

# Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project



Winter 2008

## Director's Corner



by Richard Louth

It has been a very active year at SLWP. Some of the highlights in Inservice, Continuity, and upcoming events:

### Summer 2008: A Recap

*Retreat:* Last Summer began with a visit by writer Kim Stafford and SLWP's first writing Retreat in the French Quarter. Kim led the weekend retreat, which had the theme of "Searching for Don Quixote in French Quarter." About a dozen SLWP writers and LAWP guests spent two days questing for words in the French Quarter and discussing their work-in-progress at the end of each day in the Le Richelieu Hotel's VIP Suite.

*Kim Stafford Day Conference:* In conjunction with the Advanced Institute, SLWP hosted a Monday conference at SLU's Alumni Center featuring Kim Stafford, and focused on "Rethinking Journals."



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writing workshop party. We will let you know when her next one is.



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## Continuity Update

by Terry O'Mara, SLWP Continuity Coordinator

The Fall Writing Marathon in Covington found us all in good spirits as we strolled through art-infested streets with notebooks in hand. The Art Festival, going on at the same time just added to our open, ready minds. After writing and cavorting in various ven-

ues, writers met to read and share in the back room of a dress shop (probably a first). From there, we ate a delicious dinner at Calypso's.

On tap for the first half of 2009 (Happy New Year to everyone by the way) is another writing marathon in May and a working retreat in late February. Also, I wish to thank Norma for hosting a



# October Showcase Unveils New Format

By Margaret Westmoreland

SLWP held its annual October Showcase at the KIVA on October 25, 2008. New teacher consultants from last summer's institute hosted the event with over forty participants from diverse backgrounds and teaching experiences that are the hallmark of the National Writing Project.

Beginning with a greeting from SLWP director, Richard Louth, the morning ran smoothly with teacher-led writing workshops, but the biggest change to the traditional format was the "Roundtables" segment. Instead of the poster sessions that we generally hold at the beginning of the Showcase, TCs led small group discussions in 10-minute segments before participants were asked to

rotate to another station. Modeled after the "speed dating" idea, teachers were able to sit, discuss new lessons, ask questions, and move on to another table for even more ideas. And those of us who are artistically-challenged did not have to make a poster!

Overall, the Showcase was a success, introducing a new group of teachers to SLWP and the National Writing Project and providing a continuity event for teacher consultants.

Presenters, table leaders, and panel participants are listed below:

- Eugenie Martin, Covington High School
- Angela Corkern, Loranger Middle School
- Terry O'Mara, St. Scholastica Academy
- Christy Mayfield, Fontainebleau High School
- Patsy Koksall, Staring Learning Center
- Jessica Netterville, Mandeville High School
- Ellen Steigman, Fontainebleau High School
- Sonya Willie, Covington high School
- Sherman FitsSimons, SLU
- Megan Eddy, SLU
- Beth Meyers, French Settlement High School
- Dr. Christine Mitchell, SLU
- Vicky Tangi, Mayfair Adult Education
- Leina Ball, Fontainebleau Junior High School
- Norma Watson, Metairie Academy
- Robin Perere Parrott, Walker Freshmen High School
- Margaret Westmoreland, Walker High School



## Summer Institute Retrospective

By Jeanne Northrop

The SWLP Summer Institute has been an incomparable opportunity for me to meet and learn from experienced teachers. This is invaluable to me as an intensive crash course in

learning where my Louisiana students have been in their studies and classroom experiences before I get them in 101 Freshman Composition.

Unfortunately, I realize that my Institute teacher/friends are the crème de la crème and the majority of my students will not have had

the opportunity to learn from a SLWP-selected educator. I can only hope that I am fortunate enough to have a few on my roster who have, and who like ripples will help me spread the joy of writing and learning that these wonderful teachers have inspired in me.

I am still probably

not the teacher I want to be, but thanks to the Summer Institute and my fellow fellows, I do see the path.



