

# DO THE WRITE THING

## Local author launches The Writer's Guild in April

By KATHERINE LACAZE

FOR COAST WEEKEND

**A**storia authors and literary artists are joining together to develop an organization that provides support for local writers and promotes literacy community-wide.

Led by author and educator Marianne Monson, The Writer's Guild in Astoria is starting to take shape. The first official meeting is scheduled for 6 to 8 p.m. Tuesday, April 17, at WineKraft (80 10th St.) in Astoria.

"I'm really excited about it," said Monson, who also teaches at Clatsop Community College and leads writer retreats overseas. "Right now, it's more ideas than anything, but it's coming together and there's been a really good response. I think this community is just ripe for it."

When she moved to Astoria last summer, she began searching for a similar organization to join. Realizing there wasn't one, Monson took it upon herself to gather a coalition of other writers and educators so they could develop such a group themselves.

### Sharing space

The vision for the Guild is to "build a community of writers in Astoria and strengthen the larger community through the power of the written word."

"My goal was to start an organization that would connect the writing community and create an avenue to provide more resources for writers," Monson said.

Its intended projects include offering workshops and retreats for writers; strengthening literacy through the creation of writer-in-residency programs; and training a core group of workshop facilitators equipped to aid writing workshops for at-risk populations in the community.

Initially, the Guild will be structured as an LLC with nonprofit programming and, eventually, partnerships with other established nonprofits, Monson said.

To pick up momentum, the organization



COURTESY JOAN OAKEY

Astoria author and educator Marianne Monson (right) works with Shahnaz Radjy during a recent writing retreat in Sintra, Portugal. Monson is the founder of The Writer's Guild in Astoria.

is holding monthly gatherings, which will take place the third Tuesday evening of each month at WineKraft to complement the Ric's Poetry Mic program held there the first Tuesday of each month. The meetings are open to the public. From 6 to 7 p.m., the Guild will offer a writing prompt for attendees to respond to, in addition to time for socializing, sharing professional insights and discussing Guild business. From 7 to 8 p.m., attendees can share poetry and prose during an open mic.

Writers, like any other group of creative people, Monson said, often sense the need for a "community to share and get feedback to help make our way through a creative process." Sharing work in critique sessions should be "an affirming experience," where everyone feels accepted and welcomed by other writers.

"The best (outcome) is that it sends you back to the page more inspired to write and with a new method or skill to approach it," she said.

### Find your voice

Monson is personally leading several Astoria Writer's Workshops at her home

during the next few months. Upcoming workshops include Publishing and Marketing for Writers on Saturday, April 21; Writing for Children and Young Adults on Saturday, May 19; Breathing Life into Non-Fiction and Memoir on Saturday, June 9; and The Art of Revision on Saturday, July 21. Workshops are held 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. with a two-hour break for lunch.

For future creative writing workshops facilitated on behalf of The Writer's Guild, the typical structure will be two-hour sessions that last 10 weeks. The participant-centered workshops will be led by a professional writer and experienced facilitator and explore many aspects of genre and craft.

Borrowing a similar idea from Write Around Portland, Monson envisions these workshops could be offered to at-risk populations at locations such as Tongue Point Job Corps, domestic violence shelters, local jails or prisons, and elsewhere. She believes writing is an effective tool both for artistic expression, and as a means of healing and empowerment.

Workshops would be tailored and designed in collaboration with community partners to best meet the needs of the population they serve. At the end of the workshop, projects created by students during each program would be celebrated and shared with the broader community in some way, such as an open mic event or a publication.

"I've seen the power of putting a pen in people's hands and allowing them to tell their story and find their voice," Monson said. "It's incredibly powerful and very freeing."

The Guild also recently procured an official logo, created by Polk Riley's Printing and Design, and developed a new website at [TheWritersGuild.org](http://TheWritersGuild.org). The guild structure includes a membership component, but Monson said they are still working through the financial aspect. She intends, however, "to make it really accessible to all budgets."

To learn more or register for the upcoming writer workshops, contact Monson at 503-709-5740 or [marianne.monson@gmail.com](mailto:marianne.monson@gmail.com), or visit her website at [mariannemonson.com](http://mariannemonson.com). 