

# Write What Inspires You! Newsletter

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Children's Author



Welcome to the February 09 issue of my FREE newsletter:

## Write What Inspires You!

Can it possibly be the first month of 2009 is now behind us? I hope you all have started 2009 on a good note and that good fortunes are coming your way!

I began my new position of Marketing Manager at Stories for Children Magazine in January 2009. This position has come full circle for me since SFC was my first publishing credit in July 2007. Where has the time gone since then, I don't know. But I do know I have developed a wonderful network of writer friends and continue to develop those connections for which I am eternally grateful.

I also, spent the month of January enrolled in Margie Lawson's online course entitled, "Defeat Self-Defeating Habits" and I have to tell you it has turned my mental focus on my writing for the better. The most important aspect is being paired up with a "Change Coach." A Change Coach plays an instrumental part of your daily writing life and my Change Coach and I clicked from the onset and we have plans to continue beyond the scope of the class. I know it sounds like a "Duh" moment, but I don't tackle anything at my computer until I get at least one hour of writing completed Monday through Friday. Intrigued? For more info on Margie's online classes visit her at: <http://margielawson.com>

This issue is jammed packed with terrific interviews, a book review, articles of the writing life, writer's accomplishments, testimonials, and a special contest announcement.

If you are interested, please feel free to submit your name for an interview, an article and/or your successes to: [dmccline@optonline.net](mailto:dmccline@optonline.net)

Momentum continues to build on a steady basis and we are currently at 101 opt-in subscribers and are booked through July 2009.

Please share this newsletter with your peers in the writing industry and encourage them to opt-in as a monthly subscriber @ <http://www.donnamcdine.com>

Here's to your inspiration and continued success!

*Donna*

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## Quote of the Month:

"If you want a writing life that you've never had, you'll have to do things that you've never done—and do them consistently."

~ Kristi Holl ~  
Dec. 10, 2008

## AUTHOR INTERVIEW - LORI CALABRESE

I first met Lori online at the Muse It Up Club and then in person at the Eastern NY SCBWI Conference in June 2008. The funniest thing about meeting Lori at the conference was neither one of us knew the other would be there. You know how it goes, you enter the large conference or ball room...scanning the area to find the best place to sit, hoping you'll pick a good spot. I remember distinctly walking in and a woman crossed in front of me on her way back from the coffee table and I said to myself what a pretty outfit she is wearing. I chose an aisle to sit in and while I was fumbling with my tea, the person sitting next to me leaned forward, looked at my name tag and said, Donna, Donna McDine from the Muse It Club and I said yes, that's me. I glanced at Lori's name tag and we both chuckled. Talk about karma.

Without further ado, I present to you children's author, Lori Calabrese:

Lori Calabrese specializes in parenting, motherhood, and children, both in her writing, and in her life. Her publications include *Stories for Children Magazine*, *Appleseeds Magazine*, *Focus on the Family Clubhouse Jr.*, and *The Institute of Children's Literature's Rx for Writers*. Before writing for children, Lori was a managing producer at World Wrestling Entertainment where she wore many hats and she calls Connecticut home. She's honed her writing skills at *The Institute of Children's Literature* and is a member of SCBWI.

**DMc:** Your original career was with a large television production company. How did you end up writing for children?

**LC:** Thanks, Donna. I have to admit, I never imagined I would be writing for children, but I love it and there's no turning back. I've always loved television production and was a managing television producer for ten years. It wasn't until I decided to stay home with my children that the thought of becoming a children's writer even crossed my mind. I'm fortunate to read LOTS of children's books and this is how I discovered I can't get enough of them! I've always loved picture books and now, I get a kick out of reading books to my kids that I loved when I was little. I have great memories of those books, and I hope all children are fortunate enough to make their own memories. As my interest grew in writing, I searched the web and found everything related to writing for children. I read tons of books on the craft of writing. When I realized the amount of work entailed, I enrolled in *The Institute of Children's Literature* to hone my writing skills. I also joined SCBWI. I joined two critique groups and continue to write, write, and write some more. Now, I have published articles with *Stories for Children Magazine*, *AppleSeeds Magazine*, *Focus on the Family Clubhouse Jr.*, and *The Institute of*

Children's Literature's Rx for Writers, and I have three picture book manuscripts that are looking for good homes.

