

# In Writing

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Successful Alumna, Nicole Corely

## Writing Degree Set Up Alumna for Career Success

### Krysta Rydecki

**I**n the competitive nature of today's job market, applicants must stand out. Although there is no exact formula for how to accomplish this, a valuable skill can be an attention grabber. For Nicole Corely, this skill was writing.

Corely works as a copywriter for GSD&M, the largest advertising agency in Austin, TX. She earned a degree in professional writing from GVSU in 2006, along with completing the Distinction in Writing program.

"I went to GVSU knowing that I wanted to be a writer and one of the reasons I picked [GVSU] was because it was one of the only schools at the time that had a professional writing program," said Corely.

At that time, students in the writing program picked either the creative or professional track. Corely chose to earn her degree in professional writing because she

knew it would afford her more job options.

"If I did the professional writing degree and just took all the creative writing classes I could, then I would get the best of both worlds," said Corely. "I would still be able to find a job and take creative writing classes."

After graduating from GVSU, Corely got a job working full-time for a real estate company as a marketing coordinator where she wrote brochures and websites. However, her job as marketing coordinator abruptly came to an end when the company outsourced her job to an advertising agency called Grey Matter Group.

"I thought it was the worst thing ever," said Corely. "But I realized that I was on the wrong side of the table and wanted to be working for that advertising agency."

And that's exactly what she did. Corely interviewed for a position at Grey Matter Group and was hired.

*See ALUM on page 7*

# The Circus is Coming to Town

*Claire Fisher*

Circus performers, clever puns, and life struggles dominate Assistant Writing Professor Amorak Huey's new poetry book, *The Insomniac Circus*. The book is a collection of 18 poems depicting the woes of various members of the circus.

Beginning with the ticket taker and ending with the clown, the poems move through the circus, adopting the voice and personality of each performer.

"I'm writing about performance and the mask you put on when you're a circus performer," said Huey. "This is what happens after the show, after the lights go off, but you're still awake. It seems glamorous in the spotlight, but the real circus life would be kind of crappy."

Each poem begins with a pun about the character's job and the problems they have in life such as "The Strongman Goes Weak in the Knees" and continues on to detail their affliction.

"What was challenging about this project is not making the poems too similar, but making them coherent enough to make them a collection," said Huey. "It's a unified project, but I still wanted each poem to explore different surfaces of the circus life."

The project started for Huey in April 2011 when he was writing a poem per day for National Poetry Month. Halfway through the month Huey wrote "The Sword Swallower Wonders What's the Point" and was inspired to continue.

"I wrote the first one and then I immediately thought of another title, so I wrote another one," said Huey. "Then I knew that I had something. I was going to write a series of poems with these sort of circus titles."

In the next two to three months, Huey

worked on another dozen poems to add to the project. During this time, Huey wrote and edited the poems until they were up to his standards.

"I pick at poems and worry at them and mess with them, over and over again, until I feel like it's where I want it to be," said Huey.

Huey spent months in a constant process of editing. By the end of this time, Huey found that the poems he wrote needed less editing as he started to master the tone and style of the project.

"I was sort of in the groove, and I knew what I wanted each poem to do. I was thinking about how each character fits into this collection," said Huey.

Huey then began to submit his poems to various literary journals. While he received some rejections, Huey stayed persistent and all except two of the poems from the book were published individually.

Eventually, Huey began to submit the collection as a whole. After submitting it 25 times in two years, *The Insomniac Circus* was published in 2014 by Hyacinth Girl Press, a publishing company in Pittsburgh, PA.

"The book was a runner up at a contest and it was a finalist at a couple of contests



*Huey with His New Poetry Book*

and it just kept being close, but it was never quite the one that they picked. There's a lot of competition, and it's hard to break through it," said Huey. "Then, finally, it broke through and was accepted for Hyacinth Girl."

