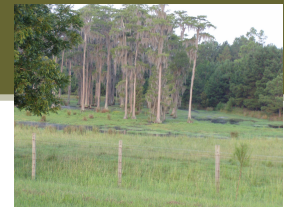


# BLACKWATER REFLECTIONS

*Blackwater Writing Project*  
Dept. of English, Valdosta State University  
1500 N. Patterson St. Valdosta, GA 31698



## Time Flies

By Diana Chartier

Well, the first newsletter appears to have been a hit. There was a lot involved in putting together that first one. But, don't forget, a newsletter requires news. So come on. Tell us what you are doing, and we can rant or rave to each other about our daily professional lives.

Write Nights are a hit for the group that participates. We miss seeing and reading more of you. The dates of upcoming Write Nights are on page 2.

## Money, Money, Money

Grants and Awards

Anetia Ports applied for and received **2** grants.

1. The San Antonio Area Foundation grant provided \$3,000 to buy software for the Rose R. Thomas Writing Center.
2. The Minnie Stevens Piper Grant provided \$2,000 to buy a computer and software for the Rose R. Thomas Writing Center.

BWP's 2006 grants guru, Alex Alvarez, applied for and received a \$250 Learning Enhancement Grant from the Valdosta Junior Service League to start a recycling program at Valdosta High School.

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## Member Updates

Kimberly Ross was proposed to by Karl Dixon and accepted. They have set the date for April 1, 2007. CONGRATULATIONS!

Lindsay Elliot was nominated as teacher of the month for September 2006 by the students.

Ryan Dixon is the new graduate assistant for BWP. A greeting from Ryan can be found on page 6.

**Do you have an update? Send it to Diana Chartier (5chartier@bellsouth.net) for inclusion in the next issue.**

## NWP Professional Writing Retreat

By Donna Sewell

In August 2006, I stuffed my suitcase with books, grabbed my laptop, and headed for Washington State for a professional writing retreat sponsored by the National Writing Project. This retreat provided uninterrupted time for writing, great food, small groups for feedback as well as access to an NWP editor, Art Peterson, and three other facilitators for individual feedback.

I left Valdosta with plans to draft a monograph on NWP leadership transition, a monograph I wanted to write with Chere Peguesse. However, as I met with facilitators and small groups, I revised my plan to a personal essay entitled “The Reluctant Director,” a piece about my fears of assuming the supervision of our site. I wanted something I could complete that weekend, and I did, sending it to *NWP Voice* as soon as I returned to Valdosta.

I encourage you to take advantage of such retreats. NWP offers two professional writing retreats—A for drafting, B for editing. NWP pays most of the costs of the retreat, and local sites cover transportation costs for those writers accepted. Attendance at a professional writing retreat may also make a site eligible to apply for a mini-grant to run our own retreat (see “Retreat into Writing” in this newsletter for information about BWP’s retreat). Please consider applying for a professional writing retreat. NWP’s retreat will be held at Sunrise Springs in Sante Fe, New Mexico. Applications are due March 19, 2007. For more information, visit the webpage (<http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwppn/22>).

### Calendar of Events

Write Nights will be at Hildegards 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Jan.	18, 2007
Feb.	15, 2007
Mar.	8, 2007
Apr.	12, 2007
May	10, 2007

Blog with us from home.

It’s easy. Go to <http://www.blogger.com> and log in. Don’t have a link to the blog for BWP? Email Donna Sewell ([dsewell@valdosta.edu](mailto:dsewell@valdosta.edu)) and ask to be invited.

Send newsletter submissions by the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month.

The next newsletters will be published on March 5 and June 5.

Go to page 6 for conference dates and websites.

*“Mock me if you must...my topic follows the minimalist tradition.”  
Ikbostic*

## The Nashville Scene Review

By Jana N. Williams, East Central Technical College

When I close my eyes and contemplate the trip, I can still hear the sound of the waterfalls from the black wrought iron balcony of my hotel room at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel. Although it's been over a month since I returned from Nashville from the 2006 National Writing Project (NWP) Annual Meeting, I am still as rejuvenated as I was the day I actually sat on the balcony and reflected upon my NWP work, inspired by the glistening lights and rushing water five stories below my feet. I accompanied several members of the Blackwater Writing Project to the NWP Annual Meeting, and each of us gushed and gibbered about the incredible inspiration that was Nashville, TN.

