

NCWN PRISON WRITERS OUTREACH VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

The purpose of the North Carolina Writers' Network's Prison Writers Outreach is to encourage creative writers currently incarcerated by the State of North Carolina. Outreach volunteers will do so by corresponding with interested inmates about the craft and business of writing.

The following guidelines are designed to protect the privacy and safety of all correspondents, both volunteers and inmates. All volunteers are required to acknowledge, in writing, that they have read and understood these guidelines, and that any violation of them will result in their immediate dismissal from the program.

Questions about the program and/or these guidelines should be sent to Celeste McMaster, NCWN Membership Director, at celeste@ncwriters.org.

GUIDELINES

- All volunteers must be current members of the North Carolina Writers' Network.
- All volunteers will undergo a training session, provided free-of-charge by the NCWN and led by a writer who has worked extensively with incarcerated writers, at the earliest opportunity.
- The inmate will initiate correspondence by writing to the Network at our mailing address below. The Network will forward this correspondence to a randomly selected volunteer.
- Correspondence from inmates may include writing samples to be critiqued, or questions about the publishing industry or some aspect of craft. Correspondents, though, may just be looking for encouragement and a sympathetic reader with whom to share their work. Volunteers should respond to the inmates' questions and needs, within the limits of these guidelines: ***The primary subject of all correspondence must remain creative writing.*** (See below)
- Volunteers should view their correspondence as a lateral relationship between fellow writers. They may ask inmates for new work to read, or for revisions of work already sent. Volunteers may also share drafts of their own work, and/or suggest writing exercises or reading materials that pertain to the inmate's work.
- Volunteers will respond to correspondence within two weeks of receipt (four weeks if critiquing a writing sample). Please allow for delays in prison mail delivery.
- For the safety of themselves and others, **volunteers must use a pen name**, rather than their own names, in all correspondence with incarcerated writers.
- Unless prior arrangements have been made, volunteers commit to at least three exchanges with inmates assigned to them. After exchanging three correspondences, volunteers may ask to continue corresponding with this inmate, or to be assigned a different inmate.
- All correspondence will be written & printed, and will go through the NCWN mailing address:

NC Writers' Network
P.O. Box 21591
Winston-Salem, NC 27120

Volunteers will not try to communicate with inmates by phone, by e-mail, or in person even if the inmate requests or invites them to do so.

- Volunteers will NOT share any personal information, including their real names, contact information (e-mail addresses, physical or mailing addresses, phone numbers, etc.), and personal details (marital status, parental status, occupation, etc.). **Under no circumstances will volunteers send photos or drawings of themselves or others.**
- Volunteers will NOT share inmates' creative work with any others, including editors, agents, publishers, friends, or fellow writers.
- **Correspondents will confine their subject matter to the craft and business of writing,** including general, generic information about the publishing process.
 - Volunteers will not discuss politics, religion, or issues/theories of incarceration.
 - Volunteers will not help inmates submit their work for publication, or answer questions about specific publishers or publications.
 - Volunteers will not act or seek to act as an agent, publicist, or publisher, in any way or form (i.e., "I can help you find a publisher . . .").
 - Volunteers will not make promises or offer assurances that they may not be able to keep (i.e., "I can help you find a publisher . . .").
- Volunteers will NOT become involved with a prisoner's legal case, whether it is ongoing or not.
- Volunteers will NOT make offers of housing, financial, legal, or other assistance, should the inmate be released.
- If an inmate's correspondence includes explicit or threatening material, mentions the commission of a violent crime or plans for escape, or makes the volunteer uncomfortable, the volunteer agrees to notify the appropriate NCWN staff member immediately, and cease all correspondence with the inmate. NCWN staff will notify the NC Department of Adult Corrections.
- Volunteers should always remember that correspondence is not considered privileged or private.

I, _____ (printed name), attest that I have read the above guidelines, and that I understand and agree to abide by them. I acknowledge that any violation of these guidelines will result in immediate dismissal from the NCWN Prison Writers Outreach program.

X _____ Signature

X _____ Date