Although the publishing process took time for *The Insomniac Circus*, Huey is glad that he had time to work on his project and suggests that students not be in a hurry to publish the first thing they write, right away.

"I've got something I can be proud of and I won't regret 10 years down the line," said Huey. "I think I will always be proud of this book because I didn't publish the very first thing I ever sent out."

*The Insomniac Circus* can be purchased on the Hyacinth Girl Press website <http://hyacinthgirlpress.com/>.

# SRS Still Going Strong

*Gina Barger*

The early spring installment of the Grand Valley State University Student Reading Series took place in Lake Ontario Hall on the evening of March 13th.

The Student Reading Series (SRS) started

in the autumn of 2004, and is still going strong into 2015, co-directed by Nathan Holtrey and Jacob Guajardo.

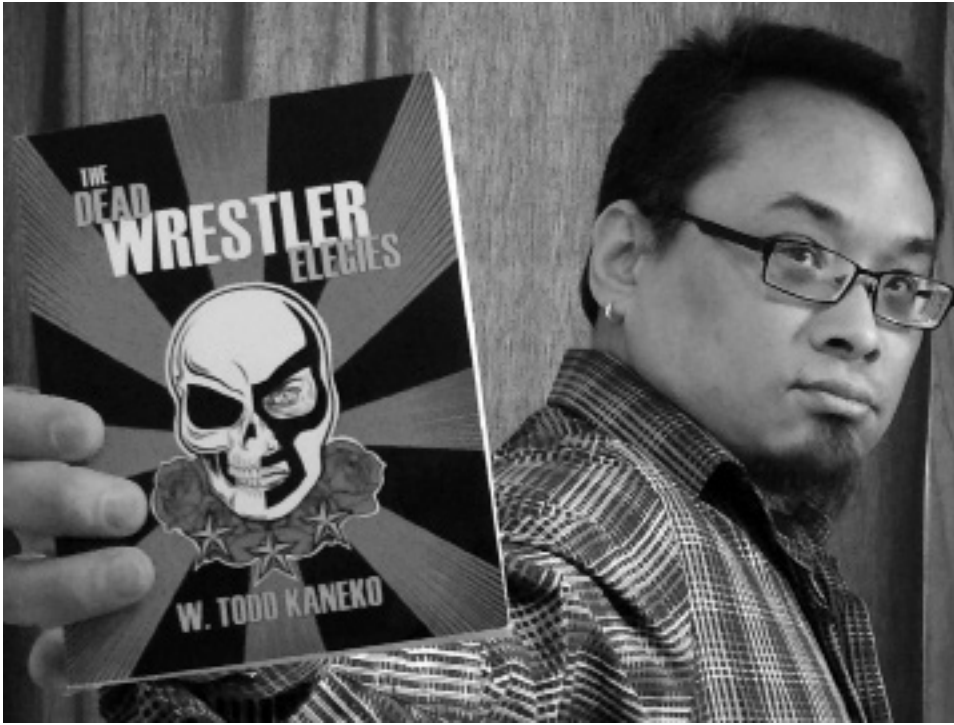
"The student readings provide a creative outlet for GVSU aspiring writers to share their works with peers in an informal setting, which is a nice change from formal academic papers," said Holtrey.

Attendance was plentiful at the March 13th reading, which featured the works of Kendra Vanderlip, Michelle Kuznicki, Jacqueline Bull, Kayla Williams, Kelsey May, Jackie Vega, and Peter Eklund.

The student work varied in length and

*See SRS page 3*

# Stepping into the Wrestling Ring



*Kaneko with His New Poetry Book*

## *D. Cole Eichelberger*

Assistant Writing Professor W. Todd Kaneko's new book of poems *The Dead Wrestler Elegies* grapples with pain, loss, and the identity of a man.

On the first page, Kaneko defines the word 'kayfabe' as the portrayal of action and story lines associated with professional wrestling as being authentic competition. No word better defines this book. From the moment the illusion is introduced, it ceases to appear scripted. It is impossible not to care for the speaker and his alcoholic father and loathe the mother who abandoned them.