**DMc: One of your most recent publishing credits is with AppleSeeds Magazine. Please share with us the process from start to finish.**

**LC:** I love the creative process of taking an idea and having it come to life. AppleSeeds is a premiere kids magazine, and a magazine I knew I'd love to write for. I ordered sample issues, and read them to get a good feel for the magazine. I printed out their theme list and tried coming up with original ideas for each theme. Then I queried, and queried, and queried some more. In fact, I queried them five times before one of my ideas was accepted. It's true what they say about perseverance when it comes to writing. One of their themes was "Amazing Journeys." I noticed in their guidelines that they look for original, fresh ideas, but not to overlook the obvious. While chasing after my kids in the library, a book on Ferdinand Magellan popped out at me. There are certainly many amazing journeys, but Magellan's first journey around the world would have to be up there on the list, right? I researched, and sent in an article outline, bibliography, and query letter as per the guidelines. Then, I waited. Needless to say, I was ecstatic to get the e-mail from Appleseeds' editor asking me if I'd be interested in writing the article. The most challenging part was definitely squeezing in as much information as I could into 500 words, but with the help of a wonderful critique group, and a great editor, I'm excited to say "Magellan's Madness" will be published in the May/ June 2009 issue.

**DMc: In your experience with print and online ezines do you find the submission varies greatly? Or is it about the same?**

**LC:** I find submission guidelines vary greatly for EVERY magazine, whether it's an online ezine or a print magazine. Each magazine is different, each editor is different, so submission guidelines for each magazine are different. I think that's one of the most time consuming aspects of being a writer- staying on top of the market, and researching guidelines. Read them in your market guide, read them online. They constantly change and editors change. Some accept manuscripts, others prefer queries. Some accept submissions via e-mail, others prefer snail mail. When querying, some require an article outline, and a bibliography. Others prefer a sample paragraph. Whew- I'm getting a headache just thinking about it!

**DMc: What advice would you give to the newbie writer attempting to break into magazines?**

**LC:** It's funny you're asking me this question because, even though I've had

articles published, I feel like I am that newbie writer still attempting to break in! I think the process never ends for a freelance writer, the market is very competitive, and we're constantly looking for ways to break into a new market, or even an old market! I remember, starting out, reading what writers had to say when posed with this question- hoping for that answer that would shed light on the numerous questions I had about breaking in. The best advice I can give is to do your homework. By doing your homework, I mean really read up on what goes into writing for children and what magazines are looking for. Study sample issues of magazines to get a feel for each one, and learn how to target what each magazine looks for in an article. It seems as though every theme has been done to death, so try your best in giving it a fresh, surprising twist. Keep writing and submit your work. Don't let that article sit in your files and collect dust. Get it out there. Once you're submitting, you've already gotten farther than many others, and you should pat yourself on the back!

**DMc: Do you have a particular genre you prefer to write for? If yes, why?**

**LC:** When it comes to magazine writing, I love writing nonfiction and that's where I've had the most success. The nonfiction market is a great market. When it comes to fiction, I enjoy writing sports stories. I've always been a big sports fan- I grew up with an older brother, and now I live in a house with three guys- talk about being outnumbered! They always say to write what you know (or write what inspires you!) and that's what I know.

When it comes to books, I love writing picture books and I'm currently working on a middle-grade novel. I love writing for younger readers because they're still discovering the world around them. Middle-grade readers are learning how to operate independently and characters aren't waiting for an adult to rescue them. They take risks and solve the problem themselves.

**DMc: What has been your experience with networking at conferences?**

**LC:** I met my critique group at a conference, so I can't say enough about attending conferences and networking. It's tough for many writers to attend conferences because of finances, travel, time, etc... But when the stars align and you have the opportunity, take it. You won't be sorry. It's great to hear what other writers are doing, meet editors face-to-face, and attend workshops to strengthen your writing.

I'll also throw in a shameless plug here, if you don't mind! :) Another valuable networking tool for me has been my blog, Lori Calabrese Writes (<http://www.loricalabrese.blogspot.com>). I've had the fortunate opportunity to meet and interview many talented authors and illustrators, and even Crystal

Stranaghan, the owner of Gumboot Books. There's nothing like hearing how others got their start and have become successful in this business!

**DMc: What is the best writing advice you've ever received?**

**LC:** The best writing advice I ever received? I've gotten a lot of advice from show don't tell, submit your work, write a lot, read a lot, etc... For me, I think writing tight is key. When writing for children, word counts can be 500 words and less, so every writer has to master self-editing, condensing and cutting unnecessary words. A great book I read that helped me was *Write Tight* by William Brohaugh- there are some great tips in that one!