The trip made my fifth National Writing Project Annual Meeting, and I can honestly say that they get better every year. From Tucson to San Francisco and now Nashville, I have been a faithful follower of National Writing Project life and pedagogy for several years. The "teachers teaching teachers" philosophy of the NWP is no better emulated than during these once-a-year meetings in November.

The days are filled with conference sessions on buzz topics such as "writing as discovery" and "writing as literacy development"; most importantly, the conference days are filled with reflective practice. As we sit in rooms of fifty or so teachers and share our classroom experiences, we take a great deal more from the sessions than we would without interaction. That's what makes the NWP unique: true collaboration.

Most of the NWP sessions were held this year at the beautiful, downtown Nashville Airport Marriott. One session in particular, focusing on the instruction of writing as inquiry, offered the diversity that keeps the NWP innovative. As I and my colleague, both from a small technical college in Georgia, sat between two professors from Rutgers and a public school kindergarten teacher, we experienced the power of learning through writing. As the session presenter flashed a picture of her second-grade class, pens and papers in hands, she encouraged us to write, too, on childhood memories

and to share these experiences with those at our table. Before the session ended, the table chatter had expanded room-wide.

Donna Sewell, Karen Morris, Michael Williams, and I met for dinner on Thursday night at Findley's Irish Pub to share our ideas from our first day of conferences. Over mouthwatering prime rib subs and cocktails, we reflected on our experiences that day, adding more "teacher teaching" to our already brimming annotations.

Friday's general session was crowded. Giving credit to Nashville's night life, a speaker informed us that this was the largest attendance ever for a National Writing Project Meeting, but the room burst into giggles and laughter. Everyone knew the real reason for the overcrowded pavilion was the continued, universal success of the National Writing Project model . . . and, of course, the excitement of hearing Richard Sterling's British accent again.

Friday's sessions proved just as noteworthy as Thursday's, and Saturday's departure seemed to come too soon. Boarding the plane, Michael Williams (my colleague and husband) and I chatted about the ideas we could bring to our tiny community in South Georgia. Detailed ideas of family write nights and student anthologies made the short flight into Atlanta pass us by in a flash.

A month has passed, I've already said. But the excitement I have about the conference will be here until I return to my National Writing Project family reunion. I look forward to seeing everyone again in New York City in 2007.

### Motto

"Courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it." ~Nelson Mandela

## Voices From the Coast: A Conference Review

By Kimberly Ross

I left work at 4:30 Thursday afternoon getting on the road to Savannah, Georgia, for the Voices from the Coast conference. As my colleague drove, I looked out the window, wishing we were headed back home and the panicky feeling of presenting in front of a room filled with experienced, professional teachers had left the pit of my stomach.

We expected that the motel would be mediocre because of the low rates quoted. However, when we reached Abercorn Street, there sat a very nice five star Days Inn. We knew that there was no way we paid \$90 for this motel, but we walked through the door to hear the clerk giving directions to the correct Days Inn as she laughed about the number of people who had made this mistake. We drove to the next motel and decided that it was acceptable for two days. In the lobby, we met two guys who were presenting a session on “Flocabulary” at the conference.

I felt okay the next morning (Friday, November 10, 2006) because I didn’t have to present and could watch others to prepare myself. We arrived early for the Flocabulary presentation. We looked through the lyric books and listened to the accompanying rap songs. This was a great way to teach Shakespearean vocabulary. I wished that I could have learned Shakespeare this way; it would have made it easier. As the day continued, other instructors talked through their presentations, but not a lot of participation with the audience was included.

Back at the room, I called Donna Sewell (Blackwater Writing Project director) and Lisa Wood (2006 fellow of the writing project) and found that they were next door. Lisa and I both were preparing for our first presentation tomorrow.

We arrived early that morning and helped ourselves to the continental breakfast. There were not many people there. I would be presenting at 9:00 while Donna’s and Lisa’s presentations were scheduled at 10:30. My heart thumped as I waited for everyone to leave the General Session. Finally, at 9:45 we started since the General Session lasted longer than scheduled. However, to my surprise few people attended. They all enjoyed making volcanoes, but I expected a larger audience.

Donna and Lisa combined their sessions to share their small audience. This way more people could come. Everyone enjoyed Lisa’s presentation, “Incorporating Writing into the Classroom.” They didn’t want to stop making bioposters when it was time for Donna to present. We also enjoyed Donna’s presentation, “Playing with the Ancients: Using Imitation to Stretch Student’s Style.” She has always had a unique way of creating better writers. I felt better about my writing when I shared one of my sentences and everyone liked it. My sentence was, “The most gloomy of all lives is one without

Continued on page 5

## Voices. . . Continued from page 4

meaning.” We used a quote from E.E. Cummings (“The most wasted of all days is one without laughter”) as a model.

