

Revise This!

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WILKES UNIVERSITY CREATIVE WRITING NEWSLETTER

October 2017

M.A. & M.F.A. Grads Walk the Stage in



Left to right: Anthony Kapolka, Pamela Turchin, Janine Dubik, Sean Egan, Patrick Kelley, Travis Shick

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Summer Commencement

We congratulate the graduates of the Maslow Family Graduate Program in Creative Writing, who were awarded their diplomas at the summer commencement ceremony on Sunday afternoon, September 10, 2017, at Wilkes University:

M.A.

Aurora Bonner (Creative nonfiction)
Andre Carter (Fiction)
Janine Dubik (Fiction)
Sean Egan (Screenwriting)
Patricia Florio (Fiction)
Patrick Kelley (Fiction)
Cooper Gorelick (Screenwriting)
Lisa Greim (Creative nonfiction)
Bibiana Krall (Fiction)
Ann Miller (Creative nonfiction)
Toni Muma (Creative nonfiction)
Travis Shick (Fiction)
Pamela Turchin (Fiction)
Carol (Christy) White (Poetry)

M.F.A.

Draper Brown
Jennifer Jenkins
Anthony Kapolka
Thomas Simko

Congratulations to each of these members of our Wilkes writing community, and welcome to the newest members of the Wilkes Alumni Association!

James Jones First Novel Fellowship Awarded for *Quantum Girl Theory*

Erin Kate Ryan, Minneapolis, MN, has been awarded the 2017 James Jones First Novel Fellowship for her manuscript *Quantum Girl Theory*. Runners-up Glori Simmons, Oakland, CA is the first runner up with her manuscript *Restell*. Second runner-up Jennie Li, is from San Bruno, CA, and was honored for her manuscript *The Unpassing*.

The James Jones First Novel Fellowship is given annually for a novel-in-progress by a U.S. writer who has not published a novel. Winners receive

\$10,000. Runners-up will receive \$1,000. A selection from the winning work is published in Provincetown Arts.

The 2017 James Jones First Novel Fellowship was judged by Laurie Lowenstein, James Jones Society president, novelist and author of *Unmentionables*; Greg Hrbek, novelist, author and past James Jones First Novel Fellowship winner with his novel, *The Hindenburg*; and Lisa Greim, journalist and author.

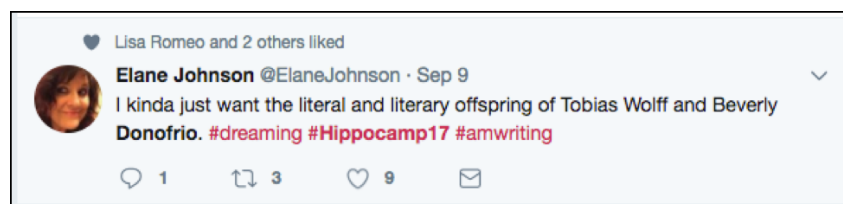
The 27th Annual James Jones First Novel Fellowship will be awarded to an American author of a first novel-in-progress, in 2018, by the James Jones Literary Society. Eligible writers have never published a novel, are U.S. citizens, and may have published other types of work including non-fiction and short stories.

Big

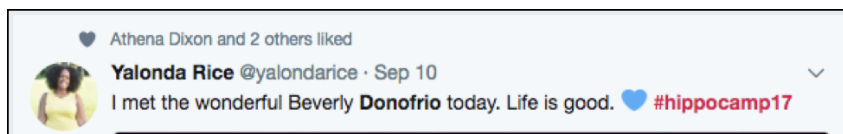
Picture? The Little Things: HippoCamp 2017 Wrap-up

By Aurora Bonner (M.A. '17)

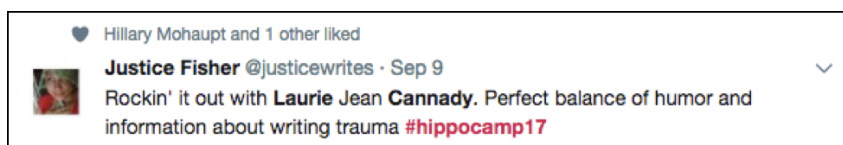
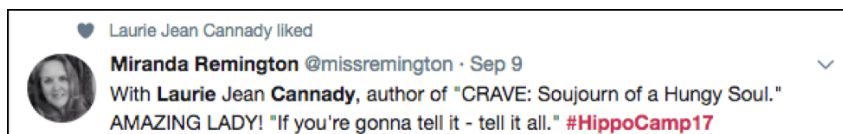
The man in front of me squealed, "Oh my goodness, what are these?!" Not waiting for an answer, he grabbed two of the desserts, one, a cupcake with a whipped chocolate topping and the other, a slim slice of cake so dense it was almost black.



