

TEACHER, WRITER, RESEARCHER

CONNECTICUT WRITING PROJECT, STORRS

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Inside this Issue

- Fighting for Social Change in Education
- Letters about Literature Continued
- Writing as the Release
- Colson Whitehead
- Jon Andersen *Augur*
- Fighting for Creativity in the Curriculum
- The Winding Road to Success

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The Director's Corner

by Jason Courtmanche (SI 99)

The theme for my fall semester was mentoring. I had—and still have—many great professional mentors, but I am at the point in my career (I've been teaching since 1991) that more often than not I am the mentor. It's a role I truly enjoy. Lynn Bloom, who was one of my best mentors when I was first hired at UConn in 2007, used to say she loved playing fairy godmother. I guess I know what she's talking about now.

This past November, I was fortunate to have three proposals accepted for NCTE in Baltimore (I have never had more than one before!), and was invited to sit on a fourth panel. As is my wont, I wrote several students and teachers into my proposals. So I had the pleasure of presenting alongside one PhD candidate in English, one MA candidate in Education, one undergraduate in English and Education, and four in-service teachers—two former undergraduate students, one a former graduate student, and one who was both. For the most part, I gave an overview of each panel and introduced the teachers, and then I let them do the talking.

They all teased me for volun-telling them for these presentations—a charge for which I am completely guilty—but for me it's just so fulfilling to see my current and former students developing into successful teachers, and to be able to give them a professional opportunity such as this.

Fighting for Social Change in Education

by Mary Zaborowski
CWP Intern

On Monday, September 30th, UConn hosted Nicolas Lampert, Paul Kjelland, and Meredith Stern, members of the artist cooperative *Justseeds*, to discuss and demonstrate the role of art in promoting social change in education. It started with a discussion in the Dodd Center, detailing how these artists have worked in promoting education justice thus far, and the struggles they've faced along the way.

Directly after the discussion, everyone got the chance to partake in a print-making workshop in Printshop Studios in the Bishop Center on campus. The artists mentioned above demonstrated ways in which people can create large-scale "Art Build" projects in their own community, through printing. Participants in this workshop made screen-printed posters, pickets, and other items, "designed to amplify demands for social change."

Printing has an extensive history, with examples of printing dating back to 23 B.C. China. Caves have been discovered in southwestern Europe with stencils carved all over the walls. It is believed that people spit in mixtures of various berries in order to create a type of makeshift paint to outline their hands on the walls. This is the first documented stencil.

In this workshop, we printed on muslin because it is a cheap, easy material to work with, allowing people to easily print off 1000 copies for one demonstration. We laid an image on the printing press with phrases like, "Global Climate Strike," and "House On Fire, Not a Drill, Climate Emergency," on top of a single piece of muslin and, using ink, ran the ink over the press until it was perfectly outlined on the muslin. Then we hung them to dry.

Many students, like high school student Cormac Nocton, attended the print-making



*Print-Making Workshop
(Photos Courtesy of Mary Zaborowski)*



Dr. Glenn Mitoma and Meredith Stern



Dr. Glenn Mitoma and Meredith Stern

workshop. When asked why he wanted to come to the workshop today, he replied, “Because it’s everything I like— social justice and art.” Cormac also continued saying that art was important to him because it, “allows me to express myself through more mediums than school lets me,” which is truly what this whole workshop is about; giving students a voice in the fight for greater social change.

When I asked Dr. Glenn Mitoma, director of the Dodd Center and Assistant Professor of Human Rights and Education, why he invited *Justseeds* to the Dodd Center, he replied that Connecticut doesn’t have an Art Build for social justice and that he’d like to change that, starting in the spring. Dr. Mitoma believes that this type of community-building is important because it creates events for hundreds of people to come and try to make things for social justice. He concluded saying, “Art Build helps you see that connection between social justice and education.”

Heather Bunnell, an art teacher at E.O. Smith High School, thinks social justice should play a role in education, because we should be “teaching kids to be citizens of the world... that it’s their job to stand up, not someone else’s.” Many other faculty present at the workshop agreed with her, collectively saying that our education system is flawed, for it doesn’t encourage kids to use their skills outside of the classroom and for causes they truly care about.

Milagros Castillo-Montoya, Assistant Professor of Higher Education and Students Affairs in the Department of Education Leadership, says that social justice and education are “inherently intertwined without us knowing it. So the question now is, are we going to be honest about that?” She continued saying that when we all finally decide to accept that, we should be using it for good by figuring out ways to educate with social justice.



