**Project WRITE Teachers-as-Writers**
**(A Michigan Department of Education Title II Grant)**

## An Introduction to *Reflections*

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The publication of *Reflections* celebrates the writing of the teacher-participants of Project WRITE. The diversity of the writing found in this book reflects the diversity of the teachers in the cohort.

It is important for teachers who teach writing to know what it is like to write papers themselves, to experience writing workshop in all of its recursive phases – writing starts from prompts, drafting pieces they choose to work on, sharing and conferencing with peers, drafting papers several times, as well as using technology in writing, editing, polishing and publishing. Experiencing writing from the inside out helps teachers to become stronger teachers of writing because they understand what students go through as they learn to write in writing workshop. Teachers understand the successes, the frustrations, the leaps of understanding, the ownership issues, and the need for fluency as well as correctness. They understand the importance of trust and safety in the writing community that grows over time. For many of the teachers, they felt like writers for the first time in their lives, and, as an added bonus, the teachers now have models of their own writing to use when teaching writing. In short, they clearly understand what is needed in their own classrooms for students to be able to take the risks necessary to become good writers.

I want to give a special shout-out to several people who helped make this publication possible. Thank you Delores (Dee) Halstead for taking on the job of shepherding the individual writings of a large cohort of teachers into a book. Thanks also to Elana Waugh for introducing us to the www.lulu.com website that she used to publish student writing. And as always, thanks to Troy Hicks, assistant professor from Central Michigan University, our technology liaison, who took one look at the website and encouraged us to use it to publish our writing online in keeping with one of the central goals of the project, to use technology to help motivate adolescents to become excited about writing.

I congratulate the teachers in Project WRITE for this publication but also for all of their accomplishments in 2007 and 2008. The teaching of writing and the improvement of adolescent literacy in mid-Michigan is strengthened daily by your efforts. Kudos to all.

# *Reflections*


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# *Reflections*


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**"28"**

I AM
Wiser **Bolder** Stronger
More Defined
Independent and Dependent
A Mother...A Teacher...A Wife...
Friend and Confidant
Happy, Positive, Inspired,
Leaving the past years behind...
...Looking forward to the future
A NEW...
DAY
YEAR
VISION

A Christmas Surprise
By: Stacy Schuh

"Who did it?"
I looked up into my mother's deep coffee colored eyes.
"What do you mean?"
"I mean the rewrapped presents under the tree with your name on them" my mother glared down menacingly at me her hands on her hips. I looked down and took a deep breath. Could I do it? Could I tell her the lie?

Earlier that week my parents had run to the grocery store to pick up a few items.
"We'll be back in a few, honey," my dad yelled up the stairs to my room.
I moved the curtain to the side and peered out the window. They backed out of the yard and headed down the road. I bounded down the steps ponytail bouncing as I headed to the living room.

Across the room I could see the green branches and smell the sweet bite of pine in the air. I looked at the boxes hidden underneath the low boughs. Walking over to the tree I thought about what was inside each of the decorated boxes. I lifted the first present turning it over in my hands I could hear a heavy clunking sound. Considering what it could be made me wish I could just get one more clue. Just a little peek and then I could go back upstairs and where my math book sat waiting for me.

What could it hurt? I would just open a corner and this nagging feeling would go away. I leaned over and looked out the large glass doors behind the tree. The coast was clear. Slowly I slipped my index finger under the tape securing the end of the box. I felt a fluttering in my stomach. I wanted to stop but couldn't I had to see what was in that treasure chest. As I pulled back the slippery red wrapping paper I could see the writing on the side of the box. A picture of a child playing basketball showed through. I dug my fingers under the wrapping paper still covering the front of the box. As my fingers felt the up raised taunt rubber I could smell the new basketball. I had done it. I discovered what was in the box. I folded the paper over and retaped the end.

All right that was it, I had seen what was in the box and now I could go back to work. I was just about to turn around when I noticed a large box near the back. "Was that present for me too?" "What could be so big?"

The feeling crept back; the butterflies in my stomach were at it again.

Before my parents returned I had opened all my presents and rewrapped them. The excitement I had had while opening the presents was now replaced by a different feeling. I was ashamed by what I had done and now had to pretend to be surprised on Christmas morning. I walked back up stairs embarrassed by what I had done.

"Well?" my mother was growing impatient and I could tell she knew I was the one who opened the presents. What happened next surprised even me.

"It wasn't me," I protested. " I know better." I closed my lips tightly to prevent any more lies from seeping out.

My mother rose an eyebrow and than walked over to my younger brother and sister. "Well, since you didn't do it I guess Brandey or Josh did."

"Yeah, I bet they were just snooping around and couldn't read the name and opened only mine" maybe I could pull of this lie.

"I'm sure that's what happened, my mother replied. "Still they need to be punished for what they did. So, I guess they will just have to spank them for being bad"

My brother and sister stared at my mother as if they couldn't believe she was being so dumb.

Wait, What? I hadn't seen this coming. I couldn't let them take the fall for something I had done.

"No mumma, I yelled, It was me I did it" by this time tears had left a trail down my cheeks. "It was me don't punish them, I did it."

My mother looked at my brother and sister "thanks for playing along, now go find something to do while I talk to your sister". The two headed down the hallway proud of their new found ability to act.

I looked up at my mother swallowing hard. "So I guess now you have to punish me?" I twisted my hair around my finger looking nervously down at the beige carpet. She slipped her hand under my chin and lifted my face. "I think your being punished right now, but next time tell me the truth. I always know."

I sniffled as I wrapped my arms around her waist. “I’m sorry,” I sobbed into her waist, tears leaving dark spots on her light blue shirt.

After that day I never lied to my mother and I never went near my presents before Christmas morning again. The feeling of guilt stayed with for some time. To this day my family and I laugh about that Christmas so long ago and how I learned a valuable lesson about lying.

## A Still (After) Life

The group's half consumed breakfast buffet sat quiet, a testimony to the fact that the morning's demand for sustenance was met. Unlike most still life paintings, this scene took on an eerie, graveyard kind of ambiance, showing not the beauty and promise of an uneaten apple but rather the decaying waste of a nearly empty fruit bowl whose only visitor, a lone fruit fly, was hovering over top like a WWII Curtiss Helldiver flying in a holding pattern. The saucer that had once displayed enticing bricks of cream cheese, now sat like a barren waste land with only abstract strokes smeared haphazardly across its surface. As I passed by I noticed a disposable knife perched on the plate with one small, tempting dollop of spread begging to be consumed by someone, anyone! Truly, I would have licked the knife clean except. . .what if someone was watching? Instead, I stepped back starring at the history held captive by this yet to be painted piece of art. Was the energy swallowed up here sufficient to produce genius from any of its transitory guests?  A secret well kept, I'm afraid.

A WANDERING MIND

It was a hot, humid start to the day that promised to get even hotter. The scene outside the classroom seemed to beckon my attention to the window and away from the instructor and lesson. Sprinklers danced across the lawn like choreographed nymphs, inviting me to take off my shoes and join them bounding through the refreshing, cool water on my body and bare feet, getting drenched in the process and thoroughly loving it! Trees even collected some of the glistening diamonds on their leaves, seeming to savor them before they disappeared, and made the day even more humid. The scattered golden brown leaves at the tips of branches were a welcome sign of the soon approaching fall and cooler, less humid weather. Time seemed to fly, and all of a sudden I realized I needed the instructor's information and had to leave my interlude on the lawn, sadly knowing that it would be gone when I later "had time" for such breaks in the day.

SHARRON BLANCHETT

# Anchor Lost

Amy Danek

We are left breathless
Wondering what to do next,
Where to go, who to go to.

We are a small boat in a large sea
with no anchor.
An artist with no muse
A family with no leader
When will we be whole or feel normal or at least be able to stop crying?

Keep going, keep moving, keep functioning
Stop thinking, stop feeling, stop remembering

Happiness begins to leak in at unexpected moments
Guilt leaks in too.

Our boat isn't quite so rocky, but we are still adrift
We are starting to remember and feel the pain of those memories
We are starting to enjoy saying his name again
And the stories that come with it.

We are beginning to laugh and to feel
As if we might just make it safely to shore.

# Auditioning

**Chandra Perry**

Like most seniors, the world was my playground. There was nothing in the world that could stop me from getting where I wanted to go – and I was going to make it big. I was going to show the world what a difference a small town girl could make. I was going to be a Broadway Star!

My parents had always been incredibly supportive, and believed in me in every aspect. As a result, I spent my senior year planning and preparing for my audition for the Musical Theater Department at Western Michigan University. Western had the most competitive department in the state – only allowing a total of 200 people, and only accepting as many new people as there were program graduates that year. This year, they were looking for four – four people.

There were four different audition groups during the year – each maxing out at 200 participants. That equals 800 people auditioning for four spots. I had signed up for the January auditions, knowing that if I didn't make it (like that would happen) I could just slip into the April group and try again. So, on that brisk January day, with falsified enthusiasm and fading confidence, I loaded myself into the van and took off for Kalamazoo.

