



## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the organization's mission?**

James River Writers (JRW) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to build community by connecting and inspiring writers and readers in central Virginia.

### **How did JRW start?**

We began in 2003 when a group of area authors sought to address the needs of writers and literary fans in central Virginia by hosting Richmond's first writing conference. Since then, we have grown into a multifaceted organization of more than 300 members that serves as the region's literary hub and a welcoming home for anyone who loves the written word. Our many programs inspire people, young and old, to pick up a book and read, or to start writing for the first time. For those already writing — be it poetry, a family memoir, or a great new novel — we help them improve their craft. A number of local writers have gone on to get their work published because of JRW. JRW plays a key role in expanding our region's life-long literacy and in adding a vital dimension to Richmond's cultural life.

### **How does JRW work?**

With a dedicated board and small staff, JRW serves the Richmond region by knitting together our literary community. How do we do it?

- Hosting a top-notch annual conference that brings nationally-recognized writers, editors, and agents to our region
- Providing monthly panels to help writers and readers learn the craft and business of writing
- Partnering to improve literacy in our region and help young writers improve their skills
- Inspiring writers of all ages to enter contests and start on the path to publication
- Sharing information on all things literary in our region with our free e-newsletters and literary calendars

### **What does JRW do?**

#### **James River Writers Conference**

The annual JRW Conference is our organization's signature event, and our most meaningful contribution to the literary arts in our region. Well-respected within the publishing industry, the JRW Conference adds to Richmond's national profile as a city of great creative depth and integrity and therefore a desirable place to live. For the past nine years, we have invited luminaries from the literary world to share their wisdom about writing and publishing. More than 300 people attend this two-day event, known for its inspiring, collegial atmosphere. We provide morning and afternoon keynote talks, appointments with literary agents and a full array of panels on writing and reading topics from the common challenges of structuring a novel to how to manage a writer's taxes.

Our past presenters have been highly regarded editors and agents from the major literary agencies and publishing houses in the country, as well as prize-winning authors in every genre. These have included Kathi Appelt (Newbery Honor Award); David Baldacci (*Divine Justice, The Whole Truth*, and many others); John Casey (National Book Award); Claudia Emerson (Pulitzer Prize); Edward P. Jones (Pulitzer Prize); Sheri Reynolds (*Rapture of Canaan*, and others); Tom Robbins (*Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*); Adriana Trigiani (*The Big Stone Gap* trilogy); Jeannette Walls (*The Glass Castle*); and Jacqueline Woodson (*Locomotion, Feathers*). Feedback from both attendees and our presenters has been very positive. Kirk Ellis wrote, “This is by far the best writers’ conference I’ve ever attended.”

By staging a high quality annual conference, James River Writers provides professional development for our region’s writers and establishes Richmond as a city that values the literary arts. Because everyone can pick up a book and be transported or moved, we feel JRW has a great role to play in keeping our region intellectually vibrant and viable.

### **The Writing Show**

Launched in 2005, The Writing Show has become a popular ongoing series that brings together writers with other publishing professionals to share their knowledge of the craft and business of writing. Held at the Children’s Museum of Richmond on the last Thursday of almost every month, the show now routinely draws nearly 100 attendees for each event. Topics have included: Writing for Children; Memoir; Trends in Publishing; Development of Villains; and Plot structure. Panelists include published authors, editors, agents, librarians, booksellers, illustrators, and other literary professionals in our region. This is an inspiring evening for anyone who wants to get a firm understanding of the world of books. Nearly 1,000 people were served by this series in 2011.

### **Our Contests**

James River Writers is committed to providing opportunities and encouragement to writers of all ages and at all stages of their careers. To that end, we offer three major contests. Best Unpublished Novel Contest (BUN): Now in its fourth year, BUN attracts over 100 submissions, a testament to the untapped literary vivacity of the region. Best Poetry Contest: In its third year, this contest has again brought in work by approximately 100 poets. Annual Student Essay Contest: Open to all students in grades 3 – 8, this competition has been done in conjunction with *The Richmond Times Dispatch* and the Library of Virginia. Student poetry and short story contest: JRW has partnered with The Richmond Area Reading Council on this contest. The first place winners of the BUN and Poetry contests receive \$500 each and also have their work published in *Richmond* magazine. Student winners are celebrated at an event, and their essays, poems and stories are posted for one year on the JRW web site.

### **Focus on Youth**

Each year, James River Writers partners with community organizations on projects that inspire students to write more and write better. JRW has provided writers, internships, and other support to Carver Middle School, The Richmond Area Reading Council, The Latino Education Advancement Program (LEAP) at the Steward School, The Peter Paul Development Center summer program, Virginia Commonwealth University, and The Podium Foundation.