



## Dune Hollow Writers: Writers Welcome

by Joan Flynn

I was a happy, oblivious writer for many years, penning verses for family birthdays and anniversaries, bleeding my heart onto paper during my tumultuous teens. Writing gave me a vehicle for all that chaotic busyness going on inside.

And then, in my early twenties, I had a disastrous weekend at a poetry critique which led me away from sharing my words for a long time.

Those other writers, none of whom I knew, took the words that had come from the deepest places inside of me and made them seem silly and frivolous. I came away wounded, unsure that anything I wrote was worthy of sharing ever again. It felt like I'd been an imposter. Who did I think I was, forcing others through the agony of hearing another ho-hum missive from me?

Yet, my fingers itched to spool out the phrases and impressions that crowded my head and woke me at 3 a.m., so I wrote, but I kept it to myself; sort of an apologetic secret.

It was a lonely time. I missed sharing with others and hearing their words. And then, in the early 1980's, someone told me about a writing group in Northampton, MA, near to where I lived, that sounded safe and supportive; that made me want to take a chance again. It changed my life.

My workshop leader used the Amherst Writers & Artists Method developed by Pat Schneider in Amherst, MA (more about that later) and suddenly, I was free to write whatever bubbled up. I could let characters speak in their own rough voices and I could share my work with the group and hear what resonated with them.

There were no parameters and no critiques. We could write poetry, prose, memoir or screenplay – any style, any genre. Seasoned writers and newbies wrote shoulder to shoulder... and we were all on the same playing field. I can't tell you what those years meant to my writer's soul. I felt reborn.

So when I moved to Orleans permanently in 2005, I longed to find the same type of writing community close enough to home to be able to make it a regular practice again.

In the meantime, I had taken the Amherst Writers & Artists training because I believed in it so strongly; that even if I could find that group, what I really wanted was to be able to teach the method to others. I knew I could share my passion for the craft and nurture those small seeds that others took the courage to sow.

It was important to me to spread the fundamental truth of Amherst Writers & Artists – "A writer is someone who writes."

And so, Dune Hollow Writers was born at 8 Cummings Road in the center of Orleans. It is a cozy, light-filled studio where we gather to practice the craft of writing.



We begin our workshops by clearing away the outer world, by centering ourselves with the breath. I offer a prompt which can be as simple as a bowl of cranberries or as complex as a box of disparate objects, or photographs, or quotes. Each time it is something different and fresh. After a set amount of time, we come back together to share (or not) and to comment on what stays with us.

There is no critique because this is raw material, unedited first-draft. We treat everything as fiction and we speak of "the narrator," not "you," if the piece is in the first person.

There is no hierarchy – degrees and publications do not give anyone more weight. We learn from each other. Confidentiality is maintained about the writing and privacy is protected. This is the basis of the Amherst Writers and Artists Method and this is what allows the muse to speak and be heard.

Each year I find my writer-self expanding - in great part due to the writers who have come into Dune Hollow and sat upon the chairs.

The stories and characters have woven themselves into the fabric of the cushions and when I enter to ready for another workshop, I swear I can hear whispers in the air - all those words just waiting to jump from our fingers to the page!



Our regular workshops run 2 ½ hours – two writing sessions with a break in-between. I always offer some yummy snack to fuel us through the rest of the morning.

I've also added day-long workshops with my colleague Linda Posage. I do the writing segments and she leads us in simple yoga and meditation. What a lovely marriage of the three modalities, so that we end the day feeling centered and calm, ready to take on whatever greets us ahead.

We will be posting the upcoming workshops on [my website](#) and on [Facebook](#).

I hope that if you have thought of finding a place to write with others, you will find your way to Dune Hollow Writers. You can check out my website or you can give me a call. I always offer your first workshop free of charge. There is a sliding scale for the workshops to make it accessible for as many people as possible.





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