

# Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project



Winter 2009

## Director's Corner



by Richard Louth

It has been another very active year at SLWP. Some of the highlights since last spring include:

### In-service & Professional Development

*Slidell High School In-service Program:*

SLWP did a series of in-services at Slidell High School over the Spring semester of 2009.

Teacher Consultant Brant Osborne had written a grant to the Dept.

of Education in order to bring SLWP in to work with their Freshman Academy, a group of ninth grade teachers across the curriculum.

One of our innovations for this series was



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## Continuity: Tickfaw Writing Retreat

Over the last weekend of February, over a dozen SLWP writers gathered at cottages in Tickfaw State Park work on two chapbooks: *Writing Marathons* and *Why Write?*

The writers discussed organization of the chapbooks, then spent time writing, working in response groups, and revising. The *Writing Marathons* chapbook details how SLWP teachers

have used writing marathons in their schools and the many possible forms that writing marathons can take.

The *Why Write?* chapbook addresses the issue of why we write and how teachers who are also writers find special ways to bring authentic writing into the classroom. Both books are currently being designed and edited by TC Kate Lane (2009).





SLWP started a new book club in Spring 2009 that met monthly to discuss professional reading. The club met both on campus, during the day, at SLU for SLWP Teacher Consultants at the university,

and after school one Wednesday evening per month at the local PJ's. The focal book for all meetings in the spring was Natalie Goldberg's book on memoir writing, *Old Friend from Far Away*. Expect the book club to start up again in the coming winter/spring.



## Fall Northshore Writing Marathon

Over a dozen SLWP writers and their friends gathered for the annual Fall Northshore Writing Marathon in Covington on Saturday, November 14. Writers met at the Farmers' Market, then spread out in small groups to write up and down Columbia Street, where the Three Rivers Arts Festival was in full swing. The Columbia

tap room, English tea room, St. John's Coffeehouse, sidewalks, doorsteps, and cemetery were popular writing spots. Writers continued to arrive throughout the day, and at 5 P.M., a group gathered in a private room at a Boston Street restaurant for a readaround and celebratory meal. Readings ranged from Terry O'Mara's long overdue haiku on a digeridoo to George Dorrill's tale of hidden treasure at the St. Tammany library. SLWP writers

## Pre-Institute Dinner

Each year, our pre-institute dinner at Jacmel Inn brings together new Summer Fellows and veteran teacher consultants to celebrate and honor the newly selected members of the Writing Project. For over 10 years, this dinner has been dedicated to the memory of Susan Wren, former SLWP Co-Director who passed away in 1997.

This year, her brother, New Orleans realtor Hayden Wren, generously underwrote

the meal, which brought together 13 new Summer Fellows and their spouses/friends; SLWP Summer Staff and Leadership Team members; Dr. David Hanson, head of the English Department at Southeastern; and two special SLWP guests who had worked with Susan Wren on SLWP's "Rural Voices, Country Schools Team"-- Linda Greene, Secondary English Curriculum Specialist for St. Tammany Parish, and the Reverend Gary Porter, Principal of St. Helena High School.



included writers from a half dozen different Summer Institutes: Michelle Russo, Kate Lane, Becky Paul, Deanna Simmons, Tabitha Bankston,

Christy Mayfield, Ellen Steigman, Jeanne Northrup, Andree Cosby, Sonya Willie, Roman Heller, George Dorrill, Terry O'Mara, and Richard Louth.



## Rhode Island Writing Project Invites Louth to Lead Writing Marathon

The Rhode Island Writing Project invited Richard Louth to return to his home state to lead a Rhode Island Writing Marathon and to be its guest speaker celebrating the National Day on Writing, October 20, in Providence, RI.

The "New Orleans Writing Marathon," begun by Louth at the Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project, has served as a model for National Writing Project sites, writers, and classrooms across the country for over a decade. This day-long writing event, with writers in small groups fanning out over the campus of Rhode Island College, was sponsored by the

Rhode Island Writing Project and National Writing Project, and was attended by approximately 100 writers of all ages, ranging from elementary school students to college students, local teachers, and the college President.

The Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project is currently engaged in producing a book on Writing Marathons, featuring the stories of Teacher Consultants who have used them with their classes. Expect to see news about the book, and how to purchase it, in the next newsletter.



### TC Spotlight

This month, we are highlighting all the great projects and activities of our TCs

#### Leina Ball St. Tammany Parish

Leina took her students on a writing marathon at her school on National Writing Day. Students wrote and shared for two hours. Afterwards, one group exclaimed, "We didn't do any work today—all we did was write!" According to Leina, they were grinning as if they had a free day.