Justseeds Print
(Photo Courtesy of *Justseeds.org*)



Justseeds Coloring Book
(Photo Courtesy of *Justseeds.org*)



Prints Made in Workshop



*“Global Climate Strike”
“House on Fire. Not a Drill. Climate
Emergency”*



*Justseeds Art
(Photo Courtesy of Justseeds.org)*

Along with promoting social justice in education, these type of Art Build events promote community, something many of the workshop participants enjoyed, including Michele Femc-Bagdell, who said, “Art is a wonderful way to voice change and bring people together.”

These kinds of events have the ability to bring students and teachers together, something everyone in their community should value. If teachers and students are working together instead of against each other, especially towards common causes they’re both passionate about, I don’t think anything will stop them.

Danielle Filipiak, Director of Secondary English Education, summed up this workshop with some powerful statements. When asked why social change should be promoted in education, she simply replied, “Why shouldn’t it?” Danielle recognizes that education should be used as a platform for social change because educating on social justice is intricately involved in everyone’s lives, and the fight for social justice should be too.

She concluded by saying, “Things aren’t going to get better until we come to terms with the gross inequalities in this country,” and incredible Art Builds like *Justseeds* and the dedicated artists working for them are committed to using art to highlight those issues, and with teachers’ help, education to justify them.

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CWP and Neag School of Education Continue Letters about Literature, Despite Loss of Funding

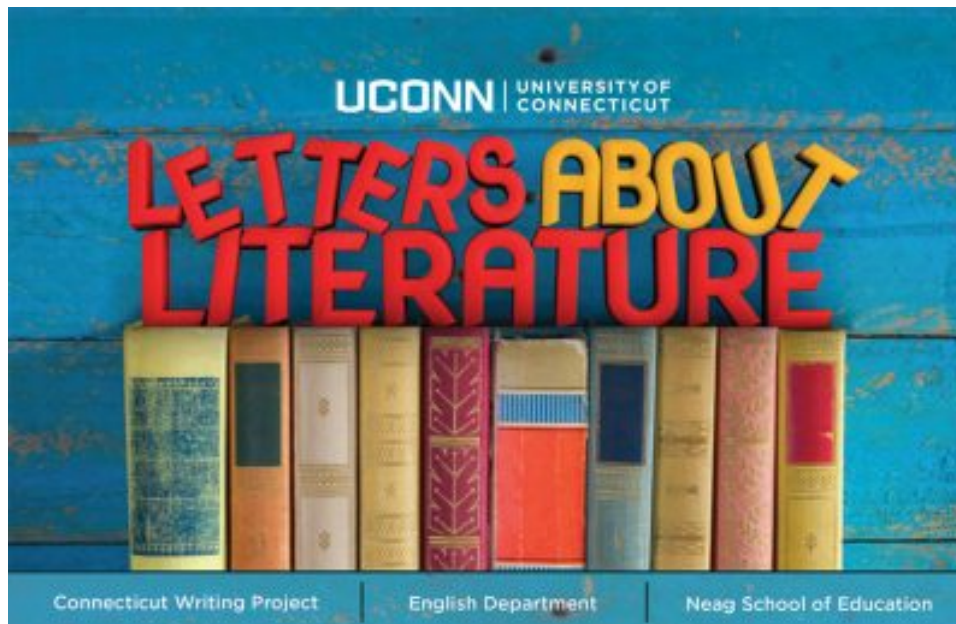
by Megan Goldstein
CWP Intern

Letters about Literature has lost its national funding from the Library of Congress after 27 years of supporting literacy and education for students. However this is not the end of the program in Connecticut, as the CWP and the Neag School of Education are working together to keep it running.

Letters about Literature is a program that allows students, from grades 4 to 12, to write a letter to the author of a book, poem, or speech that personally impacted them. The contest used to be done on a national level as it was sponsored by the Library of Congress with the support of a grant from Dollar General. This is the program's first year without national funding, and it is now run on a state level. In the 27 years that it was running, over 1 million students participated in the contest nationally.

