

President's Report to Saskatoon Writers' Coop AGM, March 22, 2007

It has been my privilege to serve as President of the Saskatoon Writers' Coop as it celebrated its 5th anniversary. The organization has come a long way in five years, solidifying its place in the Saskatoon writing community thanks to the groundwork laid by the founding members and to the dedication of the board members who followed.

As a writer, volunteering for the Writers' Coop is a rewarding experience. I have met writers that I would not otherwise have known, and now count them among my friends. I have shared my knowledge with others who want to learn and grow in their writing experience. I have been inspired by the work of others, and have laughed through many conversations about the writer's life.

In the past year, board members of the Writers' Coop have worked hard to advance the image of the Coop within our community, and to create more opportunities for writers to get together, to share their work, to learn from each other and to be challenged in the craft of writing.

The Coop offered two major classes, one of which I was lucky enough to teach, a course in freelance magazine writing. Teaching is a rewarding experience because, while we all have our special skills, we can learn so much from the experience of sharing it with others. The second class was creative writing for younger children with Dianne Young. Dianne has taught classes for the Coop before, and she is always popular.

This year, we instituted a program of monthly Open Mikes, and now we're wondering why we didn't do it sooner. The Open Mike concept is proving to be popular among local writers, both those who choose to read (or sing) their work and those who come to listen. The Open Mikes have been held in two cafés, City Perk and Mystic Java, and we hope to try other venues around the city in the months to come.

You'll hear more about Coop events over the past year in the Programming report.

One of the most exciting new developments of the past year has been updating and maturing the image of the Writers' Coop, through the adoption of a new chicken mascot and the redesign of our website. We held a contest to solicit images for the new mascot. Amazingly, we had submissions from around the world. However, we were able to unanimously pick the work of local writer and artist Beth Matheson. Beth nicknamed the chicken "Hector" and the name has stuck.

The Coop website, officially unveiled tonight but up and running for a few weeks, was redesigned by our Communications chair and website administrator Karen

Millard, who spent countless volunteer hours, and it shows. It is a beautiful and informative website with lots of room to grow. Karen instituted the brilliant idea of including the words and photos of our members, on a changing basis, so that the website is always fresh and new.

Sadly, Karen is ending her term on the board. She will be missed – as will two other members of the 2006-2007 board who are also departing: our dedicated and hardworking Treasurer Janice Schmidt, and programming committee member Adrienne Gruber.

I want to acknowledge as well the other members of the Coop board, who have worked hard this year to keep our organization vital and relevant to the membership: Secretary and *Coop Scoop* editor Jim Weseen, Programming Chair Lloyd Ratzlaff, Registrar Joanne Blythe, Membership Coordinator Lorelie Sarauer, and Programming Committee members Edda Ryan, Kamal Parmar, and recent addition Darla Tenold.

As of this date, the Coop has 114 paid-up members, in addition to two life members (Beth Matheson and Audrey Smith), two honorary members (Annette Lapointe and Martha Blum), and fifteen recently lapsed– or possibly recently renewed– members). Since the Coop's inception, the membership fee of \$10 has not changed, since we wish the Coop to be open and accessible to everyone, and because we'd all rather be spending our money on books!

Presented by Amy Jo Ehman