**DMc: How do you balance your career with the demands of family?**

**LC:** I have two toddlers at home, so life is very busy. This balancing act has plagued moms and dads for years and will continue to plague moms and dads for many more. I know I'm not alone in this battle! Somehow, someway, we all find ways to balance the things we love, right? Fortunately, for me, my writing schedule is very flexible. I can write early in the morning and into the wee hours of the night.

**DMc: Thus far, what has been your most memorable writing experience?**

**LC:** Great question, Donna! One that's very memorable is the very first article I had published, "Children's Day Traditions," in *Stories for Children Magazine*. It was fun putting this one together and learning all about the Japanese holiday, Children's Day. I'll never forget the excitement of reading that acceptance e-mail and seeing my article online for the first time. Because of that article, I began doing school visits. I know a lot of authors feel like they have to wait to conduct schools visits until they have their first book published, but children are just as fascinated to hear what goes into writing for magazines. I had my first school visit from this article and have been hooked ever since. I have a great stack of constructive criticism letters from a 5th grade class on this article that still inspires me and reminds me why I write for children.

**DMc: A signature request I like to ask every author, illustrator, editor, etc..., I interview is for the individual to share with us a tidbit from their lives that the reader will find either humorous or surprising. Lori, can you please share one with us?**

**LC:** Have you ever found yourself humming a song whose title, to your frustration, you don't know or can't remember? All throughout high school and college, I worked in a music store that sold CDs, movies, etc... I was that person that customers came to and would ask..."Do you know that song; it's on the radio all the time and goes, "Da Da Da Da DaDa Da?" For years, I could name about any tune you could throw at me. These days, I have flashbacks when I'm watching 'Don't Forget the Lyrics.'

Thanks for having me, Donna!

Visit Lori Online:

Blog: <http://www.loricalabrese.blogspot.com>

MySpace: <http://www.myspace.com/lcalabrese>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/people/Lori-Calabrese/1000244410>

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## ILLUSTRATOR INTERVIEW - JEFF MIRACOLA

Jeff's colorful world was introduced to me while reading "Welcome to Monster Isle". I was so impressed by Jeff's talents as an illustrator I dropped him a line requesting an interview. To my delight he accepted. Come long for this amazing interview and learn how one mother's love and encouragement for her son brought forth his creative talents for the world to enjoy.

**DMc:** The colorful and exciting illustrations you created for "Welcome to Monster Isle," certainly bring the story to life. What is your creative process when you first read the text for a picture book?

**JM:** Thank you, I'm glad you think my illustrations bring the story to life because that is my goal. I believe the art should support the writing and build upon it, if possible.

When I first read the text for a book, I am immediately looking for those key moments that should, or could, be illustrated. I'll even do small thumbnail sketches during my first or second reading. I try to pluck from the writing the imagery that will best tell the story, be fun for the reader to view, and be fun to create. It has to meet all those requirements for me. If the art illustrates the story perfectly, yet is not very appealing to look at, then it really isn't a success. If the art is amazing, but is at odds with the written word, then again, it's not a success. Likewise, if it isn't a very fun project to illustrate, then it may fail the first two

requirements and therefore also be unsuccessful. If I enjoy working on the art, then hopefully that shows through for the reader.

**DMc:** Are you normally hired by the publishing house or author for your illustrating talents?

**JM:** I was hired by a publishing house for *Monster Isle*, and I normally work directly with publishers.

**DMc:** Please describe the collaboration involved between you, the publisher, and the author.

**JM:** Collaborating with Oliver Chin, the writer for *Welcome to Monster Isle*, has been an amazing experience. The wonderful thing about working with a talented writer is that they know when to reign in an artist or when to let them go nuts with creativity. After each round of sketches, Oliver would give me feedback that was extremely useful. Most of the changes he wanted actually made their way into my artwork and the book is much better because of it. Likewise, he was willing to trust my artistic instincts on a number of things and kept an open mind. In other words, there was never any resistance. It was the perfect collaboration, helped by the fact that both Oliver and I are already seasoned professionals that knew how to give and take on a project. Also, Oliver had much more experience in the children's market than I did, so I listened intently to his advice.

