

The Prairie Voice



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Writing retreat held:

Art Peterson, senior editor for the National Writing Project, consults with



Sharon Kindle-Smith, Missouri Writing Project Teacher Consultant, at Prairie Lands' writing retreat, held at Conception Abbey in June. See story on p.5.

Summer Institute meets:

Geoff Heckman, counselor at Savannah Middle School, conducts a demonstration,



"The Model Family: Writing about and Redefining Family," at Prairie Lands' Invitational Institute. See story on p.6.

Writing camp a success:

Forty-eight children from 16 elementary schools participated in "Living



the Writer's Life" Camp at Missouri Western this June. See story on p.8.

Mini-grant will fund teacher study groups

Prairie Lands Writing Project is one of 10 writing project sites nationwide to be awarded a \$5400 National Reading Initiative mini-grant as a part of the National Writing Project/Carnegie Foundation project to support programs for teachers in grades 4-12 which focus on improving reading comprehension strategies and their connection to writing.

"Reading has acquired a new urgency as teachers in all content areas grapple with state standards and assessments that emphasize comprehension skills and informational texts.

"The NWP mini-grant will allow us to offer two Teacher Learning Communities (TLCs) for teachers, grades 4-16, related to reading during 2004-2005—at no cost to participants," said Jane Frick, Prairie Lands site coordinator.

Diane Watson, Prairie Lands Advisory Board member and reading instructor at Missouri Western, will direct a "READY for READING" TLC for teachers, grades 4-8, which will meet six times throughout the school year in the Prairie Lands conference room at Western, beginning Wednesday, September 22, from 5-7:30 p.m.

Valorie Stokes, Prairie Lands Teacher Consultant, adjunct reading instructor at Missouri Western, and St. Joseph School District Content Area Reading Enhancement Facilitator, will direct a "Reading Inquiry" TLC for teachers, grades 7-16, which will also meet six times throughout the school year at Missouri Western, beginning Wednesday, October 6.

Teachers selected to participate in the TLCs will receive the following:

- ✓ Light dinner during meeting sessions held from 5-7:30 p.m.
- ✓ Books and materials related to reading/teaching reading
- ✓ Two \$100 stipends (payable in December 2004 and May 2005)
- ✓ One hour of graduate credit

"We have space (and moneys) to accept eight teachers in each TLC this fall," said Frick. Any northwest Missouri teacher, grades 4-16, may apply.

Participants should contact Diane Watson (diane.watson@sjsd.k12.mo.us) to sign up for "READY for READING" (deadline is Friday, September 17); to register for "Reading Inquiry," contact Valorie Stokes (valorie.stokes@sjsd.k12.mo.us) before Friday, October 1.

"When Writing Teachers Write III" to be October 13

A "When Writing Teachers Write III" Forum featuring PLWP Teacher Consultants (TCs) reading and/or performing their original writings will begin at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 13, in the Learning Resource Center, Room 102, at Missouri Western (refreshments served).

Hosting this year's event will be Prairie Lands Teacher Consultant (TC) **Stephen Kibler**, Maryville High School speech, drama, and forensics/debate teacher, and a former member of the At Large Comedy Troupe. The event is free and open to the public.

Teacher Consultant Achievements

Awards and Accolades:

✓ **Cindy Heider**, Missouri Western Education professor, is a Missouri Western 2004 Jesse Lee Myers Excellence in Teaching Award recipient, selected for her outstanding teaching and contributions to professional activities and institutional service.

✓ **Kathy Miller**, language arts teacher and MAP senior leader at Fort Osage High School, was selected by her teaching colleagues as that school's 2004 Teacher of the Year.

✓ **Ken Rosenauer**, Missouri Western English, Foreign Languages, and Journalism department chair and English/journalism professor, received Missouri Western's 2004 James V. Mehl Outstanding Faculty Scholarship Award, partially in recognition of the recent publication of his college journalism textbook, *Storycrafting: a process approach to writing news* (Blackwell Publishing, formerly Iowa State Press).

✓ **Diane Watson**, reading instructor at Missouri Western, has been elected to a two-year term as vice president of the St. Joseph School Board.

✓ **Jeanette Westfall** is the St. Joseph School District's 2004 Innovator of the Year. Awarded annually to a St. Joseph teacher for innovation in teaching, Jeanette received this year's \$1000 award for implementing a travel destination writing project for her talented and gifted students at Lafayette High School. Westfall continues to teach the TAG class at Lafayette this fall; she has new duties as a Secondary Instructional Coach for the SJSD.

Publications and Certifications:

✓ **Christine Deihl**, grade five teacher at North Kansas City Northview Elementary School, and one of her teaching colleagues serve as the publishers of the Panther Press at their school. Last spring, over 30 children met every Thursday before school to put out the first issues of the paper "for kids,

created by kids, and written by kids," writes Deihl.

✓ **Roxanna Kerns**, grade four teacher at St. Joseph Hyde Accelerated School, has published a feature story in celebration of a family pet. "Old Rover" appears in *Petwarmers* (available online at www.petwarmers.com).

✓ **Kathy Miller and Jeanette Westfall**, served as a Missouri Assessment Program (MAP) evaluators at this year's communication arts scoring session, held in Liberty, in June.

✓ **Tom Pankiewicz and Betty Sawin**, English professors at Missouri Western, serve on the college's Common Reading task force which selected the text (*Bone Black* by bell hooks) and designed the writing assignment about the book which new students complete during orientation.

Professional Advancements:



Joyce Finch: Queen of Everything

✓ **Joyce Finch**, Prairie Lands' Missouri Writing Projects Network Liaison for 2004-2005, spends most of her evenings these days at her home on Lake Table Rock in southern Missouri. Finch, who retired from teaching in 2003 from St. Joseph's Skaith Accelerated Elementary School, has re-entered the full-time teaching world as a grade six teacher for the Shell Knob School District. Next summer, she will co-direct a National Writing Project Invitational Institute in Springfield, MO, sponsored by the Missouri Writing Projects Network.

