

# Bentonville's 3rd Annual Youth Literature Festival Bentonville, Arkansas



## Biographies of Our Authors, Illustrators, and Presenters

- Karen Akins
- James Babb
- Alene Betts
- Mary Casanova
- Thomas Cochran
- Laura Betts Coello
- Rich Davis
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### **Karen Akins**

Karin Akins writes humorous, light science fiction for young adults and the young in spirit. When not writing or reading, she loves lightsaber dueling with her two sons and forcing her husband to watch BBC shows with her. Karen has been many things in her life: an archery instructor, drummer for the shortest-lived garage band in history, and a shockingly bad tic-tac-toe player.

–from [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com)

Akins' novel *Loop* won the 'Level 2' Arkansas Teen Book Award in 2016. Her book *Twist* was featured on the 2015 *Arkansas Gems* list. *Arkansas Gems* is an annual publication of the Arkansas Center for the Books.



### **James Babb**

James is an award winning author. He was named Arkansan of the Day by Channel 11 News. His novel, *The Devil's Backbone* was named Independent Book of the Day. James was invited to speak at the AAIM conference in 2014. Also in 2014, he won a Juvenile Fiction IPPY Award. He travels to schools and speaks to students about his novels.



### **Alene Betts & Laura Betts Coello**

Alene and Laura are a Mother-Daughter creative team, who throughout their careers, have collaborated on numerous projects. Alene is an avid quilter, volunteer and toy designer. Her other books are *A Precious Resource*, *Big the Quilt*, and *Minwax the Robot*. She has co-authored *Good Morning Abba*, and *Breakfast in Bethlehem*. Laura is an award winning designer with over 20 years of experience in textiles, toys, illustration, packaging, web and multimedia. She's a graduate of the Ohio State University. She began her career working for *The Dallas Morning News*. Her products for Disney, Marvel and Dreamworks are featured at major retailers. Today she is the Founder and Creative Director for LBC Studio and is certified as a Women Owned Business by WBENC.



### **Mary Casanova**

Mary Casanova is an award-winning children's author of novels and picture books. Much of her work stems from her life on the Minnesota-Canadian border yet, increasingly, Casanova's research takes her as far away as France and Norway. Wherever her stories are set, Casanova engages readers of all ages with stories that both entertain and challenge readers.

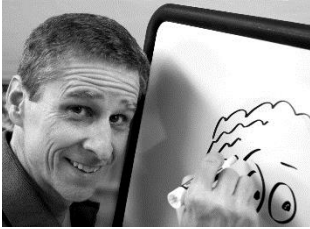
Her honors include two Minnesota Book Awards, a Fellowship in Literature by the Arrowhead Regional Arts Council, and Career Opportunity Grants by the Minnesota State Arts Board. Nationally, her book awards include: American Library Association "Notable," Aesop Accolades by the American Folklore Society, Parents' Choice "Gold" Award, *Booklist* Editor Choice, and others. Voted on by children, her books frequently land on state children's book award lists across the country. Mary recently received the George Morrison Artist Award in "recognition of her creative contributions to the genre of Young Adult Literature, often celebrating northern Minnesota, while impacting readers worldwide."

—from [www.childrensliteraturenetwork.org](http://www.childrensliteraturenetwork.org)



### **Thomas Cochran**

Thomas Cochran was raised in Haynesville, Louisiana, which serves as the model for the town of Oil Camp, the primary setting for his novels: *Roughnecks* (Harcourt), *Running the Dogs* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), and *Uncle Drew and the Bat Dodger* (Pelican). *Roughnecks* was a Young People's National Book Award nominee and has been called "... the best novel ever written about high school football" (School Library Journal). Mr. Cochran currently lives with his wife on some acres in rural Northwest Arkansas.



### **Rich Davis**

Rich Davis is a professional artist, children's book artist, and drawing game inventor. Davis grew up in Memphis, TN, where he graduated high school and obtained a BFA at Memphis University with an emphasis in Graphic Design. After getting married in 1986 he and his wife moved to Northwest Arkansas where he began to illustrate greeting cards for a Hallmark affiliate. He spent 21 years in the greeting card business and received numerous awards and experience. During that time, he was offered his first children's book contracts with Penguin Putnam (now joined with Random House) out of New York City. He has now published more than fifteen books, including the popular *Tiny the Dog* series. Rich teaches drawing instruction at schools and created *Pick and Draw*, which he developed into an activity book and game. He still lives in Northwest Arkansas.



### **Kristin Gray**

Kristin L. Gray drinks coffee (cream, no sugar) and writes books (funny, not sad) from her home in northwest Arkansas. She loves to read, walk her dogs, and eat cake for breakfast. She will also travel any chance she gets. Kristin's fourth-grade self would never believe she has five children, two dogs, one fish, a bearded dragon, and a shy gecko. *Vilonia Beebe Takes Charge* is her first novel.



### **Alan Gratz**

Gratz's *Prisoner B-3087* won Bentonville's Battle of the Books competition for the 2014-2015 school year. *Code of Honor* is on the Battle of the Books Reading List for the 2016-2017 school year.

