



# WRITERCOACH CONNECTION

September 2013



## **Coach Profile: Judy Albietz**

**By day**, Judy Albietz enjoys helping the underdog as an environmental and tribal attorney. By night, she's [J.A. Kammins](#), an author of science fiction for the young adult and middle grade market. In between, she shares her love of writing as a writer coach at Berkeley's King Middle School.

Funny how careers collide.

She learned about justice through her father, who practiced land use law in Indianapolis. One thing she did not learn from him was how to be a writing coach, as she reflects in her blog post, ["What's a Writer Coach?"](#)

"Since he was an attorney, I thought he knew how to write. He didn't even pay attention to the teacher's assignment and proceeded to write the essay for me. I turned it in, got a 'D,' and never asked him for help again. If he'd taken the WriterCoach training, he would have asked me what I wanted to work on."

"Writing a legal brief is not like creating art," Albietz states. "That's what I've always loved about creative writing."

Albietz started honing her craft as a fiction writer about six years ago and continues to take writing classes with the UCLA Writer's Program and workshops in Berkeley and Oakland, where she met WriterCoach trainer Maureen Dixon.

But her writing career began as a journalist with the Indianapolis News, where she was Mrs. Herman Hoglebogle, the city's first ombudswoman.

"I learned what makes a story—an ordinary person doing something extraordinary or when an extraordinary person does something ordinary."

Her goal now is to write the kind of stories kids want to read—"exciting adventures—with heroes and heroines who show kids that there's no limit to what they can achieve."

Albietz has always been enchanted by children's books. She's a big fan of *The Giver* by Lois Lowrie and *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeleine L'Engle. She still rereads the original collection of 14 Oz books given to her as a child.

She shares the contagious enthusiasm of reading and writing with everyone she meets. While tutoring English in a difficult Sacramento neighborhood, after graduating from McGeorge School of Law there, Albiez was shocked to learn from the local librarian that the bookshelves were full of children's books because parents didn't want to incur library fines. She's given away two of her three copies of *A Wrinkle in Time*.

As a tutor, Albiez discovered how weak her seventh graders' reading and writing skills were. Well aware of the learning gap kids face as they enter school, Albiez has prioritized the underdog as a writing coach as well. Starting as a writing coach last year at King Middle School, she had two classes with four students.

"One was struggling so much that I was just glad when he showed up," she says. With support from Kathleen Hallam and Dixon, Albiez was slowly able to gain his trust and make progress. By the end of the year he handed her a note: "Thank you. You were a big help."

"Tutoring is easy compared to coaching," says Albiez. "Middle schoolers have their BS detectors on all the time. They don't want to hear that I've written a book. And if you sound even the least bit patronizing, they're out the door."

"We are not teachers or tutors or editors. We are coaches."

It's a lesson she learned the hard way from her father.