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Writing Program Welcomes Dawn Leas as Associate Director

The Wilkes Creative Writing program is growing and with progress comes change. The position of Associate Director was recently added and in a national call for applicants, Dawn Leas rose to the top and was selected to join the Wilkes team. As a Wilkes M.F.A alum, Leas is no stranger to the program and she admits her personal experience will influence her new administrative role.



"This new position will give me the opportunity to talk about the strengths of the programs," Leas said, "to share my own personal experiences as a student and alum; to provide support in terms of navigating LIVE, our online platform; to assist Dr. Culver in building new programs as well as managing daily office operations;

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and to nurture a growing writing community.”

In her past lives, Leas has worked in PR and marketing, actively using social media and community events to engage audiences. Leas said, “I will take this experience and apply it to my new position working closely with University Relations on marketing and social media, and with Dr. Culver, Joyce Anzalone and the graduate admission office on admissions. I am also learning the tech side of LIVE so that I can help guide faculty and students through its terrain.”

In her role as Associate Director, Leas will build on the current strengths of the Wilkes program “while also looking at other avenues to best reach these groups to bring them together as a vibrant, dynamic writing community that interacts not only within itself, but also with the larger literary world,” Leas said. “I see the Wilkes Creative Writing programs as a place where we can all communicate about craft, trends in publishing, continued learning experiences, successes and milestones to help support one another in what is otherwise a rather solitary pursuit.”

Jim Warner Roast Boosts Jennifer Diskin Memorial Scholarship



The summer 2012 residency kicked off with a night of celebration, memories, and philanthropy. M.F.A. Alum Amye Archer planned an evening to honor the departure of one of its admins, but the night soon became more than a simple send-off. “The roast was initially conceived as a unique way to say goodbye to Assistant Director Jim Warner,” Archer said. “It was Jim’s very generous decision to donate all funds raised to a scholarship honoring Jennifer Diskin, Jim’s friend and program alum who passed away in December 2011.”

News of the fundraiser garnered huge support and the party was well-attended by faculty, alums, current students, and advisory board members. In addition to straight-up donations, a number of items—such as gift baskets and signed books—were donated for a silent auction. Archer said the goal of the evening was to raise \$2,000, but the event brought in well over \$4,000 in honor of Jennifer Diskin.

“Jennifer was a bright light in our community,” Archer said, “and with the help of those who generously donated their time and money for the roast, as well as with the support from Jennifer’s family and friends, it is a light that will continue to glow.”

Announcements

Faculty members who included students on AWP 2013 panel discussions are eligible to apply for student funding support from the Wilkes

University Mentoring Committee. Please contact Program Director Bonnie Culver for more details.

Faculty/Staff Notes

Gregory Fletcher's new play, *Uploaded*, was read in New York this July. The play was read by Michael Learned, June Gable, and Phil Mills.

Christine M Gelineau's poem "Sockanosset," published by *The Paterson Literary Review*, has been selected for the 2012 Pushcart Prize anthology. The anthology will be available in November.

William Heyen, Advisory Board member, has just released *Straight's Suite for Craig Cotter & Frank O'Hara* from Mayapple Press and *Hiroshima Suite* from Nine Point Publishing. A third title, *The Football Corporations*, is available from Etruscan Press this summer. Also, *The Cabin: Journal 1964-1984* will be out from H_NGM_N Press by the end of the year.

Ross Klavan's film *Tigerland* is being remastered on blu-ray and includes an interview with Ross.

Jan Quackenbush had a play performed in Germany this summer.

Student/Alumni Notes

M.F.A. alum Christopher Bullard has new poems accepted by *Rattle*, *Waccamaw*, *Trincaria* and *Slipstream*. One of his poems was chosen for the anthology *The Best of the Barefoot Muse*, edited by Anna M. Evans.

M.A. student Kait Burrier will premiere a ten-minute play this September at Dionysia 12, the second-annual Jason Miller Playwrights Project Invitational. She will also be collaborating with The Pop Up Studio this October to introduce a theatrical component to Scranton's Harvest Festival.

M.A. student Christopher J. Champion's short story, "Angel," was selected as a finalist for East Meets West, American Writers Review Spring/Summer 2012 contest.

M.A. alum Cindy Dlugolecki was the featured speaker in May for Sunday at Museum Square in Mechanicsburg PA. She presented a series of vignettes dramatizing the town's colorful history and just as colorful citizens. Cindy's M.A. thesis/play *SNAP!* was produced as a staged reading at the Little Theatre of Mechanicsburg in July.

M.F.A. alum Jaclyn Fowler won first place in the East Meets West

Spring 2012 contest for her short story, "Swing Topping and Red Shoes." She was also invited to attend this summer's Norman Mailer Writers Colony workshop on Historical Fiction.

M.F.A. alum Wendy Garfinkles' poem "Stronger Than You Think" was selected as a Finalist in the East Meets West, American Writers contest and will be published in the Spring/Summer 2012 issue.

M.A. alum Jerry Gurka's play *The Prodigal Sons* was performed at Saint John the Baptist Church, Larksville PA this past spring. He has an article forthcoming in *Celebration Magazine* and Scripts Works Press will be publishing a second collection of his Passion Plays in 2013. Also, his play *Murder at the Pierogie Wedding* will be performed this August.

M.F.A. alum Matthew S. Hinton developed PLAYROOM: An Evening of One-Act Plays by Regional Authors. The program ran this June at Kings College Theater, Wilkes-Barre.

M.A. student Lori A. May has new creative nonfiction in *Passages North*, *Hippocampus Magazine*, and *The Smoking Poet*. New poetry has been published at *Lansing Online News* and she has new reviews published in *Rattle*, *Los Angeles Review*, and *Northern Poetry Review*.

M.A. alum David McDonald's short film, *Choker*, was a finalist in the 2012 Beverly Hills Film Festival. This piece was inspired by his work in the Wilkes Creative Writing/Screenwriting Program. Janis Productions is currently budgeting the project and several more producers in Texas and California are reading it.

M.A. alum Lori M. Myers' play *The Serpents Egg* will be produced by fellow alum Matthew Hinton at Gaslight Theatre in Wilkes-Barre. Her short story "Smoke" was recently published by Sunbury Press in the anthology *A Community of Writers*.

M.A. alum Dania Ramos' play *Frozen War* was read at the Arts on Division Festival this past May at the PCNJ Pop-Up Art Gallery, Somerville NJ. This was Playwrights Theatre of New Jersey's second round of readings for the New Jersey Emerging Women's Playwrights Project.

M.F.A. alum Jonathan Rocks' screenplay *Luke Whimsey*, which was his capstone for the Wilkes program, has been optioned by Triboro Pictures, and they are currently representing it at the 2012 Cannes Film Market in France.

Program Note

• The Write Life blog welcomes guest posts from faculty, students, and alumni. Email lori.may1@wilkes.edu for details.

• Weekly interviews and literary news are shared online at <http://wilkeswritelife.wordpress.com>.

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