

DARA NEWS



Dawn Alexander ***From Cardboard Cutouts to Compelling Characters: Using Authentic Action to Bring Life to Your Story.***

What can movement reveal to the reader about a character's personality, emotional turmoil, or deep feelings? How do body language and action beats round out a character? How do you transform your characters from action figures and puppets to engaging, believable beings? In this workshop, we'll actually walk through scenes to show how actions and reactions can enrich your characterization. You'll learn to ensure every movement—from the way a character holds a coffee cup to how they throw a punch—is intentional and authentic.

Bio: Dawn Alexander is a developmental editor and story coach who collaborates with both emerging writers and accomplished authors to strengthen their stories and refine their voices. Her clients have appeared on the New York Times and USA Today bestseller lists, as well as the Amazon Top 100. Leveraging her two decades of experience in education, she designs and teaches writing courses that offer comprehensive insights and practical strategies that can be applied across genres to create compelling plots and authentic characters. She's been a featured speaker at Inkers Con, Pike's Peak Writers Conference, as well as local writing chapters, in addition to providing one-on-one coaching to numerous successful authors. When she's not analyzing plot structures or crafting characters, you can find her spending time with her two college-age kids or off-roading in her Jeep Wrangler with her husband and their dog, Teddy.

September 26, 2026 Meeting Information

Join us at the **Vickery Park Branch Library, in classroom 1, on September 26h** for our quarterly in-person meeting. The library is located at **8333 Park Ln, Dallas, TX 75231**. The meeting will also be broadcasted on Zoom for those members who can't be there in-person.

Social time is between 9-9:30am, followed by a business meeting at 9:30am. Our speaker begins their presentation at 10am.

Non-members are invited to attend two (2) free meetings. If you want to attend a third meeting, you're required to join DARA and RWA. Go to <https://www.dallasarearomanceauthors.com/> and click the button to register for the meetings. After you fill out the Google Form and submit it, you'll receive the Zoom link in the summary.

President's Letter - *The Next Chapter Needs You*

September always feels a little like a second beginning.

Summer is winding down, fall is just around the corner, and for many of us, it's a time to refocus—on our writing, our goals, and the things we want to accomplish before another year comes to a close.

For DARA, September also means it's time to start looking toward 2027 and the next chapter for our organization.

In October, we'll be holding elections for next year's Board of Directors, and we need members who are willing to step forward and help lead our chapter.

The elected positions we need to fill are:

- ♦ **President**
- ♦ **President-Elect**
- ♦ **Secretary**
- ♦ **Treasurer**

There will also be two changes to board responsibilities beginning in 2027. The Rose Presentation will fall under the responsibilities of the President-Elect, consolidating that role with our existing board structure. Membership will fall under the responsibilities of the Treasurer.

The most critical position we need to fill is President-Elect.

Several of our current board members have generously served DARA in various leadership positions for many years. However, our bylaws limit members to serving in the same board position for two consecutive years. To keep our leadership strong—and to bring new voices and perspectives into the chapter—we need other members to step forward.

We also have several important volunteer positions to fill:

- ♦ **Newsletter**
- ♦ **Website Updates**
- ♦ **Programs**

We especially need someone to take over Programs, as Jennifer August will be stepping down from that role at the end of 2026.

Every one of these roles plays a part in keeping DARA active, connected, and valuable to our members.

And here's something I want to emphasize: **you don't have to know everything before you volunteer.**

You don't need to have served on a board before. You don't need to be traditionally published, independently published, or published at all. You don't need decades of experience in the industry.

You need a willingness to contribute, to learn, and to help.

Organizations like ours don't run because a handful of people magically make everything happen behind the scenes. They thrive because members decide that the community matters enough to give some of their time to it.

I've had the privilege of serving as your president this year, and one of the things this role has reminded me is how much work—and how much heart—goes into sustaining a writing community.



Continued - Next Page

President's Letter Continued

Programs happen because someone finds speakers and coordinates schedules.

New members feel welcome because someone reaches out to them.

Our newsletter and website keep us informed because someone gathers the information and makes sure it gets where it needs to go.

Our finances remain healthy because someone keeps careful records.

