

Women Writing for (a) Change Who's Who

Dawn Koch



My writing passion began in grade school when I wrote and collected short stories, poems, and personal narratives in black and white composition notebooks. Often I'd illustrate my pieces, as well, putting together little books of stories or poems that I'd share with my family and friends or my beloved teachers. I soon became known as "the writer" and at this early age, decided my career path.

I never dreamed of "being" anything else when I grew up but a writer. I was never quite sure how I'd earn a living, but I always knew writing would be a part of my life, and a part of my livelihood.

I didn't know how crucial writing would be for my survival until I started journaling in middle and high school, filling pages and notebooks with outpourings of teenage pain, fear, disappointment, love, and stories of friendship. My therapeutic writing continued in college, through indecision and family turmoil, alongside the beginnings and the endings of relationships, and as a travel partner on a number of trips and relocations around the country.

It was in the midst of one of those relocations, moving from my home state of New Jersey to Yellow Springs, Ohio to pursue my Master's degree at Antioch University Midwest, that I discovered Women Writing for (a) Change. The Women Writing programs seemed to fit my life, my studies, and my passions perfectly. At Antioch, I was in the middle of creating my MA in Women's Transformative Writing Process, and some years earlier, I completed an Individualized BA at Goddard College in Vermont with a focus on Writing Process and Women's Studies, influenced by the Goddard College MA in Transformative Language Arts. And now here was WWf(a)C, and its supportive and inspiring circles just an hour's drive south of Yellow Springs!

I took my first Core class at WWf(a)C in the summer of 2007 with Sally Schneider. I then went on to complete four semesters as a Tuesday morning writer with Kathy Wade. I met and formed bonds with some of the most amazing women during my time in the Tuesday morning class. Many of whom still impact my life today. In the middle of all of that, I got married and relocated once again to Indiana, to my husband's hometown of Oldenburg. Still only an hour's drive from WWf(a)C, I continued to participate in classes but wanted more.

Luckily, I was given the opportunity for more when I was asked by then-Executive Director Kathy Wade to facilitate programs for young women on site and as a part of the WWf(a)C Outreach Program, specifically facilitating circles for young women experiencing homelessness, in partnership with Project Connect and Cincinnati Public Schools. I eventually branched out into creating and facilitating Specialty Classes for adults, most often workshops focused on journaling. Along the way, I was also offered the opportunity to become Outreach Program Coordinator, then Young Women's Program Coordinator and eventually, Program Manager. I've found my way into every corner of WWf(a)C as student, volunteer, faculty, independent contractor, and staff.

In addition to the work I do at Women Writing for (a) Change, I also facilitate writing programs in my community and online as Dawn Koch/Women's Transformative Writing on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/DawnKochWriting>) and with The Power of Stories Academy (<http://powerofstories.academy/>) and I am currently pursuing certification with the Transformative Language Arts Network (www.tlanetwork.org). I am also a mother of two small children, an almost 4-year-old daughter and a 10 month old son. I can't wait until they learn to write! When the day comes, I hope to provide them with the tools for self-expression that I was given at a young age so that they may discover writing as a way to heal, empower and transform.

Writing, facilitating writing groups, surrounding myself with writers and their words, and helping WWf(a)C grow and positively transform seems to fulfill my childhood dream of making writing a part of my life and a part of my livelihood. I love what I do. I love giving this gift of self-expression, as a facilitator and as Program Manager and, to every single person who takes part in one of my classes or any program at WWf(a)C. This is truly what I was meant to do. I hope to continue the work of facilitating supportive writing groups for many years to come, if not forever.