**DMc:** What have been some obstacles you needed to overcome for your illustrating career?

**JM:** I'd say the biggest obstacle I've had to overcome was in my early days as an illustrator. I was heavily influenced by the art of master fantasy artist Frank Frazetta. My walls were covered with his posters, I had every book ever made about him, I learned how to paint by studying the brush strokes he made. Because of this, my art was very similar to his.

Then I read an article about Frazetta where he was responding to a question about the many artists that create art very similar to his. In the article, he said "Don't be a second rate Frazetta. Be a first rate you." That quote resonated with me and has stuck with me all these years.

So I decided to "cleanse" myself of his influence. I boxed up all of his posters and books. I had to find "my" art. I had to discover my own, personal style. I could never do that with his amazing art towering over me on my walls, so breaking from his very strong influence was the biggest obstacle I ever had to overcome in my

illustration career.

**DMc: Please share with us your latest project.**

**JM:** My latest project was artwork for a Target gift card. Target contacted me to flesh out a concept one of their art directors had for a gift card aimed at young boys. The image I had to illustrate was of a low-rider car that would appear to bounce up and down as you moved the card. The art went through 17 variations before it was all done. In the early illustrations, Bulls-eye, the Target dog, was driving the car (a convertible at the time). Those were my favorite versions of the art. After putting other people in the driver's seat, and even adding a top to the car, Target eventually settled on a car with a top and tinted windows. It wasn't as fun as the one with the dog in the car, but for whatever reason, the big wigs didn't want the dog driving. I'm still very happy with how it turned out, though. And the team at Target is so professional and easy to work with.

**DMc: Your illustrating credits are impressive and varied. Why have you focused more of your efforts illustrating children's books?**

**JM:** Right now, I've focused my attention on children's books because I am always trying to expand my opportunities for artistic growth. Some artists can spend their entire careers painting the same subjects and working in the same field, but I find it more interesting to try new things. Or maybe I'm just restless :-)

Seriously though, illustrating children's books is a new challenge for me. I like to be challenged. For many years, I painted one-off images. That is, images that are not sequential nor have recurring characters. Illustrating a children's book presents me with the challenge of maintaining consistency across many pages. It's something that isn't as easy as one might think. But then, I believe most people think children's books are much easier to create than they actually are.

**DMc: The story of your mother's support and encouragement for your artistic talents is heartwarming. Please share with us the pivotal moment in your life when you knew you wanted to pursue this career.**

**JM:** Like so many artists, I was drawing from the moment I could hold a pencil. Thankfully, my mother recognized my artistic talent early in my life and did everything she could to encourage my growth. It's a credit to my mother that she encouraged my very dark and disturbing art even though it wasn't something she personally enjoyed.

I had a very rough childhood because of the neighborhood I grew up in, so my art

was always very dark and violent. My mother would make requests for me to draw unicorns by rainbows or lighthouses and boats. That "pretty stuff" was the most difficult for me to draw :-)

The violence on the street got so bad that I decided to spend most of my time indoors creating art. When it came time for me to enter high school, I was supposed to go to my neighborhood school, which had a reputation for being a violent school, not to mention they didn't have a good art program. I was fed up with violence (too many friends had died), so I decided I just wouldn't go to school. I'd drop out rather than get caught up in the violence, I thought.

That's when my mother discovered the Milwaukee High School of the Arts. You had to audition to get into the school, so she made an appointment for me and I went to the audition, which consisted of various drawing exercises. I was accepted. Getting into that school may have saved my life or at least taken it in a brighter direction. It was in that school that a friend gave me a book of art by Frazetta. Seeing his work inspired me to become a fantasy artist and made me realize I could make a career of it.

**DMc: Do you conduct school visits? If yes, how is a typical visit structured?**

**JM:** I have not done any school visits yet. I have a few scheduled, so I'll just have to see how I do. Hopefully the kids don't boo me off stage :-). I have done a few library visits for smaller groups of kids. Those have been a lot of fun. I showed and read my book to the children, then did a PowerPoint presentation that showed the progression of the art from start to finish, and finally took questions. The kids were great listeners and very engaged.

**DMc: Please share with us your breakthrough moment of your career.**

**JM:** In the fantasy art field, my breakthrough moment came when I was contacted by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., to illustrate for the world-famous card game, *Magic: The Gathering*. The game is so visible that it opened up many doors for me.

