

# side the 'Chrysalis': Group helps women writers flourish though peer response

Johnson  
Clackamas Print

campus women writers' Chrysalis, is just as its name

Chrysalis is the hard cocoon that grows inside of, as it were, an adult butterfly. Like any group members know that Chrysalis is just the protected stage of development of exploration and growth for women writers of all ages, who desire different things from their writing.

"It depends on a woman's writing interest," said member Roxie Matthews, "I've been with the group for seven years. I want to further your skills it's a wonderful thing he added. 'It's very nice to have people at all levels' is very supportive." The group has grown over the years from being a small group of friends

women, to a much larger group that now often reaches 20 women at a time.

The group meets once a week, and women share and discuss their pieces, ranging from poetry to memoirs, short stories to novels.

"The very first day I knew I was home," said group member Susan Landis-Steward, who has now been with the group for just over a year. Due to a brain injury, she was unable to work, and sought out Chrysalis.

"I was very afraid going because I thought, 'I'm either going to be hopelessly outclassed, or these are going to be wannabe writers, and no matter what I'm going to be a fish out of water,'" said Landis-Steward. "Right away, I felt like my writing was right there in the mix and that they had lots to offer me and I had lots to offer them and that it was going to be a good thing."

During a meeting of Chrysalis,

members typically bring in a piece of writing, hand out copies to other members and then read it aloud, but not everyone is expected to bring something.

"You don't have to read. It's totally up to you; if you want to read you can, if you don't you don't have to, so there's no pressure," said Landis-Steward.

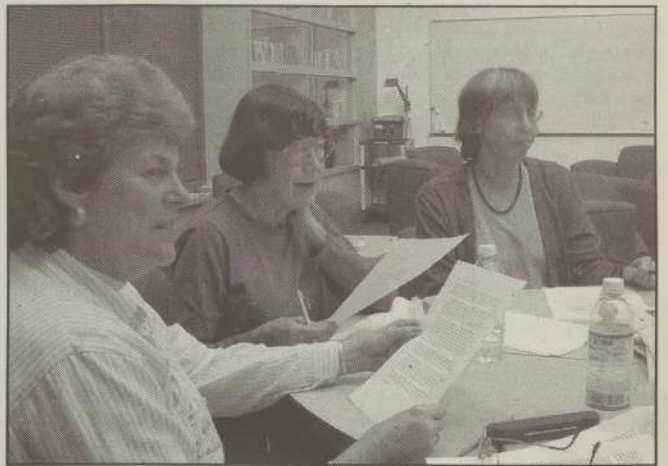
For most members, however, even without sharing, the meetings have something rich to offer.

"Some weeks I don't bring writing but I still wouldn't want to miss the group, really for the simple joy of a good story," said Pat Lichen, the group's facilitator, who's been a part of Chrysalis for five years.

"There are women who come from one week to the next and there are these ongoing novels that they are writing," she said, "and I'm looking forward to the next installment."

For those who do choose to read, one can easily request a certain kind of feedback, or ask for none at all.

"You read [your piece] out loud and people



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Members of Chrysalis, Sally Stone, Ginny Weber and Ellen Mendoza participate in a group critique.

critique it," said Matthews. "Different people have different needs, so they tell us, 'I just wanted to share this,' or, 'I just wanted to have somebody check my punctuation on this,' or, 'How is this poem coming together?' Each person comes with their own individual interests and needs."

Women in Chrysalis, especially those who have been a part of the group for quite a while, are very aware of what different writers may need to hear.

"[Chrysalis is] the kind of place where we go easy on people until we get to know them and even then, there's people that have said, 'I want you to critique the hell out of me,'" said Landis-Steward, "and there's others that need a little more nurturing style, and I think everyone's needs sort of get met."

Aside from the business aspect of Chrysalis, members form friendships.

"The meetings are the only time I see most of these people, and you really forge a connection," said Lichen.