I've mentioned before that my parents were supportive, which is a wonderful thing. However, that support immediately became my nemesis when I stepped into the green room, with my number on my shirt, and listened to the absolute endless talent belting songs out in the room next door. I instantly knew I was going to fail. No matter how much my parents loved me, they couldn't have been more wrong in judging my talent. Voices to the likes of Whitney Huston, Bernadette Peters, and Kristen Chenoweth filtered out the door, through the hallway lined with anxious auditionees, and into my

ears, where the sound waves planted enough “panic seeds” to freeze Napoleons army. I was in completely the wrong place. And what’s worse, there was no turning back. I would have to stand in front of that panel of judges and do my best, knowing full well that my best would never be good enough. I instantly felt sick and spent my waiting time running laps to and from the bathroom.

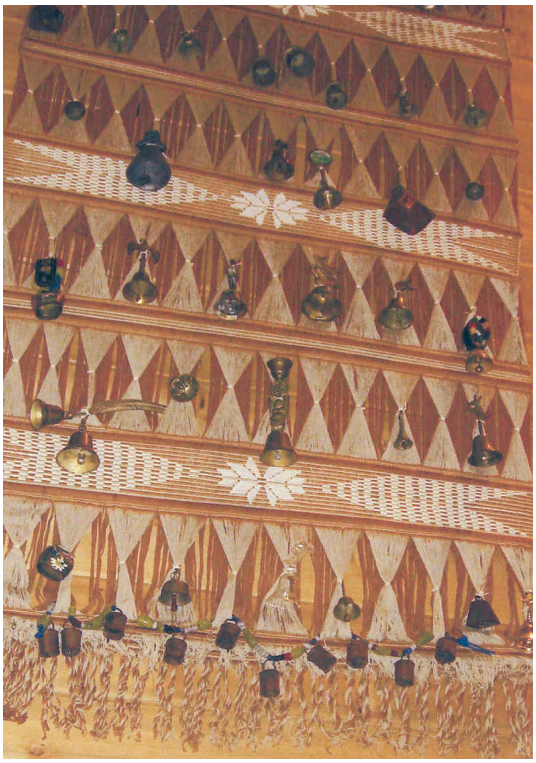
When it came my time I pulled myself up from the puddle of shame I had become, and cloaked myself in confidence , a performance deserving an Oscar. I walked into the room, found the little “x” that told me “stand here”, and introduced myself to the judges. I turned to the piano player, she started the intro to “I dreamed a dream” from Les Mis, and I began to sing. I advanced two measures when the judges said “Thank you”, and in a state of absolute shock, shakingly exited the room and walked numbly right into the arms of my mother, who had been waiting in the lobby. I didn’t have to say anything. She knew what I knew, that my world had just been taken from me. That the world had never been mine. That the world I knew belonged to someone I would never become, and, like everyone else who had failed to fit into those four precious spots, I had to find a new goal, a new world to aim for, and a new place onto which I would set my sights.

The world doesn’t end when things don’t go as planned, it just reroutes itself. It finds a new focus, and it is because of that failed audition that I stand before a classroom of thirty, instead of a packed house of 30,000. It is because of that day that I grew from a dreaming teenager to helping teenagers accomplish their dreams. It was that day that I learned the world isn’t about me, but rather those around me. It is with this newly discovered view that I set off to show the world what a difference a small town girl can make.

**Baby "Girl"**
My name once was “baby doe.”
What name would be given to
this homeless, helpless infant?
Would she be named after a flower?
A color? Or a famous singer?
Would her new family name her
after one of their admired members?
Or would they study her face and choose
a fitting name?
Today she has many names:
wife, mom, friend, and teacher
to name a few.
And to think that there was a day
when she didn't have a name.

Vicky Milner

**BELLS**



Behind the bells:
Back 43 years ago my father died. He was in his early 40s. I was in high school. I miss him. He is still my role model par excellence.
I love how he continues to influence my life. I love his generosity. I love his spirit and his caring and his intelligence and foresight.
So this is a story of love.

After he died I received a high school graduation present from him: an electric typewriter. One of the first ever. I was shocked, surprised and moved to tears. I knew that he wanted me to use it for college and to continue my education. I knew I would use it well.I was still young, but asked myself: how can a dead person keep on giving? It was to be a lifelong question.

When I graduated from MSU the first time I received a graduation present from him. He didn't even know that I was going to college and had been dead over 5 years. How can I describe the emotions? Overwhelmed. Shaky. Exuberant. Thoughtful. How could he have planned so far ahead? He must have known he was going to die.

Ten years later I received notice that he was giving me the family cabin on a lake in Wisconsin. Again I was overwhelmed and even now writing my entire being quakes with the thought that he could have envisioned the future so far ahead, that he could have thought about his family so long after his death, and that he

could have been so generous and creative in his death. He did not want us to mourn him, but remember with full hearts.

Another 10 years passed. I knew that I was done receiving gifts from my long dead Dad, but I was wrong! I received a piece of land on the north shore of the same lake where the cabin was located.

Jump ahead another 7 or 8 years:
The phone rings and I'm home, an unusual circumstance during the week in mid-November. A real estate agent from a town near the lake in Wisconsin asks for me and asks if I would like to sell the land that my father had given me. She, of course, didn't know that he had given me this property, but had an interested buyer.
I told her , "Sorry. It's not for sale. That land has been in the family for many years and I'm just not interested."
Barbara, the agent continued,"Would it be possible for us just to walk on the property this weekend?"
I replied, "Of course. I'm here in Michigan. You're in Wisconsin. Why not?"
That was the end of that.

But it wasn't. Three days later I received a call from Barbara, and again I was home. If not I would have gotten a message from her and simply hit the delete button and that would again have been the end of the story.

But it wasn't.

Barbara said, " The gentleman is very interested in purchasing your property. He liked it a lot."
I replied,"Sorry, it still isn't for sale. As I said it has been in my family and I would like to keep it."
Barbara,"Are you sitting down?"
Me, "Why?"
Barabara, "Because I'm prepared to tell you how much he's willing to offer you for the land."
Me, "It doesn't matter . It's not for sale."

Now let me say this- I knew exactly how much the land was worth because I had taken out a loan on it not six months previously and it had been appraised for $180,000. On Wheeler Lake, this 4 mile circumference-lake in northeastern Wisconsin, no land had ever sold for more than $150,000 so I thought that the appraisal was a bit overpriced, but I had needed the money and so was happy with it.

The next words out of Barbara's mouth were:
"A half a million dollars".
She said it without inflection. There were no exclamation marks in her voice. I

started shaking and stammering. Was this a joke? It couldn't be real! How could she possibly mean it?
I stuttered, "I..I..I'll have to call you back in a couple of days after I talk with my d..d..daughters."
Barabara:"And he's willing to pay the closing fees and to have the property surveyed. Talk to you soon."

The phone on the other end went dead. I felt numb, confused, alive, astounded. My heart pushed the limits of beating against my ribs. For 3 nights I didn't sleep. I became obssessed with what I should do. Sell? What would I do with the money? What should I do with the money? What could I do with that much money? My daughters agreed that I should sell.

I called Babara back 3 days later.
"Hi, Barbara. I've decided what to do with the money from the sale of the property."
"OOOOOO great. You're going to sell. He'll be so happy."
"My turn," I said, "Are you sitting down?"
Barbara,"Why?"
Me, "That's my line! I'm going to endow a scholarship in my father's name who gave me the land long after he died." I proceeded to tell her the story of the property and the shocking surprise that each gift from him over the period of over 30 years had caused.
Barbara, "You're giving me goose bumps."
Me, "The scholarship will be called the Robert E. Schulze Creative Scholarship at Lansing Community c\College and each year forever (that's FOREVER) three students will receive full tuition for whatever program they would like. There is no minimum GPA. there is no maximum age for applicants. They just have to have done something creative. That creative something could be anything from creating a new menu for a soup kitchen to adapting a new system for Habitat for Humanity, not just art or music or dance, your typical creative endeavors. That will all be written up in the brochure."

THE BELLS RING
The money came.
I gave the big chunk away and danced and danced and danced: thank you Daddy!! Pure unadulterated joy.
There was money left over.
I found 26 acres overlooking Silver Lake, the dunes and Lake Michigan on the east side of Lake Michigan. I contracted with Holland Log Homes to build the home I hadn't even had a chance to dream yet.
Pouring over log home books, my folders and folders from Architectural Digest, Country Home, and House Beautiful from which I had garnered all the ideas that I thought might be usable "someday" and pulling from my unfettered imagination ideas slowly slipped from the abstract to pencil sketches, from pencil sketches, to drawings from drawings to architectural renderings.

Little me meeting with architects and them saying, "we'll build your dream". Over the next year the project grew as I brought beaver chewed twigs from Canada for railings, digitized a photograph of the sun rising over Charlton Lake and having it custom made into a large mosaic in a double shower with glass block walls and large glass door reflected doubly, no triply all over the master bath. The artwork I'd collected from all over the world blended with my own art and was prepared for the walls.

A dream is a dream unless it materializes into a finished product. The Golden Dunes Cabin needs to stay a dream. So it shall continually evolve.