# Peace Through Writing: SLWP Covington Marathon 2008

By Leina Ball

Pen gliding, thoughts scattered, seeking inner truth  
Craving change, tranquility, simplicity and meaning  
Listening for the voice of wisdom in the stillness  
Questioning labels, assumptions and perspectives  
We wrote amid a myriad of artists and visual  
stimulation

Solitude at the cemetery with the monuments to the  
dead  
Wondering why human nature tends towards past  
and future  
Contradictions, Cold Wind and Hypocrisy  
Feeling the need to take my own advice  
Escaping the noise of distractions, demands and  
detours

Hot, aromatic tea steaming across my face  
Breathing in intoxicating aromas  
Heat and rich flavor soothing my insides  
A peace imparted  
A comfort relished

A discussion of squatting style toilets in Iran  
and Italy  
The culprit of footprints on western style seats  
revealed  
Tales to contrast our high tea experience  
The smell of alluring lotion samples  
Whipping my nose into a smelling frenzy

A lone tattered rose in a vase  
A tiny silver teaspoon



A delicate pansy covered teacup and saucer  
Lace curtains to soften our world view  
Each others words echoing in our thoughts

We breathe each other in deeply  
Knowing well the treasure of our company  
We honor our writers' voices  
Realizing our lives of privilege and good fortune  
We relish this time to ponder, explore, rant, and  
imagine

We savor our idle time and our creative outlets  
We have our pens, our notebooks, our sorrows,  
our joys  
And they come to mingle on our pages  
We feed off the energy created by our sharing  
We realize we are not alone

Truths, joys, sorrows and questions  
Memories of each others stories  
We are nurtured by our time to create and to share  
Anticipation of treasures unborn  
Our camaraderie buoys us as we experience our lives

Laughter, tears, smiles, hugs and stories  
Sitting in a circle, on the floor, in the back of a  
dress shop  
Our final read around sharing for the day  
Hearts at peace we headed off to fill the bellies  
Then went home, our separate ways, but less alone  
and more inspired



## Salsa for Breakfast: An Excerpt

By Margaret B. Westmoreland

... This was the first group of Summer Fellows to get on the university's BlackBoard site before the Summer Institute even began. It doesn't sound like much, but the result was a first day that felt more like a second week. Having already introduced themselves to one another, the Summer Fellows had posted and read their first pieces before we ever met at the table. The presentations were different also, with new presentations on teaching by in-direction, discussions on what is meaningful writing, and exploring thematic writing marathons.



Our New Orleans trip was a little different too. More than one group traveled on the Algiers ferry, just barely missing a robbery. Another group found inspiration in a rotating bar that offered a timed round of writing without the need for a clock...spigot to spigot. And there was even one day when the majority of the institute never wrote at Molly's, the unofficial writing establishment of SLWP...

possibly an SLWP first!

To balance our city writing, we spent a day at Tickfaw State Park where several writers found themselves out of their comfort zones swatting away spiders, riding bicycles for the first time in years, feeding marshmallows to the alligators, and tipping over canoes being certain to save their writers' notebooks. We wrote out of our comfort zones as well, producing poetry from non-poets and graphic stories from non-artists. One group, our overnight campers, even filmed a "low-budget horror film" with an accompanying documentary!

Yes, writers are different, but why would this group be so unique?

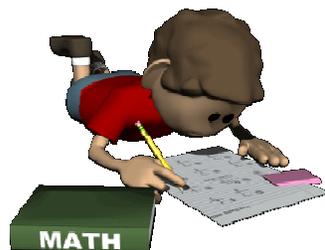
... Salsa, often home-made, nearly every day, became a breakfast ritual. Salsa on chips, salsa on crackers, salsa on bread, and my favorite, salsa on celery. Even in a summer when tomatoes came with a warning from the FDA for fear of salmonella poisoning, our crew seemed to need the salsa.

Maybe it was the heat of the side-dish that altered our behavior and our writing. Maybe it was our writing that opened our minds to something a little different in the morning. Regardless, salsa for breakfast has become as much a part of our day as writing has become a part of our lives.

## My Father Sees Me Learning Long Division

By Karen Maceira

Deep in the ghetto we didn't know we lived in, he came home one afternoon from dayshift at the fire station and passed in the hall near my room. I turned, holding a new chalkboard filled with long divisions, my face open and proud. Still I see his smile, one room's light drawing me.



## TC Spotlight

### Robin Parrott

My SLWP experience was everything I had imagined. Ever since having Karen Elkins, Tracy Ferrington, and Richard Louth for teachers, I knew I wanted to be a part of the NWP. I enjoyed their classes so much, and wanted to do the same for my students when I became a teacher. Then, I student taught for Margaret Westmoreland, and realized even more that NWP HAD to be a part of my life. I wanted to wait until I had more experience to do the summer institute, however, things worked out, and I

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**From Page 1, Director's Corner**

About 40 SLWP TC's and LAWP guests attended the conference.

