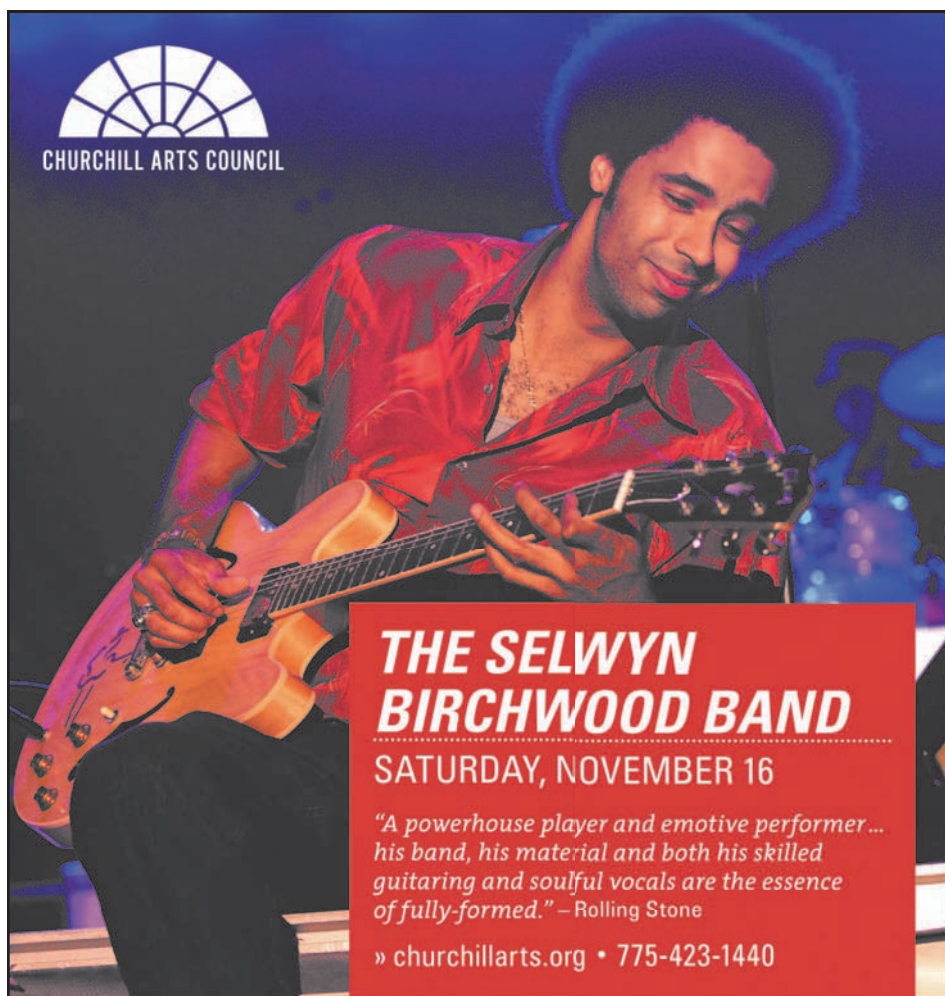


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Members of the Jot Writers' Group meet at the Holland Project. From left, Jacob Chadwick, Nathan Barnes, Claire Martin and facilitator Mel Hines.  
PHOTO/MARK EARNEST

## Making time

### Jot Writers' Group

**Finding the time for creativity can be a struggle** for many people with full-time jobs and lives where it's hard to get into that space. Mel Hines understands this, so she started the Jot Writers' Group, which met for six weeks at the Holland Project and is planning an event for Nov. 5 to read some of the work the group created during that time.

Hines wanted to start a community for other writers like herself who felt that after college they were discouraged from writing more.

"I did it a little out of selfishness—to make friends and force myself to write," Hines said. "I think there are a lot of good communities in Reno, but I think when you are moving through life and being an adult it's harder to find people to connect and write with."

There are three main goals with the Jot group: for writers to hone their skills, to share their work and get feedback and to be more accountable to find time to work on their writing. There were some other broader concerns that Hines also wanted to cover when it comes to writers and the work they do.

"I wanted to help people deal with imposter syndrome and any feelings they had of a lack of urgency to accomplish their personal artistic goals," Hines said.

For every session, there were different writers who attended, although several did make it to more than one of the Jot events throughout September and October. Among those was Jacob Chadwick, a 33-year-old writer who was taking a hiatus from standup comedy to hone his craft more. He said the workshop was valuable as he worked on meeting some writing goals.

"I started this working with one idea in mind, something pretty personal, but the first week we wrote a story about this person," he said, holding up a vintage photograph that Hines supplied as an exercise for the group. "I ended up writing something I thought I would never write, so it definitely opened me up to a new form of writing I would have never done on my own."

Two of the group members still have a hand in the academic world, Nathan Barnes, 21, is a writing student at the University of Nevada, Reno; while Claire Martin, 28, is applying at different universities for a PhD in creative writing. Both said the Jot events were time well spent.

"It gave me a reason and a validation to write for things that weren't for school," Barnes said. "I just switched to a writing degree from a music degree this semester, so it's been difficult to make that transition, and it's been great to get into a community with other people who write."

For Martin, she was mostly hoping to make new friends, as she's been in Reno for only two months. "I liked how relaxed this was," she said of Jot. "It was a very welcoming environment and very easy to share your work and talk about it in a safe space, which is not always the case when you are in an academic writing workshop."

The open-door policy of the workshop is something that Hines wants to extend to next year's Jot workshop. The biggest change may be that it is once a month over time instead of a six-week continuous arc, in order to make it easier for working people to attend. □

Members of the Jot Writers' Group will host a reading at 8 p.m. on Nov. 5 at the Holland Project, 140 Vesta St. Find out more at [hollandreno.org/workshops](http://hollandreno.org/workshops).