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Upcoming Important Dates:
- MA program in English for Teachers - Applications due Jan 1, 2013
- 2013 Summer Institute application deadline - March 22, 2013
- Connecticut Student Writers 25th Anniversary Gala - May 14, 2013

To Make a Donation to the Connecticut Writing Project please visit:
http://cwp.uconn.edu/donations.php
Our Kids, Ourselves: More Than Just Sympathy for the Victims

There are hundreds of schools and thousands of teachers throughout the state, but ultimately the profession is a small community, and little distance separates us from one another. There’s probably not one of you reading this who is more than one or two degrees of separation from the teachers at Sandy Hook. I have two former students working at the high school. My uncle, a long-time principal in New Haven, was close to Dawn Hochsprung. A cousin who lives in Newtown has a first grader at another school in town. The teachers who died—Dawn, Rachel, Vicki, Anne Marie, Lauren, and Mary—were educated at UConn, Eastern, Central, St. Joseph, and UHart, among other places. How many of us have gotten one or more degrees from these schools? How many of us attended classes with these women, taught these women, or studied with the same professors as these women? If we didn’t know these women ourselves, we all know someone who did.

We all mourn the loss of the children as if they were our own. Those six- and seven-year-olds could have been my six-year-old or any of the other children I see in the hallways every morning when I drop off my kids. Even those of us without biological children or who teach older kids, we still see in those faces the younger versions of our students. We see them in the flashback photos the kids’ parents send in for the senior yearbook. We see them in the sloppy handwriting from the 8th grade letters they wrote to themselves that their middle school teachers send to us to distribute to the seniors each spring. We see them everywhere.

My mother taught mostly first grade for 36 years, and she always says that she never gets angry with difficult strangers or rude customer service workers because every time she looks in their faces she sees the child whose parents were going through a divorce or the one who couldn’t quite master tying his shoe or the one who simply didn’t get enough sleep last night. She sees the child they were. And this is how we know these kids. They are ours as surely as they are the children of their actual classroom teachers.

But we also mourn the loss of our fellow teachers because they are our friends and our colleagues. They are the masterful veteran teacher who mentored you when you were just starting out. They are the passionate newbie across the hall who looks to you like little more than a child herself. They are the good administrator you loved working for. They are the compassionate school psychologist you could always send a troubled kid to see.

And they could have been us. We know this, too. I think of the two times my uncle took guns off boys at Wilbur Cross High School back in the 1980s when cocaine gangs ran amok in the city. Or the time my wife stood nose-to-nose with an angry young man who wanted to confront his girlfriend in her class. Amy stood her ground in the doorway, bodily preventing him from entering, and when he threatened to hit her, she told him he’d have to if he thought he was going to get into her room, and he backed down and stormed off. Who among us hasn’t had to deal with an infuriated parent, school board member, or student? How many of us have had to break up fights or deal with some type of violent outburst from a child, even a small one? You deal with these situations all the time. A year never goes by, even in the toniest of school districts, without at least a couple such incidents. We never expect this level of escalation or randomness, but the threat of violence is ever-present. But the public rarely hears about it. At best, we commiserate amongst ourselves and hope tomorrow’s a better day. One colleague of mine used to say, “The civilians would never understand.

Right now, the teachers from Sandy Hook are being justly praised for their courage and their compassion. The stories that continue to emerge are simultaneously heart-breaking and heart-warming. Honestly, though, I know most if not all of you would have done the same in their shoes. It goes without saying.
Two teacher consultants, Denise Abercrombie and Jon Andersen, attended the 49th International Writers Conference in Serbia this summer. About the experience, Andersen writes:

Sponsored by the Serbian Writers' Association, the 49th International Writers Conference was established by Ivo Andrić, using the money he received with the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1961. Our work became known to Dragan Dragojlevic, a poet and past Minister of Culture of the former Yugoslavia, through James Scully, Professor Emeritus of English at the University of Connecticut, who has attended the conference previously, and through the work of Curbstone Press, which published my first book and Dragojlevic's book of poems, Death's Homeland, in 2008. Curbstone's late founder Alexander Taylor was a popular poet in the former Yugoslavia.

The conference began in Belgrade, with 45 writers from 25 different countries around the world participating in large readings and events held over a period of a couple of days. The large group then split into smaller groups to tour different parts of Serbia, giving readings and meeting people. Denise and I travelled with four other poets to eastern Serbia, seeing the beautiful countryside and visiting the towns of Krujevac and Zajecar, as well as seeing the significant Roman ruins in Gamizgrad. The Serbs produce much of their food from their own fertile land, including vegetables, meat, and dairy products; but, when we were there, the land was currently in distress from months of record drought.