And our chapter continues from one year to the next because members are willing to step into leadership.

These aren't just positions on an organizational chart. They are the pieces that make our community work.

If you've ever thought, *Maybe someday I'll get more involved*, I'd encourage you to consider making someday now.

Serving DARA is also a wonderful way to get to know your fellow members better. Writing can be an incredibly solitary profession. One of the greatest benefits of belonging to an organization like ours is having a community of people who understand the strange, wonderful, occasionally maddening thing we've chosen to do.

Getting involved strengthens those connections.

And you don't have to do it forever.

Leadership changes. Volunteers rotate. New people bring new ideas and new energy. That's healthy for an organization. In fact, it's necessary.

DARA has existed and evolved because generations of romance writers have been willing to raise their hands and say, *I'll help*.

Now it's our turn to make sure that continues.

If you're curious about a board or volunteer role—even if you're not ready to commit yet—please reach out. Ask questions. Find out what's involved.

And if you know another member who you think would be wonderful in one of these positions, encourage them. Sometimes all someone needs is to hear, *I think you'd be good at this*.

Our chapter belongs to all of us.

Its future does, too.

I hope you'll consider being part of what comes next.

With gratitude,

—*Michelle Miles*

DARA Elections - October 10th!



We still need to fill the President-Elect position by October 8th.

October 10th: Vote for the 2027 Board of Directors.

Results: Publish the election results in the December newsletter.

December 5th: Introduce the new Board at the holiday party. Old Board and New Board will meet to handover information.

Member's Corner

A place to celebrate success, recognize our members, and welcome new members



Title: Lasso My Heart

Author: Mary Karlik

Genre: Contemporary Romance

Release Date: August 11, 2026

Available In: Kindle & Paperback

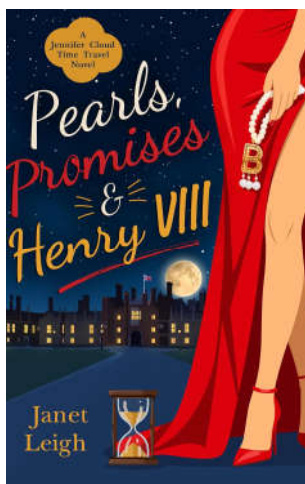
First/Subsequent Sale: Subsequent

A rodeo cowboy who's sworn off love. An optimist who still believes in fairytales. One innocent mistake that could cost them everything.

After more than a dozen epic breakups, physical therapist Lauren Winslow is one teardrop away from locking up her heart forever. A baggage claim mix-up, a swoony cowboy, and the discovery of a love letter meant for someone else convinces her to give love one last shot. The problem? The letter belongs to Rhen McGowan, and Lauren has no idea how to return it without breaking his heart and losing his trust.

Rhen is recovering from a career-ending rodeo injury and rebuilding the therapeutic riding center he nearly lost in his divorce. The last thing he needs is a relentlessly hopeful woman who crashes into his life, charms his family, and makes him feel things he promised himself he was done with.

Their chemistry is instant, irresistible, and impossible to ignore. But when Rhen discovers Lauren kept the letter and lied about it, his fragile trust shatters. Now she must convince him it was an innocent mistake before the past steals their chance at a fairytale future.



Title: Pearls, Promises, & Henry VIII

Author: Janet Leigh

Genre: Time Travel Romance

Release Date: September 1, 2026

Available In: Kindle & Paperback

First/Subsequent Sale: Subsequent

Jennifer Cloud has one simple mission: time travel to England in 1532, recover a legendary Tudor key, and get home in time to keep a promise—showing up for her own engagement party.

Simple

Instead, she lands in the court of Henry VIII, catches the attention of Anne Boleyn, and discovers the key's secret hiding place—the King's bedchamber. Worse, a rival time traveler is determined to steal it first and expose every secret Jennifer is trying to keep. Including the biggest one of all—the one involving her fiancé.

Because somewhere in Hampton Court is a much younger Caiyan McGregor, the Scottish defender Jennifer is destined to marry—and he's also searching for the fabled Tudor key. There's just one problem: he hasn't fallen in love with her yet.