Many members have grown immensely in their time with the

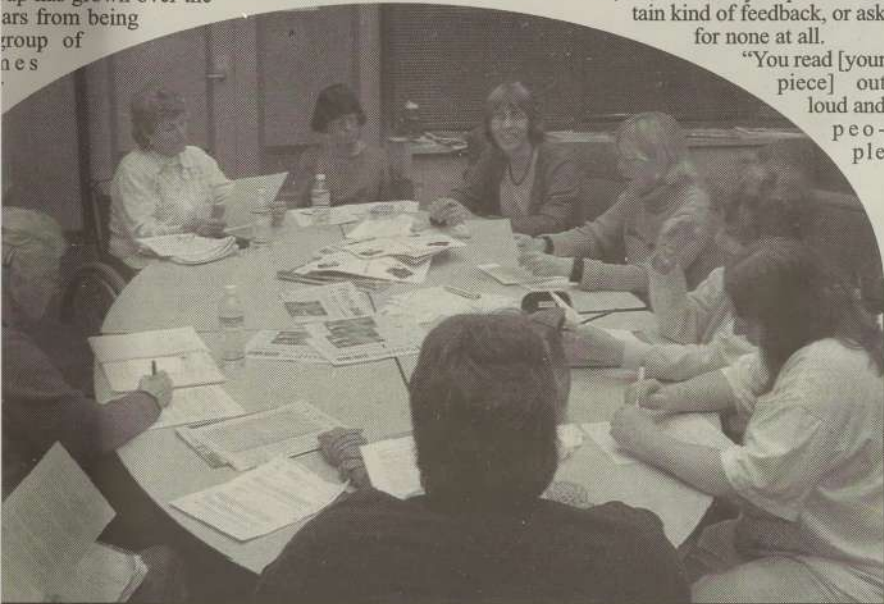
group, and their writing has gone beyond "just for fun."

"[Chrysalis] has just been a wonderful, wonderful opportunity for me," said Matthews. "Between my husband's support and the direction that I've been able to get from Chrysalis, I've got a novel and an agent and have had some short stories published."

Landis-Steward has just been published in a magazine called *Spinoff*, about hand-spinning yarn.

"It's an article that I took to the group and I said 'You know, I've been asked to write this article and I'm going to read it to you and I want you to critique the hell out of it,' and they did, and they helped me make it better," she said. "It will be kind of exciting when it hits newsstands and bookstores to see a magazine with my article in it."

Joining Chrysalis is as easy as flipping through your course schedule. It is offered every term, free of charge, and for no credit. The group meets every Wednesday in the Literary Arts Center (upper level Roger Rook Hall) from noon to 2 p.m., and women can join at any point in the term.



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The Clackamas women writers' group, meets Wednesdays from noon to 2 p.m. in the Literary Arts Center in Rook Hall, and women can join at any time during the term.

## Espino recognized by 'Who's Who'

Sorensen  
Clackamas Print

Third time's always a charm, then Science Ritch Espino, getting published in the "Who Among American Teachers" publication the fourth time must be something truly

special. WAAT, an annual publication as of 2004 (previously bi-annual), is based on "National Dean's List" students about to graduate, and when a winning letter is published, an award is sent to the recipient. Espino, however, feels like he's still as new as the first time.

"I had some pretty good luck with student Ritch Espino, "which is tough because [physiology is] one of the toughest subjects here."

He has spent a long time working to get ahead, but with three kids, a wife, and a clinic he practices chiropractic medicine, he feels like he hasn't done anything he'd be proud of above and beyond."

Getting these awards is really, really nice, but for me, I just do it ... I don't even think about it," he said. "I'm no different or any better than any of the other teachers ... in some ways it's embarrassing to be recognized."

It's hard to achieve what he has and earn a place in the universe has some pretty good aspects as well. Espino feels that teaching is a reward, and he loves nothing more than to have a positive influence in a student's life. "There's a lot of successes out there." The biggest success is somebody who feels good about themselves or hasn't been successful in school and you're a little tiny bit helping them be successful ... that's it



ESPINO

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right there."

After all the awards, and all the work, Espino feels like there's a bigger message to be learned from the success he's had. A good friend once brought someone to meet Espino and told him that Espino was both a teacher and a doctor. The man looked at Espino and said, "You don't look like one."

"I think the message there," Espino said in retrospect, "is you just kind of are what you are. Looks, pretense; that stuff doesn't really matter."

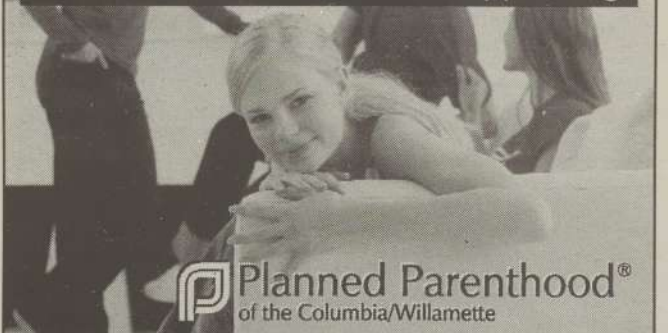
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