An artist from Puno in Peru named Suisa wove a ribbon of delight into a tapestry that hangs on the wall of the 3 season room in the loft. A pair of antique snowshoes with chamois replacing some webbing was painted by a Canadian Ojibway to hang above the log bed construed by Tom Bodine and pieced together overlooking the 23 foot windows that grace the western side of the home.

The artist in me that had been brought out and reinforced with a celebration and event by my daughters at the prime age of 60, decided to begin choosing works to share there. A folding screen with scenes from the sands below marks the lower entrance. A watercolor done on birchbark comes at the next level up A mural colors the walls of the cathedral-ceilinged dressing room.But nothing for the stairs.

Until.

I found a beautiful weaving 6 feet tall that needed some emBELLishment.
The dawning of the bell project.
One by one I chose the smallest of my collection from all over the world: from swiss cowbells to Indian temple bells to sleigh bells from great grandparents. One by one they found their spots on the tapestry. The tapestry found its place on the staircase rising and giving the space its sense of harmony.

The juxtaposition of bells and quiet appears superficially to be incompatible, but the bells do not sway in the breeze. In fact, they quiet since the walls and ceilings are knotty cedar and the floors are ash. So much wood echos, but now is calmed and the sound cooled by the woven threads of the tapestry.

my name is Jill campBELL.

**Box of Memories**

My mother passed away on June 5, 1998 from a long battle with ovarian cancer. Two weeks later I was sitting in the dining hall of Camp Lookout on Lower Herring Lake in Northern Michigan. I was hoping that being at this place I loved so much would help me deal with the death of my mother. While working there, I was reacquainted with a young man that I had met years earlier at Lookout's sister camp, but now he was much older. John was the waterfront director at Lookout for the summer while I was the program director. We had a unique connection and understanding. Days turned into weeks, and we spent an immense amount of time together. He would come with me on my early morning runs even though he was not a runner. I would help out with lifeguarding when he needed me. We had so much in common it was unreal. I couldn't help but think that my mom sent him to me. It was her way of taking care of me one last time.

My friendship with John turned into a relationship and eventually marriage. I have saved everything John has given me from letters and cards to movie stubs from date nights. I keep all of my memories of him in a memory box built from an old barn. The box sits on my dresser. It is one of the first things I see each morning and one of the last things I look at before I go to sleep. It is ten years of history and many more memories waiting to be made. It is also a reminder of my mother sending someone to me when I needed it the most.

**DAISY'S FIRST NIGHT**
**By Jennifer Casper**

Growing up I never had a dog. Well I guess I had one until I was three, but that doesn't count. I did not have a dog that I would call mine. Instead I had a cockatiel, Frostie. Although Frostie, was really cool and fun he definitely was not a dog. So after I had a job close to home Mark and I decided to adopt one. Since this was my first, I did not want a little wimpy dog. Mark had done some research and wanted a dog that would be good with kids. So, Boxer was our choice in breed. She was beautiful, fawn in color with a white mask and white boots with a white shining star on the back of her neck.

When we took her from her litter she whined and whimpered. It broke my heart. I understood because it would be hard for me to leave my brothers and sisters for the rest of my life too. I picked her up and got into the car and Daisy sat on my lap. It was awkward because I did not know what to do on the way home. What do you do with a puppy? I was also little afraid of her because of my inexperience. My husband showed me how to calm her by putting my fingers in her mouth and petting her.

The first night home was not what I had expected. Mark and I had spent time making Daisy's bed, putting up her crate and making our home welcoming for her. None of this seemed to matter to Daisy. She didn't even eat her Eukenuba Premium dog food. Instead she enjoyed playing with us on the floor and chasing after balls. After playing, it was time to go into her crate for bed time. I did expect some whining and some crying but not what had happened next. Not even five minutes into her blanket and toy filled crate, my cute little Daisy started howling like a wolf. She howled and howled. It was not like she was in a cold, dark room all by herself. She was in a crate at the end of our bed. So because I felt bad, I let Daisy out of her crate and slept with her on the floor. She fell asleep nuzzled in the nape of my neck.

I knew potty training was going to be a challenge....

frustrating frightening

necessary needless

mysterious motivating

everchanging everywhere

confusing convenient

addictive amazing

compelling consuming

confusing convenient

engaging enraging

obstinate overwhelming

determined dinosaur

Technology and me

Jan Derksen

**My Grandma Black**
**Elnora Anna Barnum Watkins**
By *Liz Webb*

When I glance at my grandma's wedding picture, I smile because she was the love of my life until I was fourteen. The pictures of her in my mind are many and varied. Her hands were gnarled with rheumatoid arthritis. The fingers of each hand curled outward painfully from her fist knuckles; all of the joints in her body -- elbows, shoulders, ankles and knees – were swollen and deformed, but she was beautiful to me.

She lived with my family as I was growing up. She often used a walker that she could stop and sit on as she moved slowly around the old farmhouse. Her arthritis would flare up for weeks or months at a time, and then, for a few days or a few weeks, it would go into remission.

When she felt well, she made the best cookies I have ever tasted. Sometimes my two brothers (Roy and Vincent) and I would literally devour the whole batch of her oatmeal-raisin cookies as fast as they came out of the oven. She'd feign anger, her face framed in glossy black hair, her dark brown eyes flashing in humor, and tell us "I am never going to bake cookies again because there are none left when the three of you leave the kitchen!" Once in a while she would make molasses cookies or some exotic things with candied fruit at Christmas time. We'd each politely take one and not touch them again for a week. Then she'd honestly get mad at us and say, "I'm never going to bake cookies again, because you won't eat them!"

When in remission she loved to drive -- to grab precious moments of freedom on the road, no longer housebound. She'd started her driving life in a Ford flivver, but when I rode shotgun with her, she drove a powder blue, humped-backed 1950 Dodge. Sometimes she would drive to a Gold Star Mothers' of World War II meeting, picking up her best friend and her granddaughter on the way. We girls would play as the ladies met and then socialized: those women had sustained terrible losses to be eligible to belong to that organization (my uncle, her son, died in France from a spinal wound sustained in the Normandy Invasion), but they enjoyed seeing each other and sometimes even howled in laughter.

Other times, she'd drive to Jackson to her appointment with Dr. Brown who gave her gold shots to alleviate the pain in her joints as bone ground on bone. I have no memory of that doctor, his office or of what I did while she saw him. What I do remember is how easy it was to be with her. We would talk and laugh. She once told me in her earthy one-generation-removed-from-Cockney-English that my "mouth ran like the clapper on the ass of a whippoorwill at blueberrying time." I laughed so hard I didn't even feel insulted.

I also remember stopping in Horton on the way home from the doctor's office at the Brown Cow, a small restaurant well known for fizzy root beer floats, but we hadn't stopped for root beer floats. We both looooved lemon ice cream. She'd stay in that hot old car that smelled like dusty, summer heat while I went in to get our lemon ice cream cones. Often they had already begun to melt as I handed hers through the driver's side window which she struggled to roll down with the tight old hand crank. I'd skip around the car and climb into the front passenger seat and we'd sit in the warm, comfortable silence slurping the lemon ambrosia as fast as we could without getting brain freeze.

Back home, she'd read to my brothers and me almost every night from the Thornton W. Burgess

nature books. We loved the stories of Bobby Coon, Little Joe Otter, Billy Mink, Grandfather Frog, Lightfoot the Deer and Old Mother West Wind. She'd read and read and read and then, after we begged her to do so, she'd read some more, the four of us snuggled together on the living room couch, her arms around one or more of us. When her voice cracked with hoarseness, she'd drop the book on her lap with a sigh of exhaustion and send us off to bed. Reading defined love to me as much as her hugs, her cookies or the ride in the old Dodge that always included lemon ice cream. I keep several of those books that one of us scribbled in with crayon on my bookshelf.

I also keep the picture of her in my living room, so I can glance at her several times a day. I rarely make oatmeal-raisin cookies as she taught me to do with a pinch of this and a handful of that, although they are still my favorites. I seldom find lemon ice cream, but when I do, I order one scoop in a dish. I can't stand to sit in a hot dusty car in the summer, but I love to read and read and read, and I look forward to a time when I can snuggle with a grandchild as I did with my own daughter, reading aloud from the Burgess animal books until I am hoarse.

# Grandma Gerry

By Heather Lewis

Meeting the family of your boyfriend can be a scary experience. But, I was blessed in meeting the matriarch of this family who put my fears at ease. I met her on the back porch. The tips of her fingers crunched over as if she was constantly pointing at something. I guess the benefit was the cigarette always had a ledge to balance on. Her hair was gray with the typical grandma perm. Sweatsuits were the norm for this old lady, matching of course. As if the visual wasn't enough, I was greeted with a, "How the hell are ya?"

Grandma Gerry has always stood out. She's a character I treasure and miss dearly. I knew we were akin spirits as she yelled lovingly, "Shut up ya Bastard," at my future husband. She fascinated me, telling me stories of the past, telling me about life, but always telling me exactly how it is. No sugar coating for this woman.

