

# Looking for community with other AWA affiliates?

It's easy and inspiring to host a gathering of AWA workshop leaders! You can do so online, via AWA's Zoom platform or a videoconferencing service of your own, or in person.

You can keep it casual and meet up for coffee or happy hour with any affiliates who are available at the time you choose. If you're looking to make connections with a specific group of affiliates, like workshop leaders of color or workshop leaders in Michigan, you can make your gathering more focused.

The agenda is up to you, though we hope it will include time for writing together and conversation. For step-by-step instructions on how to make your gathering happen, read on!

Are you interested in ongoing support? To learn about forming a Chapter in your area or around your area of interest, check out page 5 for details.

## HOW TO PLAN AN ONLINE AFFILIATE GATHERING

1. **Choose the theme of your gathering.** When you're connecting online, you have a lot of options! The event might be open to all AWA affiliates who want to attend, up to a certain number. Or, you might choose to focus on leaders in a certain location or who work with a specific a population or in a common setting.
2. **Contact AWA about your group.** Katie Frank, our managing director, can help you pull together a list of people to invite. You may choose receive a list of email address to use yourself or to have AWA assist with contacting the group via our MailChimp. The first contact can be exploratory, asking people to indicate their interest or to help organize. Or, you can take on most of the steps below, and provide details about how to join in your first email.
3. **Choose your platform.** If you don't have your own subscription to a videoconferencing service, AWA can help host on our Zoom account. If you have your own preferred platform, go with that.
4. **Select a date and time for the gathering.** Since people won't have to navigate travel, you won't need as much lead time as you would otherwise. Still, choosing a time that is 6-8 weeks away gives you and others time to plan.



5. **Decide on a number of attendees.** How many people can you manage on your platform? What kinds of activities are you thinking about? That will determine how many people you choose to allow to register.
6. **Set the fee.** There's less of a cost to gather online, so you may choose not to have a fee for participants. If you need to place a monetary value on your time or you'd like to raise money for AWA or another cause, you may choose to charge a small amount or suggest a donation.
7. **Send AWA the details:** your date, price, platform, and event description. You can email all this to Katie at [info@amherstwriters.org](mailto:info@amherstwriters.org) and she will set up an event page on the AWA website. If you want us to handle registration, she will set that up too so participants can enroll and pay online. You'll be notified as people sign up.
8. **Develop your agenda for the time (see the samples below).** People will want to write and they will also want to share, talk about workshops they're holding, ask questions, etc. This circle of AWA leaders is a good place to bring issues or problems that have come up in workshops. If your organizers are involved with the governance or business of AWA, this is a good time for them to listen to what participants want from AWA and to share what's in the works. You may provide all the prompts, or you may invite your participants to bring a prompt to offer to the group. In any case, build in time for tech support upon arrival, and lots of talking.
9. **Reach out, reach out, reach out.** If you choose to communicate through MailChimp, ask Katie to help you schedule several emails about the event. Katie will also publicize your gathering through AWA's usual routes – newsletters, social media. Personal emails from you will make a difference. Send an email to each person who signs up and add them to your list of attendees. Send a couple of reminders in the weeks before your gathering, including one just a few days ahead of time. Send everyone the agenda, an invitation to the Zoom link (or whichever platform you're using), and maybe an On Chairs attachment.
10. **Show up, relax, enjoy!**

## HOW TO PLAN AN IN-PERSON REGIONAL GATHERING

1. **Make a list of potential participants.** Katie Frank, our managing director, can help with this. You may choose receive a list of emails to use yourself or to have AWA assist with contacting the group via our MailChimp. The first contact can be exploratory, asking people to indicate their interest. Ask people to help. Or,



you can take most of the steps below, and provide details in your first email. This works well if you've already chosen a location, and have a local helper.

2. **Choose a city, ideally one centrally located for your potential group.** Once you've chosen the city, send another email. Ask for help from locals in finding venues, sources of food, etc.
3. **Select a date and time for the gathering.** At least 3-6, if not 9, months out. Give yourself and others time to plan.
4. **Find a venue.** If the number of people expressing interest is relatively small – 10-15, you may be able to hold your gathering in someone's home. Free is best, of course. Again, find someone who lives in the city you choose to help with this challenge (even if you choose your home town). Find pictures and/or a link to the venue to include in promotions.
5. **Decide about food.** At the two NC gatherings, we provided a continental breakfast and lunch so that we could spend as much time together as possible. You may decide to skip the breakfast (but you will need beverages, at least) and ask people to bring their own lunch. If you're including food, choose a source (make sure they can accommodate dietary needs), set a budget, make menu choices, and estimate the cost, per person and total. Again, find helpers.
6. **Set the fee.** Add up the per-person cost, including any charge for the venue. Both North Carolina gatherings were \$50, with several reduced-cost slots. Your fee should cover all the costs, reflect the value of the enriching event you are organizing, and, if possible, provide a little surplus to support AWA.
7. **Send AWA the details:** your date, price, venue, and event description. You can email this to Katie at [info@amherstwriters.org](mailto:info@amherstwriters.org) and she will set up an event page on the AWA website. If you want us to handle registration, she will set that up too so participants can enroll and pay online. You'll be notified as people sign up.
8. **Develop your agenda for the day (see the samples below).** People will want to write and they will also want to share, talk about workshops they're holding, ask questions, etc. This circle of AWA leaders is a good place to bring issues or problems that have come up in workshops. If you're involved with the governance or business of AWA, this is a good time to listen to what your participants want from AWA and to let them know what's in the works. You may provide all the prompts, or you may invite your participants to bring a prompt to offer to the group. In any case, build in time for stragglers in the morning, and lots of talking.
9. **Reach out, reach out, reach out.** If you choose to communicate through MailChimp, ask Katie to help you schedule several emails about the event. Katie



