

'Bird nerd's' poems soar

Fufkin Vollmayer

The Clackamas Print

Northwest community colleges have a literary scene, one that's not half bad.

Clackamas' literary scene became apparent at the poetry reading in the Literary Arts Center on May 4.

The poet Derek Sheffield may not ring a bell if a) you are not a poet or b) are not in the English Department. But no matter; the language in his poems is smart, subtle and accessible. You do not need a PhD to grasp the meaning of his poems.

Sheffield, an English professor at central Washington's Wenatchee Valley College, gave his reading as part of Clackamas' Spring Term Sustainability Project. What has distinguished the lecture series from the depressing avalanche of facts about global warming, however, have been the voices of writers and poets such as Derek Sheffield.

Poetry can reflect the impact of habitat loss more than a map. Take Sheffield's poem about Wenatchee Valley College's decision to put classrooms smack dab in the middle of an old grove of pin oaks during a construction project.

Sheffield introduced the poem by saying, "There's lots of development on campus. The cynical part of me had a hard time getting over that. It's bumper-stickered, you tree hugger sap, get over it. The loss was really palpable, and I felt it enough."

Sheffield's poem captures this with lines such as "[Where] ... Air once laced with branches, fluorescent tubes flicker."

Sheffield is a self-described "bird nerd" and during his post-graduate years in Seattle lived in a cabin on the Puget Sound.

"I had no TV, no money, a lot of student loans, and I spent my time watching the

grebes, loons, wooducks [and] harlequin ducks," he said. "The Puget Sound became my TV."

His experience is encapsulated in a poem he read about bird migration: "Slow descent of tropical migrants/ one dirty river for South America's clear cuts/ its song of hurried sweets..."

The poem ends with "3,000 miles from the gathering of his state ... that warbler, thin from its journey, stood as if I did not breathe, and only the wind could move me."

Sheffield's day-job at the community college also pays homage to the biologically unique habitats of the Northwest. As a full-time English professor at Wenatchee Valley College, he teaches a course called "Northwest Nature Writing," which is equally part bird biology and creative writing.

For the class, Sheffield teams up with an expert on native birds.

He said of the class, "It's a learning community. Students get a field guide, binoculars and learn Latin names for species ... Some students go on to learn more or to become nature writers."

Many people regard listening to poetry as the equivalent of eating green vegetables: good for you, but dull. Oh, and irrelevant.



Jennesa Palmer *Clackamas Print*

Sheffield shares his unique poems with an audience in the Literary Arts Center. His poems are partly inspired by his knowledge and love of wildlife and his many years of experience as an English professor.

Where poetry fits in, according to Sheffield, "[is that it] is the art of what you don't say as much as what you do say."

He quoted Emily Dickinson, "Tell all the truth, but tell it slanted."

So, for those craving some slanted truth, get a dose at the next Clackamas literary reading.

Of poetry, Sheffield said, "If my job was just to write poetry, I wouldn't want to do it full-time. Community college is a good life for a wrier. I gain a lot of satisfaction from teaching."



Nick Peters
1986-2007

Former Clackamas Community College student Nick Peters died on May 1 due to injuries he sustained in a car accident in Casa Grande, Ariz.

Born in Oregon City on June 16, 1986, Peters lived in Molalla until his recent move to Arizona. He attended Molalla High School and was in its graduating class of 2004. He lettered in wrestling all four years and was the Molalla District champ his sophomore year. He loved riding four-wheelers, playing guitar and having a good time with his friends.

Peters' friend, and former *Print* staff member, Kim Schiewe described him as fun-loving, energetic and always up for getting a big group together.

From spring of 2002 to winter of 2007, Peters attended the college and received a letter of congratulations for completion of his transfer degree.

A Catholic service will be held at St. James Catholic Church on May 9, with burial to follow at Russellville Cemetery. At 3 p.m. on May 11, a Celebration of Life Service will be held at the Molalla Nazarene Church.

INFORMATION SESSIONS



UNDERGRADUATE INFORMATION

7:00 - 8:30, TUESDAY EVENING, MAY 15TH
FLAVIA HALL SALON

Discover the convenience of flexible scheduling — online, or on campus, days, evenings and weekends. Meet the academic department chairs and advisors. Learn about your scholarship and financial aid options.

To reserve a place, call 503.699.6268.

PRIOR LEARNING CREDIT

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Writing contest deadline approaching

Andrea Simpson

The Clackamas Print

Sick of being a poor writer? The Writers' Club is accepting entries for the writing contest they are sponsoring.

The categories are fiction, poetry and creative nonfiction. There will be modest cash prizes for the top three winners. The top three will also be published in the Writers' Club publication coming out before the end of the year.

The collection will also feature stories by members of The Writers' Club.

The deadline for entries is May 11 by 5 p.m.

The guidelines for submission are:

Submit all entries on a CD or Floppy disk, along with a hard copy, to the Writers' Club, RR 225.

The CD or floppy must have the participant's student ID number on it, as well as the title(s) and category of the entry.

Participants should identify the hard copy by putting their student ID number on each page.

Please one-and-a-half space all fiction and nonfiction (12 pages maximum).

Include a cover page consisting of the participant's name, student ID number, phone number, address, category (poetry, fiction, or creative nonfiction) and title(s) of the submitted piece(s).

Active writers in the surrounding community will be serving as judges for the contest. The identity of these writers will be announced

after the deadline.

The judges will have general ideas of what they are looking for.

"They'll be looking for uniqueness of voice, strong use of the genre's techniques and having something important to say. Also, just pieces that stand out from the crowd," said Grabill.

Grabill encourages writers to enter who may not have the confidence to submit their work.

"Often, people can be their own worst critic, so I would say, trust in the words," he said. "Why not participate, because it can be a great feeling to share your work with others who aren't reading it to be judgmental, but to feel what you're communicating."

For more information, contact James Grabill, RR 225, at (503) 657-6958, ext. 2824.

CAMPUS NEWS & EVENTS

Today

What does Clackamas Community College mean to you? Show your pride in Clackamas by entering a video, photo, collage, drawing, painting, or sculpture and capturing the Clackamas Experience in a powerful way. Submissions are due by Wed., May 9 at noon. Take submissions to Michelle Baker in the Community Center, Room 152 (Student Activities Office). You must include your name, phone number, e-mail address and mailing address. For additional information, e-mail Michelle Baker at mbaker@clackamas.edu, or call (503) 657-6958, ext. 2245.

Today

Club Carnival in the Community Center from noon to 1 p.m. Contact ASG at (503) 657-6958, ext. 2245 for details.

May 17

Oregon State University writer laureate Kathleen Dean Moore will read from her work in the Literary Arts Center, Rook 220, from noon to 1 p.m. Moore is the author of *The Pine Island Paradox* and other creative nonfiction. The visit is just one of the many events this term connected with the Sustainability Project. For more information, contact the English Department at ext. 2284.

May 19

Clackamas celebrates its 40-year birthday this year, and its service to students, businesses and the community throughout those years. An afternoon of events will begin at noon and continue until 5 p.m. It's completely free, and the public is invited to attend. For more information, call ext. 2307 or visit the college Web site.