"Oh! Tiramisu cupcakes and flourless cake," I heard the event organizer say. **Donna Talarico Beerman (M.F.A. '13)** seemed to be everywhere throughout the weekend, and always smiling, as if hosting [Hippocamp 2017: A Conference for Creative Nonfiction Writers](#) is her favorite way to spend the weekend. I turned to say hello, but she was already off, carrying a load of conference materials through the crowd.



There were crowds, but they're manageable. Unlike the annual AWP conference, faces of presenters and attendees became familiar, prompting everyone to geek out. "Bev Donofrio sat right next to me in the last session. I was only a foot away from her!" gushed one attendee, as we made heaping lunch plates. When I told her I attended the Maslow Family Graduate Program in Creative Writing at Wilkes University, she shot me rapid-fire questions.



"One of the things I like best about the program at Wilkes is the writing community. It doesn't matter where you are from or what you write, you are immediately absorbed into this giant, cable-knit sweater of a community. Everyone is approachable and accessible," I said.

"Like Hippocamp?"

"Yes, I guess you could say that."

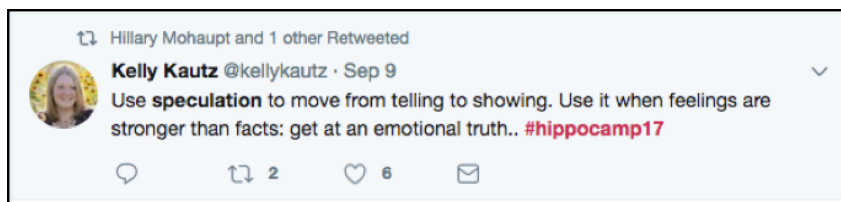
"Nice! So you're with your tribe."

"What's that?" I asked.

"You're with your tribe. This is your community!"

"Oh, yes! Yes, exactly!"

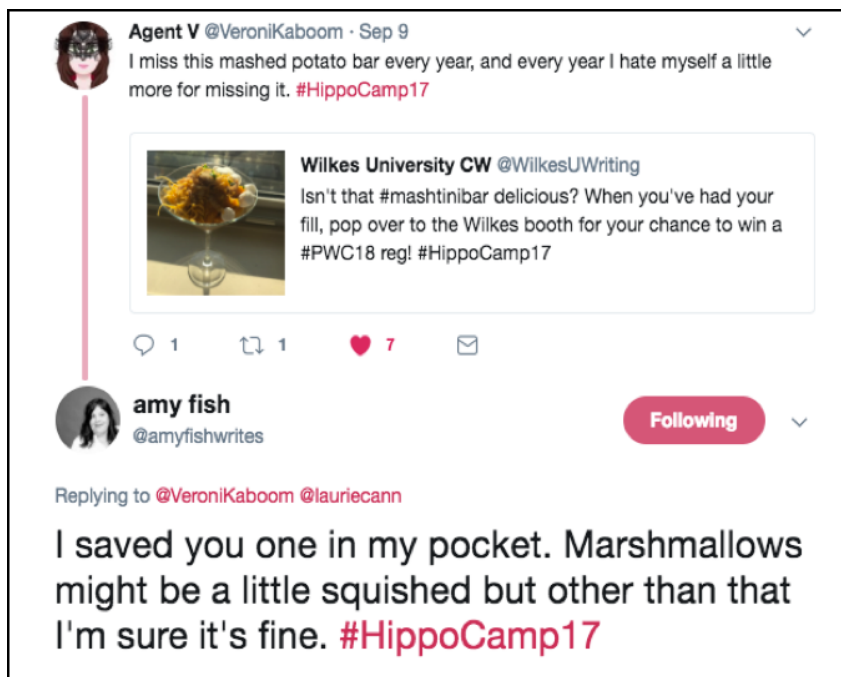
Later, I joined my tribe at the Wilkes booth. **Vicki Mayk (M.F.A. '13)** and **M.A. student Danie Watson** were congratulating **Sam Chiarelli (M.F.A. '16)** on his upcoming book, *Dig: A Personal Prehistoric Journey*, due out from the Hippocampus Books Division in Fall of 2018.



