



South Carolina Writers Association

Board of Directors

2021 Annual Report

Come write with us!

***The South Carolina Writers Association provides a supportive
environment
to help people become better writers.***

January 15, 2022

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President's Message

2021 was a pivotal year. As we entered our fourth decade serving South Carolina writers, our board and SCWA members were reeling from the effects of the COVID-19 virus. The board decided the best way to serve our members was to adapt and create our own success.

We acted on the results of our membership survey to understand member needs. We then designed and delivered the most comprehensive and creative set of programs we've ever produced. We created virtual chapters; introduced over 30 virtual workshops; published our print anthology, *Catfish Stew*; and, to top it off, delivered our first virtual conference. We also recognized the need to diversify our membership, our board, and our programs and developed a plan to look more like and reach out to all writers of South Carolina.

SCWA collaborated with new partners of other literary arts groups across the state and even the other SCWA writing organization, Southern California Writers Association, all in an effort to learn from them and share resources for the benefit of our members and all writers.

Our membership responded with outstanding participation and a demonstration to further strengthen SCWA by volunteering and also joining the board.

We look forward to continuing this trajectory of growth and supporting all the writers of South Carolina.

Mike Lee
President

SCWA Operations:

Membership and Chapter Liaison

Using the membership survey conducted late in 2020, the SCWA board continued to focus on member support through its three main areas of *Association, Education, Publication*. The Membership Committee led the association aspect and helped grow membership from 325 to 444, a growth of 36%. In addition to the new programs, a priority was placed on communicating with members through frequent chapter liaison meetings and supporting the creation of a new Charleston Chapter and an additional two virtual chapters to complement the four that were started in late 2020. A total of 25 chapters were operating at year-end.

A diversity objective was advanced during 2021 with the creation of a Diversity Committee to understand our demographics and to develop programs and initiatives that would expand SCWA to better serve the needs of all South Carolina writers. In addition to recruiting diverse members and faculty to deliver workshops, recommendations were made for the implementation of additional programs for 2022, such as outreach to underserved populations through expanded social media for awareness and the support of other organizations. Leadership at the board level also became more diverse for 2022 with the addition of several board members who better represent diverse members and can lead the way.

After more than 10 years of no increases in membership fees, the board announced an increase from \$52 to \$75 effective in late 2021. The new fees will help offset significantly increased operating costs and support the delivery of essential services and programs.

Publications/Contests

Congratulations are due to members who were published in SCWA's print anthology, *Catfish Stew*, in 2021. This members-only publication complemented the digital journal, *The Petigru Review (TPR)*, which was published in late 2020 and is scheduled again in 2022. The board decided to discontinue its print anthology in 2022 and to incorporate the popular elements of *Catfish Stew* into *The Petigru Review*, thereby reducing the significant costs and efforts of a print publication while maintaining the opportunity for members to have their work published in a members-only segment of the digital journal. Thanks are due to the Publications Committee consisting of member advisors, readers, and editors whose dedication once again produced a publication highly valued by members.

The 2022 TPR will be led by a contracted managing editor/fiction editor and a contracted poetry editor/nonfiction editor.

SCWA co-sponsored awards in partnership with the South Carolina Academy of Authors in 2021 for awards in the *Carrie McCray Nickens Fellowship in Poetry* and the *Elizabeth Boatwright Coker Fellowship in Short Fiction*. These awards are made annually to residents of South Carolina.

The Quill was reintroduced as SCWA's monthly newsletter and generated interest from our members and over 150 non-member subscribers. New features included highlights of member awards, perspectives from the president, and the introduction of guest articles and essays from members and other featured writers. The latter will be brought forward in 2022 as a new feature, in some form, in an expanded blog or monthly version of *The Petigru Review*.

Events and Education

Workshops

SCWA launched a broad program of over 30 free writer workshops during 2021 with the *Writing Conversations* and *Become an Author* series. It also introduced the new program, *Author's Corner*, in which members had the opportunity to be interviewed to discuss their writing. These programs spanned most of the calendar year with an audience of over 500 registered participants. The programs were sponsored by a grant from the South Carolina Humanities, making them free to the public while members had exclusive access to a library of recordings. We are grateful to the Events & Education Committee, which planned and produced all the events utilizing the expertise of members and invited faculty on topics ranging from craft development to how to get published. The success of these programs will be carried forward with a new schedule starting in early 2022.