Each of these poems draws strength from the heavy subject matter. In "Long Live The King Of Hearts," Kaneko uses the simple beat of repetition of the word "because" to create meaning in the poem. "Because we both want to believe that a man can fly./ Because there is no such thing as flight, only that/ indeterminate period before a man falls."

"In grief we try to make sense of things," said Kaneko, "but there is nothing to be made sense of. It's just an experience we go through."

To show that in his work, Kaneko redefines Owen Hart and the speaker's father's death to show how the speaker is

dealing with the loss of his father.

"Men are prey to the shadows of everything/ they have lost in life. Call a man whatever name/feels best in your mouth—/ call him injury,/emergency, father. Call him home."

Stanzas like this are plentiful in this book; gripping on the first read, and on the second, the enjambment hooks audiences and shows them another meaning to the poem.

The imagery in these poems is striking from the illustrations of past wrestlers to character-revealing descriptions. A mother, "June Byers, a woman more fistfight/ than housewife, more pocketknife than lipstick." A father, a man "passed out drunk, clutching a cocktail/ dress left by my mother." A world made of failure, savages, blood, and muscle, and spray tanned for the camera. This spoken language kicks readers in the head and digs into in their guts, while the rhythm changes to reflect the emotion in each of the poems.

What may throw readers back a bit is that the book is about wrestling, a fake sport, but they won't know after reading these elegies. Though the stories are fiction, the message is true.

Kaneko stated, "I hope that people who don't normally read poetry look at this book and find it accessible and use it as a doorway to poetry. And people who read poetry can look at the poems and say wrestling is a serious thing."

*The Dead Wrestler Elegies* does just that. No matter the readers' thoughts on wrestling or poetry, this is a book worth more than just a look through at the pictures.

## *SRS continued from page 2*

genre, with selections ranging from poetry to creative nonfiction to flash fiction. Senior Peter Ecklund read his piece "The Difference Between Humans and People," a comical, creative nonfiction recount of his father getting pulled over by the police for speeding en-route to a high school football game.

After the contributors had read their pieces, the audience voted on a favorite of

the night. First place was tied between Peter Ecklund and Jackie Vega, with Michelle Kuznicki receiving second place for her poem, "Paper Thin." Participants who read at the event received a book of their choice from the abundant SRS collection of paperbacks.

The final SRS event, featuring the work of graduating seniors, will take place April 17th at 4pm. Refreshments will be provided and all students in the GVSU community are encouraged to attend.

## *2015 Distinction in Writing Recipients*

**Logan Bailey**  
**Stephanie Banta**  
**Nathan Holtrey**  
**Shardea Rudel**  
**Rose White**

# ECWCA Stresses Collaborative Learning

## *Shardae Rudel*

The Fred Meijer Center for Writing and Michigan Authors (FMCWMA) is no stranger to professional development conferences. Consultants at FMCWMA are given the opportunity to attend or present at two large-region conferences each school year. After a successful trip to the Michigan Writing Center Association's (MWCA) conference in Lansing this past fall, the GVSU Writing Center was invited to participate in the upcoming East Central Writing Center Association's (ECWCA) annual conference, a nation-wide event. Each year, ECWCA invites writing centers across the eastern-central area with an aim to connect writing center professionals. Each conference centers on a theme that accentuates the developments and contributions of writing center tutors, directors, and other professionals. This year's theme is ethics.

GVSU has had a consistent presence at ECWCA and other conferences for many years. This year, 15 people will attend and

present at the event, including 11 writing consultants, two research consultants, and two administrators. Nicole McLaughlin and Erin Koren, first-year and second-year writing consultants respectively, are presenting on tact in the writing center.

