

# Mid-AMWAzup

AMERICAN MEDICAL WRITERS ASSOCIATION  
MID-AMERICA CHAPTER

SEPTEMBER 2007

## Welcome

**By Tad Coles, DVM**

WELCOME TO THIS FIRST-EDITION NEWSLETTER OF the Mid-America chapter of the American Medical Writers Association. This issue is a collaborative effort. Kathi Whitman, Brandi Schubert, and Loga Ganesh provided editing and proofreading skills. Christine Frank did the layout using In-Design. Bylines acknowledge article authors Joanne McAndrews and Bob Iles. If you have any suggestions regarding content please feel free to contact me. This newsletter can be as fun or as serious as you want it to be.

Our first order of business is to reconsider naming our newsletter. I e-mailed members the suggestion of MidAMWA News along with the following proposed tongue-in-cheek names: Mid-AMWAzup, Mid-AMWAzappinin, and Mid-AMWAzaMattaU, in an effort to generate a response. I didn't get a large reaction, but was surprised that most respondents picked Mid-AMWAzup! So there you go.

Hey listen, I'm fine with that. Let's just consider one thing that a member recently pointed out before we move on: What if you get mentioned in an article and want to pass on the kudos? Would you feel comfortable sending a client of yours a copy of Mid-AMWAzup? Me, I have no hesitation. That would be fine. But this is your newsletter and if you think we need a more conventional name, then send an e-mail to me with the subject line, "Mid-AMWA Newsletter Name," and put your suggested name in the body of the e-mail. If I get more than

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## Way Outside the Box

**by Bob Iles**

PROBABLY MOST OF US BACKED INTO the job of medical writing. That is, few if any of us majored in it in college, and once we'd graduated we didn't set our sights on one day being called medical writer or medical editor.

But we all use the written language well. And we're willing to spend long hours at the keyboard. And we deal successfully with the hierarchy of persons who themselves can't write well but have power to decide whether we do.

The above is also a fair description of a fiction writer. Yes, there are separate sets of skills needed for writing about medicine and writing fiction, but I don't think those skill sets are so far apart that you shouldn't think about writing fiction. There's a saying, "Everybody has at least one good book in them," and I believe that. Another saying I believe is, "Readers want to see the world through somebody else's eyes." What if you let people see the world through your eyes? I'll bet they would be fascinated.

To see the world through my eyes, try my recently published *Incidental Death*, mentioned in a recent Kansas City Star article you can access at <http://www.kansascity.com:80/news/neighborhood/olathe/story/242421.html>. You can get the book or order it at any bookstore or library. Find out about my other fiction at [www.RobertIles.com](http://www.RobertIles.com).

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## Mid-America Chapter Dinner in Atlanta

YOU'RE INVITED TO AN INFORMAL MID-AMERICA chapter dinner at the AMWA annual conference in Atlanta. Kathi Whitman & Joanne McAndrews will coordinate this event.

Date: Thursday October 11, 2007 in Atlanta  
Location: Pacific Rim Bistro (303 Peachtree Center Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30308)

Come and enjoy a delicious dinner with other Mid-America chapter members at the AMWA annual conference. This is an informal get-together, and individuals will pay for their own dinner and drinks. You can view menus at [www.pacificrimbistro.com](http://www.pacificrimbistro.com) <<http://www.pacificrimbistro.com/>>. This restaurant is located across the street from the conference hotel, so you will have plenty of time to make it back for the coffee and dessert klatches that evening.

To reserve your spot, please contact Kathi Whitman at [kwhitman@incredibleenglish.com](mailto:kwhitman@incredibleenglish.com) no later than Friday, October 5.

## Welcome

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six responses (the number of people who have already voted for Mid-AMWAZup), then I will collect the names and give you a chance to vote on them via another blast e-mail.

So far there has only been one person who offered more conventional names to consider and she had the following suggestions: The Midpoint: News of the AMWA Mid-America Chapter, Center Point: News of the AMWA Mid-America Chapter, and Middle Ground: News of the AMWA Mid-America Chapter. I'm not a big fan of the News of the AMWA Mid-America Chapter after the colon, but whatever you ladies and gentlemen want is okay with me. Living in a democracy is a wonderful thing. But for it to work, you have to vote.

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## AMWA Certificates Earned

**KATHI WHITMAN, PRESIDENT OF INCREDIBLE** English ([kwhitman@incredibleenglish.com](mailto:kwhitman@incredibleenglish.com) – 816-415-8449 <<http://www.incredibleenglish.com/>>), and Genevieve-Ann Gaudreau, President of Biomed Resources ([gen@biomedresources.com](mailto:gen@biomedresources.com) – 314-359-4129), recently received AMWA's Professional Development Certificate (PDC). You can earn a PDC every two years by accruing points for qualifying activities. See the AMWA Web site for more information.