"K-12 students (undergraduates, too) need to write for real audiences and purposes. [Letters about Literature] provides those two things," says CWP director Jason Courtmanche. It is important to continue programs that give students these sorts of opportunities, as studies have shown that there are many positive effects associated with them. This is why the CWP continues to sponsor contests and publications such as *Connecticut Student Writers*, *Teacher-Writer*, the Scholastic Writing Awards, as well as Letters About Literature.

Letters about Literature is not the only program that has lost its funding under today's administration, as the National Writing Project has also had its federal funding taken away. Courtmanche, has had to implement changes in how he runs the CWP to make up for the loss of funding. He says, "without the grant funds to run professional development in schools, I have



shifted the CWP’s focus to place more emphasis on publishing student writing and on supporting pre-service teachers.”

Without being sponsored by the Library of Congress, Letters about Literature loses not only the funds that they were given, but also the logistical support. The money previously allotted to the CWP was replaced by the Neag School of Education, UConn’s English Department, and the CWP, however all the operational work that goes into running the program is now done by the CWP. Courtmanche says, “now the program requires more coordination among colleges, departments, and programs, and more volunteer labor from both in-service and pre-service teachers—which is hard and time-consuming to coordinate, but has some upsides, too.”

Logistically the Library of Congress previously had a contract with the online submission platform Submittable, and did all of the first-round judging, which is usually between 1000 and 1500 submissions. Since they no longer do so, Shawn Kornegay of Neag and Courtmanche have been able to recruit about 40 people to judge the first round from Neag, the CWP, and ECE. Once the number of submissions is reduced to about 10%, the final judging and determination of winners will be done by pre-service teachers. In terms of the submission platform, Courtmanche had to pay \$4,000 for a contract with Submittable; however, it will also be used for other CWP contests, such as submissions to *Connecticut Student Writers* and the Teacher-Consultant Writing Contest, and applications to the Summer Institute.

Courtmanche credits the Neag School of Education and Early College Experience program for helping and supporting the CWP as they take on these projects. He names Brian Boecherer from the ECE, and Joe Masaus, Doug Kaufman, and Shawn Kornegay from Neag School of Education for their help supporting the writing contests. Both programs have also

supplied funding and personnel to continue the CWP’s focus on publishing student writing and supporting teachers. Courtmanche also thanks Bob Hasenfratz and UConn’s English Department for supporting the CWP.



*CWP Director Jason Courtmanche
(Photo Courtesy of CWP)*



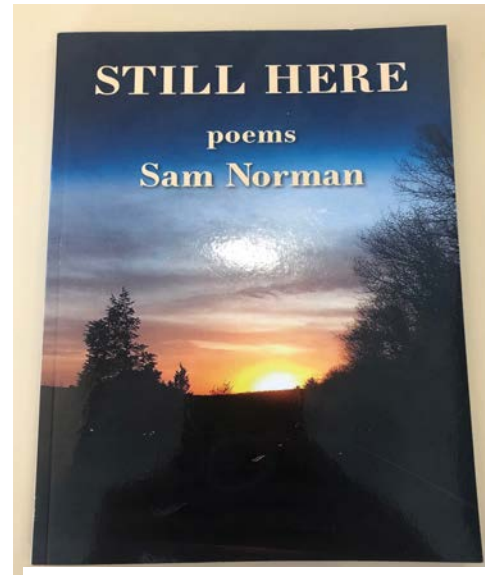
*Doug Kaufman
(Photo Courtesy of Neag School of Education)*

Writing as the Release

by Mary Zaborowski
CWP Intern

When I think of vulnerability and strength, there is one person that comes to my mind. I recently sat down with Sam Norman, loving father, husband, and author of new book, *Still Here*. Sam lives in Coventry, Connecticut, and has taught English at Bacon Academy in Colchester for seventeen years. When Sam first graduated from Clark University, teaching was not on his mind. In fact, he had actually worked with computers at Aetna for ten years before he decided to make a major career change. Since then, Sam has, “never regretted changing professions,” and he now, “wake[s] up in the morning wanting to go to work.” When asked what his favorite thing about teaching is, Sam smiled and replied, “Where else can you read, talk about books, and hang out with some really cool kids?” From his time in CWP’s Summer Institute, Sam has learned more about authentic writing and in-person peer editing, something he now incorporates into his English classes. He wants his students to realize that you don’t have to be an incredible writer to write, and you don’t necessarily need to be an incredible writer to be a great editor. Sam recently published his first book of poetry titled *Still Here*. Before this publication, Sam had written maybe three poems in the last ten years. But one night changed the course of Sam’s life forever.