At a good-by luncheon held in St. Joseph in July, Prairie Lands' colleagues paid tribute to Finch, recognizing this "Queen of Everything's" generous

camaraderie, wisdom, and insight in all matters related to life and teaching writing!

✓ **Mary Lee Meyer** retired from teaching at the Jefferson 123 School District in Conception Junction last May, leaving her more time to serve as a Media Consultant for Prairie Lands. This fall, Meyer is publishing *Prairie Lands' Writing Retreat and Invitational Institute anthologies in CD ROM format and teaching a graduate course, "Writing and Technology in the Content Area"* (See p. 12).

✓ **Melody Smith** is the St. Joseph School District's new Director of Secondary Education.

✓ **Michele Thomason**, formerly a math teacher at St. Joseph Bode Middle School, is a Secondary Instructional Coach for the district.

New Teaching Assignments for 2004-2005:

✓ **Lisa Thies-Fox** teaches English at Raytown South High School.

✓ **Stefanie Lyle** replaces Thies-Fox at Benton.

✓ **Glory Fagan** moves from teaching English to full-time librarian at Cameron High School.

✓ **Precious Kurth** has moved from Cameron High School to teach English at St. Joseph Lafayette High School.

✓ **Jan Reeder** and ✓ **Joyce Stohr**—teachers at St. Joseph Central High School and Robidoux Middle School during 2003-2004, respectively—have joined the English faculty at North Kansas City Winnetonka High School.

✓ **Mike Loving**—language arts middle school teacher at Albany, MO, during 2003-2004—replaces Stohr at Robidoux Middle School.

✓ **Charlott Bottonff**, French teacher, has moved from St. Joseph Robidoux Middle School to St. Joseph Lafayette High School.

✓ **Michelle O'Connor** is teaching language arts at Lathrop Middle School; during 2003-2004, she taught grades seven and eight for the Mirabile C-1 School District.

Judy Martin remembered:

Dr. Judith L. Martin, director of Prairie Lands Writing Project, 1996 – 1999, and Missouri Western English professor, passed away on May 22, 2004, following a lengthy bout with cancer. Last fall at age 53, she learned that she had a malignant, incurable brain tumor.

“Judy managed to keep her glass ‘half-full’ view of the world. One of her last gifts to her colleagues at Prairie Lands and Missouri Western was a booklet she compiled, ‘Creating and Maintaining a

Positive Attitude.’” said Jane Frick, Prairie Lands’ current director.

“Every work day at Missouri Western, I am reminded of Judy’s leadership and innovation. During her tenure as Writing Project director, she created a renewed focus on professional development, initiated our ongoing partnership with the St. Joseph School District, and established our site’s listserv and Web pages.

“I am especially grateful, however, for the camaraderie of teachers throughout northwest Missouri that Judy initiated. She

was a friend and mentor to so many of us,” said Frick.

A “Guest Book” for Dr. Martin—filled with tributes from former students and writing project colleagues—attests to the profound impact the “writing doctor” had on the lives of the people she touched: www.legacy.com/kansascity/Guestbook.asp?Page=Guestbook&PersonID=2264016 (active as of 9/03/2004).

Memorials in Dr. Martin’s name are being accepted by the MWSC Foundation (4525 Downs Drive; St. Joseph, Missouri 64507 Phone: (816) 271-5655).

Prairie Lands Writing Project Advisory Board

The Advisory Board meets quarterly and serves as this National Writing Project site’s planning and evaluation team.

Directors

Jane Frick - Site

Professor of English - Missouri Western
Email: frick@mwsc.edu

Heidi Mick - Professional Development

English teacher and Forensics Coach -
Platte County High School
Email: mickh@periii.k12.mo.us or
HeidiL_64@hotmail.com

Terri McAvoy - Program

St. Joseph School District Elementary
Representative
Teacher - St. Joseph Skaith Accelerated
Elementary School
Email: theresa.mcavoy@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Thomas Pankiewicz - Institutes

Instructor of English - Missouri Western
Email: pankiew@mwsc.edu

Coordinators

Sara Capra - High School Writing Camp

English teacher - Buchanan R-V High
School
Email: capras@mail.midbuchanan.k12.mo.us

Rebecca Dierking - Writing Retreat

English teacher - Maryville High School
Email: dierreb@maryville.k12.mo.us or
rebeccadierking@yahoo.com

Joyce Finch - Missouri Writing Projects Network

Teacher - Shell Knob Elementary School
Email: finch@mwsc.edu

Tina Janc - Writing Groups

Communication arts chair and English
teacher - St. Joseph Benton High School
Email: tina.janc@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Mary Lee Meyer - Media

Retired in May 2004 from teaching and
serving as technology coordinator -
Jefferson C-123 School District
Email: lucki13@grm.net

Vickey Meyer - Writing Groups

English and creative writing teacher - St.
Joseph Central High School
Email: vickey.meyer@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Dawn Smith - Prairie Voice Online

Communication arts chair and English
teacher - St. Joseph Central High School
Email: dawn.smith@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Valorie Stokes - Reading Initiative

Content Area Reading Enhancement
Facilitator - St. Joseph School District
and adjunct reading instructor - MWSC
Email: valorie.stokes@sjsd.k12.mo.us OR
vszstokes@msn.com

Invitational Institute Representatives

Lynn Tushaus - 2001

Science teacher - Savannah High School
Email: DLTushaus@netscape.net
lynn@savannah.k12.mo.us

Stephen Kibler - 2002

Speech, drama, and debate/forensics
teacher/coach - Maryville High School
Email: KiblSte@maryville.k12.mo.us