*Advanced Institute and Marathon:* The 2008 Advanced Institute, "Rethinking Journals in Teaching and Writing," brought together 13 SLWP Teacher Consultants with Richard Louth and Margaret Westmoreland co-directing. Immediately following Kim Stafford Day, members of the Advanced Institute journeyed to the French Quarter for a three-day New Orleans Writing



Marathon to fill their journals with writing. When they returned to campus the following week, they "mined" their journals, discussed their research and reading, and presented teaching ideas on journals. One outcome of their work was an anthology, *A Common Quest*. Participants included: Carly Zeller, Jeralyn Spiehler, David Jumonville, Leina Ball, Vicky Tangi, Nancy McKeand, Patricia Koksall, Mary Ann Cousin,



Kenita August, Terry O'Mara, Annabel Servat, George Dorrill, and Andre Cosby.

*Summer Institute:* SLWP held its 17th Summer Institute with 10 eager Summer Fellows, returning Mentor George Dorrill (01), and new Co-Director Margaret Westmoreland. The 2008 Summer Institute included a New Orleans Writing Marathon as well as an overnight "Writing in Nature" field trip to Tickfaw State Park (which resulted in SLWP's first movie, featuring Norma Watson, Robin Perere Parrott, Sherman FitzSimons, and



Antonio Muse, who are all waiting to hear from Hollywood). Summer Fellows produced an anthology entitled *Salsa for Breakfast*.

New Summer Fellows included:

Ellen Steigman, Jessica Netterville, Sherman FitzSimons, Linda Wisinga, Christy Mayfield, Norma Watson, Christy West, Jeanne Northrup, Antonio Muse, and Robin Perrere Parrott.

**Inservice and Professional Development**

*Inservices:* In 2007-2008, Inservice Coordinator Tracy Ferrington developed a "Second Saturday" program to deliver and critique new presentations at SLU. Several of those on the "Second Saturday" team presented inservice workshops in 2008 at

Covington High School and Monteleone Junior High (St. Tammany); Walker Freshman School (Livingston); and Northwood High, and Loranger Middle School (Tangipahoa).

In 2008-09, SLWP is currently delivering a series of inservices at Slidell High School under the guidance of Brant Osborn (who co-wrote a state grant for the series) and Margaret Westmoreland (coordinator/presenter). The series began with teachers participating in a "Slidell Writing Marathon," with small groups of teachers writing and talking about their professional lives across Slidell. This was the first time a Writing Marathon has been used in an inservice series as a way to promote community building and professional development.

*October Showcase:* About 20 SLWP Teacher Consultants participated as presenters at the 2008 October Showcase, held at SLU's KIVA on October 25, which attracted a mix of experienced and prospective teachers. For a change, this October Showcase began with a series of roundtable presentations rather

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participated in the summer institute of 2008. Since then, my entire way of teaching has changed.

The summer institute taught me that writing needs to be meaningful to the students. I strive to find some way to give them meaningful writing assignments. I give the students more choice. They always have to revise. However, when they turn in their portfolios (another idea from NWP), they get to choose their favorite pieces for me to look at closely.

We also do peer response groups- which really helps the classroom environment. Students that once said they would never read in front of the class end up reading to everyone when their peer response



group picks them for author's chair. At the end of the semester I now do a presentation for the students. We compile an anthology of their favorite pieces (written by them). Then they have to read that piece

to the class at the presentation. It's a good experience- esp. for those students that are not very confident in their writing. They receive their book on this day. Parents and administration are invited to attend. It's a big deal.

We did our first writing marathon in down town Baton Rouge last semester. This was a lot of fun, and a learning experience for us all. The students learned that writing doesn't have to stay in the classroom. I will continue to do the writing marathon- as a matter of fact, I received a grant from Target for the upcoming field trip. :)

Because of NWP, I am more aware of what I am teaching, and my students are now more aware of what they are writing. I brag all of the time about NWP- I wouldn't be the teacher I am today without it!

*A story in the Baton Rouge Morning Advocate describing Robin's Writing Marathon and her class can be found at <http://www.2theadvocate.com/features/34607084.html>*

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## ADVANCED INSTITUTE IN WRITING AND TEACHING FICTION

SLWP announces an Advanced Institute on "Writing and Teaching Fiction" that will meet June 8-18 and be co-directed by Richard Louth and Margaret Westmoreland.

The Advanced Institute will focus on:

*Writing fiction*  
*Reading fiction*  
*How to teach fiction writing*  
*How to teach the reading of fiction*  
*The relationship between fiction and nonfiction in reading and writing*

The Advanced will include a Writing Marathon in New Orleans to gather material.

This Advanced institute is open to Teacher Consultants who have attended a Summer Institute. The Advanced Institute offers 3 hrs of graduate credit in English (Engl 620), books, tuition, and a \$200 stipend.  
Admission is limited.

