***Such a Fun Age* by Kiley Reid**

Fiction, Contemporary

Wow! Beside an engrossing read, this debut novel by Kiley Reid is loaded with deep issues of race, privilege, entitlement, socioeconomic status, stereotypes, and real-life experiences. As I read the book, I had to stop and think about how I felt about the experiences of the characters, their personas, and interactions. The story revolves around Emira Tucker, a young black female soon to turn 26 and coming to the realization that her

girlfriends seem waaay ahead of progressing into adulthood. Emira lacks focus of knowing what she wants from life and takes a default position three-days a week babysitting for the very privileged Chamberlain family. She adores her three-year-old charge, Briar, but wants/needs a job with benefits and insurance. Her employer, Alix Chamberlain is self-centered social-media persona that lives for her girlfriends and any media attention she can generate. Her older daughter, Briar irritates her, but she dotes on her younger perfect baby, Catherine. After a racial event at the local upscale market involving Emira and Briar, Alix is panicked she may lose her babysitter. Alix becomes fixated on Emira, snoops on her phone, tries friendly chatting and offers glasses of wine to appear friendly and caring. She feels she can make Emira part of her family and keep her precious sitter by befriending her. She devises a plan to 'rescue' Emira that will firmly insert her into the Chamberlain family as her permanent child minder. The plan backfires for Alix and she selfishly resorts to a plan that has permanent consequences for Emira. This is a thought-provoking book you should read. ~ Karen Baker



Membership Renewal Letter

By Tammie Bob – President, Friends of American Writers

Last year, I wrote asking you to renew your membership while uncertain when we would again be able to meet in person. Last June, I seemed to think a September meeting might happen. As it turned out, we were able to offer some excellent programs via Zoom meetings. Most members rejoined and generously supported our Literature Awards and Scholarship funds, so those programs continued without interruption. A year later, things are returning to normal.

This year is our centennial – FAW is 100 years old! The Centennial Committee, headed by Roberta Gates and Karen Pulver, is working hard to plan special events such as a dinner banquet, a birthday party, and programs that will connect us with FAW's founders. These will cost a bit more than our usual programming, so if you could spare some extra dollars for the Centennial Committee, that would be much appreciated.

But let's not lose sight of our mission to support and encourage emerging writers. The Foundation Fund provides scholarships to outstanding writing students. The Patrons Fund enables us to award prizes to authors who have published outstanding books early in their career. Your donations allow these worthy projects to continue.

Thank you for your continued participation and support. Those of us who were able to attend the June Awards Luncheon were reminded of how lovely it is to meet at the Fortnightly. I hope to see you on September 8th at noon!



Friends of American Writers
2021-2022 Annual Dues Notice

Date: _____

Dear Member of Friends of American Writers:

Friends of American Writers will be 100 years old this year! Join us for the 2021-2022 year as we continue meeting again at the Fortnightly. Our FAW season will begin on September 8, 2021. The program committee is planning for another great year. Please remit your dues by check by July 20, 2021 to be included in the yearbook.

Indicate whether your \$50.00 membership is for

Individual Membership Sustaining Club Membership

Sustaining Club Name _____

Please help us update our membership information by **printing** all your correct contact information:

Your Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Phone _____

E-mail: _____

We are moving toward paperless newsletters, but if it is not possible for you to access the newsletter by email, please indicate below.

Writers with a Midwestern connection have a friend in FAW, which awards scholarships and book prizes to emerging talents. Your tax-deductible contribution supports these efforts. Please consider writing **additional** checks for donations to the Patrons, Foundation Fund and Centennial Committee.

\$ _____ Patrons Fund donation (Patrons Fund supports the Literature and Young People’s Literature Awards.)

\$ _____ Foundation Fund donation (Foundation Fund supports the yearly scholarship award to an MFA student from Columbia College Chicago.)

\$ _____ Centennial Committee

Please mail your checks to (made out to FAW):

**Vivian Mortensen
506 Rose Ave
Des Plaines, IL 60016**

<u>FAW 2020 - 2021 Officers</u>	<u>Committee Chairs</u>
President - <i>Tammie Bob</i> , Vice President - <i>Christine Spatara</i> , Secretary – <i>Patty Smart</i> , Treasurer - <i>Vivian Mortensen</i>	Newsletter Editor - <i>Karen Baker</i> , Foundation Fund - <i>Karen Burnett, Roberta Gates, Dori Roskin</i> , Literature Awards - <i>Ida Hagman, Karen Pulver</i> , Young People's Awards - <i>Angela Gall</i> , Luncheon - Social - <i>Carol Eshaghy</i> , Membership - <i>Karen Burnett</i> , Programs - <i>Joan Gordon</i> , Revisions - <i>Pat Schneider</i> , Sustaining Clubs - <i>Diana Adams</i> , Yearbook & Awards Program – <i>Dale Davison</i> , Website Manager - <i>Karen Baker</i>