Grandma Gerry was the daughter of restaurant owners in Saginaw, MI. Val's Roast Beef Deli was downtown Saginaw, next to the Stride Rite Shoe Shop that had the X-Ray machine for children to stick their feet under so you could see if the shoes fit. Amazing that generation even survived. Mr. and Mrs. Noe had two children, Grandma Gerry and a boy named Jimmy. Jimmy was a jovial young man who enlisted, entered war at 17 and came home in a casket covered with the American Flag. Beyond this childhood, not much is known to me about this crazy lady and the life she grew up in. Her story for me begins with my mother-in-law's stories, Grandma Gerry's daughter. I know Grandma Gerry struggled with depression, in fact would later be diagnosed as a manic depressive. When her second grand-child (my husband) was born, they joke that Grandma was in the hospital too, only 3 floors up on the psychic ward. She struggled with mental illness and even underwent shock therapy back in the day. Many a day Grandma Gerry would lock herself in her room, shut away from the world.

Random facts circle my mind about this fascinating woman. I know she ran with the mob in Saginaw. She evidently had some shady affairs in her time with some interesting men. Her ex husband died in a trailer park on M-13 surrounded by filth, piles of newspaper and coffee cans filled with used razors. Her second daughter (my husband's aunt) ran away from home multiple times, hitchhiking down south with random truckers, eventually dying in a studio apartment, her body filled with prescription drugs, sliding down the stairs in a body bag too heavy to lift.

When I think of her past and her life and the woman I knew in the final five years, I look at this picture and treasure it even more. It's a side of Grandma Gerry I've never seen, or even could imagine, having seen the end of her life. I love how they are drinking, smoking, having a great time. There are a series of pictures from this day showing the group posing in funny poses, laughing, building a fire and cooking out. Each one showing a different side of this remarkable woman before the drugs, before shock therapy, before life became too overwhelming.

# **Heart Stones**

*By Deborah Olrich*

The heart shaped stones felt cool and smooth in her hand. Each one slightly different in color, and, according to her husband, the claim of heart-shaped was a generous one. No matter, they were her hearts from last summer's vacation in Grand Marais, Michigan. They had planned this vacation for months, not just a spur of the moment as usual. They were lucky to find a vacancy even in February for their August vacation.

Grand Marais is a tiny village on Lake Superior, with a great brew pub, a lighthouse, tiny cabins tucked into the aquamarine blue bay, and just for good measure, a diner with excellent food, erratic hours, and a grumpy chef.

Lake Superior is best enjoyed when there's a good breeze to keep the pesky flies away. On just such a late morning they headed out to 13 Mile Point, a long stretch of Lake Superior real estate especially good for rocks and relaxing. After a couple of passes, they decided on a spot and pulled in.

Chairs and coolers in hand, they slid down the steep, sandy path to the rock-strewn stretches below. The rollers were crashing pleasantly, sending new rocks closer to shore. She bent to her task, scanning for just the right rock. Suddenly, she spotted a dark basalt rock. Holding her breath, she turned it in her hand and just as she had hoped, it held a small circular hole. She pocketed it and continued. She was supposed to be looking for agates, but everything looked like an agate to her. She continued bent over along the water's edge finding many basalt rocks, but few with the curious holes. Then she picked up a heart-shaped rock and examined it. It was not glittery, not particularly smooth, but she liked the idea that a lake known more for its ferocious storms had carved out a heart. These were harder to find.

Finally, her back could not take it, so she retreated to her chair. Conveniently, winter storms had thrown many stones up onto the sandy part of the beach, so she continued her rock hunt digging in around her chair. The sun warmed her and the brisk breeze kept away the flies. At times it was just enough to gaze at the deep blue of this immense lake, lulled by the rhythm of the waves.

They have been married for 34 years. This vacation was a real treat for both of them. Just the two. Best friends. Comfortable companions. But there were other Lake Superior visits and camping trips. And she thought back to those as well. Sometimes she missed the craziness of four kids in a borrowed camper. The kids would fill the back seat of the car floor with rocks they collected from

Lake Huron one time, or Lake Michigan another, and best of all, Lake Superior. One year, they had traveled around and the boys had swam in all three lakes in one vacation.

The best trips were in the gypsy camper-a homemade affair on the back of a 1975 short box Chevy that drew curious stares and quite a few questions. These trips were mostly with the two boys. No matter where the trip eventually took them, invariably these trips were remembered the most fondly. The bed was big and comfy. And a gallon of Gallo wine was the height of sophistication.

As the couple relaxed on the breezy beach, these memories came. Their conversation would have been cryptic to an eavesdropper...."mmmm, Lehto's pasties"....."jelly from the monks"....."Houghton's hills."....."Pictured rocks". But to them, these magic words conjured up technicolor memories of a blond boy skipping stones, sunburned faces at Silver Lake Sand Dunes, a cool lemonade overlooking the pure blue of Lake Michigan from the Fort on Mackinac Island. Almost at the same time, they smiled at each other and together wondered how they had done all that with so little money. They didn't miss the poverty of their early marriage, but they both missed that time when they were young with their kids.

Glancing at his watch, he stood and helped her push out of the chair for one more pass at the beach, each hoping to find another heart-shaped stone, a sparkly gem, a mysterious hole, a magical agate, to slip in a pocket and later to slip them in among their other rocks, collected here and there, like their memories.

Her Strength

The people walk by with hardly a glance. If a thought is given at all, the student may be thankful for the slight amount of shade that is provided by the small tree that strives to be more than a shrub. The occasional person may stop to take refuge in the cool that the leaves, though mottled and disease ridden, provide. Yet she stands proud though forgotten or glanced upon. Her place in the world rooted to the earth, grounded in the strength that nurturing provides. She stands firm in the power that comes from her foundation, the life-giving roots that run deep, unseen and often forgotten in time. Her fragile state can be seen as she reaches toward the future. Some of her branches bend to the will of the wind. Yet others resist and stay strong. The twigs that refuse to sway to the wind of time stand firm and resist the ease that flexing would provide. This is where her strength is shown. The new growing berries try to conceal the passage of years, but her make-up has smudged and the true story is told. These are the extensions that remember the foundation. Remember where she comes from. Remember the life giving roots that inject the strength to empower her to grow on.

Jennifer Strickland
Laingsburg High School
English and Technology Teacher

# In August

by Susan Quinn Wolverton

These summer smells
and summer sounds
transport me
to a time long ago,
to summer on grandma's farm.
To apple pies baked in half sheet pans,
to cucumbers curing in five gallon crocks,
to dragon flies dancing
across Queen Anne's lace
lining the lane.

My grandmother
on my mother's side
used to make pickles
in a crock on the back porch.
These jugs sat lined
on shelves along a wall
in the basement,
waiting to be called into duty
in early August.

*40 medium cucumbers*
*plenty of garlic*
*2-3 bunches of dill*
*1 pint vinegar*
*1 pound pure salt*
*2 gallons water*
*Layer and cure*
*for 2-3 weeks.*

As a tribute
to my grandma,
I make pickles in a crock
in the corner of my kitchen
each summer, the present
reaching into the past.

Ivy

Driving down an old main street, looking at the founders' houses, ivy predominates the landscape, adding mystery and depth and wisdom to the brick exteriors and the wrap-around porches bedecked with white wicker furniture. "Ivy is bad for brickwork," my contractor stepfather used to say. "It weakens the mortar, destabilizes the facade, eventually ruins the exterior of your house." Yet, it took him years to cut down the ivy that trellised up the side of our old farmhouse, even when the ivy became interior decoration in the master bathroom upstairs. It had worked its way through the bricks and mortar, found a seam in the insulation and plaster and drywall, and sent runners throughout the bathroom, creeping over the showerhead, branching along the ceiling, and resting on the light fixtures over the sink. For all the ivy's implied evil and crumbling brickwork intentions, my stepfather couldn't brink himself to squelch the tenacity of the invader in the bathroom.

But ivy is insidious. Dangerous, even. It must be cut down, not allowed to thrive. It wears a mask of wisdom and depth, but it is a chameleon, a parasite, eating away at your very foundation, if you let it linger. Dissatisfaction creeps like ivy into my consciousness with a single incident of macaroni and cheese. The empty box lies on the counter, mangled but not thrown away. The powdered cheese packet is perpendicular, its missing torn edge on the floor. The empty butter wrapper lies greasily on top, an artist's depiction of waste and gluttony on exhibit. There is a knife stuck to the sink and little dried, cracked, bright yellow caterpillars of elbow noodles are scattered over the face of the stove, the devastation after the storm. There is a pan half-filled with murky water in the sink; a fork lies half-submerged. Expletives jump to mind, whispering themselves around my brain, causing my limbs to slam the discarded remains in the trash with more force than necessary, causing my foot to kick the cabinet door closed with a bang, causing a sigh to audibly escape. "What?" you ask, belligerently. Oh, you know, I think. You know exactly what.

Why can't you clean up after yourself? The silent runners of questions begin. Is it so freakin' hard to throw away a bit of trash, wipe the counter, put the pan in the dishwasher? Why don't you respect the fact that I work all day while you get to play with our daughter, and then I have to come home and work all night just to clean up after you? Why don't you respect me? Why don't you care about me? Why don't you care about our house or our things? Why don't you care about my relationship with our daughter? Why don't you care that I have to sit her in front of the tv every night, wasting one of the few precious hours I get with her, just so that I can try to pull the house back in order for the next day?