On December 31st, 2018, Sam’s son, Benjamin Edward Norman, lost his life in a weather-related automobile accident at the age of 20. Ben was enlisted in the Navy and had soon after been selected to participate in an extremely trying and difficult nuclear propulsion training program. Not only was he



Still Here

(Photo Courtesy of Mary Zaborowski)



Benjamin Norman

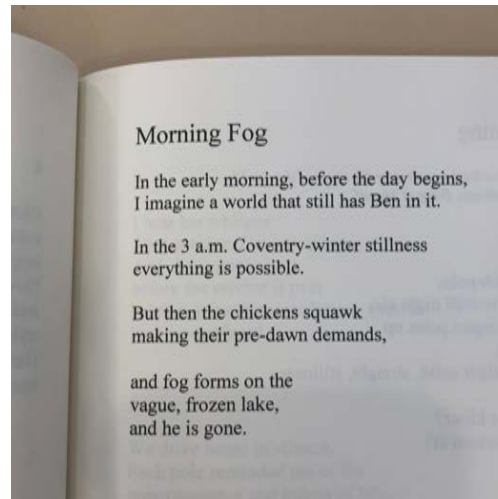
(Photo Courtesy of Legacy.com)

an incredibly smart and upstanding young man, Ben also had a certain light inside him. His father elaborated, saying he was such a “warm, kind, loving person,” and that, “he was the kind of kid that made everyone feel loved and appreciated.” Over 800 people attended Ben’s funeral, including over 60 sailors and captains from his Navy base, which clearly speaks for itself. He was so, so loved.

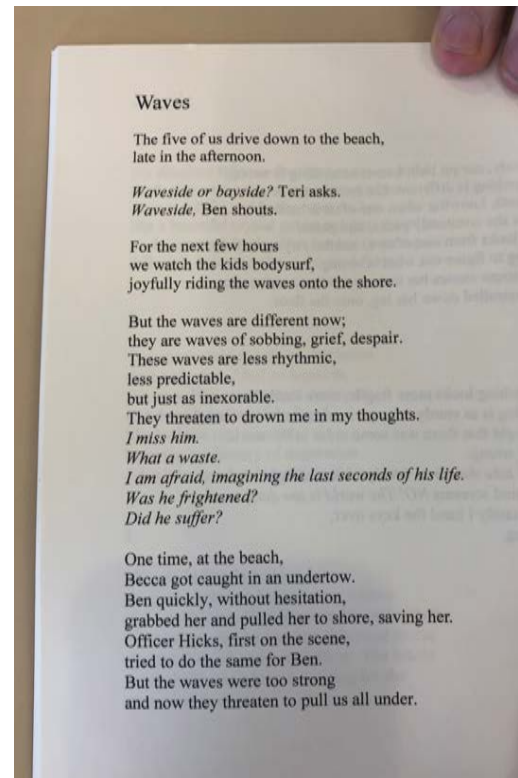
In the wake of this tragedy, Sam needed an outlet, a platform to express what he was going through in this excruciatingly hard time. So on January 2nd, he wrote his first poem, titled “Stained Glass.” After that, Sam said, “I could not stop. I could not stop writing.” He was writing 2-3 poems a day for about two and a half months, as if he were “divinely inspired” to do so. Sam barely slept; he wrote in the middle of the night as well. His poems just “came out” which Sam admitted was really, really strange considering his other poems came to fruition after many years, and many drafts. Not only that, when Sam wrote these poems, not a single poem took more than one sitting. When he was done, he was simply done. He even admits that he has barely written since.

Soon after Sam started writing, one of his mentors, John Stanizzi, took a look at some of his poems and seeing the potential they had, encouraged Sam to put together a manuscript. Sam originally had no intention of publishing any of his poems. For him, poetry was cathartic; a way to release his thoughts and feelings onto paper. But Stanizzi was the driving force behind *Still Here*, and now that it’s published, Sam has decided to dedicate all proceeds from his book to an annual scholarship fund created in honor of Ben at Coventry High School (which already has thousands of dollars in it).

