

Keeping Creativity Alive: What Cheer Writers Club marks their reopening after a year of virtual programming

Much like the rest of the world, when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, What Cheer Writers Club was struggling with how to take their coworking space – made for writers and illustrators as well as other creatives – and bring it to their patrons.

Jillian Winters, What Cheer’s general manager, said, “Having an online community was something we always wanted to do. We service or serve across Rhode Island, and not everyone can always come to the coworking space.” And so they went online.

“I think the driving force was making sure people had the opportunity,” Winters continues. They cite the pandemic as a reason to make sure that the club members were able to connect in the time of isolation. Winters even joked that handling the pandemic was a little easier for introverts and writers, since they’re used to working alone and sometimes thrive on it.

During the pandemic, the club featured weekly coffee chat check-ins and brought local authors in to talk motivation and how they were using their time. Then in summer 2020, they started finding ways to safely engage the writing community with one in-person event and weekly online events. Though they were cautious to mention the dangers of Zoom fatigue, and how we’ve all felt it. The members of What Cheer Writers Club and the writing community helped the club thrive online. “Everyone is always so supportive and kind and willing to go along with our ideas and ways to keep the community connected,” said Jodie Vinson, program manager at the club.

Winters and Vinson found that it was a success being online – and that more members than ever before were able to engage. The club has now reopened for the first time since March 2020. Members can book time for individual coworking, and safety has been at the forefront of the club’s mind, with new fans for ventilation, air purifiers and reduced capacity.

On Thursday, August 5, at 7pm, as part of PVDFest, the club will host an open-air showcase called “Emergence” with The Avenue Concept and with support from the Providence Art and Tourism Council. It will be held in front of the “Adventure Time” mural, which will be painted over soon.

“We were feeling the impetus, this cultural moment, recognizing it as a moment of transition and wanting to give artists and writers and creatives a chance to reflect on that moment,” said Vinson. There will be 14 readers across genres, and it is open to the public, though reservations can be made through the club’s Eventbrite.

“We see these moments in our culture and our times and want to give people an opportunity to reflect, and create stories and art and poetry,” Vinson continued. “Stepping forward and out at our own pace, we’re recognizing that moment.”

What Cheer Writer’s Club lives in downtown Providence, but will remain hybrid for with events for writers, including weekly networking events. Membership is \$10 a month, with free memberships for

BIPOC creators. www.whatcheerclub.org