"Our goal is to figure out how to appropriately deal with abnormal consultations, such as with students experiencing high stress or anger," McLaughlin stated. "We hope to learn some new strategies as well as get some affirmations on some of our current techniques from working with writing centers all over the country."

McLaughlin and Koren's presentation will be in the form of a round-table discussion, encouraging participants to contribute and share experiences for the entire group to talk through. Discussions are one of many formats for presentations at ECWCA, and remain a favorite among GVSU participants this year. Bryce Carlton, a graduate student, is holding a workshop-style presentation with co-consultant Michelle Kuznicki, a junior.

"We're presenting on the ethics of working with short creative pieces, mainly

poetry," said Carlton. "We want to focus on how we as consultants can effectively not take ownership of a short piece—something that poets and creative writers struggle with a lot when coming into the center."

Instead of lecturing on the topic, Carlton and Kuznicki will present the topic and scenario and act as mediators with a goal to learn from each of the attendants. The format will encourage the presentation's audience to use their existing skillset as well as learn from each other in a productive way.

"It will help us learn about how other writing centers operate as well as introduce us to some of their theories," Carlton says. "There are lots of big universities there, like Purdue, and it's great that we can use that to our advantage to improve what we have going on here. I'm excited to go not only as a presenter but also as an attendee."

Each presenter hopes to bring back new ideas and strategies to use both in the

*See ECWCA page 6*

# Publishing Night Offers Insights

## *Jonica Lister*

Some students may believe that publishing their work is only worthwhile to achieve fame, fortune, and ego. Assistant Professor Amarak Huey would suggest otherwise.

On March 11, students found their way to Lake Ontario Hall to attend Publishing Night, an annual event held to introduce publishing opportunities that undergraduates may be unfamiliar with. Huey joined Assistant Professors Laurence José and W. Todd Kaneko to give students expert advice on how to promote their work as undergraduates by sharing their own personal experiences with publishing. After baked goods and refreshments were passed around, each professor approached the event to explore the questions of publishing: Who, What, When, Where, and Why? But the most important and anticipated question of the night was yet to

come: How?

Huey kicked off the event with a presentation on the meaning of publishing, which, as he described, is a way of sharing work with an audience. He then asked "Why publish?" and suggested that students should publish their work because they're interested in joining a conversation, they have the talent and passion for writing, and because they have something meaningful to say. The right time to publish is when students are writing, revising, and reading regularly.

He advised, "Don't be in a hurry. It's okay to be uncertain at the beginning because you are at the very beginning stages of your life as a writer, so that uncertainty is okay."

He also expressed that although some submissions may be rejected, students should not let "no" stop them from trying.

José spoke next about possible avenues available for students to publish their professional and academic writing. She

stressed that students determined to publish their work should find a topic they're interested in and start working toward drafting a piece of writing about it outside of the classroom, striving to create something for "more than a grade." When approaching the "Where to publish?" question, José suggested that students should identify their genre so that they can determine the audience and journal most related to that type of writing. José also mentioned that multimodal avenues of publishing, such as videos and blogs, could be useful tools for students to promote their work.

"Digital portfolios are something to think about, especially when you're getting ready to graduate," said José, "Use the skills you've gained from courses to start thinking about having a collection of work that can be digital and tangible."

*See PUB page 7*

# A Look at the New *fishladder* and Prizes

*Paige Dhyne*

**A**vid readers of *fishladder*, GVSU's annual, student-run literary journal, can expect some new and exciting additions for this year's edition and release party. I sat down with the *fishladder*'s editor-in-chief, Jacob Guajardo, to ask him about this year's compilation, which was drawn together from over 400—a record for the publication in recent years. The student-run publication has been around since 2003 and has since been thriving with entries accepted in the genre categories of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, and visual art.

When asked about the overall publication, Guajardo proudly announced that the publication this year was charged with student emotions representing GVSU's culture as a whole: "I wanted to focus on getting a diverse group of storytellers with different backgrounds: racial, gender, sexualities, art [forms], and majors."