#### Sonya Willie & Eugenie Martin St. Tammany Parish

In November, Sonya, Eugenie, and three other teachers are in the process of getting students ready for a trip to the New Orleans Museum of Art. According to Sonya, the focus of the project, which they are calling *Art in Real Time*, will be on the concept of a "site-inspired writing experience."



### Fiction Writing Marathon

SLWP held its first "Fiction Writing Marathon" in Hammond in April, and also held its usual "Northshore Spring Writing Marathon" in Hammond in May.

The Fiction Writing Marathon was the brainchild of novelist and Teacher Consultant Dayne Sherman, whose idea was to inspire a small, intrepid group of fiction writers to complete a piece of fiction in one day for an

upcoming writing contest sponsored by *Country Roads Magazine*.

This marathon also prepared the way for the summer's upcoming Advanced Institute on Teaching and Writing Fiction. Another group of Teacher Consultants attended the day-long "Northshore Spring Writing Marathon" in May, which ended with a readaround and meal at Rotolo's.



### Calling All TCs !

Drop us a line and tell us about the exciting things you are doing

## SLWP Best Practices Showcase



Over 50 participants and Teacher Consultants gathered in the Kiva of the TEC building at SLU to share best teaching practices, write together, and discuss the teaching of writing at the annual SLWP Showcase.

The day began with coffee, snacks, and opening remarks from Richard and Tracy. Then participants were able to choose from 12 Roundtables on everything from technology to poetry to grammar. Each Roundtable was led by a TC who demonstrated a hands-on teaching strategy, then provided time for questions and answers and sharing. Roundtables were fast-paced, lasting 15 minutes each before participants moved on to another table.

SLWP Teacher Consultants presenting Roundtable activities included Caroline Derbes, *Fishing for Poems*; Patsy Koksall, *Learning Centers*; Becky Paul, *High School Poetry*; Leigh Rourks, *Writing to Read Poetry*; Beth Calloway, *Poetry, Place, and Portfolios*; Sonya Willie, *Word Nerds*; Carly Zeller, *Journaling*; Megan Eddy, *Commenting*



*on Student Writing*; George Dorrill, *Grammar and Grading*; Lynne Vance, *Secondary Literacy*; Norma Watson, *World-Wide Writing*; Leina Ball and Eugenie Martin, *Writing Gone Wild*.

Afterwards, participants had the option of participating in a Writing Marathon led by Leina Ball or attending one of six workshops. Marathoners left the Kiva in search of great writing spots on campus, while workshop participants chose from one of the following presentations by SLWP Teacher Consultants: *Take a Risk: Succeeding with the GEE Writing Assessment* by Richard Long; *Teaching the Holocaust: A Panel Discussion* by Beth Calloway, Mary Koepp, and Billie Smith; *Teaching Revision: Using Revision Centers in the Classroom* by Michelle Russo; *Letter Writing* by Eugenie Martin; *Reading and Writing Connections: A Panel Discussion* by Tracy Ferrington, Beth Meyers, Richard Long, Lynne Vance, and Nancy Pearson; and



*Rubrics: How They Can Improve Your Teaching (And Just Maybe Your Life)* by Kate Lane.

Throughout the day, Beth Meyers conducted interviews with TC's to update their contact information and find out what they've been up to since we last saw them.

The Showcase ended with a reflective writing activity that provided all participants an opportunity to write about and share what they learned, what they thought, and what they might do with the new strategies and teaching ideas.

As always, the Showcase provided a chance for new TC's to meet veteran TC's, and gave everyone an opportunity to sample and share ideas for teaching writing.



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to begin with a writing marathon, where faculty left the building to write and share in small groups around Slidell.

Brant himself presented at several of the meetings, using technology and Randy Pausch's "Last Lecture" video for inspiration.

The series ended with an "in-house" writing marathon and buffet luncheon for the assembled teachers.

**Institutes**

*Advanced Institute in Writing and Teaching Fiction*

The Advanced, co-directed by Richard Louth and Margaret Westmoreland, brought together 13 TC's for two weeks in June.

The first week was devoted to a three day writing marathon in New Orleans to generate material, and during the second week participants returned to campus to polish their writing and exchange ideas for teaching fiction and fiction writing.

An anthology, *Draft!*, was produced. Participants included: Kenita August, Leina Ball, Sherman FitzSimons, David Jumoville, Brant Osborn, Terry

O'Mara, Eugenie Martin, Kelley Silvey, Billie J. Smith, Norma Watson, Antonio Muse, Sonya Willie, and Anabel Servat

*Invitational Summer Institute*

SLWP's 18th Invitational Summer Institute was co-directed by Richard Louth and Tracy Ferrington, with George Dorrill reprising his role as mentor, and brought together 13 new Summer Fellows for five weeks in June and July.