When I asked Sam if he would suggest writing as a good coping method for people,



“Morning Fog”
(Photo Courtesy of Mary Zaborowski)



“Waves”
(Photo Courtesy of Mary Zaborowski)

he enthusiastically replied that he would, because it's great therapy. He also admits that he "[doesn't] really hold back," which is evident in some of his favorite poems like, "Fragile," "Absences," "Petty Bitterness," and "Still Here," a few that he holds closest to his core. After pausing for a second, Sam said, "I honestly don't know what I would have done without writing." He wants people grieving over the loss of a loved one to know that they're not alone, and he hopes his book will be able to help people in similar situations. To those in mourning, Sam advises you to not let anybody tell you how to grieve, for there is no time limit for grieving. "I'm no expert. I just wrote," he threw in with a smile.

As I was saying my goodbyes, I told Sam that I was honored to have interviewed him, for he is an incredible man and I'm sure his son was a beyond incredible young man, too. Smiling at the ground, Sam said, "Yeah, he really was, he really was..." and as he looked back up, he shrugged and simply said, "and he's still here."

Colson Whitehead

By Amanda Flaschbart
English Teacher, South Windsor High School

On Thursday September 26, author Colson Whitehead gave a lecture at the Konover Auditorium in the *Dodd Research Center*. Whitehead began by recounting his history as a writer, beginning with his early childhood in Manhattan where he enjoyed time indoors and tracing his way through his writing challenges during his early adulthood. His wry, sometimes self-deprecating humor was infused throughout; while discussing his perceived failures as a writer, he questioned whether he should have instead considered careers as a surgeon or a pianist, given his long fingers. Ultimately Whitehead published his first book, *The Intuitionist*, an award-winning novel featuring an elevator inspector as its protagonist. Whitehead went on to write six more novels, including *The Underground Railroad*, which earned him the Pulitzer Prize in 2017.

Whitehead then discussed *Nickel Boys*, his most recent novel, which primarily takes place at a reform school in Jim Crow-era Florida. Whitehead stated that he first conceived of the idea after reading a newspaper article about the school upon which *Nickel Boys* is based. In fact, he hadn't wanted to write another novel about race so soon after *The Underground Railroad*, but once he stumbled upon this newspaper clipping, he postponed his initial plans to write a crime novel, feeling a need to "work out how to live in Trump's America." Whitehead shared that the two protagonists of *Nickel Boys*, Turner and Elwood, represent opposing parts of himself (he also noted that Cora, the strong and rebellious protagonist of *Underground Railroad*, has very few elements of himself). *Nickel Boys*, Whitehead explained, explores different ways in which people engage with ideas like hope, safety, and freedom. Following his lecture, Whitehead engaged in a Q&A session, during which he covered several additional topics, including his writing process and his current writing project. Whitehead's combination of challenging and mature topics such as race with his frequent humor created an engaging and meaningful experience with one of our nation's most important writers.

Jon Andersen's *Augur* a Finalist for CT Book Awards

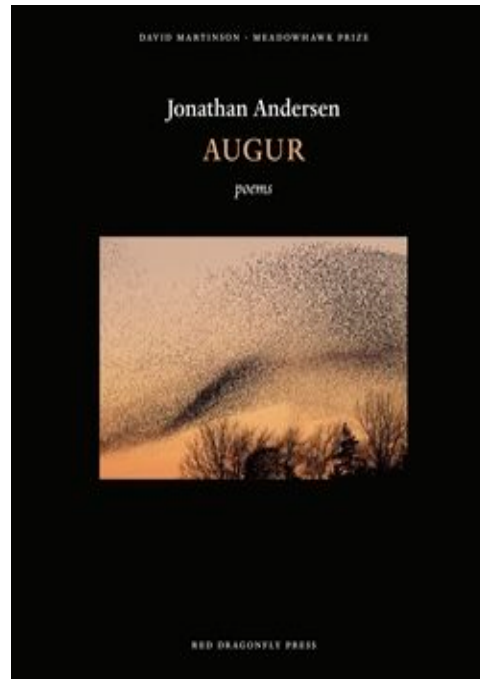
by Megan Goldstein
CWP Intern

Jon Andersen (SI 09) is “thrilled” that his poetry collection *Augur* was among the 3 finalists for the poetry category of the CT Book Awards. His first full length collection in 13 years, *Augur*, was published by Red Dragonfly Press in 2018. Although he did not ultimately win the contest, with Cortney Davis’s book *Taking Care of Time* receiving the prize, he was still honored to be a contestant.