**DMc: A signature request I like to ask every author, illustrator, editor, etc., I interview is for the individual to share with us a tidbit from his or her life that the reader will find either humorous or surprising. Jeff, can you please share one with us?**

**JM:** I used to be a break dancer back the early 1980s. I was part of a group that danced in competitions and was also paid to perform. It was a part of my life that seems, at times, like it was the life of someone else. I am such a different person

now that it makes me laugh to even think I used to do that for years. So I'm sure this revelation satisfies both the humor and surprise that you and your readers were seeking.

Thanks for the great interview and the kind words about my book.

To learn more about Jeff's career, visit him at: <http://www.jeffmiracola.com>

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## EDITOR INTERVIEW - JON BARD

Back in 2006 being a newbie to the writing for children industry I stumbled upon the Write4Kids.com website while surfing the Internet. This is when I first become aware of all the fabulous information Jon Bard offers to the newbie and seasoned writer. The Children's Book Insider Newsletter is a must have for any writer. Jon graciously granted me an interview and a glimpse into his wonderful world. You will certainly walk away inspired and encouraged that with hard work and perseverance publication is possible.

**DMc: Your background prior to starting the Children's Book Insider Newsletter was in public relations. How did this inspire you to create CBI?**

**JB:** CBI was really Laura's baby (Laura Backes, CBI Publisher & my wife). She was a literary agent who loved children's books but didn't particularly care for the day to day work of agenting. Whenever folks she met found out what she did, invariably she'd hear "Oh, I've always wanted to write a children's book. How do I do it?" We soon realized that there was an opportunity to build a business teaching people how to write for children. That was 1990. In 1993, I sold my business and we made CBI our full-time family business. We've been going strong ever since.

**DMc: How far in advance do you prepare the CBI Newsletter?**

**JB:** The newsletter goes live on our site (The CBI Clubhouse -- <http://cbiclubhouse.com>) within minutes of it being completed. That's the beauty of the Internet and electronic publishing -- you can get incredibly fresh information into the hands of your readers.

**DMc: Do you research the information provided in the column 'At Presstime' or do you have staff conduct the research?**

**JB:** Laura has contacts throughout the publishing world, so a good deal of it comes to her directly. She also spends a lot of time throughout the month getting in touch with newer publishers, updating guidelines and such.

**DMc:** Do you work with a pool of writers for the columns or are you open to submissions? If you are open to submission, please share with us your guidelines.

**JB:** We're always open to submissions. The number one thing -- and this isn't as easy as it sounds -- is that all articles be instructional in nature and cover new ground. We don't run self-promotional pieces, or whimsical ruminations about the magic of writing. The newsletter is nuts & bolts -- here's how I did this, here's how I did that, here's how you can do the same thing -- and we don't run one article after the other saying "show, don't tell". Our readers expect to be surprised with each new issue, and to be able to take what they've learned and put it to immediate use.

For full guidelines, e-mail: [laura@write4kids.com](mailto:laura@write4kids.com)

**DMc:** What do you find to be the most challenging aspect of the CBI Newsletter?

**JB:** Our new endeavor, The CBI Clubhouse, is by far the most challenging thing we've ever done. Essentially, we've created a children's writing community from scratch, packed it with content and made it a free part of everyone's Children's Book Insider subscription. It's tremendously time intensive, but we believe that, especially today, you have to blow people away with value. And that's just what we've done. It's been very rewarding, as the response has been far beyond our expectations. If you go to <http://cbiclubhouse.com/sign-the-wall/> you'll see exactly how folks have reacted.

I invite all your readers to visit The CBI Clubhouse (<http://cbiclubhouse.com>) and join the Fightin' Bookworms!

**DMc:** Where there any obstacles along the way that made you think of throwing in the towel?

**JB:** Not really. We have our ups and downs, but our customers are lovely to deal with and we love the subject matter, so we keep plugging no matter what.

**DMc: How do you envision CBI over the next 5-10 years?**

**JB:** The CBI Clubhouse was our great leap forward. Now we're going to focus on bringing that to its fullest potential, with webinars, teleseminars, celebrity author guest editors and more. We're also going to actively work to connect Fightin' Bookworms (that's what we call our members) through local meet-ups and events. The newsletter itself just got a re-design and we'll continue to improve it. We believe it's already the best tool out there for children's writers, but it can always get better!

**DMc: Your opt-in mail list is huge. Please share with us your marketing techniques that helped you grow your subscriber list to such impressive numbers.**

**JB:** No big secrets. We have a sign-up box on our write4kids.com site and we ask people to join. Then we give them a great free newsletter (The Children's Writing Update) so they stick around. Over time, many of them take the leap to becoming CBI subscribers and Fightin' Bookworms.

