



The International Women's Writing Guild

Update from IWWG Executive Director & Board of Directors

May 1, 2020

Dear IWWG Community,

As we write this letter on behalf of the IWWG and our Board of Directors, we remember the hugs of those returning to the summer conference, applause given the three-minute readings, smiles offered and returned across lunch and classroom tables. One of the things that we love most about the Guild is that we as women writers come as we are, with our untold pasts and questioning presents, determined to craft our tomorrows through the Guild's unique and nourishing energy. It is this spirit of community that brings us to share an update on our thinking about moving forward.

Our Plans for Summer

Social distance and Guild in-person gatherings do not speak the same language. So, honoring the guidance that Massachusetts and other states have put in place for the summer, we are hoping to reschedule the Summer Conference close to same time, same place next year. In the meantime, however, we will be refunding all registration money in full between May and June. In addition, this summer we will be providing a rich body of workshops and experiences online at our Digital Village. Please expect a full catalog mid-May with more exciting details.

Our Online Writing Community

The Guild came early to building an online writing community through our now well-established Digital Village. Even during these dark opening months of the shared pandemic, when doors and windows across the world were closing, our screens have remained well-lit with a poetry workshop by Cynthia Manick, Open Mics for sharing those crucial three-minute readings, even a delicious free series using food to nourish writing and writers that reached over 140 women from almost every state and 12 foreign countries. "You saved my life" more than one participant wrote in. It is ingredients like these that have been and will be invaluable in keeping our community and all of us going strong. More of our doors will be opening each week in the months ahead.

Our Financial Future: Caring for Our Staff, Teachers, Members, and Friends

We know that this crisis brings real and sustained financial challenges to many groups created to serve the needs of others and the Guild is no exception. As many of you now realize, over the 44 years the Guild has empowered women and our writing voices, our Summer Conference has provided close to 75% of our earned revenue. While we have made inroads into individual donations and foundation-sponsored funds, we are still in the early stages of developing those resources. As the advent of canceling the Summer Conference has become clearer, the Board and our committees have put many hours into imagining our way forward. The guiding focus of our planning has been to sustain the Guild's momentum until we can again open registration for Summer, 2021, likely this December.

Making this happen has called for and been answered by many members of our Guild community. Paid staff has agreed to work pro bono during the summer and fall months with a focus on fundraising. Operations have been streamlined. Board members and officers have signed on to lead and guide the Guild's communications, experiences, and programming in the critical months ahead. While these decisions in all areas have been difficult, they support our intention to keep our community and

outstanding programming intact and available for all who come.

Support for Immediate Needs

In support of these values, our Board of Directors has laid a foundation for the Guild's *Tomorrow Together Fund*, established to support our immediate emergency needs and help carry the Guild through the volatility created by the economic consequences of the pandemic crisis. Our ability to respond to these needs is strengthened when we join together to keep our community whole. If you are in a position to contribute to the Guild for our shared Tomorrow Together Fund, please contact our Executive Director Michelle Miller or make your donation through our website or mailing address.

Closing Thoughts

In a recent *New York Times* interview, writer and teacher Jack Kornfield offered this question: "Epidemics are part of the cycle of life on this planet. The choice is how we respond. With greed and hatred and fear and ignorance? Or with generosity, clarity, steadiness, and love?" He then went on to describe our health care workers: "You have a team of a million who are voluntarily linking hands and saying, 'We know how to do this.'"

The IWWG community has the opportunity now to not only weather this storm, but to stay strong always, more committed than ever to empowering the women of the world as we find, raise, and share our voices to make all of our tomorrows better.

In the days ahead all of you will be getting more specific information on how you can individually join our circle of linked hands in supporting the Guild's todays and tomorrows.

Tomorrow Together. Let's make this happen.

In the Spirit of the Guild,

Judy Huges

Judy Huges, Board Chair

Michelle M. Miller

Michelle M. Miller, Executive Director

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