Donna Sewell, Lisa Wood, and I represented Blackwater Writing Project (BWP) well. Very few presentations incorporated the audience. If BWP hosts a conference, we shouldn’t have it on Friday so that teachers will have no problem attending. Also, we don’t need concurrent sessions; they make it hard to choose which one to attend, and if the turnout is low, there won’t be many people in the audience. I also think that we will need to publicize it enough so that many teachers and others know about the conference. We went on Armstrong University’s main campus looking for the Armstrong Center. No one on campus knew anything about the conference. This was happening at their school, and the faculty and students were not aware.

I end with another sentence derived from the earlier E.E. Cummings’s quotation: “The most disappointing of all conferences is one without an audience.”

## Greetings from the Graduate Assistant

By Ryan Dixon

My name is Ryan Dixon, and I am pleased to announce I will be working with Donna Sewell as a graduate assistant for Blackwater Writing Project this semester. This is the first semester of my pursuit of a Masters of Education in School Counseling here at Valdosta State. I received my Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology at the University of Colorado in Boulder. After school, I worked at a drop-in center for youth with mental health issues where I developed a passion for teaching and working with high school-aged students. I also worked at a teen homeless shelter in downtown Denver during this time. I moved to Valdosta from Colorado last fall and since then have worked with the South Georgia Coalition to End Homelessness and 2-1-1 of South Central Georgia information and referral service.

I am excited to have the opportunity be a part of a program that makes such a positive impact in our community’s schools. Please feel free to email any time at [rcdixon@valdosta.edu](mailto:rcdixon@valdosta.edu). I look forward to working with everyone this semester.

**And we are all looking forward to working with you, Ryan.**

# Retreat into Writing

By Donna Sewell

## BWP's First Writing Retreat

Imagine yourself sitting on a porch, tapping away on your laptop or meeting with an experienced writer for feedback on your article or grant proposal. Come write with us! Blackwater Writing Project wants to help you move toward publication in whatever venue you wish. Whether you need to prepare materials for a conference presentation, write a grant proposal, start an academic paper for a graduate class, or revise a graduate paper for publication, this retreat is for you. Donna Sewell and Chere Peguesse will offer strategies for getting the writing done as well as providing lots of uninterrupted time for writing and being available for individual response.

Blackwater Writing Project will host its first writing retreat March 23-25, 2007, at Seminole State Park, which is sixteen miles south of Donalsonville, Georgia. This retreat is open to all past participants of an Invitational Summer Institute of Blackwater Writing Project, formerly South Georgia Writing Project.

Registration is required for the conference. Clip out the registration form at the bottom of this page, and mail it along with a check for \$30 made out to Blackwater Writing Project. We have space for eighteen participants in two-bedroom cottages (double-occupancy bedrooms, but not beds). The deadline for registration is Feb. 15, 2007, but spaces will be filled based on order of registration. Please join us. Contact Donna Sewell (dsewell@valdosta.edu) if you have any questions or concerns.

### Registration Form for BWP's Writing Retreat

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Year of ISI \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please discuss briefly the project you plan to write during the retreat.

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*We're on the Web!*

*Visit us at:*

<http://www.valdosta.edu/bwp>

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January 20, 2007: Deadline for  
 Applications to The Memorial Library  
 Summer Seminar on Holocaust Education in  
 New York City

(  
[http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp\\_e/181](http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp_e/181))

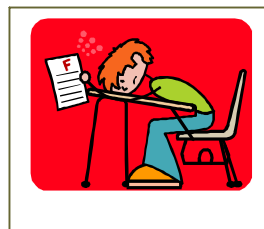
March 9-10, 2007: Rural Sites Network  
 Conference, Albuquerque, New Mexico (  
[http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp\\_e/171](http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp_e/171))

March 19, 2007: Deadline for Applications  
 to NWP Professional Writing Retreat A (  
[http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp\\_e/172](http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/print/nwp_e/172))

March 29-30, 2007: NWP Spring Meeting,  
 Washington, D.C.

(  
<http://www.writingproject.org/cs/nwpp/>

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*I tried my best. It's the teacher's fault.*