Folks can view the current issue of the Update at:  
<http://write4kids.com/update.html>

**DMc: What advice would you like to share for someone thinking about starting their own newsletter?**

**JB:** Keep your niche small. If we had just tried to create a newsletter about the overall topic of writing, we'd have no chance. We couldn't compete against Writer's Digest or the Writer. But, in the world of children's writing, we're a big, big fish. But a very nice and well-mannered big fish. :)

**DMc: A signature request I like to ask every author, illustrator, editor, etc., I interview is for the individual to share with us a tidbit from their lives the reader will find either humorous or surprising. Jon, can you please share one with us?**

**JB:** I got my black belt in karate this past September. It took four years of training, and then 8 hours running up and down a steep hill, while getting punched and kicked (and punching and kicking other folks) to get that belt, but I got it. It's no coincidence that the CBI Clubhouse was conceived, built and launched right after that. That test flipped a switch on inside me, once that said "you can accomplish anything you want, no matter how daunting it may seem". The process of creating the Clubhouse was a massive undertaking, one largely done on my own. I built that

site from scratch. But I never doubted I could do it and that it would work and that people would go crazy once they saw it. I'm certain that my experience in getting that belt was what drove me on and gave me confidence.

I suppose that what I'm saying is this: work to accomplish something great in your life -- whether it's related to writing or not is irrelevant -- and then use the confidence you gain to succeed in every aspect of life. Confidence is 100% transferable. If you can, say, raise a child into a fine adult, you can surely write a great book and persevere until it gets published.

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## BOOK REVIEW



**Title:** Welcome to Monster Isle  
**Written by:** Oliver Chin  
**Illustrated by:** Jeff Miracola  
**Hard cover:** 36 pages  
**Ages:** 4-8  
**Publisher:** Immedium, Inc.  
**ISBN-13:** 978-1-59702-016-9  
**Publication:** September 2008

At one time or another many people have experienced bizarre circumstances on their long awaited vacation. And Finnegan and his family are no exception. Journey along with Finnegan, his family, and their dog, Yowie, on their vacation and all goes wrong when their boat is thrown off course. Before they know it they are marooned on a desert island. The seven begin their search for help and they come across seven monsters that inhabit the island. They need to find a way to communicate and befriend these vibrant monsters, but how?

"Out of the bush jumped a hairy beast with huge feet! The furry Yowie yelped, Pulling Finnegan along, the Captain ordered, Let's go, little buddy! Off they scampered with the Big Foot in hot pursuit."

The colorful illustrations and fast paced story is brought to life and leaps from the pages in an array of rainbow colors. *Welcome to Monster Isle* is sure to become a treasured book of all who read it.

Visit illustrator Jeff Miracola at: <http://www.jeffmiracola.com> to learn more about his world renowned illustrating career.

Visit author Oliver Chin at [http://www.immedium.com/authors/chin\\_o.html](http://www.immedium.com/authors/chin_o.html) to learn more about his diverse writing career.

Reviewed by: Donna M. McDine

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## REFLECTIONS OR DREAMS

### Why.....I.....Write

By Stephanie Hoina

I write because I am.

I write because I have a story that no one else can tell.

I write because a professor once told me I couldn't.

I write because not writing is not an option.

I write because when I do it's the best therapy session there could ever be!

I write because I am home with two little ones and it keeps me sane.

I write because everything that needs to be said hasn't been.

I write because it makes me happy.

I write because I don't want to work a 9-5 job for the rest of my life.

I write because I read.

I write because I have a lot to share.

I write because I go crazy when I don't.

I write because I love words - like dollop and splomf!

But mostly, I write because.....I'm a writer!

## REFLECTIONS OR DREAMS - continued

### **The Five Keys to Achieving Dreams!**

By L. Diane Wolfe

Living life to the fullest requires determination. We must possess purpose and drive. We need to set goals and maintain a positive attitude. Fear must be conquered. Leadership traits and people skills are vital. To live a life filled with enrichment and satisfaction, we need some spunk!

I was aware of the elements of success but had no working formula. To break out of mediocrity, I devised the five keys of overcoming. These keys work in conjunction with one another to unlock the secrets of personal success. However, all five elements need to be mastered if the formula is to work properly. There is no one key to true success! We must become proficient in all areas if we hope to achieve our dreams.