The runners of resentment spread through my limbs, red tipped with anger, digging into the bricks of my self-worth and of my love for you, crumbing the mortar of my contentment. Soon I will be covered, coated with passive aggression, unable to see out through the tenacious vines covering my eyes and preventing me from taking a deep breath.

At 2 years old

At 31 years old

Life is precious!
She came to us this little bundle with peach fuzz for hair and with such a voice. This little bundle, our new niece and goddaughter, came ten months before we had any children of our own. She is the first grandchild for all of her grandparents and the apple of all of our eyes. As an only child she became the "big sister" to my three children. She and her cousin, Jim Jr., were inseparable and when Amy Kate came along one always heard her say to them, "Me too, me too"!
By the age of seven Erica had left Michigan to move to New York as her father, Rick, took a position as Dean of Music at Queen's University in New York City and mother, Mary Lou, worked in an accounting position as teaching positions were scarce. Erica was allowed at seven to call Grandma or Aunt Kate and Uncle Jim's house whenever she was lonely! We talked long and often! Her expertise in anything musical was phenomenal- we were sure she would major in music. Too soon she was off to college in Maine and the calls were not so often, but we had discovered email. Very quickly it seemed her four years of college time was done. Erica's major was in anthropology, but she adores playing her Cello and giving lessons. Erica learned her parents were divorcing and her college-long relationship was crumbling- so she came home to her godparents and siblings for a long vacation. During this stay she asked if it would be okay for her to call me "Sissy Kate" because she stated I was more like a big sister to her than an aunt. She worked out a great many issues that summer and promptly went back to New York;  applied for and was accepted for Graduate School in Boston, Massachusetts; moved to Boston; took an accounting position; and began a new relationship with a young man in one of her grad classes. Four years later we were invited to Boston for Christmas to plan a wedding. Jim Jr. had to work (new job, no vacation time) so he took care of all of the animals. We had a lovely time; sight seeing, shopping for bridesmaid dresses, and hashing out all the ideas for the wedding! Erica's birthday was October 25, her wedding October 27, and Boston was beautiful that fall. Chris and Erica's wedding was STUPENDOUS!!! All of my children took part in her ceremony and they became close friends with Chris and his brother, Tim. Both Erica and Chris finished their Masters programs and are CPA's. It was time to start thinking about starting a family. This past

August (2007) Erica began to have shortness of breath and loss of stamina to the point she had to cut short her gym workouts. Then came the trip to Chicago for her Grandmother's funeral and a trip to emergency. It was not her asthma. The ER doctor sent her x-rays home with her and said you need to show these to your doctor as they just don't look right to me. Back in Boston her doctor sent her to a specialist and the tests began. By Thanksgiving she was calling regularly with updates and finally she said," I don't care what it is, I just wish I could have a prognosis by Christmas, so we can get on with treatment!"
"Be careful what you wish for," I responded.
Christmas Eve I received a call: "Do you want the good news or the bad news first?" was Erica's opener. We learned they would not be cracking open her chest, but she had a four- inch tumor on her thymus and it was cutting off air supply to her lungs and was lying across her aorta. She would have to undergo six months of chemo-therapy and then possibly radiation. The good news it was in stage one- caught early and recovery prognosis was good! Keeping a positive attitude became our primary goal...
In February I spent my mid-winter break in Boston. After conferring with her parents I flew to Boston for my spring break. My school let out early so I flew to Boston May 29 for her last three weeks of chemo. During this six month period family and friends took turns staying in the apartment with Erica; feeding, tending, encouraging, sympathizing, and entertaining. We must have kept her very well for she never had to go to the emergency room and thusly reduced her chances of complications. One week before her last chemo, while she was standing against the window in the sunlight, I noticed her hair was starting to come back in; no bald head anymore, there was FUZ! The last chemo treatment went off without a hitch; not even the nausea. Her blood cell counts were still low so she still had five shots of Nupagen over the next ten days. Then came the waiting.... Finally the day I left they scheduled her pet scan for July 8. The results were long awaited and then hurray a diagnosis of COMPLETE remission. On to the meeting with the radiation oncologist and again she received more bad news. Erica would have to undergo radiation to rid her of the tumor. In that dark cloud was a silver lining, a new treatment had been approved and she could have a beam of radiation that follows her breastbone instead of a broad band across her entire chest. What terrific news!! This new type of radiation lessens the chance of breast or lung cancer in the next twenty years and heart problems in ten years (the complications of broad-band radiation). As Erica has said many times before one cancer in my lifetime is MORE than enough. The day following this news she was devastated; the next day just mad; and the next morning she was ready to fight for her life again and WIN! Erica is thirty-one years old; she and Chris plan to have a family (their own or adopted); own a house with a yard; and enjoy many more years of Living.
This experience confirms life does not come with a set of guarantees; live everyday to its fullest; love completely; and always remember life is a gift and Life **IS** Precious!

Love

I was born Martha.

My father changed it to Ann because I was his greatest fan.

My brother changed it to Soupy, to make me stand out in the group.

My college roommates changed it to Marty to keep me in the loop.

My husband changed it to Ms Walker because I said I do.

My children changed it to Mama which all add up to I love you.

# Majestic Pine

Majestic pine tall, sturdy and erect.
Protruding branches spreading out from the trunk.
Textured bark riddled with deep crevices.
Old and firm to young and supple needles.
Spurting sprinkler leaves droplets that glisten in the sun
like icicles on a cold winter's day.
Fragrant scent of pine hangs in the air as if it were a drape.
Majestic pine emits a sense of beauty, wonderment of creation
and the kindness of its shade.

Theresa C. Trevorrow

*My First Job* By Leslie Yats

I was so excited to have my first "real" job. I was sixteen and I was going to work in the cafeteria at Sears! I would make $1.75 an hour doing the same things I do at home. Easy, so I thought!

The first afternoon I showed up all clean and eager to start. The boss said, "here is your uniform, put it on." The uniform smelled like grease and looked like it would fall apart anytime. I reluctantly put it on and asked, "What can I do now?" I was ready. The boss told me to start clearing tables and putting dishes and the washer and then she left. I took my time and washed each table and dish slowly and carefully. I didn't want to make a mistake on my first day.

Soon the evening was about over and as I looked out to the cafeteria there were still lots of tables to be cleared. I didn't worry I was doing my job. Suddenly one of the waitresses said, "Hey, you have to have all this done in fifteen minutes, before we leave, Hurry up! We want to leave." I didn't have a clue that this was **my** whole job. Panic set in and I started to cry as I ran around tossing things in and shoving things in the dishwasher. I finally got my job done about a half hour late with the waitresses helping me reluctantly.

I left the store in tears as my Dad waited in the car. He listened intently and said '"Honey, you don't have to go back. It's okay." I felt relieved. Work was not what I had expected.

When we walked in the door, things changed. Mom was not as sympathetic...As she proclaimed, "that's what work is...you can't quit! This is what responsibility is!"

I looked at my Dad for help but he had decided to stay out of the discussion.

The next afternoon, I returned to Sears and the manager greeted me, "I'm so sorry about last night. We really should have had someone explain your responsibilities. We were sure you would not come back. I'm glad you did."

Well that day was a little better and I continued to work at Sears throughout high school and college in several departments. I made some great friends and even better memories.

In a lot of ways Sears is responsible for helping me through college and into the career I have now as a teacher, but we all know the moral of the story.

*ALWAYS LISTEN TO YOUR MOTHER*

I'm so lucky to still have my Mom in my life to continue to give me advice.

# My Little Girl

**Cathy is born**

October 17, 1982 Catherine Marie Cordesman was born at 4:17 pm. She was a beautiful 7 pound and 14 ounce little girl and I was a scared 16 year old who just gave birth. I was a mom. But I just realized I was a mom without a dad. For the first time since I became pregnant, I had realized I was responsible for this tiny pink bald-headed little girl. What was I going to do? How am I going to raise her? All I knew was that she was mine and I was going to try to be the best mother I could.

The nurse handed her to me, I held her for the first time and I cried. I loved her so much. I named her Catherine after my confirmation name when I was in Catholic school and Marie because I liked that name. She was all mine and I was going to take care of her—no matter what.

**Cathy's "daddy"**

It was 1984 and Cathy was a 1 ½ years old. Things for me, in general, were really hard. I was holding down two jobs, and was getting ready to quit one. I was going to work full time at my new job at Pizza Hut hoping to make more money so I could get a better place to live for Cathy and myself.

I met Jim Halstead the assistant manager at Pizza Hut. Immediately he started taking care of me. He would take me "home" after work and was concerned about where I was living. On my days off I would take Cathy into Pizza Hut. On one of these visits Jim was working and he immediately saw Cathy. He came over and gave us lunch and took a shine to the bald-headed little girl. I could see the smile on his face as he was holding her and she liked him too. It was after that I thought I could marry this man, if

only he would ask me out. The next day we were working together and he did. After we dated for a few weeks I moved out of the dump I was living in and moved in with Jim. The first night at his place I was scared to death—what was I doing? But, when he made us dinner and played with Cathy on the floor I knew I made the right decision. He loved playing with her and spending time with her. He took her everywhere and considered her his "daughter." He took her to see the torch runner for the 1984 Olympics and to the grocery store. He was her "daddy."