"Vicki, you're blowing up on Twitter," Danie said, turning her phone for Vicki to see. Vicki presented one of the first sessions early Saturday morning, examining the use of speculation in creative nonfiction.

As conversation shifted into Twitterland, my thoughts drifted to the work I had at home. Not only did I owe my mentor work, I also had papers to grade. I'm in the 612 cohort of students, working on my M.F.A., while juggling a bunch of adjunct classes and momming it at home. Distracted, I floated into the next session.

The woman presenting was ageless, somewhere between twenty and fifty, soft-spoken and a self-proclaimed bookworm. In a room full of bookworms, not surprising. But what was surprising was the passion that erupted from her when she began presenting. Her excitement about the topic—and her enthusiasm to share her revelations with us—was infectious. She explained how she applied the lesson to her own work, and then gave us a copy of her notes so we could see exactly what she'd done. Seeing this helped me imagine how I could apply her lesson to my current the project at Wilkes. I skipped through the rest of the conference, with a grin perhaps only Donna surpassed.



My biggest take-away from Hippocamp? The little things. Mashtini bars, tiramisu cupcakes (okay, the food is really good), the blending of voices and experiences, the sharable moments, and the extraordinary buzz of community. The ageless presenter with a soft voice and a craft lesson that knocked me into a permanent smile was not the only person sharing. The entire community, attendees, presenters, keynotes, volunteers, and organizers, shared. As a student, I was sitting in awe of greats like Beverly Donofrio and Tobias Wolff, but I was also learning applicable lessons on craft and insight into the post-writing world. The whole conference screams community. Even the tweets.

Aurora D. Bonner (M.A. '17) is a writer and artist who teaches in the Endless Mountains. She is currently working on a memoir that follows her through several National Parks in the American West. Bonner is an M.F.A. candidate at Wilkes University. Follow her [@aurora_bonner](#).



From June 23 to 25, 2017, alum Vicki Mayk hosted her first writing retreat "Healing Through Our Stories" in Bangor, PA. Eleven writers joined Mayk at the Kirkridge Retreat Center for the writing and storytelling retreat.

Questions for Vicki Mayk (M.F.A. '13): On Hosting a Writing Retreat

Mayk is a memoirist, nonfiction writer and magazine editor whose work has appeared in print and online publications including *Ms. Magazine*, *Hippocampus Magazine*, *Literary Mama*, and the *Manifest-Station*. She created and teaches a memoir workshop for the bereaved at St. Luke's Hospice in Bethlehem, PA, and teaches writing workshops for those dealing with loss under the umbrella of her business, Write To Heal. She is the editor of *Wilkes*, the University Magazine at Wilkes University, where she also teaches adult creative nonfiction workshops and a class about the power of story for first year students. We asked her a few questions about hosting a writing retreat, and how her M.F.A. internship blossomed into a full-fledged retreat.

1. What was the catalyst that made you want to host a writing retreat?

After participating in a writing residency at the Mailer Center in Provincetown in summer 2013 and a second residency in summer 2015 at the Writers Colony at Dairy Hollow in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, I realized how valuable it is for a writer to be able to "get away" for some focused writing time. A year later, in August 2017, I attended a session on starting a writing retreat given by Joanne Lozar Glenn at HippoCamp, the nonfiction conference started by Wilkes creative writing alumna Donna Talarico-Beerman. Those experiences showed me how hosting a retreat could be a natural extension of one of the things I like to do best – teach – while providing that "away time" for fellow writers similar to what I

enjoyed in my residency.

2. What benefits do you think a retreat has for a writer?

There are two benefits for writers: it gives them some time away from home and their daily routine to dedicate to writing and it also offers an opportunity to interact with other writers. It's kind of a yin/yang type of thing: time alone and time with like-minded people.

3. What are the logistics of planning a retreat?

Well, it can be a bit daunting because there are a lot of logistics! The session I attended at HippoCamp was helpful because the presenter provided a sample timeline and summarized the steps. You have to find a venue and reserve the date.

