



# December 2023 Newsletter

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*Above: yesterday coaches worked with 9th graders at Sentinel High School. When discussing how to rephrase one of their sentences, a student exclaimed, "Redundancy--the bane of writing!" We couldn't agree more.*

# Coaching update

Help us round out this semester's coaching! Trained coaches can sign up for the following opportunities:

## **Flathead**

### Whitefish High School

9th Grade, short stories

- [Tues. Dec. 12, Single Draft](#)
  - 2 coaches at 2PM - 3:27

### Kalispell Middle School

6th Grade, creative stories

- [Monday, Dec. 18, Single Draft](#)
  - 8:00-8:55am, 2 coaches needed
  - 9:55-10:45am, 3 coaches needed
  - 1:15-2:05pm, 2 coaches needed

## **Ravalli**

### Florence-Carlton Middle School

8th grade, multiple intelligences essay

- [Friday, December 8](#), Second Draft
  - 8:10-9:03am, 1 coach needed
  - 11:01-11:54am, 1 coach needed

### Hamilton High School

11th grade, Native American research

- [Monday, January 8](#), second draft
  - 2:00-3:30pm, 1 coach needed

### Corvallis High School

12th grade, principles of American Democracy

- [Friday, January 12](#), first draft (Please sign up for the 1st & 2nd drafts, if possible.)
  - 8:30-10:05am, 4 coaches needed
- [Monday, January 29](#), second draft (Please sign up for the 1st & 2nd drafts, if possible.)
  - 8:30-10:05am, 4 coaches needed

Not a trained coach yet? Learn about our upcoming workshops, below.

Questions regarding coaching in the Flathead can be directed to Jeanne Wdowin

(jeanne@writingcoachesofmontana.org) or in Missoula/Ravalli to Kat Jackson (kat@writingcoachesofmontana.org).

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## Giving Season: help eliminate school fees!

WCM's fundraising goal for the rest of this school year is to [eliminate school fees by fall 2024](#). Coaching needs to be accessible to all students, no matter schools' financial restraints.

So far we have reached [30% of our fundraising goal for the holidays](#). Will you help us achieve our \$8,000 goal?

In the past, WCM asked schools to contribute to program costs, but over the course of the last few years, financial barriers have threatened this vital work: levies fail, budget cuts create staff shortages, and school funding for programs like WCM becomes precarious. WCM's strategy is to increase both grant funding and private donations to ensure that students' literacy support remains consistent.

One of the most effective ways to support this goal is to become a Friends of WCM monthly donor. This helps WCM cut down on fundraising costs so we can focus on what matters most: supporting students!

- [A few lattes \(\\$15/month\)](#) covers the cost of 36 coaching sessions.
- [A tank of gas \(\\$50/month\)](#) pays for 30 volunteer background checks.
- [A dinner date \(\\$100/month\)](#) jumpstarts a relationship with a new school system.