**Daddy's Little Girl**

It is June 14, 2008 and my daughter is getting married to the man who will be her husband. I am so proud of this moment, but also sad as her **"daddy"** is not here. Jim died a year ago, and he is not here to enjoy this moment. I am going to be walking her down the aisle and I am so nervous. I have been holding my tears back all morning and I do not want to cry, not yet.

I keep asking myself, "How can I do this? How can I do this without Jim here?" I miss him so much and I know he wanted to see his little girl married. He loved her so much and even though they were not biologically related, they were father and daughter. He was there in spirit and I am sure as I was walking her down the aisle he was smiling upon us and sending us his love.

She was the most beautiful bride and her father would be so proud to be there. She held a memorial for him with a candle and a "**surrogate father**" dance for all of his friends. It was the sweetest moment in my life to see Jim's entire group of friends dance with her. These were all the men who have known her since she was 8 years old and were

Jim's dearest friends. So Jim may not have been there in body, but his spirit was there in the bodies of his buddies as they danced with his little girl.

# No One Sent For Me

By: Yolanda D. Jackson

Ethel Banks was her government name. We affectionately called her Granny. She was my step-grandfather's mother. She'd only had seven children, but everyone called her Mama Ethel. In the beginning she'd lived in a gray house on Sixth Street. She would help and take care of anyone she came into contact with. In fact, she once told me she babysat Stevie Wonder. This was way before he became the musical wunderkind he is now. At any rate, she became a superstar to me. Her warm nurturing spirit provided us with a safe place to be vulnerable, honest, and bold. She never cursed or raised her voice. She always had a smile, and didn't hesitate to invest a golden nugget of loving advice to uplift one's spirit. On Christmas she'd pass out a small black velvet drawstring bag with two dollars in fifty-cent pieces. Somehow that felt reminiscent of the kind of Christmases she experienced as a child. She never asked for anything, but gave so much simply because she wanted to deposit as much love as she could into an individual's life.

She lived with us at my grandfather's. I remember how every morning she'd eat two pieces of buttered toast and a cup of coffee with cream and two Sweet-N-Low ®. On some days she'd feel like a little more. She'd add two pieces of a fried hot dog and scrambled egg. She'd make her bed and enjoy the news and a daily dose of "The Price is Right".

She was also the cook of the house. On a regular basis we partook of wonderful and rich meals that where most families would probably deem their Sunday's best. I can recall her turkey and potato hash. Her smothered chicken and rice made for great warm days. However it was her fried chicken (the leg in particular) that I remember the most vividly. When I would walk in the house from school, I'd see the silver colander lined with paper towels sitting on the stove and I knew what graciousness she was about to fill our stomach's with. Homemade "osh" potatoes and mixed vegetables complimented the meal as we slowly savored each bite longing to get next to the cinnamon apples in the small pot at the back of the stove. Every holiday also brought sweet potato "pone", caramel, red velvet, and jelly cakes.

She held every disclosed secret wish and pain close to her heart while lifting us up and inspiring us to work hard and trust GOD. We'd often talk in whispers at the foot of her bed while sitting on her cedar chest that housed her sheets, comforter, and pearl handled pistol. I don't think she ever had to use it. I'd help her get ready for church on Sundays. I so loved to see her in her all white "Mother's Board" garb with the fancy

white hat. I believe she also felt good about the way she looked in it because she had an extra skip in her step. She smiled a little more and even held her head a little higher.

Once a month, my grandmother would take Granny to Second National Bank to withdraw money to pay her bills. Some of those bills included her children who needed to borrow money. She was so giving, that she'd even share a special moment with us buying us a Happy Meal or some other treat that my grandmother didn't bless us with often. She'd slip us money for "favors" when she really just wanted us to have something because my grandmother wasn't giving it. I am still in love with, although I can't find it, the Barbie® "head doll" she purchased for $7 at a garage sale for me. Patty was her name and it meant so much to me.

Soon, however, her strength started to wane. A series of strokes compromised her ability to complete a load of laundry, fry that mean chicken leg, or even tend to herself as a human being. I don't know if she could tell that she was getting worse, but she would never admit that she could no longer be Granny for us. In fact, when one of those villainous nerve attacks crippled her ability to use her left side, Granny would sit in the hospital issued wheelchair and tool around in the kitchen looking for the black cast iron skillet to smother some pork chops and steam yellow squash drenched in onion and butter. No one could tell her and make her believe that it was ok to no longer be who we had known her to be. She would often cry because she was embarrassed by what we had witnessed happening to her. She didn't know that we were more than happy to help her bathe or comb her hair. Soon thereafter she refused to take her medication. She was tired and didn't want to be a burden or suffer anymore. She didn't want to us to suffer with her anymore. To prove it, she had my grandmother take her to Browne's Funeral Home and plan for her home going celebration. She paid for everything herself.

Granny passed during my sophomore year in college. I was unable to make it to her funeral. No one sent for me. We never got the chance to have one of our special talks again. I never got to say thank you for believing in and investing in me. I never got to hear her say she was proud of me. Somehow I believe she is though. Through Granny I learned how treating people right was the best way to live and being sweet was the only reason I needed to live for.

Nurture By Nature
By Cynthia Hendrix

The environmental ecosystem outside of Brody Hall is being nurtured through nature. Humans, with the divine help of the sun and water as life giving sources are distinctly impacting the food chain. The trees, shrubbery, and surrounding area provide a natural habitat for the birds, squirrels, and other small animals and insects. This safe haven allows them to thrive.

Green is the color of nature which is reflective of life.
Imagine the many hues that you see,
Actually what could they possibly be?
Wheat grass comes to my mind and it's an elixir full of chlorophyll.
Oh, how it helps a body to thrive and to heal.

Cynthia...

Though yesterday I was called JOY
and praise was given for the possibilities that lie in, by, around and
My daddy called me Cat Woman
Yet mother thinks and still calls me "Little Girl"
My children call "M-O-M!"
It's nice to be called " Brown Sugar" as a term of endearment
and CYNDOE is echoed by my closest friends
Today, however, you could call me BLUE
Tomorrow I'll be "JOY, the Wonderful One."

**Perspectives on a Sand Volleyball Court**

Katy Leedy

Sand volleyball was originally created near water, I am sure. Some people were playing around, and soon they began to create rules and a net was added, until the official game was born. Now, the game's attraction is such that courts are recreated miles away from any sea.

The sand of the court creates an intriguing metaphor. The form of the sand remains true, the shape of the court remains the same and the basic level of the court is not altered, yet it is constantly changed as people play on it. The court endures the changing weather and temperaments of people: sometimes they wish to play and sometimes they abandon it, leaving the court to grow grass and weeds until the next group desires its form.

I love to watch people play beach volleyball; I admire these people. Their skill and agility amazes me. Their willingness to dive head first into the sand to spike the ball and take a face-full of grainy sand for the team is fascinating.

This is also as my life should be: willing to take dangerous risks, but only for a cause.

Remnants
By Troy Hicks

We cleaned your drawers today
The closets
The cupboards

All the spaces that you did not
Would not
Could not
Let me help you purge over the past two years

You wanted to be there, right there
So I wouldn't throw away something useful
Something wanted
Something precious

Carelessly toss some something aside
Lose a memory
Forget a story
Sell a childhood friend

Now gone,
I begin the journey through your history
Our life together
My future

First, alone
Then, with our kids
Your mother
Your sister
Our best man and his wife