Andersen was inspired to form a collection when he noticed that many of his poems dealt with “the confusion in the world which then filters down to all of our personal lives.” He will write a significant number of poems throughout the years and then go back and look for thematic possibilities: “After a certain point I look back at the work to see if I can find connections, threads that I can pull on, things that are running through the varied poems.” By doing this he is able to find themes that tie his poems together, and thus an overarching theme for a collection. Once he has a starting point, Andersen views the theme as a writing prompt and will write poems to specifically fill in gaps and areas that need more.

A professor at QVCC, Andersen was able to get a sabbatical for a semester to focus only on writing and research, which allowed him to ultimately finish *Augur*. He said, “I put in a lot of time, it was terrific. I was very fortunate and I spent a good chunk of time just working on this collection.”

The idea for a title was inspired by William Blake’s poem “The Auguries of Innocence.” The augurs in ancient Rome were seers or prophets who would read natural signs, such as bird patterns, and then determine what



“Augur”
(Photo Courtesy of Jon Anderson)



Jon Anderson
(Photo Courtesy of Jon Anderson)

it meant in terms of their society. Andersen does not claim to be an augur, yet with the pressing issue of climate change he thinks we all need to observe the signs. “I think the point of [*Augur*] is that everyone has to be reading the signs. We don’t want to be Rome; it’s everyone’s job to figure out what is going on and do something.” Andersen believes that the prospect of climate change “has to have an impact on the anxiety that we see in young people right now. And it might be hard to tease that out scientifically but it’s all there, and in [my] poems I find myself metaphorically or literally reading signs a lot”

Andersen describes his books as “eclectic,” and says “I just try to be open to whatever comes my way.” For an example of how he finds inspiration for writing, he shared a story with me about how he was facing writers block and couldn’t come up with anything to write, so his wife challenged him to write a poem about a strange dark circle that was on their lawn. “It’s called a fairy ring, it’s a dark circle that appeared in our lawn; we didn’t know what it was, so it was kind of magical in a way, and it turns out to be a certain kind of fungus, so that was kind of funny,” he says.

He likes to think of writing as a way of thinking and knowing, and encourages his students at QVCC to do so as well, saying “there’s something about writing, [where] you write your way into your thoughts and then what you say sparks something else.” Although it is challenging to balance writing poetry with teaching, Andersen is able to draw upon his job for his writing. He says, “on one hand [teaching] detracts from energy and time to write but paradoxically it’s also what I draw from. I feel very fortunate to have a job that I find very meaningful. I draw on that and on the world I live in, and so it takes more time [to produce collections].”

Andersen believes that it is very important for students to be exposed to poetry. He likes to do an exercise in his class where he will ask if anyone dislikes music, and no hands will go up; then he asks if anyone dislikes poetry, and some students raise their hands. “My point is that there are so many different kinds of music you know, and it’s the same thing with poetry—you probably just haven’t been exposed to the poems that speak to you yet, or the kinds of poems.” Since poetry has so many forms and can be written in many different styles, one just needs to find the poems that move them.

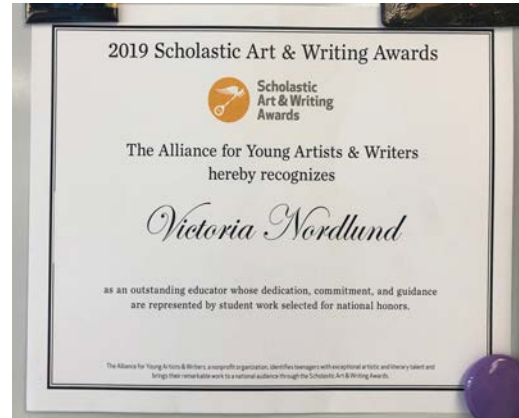
Teaching has been very meaningful to Andersen and he believes that engaging with his students in turn teaches him. He told me, “you never learn something so deeply as when you go to teach it. You could be an absolute expert but then when you actually go to see it and try to see it through the lens of someone who isn’t an expert you realize [new] things about it.” He told me about how going through the CWP Summer Institute introduced him to great conversations about the concept of “teacher as writer.” At the institute, he began work on a novel, the process of which helped him realize what it is like for one “to come up against the wall of your ability at that point and feel that frustration and work through it, gives you more empathy for what your students are going through.” He also credits his wife, who is also an English teacher, for keeping him excited about life; since they are both engaged in writing and teaching, they are able to support and encourage each other in both their lives and their writing.