Then there is planning the program for the weekend (since my retreat is a weekend), which includes a mix of workshops and prompts and down time for people to do their own work. As organizer, I have to also coordinate food and refreshments, advertise and promote the retreat, take registrations and answer the 1,000 questions that your attendees may have. And you have to pay attention to all kinds of things like whether attendees have food allergies, if one of them has to leave early (or arrive late), and bring along all the materials you will need for the weekend.



4. How/Why did you pick your venue?

I teach a memoir workshop for St. Luke's Hospice in Bethlehem, PA, and a social worker there, hearing that I was planning to offer a retreat, suggested Kirkridge Retreat Center. I also had found a retreat center in New York state that I considered. But Kirkridge ended up being a great choice: it's in a lovely country setting that allows writers to get away from it all. They also can provide all the food, and the cost is relatively reasonable for attendees. It's not as luxurious as a hotel, but people were willing to have more modest accommodations for a more reasonable price. However, I'm also experimenting with using a bed and breakfast for

an upcoming retreat. There are a lot of options – and there's no single "right fit." One of the biggest challenges is that almost everyplace requires you to guarantee a certain minimum number of people staying at the location in order for you to use the facility.

5. What is the return on your



investment?

Well – you asked why I do this in addition to everything else I'm involved with, including having a day job. So the first answer that came to my mind was that I'm crazy! But all joking aside: it gives me great satisfaction to put together an event for a group of writers. It allows me to expand the community of writers that I am a part of and it also allows me to expand my teaching. I also should note that my first retreat was designed for both writers and non-writers and was aimed at helping people use writing as a way to heal from grief, trauma and other challenges. It's part of an initiative of mine that I call Write to Heal, which focuses on using writing as a way to process our experiences. It grew out of my hospice workshop – which I created as part of my M.F.A. teaching experiences. Talk about coming full circle! If anyone in my Wilkes family is interested in receiving information about my upcoming retreats in June and September 2018, they can email me at vicki.mayk@gmail.com. For more information, visit [Vicki's website](#).

Danie Watson is a freelance writer based in Scranton, PA. She is currently pursuing her M.A. in fiction from Wilkes University, where she serves as a graduate assistant.

Faculty, Student, and Alumni News

Faculty News:



Gregory Fletcher directed the play *Image* by Jack Rushen for the Broadway Bound Theatre Festival in NYC in August.

Laurie Jean Cannady (Crave: Sojourn of a Hungry Soul) discussed her writing process and signed books at the Wilkes and Etruscan booth at AWP17

Lenore Hart's short story "Thirteen Ways of Living" was a finalist for *The Florida Review's* 2017 Editors' Awards.

Ross Klavan wrote "[Act Two: A Craft Essay](#)" that was recently published in the magazine for Down and Out Books.

J. Michael Lennon moderated an event focusing on "fake news" at the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts on October 1. The event was organized by Laura Moran (M.F.A. '12). Lennon will speak at an event in Washington, D.C. commemorating the 1967 March on the Pentagon, sponsored by the Vietnam Peace Commemoration Committee, along with Daniel Ellsberg and Peter Yarrow (of "Peter, Paul and Mary"), and Vietnam War vets. The event will be at the Western Presbyterian Church in Washington on Saturday, October 21st. The Norman Mailer Society is co-sponsoring the event, which will conclude with a March to the Pentagon, and a gathering at the Vietnam Memorial.

David Poyer will be republished in Hungarian in *Galaktika* this fall.

Student and Alumni News:

Jennifer D. Bokal's (M.A. '10) newest book, *Her Rocky Mountain Hero*, will be released by Harlequin Romantic Suspense in November, 2017. HRMH is the first book in the Rocky Mountain Justice series. The second book in the series, *Her Rocky Mountain Defender*, will be released in April, 2018.

Craig Czury's (M.F.A. '08) new book [Fifteen Stones](#) has been published by NYQ Books.

Cindy Dlugolecki (M.A. '11) will have her "Ghosts of Mechanicsburg" produced at the Little Theatre of Mechanicsburg the last two weekends in October and her "ANGELS INC. produced at the same community theater

the first two weekends in December. ANGELS INC. is published by Blue Moon Plays.

Richard Fellingner (M.F.A. '10) published [an op-ed](#) on responding to racial hatred in the Lancaster paper after the events in Charlottesville.

