



News Release

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April 25, 2008
NR08049

NMCC students find new “Beginnings” as they prepare to launch on-line literary magazine

Aroostook County - A hands-on assignment designed to be a final project for a creative writing class at Northern Maine Community College has instead become new “Beginnings” for 20 students enrolled in the course taught by instructor Jan Grieco.

In the coming weeks the students will show their best work from the semester to the world when they become published authors in a very 21st century way – by launching an on-line creative literary magazine. Not only will the writing showcased be that of the students, but the entire project from managing and editing to creative concept and web design is the product of the class. Even the e-magazine’s name “Beginnings” is the result of a group brainstorming session and holds special significance to those involved with the project.

“‘Beginnings’ means many things,” said Meggan Pratt of Van Buren, who was selected by her classmates as managing editor. “This is the first time Mrs. Grieco is teaching creative writing here at NMCC. Secondly, we are all beginning writers. In addition, where we are living and going to school is also home to a beginning – the start of Route 1. How great would it be to be discovered and say ‘I had my first work published in ‘Beginnings’.”

Generating that enthusiasm about writing with her students was among the many goals set by Grieco when she first spoke with them early in the semester about presenting their work in what she originally envisioned as a printed compilation.

“It is important for beginning writers to find an appropriate way of publishing, and to understand what that process is like. So, ‘Beginnings’ has a multi-fold purpose. First is to involve the student in the business of writing – that is to give them a hands-on understanding of how one’s work gets published. Second, this magazine has encouraged active peer interaction, and a reliance on each other as reliable critics, commentators on each others’ work.”

That review work is now under way by the students in the class who fill the editor role along with Grieco by checking the submissions for content and grammar. The papers will then be forwarded to the team of student graphic designers who will add background images and pictures that either they or the author feel enhance the piece in a visual manner.

The material is then moved along to classmate Robert Williams of Perham, who serves as the webmaster. Williams takes the written work and art work and creates a “dead page” with no active links to show to the author, so he or she has the opportunity to see what the page will look like when the site goes “live” – which is expected to happen before the end of the semester.

“This project has given me a chance to continue exploring the development of a web site from scratch using previous knowledge of basic HTML coding. It has also given me, and my classmates, a chance to interact with different departments and students around campus,” said Williams. “This project is like an all encompassing experience that shows what college is truly about, meeting new people and exchanging ideas freely without being put down for your beliefs. The greatest reward that has come from this project is that we, as writers and students, are able to have our works not only published for others to read, but that it is being published by fellow classmates who have an insight into what we want to accomplish with this entire project.”

It appears what the class initially set out to accomplish will be exceeded as the students and Grieco view the upcoming launch of “Beginnings” as just that – the beginning.

“We hope that this will continue as an annual project for the next several years, and then become a twice yearly publication – once each semester,” said Grieco.

Plans for the future development of the e-magazine include expanding the scope of the publication outside of the creative writing class to include submissions from students across campus. Many of the students who began the project plan to stay with it as they continue their education.

“I hope that our work can be a model for other writing classes, so that other students from other colleges, or even high schools, who work hard and have poems and stories that are well written can make a site as well,” said Pratt.

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Northern Maine Community College students (left to right) Robert Williams of Perham; Misty Robinson of Masardis; Amber Hill of Readsboro, Vermont; and Meggan Pratt of Van Buren review an early design draft of their soon-to-go-live on-line creative literary magazine "Beginnings."