

Tuesday, October 27, 2009

Professional Writing Retreat

by Laura Gabrion

Ever since my children were small, I imagined the somber day when I would have to drive them to college. In this vision were plenty of tear-laden hugs and the instant realization that one of my children had, despite my fierce resistance, grown up. An unexpected ripple disrupted this dream in August when my three children, my husband, and our dog dropped me off at college for thirty hours of writing and sharing the NWP way.

Friday began early at the Towers Residential Suites on the campus of Wayne State University. Toni Gibson of the MBWP and Maurya Kay of the WSWP had worked tirelessly to create an enriching urban event. After brief introductions, we did what we had come to do--write. Our initial exercise was to journal about our topics. After sharing those topics with others, we were invited to sneak away into any alcove of the campus we chose; we dispersed rather quickly. Depending on our selected subjects, we were able to research, ponder, or actually begin to formulate the articles we felt compelled to write. Several of us chose to cross the campus and work in the quiet seclusion of the historic Detroit Public Library.



Laura Gabrion

Lunch was full of chatter, but many of us were eager to get back to work. We again disbanded, but some of us conferred with Laura Schiller, our resident expert from the Oakland Writing Project. She made time to read our pieces, and her advice was both helpful and direct. The latter part of the afternoon offered us an opportunity to share in small groups and to savor the suggestions provided by our colleagues. After that, we enjoyed a more relaxed atmosphere without laptops and notebooks at the Traffic Jam, a local eatery.

In the morning we had a couple of hours to read, write, share, or meet with Laura. Our closing activity, as a large group, allowed us the chance to read our pieces to the group if we felt comfortable doing so. The feedback and encouragement were a fitting way to end the retreat, and we planned a date to reconvene and reveal our "finished" pieces. Standing on the curb of Anthony Wayne Drive, I realized that my brief interlude as a college student was about to end. As I watched the family van round the corner, I could only hope my children will someday relish such opportunities for personal growth as much I have.

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SUMMARY

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