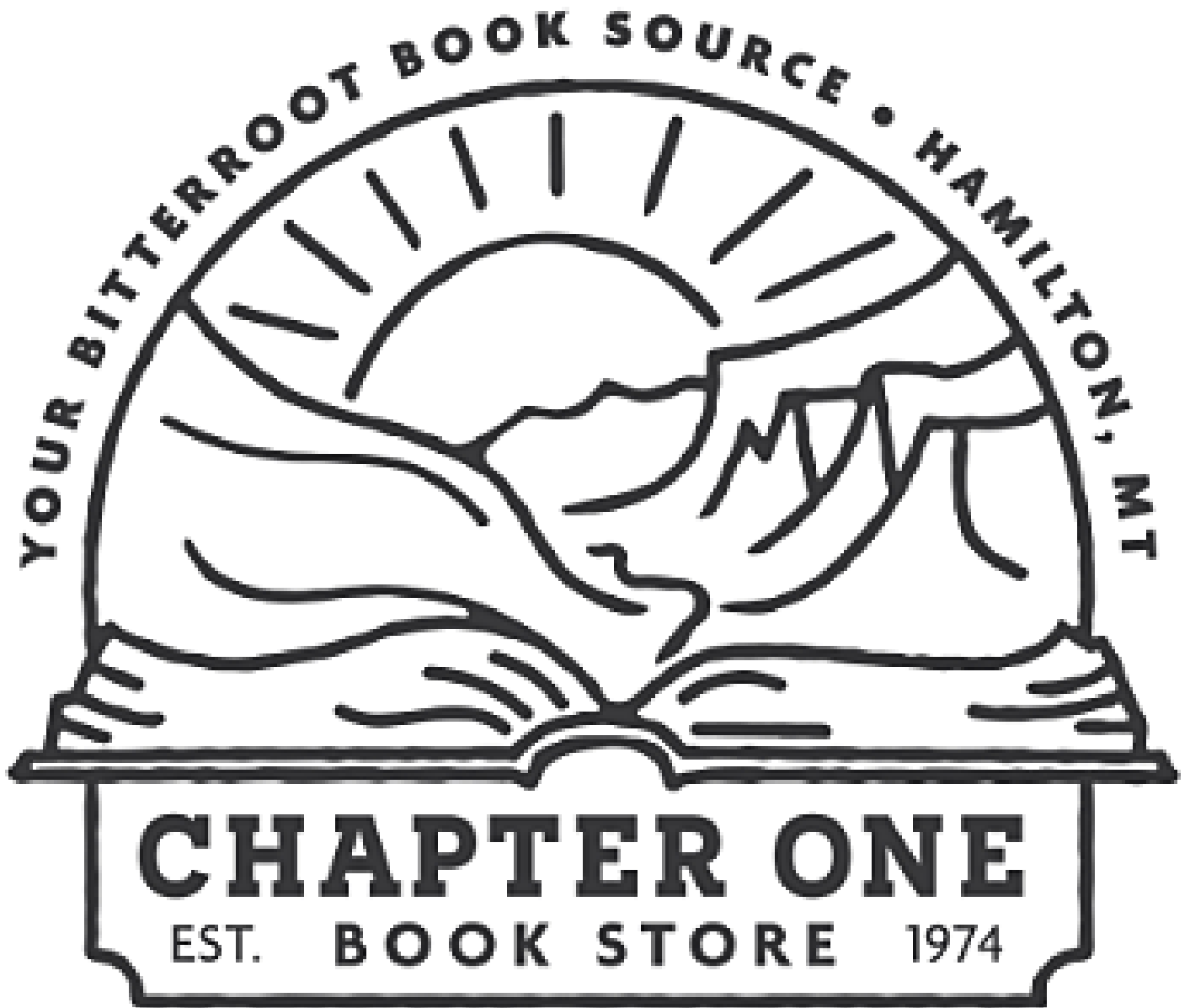
You can become a Friends of WCM donor by going to our [website](#), entering in your monthly donation amount, and then clicking the "make this a monthly payment" button when prompted to submit your payment.

**DONATE**

## **Thank you**

...to everyone who already donated during this giving season! We are hopeful about building a brighter future for Montana, together.

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## **Chapter One Bookstore Holiday Events!**

During the **entire month of December**, you can choose from several titles at [Chapter One Bookstore](#) in Hamilton, Montana, and the **store will donate a 20% of sales to WCM.**

For supporters in Flathead and Missoula who cannot visit the store in Hamilton, you can order books over the phone (406-363-5220) by December 13 and have them delivered by WCM staff by mid-December.

The below list includes teacher wishlist books. If you purchase these titles, the book is donated to the teacher, and 20% of the sale is donated to WCM. An \* denotes a teacher wishlist title.

Here is the list of eligible titles:

- [\*A Christmas Carol\*](#)
- [\*Hershel and the Hanukkah Goblins\*](#)
- [\*How the Grinch Stole Christmas\*](#)
- [\*Iron Flame\*](#)\*
- [\*Thanks to the Animals\*](#)
- [\*The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes\*](#)\*
- [\*The Hard Hat\*](#)\*
- [\*The Heaven and Earth Grocery Store\*](#)\*
- [\*The Polar Express\*](#)
- [\*The Wingmen\*](#)\*

**Friday, December 1:** Grow your heart three times in size when you attend the bookstore's Grinch-themed holiday kickoff event. Enjoy snacks & drinks & cheer. You might even see some recognizable WCM staff dressed as folks from Whoville.

