

At the Ellenville Public Library

Creative Writing Class

by Dianne Krulick, *Secretary, EWCoC*

What if you had an interest and could have someone help with it? What if this could take place in Ellenville without having to travel far or pay for the help? This is exactly what occurred at our own *Ellenville Public Library*. A few employees were interested in writing, but not just sitting home without someone to help and critique their work. They talked about trying to form some kind of writing group.

Within a few days after the idea came up, along came Edgar Dass, a library patron, wanting to know if there was something he could do to help out in the area. The timing could not have been better; Mr. Dass is an Associate Professor at Orange County Community College with expertise in writing. So, the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum's Creative Writing Class* began. Professor Dass volunteers his time to meet with this very special group of local writers, facilitating the program and bringing his own writing to share.

The group meets twice a month on Saturdays in the **Community Room**. Participants are of many different ages, from college students to retirees. They have been non-published writers until Professor Dass met with Diane DeChillo, who facilitated the publication "Insights by Ellenville Authors," a collection of poetry, essays, and short stories. Five hundred copies were produced, made available free to library patrons and other members of the community.

At each meeting, the participants read something they wrote and others present make comments. Comments are constructive and supportive, often with such awe at hearing what someone has written. Discussion about writing style is often mentioned. When asked about writing in first or third person, the writers agreed that it's much easier to write in the third person because the other is more limiting. In order to write in the first person, one must often be a narrator, not directly involved in all parts of the story, more of an observer from afar.

Each person writes in a format that is of personal interest. Many of the writers are completing short stories, from a historical romance to a story set in New York state with a locale of the Mamakating area to be included. Poetry ranges from personal writing about family to the issues concerning our country today. Some writers began writing many years ago but didn't continue. This venue creates a positive outlet.

One writer said, "Sometimes the story writes itself," with characters seeming to appear without the writer's planning his/her presence. The emphasis on characterization is evident in most of the writing that has been done. A writer used his own recollections of someone from the past to describe a fictitious story about conflict within a country. Descriptions are so clear that one feels as if the scene is occurring in the present as it is watched from nearby.

This group is quite supportive of each other, having established camaraderie after a few short months. There is a sense of trust and comfort to share personal experiences as new writing is introduced to the listeners. Knowing that a group member was celebrating her birthday, one of the group brought a cake to share.

When asked how long they spend on their writing, the time, as expected, varies. There is no requirement to have



something to share but everyone does. In fact, one writer finished his episode the morning of the session. It all depends when the inspiration, or time, presents itself.

One important aspect of the program is reaching a goal. Having created one issue of the *Ellenville Authors* publication, they are planning a second one to be published sometime in May. Professor Dass will again do some editing to prepare each work for publishing. Not sure where the money will come from, the group is exploring a variety of venues, from help from the *Library* to private donations.

Participants include: Aline Ballentine, Enrico Bazzoni, Shanaz Dass, Connie Hemstreet, Kim Hicks, Betty Jeszeck, Lindsey Lake, Claire Lichtenberg, Lois Lichtenberg, Camille Regholec, and Dennis Warner.

The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month, at 3:00 PM, in the **Community Room** of the *Ellenville Public Library*. They hope that many other local aspiring writers of high school and adult age will join them. If interested, call the *Library* at 647-5530. ☆

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