Guajardo attributes the success of this year's edition to the amount of pieces submitted, emphasizing that he wanted to reach more than just writing majors. "It was really important to me that these other students felt like they had a voice," he said.

During the call for submissions, *fishladder* staff asked students to submit experimental pieces in addition to literary writing. Guajardo wanted the journal to be open to any interpretation of writing so no voice would go unheard.

When asked about this pitch, Guajardo acknowledged that while the publication is still rooted in the traditions of its literary predecessors, he insisted that this year's publication will be aesthetically different for readers.

"The genre theme from last year opened *fishladder* to a newer audience and writing pool," said Guajardo. "It's the different students' views and the way they see and experience the world. And we are all really excited about that."

Jackie Vega, the assistant head editor of *fishladder*, insists that while there is no clear or established theme, like last year's emphasis on genre and literary writing coming together, she said, "We wanted to be especially open to what people would interpret the journal's theme as this year and work with that feedback to shape the journal in the coming years."

This year the journal also has a new award: the editor's prize. Valued at \$50, the prize will be handed out at this year's release party to one talented writer or artist published in one of the five genres of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, or visual art. The winner of this prize is chosen from a juried vote held by *fishladder*'s editorial staff. The prize is a new addition to help recognize extraordinary creativity, excellent writing, and compelling content.

When asked about the motivation behind this new prize Vega said, "We wanted to highlight extraordinary student content and

student writers. Without them, we wouldn't have a publication."

The release party will also feature readings from the selected entries published in the journal. This year, student artists will also be featured at the event during a panel. They will be able to talk about their motivations and the work behind their pieces, a first for *fishladder*'s release party. All art published in the journal is currently displayed on the first floor of Lake Ontario Hall with accompanying artist statements.

Both Guajardo and Vega are excited for the release party and the featuring of artists and writers alike.

"The journal starts with the people who want to share their stories, and the writers, and the artists, and the poets. We want to finish that way, too," said Guajardo.

The launch of the 2014–2015 edition of *fishladder* and the celebration of art and writing within it will take place on April 17, 2015 in room 168 of Lake Ontario Hall from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Food and refreshments will be provided. Be sure to pick up a copy at the event. For those unable to attend, copies of *fishladder* will be available at a later date in the Writing Department's main office.

Anyone interested in participating in *fishladder* or reviewing past/current issues of *fishladder* can find information at: [wordpress.fishladder.com](http://wordpress.fishladder.com).

## AWP Awards: Writers Become Readers

*Kelsey May*

The Writing Department hosts an annual contest to enter student work into the national competition hosted by the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP), a network that links universities, creative writing programs, and individual writers. Awards are given in three categories: nonfiction, fiction, and poetry. The winning entries in each category from GVSU move onto the final round. In late January, the winners of GVSU's AWP Awards were announced. These winners, as well as honorable mentions in each category, were invited to share their work

at a reception in Cook-DeWitt Hall as a special Student Reading Series event.

The winner of the creative nonfiction category was Paige Dhyne. She read from "Behold as the Beholder Before You Beheld It: The Musings and Observations of a Girl." The memories explored in this piece ranged from growing up with her brother to the college writing scene.

Jacob Guajardo read from his winning fiction piece "We Have Commandeered Our Bodies to Science," a story that sees a future where children are less important than scientific and robotics advances.

Annabelle Miller, Katie Dooley, and Stephanie Oesch were recognized for their



*Winners of the AWP Intro Awards Contest*

*See AWP page 8*

# Not the Average 9-5: Interning for *The Black Sheep*

Rose White

As a junior entering into his senior year, Logan Bailey knew he had to complete an internship. In an act of desperation, in spring 2014, Bailey applied to be a writer for the young, burgeoning publication on GVSU's campus, *The Black Sheep*. Bailey chose the satire newspaper out of practicalities, but he also thought "it seemed to be an even blend of creative and professional writing." Like most interns in the writing program, Bailey did not expect the experience to go beyond the semester. But, it did.

