



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Denise Low-Weso, President
Haskell Indian Nations University

Francisco Aragón, Vice President
University of Notre Dame

Steve Heller, Vice President
Antioch University Los Angeles

Terry Blackhawk, Treasurer
InsideOut Literary Arts Project

Richard Robbins, Secretary
Minnesota State Univ., Mankato

Dinty Moore, Ex Officio
Ohio University

Judith Baumel
Adelphi University

Bonnie Culver
Wilkes University

Oliver de la Paz
Western Washington University

Cynthia Hogue
Arizona State University

Roger Lathbury, AWP-GMU Liaison
George Mason University

Jerod Santek
The Loft Literary Center

Natasha Trethewey
Emory University

•
David Fenza
Executive Director

Carty House, Mail Stop 1E3
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA 22030-4444
Phone (703) 993-4301 • Fax (703) 993-4302
conference@awpwriter.org • www.awpwriter.org

CHILDCARE AT THE ANNUAL AWP CONFERENCE & BOOKFAIR

Dear AWP Members & Conference Attendees,

As a non-profit association that serves many literary communities nationwide, AWP is dedicated to helping all those diverse communities at our annual AWP Conference & Bookfair. The AWP conference recently grew from a small meeting of 40 presenters and 1,000 attendees to a large conference of 1,600 presenters and 9,000 attendees. As the conference grows, AWP searches for new ways to enhance the program so that it supports all of our members. While we do this, we are obliged to remain fiscally responsible and to avoid problems that could jeopardize the long-term success of the conference and our association.

AWP has been asked many times to provide on-site childcare at the conference. We are sorry that we cannot provide this service at this time. While we work to facilitate a rewarding conference for all of our attendees, including parents, AWP must also operate prudently with limited resources. Providing childcare would be both costly and risky. Some have suggested that we raise our registration fees to underwrite the cost of this service. In this unsteady economy, this is the wrong time to raise conference fees on all attendees. The price hike would need to be substantial because childcare is a more expensive project than most of us can readily imagine.

The project would require the costs of additional staff, security, a licensed and bonded childcare provider, and liability insurance. Our association would need to carry a liability insurance policy to protect AWP in the event of a worst-case scenario. These cumulative costs would make childcare rival our bookfair as the most expensive component of our conference, and it would still leave AWP exposed to a high amount of risk.

The Professional Convention Management Association, the best resource for standards concerning the conference planning industry, recommends that an association providing conference childcare should carry liability insurance to protect itself against a settlement costing \$3 to \$5 million. Even with this level of coverage, the cost of one lawsuit could exceed the organization's coverage. A single lawsuit could jeopardize the assets that AWP has built over the past 40 years and possibly bankrupt the organization. Given the litigious society in which we live, and given that, without national tort reform, there is no cap on the award from such litigation, this concern is hardly an exaggeration.

Although there are few professional conferences of AWP's size that offer childcare, please be assured that we will continue to explore new ways to meet the needs of our constituents.

Sincerely,
The AWP Board of Directors & Staff