Author Adds Creative Spark to Community Education Program

New River Community and Technical College is fortunate to have some of the most talented artists and professionals in the state willing to share their passion and expertise by teaching classes and leading workshops for the public through the community education program. A shining example is author and literary lecturer Belinda Anderson. Her creative writing workshops at the Greenbrier Valley Campus have been wildly successful and a positive experience for both students and instructors.

Anderson is the author of three collections of short stories, “Buckle Up, Buttercup,” The Bingo Cheaters” and “The Well Ain’t Dry Yet.” These journeys into Anderson’s imagination feature characters steeped in mountain-born spunk living in the fictional Hope County. Her tales are driven by themes of hope and the resiliency of West Virginians.

“Writing is, for me, a means of seeking,” she points out. “I write nonfiction to document life; I write fiction in order to understand it.”

She is also well versed in the works of her fellow West Virginia writers and often leads readings and lectures on their works.

Anderson started her literary career as a small child. “Before writing came storytelling. As a kid, I liked to draw pictures and make up stories about them. My Barbie dolls lived very dramatic lives,” she explains.

Her seventh grade English teacher, Mrs. Geiger, introduced her to journal writing, and Anderson took to it immediately. “What an incredible experience, to be invited to write whatever struck your fancy,” she says, recalling those days of discovery. Her high school English
teachers, Mrs. Miller and Mrs. Muncy, added fuel to her literary fire, encouraging her to continue exploring her imagination and expanding her writing skills.

That encouragement is one of the reasons she teaches today, including elementary school presentations.

“It’s a nice circle to help children develop their creativity just as I was helped,” she says. “But my primary motivation in working with children is that I really enjoy it. They are so eager and responsive, and it’s wonderful to see them blossom when they’re given a chance to express themselves.”

Her experiences working with adults through New River are equally rewarding, according to Anderson. She equates the stories, poems and family memories that have been locked away inside her students with bits of buried treasure.

“It’s great,” she explains, “teaching folks who want to learn for the sake of learning, to experience personal growth – they’re always engaged and enthused.”

Her students would agree. Anderson has been described as a “very generous and jovial soul.” One student, upon leaving the class “Life Stories,” stated that they couldn't wait to get home to the computer. Another said, “Belinda has such a passion for writing and she also possesses great teaching skills.

Anderson teaches classes and conducts readings all across the Greenbrier Valley, working with New River, The Greenbrier County Public Library, Pearl S. Buck International Writer’s Festival and Pocahontas County Library in Hillsboro. She was a featured artist in the Tamarack Foundation Newsletter. Her books are available at local libraries, The Open Book, Tamarack and online at amazon.com.

The next session of Anderson’s “Life Stories” memoir writing workshop will take place on Saturday, June 26. For more information, or to be added to the interest list for Anderson’s upcoming community education classes at New River Community and Technical College, please call 304-647-6715 or 304-872-4520.

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Photo of Belinda Anderson courtesy of Josh Baldwin, Greenbrier Valley Quarterly