*The Black Sheep* is GVSU's satirical newspaper that is published on over 25 campuses across the United States. Bailey had heard of the newspaper, but he says, "Before I started interning there, I thought *The Black Sheep* just produced humor writing."

Once he started, Bailey wrote his first piece, "The Wrecking Ball is Sad that No One Wants to Ride it Anymore." Crafting this article quickly immersed him into the genre of satire. For Bailey, the focus on satire instead of plain humor took off constraints, which allowed him to write about anything on campus or in the Grand Rapids area. But Bailey revealed "this lack of creative constraints made it more intimidating."

By writing for *The Black Sheep*, Bailey learned how to handle minimal constraints in addition to the restrictions that came from the corporate offices of *The Black Sheep*. Although the newspaper is run from GVSU's campus, the main offices are in Chicago, IL. This oversight places restrictions like length, location, and deadlines. He discovered that a lot of the principles from courses like Introduction to Professional Writing were applicable.



Logan Bailey Examining the Latest Issue of *The Black Sheep*

For instance, Bailey found himself considering the primary audience more. He also developed his writing style and adaptability as a writer by being in a context of satirical writing. From this experience, Bailey believes he is, "better apt to write in any genre that I might be placed in."

Although completing an internship is necessary for writing students to graduate, Bailey discovered that writing for *The Black Sheep* opened unprecedented opportunities.

Bailey said, "My favorite article was when I got to interview Mike Birbiglia."

Birbiglia is a writer, actor, comedian, director—you name it—who recently went on a comedy tour that brought him through Michigan. Although the interview was for *The Black Sheep*, Bailey gleaned from the experience the fact that, "no matter what genre you are writing in, there are no bounds

for what you are writing. Like, if you are a stand-up comedian, you can write a movie or a speech or a book."

This realization is one of the major things Bailey learned through his internship at *The Black Sheep*. He was able to become an adaptable writer, gain experiences, and compile a tangible portfolio that went beyond in-class assignments. Even though Bailey will probably not be a comedy writer, unless "the new host of *The Daily Show* is looking for a writer," he continues to write for *The Black Sheep* long after completing the internship. For him, it's more than the credit, but also for "the experience and the sheer delight of writing comedy."

If you want to be involved with *The Black Sheep*, you can find information on the Job Board at [theblacksheeponline.com](http://theblacksheeponline.com).

*ECWCA continued from page 5*

FMCWMA and for their other professional ambitions. The theme of ethics runs strongly in each of the presenter's goals and there is a palpable air of excitement as the date approaches.

"Both Erin [Koren] and I want to be teachers, so this is a great experience to not only help out at GVSU, but also our future careers," McLaughlin says. "It'll help me learn my strengths and weaknesses as a presenter while also letting me see if others share my consulting strategies."

Looking ahead, the FMCWMA's presence

at the conference is sure to be a great collaborative experience and one that all contributing consultants and other participants will use to benefit the GVSU Writing Center for years to come. The conference takes place on April 10-11, 2015 at the University of Notre Dame.

*ALUM continued from page 1*

“They were wonderful,” said Corely, “And I realized that advertising was a much better fit for me.”

During her time in Grand Rapids, Corely worked on a number of freelance projects, which allowed her to do different kinds of writing. She wrote articles for *Rapid Growth Media*, the arts and entertainment section of the *Grand Rapids Press*, and the music section for *On the Town*.

After working in Grand Rapids for four years, Corely moved to Savannah, GA, where she earned a master’s degree in advertising from the Savannah College of Art and Design.

From there she made her way to GSD&M, where she has been for two and a half years. There she works with clients such as the U.S. Air Force, John Deere, Marshall’s, Zales, and Seton Hospitals.

As a copywriter, Corely writes headlines for print ads, copy for websites, scripts for radio and television, product taglines, and companies’ social media posts.