Every choice Jennifer makes risks unraveling the love story they haven't lived, while a deadly prophecy, a jealous nun, and a king famous for removing heads threaten to destroy far more than history.

To save the future, Jennifer must survive Henry VIII, outwit her enemies, and resist falling for the man she's already in love with.

Member's Corner

A place to celebrate success, recognize our members, and welcome new members

Contest Wins:

Once Upon a Midnight Dreary by **Michelle Miles** placed third in the Light Paranormal category of the 2026 PRISM contest. The Fantasy, Futuristic, and Paranormal Chapter of RWA sponsors the PRISM contest, and announced the winners at the 2026 RWA Conference.

Welcome To The Chapter

Rachel Osborn (aka R.R. Born) joined the chapter on July 21st. Visit her website to learn more about her. <https://www.rrborn.com/>

Susan Bateman joined on July 23rd after meeting us at the conference in New Mexico.

Della Curran joined on July 28th.

Welcome - we're glad you're here!

Booksignings:

Michelle Miles & Sharla Wylde - *September 12th at the Texas Booktackular in Cisco, TX.*

Sharla Wylde - *October 17th at Smut-Palooza Book Festival in Hennessey, OK.*

Stephanie Pass - *October 24th at The Blood-Moon Masquerade in Pinehurst, TX.*

Amanda Reid, Fenley Grant, & R.R. Born - *November 14th at the Tropicon Book Expo in Katy, TX.*

Writing Sprints 2026 ZOOM Link

Janet Leigh host the Writing Sprints every Monday night at 7:30 CST. Look for the link in Circles and on DARA's Facebook. Join the sprinting action on Zoom.

If you can't click it, highlight the link and paste it in a browser.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86099936742?pwd=ApZiLnB0J0PX30lcia4fHbHuXWeab.1>

Author Interview with Rebecca Byron

Submitted by Donna McGoldrick



Rebecca Byron is one of DARA's newest members. She read romance icons like Janet Dailey, LaVyrle Spencer and Kathleen Woodiwiss. But after she read Salem's Lot, vampires took up permanent residence in her heart. In addition to all things vampiric, Rebecca has deep love for ghost stories, witch-lore, and all forms of clairvoyance - which she may or may not secretly possess.

Welcome Rebecca, and thank you for taking the time for this interview.

Tell us a little about yourself.

I live in Grapevine, with my husband, and I'm proof that it's never too late to chase a dream. At 55, I decided to write my first book.

As a teenager, I briefly flirted with the idea of becoming a romance author and even attempted a novel—before giving up after three days. I didn't think much about writing again for decades. Then, in early 2025, I fell down a vampire romance rabbit hole on Kindle Unlimited. After devouring book after book and still not finding quite the story I wanted to read, I decided to write it myself.

I grew up in Southern California, spent a year working on a horse ranch in Italy, and moved to Texas in the early 1990s, where I've happily remained ever since.

What is your favorite aspect of writing paranormal romance?

I love putting characters into supernatural situations and watching how those experiences shape who they become over the course of a story. I enjoy weaving twisty, suspenseful mysteries with plenty of unexpected turns, but at heart, I'm here for the romance payoff. That's what keeps me turning pages as a reader, and I hope my books give readers that same satisfying experience.

What do you think are the key elements that keep your readers engaged?

The readers who connect with my stories are usually looking for an epic love story they can completely lose themselves in. They want to feel immersed in the setting and emotionally invested in the characters' journeys.

My writing tends to be lush and descriptive, both in bringing the setting to life and in exploring the interior emotional experiences of my characters. While I love richly layered storytelling, I'm also very conscious of pacing. Stories with strong atmospheric elements can sometimes become bogged down, so I work hard to keep the narrative moving and the pages turning.

My first novel, *A Memory Not Mine*, had some uneven pacing, but I believe I truly found my stride with the second book in the series, *Memory of the Blood Moon*. Continually improving my craft is incredibly important to me, and with every book, I strive to become a stronger storyteller.

What is your typical writing process? How do you stay focused? And do you use writing software tools?