Former Co-Director Melanie Plesh, of Mandeville High School, gave the introductory special guest presentation, and Tasha Whitton, SLWP Tech Liaison, also was a guest presenter.

This was the first Summer Institute to meet in SLWP's new home, the "Writing Studio" recently created on the third floor of D Vickers. As part of the introduction to this great

space, which included laptops and wireless, Jim Kalmbach, a technology expert from the University of Southern Illinois, Carbondale, also gave a guest presentation.

As usual, the Institute included an over-

ter. The Institute's anthology, *You Belong to Me Now*, contained fiction, poetry, and non-fiction by participants. Participants included: Kate Lane, Nancy Pearson, Andrea Dennis-Lewis, Rebecca Vicknair, Shannon



night New Orleans Writing Marathon at Le Richelieu Hotel in New Orleans, where other SLWP Teacher Consultants joined us. SLWP T-Shirts sporting a picture of Uncle Sam on the back and the words, "I Want You to Start Writing" could be seen across the French Quar-

Babin, Rebekah Blair, Mandy Marshall, Nicole Smith Lato, Carolyn Kirk Vosburg, Michelle Hebert Russo, and Jill Foster.

**Community and Young Writers**  
*Young Writers Camp*

Dr. Beth Calloway (SLU) and Christy Atkins co-coordinated this year's week-long Camp for 20 young writers met in a D Vickers classroom right beside the Summer Institute. Kevin Louth, who had attended the camp several years in the past, returned as a mentor to the young writers, and



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Teacher Consultants Leigh Rourks and Lynne Vance presented workshops.

*SLWP Writes! Contest*

For the first time, SLWP held its own writing contest in conjunction with the

**From Page 3, TC Spotlight**

**Kate Lane  
Baton Rouge Diocese**

Kate just finished her dissertation defense and is now officially “Dr. Lane!” Gooooo Kate! She and Nicole Lato recently completed a marathon at their school where they used kineshetic prompts. The response, Kate says, was great! She is also working on editing and compiling SLWPs marathon anthology.

**George Dorrill  
Southeastern Louisiana University**

In November, George will be presenting at the National Council for Teachers of English convention in Philadelphia.



Louisiana Writing Project Network's LA Writes! Contest. Called *SLWP Writes!*, the contest received over 200 entries, and awarded first-third place prizes and honorable mentions in prose and poetry to students submitting in secondary and elementary

divisions. Among SLWP teachers who had 1st-3rd place winners were Eugenie Martin, Jeralyn Spiehler, Lynne Vance, Deanna Simmones, Margaret Westmoreland, and Sonya Willie. Winners and their teachers received a certificate of

recognition and copy of *SLWP Writes!*, a book published by LULU.COM that featured winning pieces. The contest was such a success that we plan to continue it in the future.



# Writers Gone Wild

*By Leina Ball*

This year at the Louisiana Book Festival in Baton Rouge, SLWP lured writers ranging from pre-K through high school to our table in the tent. Eugenie Martin created a fill-in-the-story outline prompt inspired by the book *Where the Wild Things Are*. This was perfect since the movie came out the night before and excitement was up. Unfortunately Eugenie literally fell for arts at Covington's annual Fall for Arts Festival so she was in recovery during the event. The weather was ideal and I was able to slip over to savor Anabel's tasty treats (I recommend the dark chocolate Guinness muffin) at the farmer's market amid other lovely offerings. We were fortunate to have Carolyn Vosburg, Michelle Russo, Shannon Babin, Vicki Tangi,

Patsy Koksall Mara and myself assisting writers at our table as they created their own wild things. A few young writers dictated their stories, but most took up their own pen. Most memorable from my group was a girl who's

wild thing smelled like the port-a-potties. Volunteers “crowned” participants King or Queen of the wild things and sent them off with their story and an SLWP wild things bookmark. And the wild rumpus continued.



## From Page 6, TC Spotlight

### Kenita August Washington Parish

Kenita is teaching the first district recognized creative writing class at Franklinton High School. She has also been appointed Department Chair. Kenita says that she is very excited for the opportunity to flex her leadership muscles.

### Beth Meyers Livingston Parish

Beth was recently notified that an article she co-authored with SLUs Dr. Richardson and Dr. Fulwiler has been accepted for publication in *The Journal of the National Association for Alternative Certification*.

### Deana Simmons Tangipahoa Parish

Deanna has been taking her classes to the Nursing home and having them write about the experience. Last years seniors first visited Kentwood Manor in February 2009. This year's seniors returned for a visit in October. Their visits have inspired journal writings, poems, and essays. One selection *I Sit Here* written by 2009 senior Cody Trout was featured in the local newspaper.



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