Fighting for Creativity in the Curriculum

by Mary Zaborowski
CWP Intern

In most high schools, the same old structured 5-paragraph essay pervades every English classroom. But Vicki Nordlund, a teacher at Rockville High School for thirty years, wants to change that. Vicki runs an extremely successful creative writing program for her students, and her efforts do not go unrecognized. This year alone, Vicki has 79 students enrolled in the program; some of which have participated in the program all four years of high school. As freshmen, they start with introduction courses about poetry, play-writing, and various genres. Over time, they work up to harder classes like Advanced Creative Writing and by their senior year, some students enroll in the Humanity Scholar Program, a program that not only encourages creative writing, but promotes leadership as well. Students write books, skype with authors, and set up workshops for middle schoolers in order to promote creative writing in more grade levels.

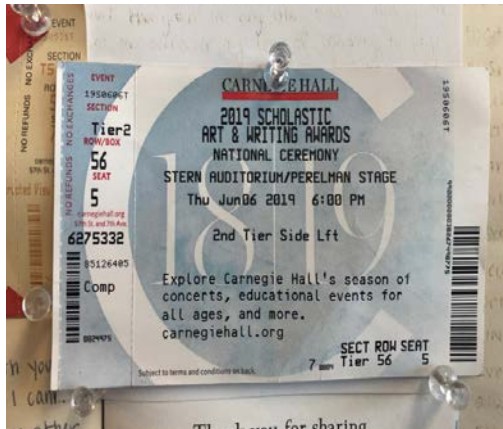
Due to the success of Rockville High School's Creative Writing Program, it isn't surprising that Vicki's students dominate in the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards contest. Held every year to honor students in grades 7-12's creative achievements, the contest gives teens a chance to showcase their artistic or literary skills through submissions of writing and/or artwork. According to Vicki, the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards have, "become part of Rockville culture," with students eager to submit their work every year and get a chance to attend Carnegie Hall for the awards ceremony, an event sometimes attended by celebrities like Meryl Streep, Sarah Jessica Parker, Alec Baldwin, and other



*Certificate of Recognition from
Scholastic
(All Photos Courtesy of Mary
Zaborowski)*



*Various Gold and Silver Medals Won
by Vicki's Students*



Ticket into Carnegie Hall



Newspaper Clippings Honoring Vicki's Students

people of notoriety who support the arts. Vicki's students have gone to Carnegie Hall every year except for one since 2008. When asked how she produces such a great turnout every year, Vicki simply credits her program, saying its high enrollment and students' great exposure to creative writing is rare in other schools. Her students work with plays, poetry, and short stories, so they don't mess around when it comes to the contest. Smiling, Vicki says, "It's big for them."

Just last year, her students alone won: 12 gold keys, 33 silver keys, 50 honorable mentions, 2 silver writing portfolios, 1 gold medal for dramatic script, 1 gold medal for poetry, 2 silver medals for poetry, and had 9 people published in the CT Student Writer. If that isn't enough, Rockville High School won the most national medals in the state of CT, and won the most awards of any participating high school in New England! Now that CT has its own region for the Scholastic Writing Awards, even more students are being honored for their achievements. Before CT had its own region, Carnegie Hall wouldn't honor students who won silver medals, which Vicki found "outrageous." She wants all of her students' hard work to be recognized, and is thankful that they can finally receive recognition at the regional ceremony.

When asked if she thinks it's important for kids to participate in creative writing contests, Vicki responded affirmatively saying, "It gives them an audience to write for beyond my classroom walls," and allows the students to say, "I got my voice out there," which can often be a struggle for high school students who may not even know what their voice is yet. Vicki continued saying that she doesn't understand why teachers and school systems don't stress creative writing enough, for creative writing goes directly hand in hand with social-emotional learning— a method more schools

are trying to adopt. Social-emotional learning is a type of learning that stresses a more positive relationship between adults and children, in which both parties understand and manage their emotions better while feeling and showing empathy for others. It helps kids feel more connected and understood by teachers in all aspects of their lives, not just in their role as students. Vicki thinks creative writing provides a space where writers can share work and experiences with each other, thus creating a respectful community of love and support among students.