I write in plain old Microsoft Word—nothing fancy. I'm very ADD, so minimizing distractions is essential for me. When it's time to write, my phone goes straight into a drawer in my desk where I can't see it. I usually have music playing softly in the background, and there is always an alarming amount of



Continued - Next Page

Author Interview Continued

caffeine within arm's reach—iced lattes, Red Bull, coffee...whatever is required to keep the words flowing.

How do you keep details straight while writing a series?

I make notes to myself at the beginning of nearly every chapter or scene to remind myself of the key points I want to convey, the emotional state of the characters, and any foreshadowing that needs to be woven in. I highlight those notes so they're easy to spot as I write.

Rather than deleting them as I go, I simply strike through them once I've covered that section or included what needed to be there. I leave those crossed-out notes in place throughout the drafting process as a visual reminder of what I've accomplished and what still needs attention. I don't remove any of them until I'm confident I've achieved what I set out to do—usually near the end of the first draft, just before I send the manuscript to my editor.

Tell us what it's like as an Indie published author. What challenges have you faced?

My biggest challenge has been balancing the time spent promoting my books with the time I need to actually write them. Marketing can easily consume every available minute if I let it, so I've had to become intentional about blocking out writing time and sticking to a schedule to make sure the creative work remains the priority.

Another challenge has been finding the exact readers who will connect with the way I tell stories. I'm a bit of a genre blender, and with the *Sanguis Amantium* series, I haven't been especially focused on writing to market. This series has very much been a passion project and a learning experience.

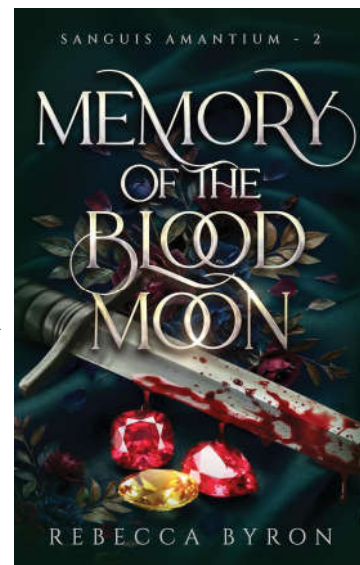
I may take a different approach with future projects, but I'm grateful that this series is finding its audience. I've been fortunate to build a wonderful community of readers who have embraced these stories and continue to spread the word, which has been incredibly rewarding.

Can you talk about your current work-in-process?

I'm currently working on two projects simultaneously. The first is a serialized novella told from the point of view of the villain from the first book in the series. I'm releasing it as a reader magnet to grow my newsletter and give readers a chance to experience his side of the story.

At the same time, I'm hard at work on the third and final book in my *Sanguis Amantium* trilogy. I'm about 20,000 words into the manuscript and am hoping to release it in January 2027.

Visit Rebecca's website at <https://rebeccabyron.com/>



Get Your Raffle Baskets Ready!

Our Holiday Party will be December 5th at the Hampton Inn by Hilton Dallas Central/North Park on 10370 N. Central Expressway, Dallas.

Candace Havens is our guest speaker. Information about her workshop will be posted soon.

If you're interested in donating a basket, please bring it with you, or contact Janet Leigh at janetleigh@janetleighbbooks.com.

Nominees for the 2027 Board of Directors



Secretary

Fenley Grant has volunteered to serve a second term as Secretary.

Fenley is an award-winning author, a 2019 Golden Heart finalist, a 2024 double Diamond Heart finalist, winner of the 2023 and 2024 PRISM award in paranormal romance, and she writes urban fantasy, time travel, and paranormal romances.



Treasurer

Donna McGoldrick has volunteered to serve a second term as Treasurer. In 2024, she served as President-Elect, and President in 2025. She served as Membership Chair in 2025 & 2026, and Communications Chair (Website / Newsletter Editor) from 2022 to the present.

She is an active member of Dallas Area Romance Authors (DARA), and Romance Writers of America (RWA). She is also a member of Mystery Writers of America (MWA), Sister's in Crime (SinC), and several SinC chapters. She writes mainly in the mystery and suspense genre with a little romance thrown in.

DARA is looking for volunteers for the following positions:

President-Elect: Serves two years - one as President-Elect and one as President. The PE will learn the Roberts Rules of Order, chapter bylaws, chapter policies and procedures, preside over all meetings of the Board and members in the absence of the President, and present the roses for new releases at the meetings.

