

Staten Island woman has a life filled with love stories

by Tevah Platt / Staten Island Advance

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STATEN ISLAND, NY - FORT WADSWORTH -
- They meet and fall in love, they part and reunite.

That's the long-standing formula behind thousands, possibly millions, of romance stories.

But filling in the details that make each romance unique takes skill, tenacity and often, help from other writers.

Want to learn how to make Cupid your muse?

Tap Karen Cino of Fort Wadsworth, a self-published author who became president last month of the New York City chapter of Romance Writers of America (RWA).

There's a key to romance writing, says Ms. Cino: "Write from your heart."

Ms. Cino, 49 and a divorced mother of two, was in high school when she wrote her first romance, "Second Chance," entirely in long-hand.

Since then she has written five novels, including locally set "East Shore Babe" and "The Boardwalk," a forthcoming work that incorporates people and places she's come to know through ritual morning walks on South Beach.

"People like to read romances because it makes them feel good," says Ms. Cino, whose description of her main character in front of a mirror in "East Shore Babe" could pass for a sketch of herself:

"Clad in tight jeans and a short black skirt she smiled in approval. At 43 years old and after two kids she had a remarkable figure. She was petite, standing at five foot one but raised her height by three inches in her high heeled shoes. Placing her trademark dark sunglasses on to cover her big brown eyes, she was ready for her regular Friday morning routine."

But rather than flying off in pursuit of "The Stallion," Ms. Cino's regular Friday routine includes meeting a daily writing goal of about 30 pages, watching her son's band and her daughter's baseball games, and coordinating speakers, events, awards and monthly meetings for the RWA .

Her chapter's 80-some members include seasoned and novice writers of romance novels and erotica.

"Some people are born to write about love," she said. "I just know when I sit down that the books I'm going to write will be about love."

But if the disposition is innate, the skills are not.

Ms. Cino was an experienced author and a former freelancer with the Staten Island Register, but she said she learned important lessons about writing through the RWA - about showing, not telling, using strong verbs and avoiding the passive voice.



She suggests all aspiring authors join a writer's group; if she found interested Staten Islanders, Ms. Cino said she'd be open to running one herself as a means of giving back to her longtime community.

"Everybody likes writing, nobody likes editing," she said. "The groups aren't about criticizing, they're about helping each other out."

Ms. Cino says that she writes in order to share her passion with others.

"When you read a romance, you feel hopeful. You feel that the author has faith in love," she said.

Visit the Romance Writers' local Web site at www.rwanyc.com, or E-mail Ms. Cino at karencino@aol.com.