Joyce Stohr - 2003

Language arts teacher - North Kansas
City Winnetonka High School
Email: Jstohr@nkcsd.k12.mo.us OR
jstohr78@yahoo.com

Regional Representatives

Christine Deihl - Southern

Teacher at Northview Elementary School
- North Kansas City

Email: Cdeihl@nkcsd.k12.mo.us OR
Trimbletiger@aol.com

Jan Reeder - Southern

Language arts teacher - North Kansas
City Winnetonka High School
Email: Jreeder@nkcsd.k12.mo.us

Debra Schwebach - Central

English teacher at Lathrop High School
Email: jldss@yahoo.com

Jeanne Rost - Northern

Part-time English teacher at Savannah
High School
Email: jeanne@savannah.k12.mo.us

St. Joseph School District Representatives

Melody Smith - Administration

Director of Secondary Education
Email: melody.smith@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Amy Grier - Middle

Gifted education teacher - Bode Middle
School
Email: amy.grier@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Laura Nelson

Secondary Communication Arts
Coordinator (grades 7 - 12), and
English teacher - Central High School
Email: laura.nelson@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Diane Watson - School Board

Reading Instructor - Missouri Western
Email: diane.watson@sjsd.k12.mo.us

Missouri Western Representatives

Cindy Heider

Assistant Professor of Education
Email: heider@mwsc.edu

Dawn Terrick

Instructor of English and
Developmental Writing Coordinator
Email: terrick@mwsc.edu

National Writing Project Connections

MWPN retreat held in Columbia in August

Eleven Prairie Lands Writing Project site leaders participated in the Missouri Writing Projects Network's (MWPN) Leadership Retreat, funded by a National Writing Project (NWP) State Networks Grant, and held in Columbia, August 5 – 7.

Representing Prairie Lands at the retreat were **Jane Frick**, site director and MWPN assistant director; **Rebecca Dierking**, writing retreat coordinator; **Joyce Finch**, MWPN liaison; **Christie Hofmeister**, youth writing program assistant; **Theresa McAvoy**, program director; **Mary Lee Meyer**, media coordinator; **Heidi Mick**, professional development director; **Tom Pankiewicz**, institutes director; **Kelly Robb**, in-services assistant; **Debbie Schwebach**, Advisory Board member; and **Valorie Stokes**, reading initiative coordinator.

"We [40 teacher leaders] met in Columbia to share ideas, pool resources, and delivery modes for statewide in-service projects, especially those related to meeting the state's Annual Yearly Progress goals for No Child Left Behind," said Frick.

The retreat was organized and hosted by a cadre of Missouri Writing Project Teacher Consultants, headed by **Amy Lannin**, the site's co-director and Invitational Institute leader.

Diane Scollay, Gateway Writing Project director, launched the three-day meeting with a community-building exercise, followed by Frick's "MWPN Year in Review" report regarding the 2003-2004 joint activities of the state's consortium of NWP sites (Gateway Writing Project at the University of Missouri – St. Louis; Greater Kansas City Writing Project at the University of Missouri – Kansas City; Missouri Writing Project at the University of Missouri – Columbia; and Prairie Lands Writing Project at Missouri Western State College).

In her "State of the State" report, **Maridella Carter**, MWPN director and Greater Kansas City co-director, described how the

changes in state testing will create additional demands for writing in-services, grades 3 – 8.

Participants also heard reports from the Teacher Consultants (TC) who participated in the 2004 Invitational Institute TC exchange. Eleven TCs spent at least a day as guests at each other's summer Institutes, including Prairie Lands TCs **Kathy Miller**, **Rebecca Dierking**, and **Valorie Stokes**, who visited the Missouri, Gateway, and Greater Kansas City Invitationals as a part of the exchange this summer.



Above: *Melanie Burdick leads goal-setting session at the retreat.*



Opposite: *Left to Right: Christie Hofmeister, Astra Cherry (Gateway Writing Project), Valorie Stokes, and Debbie Schwebach during the goal-setting session.*

"When I walked through the front door, the familiar smell of the morning's food fair wafted across the room. As I made my way to the class conference table, project members did not hesitate to greet me with warm and friendly welcomes and informal introductions," wrote Stokes, about her visit.

"Once the day's routine began, Karyl Michel, one of the project's co-directors, gave a brief report about her exchange visit the day before to our Prairie Lands Project. She also noted how easy it was to feel comfortable at a different site because the familiar Writing Project philosophy tends to permeate each site's invitational. I wholeheartedly agree with that sentiment. As I glanced around the table, the smiles and brief exchanges made it obvious the mood was relaxed, and the group had definitely bonded."

A highlight of the retreat was a writing marathon within the environs of Columbia followed by an after-dinner

open mic reading of marathon texts.

MWPN's implementation plans for 2005-2006—which were developed at the retreat in a session conducted by **Melanie Burdick**, Greater Kansas City director—include the following:

- ✓ Initiating a satellite site in southwest Missouri, including hosting an Invitational Institute in Springfield in July 2005
- ✓ Conducting a "Writing Project Philosophy and Six-Traits Writing" spring conference
- ✓ Developing a database of MWPN TCs qualified to provide literacy in-services and/or serve on state curriculum development and assessment committees and task forces
- ✓ Co-sponsoring Missouri's 2005 Write to Learn Conference for language arts teachers
- ✓ Assisting Gateway Writing Project when it hosts the National Writing Project's Urban Sites Conference in St. Louis next April

Time to write, reflect at retreat

By Rebecca Dierking, Prairie Lands Writing Project Writing Retreat Coordinator

Question: What do tired, over-worked, world-weary teachers want to do at the end of a school year?

Answer: Retreat—from school, administrators, students, papers, you name it.