will also publicize your gathering through AWA's usual routes – newsletters, social media. But personal emails from you will make a difference. Send a personal email to each person who signs up and add them to your list of attendees. Send a couple of reminders in the weeks before your gathering, including one just a few days ahead of time. Send everyone the agenda, any special directions to the venue, maybe a link to the location in google maps.

## 10. Show up, relax, enjoy!

## SAMPLE EMAILS

### Initial Contact

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Good news! Maybe you read in the April newsletter that a major AWA goal in 2018-19 is building regional networks of AWA-certified workshop leaders. Well, we're taking the first steps with two one-day retreats in North Carolina to support your work as workshop leaders *and* your writing life. On June 16, we'll gather at Elizabeth Hahn's beautiful Writers' Cottage in Chapel Hill. Then, on September 29, we'll meet in beautiful downtown Asheville on the Lenoir-Rhyne University campus. Space is limited, so sign up early.

June 16, 2018, 9:30 am—4 pm  
The Writer's Cottage  
Chapel Hill, NC

September 29, 2018, 9:30—4 pm  
Lenoir Rhyne Campus  
Asheville, NC

#### Schedule

9:00- 9:30 Gather with a continental breakfast  
9:30-12:00 AWA-method writing  
12:00- 1:30 Lunch and Kibbitzing  
1:30- 3:00 AWA update, affiliate community brainstorming, questions  
2:30- 4:00 AWA-method writing

Fee includes a light continental breakfast and catered lunch.

Certified workshop leaders: \$50

Affiliates: \$38.50 (25% affiliate discount)

Scholarship slots (2 available): \$25

All proceeds go to AWA

Register online at [amherstwriters.org](http://amherstwriters.org).

Questions? Email me at [lane@amherstwriters.org](mailto:lane@amherstwriters.org), or call me on my cell.

And, if both of these locations seem too far to travel for a day, we'd be glad to help you organize a day for your local AWA community.

Hoping to see you in Chapel Hill or Asheville,



## Follow-Up

Hello, AWA leaders of the southeast—

Summer is waning, although it certainly doesn't feel like it today. The weekend's cooler weather gave me a sweet taste of fall, and with that, a reminder that our September 29th gathering near Asheville is coming up fast. We have changed the location; Katherine Dadichangi, an AWA writer from California who has recently moved to our area, has offered her home in Candler, NC. It's conveniently located just off I-40 East two exits west of the Biltmore Estate.

All of us who participated in our June 16 gathering in Chapel Hill came away recharged and enthusiastic about AWA, and I took AWA lots of ideas for the board of directors. I'm including everyone who attended in this email; I'd love to see you in Asheville, too, but even if you can't come (and it is a hike from your neighborhood), I'm hoping some of you will share your impressions of our meeting with the entire group. We were small, but mighty!

Our day will begin with hello's, bagels, coffee, and tea at 9:30 am: we'll write until noon, then enjoy a catered lunch. After lunch, we'll talk--about your writing, the direction of AWA, workshops, business questions, challenges, ideas. Another hour of writing will close out the day. Even if you aren't currently leading workshops, even if you don't plan to, wouldn't you enjoy reconnecting with the AWA method, and with like-minded writers? Here's your chance. Register online at [amherstwriters.org](http://amherstwriters.org).

If you'd like to come in the night before, or stay over and enjoy Asheville, Annie Fahy has volunteered to help folks locate convenient airbnb's or other accommodations. Contact Annie @ [anniefahy@gmail.com](mailto:anniefahy@gmail.com).

And, last but not least, if financial considerations are an obstacle, please contact me. We can figure this out!

Don't hesitate to contact me by phone or email if you have questions or concerns.

Looking forward to meeting you,

## HOW TO FORM AN AWA CHAPTER

If you're finding value in the connections made with other leaders and you'd like to make gathering together a semi-regular practice, you may consider giving your group the structure of an AWA Chapter.

1. **Contact AWA affiliates from the demographic you're interested in including:** whether it be region, type of workshop, population served. If you've led a gathering, whether regional or affinity-based, you can start with that list of attendees. Katie Frank, AWA's managing director, can also help you build or add on to your list. She can give you names and contact information or reach out to the group on your behalf via AWA's MailChimp.
2. **Begin a conversation with those interested in joining the chapter about goals, activities, purpose.** Consider a face-to-face, telephone, or on-line meeting (perhaps follow guidelines of the gathering above). If the group wants to go forward, let us know you are organizing. Reach out to [info@amherstwriters.org](mailto:info@amherstwriters.org)



and we can put you in touch with any resource person on the AWA board. We're here to help.