We sort and toss
Caress and cry
Savor and share

Yet, it still seems perfunctory
Mechanical
Invasive

Lonely

I found many things…
Remnants, really

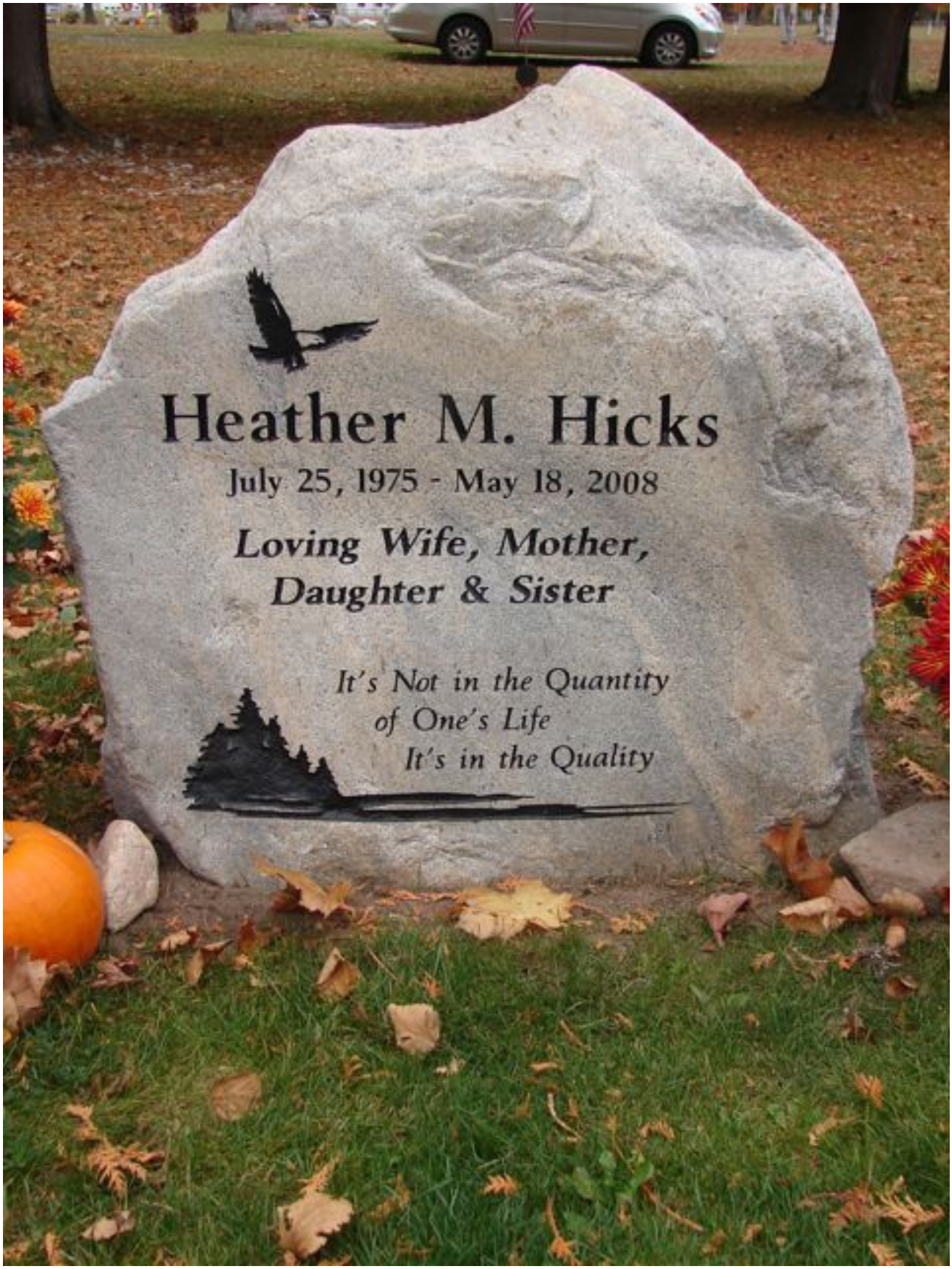
Items once loved,
Then lost,
Now uncovered after years of moving from home to home
Unpacked from boxes that were never unpacked

Starting in college, walking backwards, my eyes swell from smelling your flannel shirt
Unfolding your love letters
Dusting off your bowling ball
Handing your mother your favorite doll

Items bought, never opened
Socks and scarves
Lotions and creams
Journals that never felt the touch of your pen
The book you left half read

All of which reminded me of you
Too close
Too distant
Too many
Too few

Remnants
All that once belonged
Some of which remain
None that bring you back
Yet somehow help me hide the pain


Heather M. Hicks
July 25, 1975 - May 18, 2008
Loving Wife, Mother,
Daughter & Sister
It's Not in the Quantity
of One's Life
It's in the Quality

http://farm1.static.flickr.com/77/171712672_ac42db7aef_o.jpg
Jumping Into Summer by Adwriter

Summertime Sprinkles

As I look to the world outside, I see golden, sun-kissed droplets breathing life into the world around them. Upward thrusts of water send branches hurtling into space, only to leave them limp under the weight of the water as it drips to the ground. The sun shines through the large sprays of water creating a wet, rainbow blind. The smell is unmistakable: wet concrete, sunshine, drenched grass, and life blooming around me. Summer is definitely at its peak.

I am taken back to a time so long ago it seems to have been in another life. I picture myself in only my cotton underwear running through the sprinkler in my grandma and grandpa's backyard. I am running fast toward the sprinkler, grinning with my purple Popsicle stained mouth, eyes shining, timing my jump just right so that I will not land on the sprinkler head. As I approach, I leap into the air and feel water pelt my bare stomach, legs, back, face...I am alive. I am giggling before I hit the ground. I see a light shine in my sister's eyes...she has an idea. She races into the basement, momentarily shocked by the cold, air conditioned room and grabs the old, dilapidated Twister box. I see her rushing outside putting the slippery plastic game board on the ground where the water droplets are landing. It's time for a wet, tangled mess of a good time.

I blink and suddenly things are different. My sister and I have grown older, much too old to be running in nothing but cotton underwear. We sit on the deck at our grandparent's house. It's time for tea. Real china tea cups and

saucers along with fancy sandwiches cut into different shapes adorn the table as we look out into the lush, green backyard. The sprinkler is still there, still rushing back and forth, hurling golden droplets into the air. I tip the large straw hat on my head because it has fallen over my eyes, obstructing my view. I rub my bright pink lips together and begin smiling with my made up eyes. The smile creeps down my face and to my lips...I am alive.

Kristy Walters

# The Bike Rack

By Cheryl Elliott

The kids were so excited when their dad built a bike rack for them. They each eagerly anticipated parking their little bikes in the rack at the end of the day. They chose a spot for their bikes based on birth order – left to right – oldest to youngest. For the first couple of years whenever the bikes were not being used they could be found in the rack in their correct spot. And then, one day, something unspeakable happened; one of the bikes was not parked in its proper spot. After yelling, tattling, and tears the bike was eventually, though reluctantly moved to its correct place. From that day on, the bike rack and its simple rules were never the same.

It wasn't that the bike rack changed that much, although it did change some. It became nicked up and weathered and one of the slats cracked and broke leaving an empty space in the rack. But, still the rack continued to perform its job. When called upon it let go, shedding a few tears, the little bikes that were outgrown. When old bikes were replaced with new bikes it welcomed the new bikes without complaint.

Sometimes a bike would fall over in the rack, because it was not parked properly in its spot, and scratch or dent another bike. Nevertheless, the rack continued to support all of the bikes regardless of how they were parked. And, even with all of their dents and scratches the rack still took pleasure in providing a resting place for each bike.

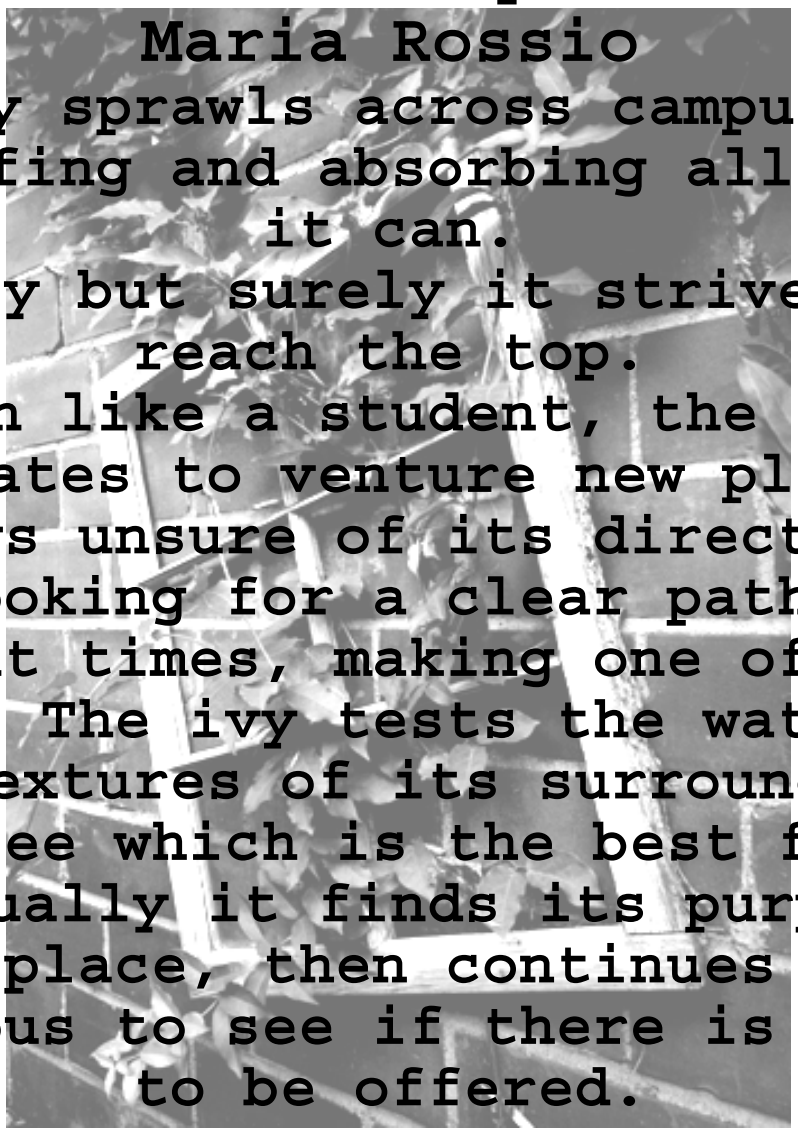
Through the years and many storms, as the size of the bikes grew larger, the rack stood firm. In the course of time, bikes began disappearing from the rack. As the rack continued to age and the four bikes rode off in different directions the rack's job seemed to be complete. At a glance, someone seeing the forlorn empty rack would think it was useless.