Retreat is just what sixteen National Writing Project Teacher Consultants did June 4-6. Each retreated to the pastoral hills of northwest Missouri. Once encircled in the calming arms of Conception Abbey, all took a deep breath and enjoyed hours—yes, hours—devoted to writing in various, self-selected genres.

Based on the NWP model, the retreat included arranging participants into response groups, enjoying meals prepared by the monastery staff, and communing with the inner muse.

“I particularly valued the times when we could share our work with others in the group. The longer I write, the more I believe that writing is meant to be shared and that writers are most likely to take responsibility for their efforts and ideas when they share them with others,” said **Sue Ferguson**, TC from Greater Kansas City Writing Project, who participated in the retreat.



Retreat portrait (left to right): Row 1: Diane Watson, Dawn Terrick, Art Peterson, Joyce Stohr, Sue Ferguson, Jane Frick, Mary Lee Meyer; Row 2: Rebecca Dierking, Sharon Kindle-Smith, Tina Janc, Kelly Lock, Joy Conn, Amy Grier; Row 3: Tom Pankiewicz, Lynn Tushaus, Jim Super, and Roger Kirschbaum.

Highlighting the weekend was a presentation by **Art Peterson**, senior editor for National Writing Project. Writers in all genres enjoyed Peterson’s engaging wit and appreciated his personal attention throughout the weekend.

“It was fantastic to have one-on-one opportunities to consult with Art. With the support of fellow writers, I had the courage and guidance to start a professional piece of writing,” said **Mary Lee Meyer**, Prairie Lands Writing Project (PLWP) TC who wrote a

personal poem titled “Cowboy Up” during the weekend writing session.

“There was nothing monkish about the creative energy that these inspired writers were fueled on over this productive weekend,” said Peterson.

“I hope to see at least a few of these works published in the National Writing Project Quarterly.”

However, participants unanimously acclaimed the large blocks of uninterrupted time to write.

“It was a wonderful experience to have the time to dedicate to thinking through the process of writing and the gift of good friendship to provide the sense of security to complete a long sought after goal,” said **Diane Watson**, PLWPTC.

Note: **Rebecca Dierking** coordinated the retreat; assisting her were Prairie Lands’ TCs **Amy Grier**, **Tina Janc**, **Stephen Kibler**, **Tom Pankiewicz**, **Betty Sawin**, and **Lynn Tushaus**. Contact Dierking (rebeccadierking@yahoo.com) if you would like to be a part of the 2005 professional writing retreat planning team, tentatively scheduled for June 2005 at Conception Abbey.

Missouri directors attend NWP spring meeting

Jane Frick, Prairie Lands site director, and **Diane Watson**, Prairie Lands Advisory Board member, participated in the National Writing Project’s annual spring meeting, in Washington, D. C., April 1-2.

During the conference, the two attended meetings on Capitol Hill and a series of workshops related to writing/teaching writing at the Washington Court Hotel.

“The kick-off session in the Mansfield Room in the U. S. Senate was inspirational. Almost every state was represented during the roll call of sites, and we heard key Congressional supporters for National Writing Project on both sides of the aisle tell us how



Left to right: Watson, Scollay, Frick, and Jenkins during legislative visits.

much they value the importance of writing and teachers of writing,” Frick said.

She and Watson developed a camaraderie and lasting respect for **Diane Scollay** and **Peggy Jenkins**, Gateway Writing Project Director and



National Writing Project director Richard Sterling at kick-off session.

Co-director, respectively, during the meeting. As Missouri Writing Projects Network Teacher Consultants, the four sloshed through pouring rain and multiple security checks to meet with aides from Missouri’s entire legislative delegation—in four hours.



Invitational Institute meets

Scholars conduct demonstrations; read and write and share in workshops

Twenty northwest Missouri teacher leaders spent their July “vacation time” engaged in renewal and reflection by participating in Prairie Lands Writing Project’s (PLWP) 2004 Invitational Institute.

“This experience has been so refreshing. We became friends as we wrote, read, studied, shared, borrowed, discussed questioned, reflected, learned and grew together. I know that my energy has been renewed,” said **Lenora Miles**, English teacher and department chair at Platte County High School, about her participation in the Invitational.

The Summer Scholars selected to participate in this year’s Invitational held a weekend orientation at Missouri Western in April.

In July, they returned to the college campus for a four-week seminar where they each conducted 90-minute demonstrations for their peers, documenting effective research and classroom practices for teaching writing.

“This was an excellent opportunity to meet incredibly talented teachers from whom we could draw ideas and energy,” said Summer Scholar **Kelly Lock**, a language arts teacher at St. Joseph Spring Garden Middle School.

In addition to conducting demonstration lessons, Scholars completed



— photograph by Mary Lee Meyer

Above right: Kelly Robb writes in her journal. Prairie Lands Writing Project 2004 Invitational Institute Portrait. Left to right: Bottom Row 1: Jasmine Steele and Jenna Whittington; Row 2: Kelly Lock, Michele Thomason, and Jane Frick; Row 3: Joyce Finch, Christie Hofmeister, and Kelly Robb; Row 4: Stefanie Lyle, Michelle O’Connor, Diana Silcott, and Precious Kurth; Row 5: Lora Mason, Jeanie Scott-Pillen, and Lenora Miles; Row Five: Joseph Marmaud, Melody Townsend, and Charlott Botorff; Row 6: Tom Pankiewicz, Mike Loving, Geoff Heckman, Mike Epperson, and George Jones.

journal writings and compiled an electronic portfolio of creative, critical and reflective pieces.

They participated in peer writing and reading groups, a writing marathon, and observed demonstration lessons and workshops conducted by former Invitational participants and/or writing professionals.