When I asked Vicki what advice she would give teachers trying to increase participation in writing contests, she said that teachers must first fight to incorporate creative writing into the English curriculum more. Writing should be more fun for students; teachers should stray from the typical 5-paragraph essays and truly allow their students to have a voice. She also said that contests shouldn't always be separate from the classroom; teachers should be helping their students get involved by truly helping them every step of the way. Her class, for example, raises money to cover entry fees for kids as more of an incentive to get them to participate in the contest. In Vicki's experience, creative writing has allowed her to check in with her students, and she thinks if teachers "create a safe environment where you care about students' well-beings, they'll work for you." Creative writing is more than a curriculum; it's a platform. It's a platform that students can use to express themselves in a safe environment where they feel respected and cared for. School shouldn't solely be about education. It should also be about community and support. Vicki Nordlund's creative writing program legacy at Rockville High reveals that.



Vicki's Classroom



Vicki's Classroom

The Winding Road to Success

by Mary Zaborowski
CWP Intern

Coming to terms with one's true passion in life can be a very difficult process, full of many different winding roads and detours. For Megan Murphy, her road to a Secondary English Education degree has been rocky but rewarding, full of many valuable life lessons along the way. Megan Murphy is currently a Special Education teacher at Enfield High School. However, she originally got her Bachelor's degree with a double major in Elementary Education and Special Education (or SPED). After one year of working at the elementary level, Megan decided to move up to High School SPED.

When asked why she wanted to teach Special Education, Megan replied that she always liked helping people, and SPED was the best way to do that. She wanted to make a more inclusive environment and have an impact on the kids she taught, and Megan says that her SPED kids are "the best part of my school. They're so loving and carefree." Megan loves not only having an impact on the students, but on their parents/families too, for when you help the child, you help the family as well. Megan says some of the best parts of teaching SPED are enjoying the incredibly close bonds you form with the students and their families.

Megan recently moved up to SPED at the high school level because she liked the structure of having one classroom where she could work with the same group of kids all day. She was also a member of Best Buddies in college, an international nonprofit that is dedicated to, "ending the social, physical, and economic isolation of the 200 million people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)" by creating one-on-one friendships, chances at employment, and leadership opportunities for people with IDD (bestbuddies.org). When Megan arrived at Enfield High School, she realized that they didn't have a Best Buddies club, so one of her first projects upon arrival was to bring the organization to Enfield, which she followed through with, becoming the club's advisor.

Last summer, Megan was convinced to attend the Connecticut Writing Project's Summer Institute by one of her Neag teachers, Kelly Babcock. Megan originally thought the institute was too "Englishy" for her, but they promised they'd fit it into her program, for at the time, she was pursuing a Master's degree in Reading. However, after attending the Summer Institute and hanging out with other high school English teachers, Megan was fascinated with what they were doing in their classrooms. The work she did in the Summer Institute sparked a flame inside her; one which reminded her of the love for reading and writing she had when she was younger. It was after the Summer Institute that Megan decided to change her Master's degree from reading to Secondary English Education, and is now en route to become a high school English teacher!

This change, however, didn't come without its obstacles. While pursuing her Master's degree, Megan was working full-time as a SPED teacher at Enfield High School. She describes this process as "brutal," for she was a full-time teacher and grad student, working every day at Enfield, then traveling to UConn three times a week for night classes. However, Megan was relieved, saying, "I'm so happy I got it over with, because now I have my Secondary English Ed degree!" With her new certification, Megan would love to teach high school, juniors specifically, and lead a creative writing course. She'd also love to continue to advise Best Buddies, for SPED kids will always continue to have a special place in Megan's heart.

Megan is a shining example of someone who didn't let their dreams stay dreams. Upon discovery of her true passion for reading and writing as well as teaching, Megan did all she could to make it happen, persevering through many insanely hard nights of being a full-time teacher while simultaneously working towards her Master's. Her hard work and dedication to making her dreams a reality is truly inspiring.

The Connecticut Writing Project (CWP)

The CWP-Storrs, one of the oldest sites of the National Writing Project, was established at the University of Connecticut in 1982. Since 1986, the site has benefitted from funding the Aetna Endowed Chair of Writing. Through its annual Invitational Summer Institute, the CWP offers opportunities for professional growth to teachers in all disciplines who recognize the worth of using writing as a means of learning any subject matter. Improving writing skills improves thinking skills and this leads to higher levels of achievement in all areas. In addition, the CWP offers professional development services to schools and school districts, and a variety of opportunities for students to publish their writing.

Connecticut Writing Project

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