THE DOS AND DON'TS OF AUTHOR VISITS BY JULIE ANNE PETERS

DO: Spare no expense. Buy first-class airline tickets and send a stretch limo to pick the author up at the airport.

DO: Choose the most expensive hotel in town and book the penthouse suite.

DO: Take the author to dinner at fine dining restaurants throughout his or her stay.

DO: Offer twice as much honorarium as the author requests.

DON'T: Do any of this.

THE REAL DOS AND DON'TS OF AUTHOR VISITS

DO: Book an author early. A year before the event is reasonable, and even earlier is better. Most authors are busy people, scheduled up the wazoo with writing, revisions, deadlines, publicity events and roller derby tournaments.

DO: Negotiate a fair honorarium.

DO: Give the author as many details as possible about the event. When and where is it? Who will be attending? What you would like them to speak about, or can they choose a topic? How long should they plan to speak? Who is their contact?

DO: Negotiate a fair honorarium based on your expectations.

DON'T: Keep adding on additional speeches for the same honorarium you negotiated for one talk. If you asked the author to give three speeches to begin with, you should expect her or him to either say they can't handle more events, or increase their fee accordingly. Nothing irritates an author more than being invited to give one speech for one price, and then learning at the last minute that the organizers would like her to give two or three more talks. Most authors prepare well in advance to please your initial audience. If you want them to speak to more groups, go through the process of renegotiation.

DO: Pay the author at the time of the event, preferably with a check (that won't bounce) tucked in a thank you card.

DO: Pay *all* expenses. Ask whether the author would like to make her/his own plane reservations, in which case you should reimburse immediately for airfare. You can also ask the author to send you a preferred flight number so that you can make the reservations and avoid the hassle of reimbursement.

DO: Expect to pay for transportation to/from airports to homes/hotels. Most authors I know would prefer to be picked up at the airport, rather than take a taxi, but if that's not possible be sure to collect receipts so that you can pay for taxi fares. That includes what they had to pay to get to their airport. Also reimburse for all meals while an author is in your care. An author should know to submit all receipts, but you may have to remind him/her.

DO: Make hotel reservations for the author. Call to confirm the author's reservation a few days prior to her arrival. (I can't tell you the number of times I arrived at a hotel to find that the hotel clerk had no record of my reservation.) Authors are tired after traveling and this is the kind of stuff that makes them crabby. Although, some authors are crabby by nature.

DO: Give the hotel a charge card for all the author's expenses.

DO: Ask the author if they'd like to go out to breakfast/lunch/dinner with you or your planning committee. I know I always arrive starving and hate to spend my host's money on room service. It is possible, however, that an author may just want to crash that first night, so please let him/her know that room service will be covered (which is why you've given your charge card number to the hotel clerk). Hopefully, your author won't rack up massage and adult film charges – ha!

DO: Absolutely find out if your author has food preferences or allergies, especially if you plan to take the author out for a nice dinner. More than once a planning committee has chosen a swanky restaurant that they love, but it doesn't have any vegetarian selections on the menu for me. Awkward. It's all over my website that I'm a vegetarian, and all they had to do was ask.

DO: Find out what A/V equipment will be needed for your author's presentation. Please test the equipment and have backup available in case something goes wrong.

DO: Provide the A/V equipment the author requests. More than once I've arrived at an event and learned two minutes before I was to go on that, oh yeah, we couldn't get you a microphone. My voice doesn't carry and having to shout my entire speech gives me a major migraine. Come on, peeps. How hard is it to find a microphone? Or even a karaoke machine.

DO: Plan a book signing before or after the event. (After is better.) Selling books is how authors make money.

DO: If the author will be speaking to students, familiarize them with the author's books. And ask the author beforehand if they're willing to autograph books after speaking with students. Most authors are thrilled to schmooze with their readers.

Do: Please introduce the author to the audience. I have a bio page on my website with both a professional introduction and more personal details to draw from. Most authors' websites are chock full of great information from which to create an introduction. You can even email the author and ask if they'll provide a short intro or bio for you. When I'm introduced as, "Here's

Julie Anne Peters," I don't even know where to begin. How much does the audience know about me? Should I give them background before I start my talk? Dilemmaville.

DO: Following the event, tell the author they were fabulous, even if they sucked. I work hard on giving inspiring speeches and to hear that there was negative feedback from the audience hurts my feelings. You're free, of course, to let your peers know what a diva I am and that I may not be an author they'd ever want to invite to speak, but don't tell me that to my face. Frenemy.

DO: As the author is leaving, tell the him/her to please submit all other receipts. Airport parking and/or transportation home should be included in the expenses you cover. And if the author left around mealtime, you should cover food expense as well.

DO: Notice how all my don'ts are couched in dos ☺. Authors are grateful to be invited to speak and want to make your experience with them a positive one. Even if they're demanding egotists (who me?), planning, organization and smiling when it hurts will see you through.

Julie Anne Peters is is the critically-acclaimed, award winning author of more than a dozen books for young adults and children. Her book, *Luna*, was a National Book Award Finalist; *Keeping You a Secret* was named a Stonewall Honor Book; *Between Mom and Jo* won a Lambda Literary Award; and *Define "Normal"* was voted by young readers as their favorite book of the year in California and Maryland. Julie's books have been published in numerous countries, including Korea, China, Croatia, Germany, France, Italy, Indonesia, Turkey, and Brazil.

She is a member of The Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, PEN America, Colorado Authors League, and The Author's Guild.

Julie loves writing because she gets to be her own boss and doesn't have to work in an office cubicle. It's hard to think outside the box when you work in a cube. She lives in Lakewood, Colorado, with her partner, Sherri, and far too many cats. The cats are under the impression that they're creative geniuses, since they spend a majority of their day walking back and forth across her computer keyboard. They probably generate more words per day than she does, but who can read cat gibberish?