“I am anxious to apply what I’ve learned. . . .” — Jeanie Scott-Pillen

“The reciprocal learning that takes place is phenomenal.” — Michele Thomason

For **Michelle O’Connor**, language arts teacher at Lathrop Middle School, the camaraderie developed with teachers at all levels was invaluable. “The community established, the friendships, and the sharing of opinions and ideas are ultimately the most significant part of the Invitational,” she said.

“The National Writing Project’s belief statement about ‘teachers being the best teachers of teachers’ certainly was affirmed in St. Joseph this summer,” said **Tom Pankiewicz**, Missouri Western English instructor and PLWP institutes director, who headed this year’s Invitational leadership team.

Assisting him as co-leaders were **Joyce Finch**, PLWP youth programs co-director, and **Jane Frick**, Missouri Western English professor and PLWP director. **Mary Lee Meyer**, a teacher and educational technology coordinator at Jefferson C-123 School until she retired in May, served as the Invitational’s media coordinator. **George Jones**, English and Spanish teacher at Platte

County High School and returning Invitational Summer Scholar, mentored other Scholars in developing their teaching demonstrations.

Summer Scholars in addition to Miles, Jones, Lock, and O’Connor who are participating in this year’s Invitational include: **Charlott Botorff**, French teacher at St. Joseph Lafayette High School; **Mike Epperson**, journalism and English teacher at Lathrop High School; **Geoff Heckman**, counselor at Savannah Middle School; **Christie Hofmeister**, kindergarten teacher at St. Joseph Skaith

Accelerated Elementary School; **Precious Kurth**, language arts teacher at St. Joseph Lafayette High School; **Stefanie Lyle**, language arts teacher at St. Joseph Benton High School; **Mike Loving**, language arts teacher at St. Joseph Robidoux Middle School; **Joseph Marmaud**, language arts teacher and department chair at St. Joseph Spring Garden Middle School; **Lora Mason**, grade six teacher at St. Joseph Hyde Elementary School; **Jeanie Scott-Pillen**, language arts teacher at Ravenwood Middle/High School; **Kelly Robb**, grade six teacher at St. Joseph Hall Elementary School; **Diana Silcott**, grade six teacher at St. Joseph Neely Elementary School; **Jasmine Steele**, grade three teacher at St. Joseph Noyes Accelerated School; **Michele Thomason**, secondary instructional coach for the St. Joseph School District; **Melody Townsend**, language arts teacher at Savannah

Middle School; and **Jenna Whittington**, communication arts teacher at Mid-Buchanan High School.

Guest presenters during the Invitational included **Joyce Stohr**, language arts teacher at North Kansas City's Winnetonka High School; **Terri McAvoy**, grade two teacher at St. Joseph Skaith Accelerated Elementary School; **Missy Farmer**, language arts teacher at Cameron High School; **Patricia Donaher**, English professor at Missouri Western; **Mary Lee Meyer**; **Kathy Miller**, English teacher and senior MAP leader at Fort Osage High School; and **Jan Reeder**, English and creative writing teacher at North Kansas City Winnetonka High School.

"The 'real world' information I've learned can be applied immediately in my classroom," said Steele.

"I can't wait to try out the new techniques and fresh ideas in my classroom."

Prairie Lands' 2004 Invitational will conclude on Saturday, October 16, when the Summer Scholars participate in the site's Saturday Seminar (See p. 11).

The Scholars will receive their National Writing Project Teacher Consultant (TC) certification at this year's luncheon. Also receiving certificates will be TCs who successfully completed Prairie Lands Advanced Institute this summer directed by **Rebecca Dierking**, English teacher at Maryville High School; **Vicky Bryan**, St. Joseph Central High School English teacher; **Lynn Tushaus**, Savannah High School science teacher; **Steve Kibler**, Maryville High School speech and drama teacher; **Amy Grier**, St. Joseph Bode Middle School gifted teacher; **Joyce Stohr**, North Kansas City Winnetonka High School English teacher; and **Pam Johnston**, Trenton Middle School English teacher.

Captions: 1. Jeanie Scott-Pillen looks up from journal writing; 2. Stefanie Lyle, Mike Epperson, Charlott Bottorff, and Joseph Marmaud are Pou Voir de la Plume group members ; 3. Kelly Lock writes during Mary Lee Meyer's demonstration; 4. Lenora Miles gives debate instructions; 5. George Jones and Jasmine Steele debate Precious Kurth and Joe Maumard over school uniforms while Missouri Writing Project guest Juanita Willingham observes; 6. Precious Kurth leads Geoff Heckman during Jenna Whittington's demonstration activity; and 7. Precious Kurth describes her character education project.



“Living the Writer’s Life” 2004 Camp

By Adam Twedt, Missouri Western State College BA English/Technical Communication Intern

Imagine. You’re in elementary school, and you have almost all of the summer to do whatever you want.

Who would think nearly 50 children, ages eight – 11, would be excited about participating in lots of reading and writing activities the first four weeks after the school year ends.

“I’m here to write. It’s really fun to express my feelings on paper,” said

Natasha Ygsi, a fifth grader at Coleman Elementary School, who participated in “Living the Writer’s Life” Camp this summer.

The camp, co-sponsored by Prairie Lands Writing Project (PLWP) and the St. Joseph School District, met in air-conditioned classrooms at Missouri Western State College, from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m., June 7 - July 1. Forty-eight children from 16 St. Joseph elementary schools attended.

Terri McAvoy and **Joyce Finch**, Prairie Lands’ Youth

Writing Project co-directors, organized and directed the summer youth camp. McAvoy, a second grade teacher at St. Joseph Skaith Elementary School, and Finch, a fifth-grade teacher at Skaith until she retired in 2003, have coordinated PLWP summer camps and after school-clubs since 1997. The duo developed this summer’s selective application process and camp format for youth writing camps from those used by National Writing Project Teacher Consultants at Gateway Writing Project – St. Louis.