Conference

SCWA held its inaugural virtual conference in April of 2021. The 125 participants benefited from keynote speeches from nationally acclaimed authors, workshops presented by writing experts, and panel discussions hosted by leading agents and editors. The three-day conference also featured an open-mic, a slush fest, and the opportunity for participants to have their work critiqued by industry-leading editors.

Work began on the in-person 2022 conference scheduled Oct. 21 through 23 in Pawleys Island. This conference, led by a contracted conference director, will also feature a separate virtual program.

Other Operating Highlights

- SCWA expanded its social media presence by engaging a director/social media. Facebook was used as its primary platform and consequently, it developed a group with more than 1,600 followers. Plans were developed to expand into other platforms in 2022 with the objectives to increase the awareness of SCWA and attract more diverse writers.
- SCWA's website, myscwa.org, was upgraded to improve the use of the membership management software, Wild Apricot. A project was implemented to enhance the exposure and awareness of the website through a search engine optimization project (SEO). This project was funded by a grant from the South Carolina Humanities and will improve the profile of SCWA among the writing community.
- The South Carolina Literary Arts Partnership Project that was initiated in 2020 completed the bulk of its work in 2021. The project was funded in part by RaiseUp Charleston, the Pat Conroy Literary Center, South Carolina Humanities, and SCWA and was led by a contracted project manager. A survey was distributed to 72 writing groups and responded to by 44. Meetings were held to identify areas of opportunity for collaboration and support with alliances formed by several groups. Literary groups now can post their events on the South Carolina Humanities calendar and register as a literary agency on the directory to be hosted by the South Carolina State Library. SCWA continued to benefit directly from its partnerships with the board and staff of the Pat Conroy Literary Center, the South Carolina Academy of Authors, and One Columbia for Arts and Culture.

- The board of directors conducted a strategy and planning session in June utilizing an expert consultant. The vision of the SCWA board was confirmed to expand operations while increasing funding for operating staff and the transition of the operating board to a governing board. Plans were made for 2022 programs and to build further capability among the board and contract resources.

Financials

SCWA finished the year with a net operating loss of \$7,558 before adjustments. This loss was due to the cash basis accounting methodology used. After adjustments were made to reflect grant revenue received in 2020 for programs operated in 2021 there was a net income gain of \$842. Cash reserves at year-end were \$33,334.

A total of \$4150 of grant funding was received in 2021, \$2,400 of which was received from the South Carolina Arts Commission as part of the Covid Emergency Relief funds program.

Board Membership and Staff 2021

SCWA's success is due to the participation of its members and the dedication of its volunteer board of directors and advisors:

Directors

Nancy Allen-Mastro, VP Membership
Vivian Bikulege, Chapter Liaison
Paul Davis, Leader Events & Education
Roger Jones, Board Development
Cayce LaCorte, Social Media
Len Lawson, Leader Diversity Committee
Mike Lee, President/Secretary
Dan Mooney
Abby Morales
Kasie Whitener, 1st VP/ Director Partnerships
David Wilson, Treasurer
Susan Zurenda

Advisors

Jayne Bowers, Publications
Sue Cryer, Publications
Barbara Evers, Chapter Liaison
Dorree Lynn, Publications
Yvette Murray, Publications
Mary Sturgill, Communications
Sean Scapelatto, Legal
Art Turfa, Conference, Publications
Anica Williams, Publications

Staff

Laura Corbin, Administrator

The board sends a special thank you to Past President *Amber Wheeler Bacon*, who served as conference director, led the publication of *Catfish Stew*, and helped design and deliver many of the programs in our Events & Education. SCWA is indebted to Amber's leadership and for providing her dedicated expertise which made the organization successful.

During the year, SCWA also benefited from the contributions of directors *Gail DePriest* and *Sara Thornhil*, and Advisor *Bill Bruehl*. We are grateful to them for adding to SCWA's success and regret their departure.

We enter 2022 with the retirements of *Nancy Allen-Mastro*, *Vivian Bikulege*, *Barbara Evers*, *Roger Jones*, *David Wilson*, *Susan Zurenda* and *Mike Lee*. David, Susan and Mike will remain as advisors. The board's success can be measured in large part by their contributions and leadership.

The horizon for 2022 is very bright with the additions of new board directors *Catherine Con*, *Wanda Craig (Raegan Teller)*, *Austin Hehir*, *Ralph Jarrells*, *Sharon Thomas* and *Lynn Volkenant*. Advisors *Peter Coan* and *Brad Land* also will provide their guidance.

Mike Lee
1/20/2021