In preparation for our trip, Denise and I researched the country and its history; we were especially interested in trying to understand what led to breakup of Yugoslavia, what happened in Serbia under Milosevic in the 1990s, and the circumstances around the NATO bombings. Our research and our talks with people in the country provided a fuller picture than what we remembered from that decade. The Serbs to whom we talked had as varied political viewpoints as Americans do; but almost everyone we met expressed a similar sentiment: pain and sometimes bewilderment that the Serb people who fought so valiantly against the Nazis and who sacrificed so much would then come to be equated with Nazis in the eyes of much of the world. To be sure, there were horrible atrocities committed by ultra-nationalists and paramilitaries, especially against Muslims and ethnic Albanians. But there were also many gross distortions and fabrications that were revealed later. We also tended to get a one-sided picture in the West, smearing all Serbs with these crimes and almost completely ignoring the war crimes and ongoing persecution of Serbs. There is a lot of grief over this history and this situation, in which Serbs are so isolated economically from the rest of the world. But there is also a lot of joy and resilience and celebration. The spirit of the conference—bringing together writers from across Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and South America—is one of healing and understanding.

On October 5, 2012, UConn hosted its 5th Annual Conference for Secondary School Writing Centers, sponsored by the University Writing Center and the Connecticut Writing Project. There were 120 participants representing 17 Connecticut middle and high schools. Presentations and interactive workshops focused on the philosophy of peer tutoring, as well as on pragmatic strategies for starting writing centers and training tutors.

After a warm welcome from Tom Deans, Director of the University Writing Center, and Jason Courtmanche, Director of the Connecticut Writing Project, students from Windham High School, Ashford School, and E.O. Smith High School took to the stage to perform skits and to showcase videos that provide insight into the work that occurs in their centers. The students and teachers then moved to breakout sessions where they discussed goal planning and writing center philosophy with the help of several UConn Writing Center tutors. As the morning came to a close, all participants returned to the theater to share some of what they had learned from their peers and fellow tutors.

The conference is held each October and all are welcome—both schools with writing centers in operation and those still exploring the idea. Schools typically come with one or two teachers and about ten students who are current or prospective peer tutors. Details and registration information for the next conference will be posted on the University Writing Center website in August.

Those interested in learning more about this program may contact Jason Courtmanche at jason.courtmanche@uconn.edu or Tom Deans at tom.deans@uconn.edu.
CWP Teachers Recognized at Aetna Awards Night

By Lindsey Volz

The Aetna Writing Prize Program held their awards night on Thursday, October 25, 2012 at 7PM in the Konover Auditorium. Tom Deans and Margaret Breen were the first speakers starting off the 23rd annual Aetna Awards ceremony. Breen introduced the night as “the signature event to celebrate the writing of students and teachers.”

After awarding the winners for the Kathleen Gibson McPeek Scholarship, Aetna prizes for Freshman Writing and Writing in the Disciplines, the awards night proceeded with Jason Courtmanche, CWP director, acknowledging the 2012 Summer Institute fellows. Courtmanche explained how, in past years, there has always been a chapbook that published writing from the Summer Institute; during his directorship, however, he moved to have a more formal journal that better showcased the writing of the Summer Institute fellows, of writer-retreat participants, and of the teacher-consultant Writing Contest award winners.

The CWP offers three categories for submissions to their teacher-consultant writing contest: poetry, prose fiction, and prose nonfiction. Jane Cook received the prize for both prose fiction and prose nonfiction. Her flash fiction piece, “Not on Schedule,” was inspired by a National Public Radio topic for three-minute fiction on the topic of someone coming and someone going. Cook's second piece, “Top Ten Reasons for Not Writing,” was inspired by a Summer Institute round table. Cook is also a nominee for the NEATE poet of the year, with her submission of another Summer Institute-inspired poem. She currently works part-time in Windham, improving student literacy. Elizabeth Amburn received the prize for poetry, with “Heavy Work.” She said the poem was inspired by her interest in new discoveries about space. Amburn completed the 2012 Summer Institute, describing it as “a wonderful experience.” She currently teaches fourth grade at Killingly Memorial School.