Well-deserved congratulations to the following chapter members, who completed the requirements for a Core Curriculum certificate in 2006:

- Catherine M Jarrell, MA
- Ruth Martinez, RPh
- Joanne M McAndrews, PhD
- Ruth M Noland, PharmD

## Board of Editors in the Life Sciences (BELS)

**CONGRATULATIONS TO MID-AMERICA CHAPTER MEMBER CAROL** Sonderman, President of Effective Editing, Inc. <<http://www.effectiveediting.com/contact.html>>, who recently passed the BELS exam.

## Kansas City Members Needed

Our next chapter conference will be held in Kansas City, Missouri. We are looking for a few Kansas City area chapter members to help with the arrangements. If you are interested, please contact our chapter president, Donna Coffman at [donrcoffman@earthlink.net](mailto:donrcoffman@earthlink.net). Thank you!

## Mid-America Chapter Local Groups Now Forming

**By Joanne McAndrews, PhD**

**WE ARE NOW FORMING LOCAL EVENTS** groups within our chapter. St. Louis-area freelance Mid-America chapter members have been holding bi-monthly luncheons with St. Louis-area Society for Technical Communication (STC) freelance writers since September 2006. A different topic of interest to freelance medical/technical writers is discussed at each meeting, including:

- Business plans
- SMART business goals for 2007
- Warming up cold calls/marketing your business
- Retirement options for the self-employed
- Working remotely

The average attendance at these gatherings (typically at local restaurants) has been 8 to 10 people, with each paying for their own food and drink. Those participating have really enjoyed the get-togethers.

We are looking for Mid-America chapter members who would like to help organize occasional chapter activities in their area—social, work related, or otherwise. These activities could include: potluck dinners, informal networking lunches, outings to local museums and other attractions, dinners with guest speakers, panel discussions, walks or bike rides through local parks, etc.

If you live in one of the following areas and would like to get involved, please contact Joanne McAndrews at [jmmcandrews@earthlink.net](mailto:jmmcandrews@earthlink.net), and she will put you in touch with others in your area.

- Kansas City
- St. Louis, MO
- Springfield, MO
- Lincoln, NE
- Omaha, NE
- Ames, IA
- Des Moines, IA
- Iowa City, IA

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# President's Letter

By Donna Coffmann, MD

DEAR CHAPTER MEMBERS,

I wanted to take a moment and thank everyone for all their efforts and support of our chapter! We have had some exciting new things developing in the past year to year and a half, including the St. Louis lunches arranged by Joanne McAndrews, our new website managed by Carol Sonderman, our inaugural issue of the chapter newsletter with Tad Coles at the helm, and participation in the AMWA survey written and managed by Joanne McAndrews. Thank you for your hard work!

Despite the small turnout, we had a very enjoyable chapter conference this spring. The chapter officers will be meeting soon to begin working out ideas for future chapter conferences. The participation of chapter members in the annual conferences and local meetings is critical to the function of AMWA. Please consider participating in the annual chapter

## Outside the Box

by Bob Iles

**THIS PAST MAY, A VETERINARY PATHOLOGIST** and journal editor who was organizing sessions for a national conference contacted me. He wanted me to come to Savannah in November and lead a workshop for veterinarians on writing for journal publication. He had found me by wandering the Web, looking for an experienced medical writer who is also a teacher, and he decided on the basis of what he saw at my Web site that I was a good fit. I went to work studying recent issues of various veterinary journals. I found major similarities between what editors of those journals require and what editors of human medicine journals require, so I discovered I had value outside the box of human medicine I had placed myself in.

conference for your own educational enrichment as well as for the benefits of a cohesive support/networking group.

Joanne has done a wonderful job of organizing lunches every couple months for the St. Louis area writers. Through these meetings, members have gotten to know each other better, have done some networking, and have learned some new business skills. If you are from the St. Louis area, please feel free to contact Joanne about joining us for these lunches (jmmcandrews@earthlink.net). If you are not from St. Louis, I encourage you to organize lunches in your area. The St. Louis lunches started as simple get-togethers for lunch and grew from there, so getting started is not difficult. Choose a place for lunch and e-mail local members!

Lastly, thanks to everyone who participated in the chapter survey. We will carefully consider your input as we go forward with planning for the chapter. Your input and participation are what makes this chapter yours.

Do you have a Web site, one that features your interests and strengths? I wouldn't be surprised if a lot of you say, "No. Haven't gotten around to it; too modest; too much trouble." If that fits you, think about this: As an AMWA member you likely have valuable experience and education in the biosciences that someone somewhere is looking for. Add to that the fact that most AMWA members have the ability—and doggedness—to get words on paper, and you see that we are a very small slice of the population. My advice is to tell the world. Maybe you'll be in Savannah next year when the snow flies here in mid-America.

(Full disclosure: My Savannah vignette does not have a story-book ending. Family health problems made it necessary for me to cancel after having prepared my talk and slides. Oh well, it was fun looking forward to it.)