Program Coordinator: Find Speakers with topics that are focused on the goal of educating members on the craft of writing, the business of writing, writing career development, or informing members on writing related topics.

Communications Chair: Gather content for the newsletter and the website. Maintain the website's content, which includes revising or updating the look and function of the site. Create the newsletter and send it out quarterly to the membership.



Your Chapter dues are due on the month you joined DARA. Please go to DARA's website to renew your chapter dues for 2026-2027. Click the **Join/Renew** button. This will take you to RWA's site first, then the chapter will be notified of your renewal. You'll receive an email to pay chapter dues via PayPal. You can also write a check and send it to our post office box.

Website: <https://www.dallasarearomanceauthors.com/join-renew>

Romance, Readers & a Fabulous Day at Half Price Books!

—Janet Leigh

What happens when you gather a group of romance authors, a room full of book lovers, and more books than any of us could possibly resist? You get a pretty fantastic Sunday!



I recently had the pleasure of joining several wonderful authors for a special author panel and book signing at the flagship Half Price Books in Dallas, Texas. We chatted about writing, romance, our characters, and all the behind-the-scenes fun that goes into creating the stories we love to tell. We even tested everyone's book knowledge with a little trivia before settling in for the signing.

Joining me for the event were Michelle Miles, Fenley Grant, Amanda Reid, Stephanie Pass, Carolyn Rae, Jennifer August, and Mary Karlik. It was such a fun mix of authors, stories, and personalities—and one of my favorite parts was getting the chance to spend time together while meeting readers who love romance as much as we do.

A huge **THANK YOU** to everyone who came out to see us, bought books, asked questions, played along, and stopped by to say hello. There's nothing quite like getting to meet readers face-to-face and talk about books without having to explain why we can discuss fictional people as if they're actual members of the family.

And a special thank-you to the wonderful team at Half Price Books for welcoming us and helping make the event possible.

I came home with a happy heart, some wonderful memories, and—because putting a group of authors inside a giant bookstore is dangerous—possibly a few more books than I started with.



DARA Newsletter

Our Mission: DARA is focused on providing education and marketing opportunities to the members. With monthly programs on writing craft, publishing business, and writing tools, we strive to improve our writing skills. We support and encourage our members no matter their writing level.

DARA welcomes letters, comments, and articles on writing and publishing. The DARA News is seeking articles that cover self and traditional publishing, author interviews, genre and subgenre writing techniques, grammar, reports from conferences, marketing / promotions, social media, and many other writing advice and tips. You don't need to be a published author to submit an article. Send your submissions in MS Word format to Donna McGoldrick at dsmcgold@donnamcgold.com

The DARA News is published monthly from January through November. DARA does not publish a newsletter in December. **DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION is the 10th of each month.**

SUBMISSION POLICY

In the interest of good journalism the editor reserves the right to refuse or edit any material that could offend our readers and the right to edit to meet space requirements. Accuracy of the articles, announcements, and informative statements are the sole responsibility of the submitting author and not this publication or its supporting Executive Board. DARA does not endorse any person, firm, partnership, or corporation mentioned in this newsletter. Readers are urged to determine for themselves the reliability, integrity, and financial responsibility of those with whom they deal. DARA makes no warranties or representation, either expressed or implied.

To our sister Chapters: We invite you to use any part of our publication with proper credit to the author and chapter.

If you have a new release, send your information to Michelle Miles at mlmiles21@gmail.com.

Please include your name, the title, the genre, release date, format, and whether or not it's your first publication.



DARA's Website:

dallasarearomanceauthors.com

Mailing Address:

Dallas Area Romance Authors
PO Box 833092
Richardson, TX. 75083-3092

DARA Board of Directors for 2026

President—Michelle Miles

President Elect—Janet Leigh

Treasurer—Donna McGoldrick

Secretary—Lisa Fenley

DARA Leaders

Program Coordinator—Jennifer August

Membership—Donna McGoldrick

Member Awards (Roses) - Michelle Miles

Communications (Newsletter / Website) - Donna McGoldrick

Pan Liaison—Open

Pro Liaison—Open