In order to attend “Living the Writer’s Life” Camp, students had to complete grade three, four, five, or six at a St. Joseph area school and be nominated by their teachers as good writers and readers. They also had to complete a camp application which included writing a letter to McAvoy and Finch describing their favorite books and explaining why they liked to write.

While at Western, campers completed reading and writing activities in a 90-minute general session, and following a break, met in three groups, “Writing Stars,” “Writing Starz,” and “Jazzin Journalists,” for more individualized activities. The young writers also participated in a one-day writing marathon, completing and sharing journal writings during their visit to the

that some of his Southern relatives speak with a funny accent. The campers paid attention: laughing when appropriate and “ooing and aahing” at the book’s illustrations as Finch showed them to the campers.

Then, it was writing time.

“Write about an experience you have had when relatives visit your family. Write about something that

happened at camp yesterday, or write about whatever you want,” Finch said.

The room went quiet except for the occasional scratch of a pencil. Campers and teachers wrote and wrote and wrote—for 30 minutes.

Then, Finch returned to the front of the class and read what she had just written. She had the campers’ full attention; the students laughed with her as she read her story about relatives visiting her family.

“Who would like to share a writing?” McAvoy asked in



Campers during opening session.

the Steamboat Arabia museum in Kansas City.

“When we walked into the [camp] classroom, it wasn’t the teachers motivating the students,” Finch said. “It was the students who motivated us to get up every morning; that’s something you can’t find in a normal classroom atmosphere.”

I sat in on the camp’s opening session on Thursday, June 24, and was immediately impressed by the energy which filled the large, u-shaped, tiered classroom. The children already had their notebooks out on their desks. Some were talking to the teachers. Some were already writing.

Covering the class walls were students’ poems and essays and the “daily logs” that the students had filled out: word and picture descriptions of the camp activities on preceding days.

The camp opened with Finch reading a children’s book describing a family visit—how the narrator learns

anticipation of the camp’s Open Mic session. Hands shot up in the air throughout the room; it looked as if every camper wanted to read.

McAvoy announced that priority would go to readers who hadn’t already shared their writing that week. One by one readers came down to the front of the classroom, put on the lapel microphone, and read. Enthusiastic applause supported the readers as they returned to their seats.

“We were surprised how many of the students wanted to share all of their work,” McAvoy said.

“There was something about the microphone,” Finch said. “The moment we wired them up, students seemed to be able to form an imaginary wall in front of them so the other students couldn’t see them, making them feel at ease in sharing their work.”

After the Open Mic session, campers worked together in literature circles, discussing and writing about a



Finch (right) listens during the Open Mic session.



McAvoy assists campers in writing group.

book of their choice: *Loser*, *Victory Garden*, *Wild Man Island*, or *Surviving the Applewhites*.

During the book circle discussions, I collected opinions from campers about the camp:

✓ “My favorite part of the whole [class] is when we come in here and Mrs. Finch or Mrs. McAvoy read to us,” **Jasmine Meyer**, a fourth grader at Coleman Elementary School, said. “It helps me to write fiction that I would want to write.”

✓ “I really have been having fun with Mrs. Finch and Mrs. McAvoy,” Natasha said. “I like the way that they teach this class.”

✓ “There isn’t anything else I would like to be doing,” **Michael Ousley**, a fourth grader at Hyde Elementary School, said. “I’m just happy that my teacher nominated me.”

✓ “It was an honor and a privilege to be here,” **Derek Rice**, a fourth grader at Coleman, said. “I’ve always wanted to be a writer and get to write stories.”

Every “Living the Writer’s Life” camper became a published writer. Students contributed their bio poems and another work of their choice for the “Living the Writer’s Life” Camp 2004 Anthology.

The last day of the camp was a celebration. The students’ teachers and parents attended the final Open Mic session, and campers received “Living the Writer’s Life” Camp diplomas.

“I wish we could come to camp for even longer. I’m going to miss it,” Jasmine said.

“Living the Writer’s Life” Camp Profile

- ✓ Campers arrived at 8:00 a.m.
 - ✓ Camp’s opening session held in large, tiered classroom.
 - ✓ Finch and McAvoy coordinated the whole-group activities.
 - Finch or McAvoy read a children’s book out loud, selecting a literature text to match that day’s writing activities.
 - Diane Gould**, Newspaper in Education Coordinator for the St. Joseph News-Press, and **Christine Deihl**, grade five teacher - Northview Elementary School for the North Kansas City District, conducted writing workshops during two of the camp’s opening sessions.
 - ✓ Campers wrote in their journals for 30 minutes.
 - Campers could choose to write from any of the prompts selected from the camp’s Writing Prompt Treasure Chest, a topic suggested by the day’s reading, or whatever they wanted.
 - ✓ Three days a week campers met in literature circles to discuss books.
 - ✓ Finch and McAvoy selected books from the Mark Twain 2004-2005 Awards List of children’s literature: *Loser*, *Victory Garden*, *Wildman Island*, *Surviving the Applewhites*.
 - ✓ The campers chose a different role each time they met in their literature circles: Group Leader, Scribe, or Passage Master.
- ****BREAK TIME (snacks provided by Hy-Vee Food Stores)****
- ✓ The campers met in writing groups: **Writing Stars**, **Writing Starz**, and **Jazzin Journalists**.
 - ✓ Groups rotated from teacher to teacher: **Finch**, **McAvoy**, and **Betty Stacey**, St. Joseph Skaith/Webster Elementary Schools art teacher.
 - ✓ Campers completed hands-on reading/writing/art activities.