“The challenge in advertising is to find a new way in, a new way to tell a story, and learning the exact voice that would appeal to a certain type of person,” said Corely. “It takes a lot of creativity and strategy and it takes a lot of the influences of professional writing that lend themselves well to advertising.”

As a member of the creative team, Corely is partnered with an art director on each project. Account managers and strategists present them with the problem that needs to be solved, familiarize them with the target audience, and help them identify the message they want the target audience to take away. Corely and her partner then have to find the most creative and interesting way to tell the story so it resonates with the audience. This begins the process of generating ideas.

“We start with some bad ideas and toss them as we get better ones,” said Corely. “At that point it’s about overcoming the intimidation of the blank page. That’s the scariest part.”

Once Corely and her partner come up with a few solid ideas, they show them to the creative directors who select the ones with the most potential. Those ideas are further developed as Corely and her partner write sample copy and explore how they would work with visuals.

“We go through a few rounds of concepts, and sometimes a few late nights and 70 hour weeks, and finally come up with a few campaigns to show the client,” said Corely. “We present them, and if they like one, we start making it.”

Depending on the assignment, this could mean selecting voiceover talent, directors, locations, photographers, getting a designer involved, or simply opening a Word document.

“There are always rounds and rounds of revisions and approvals,” said Corely. “Watching your idea evolve can be a very frustrating and rewarding experience at the

**“I am so glad I got a bachelor’s degree in a specific, marketable skill [writing], and then found different ways to apply it,” said Corely.**

same time. It’s crazy how many ideas are tossed aside to get to the one print, banner, or TV ad you see.”

Corely believes that being a trained writer who happens to work in advertising is a huge benefit.

“I am so glad I got a bachelor’s degree in a specific, marketable skill [writing], and then found different ways to apply it,” said Corely. “In advertising it’s easy to tell the difference between the writers who are truly writers and writers that just didn’t want to learn Photoshop so they could be an art director. Real writers want to write. They have a way with words. They read. They practically speak in headlines. They can actually spell. They can write headlines and

long copy that are practically poetic.”

Although Corely feels like her journey in advertising is a little uncommon, she is happy to be where she is.

“I didn’t go into it [writing] intending to go into advertising,” said Corely. “It just kind of happened. Sometimes I sit back and look at how I got into advertising with my professional writing degree, and I’m glad I did.”

*PUB continued from page 5*

Kaneko shaped his presentation around publishing avenues for creative writing. According to Kaneko, publishing is the gateway to professionalizing oneself as an artist. His biggest piece of advice for students was: “There’s no rush. Take your time.” He also touched on how rejection is inevitable and that students won’t get what they want unless they pursue it.

“It’s scary asking someone to publish your work—it’s terrifying,” Kaneko said, “but you never get what you want unless you ask.”

He ended his presentation by showing students helpful resources like newspapers.com and duotrope.com, which can be used to research the market, find places to publish, understand what editors and journals are looking for, and keep track of submissions.

The answer surrounding “How to publish?” wasn’t black and white, as some students may have hoped. All of the professors stressed that publishing depends largely on a student’s willingness to invest time and effort into their work. They voiced that publishing is about knowing your audience, being open to feedback, and acting professionally. Lastly, it’s about not giving up. Writing is hard work, but knowing that your words are important enough to be shared with an audience makes it all worth it.

*InWriting*

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# Alumni News

## 2004

**Dawn Schout** published her first book, *Wanderlust*, in January 2015 by WordTech Editions. It's a full-length collection of travel poems and photographs from her travels in the U.S., Caribbean, Asia, and Europe. The book is available through Amazon.com, Barnesandnoble.com, and Abebooks.com. It's also sold at The Bookman in Grand Haven, MI and Readers World in Holland, MI.