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Alan Gratz's first novel, *Samurai Shortstop*, was named one of the ALA's 2007 Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults. His second novel, *Something Rotten*, was a 2008 ALA Quick Pick for Young Adult Readers, and was followed by a sequel, *Something Wicked*, in October 2008. His first middle grade novel, *The Brooklyn Nine*, was one of the ALA's Top Ten Sports Books for Youth and Top Ten Historical Books for Youth, and his middle grade Holocaust novel *Prisoner B-3087* was one of YALSA's 2014 Best Fiction for Young Readers and has won seven state awards.

His latest novels are the YA thriller *Code of Honor*, a YALSA 2016 Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers, and *The Monster War*, the third book in his middle grade steampunk *League of Seven* trilogy.

Alan's short fiction has appeared in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine, online at Tor.com, and in the anthologies *Half-Minute Horrors* and *Tomo: Friendship Through Fiction*, which benefitted victims of the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami.

As the first Artist in Residence at the American School in Japan in 2010, Alan spent six weeks teaching historical fiction-writing to middle school students in Tokyo, and he was the Thurber House Children's Writer in Residence in 2011, living and writing in James Thurber's attic for a month while working with young writers from all around the Columbus, Ohio area.

In addition to writing plays, magazine articles, and a few episodes of A&E's City Confidential, Alan has taught catapult-building to middle-schoolers, written more than 6,000 radio commercials, sold other people's books, lectured at a Czech university, and traveled the galaxy as a space ranger. (One of these, it should be pointed out, is not true.)

Alan was born and raised in Knoxville, Tennessee, home of the 1982 World's Fair. After a carefree but humid childhood, Alan attended the University of Tennessee, where he earned a College Scholars degree with a specialization in creative writing, and, later, a Master's degree in English education. He now lives with his wife Wendi and his daughter Jo in the high country of Western North Carolina, where he enjoys playing games, eating pizza, and, perhaps not too surprisingly, reading books.

-from [www.alangratz.com](http://www.alangratz.com)



### **Ard Hoyt**

Ard Hoyt was born in Temple, Texas and raised on picture books. From a very early age he discovered that even though he wasn't allowed to cross the street, he could go anywhere in a picture book. He fell in love with the worlds created by Robert Lawson, Steven Kellogg and H.A. Rey. This freedom grew to include his own pictures. Before long Ard discovered that with a white sheet of paper he could change the weather. He knew that he wanted to be a children's book illustrator and dreamed of one day having a book with his name on it next to the great ones.

Ard graduated from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California in 2001 and has illustrated over 25 children's books since including two New York Times Best Sellers (*I'm a Manatee* by John Lithgow and *The Hair of Zoe Fleefenbacher Goes to School* by Laurie Halse Anderson). Ard hopes that you can open up one of his picture books and travel to a different world, just as he does. Enjoy! —from [www.ardhoytbooks.com](http://www.ardhoytbooks.com)



### **Susan Knapps**

Susan Wadino Knapps grew up in Southeast Kansas where she has been delighting audiences with her storytelling since she was in the fifth grade. She received her BA degree in Elementary Education from Pittsburg State University and her MA in Ed. Administration from Williams Woods University. May 2012, her first children's book *Baby Bear to the Rescue* was published and released nationally. Susan has been a guest speaker for reading/writing workshops throughout the area. She loves the opportunity to inform educators about the effectiveness of using storytelling in their classrooms. She is a Literacy teacher at Irving Elementary in Joplin, Mo. She is married to Michael and they have two sons Adam and Ethan.



### **Roland Smith**

Born in Portland, Oregon, Roland Smith knew what career path he wanted to take at an early age. When he was five years old, he received an old manual typewriter from his parents that quickly became his favorite possession.

Roland's passion for writing unexpectedly led him to working with animals. While pursuing an English major at Portland State University, Roland took a part-time job at the local children's zoo. Little did he know that his part-time job would lead to a twenty-year career with the zoo and that his work with animals would take him all over the world.

Roland continued to practice his writing, but it was hard because the animal work took a lot of time. Still, he kept writing and getting his books published. Eventually, Smith left the zoo to write full-time. Even now that he no longer works with animals, his love for them still shapes a large part of his work as a writer. "Most of my novels are a result of my travels and experiences in the field," notes the author.

Over the years, Roland has written numerous books for young readers, including *Jack's Run*, *Zach's Lie*, *Cryptid Hunters*, *Peak*, *Tentacles*, and the Storm Runners series. He is also the co-author of numerous picture books with his wife.

A frequent speaker at schools and libraries across the country, Roland lives with his wife on a farm near Portland, Oregon.

—from [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)



### **Maiya Williams**

Williams' *Middle School Cool* is on the Charlie Mae Simon Reading List for the 2016-2017 school year.