****12:00 END OF THE DAY****

TIP reading seminar held as Open Institute

Summer reading workshop directed by Valorie Stokes, St. Joseph School District Content Area Reading Enhancement Facilitator and Prairie Lands Writing Project Teacher Consultant

Early August usually finds educators fleeing on that last vacation trek before yet another opening day of school. But the week of August 2nd-5th found five teachers back in class a little earlier than usual for TIP, the Textual Illuminations Project.

Co-sponsored by the St. Joseph School District CARE (Content Area Reading Enhancement) Team and the Prairie Lands Writing Project, the TIP experience promotes and enhances teacher awareness and knowledge of the reading demands and challenges students face in their classrooms.

Illumination Candidates (ICs) **Steve Bennett** (communication arts teacher at St. Joseph Central High School), **Jen Hoecker** (communication arts teacher at St. Joseph Central High School), **Marnie Lucas** (communication arts teacher at St. Joseph Central High School), **Jeanie Scott-Pillen** (communication arts teacher at Northeast Nodaway R-IV School) and **Melissa Ross** (social studies teacher at St. Joseph Spring Garden middle school) not only learned what factors help or hinder students' reading in content areas, but also how those factors under their control can really make a difference in how students achieve and succeed in their classes.

Each day of the project focused on a particular aspect of the reading process and included visits from Readers in Residence—**Joanne Anderson, Renee Beggs, Melody Smith and Candy Stamp**—educators who had already completed TIP or have been members of the District's CARE team.

During day one of the project, participants shared about themselves as readers and thought about how their reading preferences and processes vary depending on factors such as motivation, environment, time and material.

The ICs came away with a better understanding of themselves and their students as readers. "I never thought about how my students read rather than why they are not reading," observed Scott-Pillen.

On the second day the focus shifted to content area reading and the factors that affect the reading process.

Since project facilitator Valorie Stokes had recently attended a conference featuring Ruby Payne whose work focuses on children of poverty, the group also spent quite a bit of time on Payne's ideas about various "levels of language," "voices," and "reframing" language for various groups and purposes.

"I loved talking about Ruby Payne's work with different socio-economic groups. I learned how to rephrase and reframe the way I say things in order to get through to different groups," noted Marnie Lucas.

During day three activities, leisure and general interest reading became the focus and the ICs had the opportunity to cultivate more empathy for their students with their discussion of some "Reading Reasons" from Kelly Gallagher's text of the same name and participating in a "Tale of Two Magazines" activity.

TIP's final day shed light on media literacy issues and the use of popular culture to create meaningful connections to classroom content. By day's end the ICs truly understood how much their students are immersed in various media forms and how different the reading demands of those literacy worlds are for adolescents. It also prompted them to think about how and why they might incorporate more of those forms into their classroom work.

"I'm doing more magazine (current) stuff to connect to students interests," decided Jen Hoecker.

"[Using] segments of movies will help in enhancing some of the units without taking oodles of time," fellow IC, Melissa Ross, added.

By week's end, all of the TIP participants agreed the institute had by no means been the equivalent of a langorous last-minute vacation, but instead a valuable learning experience that helped them understand themselves better as readers and reading

role models and made them more fully appreciate the daily reading demands their students face.

"In one way, I feel like Goldilocks. TIP was neither too difficult, nor too easy. It was just right. I was able to keep up with all the ideas tossed at us, yet I was not bored because I had heard it all. In fact, I am deeply aware of how little I have learned about reading and teaching reading in my content area. There is just so much to learn," observed Bennett.

"I have so many more tools for my toolbox I want to use to help my students read my book and become lifelong readers," Ross noted.

"The wealth of helpful information, the network of professional support, and the basic philosophies of teaching and reading methods are invaluable. It helps to have the research, statistics, etc. back up what I've always known. To be successful, we all must be able to read, write and think for ourselves," Scott-Pillen said.



To arrange for school in-service workshops conducted by Prairie Lands Teacher Consultants, contact **Heidi Mick**, PLWP Professional Development Coordinator (mickh@pcrui.k12.mo.us or HeidiL_64@hotmail.com) Phone: 816 271-4315).

The Prairie Voice

is published biannually by Prairie Lands Writing Project, a National Writing Project site.
Editor: **Jane Frick** (frick@mwsc.edu)
Editorial Assistance: **Tom Pankiewicz** (pankiew@mwsc.edu) and **Valorie Stokes** (valorie.stokes@sjds.k12.mo.us)

This issue of The Prairie Voice is available online (PDF download) at www.mwsc.edu/prairielands.

Saturday Seminar:

Empowering Teachers Through Writing



Saturday, October 16, 2004

9 a.m. - 12 p.m. (or 1 p.m. if staying for lunch)

Missouri Western's Multi-Purpose Building, 214-216

Registration Deadline: Wednesday, October 13

Seminar Schedule

9:00 - 9:15	Coffee and Conversation
9:15 - 10:00	Round I Workshops
10:15 - 11:00	Round II Workshops
11:15 - 12:00	Round III Workshops
12:00 - 1:00	Celebration Luncheon (optional)
1:00 - 1:30	Prairie Lands Advisory Board Meeting



Tushaus leading workshop

(During each round, three of these workshops will be offered.)

