Instructors

Meet the Rehoboth Beach Writers Guild instructors who are eager to work with you on your writing journey.

Sarah Barnett

Before retiring to Rehoboth Beach and discovering the joys of writing creatively, Sarah Barnett had careers as teacher, librarian, and lawyer. Attending the Guild's weekly FreeWrites, she found herself writing fragments of memoir, humorous essays, and short fiction. To her surprise, some of these pieces evolved into prize-winning stories and in 2020 she received a Delaware Division of the Arts Fellowship in nonfiction. She is vice president of RBWG and enjoys leading FreeWrites, teaching writing classes, and composing essays and stories while walking her dog on the beach. Her work has appeared in *Hippocampus, Brevity Blog, Delmarva Review, Delaware Beach Life*, and other publications.

Kim Burnett

Kim Burnett spent her career as nonprofit marketing and communications professional. Before moving to Rehoboth, she studied creative nonfiction and personal essay at The Writer's Center in Bethesda, MD, traveled to writers' conferences, and worked with a devoted writing circle. Her work has appeared in *Persimmon Tree, Women on Writing, Delaware Beach Life,* and *IWWG Network*, and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She is currently working on her first novel. In 2025 she was awarded the Delaware Division of the Arts Individual Fellowship as an Emerging Writer of Fiction, Runner-Up. She holds a BS in Public Administration from the University of Evansville and an MSc. in Public Policy from the London School of Economics.

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Kat Caputo

Kat Caputo's debut mystery, *A Sliver In The Dark*, will be published in 2027 by Red Adept Publishing. Her work has been featured in *Mystery Readers Journal* and the Hudson Valley MOCA and her short story will be published in the upcoming *Jersey Sleuths Anthology*. An award-winning arts educator and artist, Kat coaches creatives and hosts Mystery Woman Creative Retreats. Kat holds an MFA in Studio Arts and an MA in Art Education from the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

Judy Catterton

Judy Catterton has been teaching memoir and essay writing for the Guild since 2015. In 2015, she was the recipient of the Individual Artist Fellowship for nonfiction writing awarded by the Delaware Division of the Arts. Her essays have appeared in literary journals, including *Noise* (Grand Prize), *Chatter House Press* (Third Prize), *Alligator / Juniper* (Contest Finalist), *Wising Up Anthology, The Divine Feminine, The Ravens' Perch*, and the textbook, *Grief and Loss Across the Lifespan*. Her poetry has appeared in *Delaware Beach Life, Third Wednesday*, *She Writes, Rat's Ass Review*, and *Seaside Scribes*.

Ellen Collins

Ellen Collins is a writer, teacher, and artist. She taught for over 25 years in Fairfax County Schools in Virginia and has conducted writing workshops for children and adults in Louisiana, Texas, Virginia, and Massachusetts. Her stories and poems have appeared in *The Broadkill Review*, *Mettazine*, *Referential Magazine*, *Bellevue Literary Review, No Place Like Here, The Beach House, Rehoboth Reimagined* and *She Writes: Visions and Voices of Seaside Scribes*. She has published two volumes of poetry: *The Memory Thief* and *Invitations: Poems of Yoga and Meditation*. She has been an active member of the Rehoboth Beach Writers Guild since its inception. Ellen is putting final touches on a novel, the title of which is as yet undecided. She divides her time between Vienna, VA and Bethany Beach, DE.

Gail Braune Comorat

Gail Braune Comorat is a founding member of Rehoboth Beach Writers Guild, author of *Phases of the Moon* (Finishing Line Press), and a collaborating poet for *Walking the Sunken Boards* (Pond Road Press). She serves as an editor for *Quartet,* an online poetry journal for women 50 and over. Her work has appeared in *Gargoyle, Grist, Mudfish, Philadelphia Stories*, and *The Widows' Handbook*. She's a long-time member of several writing groups in Lewes, Delaware.

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Maribeth Fischer

Maribeth Fischer, in addition to founding and serving as executive director of "The Guild," as many now call it, is the author of three novels, *The Language of Goodbye* (Dutton 2001), and *The Life You Longed For* (Simon & Schuster, 2007), and *A Season of Perfect Happiness* (Dutton 2024). Since 2009, Fischer has received three Delaware Division of the Arts Fellowships for fiction and nonfiction. She has published essays in such journals as *The Iowa Review*, *The Yale Review*, *Fourth Genre*, and *Creative Nonfiction* and has received two Pushcart Prizes for her essays. For more information about Maribeth, go to www.maribethfischer.com

Patricia Garrison

Patricia Garrison is an essayist and journalist who embarked on a writerly life after retiring from her career in public relations and corporate communications. Her essays often deal with issues of relationships with adult children, family dynamics, older women and intimacy, and the intersection of aging and sexism. Her work has appeared in *Next Avenue, Insider, HuffPost, Delaware Beach Life, Pangyrus, Persimmon Tree, Moss Piglet,* and *Herstry*.

Lisa Graff

Lisa Graff is an award-winning writer, novelist, and actress. Her essays have appeared in *The Washington Post, Woman's World Magazine, Delaware Beach Life Magazine*, the *Montgomery Journal*, the *Gaithersburg Gazette* and the *Cape Gazette*. Her column "Our Senior Yearbook" was featured in the *Cape Gazette* from 20212-2024. She has published two novels, *Find Me Alone* 2017 and *Up in the Sky so Blue* 2020.