Vicki Mayk (M.F.A. '13) presented the writing retreat "Healing Through Our Stories" from June 23-25 at Kirkridge Retreat Center in Bangor, Pa. In 2018, she will be offering retreats once again at Kirkridge in June, and in September at the New Jersey shore. Vicki also presented "Maybe, Perhaps, Possibly,... Using Speculation In Creative Nonfiction" at the HippoCamp Creative Nonfiction Conference from Sept. 8-10 in Lancaster, Pa. She is teaching "Life Stories: A Memoir Workshop" at Union United Church of Christ in Neffs, Pa., in October.

Lori A. May (M.F.A. '13) has an essay included in an upcoming book, *Writing Creative Writing: Essays from the Field*, scheduled for 2018 publication with Dundurn Press.

Margaret McCaffrey (M.A. '14) had two memoir pieces read on Vision Australia Radio in celebration of Father's Day: '[Poultry Farm](#)' and '[Leaving for London](#)'.

Donna Talarico (M.F.A. '10) has the cover story in the November 2017 issue of The Writer (available in October), which focuses on technology and the writing life. She'll also have a story in the same magazine in the December 2018 issue, on literary magazines and website accessibility. She continues to write a monthly marketing column for Wiley's higher education newsletter, "Recruiting and Retaining Adult Learners." She presented "Interview Like a Journalist, Write Like a Marketer" at two higher education marketing conferences: WPCampus in June and HighEdWeb in October. Donna was the featured guest on two creative-nonfiction themed podcasts in August, the *Brevity Magazine* podcast with Allison K. Williams and #CNFpod with Brendan O'Meara.

Patti Taylor (M.A. '15) had two books published over the summer. *Making Miracles: 1st I Cured My IN-Curable Blindness, So Why the HELL Am I Still Fat?* and *Slip Away: 11 Escape Stories* under her entire name: Dr. Patti Novotny Taylor. Taylor also delivered a keynote speech July at an event for Courage to Change Enrichment Leadership & Mentoring, LLC and received an award for the speech. She also received the Stephen Shank award for teaching for the third time this summer. Taylor is also being included in Who's Who in the World for the second time.

Danie Watson (M.A. student) had her book review of *Stranger In the Woods: The Extraordinary Story of the Last True Hermit* featured in the

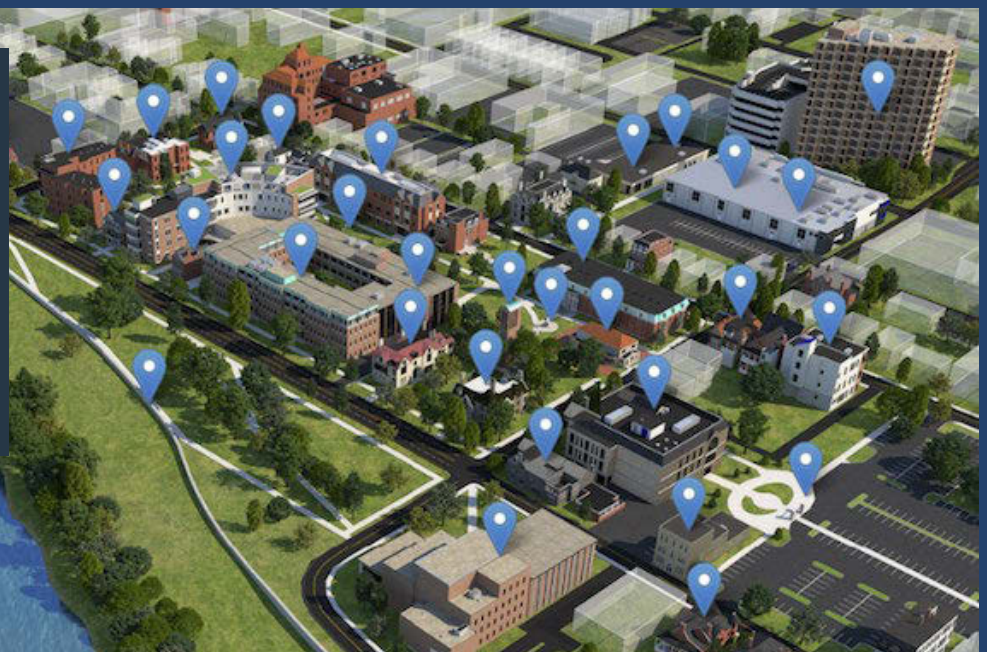
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