

## **Ellen Jarrett, of Porter Square Books in Cambridge MA, Shared a Wonderful Concept**

### **Writers Among Us**

We at PSB, and all indie booksellers I'd wager, are always brainstorming for ways to engage with our community of writers - published, non-published, self-published, aspiring - in a meaningful and mutually beneficial way. We, actually our marketing team, have hit on something that may not be novel in the literary world, but may be in the context of a bookstore. That is a [Writer in Residence](#) program. The idea was first hatched back in January 2018. Management was unanimously behind it and requests for proposals went out to the public in June. The response was overwhelming. Committees were formed to read the proposals in which the applicants were asked to include a short essay answering the question "How will a Porter Square Books residency help you as a writer?", a sample of a work in progress, and a CV. Eligible candidates have to live in the greater Cambridge area, NOT be employed at any bookstore or publisher; and not hold a permanent academic position at a college or university. Two writers, one writing for adults and the other for young readers, were selected to participate in our first term, February through October.

Our writers in residence receive the staff discount in the bookstore and café; have use of office space, such as it is, after 5pm on weekdays; and are free to take any galleys or ARC's. The WIR are invited to submit staff picks which we rotate on a monthly basis; are responsible for writing at least three pieces for the store's blog; and are asked to introduce and/or engage in any of our store events in some way throughout their term. Of course the WIR term will culminate in a reading of each writer's work to which the public will be invited.

The aspect of this program that seemed to be most coveted by applicants was the availability of a dedicated work space - a place to escape from home, school, or work and steep in the love of books, the acquisition of books, and the lively discussion of books. Writers can expect minimal interruptions, but if a much loved author should wander in and make their acquaintance, it would be a welcome distraction!

If this sounds like something you might want to institute in your bookstore, feel free to [contact us](#). We in New England are rich in writers and we should capitalize on that!