

Seattle Chapter by Leslie Adams

The idea of a Seattle Chapter blossomed when Nancy Pearl hosted a gathering of interested people at her home in May 2008. Pearl, the best-selling author, literary critic, noted librarian, and 50th winner of the WNBA Award for her extraordinary contribution to the world of the book, wondered why Seattle didn't have a chapter. Joan Gelfand, WNBA national president, was present and talked to those gathered about the WNBA chapter benefits and formation process.

The discussion with Gelfand continued at a follow-up meeting at Sasquatch Books; Henriette Anne Klauser agreed to attend the national meeting in early June. Upon her return, she met with Diane Wright in a coffee shop—very “Seattle” —and drafted the Letter of Intent. On July 22, 2008, official notification was received that a Seattle Chapter of the Women's National Book Association would be established. By modest count, there were at least twenty-five women interested in becoming charter members. The founding WNBA Seattle Chapter Executive Board members who worked together to plan and organize the chapter included Henriette Anne Klauser, Ph.D. (president), Anna Johnson (vice president), Diane Wright (secretary), and Marion Holland (treasurer).

WNBA Seattle was officially chartered at their first National Reading Group Month event held on October 20, 2008. Jill Tardiff, WNBA National Reading Group Month Chair and Joan Gelfand, WNBA national president, were present for the induction of officers and new members. The event celebrated the joy of shared reading and featured Nancy Pearl as the evening host and moderator with featured speakers Mary Ann Gwinn, book

editor at *The Seattle Times*; authors Diane Hammond and Nancy Horan; and book store executives Cheryl McKeon and Rebecca Willow. Member Dawn Wagner Todd brought a proclamation from the mayor of Seattle declaring October 20, 2008 to be Women's National Book Association-Seattle Chapter Day. It was signed by all Seattle City Council members.

The chapter's very first event, and now the most anticipated one each year, is the October National Reading Group Month program. It is traditionally a moderated panel with prominent Pacific Northwest authors. A few of recent panelists and moderators have included Erika Bauermeister, Jillian Cantor, Carol Cassella, Tara Conklin, Robert Dugoni, Jamie Ford, Laurie Frankel, Mary Ann Gwinn, Nancy Horan, Stephanie Kallos, Jim Lynch, Nancy Pearl, Maria Semple, Jennie Shortridge, Garth Stein, and Ellen Urbani.

Seattle has a wealth of independent bookstores and an award-winning library system. To support and take advantage of these assets, the chapter coordinates and sponsors "Readings 'Round the Sound," a month-long lineup of author appearances held at local independent bookstores and libraries. Every October during National Reading Group Month as many as fifteen events are selected and promoted with flyers, posters, press releases, and social media. "Readings 'Round the Sound" is promoted by WNBA-Seattle, bookstores and libraries, and by the authors and their publicists.

The focus of the chapter reflects the mission of the national organization, to support reading and to champion the role of women in the world of books. Our monthly

meetings from September through June feature programs that interest our diverse membership of published and unpublished writers, librarians, educators, and booklovers. Literacy has been the focus of our community service: we donate books to women in shelters and to organizations such as UNICEF; Page Ahead, which provides new books and develops reading activities that empower at-risk children; and Powerful Schools, which supports high-quality educational enrichment for elementary students.