



Thursday, April 4, 2002

OU hosting Far Field Retreat for writers

It is a quiet, scenic place away from life's distractions where time is devoted to the practice of the writer's craft and invaluable feedback is derived from a community of poets, novelists and other wordsmiths – the Far Field Retreat for writers.

The four-day, on-campus retreat, sponsored by the Oakland University Department of English and the College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Program Fund in association with The Writer's Voice Project of the Detroit YMCA, takes place May 16-19.

"We have on the faculty two distinguished poets, Edward Haworth Hoepfner and Gladys Cardiff; two fiction writers, Maureen Dunphy and Annie Gilson; and a very successful teacher of creative nonfiction, Linda McCloskey," said Brian Connery, English Department chair. "The retreat offers us an opportunity to share the talents of these faculty members with the local writing community and to let both our students and our faculty work with visiting writers."

According to the founder, award-winning poet Mary Ann Samyn, CAS '92, an Honors College and English Department alumna, the Far Field Retreat closely resembles a writer's workshop.

"Writers enjoyed lots of things about the retreat — the congenial atmosphere, the amount of attention their work received from our faculty, the beauty of OU's campus, the opportunity to make contacts with other writers, even the food," Samyn said. "But the focus is really the workshop."

Participants at Far Field get the chance to be involved in the workshop along with faculty who know how to give commentary and how to encourage others in the workshop community to do so at a high level." Participants of the first retreat had many positive comments about their experience.

"The speakers made me feel like getting published may not be so impossible," said Courtney Bertrand, who participated in the first retreat. "The experience of work shopping (with Pushcart Prize-winning fiction writer) Reginald McKnight is something I will hold with me forever."

"The positive atmosphere of community...was undeniable throughout the weekend," Lisa Friederich-Harris said on her evaluation. "Not only did I benefit as a writer from the intensive group analysis of words on paper, but also from the opportunity to connect with other Michigan writers."

For 2002, a workshop on creative nonfiction will be added. Samyn will lead a poetry workshop and serve as conference director.

Samyn has had three volumes of her poetry published: "Rooms by the Sea" (Kent State University Press 1994), "Captive Narrative" (Ohio State University Press 1999) and "Inside the Yellow Dress" (New Issues Press 2001). A former special lecturer in the OU Department of Rhetoric, Communications and Journalism, Samyn currently is an English instructor at Kirtland Community College in northern Michigan.

The Far Field Retreat costs \$450 for on-campus participants and \$400 for commuters, with meals included (the cost is not correct in the spring issue of OU Magazine).

For more information, see the article in the spring issue of OU Magazine or visit the [Far Field](#) Web site.

SUMMARY

The Far Field Retreat for writers is devoted to the practice of the writer's craft where invaluable feedback is derived from a community of poets, novelists and other wordsmiths. The four-day, on-campus retreat is May 16-19.

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