

## Like Ripples in a Pond

Written by Editor

Tuesday, 19 February 2019 09:08

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The next generation of creative writers at the University of South Carolina Beaufort is about to take pen in hand—figuratively, of course—to begin work on the second of two related literary magazines published by the USCB Society of Creative Writers each academic year.

The fall 2018 issue of “The Pen” features 24 of the best student offerings in poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction and drama, all illustrated with a sprinkling of original artwork. Each piece was selected by the magazine’s staff of nine students to support the theme of “Revelation.” The companion issue, to be published at the end of the spring semester this year, will explore “Revolution.”

Working under the watchful eye of Ellen Malphrus, Ph.D., professor of English in the Department of English, Theater and Liberal Studies, and faculty advisor for the Society of Creative Writers, the staff begins the creative process by issuing a university-wide appeal for submissions. The staff then evaluates each story, poem and play before selecting the material that most closely reflects the theme.

“There were 24 contributors from across the university chosen from 124 submissions,” Dr. Malphrus says. “We had many English majors, but also history majors, psychology majors, interdisciplinary studies, biology. We had the whole gamut of student talent.”

Each member of the staff is required to take a practicum, a one-hour course that focuses on

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organizational structure. Dr. Malphrus credits the practicum with improving both the organizational function of the staff and the level of interest in serving on it.

Since its inception 13 years ago, “The Pen” has matured as the writing quality has improved. And so, too, have the student contributors. “I can say that our student writers are becoming bolder in their creative expressions,” Dr. Malphrus says. “They’re more confident. I think part of that has to do with attending the practicum. Almost all of these students are in my workshop class and so part of what I try to do is to bring out the strength of their voices and give them added confidence.”

Yet another confidence builder is the national first-place award “The Pen” earned in January 2019 from the American Scholastic Press Association. In a letter to Dr. Malphrus and editor Christopher Hunt, the association praised “The Pen” as “an excellent publication which deserves a first-place award in the annual American Scholastic Press Association’s magazine competition.

“Creating a magazine teaches students the fundamentals of publishing and creative writing, proofreading and editing skills, and concepts of design/composition while promoting and supporting a community of young writers, thereby nurturing esteem and status,” the association added. “Your magazine shows the superior efforts of talented and creative editors, writers, artists, photographers, layout/graphics designer, staff members, contributors and advisor.”

Entries were judged on five categories: content coverage, organization, design, presentation and creativity. Student staff members who worked on the two award winning entries submitted for consideration were: Hunt, Madison Hayes, Amanda Mazeika, Matthew Rodriguez, Cecilia Codling, Maddie Csernica, Selena Menjivar, Angela Stevens, Courtney Sherry, Susan Baukages, Bran Lovell, Carrie Myers, Crystal Saunders, Jaia Jones, Kris Geiger, Rebecca Malkewicz, Ryan Muth and Anne-Marie Cauthen. They worked under the supervision of Dr. Malphrus and the sponsorship of the USCB Society of Creative Writers.

Toward the end of the fall semester, a former student, now the activities director for the Boys & Girls Club of Bluffton, approached Dr. Malphrus with a question: Would her students be interested in conducting creative writing workshops for the young people at the club? They would.

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And so, every Monday until May of last year, members of the creative writing staff presented two lessons plans to about 40 young people at the club—one for tweens, the other for teens.

“My students taught the same techniques of creative writing that I had passed on to them, and they worked with a big group of tweens and teens throughout the semester,” Dr. Malphrus says. At the end of the semester, all “giggly and silly,” club members got up and shared their work. “It was just glorious for me to witness that handing down of the love and the drive to see these young people get involved and care about writing,” she says. “That’s something I’m really proud of.”

The “Revelation” issue of “The Pen” is available free of charge at the Bluffton Library, the Beaufort Library, on the Bluffton, Beaufort and Hilton Head Island campuses of USCB, and at Andes Rotisserie in Bluffton.