

CONFERENCE INSIDER

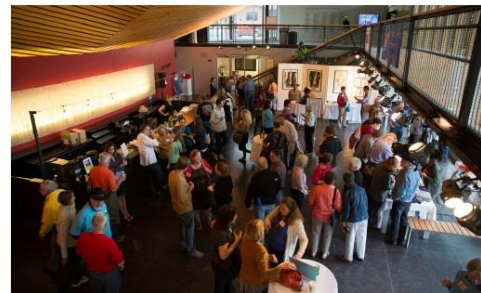
BY MEREDITH QUINN

Big-sky inspiration

Nature plays a starring role in this conference-yoga-retreat hybrid.

Want to learn more about the affinities between yoga and writing?

Visit writermag.com to read "Get Your Yoga On," Meredith Quinn's exclusive interview with poet Patricia Lee Lewis. Find many more web-only stories on *The Writer* blog Views and News.



about an hour north of Jackson, a city often touted as a spiritual center.

Lewis, who has an MFA in creative writing from Vermont College of Fine Arts and leads retreats internationally, will help writers get in touch with their spiritual side by balancing morning yoga, writing exercises and recreational activities such as horseback riding and rafting.

What does yoga have to do with writing? A lot, according to Lewis, including discipline and practice. "I'm thoroughly in favor of people writing from a deeper place," Lewis explains, "not the thinking

part of the mind, but rather memory and image and feeling. Yoga helps us get in touch with the feeling self. Memories are embedded in our tissue, they're in our bodies. We may think they're in our brain, but anybody who has had a good massage and has had memories come out will tell you they're in your backbone, in your shoulder muscle – they're there. Yoga helps loosen that up."

At the end of the retreat, there will be a closing ceremony, during which writers will read something that they prepared during the week. "I read my stuff just as

vulnerably as anybody in the group," says Lewis, "which I think helps people see that they don't have to have written a perfect piece in order to read it."

Those participating in both events will go straight from the yoga and writing retreat to the conference with a polished piece of writing in hand. Wieneke's advice for all conference attendees? "Go to the panels, go to the workshops. Talk to people. Don't sit in the corner." ■

Meredith Quinn is a graduate of New York University and associate editor at *The Writer*.



CONFERENCE Jackson Hole Writers Conference

DATES June 25 – 27

LOCATION Jackson Hole, Wyoming

WEBSITE jacksonholewritersconference.com

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Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the gateway to Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks, offers a spectacular setting through which to get in touch with nature and be inspired by the great outdoors. And the Jackson Hole Writers Conference has been marrying Mother Nature and masterful writing for the past 23 years.

"It's hard not to be inspired by the location," says Connie Wieneke, development director for Jackson Hole Writers. "Mountains, alpine skies, the air." Even the Jackson Hole Center for the Arts, which hosts the conference, gives in to the landscape, boasting views of Snow King Mountain, multiple lawns and a grass amphitheater.

Perhaps that is the element drawing the near 40-member faculty, including Tobias Wolff, Jeff Greenwald, Scott Lasser and Eric Paul Shaffer, to the event. In addition to editors and

agents, the faculty will lead workshops in fiction, nonfiction, poetry and young adult writing.

Despite the big-name faculty, organizers take pride in an intimate, laid-back conference, which has a four-to-one student-faculty ratio. "We are small-town friendly with big city questions about the craft of writing," says Wieneke. "Serious stuff happens here."

One of those serious items is the manuscript critique, which wins positive feedback year after year. The 100 participants who sign up for the critiques (at an additional fee) each meet with three faculty members for an hour apiece to discuss 15 pages of prose. Poetry critiques of five poems are led by a poet. The faculty, with the exception of Wolff, Lasser and agent Chuck Sambuchino, will take part in the sessions this year.

Repeat conference attendee Terry Fischer participated in her first critique last year.