Following the announcement of the Graduate Essay Awards, keynote speaker Martha Cutter presented her lecture, titled “Writing for your Life: Or, How a Dirty, Stinking, Smoking Jew finally Came Out.” Cutter described an experience in which she was physically and emotionally harassed by a school bully. She explained how she coped with the bullying by writing in a dialogue journal with her high school English teacher. The written conversation provided her with a safe environment in which to express herself, while still allowing her teacher to reach out to her. Through the journal writing, her teacher encouraged pride in her heritage and told her that she did not have to put up with this bully. Cutter described this teacher as “an amazingly gifted instructor.” Cutter said that although her words are what stopped the bully, her writing is what truly stood up to her. She encouraged the audience to use writing as an intervention, telling them that “We must learn to write for our lives.” Professor Cutter is a member of the English Dept. faculty at UConn, where she teaches courses on African American Literature, Ethnic Literature, and Holocaust in Literature and Film.

Aetna Award Winners

Poetry
First Place
Elizabeth Amburn, “Heavy Work”
Honorable Mentions
Denise Abercrombie, “What I Do When”
David Polochanin, “Some General Advice That Could Go Either Way”

Prose Fiction
First Place
Jane Cook, “Not on Schedule”
Honorable Mention
Kisha G. Tracy, “Reaching Out”

Prose Nonfiction
First Place
Jane Cook, “Top Ten Reasons For Not Writing”
Honorable Mention
Daniel Blanchard, “I Look Out the Window and I Don’t Know What I See”

“We must learn to write for our lives.”
— Martha Cutter, Aetna Awards Keynote Speaker
The 21st annual Connecticut Children’s Book Fair took place on November 10 and 11 in the Rome Ballroom at the University of Connecticut. As a part of this event, several notable authors and illustrators were present to sign books and meet their readers. On Sunday afternoon, four of the authors, Judy Blundell, Kim Harrington, Kirsty McKay, and Sonia Manzano, also met with a group of students from Rockville High School for the “This is Teen” panel, sponsored by Scholastic.

The group of about 20 students, representing mostly juniors and seniors in creative writing classes, had lunch with the authors and attended their presentation at the book fair. The students and authors shared conversations about their writing processes, inspiration for writing, and books they have read for enjoyment and academic purposes. Harrington was able to provide students with some insight into the editing and revising that leads up to publishing. Blundell introduced students to a particular mindset that can be taken to begin writing. She told them, “I sit down with a big piece of paper and think What if this happened? What if that happened?” and also stated that to improve your writing, “you just have to do it a lot.” The students were particularly impressed with Sonia Manzano, as they found out she played the character, Maria, on Sesame Street. Manzano explained that “acting is the exact opposite of writing” because “you can’t know what will happen next.”

At the book fair presentation, each of the authors were introduced and given the opportunity to describe their work and read brief excerpts from their writing. Harrington, who mainly authors mysteries, discussed her work on the Clarity and Sleuth or Dare series as well as her up and coming book Dead and Buried. Blundell discussed her recent work with historical fiction in Strings Attached. This is the story of a 1950s girl in the postwar period. She said the novel centers on “not a feeling of if the bomb is going to be dropped on us, but when.” Kirsty McKay talked about her series Undead. These books are considered a kind of zombie comedy for teens. Sonia Manzano closed the presentation talking about her newly published novel, The Revolution of Evelyn Serrano, the story of a teenage girl growing up in 1960s Harlem amidst the turmoil of protests by The Young Lords. The “This is Teen” panel gave the authors a chance to meet their audience members directly. This event was a great opportunity for the high school students to learn as student-writers and readers.

Future English Teachers Visit Mark Twain House

Jason Courtmanche and his pre-teaching students from his INTD course for Secondary English teachers made a field trip to the Mark Twain House on October 20. Seven students and two instructors attended this trip, the purpose of which was two-fold: to focus on how to take students on field trips and on how to teach controversial texts.

The students were able to take a tour of the house and to attend a workshop on teaching “racist texts” like Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn. Published in 1885, two decades after the Emancipation Proclamation, Huckleberry Finn has been frequently considered somewhat controversial.

Emma Czaplinski, a third semester pre-teaching student, observed that teachers need to face the issue of racism in the text, if they are to teach it effectively. While many would still consider Twain’s novel a “racist text,” Czaplinski prefers to view the novel as progressive. Through the workshop, the students were able to see that Twain created strong African American characters in his novel, actually moving away from the racism of his time. Still, Nicki Covax, a third semester English major, described the importance of looking at the time period in which the book was written. She said the trip “opened my eyes a lot to teaching reading.” Ashley Bernardo, another third semester pre-teaching student, said it is “hard to really know the background you need to explain a book like Huck Finn.” She appreciated the opportunity to learn about explaining the context of such a novel to students.