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MAIYA WILLIAMS was editor and vice president of the *Harvard Lampoon* and a writer/producer for TV shows including *Rugrats*, *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*, and *Mad TV*. She is the author of a time travel trilogy that includes the critically acclaimed books *The Golden Hour*, *Hour of the Cobra*, and *Hour of the Outlaw*. She lives with her husband, three children, two dogs, two guinea pigs, and a variety of fish in Pacific Palisades, California. Visit her at [maiyawilliams.com](http://maiyawilliams.com)

- from [www.penguinrandomhouse.ca](http://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca)



### **Janet Wong**

Janet Wong was born in Los Angeles, CA, the daughter of a Chinese-immigrant father and a Korean-immigrant mother. She grew up in Los Angeles and in San Anselmo, 20 miles northwest of San Francisco.

Before becoming a writer, Janet explored a few other fields. During her junior year in college, Janet studied art history in France at the Universit© de Bordeaux. When she returned from France, Janet founded the UCLA Immigrant Children's Art Project, a program focused on teaching refugee children to express themselves through art. After graduating from UCLA, Janet attended Yale Law School and went on to practice corporate and labor law for GTE and Universal Studios Hollywood. But after a few years she chose to write for young people instead.

Success as a children's author did not come easily for Janet; she received over 20 rejection letters for her early picture book manuscripts, and felt "like a failure" after a year of writing. Janet's first collection of poetry, *Good Luck Gold*, was published in 1994.

Janet is the author of five collections of poetry and six picture books. Her poems have been reprinted in many textbooks and anthologies, as well as in some more unusual venues. "Albert J. Bell" from *A Suitcase of Seaweed* was selected to appear on 5,000 subway and bus posters as part of the New York

City Metropolitan Transit Authority's "Poetry in Motion" program, and poems from *Behind the Wheel* have been featured on a car-talk radio show.

Janet's awards include the International Reading Association's "Celebrate Literacy Award," presented by the Foothill Reading Council for exemplary service in the promotion of literacy, and honors from the Claremont Graduate School and Penn State University. She also has been appointed to the Commission on Literature of the National Council of Teachers of English. Articles by and about Janet have appeared in Scholastic's Instructor magazine, Creative Classroom, Booklinks, and O magazine; Janet and her work have been featured on The Oprah Winfrey Show and other television programs. —from [www.scholastic.com](http://www.scholastic.com)

## **Notable Books for a Global Society Workshop Presenters**



**Dr. Sue Parsons**

Dr. Sue Christian Parsons is an associate professor and the Jacques Munroe Professor of Reading and Literacy at Oklahoma State University. Dr. Parsons teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on literature for children and adolescents and on K-12 reading and language arts instruction, all infused with explorations of cultural diversity and social equity. Her recent research focuses on depictions of adoption in young adult literature and on using young adult literature to help preservice teachers prepare to teach in diverse communities. A passionate promoter of quality literature for young readers, Dr. Parsons has served on numerous book award committees and is the President-Elect of the International Literacy Association Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group.



**Dr. Renita Schmidt**

Dr. Renita Schmidt is an associate professor in the College of Education at the University of Iowa. She received a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and Teaching from Iowa State University. Schmidt earned her PhD in Language, Literacy and Culture from the University of Iowa. She currently teaches Literacy courses in elementary education and qualitative research methods. Schmidt is also the co-director of a book program called Strong Girls Read Strong Books, where 4th-6th grade girls explore what it means to be a strong girl. She is the current chair of the Notable Books for a Global Society Committee.

**Janet Wong** – See Above Authors and Illustrators

## Picture Factory Presenter

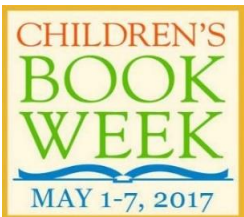


### **Napoleon Desaldivar**

Napoleon Desaldivar is a 5th & 6th grade art teacher at Old High Middle School in Bentonville, Arkansas interested in growth, collaboration, STEAM, PBL, and Genius Hour education. “I have a passion for learning and wish to connect with like-minded people who are ready to prepare our youth for real-world success. I am an artist both by passion and profession.” –from <https://about.me/napoleon.dezaldivar>

## About BYLF

All festival events at Bentonville Public Library are free and open to the public. All ages are welcome. No registration is necessary.



BPL's celebration is an official Children's Book Week kick-off event.

BYLF is supported by volunteers, grants, private donations, sponsorships and in-kind contributions to the Bentonville Library Foundation. A portion of the book sale proceeds go to support Bentonville Public Library.

### **Special Thanks to our Festival Partners, Supporters and Friends!**

Friends of the Bentonville Library, Bentonville Public Schools, Rotary Club of Bentonville, Barnes & Noble of Rogers, the Peel Compton Foundation, Children's Book Week, Englander dzignpak, Farmers Insurance: Shelley M Parsons Agency and the Scott Family Amazeum.

**Celebrating Reading, Writing and Creativity**

**Learn more at [www.bylf.org](http://www.bylf.org)!**



***BYLF Mission:**  
to connect our community  
with authors and illustrators  
to spark imagination, inspire young  
learners and nurture a lifelong love of  
reading, writing and creativity.*