Life is full of uncertainty. There are few things in life we can truly control. We can't control our environment or the challenges we may face. We certainly can't control other people and what they may say or do. However, there is one thing we can control- our attitude. This is the first key to success - developing a positive mental attitude. How we respond to situations and people is the only thing we can truly master. Almost every outcome and end result will be determined by our attitude. A negative attitude will only hold us hostage, but our chances for success and happiness increase with a positive attitude. For me, optimism made all the difference! To transform our world, we must adopt this outlook on life.

The most important trait we can develop is skill with people, which is the second key. The great Andrew Carnegie claimed he valued an employee who worked well with others over all else. If a billionaire believed people skills were that essential, then perhaps we should work on fine-tuning those skills! I was fortunate to receive training, but what we learn occurs mostly through trial and error. Many never even grasp the concept. If we want to succeed in life, though, we must be able to properly interact with other human beings. We need to understand basic human truths, develop conversational skills, and learn to truly appreciate others. If we close ourselves off to people, we lose access to so many great ideas and benefits.

A healthy self-image is the third key to success. I struggled with this for a long time. Our self-esteem is basically how we view ourselves. This inner opinion affects everything from our relationships to our accomplishments. It controls our confidence or lack thereof. We are either set free or held hostage by our self-image, and we can never grow beyond its level. A poor self-esteem is evident in our

speech, mannerisms, and actions, and unfortunately, most people accept us at our own self-appraisal. We need to break this cycle of pessimistic defeat. If we are to achieve more and live life fully, we must raise this personal opinion of ourselves.

The greatest obstacle facing success is fear. No other single force prevents us from accomplishing our goals as effectively as this negative emotion. It controls and binds as if we were prisoners. Most fear stems from past experiences of failure, and I can testify this is true! To conquer this great demoralizer, we must recognize and understand all facets of fear and eventually gain the strength to overcome. Overcoming our fear is the fourth key to success. The only way to conquer fear is to take action. Pushing through our fears is ultimately less frightening than living with them, too. If we are to achieve our full potential, we must be willing to take risks despite our fears.

This leads us to the final key- setting goals. Goals are what give us purpose in life. Equipped with a target and a plan, our existence holds meaning. Without dreams and aspirations, we simply drift through this world like a leaf on a river. Many times our dreams become lost in the daily shuffle, and my author dream lay dormant for years. To reinvigorate our purpose, we must redefine our goals and keep them in front of us at all times. We need to create stepping-stones of success by setting short and long-range goals. This gives us the opportunity to build upon our accomplishments and make adjustments if necessary. Armed with a vision, we can accomplish anything in this world.

Success is not by chance- it is by choice. To realize our dreams, we must focus on these five keys- a positive attitude, people skills, raising self-esteem, overcoming fear, and setting goals. They will ignite our passion and prepare us for success. The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire and I am ready to burn!

Author & Professional Speaker, L. Diane Wolfe  
[www.spunkonastick.net](http://www.spunkonastick.net) / [www.thecircleoffriends.net](http://www.thecircleoffriends.net)

**PROCLAIM YOUR SUCCESSES!**



**Lori Calabrese is happy to share:**

- ❖ "Big Job for Little Stamps," will be published in the May 2009 issue of Stories for Children Magazine.

**Amy Allgeyer Cook:**

- ❖ "Fostering Nina," a YA short story was accepted by A Fly in Amber Magazine and selected as the feature for their January issue. The story can be found at: <http://www.aflyinamber.net>

**Karina Fabian:**

- ❖ *Leaps of Faith*, a Christian Sci-Fi anthology, is finally available in print: [www.leapsoffaihtsf.com](http://www.leapsoffaihtsf.com) - Nominated for the best anthology in the P&E polls.
- ❖ *A Dragon's Eye View*, is my newsletter about the DragonEye, PI universe. Each issue has a note from me, a note from Vern the dragon detective, a fact about the Faerie world, and special events and offers. To get your copy, register on the website, [www.dragoneyepi.net](http://www.dragoneyepi.net)
- ❖ The DragonEye, PI website has Vern's blog, stuff about the Faerie/Mundane world and other fun. Check it out.
- ❖ "Christmas Spirits," a story in the DragonEye, PI universe, is for sale on the website.
- ❖ Feb 2-9, I'll be presenting at the Catholic Writers Conference Online: [www.catholicwritersconference.com](http://www.catholicwritersconference.com)
- ❖ March 1, my first DragonEye, PI novel, *Magic, Mensa and Mayhem* comes out from Swimming Kangaroo.
- ❖ March 29, 7-9 EST, I'll be guest of honor at the Writers Chat Room: [www.writerschatroom.com](http://www.writerschatroom.com)

**Kim Chatel:**

- ❖ "A Talent for Quiet," is a fiction picture book illustrated with stunning photography. It includes several pages of tips for kids to take better pictures ~ Coming February 2009.