3. **Write a mission statement** that affirms AWA principles, and the chapter's commitment to AWA (a sample follows) and establishes support for members as writers and workshop leaders.
4. **Decide what activities you will begin with**—starting small is fine. See the materials that follow for some examples.
5. **Decide whether your chapter wants to collect dues to pay for these activities.** (Chapter dues are not required, but if your chapter initially decides not to collect dues, it may revisit the idea at any time.) If so, consider the amount you think you need, then contact [info@amherstwriters.org](mailto:info@amherstwriters.org) to discuss it. AWA will work with you to set reasonable dues, and to adjust affiliate dues paid to AWA so that joining the chapter will not create a financial burden; however, AWA must be a part of this conversation and agree to the adjustment.
6. **Write a simple proposal** including a description of
  - a. your demographic,
  - b. mission statement,
  - c. initial activities,
  - d. and dues structure,and send it to AWA for approval by the AWA Board.

## Sample Mission Statement

### Amherst Writers Ireland

Amherst Writers Ireland (AWI) is an autonomous chapter of Amherst Writers & Artists (AWA). We are a group of writers and teachers of creative writing whose main purpose is to maintain and promote in Ireland the five essential affirmations, outlined by the founder of AWA, Pat Schneider:

1. Everyone has a strong, unique voice
2. Everyone is born with creative genius
3. Writing as an art form belongs to all people, regardless of economic class or educational level
4. The teaching of craft can be done without damage to a writer's original voice or artistic self-esteem
5. A writer is someone who writes.

AWI maintains a spirit of generosity and collaboration amongst its members and is committed to upholding the principles of an AWA workshop as outlined by Pat Schneider:

1. A non-hierarchical spirit in the workshop is maintained while at the same time an appropriate discipline keeps writers safe;



2. Confidentiality about what is written in the workshop is maintained and the privacy of the writer is protected. All writing is treated as fiction unless the writer requests that it be treated as autobiography. At all times writers are free to refrain from reading their work aloud.
3. Absolutely no criticism, suggestion or question is directed toward the writer in response to first-draft, just written work. A thorough critique is offered only when the writer asks for it and distributes work in manuscript form. Critique is balanced; there is as much affirmation as suggestion for change.
4. The teaching of craft is taken seriously and is conducted through exercises that invite experimentation and growth as well as through response to manuscripts and in private conferences.
5. The leader writes along with the participants and reads that work aloud at least once in each writing session. This practice is absolutely necessary, for only in this way is there equality of risk taking and mutuality of trust.

## About Chapter Dues

A chapter is not required to collect dues. However, it is required as part of the collective structure of AWA, that a member of a chapter must have paid the AWA annual dues.

A chapter can decide that it does want to collect dues as a way to fund events and support its membership's activities. If a chapter decides to collect dues, AWA will work with that chapter to set reasonable dues, and will, whenever possible, reduce the dues AWA collects from chapter members to accommodate chapter dues.

For example, AWI, the Irish chapter, collects annual dues of \$75.00. The annual dues for AWA, the home organization, are \$175. To support the chapter, AWA has agreed to accept annual dues of \$100 from AWI members so that joint membership does not result in burdensome dues.

Each member of a chapter is responsible for maintaining her or his annual dues with AWA as well as with the chapter.

## Possible Chapter Activities

Chapters have been established based on regional proximity. This organizing principle makes sense as it helps to create and maintain a sense of local community for members as workshop leaders and writers.

A chapter could also be established based on the types of workshops its members are leading. Those who lead workshops in prison, for example, could form a chapter even though their membership might be spread around the globe. This type of chapter would, by necessity, meet on-line.



A chapter can establish its own structure for meetings, based on the needs of its membership.

A chapter can choose to have one annual meeting that is part business meeting and part writing together as workshop leaders.

A chapter can also choose to have more than one annual meeting: a business meeting that supports its membership as workshop leaders, focusing on questions of running a business, working with agencies, sharing prompts, handling difficult situations; a one-day writing workshop where each member takes a turn leading the group; or a weekend retreat for the members.

A chapter can offer readings, shared retreats for non-members and other collaborative events.

## Policy on AWA Training

According to the Licensing Agreement established by Pat and Peter Schneider in August of 2010, only the Board of Directors of AWA can offer trainings to teach the AWA method of workshop leadership.

The Board determines, through the agency of the Training Program Director, which individuals are qualified instructors. The Licensing Agreement includes a document called Guidelines for Maintaining the Integrity of the Amherst Writers and Artists Method: A Checklist Regarding Curriculum, Instructors and Training in the AWA Method.

A percentage of the revenue earned from these trainings is paid to the Schneiders twice a year. No other group, individual, or chapter can legally hold trainings teaching the AWA method.

However, should a chapter decide that its members want a training session to be held in their region, AWA will work with that chapter, sending instructors when possible, and including the membership in reasonable ways as part of the training. This collaboration may result in one or two of the members eventually becoming instructors.