Today, Lisa is creating and performing her own one-woman shows based on her real-life experiences and setting the shows to live music! She has written six different scripts and has plans for several more. Learn more at LisaJgraff.com

Gina Hagler

Gina Hagler has written fiction and nonfiction for adults and children for twenty-five years. While her focus has been on science and technology, her work includes many middle school titles for Rosen Publishing; profiles, business, and explainer pieces relating to biotech for individual companies and BioSpace; and articles about parenting for *Washington Parent* and *Good Housekeeping*. She works as a developmental editor and writing coach, and taught nonfiction, intro to writing, and sci-fi classes at The Writer's Center in Bethesda for many years. Her work has won several awards, and she is a member of the ASJA, NASW, and SCBWI. See her books, biotech writing, and other clips. She is also the founder of KidWrite! Language Arts.

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Crystal Heidel

Crystal Heidel is a graphic designer who has designed nearly 100 book covers, some of which received state and national awards. She is also a writer, the author of the award-winning murder mystery, *Still Life in Blood*, which won First Place in both the Delaware Press Association's Communications Contest and the National Federation of Press Women's Communication Contest in 2014. This combined passion for unique book design and compelling writing led Crystal to found Byzantium Sky Press, an indie publishing company dedicated to sharing the voices of empowering women writers who are not afraid to be who they are and change lives with their words. Byzantium Sky Press has won multiple awards in the Delaware Press Association's Communications Contest for cover design.

Ilona Holland

After 14 years of commuting to Cambridge, MA from DE, Ilona Holland retired from her position on the faculty at Harvard Graduate School of Education. Her decision was stirred by a keen desire to devote more time and attention to writing. Since retiring, she has published two award-winning historical fiction picture books, *The Lost Locket of Lewes* and *The Great Explosion: A Powder Mill Chronicle*. She was also honored to have her debut children's book, *Buddy Bison's Yellowstone Adventure*, included in United Through Reading, a program serving over 100,000 families in which deployed military parents read to their children over distance.

Ethan Joella

Ethan Joella is president of RBWG and teaches English and psychology at the University of Delaware, where he specializes in online teaching and community writing workshops. His work has appeared in *River Teeth*, *The Cimarron Review, The MacGuffin, Delaware Beach Life*, and *Third Wednesday*. He has published two chapbooks of poetry, and his novel, *A Little Hope*, published in 2021 by Scribner (Simon & Schuster). He lives in Rehoboth Beach.

Gregory A. Kompes

Gregory A. Kompes (MFA, MS Ed.), founder of The Writer Workshop, is an award winning and bestselling author of fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. He's a contributor to 14 anthologies, among them: *Chicken Soup for the Soul's What I Learned from the Dog*. Gregory served as a Subject Matter Expert during the development of Southern New Hampshire University's MFA program, where he now teaches author platform building, business of writing, and fiction courses. GregoryAKompes.com.

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Mariah Burton Nelson

A lifelong writer, Mariah Burton Nelson recently started studying graphic storytelling at the Sequential Artists' Workshop and is eager to share what she's learning with other writers who are brave enough to try something new in a very low-risk setting. So far, she has published one graphic story (with *Passager Journal*), was a featured artist at RBWG's Art in the A.M. program in 2019, and earned her World Art History certificate from Smithsonian Associates in 2020. Before studying art, she wrote seven books, most notably *The Stronger Women Get, The More Men Love Football* (Harcourt Brace). She has written for *The New York Times, The Washington Post, USA Today, Newsweek*, and other publications, anthologies, and literary journals. She lives in Arlington, VA, and Rehoboth Beach, DE, and is at work on a graphic memoir.

Catherine Pierce

Catherine Pierce served as the Poet Laureate of Mississippi from 2021-2025 and is the author of four books of poems, most recently Danger Days (Saturnalia Books, 2020). A memoir, Foxes for Everybody (Northwestern University Press) and a new poetry collection, Dear Beast (Saturnalia) are forthcoming in 2026. Her work has appeared in The New York Times, The Best American Poetry, American Poetry Review, The Nation, the Pushcart Prize anthology, and elsewhere. From 2007-2024, she was professor of English and co-director of the creative writing program at Mississippi State University. She recently moved with her family back to her home state of Delaware, where she continues to write, teach, and spend as much time outside as possible.

Karen Yudelson Sandler

Karen Yudelson Sandler is an inveterate writer of letters to the editor over the years, having had ten acceptances by the *Washington Post*, one of which became a paid opinion piece, and a full-length essay for *Style Plus*. Her latest letter appeared on July 4, 2025. Karen retired from a career as a fixed income portfolio manager and investment strategist, then went on to teach ESL as a volunteer and then served as Board Chair of the Washington English Center. A long-time member of Luscious Literati, a DC-based writers' group, she has produced creative non-fiction pieces, opinion pieces, short stories, and two novels. Her work has appeared in *Delaware Beach Life*, received honorable mention in *Bethesda Magazine's* Short Story Contest in June, 2024, and first place in the national Resource Center for Women and Ministries in the South essay contest in 2021. She is grateful to be a member of the Guild since 2021.

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Elise Seyfried

Elise Seyfried is the author of five books of humorous and spiritual essays, and dozens of freelance essays for publications including *Next Avenue, The Independent, Purple Clover, HuffPost, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Modern Loss, Living Lutheran, Chicken Soup for the Soul,* and *Delaware Beach Life*. Her weekly blog "Working Title" has appeared in the *Cape Gazette* digital edition since 2012.

Rae Tyson

Rae Tyson of Georgetown has been a professional writer for over 40 years, with work appearing in newspapers, magazines, and books. One of his short stories was published locally in 2018 by Cat & Mouse Press. Since 2014, Tyson has been teaching fiction and non-fiction writing at the University of Delaware's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Collaborating with acclaimed writer Mary Jumbelic, Tyson also is teaching a memoir writing class at the Downtown Writers Center in Syracuse, NY.

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