**Lisa Lipkind Leibow:**

- ❖ "Double Out and Back," Red Rose Publishing.

**CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL!  
CHEERS TO YOUR CONTINUED SUCCESS!**

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## CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT

Refer an opt-in subscriber to the "Write What Inspires You!" Newsletter and automatically be entered in the drawing for:

"Writing Kit: Everything You Need to Get Creative, Start Writing, and Get Published," From the Editors of Writer's Digest Books.

- ✓ Make sure the person you refer includes their name & email address and your name & email address in the opt-in box at the top of my website:  
<http://www.donnamcdine.com> or within their email to: [dmcdine@optonline.net](mailto:dmcdine@optonline.net)
  - ✓ Contest ends: April 30, 2009
  - ✓ Winner Announced: May 2009 issue of the "Write What Inspires You!" Newsletter
- 



## Stories for Children Magazine Announces Its *First Annual "Best of" Anthology!*

Stories for Children Magazine is proud to announce the release of its first annual anthology *Best of Stories for Children Magazine* Volume 1. Come take an adventure in the World of Ink and let the SFC Contributors and Stanley Bookman show you how your imagination can be your guide.

There has always been an enchantment about reading a good children's story. Children take pleasure in having a story read to them anytime or anywhere - whether it be around a campfire, under a starry night, in their beds wrapped up tight in snuggly blankets, beneath a shady tree on a hot summer's day, or in front of a roaring fireplace on a cold winter's day. Children love to listen to a story being read and this can go as far as adolescence. *Best of Stories for Children Magazine*

Volume 1, is a collection of over 20 poems, stories, and articles published by leading children's authors.

At Stories for Children Magazine the World of Ink is a place where imagination is everything and everything is only your imagination. Stories for Children Magazine has been inspiring children, parents, librarians, and teachers for well over two years with their monthly online magazine. Now with the release of *the Best of Stories for Children Magazine* Volume 1, children, parents, librarians, and teachers can enjoy the top stories, poems, and articles from Stories for Children Magazine's first year of publication over and over again.

The Best of Stories for Children Magazine Volume 1 can be purchased nationwide from any bookstore, or online through several internet websites including Amazon.com, LuLu.com at <http://www.lulu.com/content/4892856>, and the SFC Bookstore at <http://www.storiesforchildrenmagazine.org>

Come visit the SFC Team and SFC Contributors in the World of Ink at Stories for Children Magazine! There are many wonderful articles, stories, and interviews with leading Children's Authors or Illustrators in each monthly issue.

To learn more about Stories for Children Magazine visit:  
<http://www.storiesforchildrenmagazine.org>

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Phone: 800-670-4416

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## TESTIMONIALS FROM SATISFIED READERS

*"I have had an extremely difficult time resuming my writing and course work with ICL. After reading your newsletter, I am ready to get back into my chair and start anew. Thanks for sharing your expertise and enthusiasm!"*

Audrey Lengyel  
[audreylengyel@comcast.net](mailto:audreylengyel@comcast.net)

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*"Your newsletter is wonderful! I just finished reading it. The graphics and fonts make for easy reading. I like the items that you offer your readers from the quote on the first page to what writers feel good about near the end. I want you to know that I had tears rolling around in my eyes when I read "Reflections" by Kristie*

*Smith. She is an amazing, wonderful person who has a firm grasp of what is important in life. And, Donna, you are fantastic for providing a quality, free newsletter for writers Thank you!"*

Joseph Sottile

[www.joe-sottile.com](http://www.joe-sottile.com) and <http://poetryinsider.blogspot.com>

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My heartfelt Thank you to Stephanie Hoina ([stefhoina@hotmail.com](mailto:stefhoina@hotmail.com)), my critique partner and friend for taking on the responsibility of proofreading the Write What Inspires You! Newsletter. As writers we all know how difficult it is to proofread on our own!

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