



Florida Writers Association, Nassau County Chapter

By Marla McDaniel

Amelia Island Writers, whose origins stretch all the way back to the 1980's, has been growing and changing. A new and ongoing project is the inventory of local authors and those who have published books about Amelia and Nassau County as non-residents. The inventory serves as a one stop web resource for the public to find local authors, bloggers, and businesses in support of them. AIW is a local chapter of Florida Writers Association. The 501©6 non- profit organization is multi-faceted, but is unified by a simple phrase, "Writers Helping Writers."

The chapter had its beginnings when Lucy Beebe Tobias was a News Leader reporter, and founding member of the local chapter. The Nassau County Poets and Writers, as they were called, published two collections, *Landfall* Volume One, Number One, Spring 1988 and *Amelia...A shimmer on the Water, A Whisper on the Wind*, 1997. Lucy relocated to Sarasota, and is a published author. Her Saturday Morning Magazine has become a popular blog throughout the state and beyond. lucytobias.com

The chapter was later coordinated by Maggie DeVries, owner of the former Books Plus. *Ghosts of Amelia and Other Tales*, and *Amelia Island's Golden Years, Silver Tears* were and are popular with residents and visitors alike. During these years, News Leader columnist Cara Curtin and cohorts wrote a few novels together, beginning in 2004 with *Murder in Fernandina*.

Change is inevitable, and Maggie and her husband returned to Charleston after closing their bookstore here. The chapter almost folded at that point. Dr. Nadine Vaughan D'Ardenne, Dave D'Ardenne, Jim Weinsier, Wayne Cothron, Martin Teaster, Doug McDowell, and Marla McDaniel determined to keep it going. Writers by the Sea was born. After five years of programming under Dr. Nadine Vaughan D'Ardenne's coordination, she retired to spend more time with her own writing. She is a screenwriter and published author.

Amelia Island Writers emerged from Writers by the Sea in 2019. A comprehensive website was established along with a monthly newsletter to bring the writing community together and celebrate the accomplishments of local writers. Since the agenda has expanded, coordination is through an advisory committee. More information is at ameliaislandwriters.org. If you are an author or blogger and are not listed on the AIW website, fill out the web form to be added. The group searches for authors and out-of- print books from the past also, so they may be listed and remembered.

While programs have been sidelined during COVID-19, better times will see the return of monthly gatherings and focus group meetings: Critique, Writing for Stage and Screen, Writing Memoirs and Biography, and Works in Progress. Amelia Island Authors focus is collaborative writing; currently they are developing a project with local artists.

To be added to the monthly news, fill out a short request on the website. Florida Writers Association membership is not a requirement in order to attend and participate in local meetings.

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