To apply, email Richard Louth. <[rlouth@selu.edu](mailto:rlouth@selu.edu)> stating why you are interested and how the Advanced could help you as a teacher or writer. Applicants will be notified of their status within 2 weeks of applying.

From Page 5, Inservice

than with the poster sessions we'd employed in previous years.



### Continuity and Community

Continuity activities included a Covington Writing Marathon: in November 2008 organized by Terry O'Mara, which ended with a readaround in a local shop and a dinner for all participants at Calypso, a fabulous Covington restaurant. Community Activities included our

## Amite Writing Marathon for Tangipahoa Students & Teachers

SATURDAY, APRIL 25

The Amite City Arts Council will be sponsoring a writing marathon for high school students Saturday morning, April 25 in downtown Amite. Students who want to participate have to register with a to-be-designated teacher at each Tangipahoa Parish public and private high school. Home-schooled students can register by calling 747-6600. The Arts Council will publish a book of featured selections from the marathon. Writing project teachers Lynne Vance, Beth Calloway, Deana Simmons and Roslyn Lea Varnado will be the team leaders for the marathon. If needed, other writing projects teachers might be contacted to assist. All teachers who work the marathon will be paid.

### NWP TEACHER COLLECTING ESSAYS ON TEACHING

NWP teacher Maureen Robins is collecting essays for an anthology on The Pressures of Teaching and looking for essays across the K-12 continuum. Essays can be on any topic and range in length from 1,000-3,000 words. She is interested in the challenges of teaching, doing grades, content area challenges, gender, race, math, technology, supplies, labs, appropriate challenges for students, pacing calendars, testing, fitting in, and the surprise me topic. The deadline is a close one (so for us procrastinators the pain is minimized). Please contact Maureen if you're interested at this email.

**Maureen Robins** <mrobinster@gmail.com>



## SUMMER INSTITUTE IN TEACHING WRITING

The Southeastern Louisiana Writing Project (SLWP) is now accepting applications for its 18TH "Invitational Summer Institute in Teaching Writing." The Institute meets at Southeastern from June 22-July 23, Monday-Thursday, 9:00-3:30, and is designed for teachers who use writing in their classrooms, are eager to share their knowledge, and wish to learn from other experienced classroom teachers. During the Institute, selected K-College teachers from across the curriculum study the teaching of writing, reflect on their own teaching, and share their best teaching practices with each other. Participants also produce personal and professional writing and develop workshops on teaching writing suitable for delivery to local schools. As Summer Fellows at the university, participants receive a \$400 stipend, six hours of graduate credit, and free tuition. Upon completion of the Institute, they are recognized as National Writing Project Teacher Consultants.

Applicants should submit the following: a resume; a brief description of a writing activity used in their classroom; a recommendation from a supervisor or member of SLWP; and a page containing name/address/phone/email/W# as well as school and grade level where the applicant currently teaches. Applications are considered until the Institute is filled, and on-campus interviews begin soon. Applications can be emailed to <rlouth@selu.edu> or addressed to Dr. Richard Louth, SLU 10327, Hammond, LA 70402. For questions, email rlouth@selu.edu, call 985-549-2102 or 2100, or visit the SLWP webpage: <[http://www.selu.edu/acad\\_research/programs/slwp/](http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/programs/slwp/)>.

## ANNOUNCING TWO SLWP BOOK CLUBS

Come join the SLWP Book Club for a brown bag discussion the first Wednesday of every month. There will be two discussion groups--one for those who are on the SLU campus during the school day, and the other for those who can come after school.

\* 11:30-12:30 pm at SLU in DVic 326.  
Contact Tasha Whitton <nwhitton@selu.edu> to register.

\* 6:30-8:00 pm at PJ's in Hammond.  
Contact Richard Louth <rlouth@selu.edu> to register.

Meetings will take place on Wednesdays, March 4, April 1, and May 6.

Our topic for the first meeting in both locations will be Natalie Goldberg's great new book on memoir writing, *Old Friends from Far Away*. Contact Richard ASAP if you plan to join one of the groups and want a copy of the book.

Come if you have read the book, are interested in reading the book, or want to talk to someone who may or may not have read the book. Books are a great reason to meet, and the resulting conversation is what will keep you coming back. Bring your journal with you, as we'll surely want to try out a few of Goldberg's exercises. At this first meeting, we will also discuss selections for April and May. If you have any suggestions or questions about either group, contact Tasha or Richard.

We hope to see you there!



Visit SLWP online at

[http://www.selu.edu/acad\\_research/  
programs/slwp/index.html](http://www.selu.edu/acad_research/programs/slwp/index.html)

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