Frequently Asked Questions

What is the organization's mission?
James River Writers (JRW) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to build community by connecting and inspiring writers and all those in central Virginia with a love of the written word.

How did JRW start?
We began in 2003 when a group of area authors sought to address the needs of writers and literary fans in central Virginia by hosting Richmond's first writing conference. Since then, we have grown into a multifaceted organization of around 350 members that serves as the region's literary hub and a welcoming home for anyone who loves the written word. Our many programs inspire people of all ages to find their voices and connect with the written word. For those already writing, no matter the genre, we help them improve their craft. A number of local writers have gone on to get their work published with the help of JRW (e.g. Ellen Firsching Brown, Bill Blume, Lana Krumwiede, Virginia Pye, A.B. Westrick). JRW plays a key role in expanding our region's love of the written word and in adding a vital dimension to Richmond's cultural life.

How does JRW work?
With a dedicated board and small staff, JRW serves the Richmond region by knitting together our literary community. We accomplish this by

- Building a community of members to celebrate, share information, and network.
- Providing monthly panels to help writers & readers learn the craft and business of writing.
- Offering hands-on instruction through Master Classes taught by industry experts.
- Hosting a top-notch annual conference that brings nationally-recognized writers, editors, and agents to our region.
- Inspiring writers of all ages to enter contests and find their voices.
- Sharing information on all things literary in our region with our free e–newsletters and literary calendars.

What does JRW do?

James River Writers Conference
The annual JRW Conference is our organization's signature event, and our most meaningful contribution to the literary arts in our region. Well-respected within the publishing industry, the JRW Conference adds to Richmond's national profile as a city of great creative depth and integrity and therefore a desirable place to live. Since 2003, we have invited luminaries from the literary world to share their wisdom about writing and publishing. More than 300 people attend this two-day event, known for its inspiring, collegial atmosphere. We provide morning and afternoon keynote talks, appointments with literary agents, and a full array of panels on topics from the common challenges of structuring a novel to how to manage a writer's taxes. The Friday before is a day of hand-on Master Classes.

The Writing Show
Launched in 2005, The Writing Show has become a popular ongoing series that brings together writing professionals to share their knowledge of the craft and business of writing. Starting in February 2015, it has been held at Firehouse Theatre on the last Wednesday of the month January - September. Its success has inspired a copycat program in South Carolina through the Hub City Writers Project. Topics have included writing for young adults, memoir, book trailers, trends in publishing, and advice from agents. This is an inspiring evening for writers and readers alike.

Master Classes
JRW offered our first Master Classes as pre-conference workshops in 2010 and has expanded on that offering every year. Master Classes give attendees the chance to experience direct learning from expert teachers in a small classroom setting. Topics have included advice from New York agents on query letters, poetry, an 8-week series on short story writing, editing, and social media platforms.

Writers Farmhouse
Started in 2014, Writers Farmhouse is a weekly opportunity to jump in with other writers and commit to your work. Come here to write, get feedback and encouragement from peers, and set a weekly writing goal.

Writers Wednesday
Held on the second Wednesday of every month, Writers Wednesday is a casual meet and greet for both aspiring and published authors of every genre. It's a great way to ease into the literary scene, network, and mingle with professionals and first-timers alike.

Contests & Awards
James River Writers is committed to providing opportunities and encouragement to writers of all ages and at all stages of their careers. To that end, we offer three major contests and a regional award. The Best Unpublished Novel Contest attracts nearly 100 submissions and is a testament to the untapped literary vivacity of the region. The Shann Palmer Poetry Contest has brought in work by approximately 100 poets and been judged by literary luminaries like the Virginia Poet Laureate. Begun in 2014, the Best Self-published Novel Contest celebrates the entrepreneurship of our community's indie authors. JRW runs one contest a year in conjunction with *Richmond* magazine. The annual Emyl Jenkins Award celebrates an individual and/or organization furthering the arts by connecting writers and other word lovers in central Virginia.

Membership
We work hard to keep program costs low and to build a network of writing enthusiasts who support and celebrate each other. We now offer tiered packages ranging from our traditional membership (monthly members-only newsletter, great discounts on our programs, benefits with area merchants, and two free Writing Show passes) to all-inclusive (one-year membership plus Writing Show season pass + 2 guest passes, registration to some Master Classes, and registration for our Annual Conference). Check out all our membership options by connecting with membership@jamesriverwriters.org today!