

Life begins anew after 50, Hemet writer proclaims

By **ALLYSON ESCOBAR** / CONTRIBUTING WRITER / The Press-Enterprise / [PE.com](#)

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Writer and Hemet resident Lynne Spreen says that aging – which she defines as life after 50 – is a second “coming-of-age story.”

The 62-year-old award-winning author, speaker, blogger, and self-proclaimed “advocate for positive aging” is just getting started.

“I see so much potential that I want to bring out, especially in (those who are) aging,” said Spreen, who is originally from Whittier but graduated from Riverside Community College and the University of Redlands. “When you get older, perhaps it’s a second chance to

chase after the things you missed, or always wanted to before.”

Spreen had always wanted to be an author, but said “life got in the way.”

After a 30-year career in human resources, working for two school districts and a law firm in Riverside County, she decided to go after her dreams of writing her first novel. The publishing industry had changed so much, Spreen recalled, but said that after so many years in HR she learned that everyone had a contribution to make.

Spreen was 58 when she published her debut novel, “Dakota Blues,” in 2012. Self-published through Amazon’s CreateSpace, it tells the story of two women, one 50 and the other 90, who go on a life-changing road trip together and discover themselves along the way.

‘Campfire circle’

Wanting to spread her knowledge and experience, she and a group of fellow writers in January 2016 created a community for writers in the Inland Empire – the Diamond Valley Writers Guild.

“I wanted to create a sort-of ‘campfire circle’ where writers could gather, learn from one another, discuss their products, and hear engaging speakers talking about their craft,” she said.

The guild meets monthly at the Hemet Public Library on the fourth Saturday of each month, from January to October, and has an annual fee of \$20 per year.

Members of all ages often come from as far as Palm Springs, Hemet, Moreno Valley, Temecula, Menifee and across the San Jacinto Valley.

Spreen encourages professional growth, pushing them to get their stories published – whether as a book, magazine article or blog post – and inviting guest speakers to come talk about their respective genres, crafting a regular writing schedule, and the business/marketing side of publishing.

On the writers' guild's first anniversary, Spreen says she is optimistic to see membership grow, as the number of people in the room “seems to get bigger each month.”

This year, the Diamond Valley Writers Guild will partner with the Diamond Valley Arts Council in Hemet to provide authors with more opportunities to get their work published.

“In creating the guild, and in giving people a reason to feel excited about the second half of life as a time of growth and personal development, I'm hoping to make my contribution.”

‘Mid-life fiction’

Spreen sees herself as a “mid-life fiction” writer.

Her dream is to write stories about people who are older and still discovering themselves in their 50s and beyond. It's a demographic, she says, that is “at least a third of the country.”

“Traditionally there's the ‘coming-of-age’ story in movies and books, and it usually involves finding love, establishing a career, starting a family. ... But what happens after that? After you turn 50 and the kids are gone, or you're retired, or stuck in the same relationship – is that all there is?”

Ultimately, Spreen says she believes aging is just another beginning of life and her hope is to encourage older folks to write a “second coming-of-age story.”

“This is the time when life's Big Questions are answered—add that to the seismic shifts caused by menopause, and life after 50 can be a really dynamic period,” she said.

The author — who is married to a retired salesman, Bill Spreen — calls her next genre a “silver romance.”

“It's insulting when the traditional book publishers frown on romance between characters older than 30,” she said. “I absolutely believe baby boomers and the (over 50) demographic will be thrilled to read about people their own age falling in love and chasing their dreams. And it'll be completely unique, because this time of life is different from our youth.”

'Keep the dream alive'

For aspiring writers, bloggers, and publishers, Spreen says to keep doing what you can "to keep the dream alive."

"I had to struggle throughout my lifetime, and kept delaying my dreams as a writer," she said. "Even if you can't focus on it right away to make a living, do what you can to fan the flames ... until you can actually throw yourself into it."

Spreen blogs about positive aging at AnyShinyThing.com. She said that she hopes her work shines as an example for younger generations of novel writers.

"When we act like we're afraid, or apologize for being old, what kind of message does that send to the youth? What if younger people look forward to some of the beauties of aging – like being more free, having more confidence?" she asks.

"They look at us and say, 'That's a pretty good trade-off for wrinkles.' "

The first Diamond Valley Writers Guild meeting for 2017 is at the Hemet Public Library from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, Jan. 28. More information can be found at dvwritersguild.org

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