- "Popular Culture: Mirrors and Windows to Use in the Content Classroom."** Connect your students' interests to your classroom by using popular media forms in your reading and writing assignments. Conducted by **Valorie Stokes**, St. Joseph School District Secondary Content Area Reading Enhancement Facilitator and Missouri Western State College adjunct reading instructor.
- "Satisfaction Guaranteed: Letter Writing."** Students learn the power of writing by sending letters to real-world audiences—which are likely to generate tangible rewards for the letter writer. Conducted by **Pamela Johnston**, language arts teacher at Trenton, MO, Middle School.
- "Wastebasket Writing."** Construct a story through the use of clues using scraps of paper: memos, grocery lists, airline tickets, e-mails, letters, envelopes, to-do-lists, and newspaper clippings. Conducted by **Amy Grier**, Odyssey (gifted children) teacher at St. Joseph Bode Middle School.
- "Writing Across the Curriculum: Poetry and Art."** Try out these hands-on art and language activities to use with your students in writing effective poetry. Conducted by **Vickey Meyer**, English and creative writing teacher at St. Joseph Central High School, and **Stacey Meyer**, art teacher, grades K – 12, at North Nodaway R-VI School.
- "Writing and Inquiry Learning."** In this hands-on workshop, learn how to combat the 'I know it, but I can't explain it syndrome.' Teach students to follow Tom Romano's advice to use their 'imagination as an ally in learning.'" Conducted by **Lynn Tushaus**, science teacher at Savannah High School.
- "Writing Counts."** Learn writing activities that will increase student learning, and that you can easily incorporate into your daily math lessons. . . starting Monday! Conducted by **Christine Diehl**, grade five teacher at Northview Elementary School – North Kansas City School District.

Saturday Seminar Registration Form

Name: _____ Email Address: _____

Mailing Address: _____

School: _____ Telephone Number: _____

Check here if you will need a certificate verifying your participation: _____

Check here if you will be joining us for our celebration luncheon at 12 noon: _____

List letters of workshops here in order of your attendance preference: _____

Email Jane Frick (frick@mwsc.edu) OR FAX (816 271-4166) OR mail registration confirmation to SS/C 201: Prairie Lands Writing Project, Missouri Western State College, St. Joseph, MO 64507 DEADLINE: Wednesday, October 13.

Saturday Seminar workshops are conducted by Prairie Lands Writing Project Teacher Consultants who have completed a National Writing Project Advanced Summer Institute.

Registration Fee
\$0 per person

Includes

- ✓ Refreshments
- ✓ Workshop Handouts
- ✓ Certificates of Professional Development Completion

Luncheon Fee
\$10 per person,
payable at the luncheon

- ✓ Luncheon fee is waived for Prairie Lands alumni, Advisory Board members, and 2004 Summer Scholars



Prairie
Lands
WRITING PROJECT

11



Writing and Technology

Sign up for Writing and Technology Course

Do you want to learn how to use technology to improve writing and learning in your classrooms?

This fall, **Mary Lee Meyer**, Prairie Lands Writing Project Media Coordinator, is offering "Writing and Technology in the Content Area," a two-hour Northwest Missouri State University graduate course: Six Thursdays, beginning September 23, from 4:30 - 8:30 p.m. in Room 106 of the Janet Gorman Murphy Building at Missouri Western.

Participants will use technology—including Web pages and graphic organizing, word processing, and presentation software—to design effective discovery learning assignments for their classrooms.

Fees: \$285 for two graduate credits or \$135 for certificate of completion hours. Email or call Writing Project Director Jane Frick (frick@mwsc.edu; 816 271-4315) to register. **Deadline: Monday, September 20.**

Prairie Lands Writing Project, a National Writing Project site, is jointly supported by Missouri Western State College and the St. Joseph School District. Prairie Lands offers graduate courses in affiliation with the Northwest Area Regional Professional Development Center located at Northwest Missouri State University.

Prairie Lands Fall Calendar

W 9/22, 10/6, 12/01, 2/2, 4/6, 5/4 READy for READING Teacher Learning Community (TLC) meetings:

5 - 7:30 p.m. in the Prairie Lands Writing Project Conference Room (SS/C 201) at Missouri Western.

Registration deadline: Friday, September 17.

Contact TLC Director **Diane Watson** (diane.watson@sjsd.k12.mo.us) for additional information.

S 9/25 High School

Writing Camp:

12:30 - 7 p.m. in Rooms 218/219 at Missouri Western. High school students, grades nine through twelve, may attend the camp. Registration deadline: Wednesday, September 15. Contact Camp Director **Sara Capra** (capras@mail.midbucanan.k12.mo.us) for additional information.

W 9/29 Banned Book

Reading: 7 - 8 p.m. at

Missouri Western in Rooms 214/216 of the Leah Spratt Multipurpose Classroom (MC) Building. Prairie Lands 2004 Summer Scholar **Jeanie Scott-Pillen** is a featured reader. Contact English Professor **Michael Cadden** (cadden@mwsc.edu) for details.

W 10/6 and to be determined Reading Inquiry Teacher Learning Community (TLC) meetings:

5 - 7:30 p.m. in the Prairie Lands Writing Project Conference Room (SS/C 201) at Missouri Western.

Registration deadline: Friday, October 1. Contact TLC Director **Vaorie Stokes** (vaorie.stokes@sjsd.k12.mo.us) for additional information.

W 10/13 When Writing

Teachers Write III: 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. at Missouri Western in the Learning Resource Center, Room 102 (Little Theater). Prairie Lands Teacher Consultants who wish to read at the

session should contact Writing Project Director Jane Frick (frick@mwsc.edu) by Friday, September 17.

S 10/16 Saturday Seminar and Fall Finish for Summer Institutes:

9 a.m. - 1 p.m. in Rooms 214/216 of the Leah Spratt Multipurpose Classroom (MC) Building. Contact Institutes Director **Tom Pankiewicz** (pankiew@mwsc.edu) for information, or see registration details on p. 11.

Th 11/17 - S 11/21 National

Council of Teachers of English Convention and National Writing Project Annual Meeting in Indianapolis, IN: See www.ncte.org/ and www.writingproject.org/ for details.

T 11/30 Prairie Lands

Advisory Board Meeting: 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. in Room 219 in the Student Union at Missouri Western.

The Prairie Voice

The Prairie Lands Writing Project

Jane Frick, Director

Missouri Western State College
St. Joseph, MO 64507

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