Sarah Falcetti, the student mentor who arranged and lead the entire field trip for the class, said the workshop was useful in helping students view Huckleberry Finn as a text reflecting “changing values.” Although she was disappointed that some students could not attend because of other obligations, she noted that the students she talked to had only favorable responses to the trip.
Master of Arts Degree for Teachers

The University of Connecticut English Department is currently offering a Master’s of Arts degree in English for teachers. The **MA in English for Teachers** is a graduate degree directed to teachers who already hold a BA in English and wish to pursue a Master’s degree in their content area. Students who have completed the Neag School of Education’s Integrated Bachelor’s/Master’s (IB/M) program in English and Education, or the Teacher Certification Program for College Graduates (TCPCG), are especially encouraged to apply. Applications for Fall 2013 admission are due **January 1**.

The Program:
Students complete thirty-one (31) credits in total: eight regularly scheduled three-credit courses (24 credits), a one-credit research methods course, and one Summer Institute (6 credits) with the Connecticut Writing Project (CWP). Several courses will be offered in the evening to accommodate teachers’ schedules. For the fall 2013 semester, Lynn Bloom will be teaching ENGL 6600-01 Creative Writing Workshop, with a focus on creative non-fiction. For the spring 2014 semester, three other night courses will be offered later in the day. Penelope Pelizzon will be teaching ENGL 6450-01 Special Topics in American Literature, with a focus on three women poets: Moore, Bishop, and Glück. Ellen Litman will be teaching ENGL 6600-01 Creative Writing Workshop, with a focus on fiction. Anna Mae Duane will be teaching ENGL 6750-02 Special Topics in Language and Literature, with a focus on disability studies and the posthuman condition. The days of the week are yet to be determined, but each course will likely be offered in the evening.

Students admitted to the MA program for teachers receive an Aetna Fellowship from the CWP for the Summer Institute, but do not receive a Graduate Assistantship from the English Department. Teachers from High-Need Schools can apply for a fellowship to defray tuition costs. For more information, visit the English Department website, [www.english.uconn.edu](http://www.english.uconn.edu).

2013 CWP Summer Institute

The Connecticut Writing Project at Storrs will be hosting the **2013 Summer Institute, June 24 - July 19, 2013**. This experience is recommended for teachers who wish to grow as writers and to improve the writing experience of their students. Applications are due by **March 22, 2013**.

Through an Aetna Fellowship, participants will receive either six (6) graduate-level credits in English or a $500 stipend. During the Summer Institute, fellows will revise writing in response groups, share knowledge with teachers of all grade levels, conduct graduate-level research on a chosen topic, present a workshop, build leadership skills, and grow as teachers and writers. Prospective fellows are required to submit a one-page letter addressing your teaching philosophy and an area of interest for research, a resume, and two recommendations (preferably one from a Teacher-Consultant).

Every year since 1982, the CWP has invited outstanding teachers from all disciplines and levels of instruction to participate in an Invitational Summer Institute on the Storrs campus. This Summer Institute provides teachers with the opportunity to join a research inquiry group, share their expertise, and compile their own original writing portfolio.

For more information, visit [cwp.uconn.edu](http://cwp.uconn.edu), call 860-846-2328, or email CWP Director Jason Courtmanche at [jason.courtmance@uconn.edu](mailto:jason.courtmance@uconn.edu).
The CWP-Storrs, a site of the National Writing Project, was established at the University of Connecticut in 1982. 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 thus leads to higher levels of achievement in all areas. In addition, the CWP offers services to school districts including contracted professional development sessions, workshops, research mini-grants for teachers, and publication opportunities for teachers and students alike.

2013 Connecticut Student Writers Magazine Call for Submissions

*Connecticut Student Writers* is a statewide magazine that recognizes and promotes student writing in grades K through 12. We are seeking submissions of writing, including poetry, essay, drama, and fiction. This year the magazine will be celebrating twenty-five years of publication!

Published writers and honorable mentions will be recognized at the *CSW 25th Anniversary Gala* at the University of Connecticut’s Jorgensen Auditorium on **Tuesday, May 14, 2013**. The keynote speaker at the Gala event will be *New York Times* bestselling author **Wally Lamb** (*She’s Come Undone, I Know This Much is True*). Lamb was one of the writing judges in the *CSW*’s inaugural issue in 1988.

Published students will receive two complimentary copies of the magazine. Honorable mentions will receive one copy of the magazine. Additional copies will be on sale for $10 at the Gala event. Please visit [http://cwp.uconn.edu/publications/csw.php](http://cwp.uconn.edu/publications/csw.php) for further information concerning submissions. For electronic submissions, please send document files as an email attachment to [cwp@uconn.edu](mailto:cwp@uconn.edu).

The deadline for submissions is **January 25, 2013**.