**Friday, December 8:** Enjoy a live window event in the storefront! Missoula/Ravalli Coordinator Kat Jackson & Executive Director Cassie Sheets will be recording live for WCM's [\*\*new podcast, Writing Matters\*\*](#). This episode theme is: seasonal storytelling.

We will also be raffling a beautiful Winter Wonderland (blue & white) quilt made and donated by Ravalli coach Denise Mahrer. Raffle tickets can be purchased online via our [website](#) until December 31 and during both in-person events at Chapter One Bookstore. If purchased through the website, please email [admin@writingcoachesofmontana.org](mailto:admin@writingcoachesofmontana.org) to let staff know you wish to receive tickets.

**Give a book to support young writers this holiday season!**





PRESENTS

# WRITING MATTERS



WITH

**NEIL MASSEY**

WCM BOARD MEMBER  
HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEACHER

**KAT JACKSON**

WCM COORDINATOR

## Writing Matters, WCM's new podcast!

Enjoy the [first Writing Matters episode, about AI \(artificial intelligence\)](#) and its effect on writing and thinking. Interviewees include high school and college students, a high school educator, and Montana Digital Academy Executive Director, Jason Neiffer.

Help WCM spread the word about [Writing Matters](#) by listening to the episode and sharing with friends, family, & colleagues. Once we hit [1,000 episode listens](#), WCM qualifies for Spotify sponsorship--another strategy to ensure our services are available to schools for free by fall 2024!

Up next in December's episode: the power of storytelling during the winter season! If you visit Chapter One Bookstore in Hamilton from 5-7pm on Friday, [December 1st](#) or Friday, [December 8th](#), you may be interviewed for the episode.

## New coach workshop

If you're already considering New Year's resolutions, consider giving back to your local schools! Become a volunteer writing coach by signing up for our next training.

Register in advance to receive training materials: [Wednesday, January 31](#), 5:30-8:30pm via Zoom.



## Growth Mindset: a coaches' blog

*Above: Our wonderful Flathead Coordinator Jeanne Wdowin enjoys the end-of-year coach appreciation picnic.*

### **The Gift of Time Yields Purposeful Community Connections**

After decades of being in public education, my annual rhythm included 180 days of close contact with students and provided me with an important position in my community. I enjoyed working with young people, day in, day out, five days a week for 40 weeks, for 45 years. Such a schedule causes one to be comfortable meeting new students and forming relationships while working through a process and finalizing a product. It also creates a void when that structure is gone.

To find myself retired, for the second time, moved away from friends and family into a new community, as a senior citizen, I felt out of place. I'm a social creature who's been a part of every aspect of school and students, and loved every minute of it. I needed to find a connection to my new community, preferably a connection familiar to me. Then, there it was! I saw a press release, seeking volunteers to coach students with writing. It's a godsend, it's a sign, an omen just for me.

Being a writing coach gives me purpose. I'm happy to be accepted into a school, a sacred place, a place that needs to be kept safe and secure. I greet my students and their teachers with a respectful, cheerful calm and an open heart. I remember the stress of meeting the needs of 125 students. So, I am excited to listen to what they have to say and



support them for having the courage to share their written work. I hope that our coaching lightens the teacher's load and sparks student interest.

In the past I've done research on writing motivation. Why do students write? Is it to satisfy curiosity, seek information, self reflect, relieve boredom, or gain social recognition? In most cases, it's a combination of these elements; so it's exciting for me to listen to student work and ask clarifying questions to stimulate student thought. I care deeply about students and I work to promote understanding, facilitated with kindness and the gift of time given by our volunteers. Students are our future and we need to be relevant to them, so that they are willing to care about us as we age. I'm grateful for Writing Coaches Of Montana, because this nonprofit allows me and the volunteers to cultivate connections within our community.

--Jeanne Wdowin, Flathead Coordinator



*Contact us:*

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