## 2005

**Tracy Lee** finished an MA in creative writing at Eastern Michigan University in 2008. After adjuncting for a few years in both Michigan and Arizona, she is now full-time faculty at Illinois Valley Community College, where she teaches English composition and creative writing. She also serves as the faculty advisor for the institution's literary journal, *River Currents*. She has also been serving as an assistant editor with *Narrative Magazine* since 2009.

## 2006

**Nicole Corley** works as a copyeditor/account manager for GSD&M, the largest ad agency in Austin, TX. She writes headlines for print ads, copy for websites, scripts for radio and television, product taglines, and social media posts.

**Mike Salisbury** works as an Associate Literary Agent for Yates & Yates. In this position, he serves as creative counsel for authors, artists, and creative organizations.

## 2007

**Meaghan Pear** works as the Marketing Director for Beene Garter LLP, the largest independently owned accounting and consulting firm in West Michigan. She is responsible for the strategic development of the firm's marketing strategies.

## 2008

**Kenneth Caldwell** was the Marketing Communications Specialist at McLaren Homecare Group, a health care provider based in Davison, MI. Recently, he took a position as the Marketing Communications Specialist Intermediate for the University of Michigan Information and Technology Services, based in Ann Arbor, MI.

## 2011

**Lizzie Uhl** works as a Technical Writer at JR Automation in Holland, MI. She also manages the their social media accounts.

## 2012

**Megan Smith** works for VerTech Solutions in Highlands Ranch, CO. She started as a technical communicator for them, but now manages their marketing and CMS portal, develops websites for clients, trains clients in CRM, and performs software configurations.

## 2013

**Sami Birch** works as a Technical Writer at JR Automation in Holland, MI.

**Nicole Olweean** is finishing her first year in the MFA program at the University of California—Riverside. She has been awarded a summer fellowship to teach poetry to high school students at UCR's Gluck Program of the Arts.

**Matthew Russell** is finishing a Master of Arts in Professional Communication at Clemson University with an emphasis in Human-Computer Interaction.

## 2014

**Ari Mokdad** is a regular contributing writer for *Michigan BLUE* magazine, where she maintains a 5,000-word column for every edition. She has also published articles in *Just Labs Magazine* and *Life on Holiday Magazine*. She has recently accepted a new position as the New Media Developer and Marketing Manager at Dry Harbor Marine in Charlevoix, MI.

**Marie Orttenburger** works as a technical writer and marketer at Tuff Automation, where she writes manuals and communication documents about material handling equipment. In her free time, she writes about craft beer for *MittenBrew* and local music for *Mostly Midwest*.

**Andrew Wernette** is halfway finished with The Creative Circus, a two-year advertising portfolio program in Atlanta, GA.

## *AWP continued from page 4*

winning poems. Millers's piece "Umbrellas turned upside down look like poodle skirts" spun beautiful imagery around relationships and rainy days. Dooley examined a complex web of emotions in her poem "Home Improvement." Her inspiration came from last summer when "there were quite a few weeks where it was way too hot." Oesch's poem "Hit" also centered on temperature, exploring the relationship between a young boy and baseball.

Finalists in the national round are announced at the AWP conference in April. A group of Writing Department faculty and students travels annually to attend this conference with hundreds of other programs, universities, and authors. This year, the conference takes place in Minneapolis, MN. In addition to monetary prizes, the winning pieces of the final round of the AWP Awards are published in a few major literary journals with national distribution.

Being entered into this contest is an honor and is a point of pride for undergraduate students. Participating in the public reading was a first for many of the students, and this opportunity has only encouraged the winners and honorable mentions to continue submitting their work into contests.

"Reading out loud was a great experience because it allowed me to really put my work out in the world in more than one form," said Dhyne.

## *Writing Department Award Recipients*

### **Department of Writing Outstanding Student**

Rose White

### **Kenneth R. VenderBush Student Leadership Award Nominee**

Ariel Mokdad

### **Glenn A. Niemeyer Award Nominee** Grayson DeYoung