

HOFFMAN CENTER FOR THE ARTS DEBUTS 'ONLINE AND AT THE BEACH'

By **DAN HAAG**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

Education in the 21st century often means more than brick-and-mortar classrooms. There is a bevy of online opportunities for all ages and interests.

Online students can learn from wherever and whenever they want, making "e-education" an attractive option for those with busy work and family schedules. Or for those who prefer learning from the comfort of their favorite chair and cozy bathrobe.

With that in mind, Manzanita's Hoffman Center For The Arts Writer's Series is launching "Online and at the Beach" on May 1. Part of Hoff Online, the program will offer writing and visual arts workshops.

While Hoffman Center has always offered a broad range of workshops, the center's President Vera Wildauer said the time has come to expand their repertoire beyond the half-day, in-house format.

"It allows for a more in-depth learning experience," she said. "Students appreciate the flexibility and can work on their own schedule and from anywhere."

"Online and at the Beach" will reach people who might only come to the beach for holidays and weekends, as well as coastal residents farther south or north.

Wildauer said people in Clatsop, Tillamook and Lincoln counties often try to participate in the center's programs but aren't always able to because of work or weather conditions.

"Tillamook County is a very long county, and while we regularly get participants who live in Pacific City or Neskowin, offering online learning makes it easier for them to connect with us," she said.

'A creative hothouse'

The five-week online course culminates in an optional writing retreat weekend in Manzanita the weekend of June 2, a gathering that will allow students to meet their instructor and fellow students, and enjoy additional craft writing sessions.

Participants will also have an opportunity to read their work at an open mic, try "Yoga for Writers," go on hikes, and dive into a "Prompt-O-Rama."

The intention, Wildauer said, is to complement the online courses with a weekend retreat as often as possible.

The initial series instructors will be prominent Pacific Northwest authors Megan Kruse and Jennie Shortridge.

Kruse will teach "Creativity Catalyst" while Shortridge will teach "Putting Your Prose to Work."

Both Kruse and Shortridge are "veterans" of previous workshops and readings at the center and were natural fits for the pilot program.

"We've always had great response to Megan and Jennie here as workshop teachers," the writer series organizer, Kathie Hightower, said.

Kruse, the author of "Call Me Home" and recipient of a 2016 Pacific Northwest Book Award, is excited to be on board.

"Life so often gets in the way of our work," she said. "I want this class to be a creative hothouse for dormant ideas and a jolt of energy."

Shortridge, author of five novels — including "Love Water Memory" and "When She Flew" — thinks the program will offer a necessary push to writers.

"I'm excited to work with students who've been writing for a while, but aren't quite sure how to go to the next level," she said, adding that the class will provide clear, concrete practices

and methods that aren't necessarily taught in classrooms in her experience.

'Hard to beat the beach'

For the Hoffman Center For The Arts, this program is an exciting step in a new direction. It has the potential to reach writers on the Oregon Coast, the Pacific Northwest and the country.

The hope is that future classes will expand to include other artistic endeavors such as painting and music instruction.

But writing always seemed like the natural component to start with as it combines the best of both worlds: e-learning with workshoping.

Hightower said that, over the years, the center's programs such as the Writers Series and PoetryFest have offered valuable interaction time between writers and teachers.

She thinks that interaction — along with the renewal and healing aspect of the beach setting — will make "Online and at the Beach" successful.

Wildauer agrees.

"It's hard to beat the beach for inspiration and learning," she said.

Classes begin May 1. To register, visit www.hoffmanblog.org/hoff-online.

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Dan Haag is the manager of the Manzanita Visitors Center.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Manzanita Writers' Series
has offered many workshops over the years.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Author Jennie Shortridge will teach "Putting Your Prose To Work" and believes the class will help writers take the next step.



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Megan Kruse, author of "Call Me Home," will teach Creativity Catalyst online through Hoffman Center for the Arts.