As time went on the rack was eventually tended to; a new slat was added and a new coat of paint was applied. However, the mended rack was still empty - until one day, two small bikes were seen parked side by side in the rack.

## And - the rack delighted in embracing the little bikes.

# The Ivy

Maria Rossio



Ivy sprawls across campus,
engulfing and absorbing all that
it can.
Slowly but surely it strives to
reach the top.
Much like a student, the ivy
hesitates to venture new places;
always unsure of its direction.
Looking for a clear path,
and at times, making one of its
own. The ivy tests the waters
and textures of its surroundings
to see which is the best fit.
Eventually it finds its purpose,
its place, then continues on,
curious to see if there is more
to be offered.

Some ivies find their
agriculture, some their
architecture,
and some wander aimlessly through
academia.

**We are all the ivy, slowly searching for completion. Bending and winding through debris to find our sanctuary, only to realize we will always be looking for more.**

# The Painter and the Poet

## The Painter

The Painter carefully prepares for the creation
searching the landscape of life
for just the right glimpse

Next comes the canvas
Insuring the vision will be
Locked for all time

Time spent preparing the surface
To receive the loving strokes
Delivered by the *gentle* hand of the dreamer

Blank canvas now
Transformed by thin hairs
Colors washing over

Slowly, deliberately
Moving from dreams into inspiration
A revelation turns into reality

## The Poet

Now comes the poet, *empowered* by the words of life
Transforming thoughts and dreams
Into songs and stories

Soothing the soul
Stringing together rhythm and sound
Letters and words

Joining the unlikely, sometimes unlovely
Into a quilt, covering the heart
Wrapping the soul in warmth and comfort

Sometimes words are cruel,
Cutting deeply
Exposing the gashes of life

Sometimes words are fun
Sliding down
And rolling along memories

Sometimes words are lyrical
Singing the songs of earth
Grounded in the joy of nature

Sometimes words are love
Healing the wounded heart
Knitting together the fractured soul

**The Painter and The Poet**

The painter and poet together
Turning dreams into life

Melding the sights of the eyes
And the sounds of the ears

Into the songs of life, of love
Sending the energy of the earth

To all who care to see, to listen, to love.

**The Sprinkler**

It jets across the landscape careful of where it lands.
Its coverage is like that of a child's blanket-carefully wrapping the earth with its needed comfort.
The orb of light above sends rays in various angles helping the droplets to twinkle like the stars, captivating its audience's attention.

Never is it this quiet for long...
I am suddenly pulled from my reverie by the shriek of a delighted two-year-old.
The Thomas the Tank Engine water sprinkler jets in all directions as the sun catches it in its gaze. I see his tanned limbs in the evening sun, soaking wet, and "nakie-nakie," as he calls his diaperless body.

I watch in wonder- jealous that something so simple could make him so happy.
Melancholy that days like this will end too soon.
Reminded that life is as beautiful as you take the time to make it.

The Sprinkler (Writing from different perspectives)

9:18 a.m. That precise moment in time triggers a six-inch mechanism's internal memory card, causing the mechanism to activate an underground irrigation system. This system is vital to the microscopic organisms that survive in a fragile horticultural ecosystem. While dousing everything living and non-living within a 15 foot radius, this mechanism, commonly known by homosapiens as "the sprinkler", attempts to revitalize damage caused by the sun's UV rays.

Tat-tat-tat-tat-tat goes the sprinkler, like a frantic journalist trying to make an approaching deadline. Round and round it goes as though it were a child playing Ring-Around-The-Rosie. It does not change course nor does it stray from its child-like play. Early in the morning or late in the evening is when it has its most fun; chasing inattentive people who venture too close.

Although to some people a sprinkler is simply a nuisance that serves only one function, to me it is symbolic of my childhood years at Grandma's house. Grandma didn't have a pool (those were reserved for "rich people" as she put it), so she would improvise by turning on the sprinkler on those hot summer days (those were the days before people worried about the energy crisis and water conservation). We would make a game out of seeing who could run through it the fastest or who could stand in it the longest. On any given day, you could find me, my cousins, and the entire neighborhood playing in the sprinkler in Grandma's backyard. Sights like that are hard to come by in today's world. I miss being a kid at Grandma's...

Bridget L. Chema
8th and 10th Grade Teacher
Genesee Jr/Sr High School

# The Unveiling
by Jessica Dryer

His branches are full of a protective coat of arms that has been bruised and scratched.
The coat is old, frail and chipped, exposing beneath a beautiful burnt amber
Color and life~ Like a new love after a broken heart. The brokenness... cloaked by lush greenery. An exterior hiding the truth.
When the sun gently strokes his outer most edges, he shines and shows off the most beautiful radiant pieces of himself.

Some may see this as just an exterior - a paint job covering the withered scaled soul, but a fresh eye unmasks buds - new life ready to be exposed - reaching for the sunlight to develop and nurture it into a small yet beautiful piece of his being.

God shines down his bright light feeding him, making him look more beautiful to those willing to get close.

Gifting him those buds - a new beginning - waiting for the right moment to
embrace
refresh
making his life whole.

TO MY MOTHERS FROM WHOM I COME
By Deborah C. Lamb-Babcock

She stands tall, grandmother does, reaching her arms to the sky,
Her skirts o u t s t r e t c h e d
To catch her children
Within the wrinkles of her apron.

Strong, vibrant with health
Skin folding—crinkling—full of ridges and knots.

She bends and sways to the winds that pummel her.
Her tears, golden rivulets
T
R
I
C
K
L
E

With g l a c i e r - like speed
as she stands
looking down at her children.

The veins in her body dig deep into the earth;
Grabbing it,
Absorbing it,
Receiving strength and life from it,
Holding her blood in her scraped and twisted veins,
Veins made strong through age and exposure to life.

She stands guard
Never sleeping
Whispering
Always whispering to me,
"Be strong,
Be strong."

"Blueberry Hill" Photo
http://farm1.static.flickr.com/80/222393882_e27a1599b7_o.jpg

# Transformations

Caught between the powerful droplets
of the lawn sprinkler and the rays of the sun,
I long to find my way out.

I linger only for a moment,
in hopes of some sort of guidance,
knowing that if I wait too long
I will again find myself
confined between the two.

Feeling another droplet cut through me,
I realize my only alternative is down,
settling myself upon the heat stricken lawn
and worn out sidewalk.

Tammy Brost '08
Photo Curtsey of Flickr
http://www.flickr.com/photos/15668149@N02/

# Who Am I?

Once upon a time I was called daughter, sister, friend
Even student, manager, and boss were on my name tag
But that was in a place that seems so far, far away
On occasion names like colleague, coordinator, coach and counselor are whispered
but not now...

In her kingdom I am...
Protector
Healer
Nurturer

Still I am...
Unseen
Quiet
Concealed

The best identity I've ever had...

I am Mama

By: Kim Hewitt
Dedicated to my daughters

**Gwendalyn Faye Gulley**
**Westwood Heights Schools**
**ELA Teacher**

***Writing From Different Perspectives***
**Sprinkler**

Sweeping relentlessly across the sage shaded lawn, the sprinkler refreshes the students' path to Brody. Its silver mist is surprisingly cool. Its circular sprinkle of liquid falls ever so lightly on the people and pavement. The melody of spritz is mesmerizing. A rhythm of schuss schuss schuss schuss schuss ...Gray, silver, powder rainbows tower the landscape.

Up and down. Up and down. Round and round. Round and round. A seesaw or a pony ride? Maybe a deer caught in headlights? I'll compromise; the sprinkler is prancing like a merry-go-round suspended on a fire hydrant. The ride began at the break of day and will continue longer than needed.

When told that my dish is hot by the server, I smile with the innocence of a child and 'tap' the plate. The sprinkler tempts the inner child in me, and I creep up to the sidewalk, crossing in front of a classmate, and wade quickly to its border. I sweep my hand in the air and catch a few drops of artificial rain. The melodic twists and turns bring me back and forth to his hypnotic waltz... He takes my hand and he pulls me in; I watch for a glimpse of disapproval as I tip to its border for one last spin.

## Biopoem

Project WRITE
Challenging, creative, incredible, encouraging
Facilitated by Liz Webb and Troy Hicks
Lover of reading, writing, and technology
Who feels frustration when students and teachers don't have access to adequate technology, are 'left behind', and are stressed by state tests
Who needs samples of student work, teacher participation, and administration support
Who gives encouragement, advice based on best practice, and support to all
Who fears test-driven curriculum, apathetic learners, and out-dated technology
Who would like to see effective strategies, appropriate technology, and open-minded learners
Originating at MSU
Committee of Lifelong Learners