South Florida Chapter by Michelle Putnik

Escaping New York's winters of snow and ice for warm, sunny Florida was an easy decision for WNBA-New York City members Linda Rosen and Andrea Baron. But giving up WNBA programs and networking was not. So, in 2015, the two set out to start a chapter in South Florida. From their winter homes in Boynton Beach and Delray Beach, respectively, they contacted and met with librarians, writers, book store owners, and creative writing teachers. Joann Sinchuk, manager of Murder on the Beach Mystery Bookstore in Delray, graciously offered her shop for their introductory meeting.

On a warm December evening Linda and Andrea introduced the organization to a room full of writers with the added incentive of wine and cheese. The women attending were all very excited about the idea of having a chapter in South Florida, but no one volunteered to be on the board. Without a president, secretary, and treasurer, there would not be a new chapter.

Feeling a little let-down but not willing to give up, Linda and Andrea told the women to think about it and call them with their questions and concerns. The next morning, while having breakfast, Linda was considering their next move. How were they going to get WNBA to South Florida? Her cell phone rang and on the other end was a very excited voice. “I couldn't sleep last night,” Michelle Putnik said. “We need the WNBA down here. I've talked to my friends and we're ready. I'll be president and I've got a board ready to start: VP Carol White, secretary Susan Cox, treasurer Barbara Bixon and publicity Mary Yuhas.”
During its first year as a chapter, WNBA-South Florida has had a program every month, kicking off with a party in April 2015 at Murder on the Beach Bookstore. That June, Carla Norton spoke about her book *What Doesn't Kill Her* and in July, editor Susan Bryant spoke on “How to Work with an Editor.” Workshops “Romance Between the Pages” and “How to Self Publish” were held in August and October. For their first National Reading Group Month the new chapter welcomed authors Lauren Groff and Hank Phillippi Ryan, and in November their own board member, Susan Cox, talked about her road to publishing her debut mystery *Man on the Washing Machine*. A holiday party was held in December, and January found Prudence Taylor Board speaking on “Setting as Character.” Talia Carner, guest author, addressed members that February, and a membership recruiting party and elections for a new board rounded out the chapter’s first year.

The mission of the South Florida Chapter is to encourage women to read, write, network, and to support literacy among young people in their communities. To that end, the chapter is donating books to school libraries and classrooms. Clearly, the new chapter is off to a great start.