



# **Writers of the Riverbend Event Connects Local Writers and Readers**

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter  
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ALTON - Twenty writers and countless bookworms flooded the halls of Milton Schoolhouse for the seventh Writers of the Riverbend event on Saturday, Oct. 14, 2023.

Writers of the Riverbend invites local authors, editors, photographers, illustrators and other creatives to connect with each other and share their work. Community members, including many aspiring writers, stopped by the schoolhouse to support the artists and learn about the publishing process.

“When I started, I didn’t know any other writers,” said Sarah J. Dhue, author and organizer of the event. “Community is huge, huge, huge for me, and it’s become more in the most recent years in writing as well as other parts of my life, just how important it is to have that community.”

Dhue explained that the event aims to bring writers together so they can network. She said it’s difficult to navigate the writing, editing and publishing process by yourself, and it helps to have mentors or friends who have done it before and can offer advice. Poets, journalists, children’s book authors, comic book artists and fiction and nonfiction writers mingled on Saturday, selling their books and chatting about craft.

“I come here every year to show my books and hustle,” said [graphic novelist Max Hoven](#). “At the local events, I can identify more with people that are trying to learn how to level up.”

Hoven explained that he attends many comic cons and author events. This year, he decided to skip the weekend’s New York Comic Con and attend the Writers of the Riverbend event instead so he could connect with a more local audience.

The event encouraged that connection between local writers and readers. David Pagel noted that he wouldn’t be an author at all without the community in Alton and Milton Schoolhouse. David and Jacqueline Pagel recently published their first children’s book, [“The Coffee Shop Cat.”](#) This book tells the true story of Buford, a stray cat who roamed the halls of Milton Schoolhouse and was loved by many Maeva’s customers until his passing.

“We just thought it was such a cool story because we’re a part of it,” David said. “This is the first book we actually ever endeavored to write before, and Buford was the inspiration for that, and so that kind of kicked off some other things. We might have some other books coming out, but we felt that this one would be a great one to lead with. Plus, we love Maeva’s. We love the schoolhouse here, the community. We just have a connection here.”

Dhue tries to organize two Writers of the Riverbend events every year, and she noted that new writers sign up every time. The event has grown a lot since its beginning, as has the local writing community.

“I have just been blown away by how many authors and such come out of the woodwork,” Dhue added. “It’s always neat to go to a bookstore or book fair, but this is all stuff that’s happening right here in your neighborhood. You’d be amazed just how many people in your own backyard, your own neighborhood, are creating awesome things.”

For those who want to learn more or stay updated for the next event, you can visit the [official Writers of the Riverbend webpage](#) at [Dhue's personal website](#).