

# WRITE CLUB

Women writers find encouragement, inspiration at local writers' group

By Julie A. Jacob

On a crisp fall evening, about a dozen women and men gather in a classroom at Carthage College for the Kenosha Writers Guild's monthly meeting. Although their ages and backgrounds vary, the writers share a passion for expressing themselves with words. Some write fiction, others poetry or nonfiction. Some are seasoned writers, others beginners. No matter their genre or level of experience, however, the writers support and encourage each other.

## THREE FOR ME (INTELLECTUALLY)

One by one, each person reads a brief excerpt from his or her work — a screenplay, a collection of poems, or a story. The other writers comment on the piece. The Kenosha Writers Guild is a loosely knit community of about 60 writers who meet for monthly meetings and in-depth critique sessions, read from their work on a monthly WGTD show, and give public readings. Although the group is open to both women and men, the camaraderie and support is especially important to women writers who often juggle their writing with the responsibilities of work and raising families. Here three women in the Kenosha Writers Guild share their thoughts on writing.

### Lisa Adamowicz Kless

"Writing isn't what I do; it's what I am," said Lisa Adamowicz Kless, a vivacious woman who serves as the guild's president. "I've loved writing since I was a very young child. It's been something that I've done nearly all of my life."

Kless recalls constantly writing stories as a child. Her love of the written word continued in college, where she majored in English at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside. In her post-college life, however, her wordsmithing took a backseat to raising her son and working as a pre-school teacher. She never forgot her love of writing, though. When an acquaintance encouraged her to start writing again, she joined a local writers' group. When that group disbanded a few years ago, Kless and some other members formed the Kenosha Writers Guild.

"We have a great group of welcoming, supportive, encouraging members, with such a diverse range of ages, experiences and genres. I get an incredible sense of pride and satisfaction when I hear newer members say that the organization is one of the best things they've ever been involved in, and has helped them to achieve or move closer to their writing goals," she said.

With friend Jan Rivera, Kless also co-founded a website, [www.2ndFirstLook.com](http://www.2ndFirstLook.com), that posts essays on movies and the arts. In addition, she and some other artistically minded Kenosha residents are launching a local arts magazine called "Left of the Lake."



PHOTOGRAPH BY SEAN KRAJACIC

Jennifer Sepanski, left, Kris Strauss, center, and Lisa Adamowicz Kless are members of the Kenosha Writers Guild.

### Jennifer Sepanski

As a young girl, Jennifer Sepanski wrote stories she stapled into booklets her brother illustrated. But Sepanski drifted away from writing when she became a busy stay-at-home mother. She missed it and wanted to find a way to connect with other writers that would fit into her parenting schedule.

"I missed the creative expression I had in high school and college: playing the cello and writing," Sepanski said. "Lisa mentioned that she was part of a writers' group and it had inspired her, and she invited me to join her. After the first meeting I was hooked!"

Although Sepanski still writes poetry, she now focuses on writing humorous essays, such as one about trying to exchange a bra that her husband had given her as a Christmas present.

"I write commentary on things that affect women, usually about ridiculous trends or shared experiences that are uniquely female," she said.

### Kris Strauss

"I write because I have stories running through my head," said Kris Strauss. "I think about stories, characters, dialogue, and relationships when I run, before I fall asleep, while waiting for my kids."

She began to focus seriously on her writing about four years ago. After Strauss dropped off her children at school, she would head to a coffeehouse to study for her LSAT exam. One afternoon she decided to take a break from the studying and write. Writing, she realized, was her true passion.

"That turned into the Kenosha Writers Guild, submissions, competitions, Milwaukee Writers Camp, NaNoWriMo [National Novel Writing Month], and now a dash to finish a novel," Strauss said.

She credits the community of writers with helping her grow as a writer. "I leave every meeting excited about my craft again ... (Kenosha Writers Guild) has helped me find my voice, my writing style, and the courage to attempt new things regardless of how they turn out." ✍

### Writing Tips

"Join a writing group."

Lisa Adamowicz Kless

"Keep notebooks in easy locations and write down those ideas as soon as they pop into your head."

Jennifer Sepanski

"Commit — every day. Set a word count, use a daily prompt, start your writing as soon as the alarm rings, create Twitter stories. Try them all until you find one that suits you."

Kris Strauss