

# The Fervor of Nashville

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Upon my arrival in Nashville, I wandered wide-eyed through the expansive labyrinth of the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center. As I prepared myself for my first National Writing Project (NWP) Annual Conference, my mind immediately flashed back to images of Walt Disney World; a perfectly oiled machine, thriving off the joy of young and old alike—a dedicated community with the common goal of creating a positive, wholesome family experience.

Opryland is a fairytale locale endowed with flowing rivers, waterfalls, exotic gardens and magical hamlets. It captivates country music lovers, business conference aficionados and adventure-seeking tourists, who are all on a quest for an original hotel/vacation experience. It is said that you can judge the success of an organization by the happiness of its employees. Well, employing more than 4,000 people, there was not one staff person I came across in my jaunts that did not greet me with warmth. Everyone was willing to go that extra mile to make sure my stay was impeccable. Their hope was to instill in me a sense of awe and excitement.

Like Walt Disney World and Opryland, the NWP shares similar visions, passions and drive. The NWP works to instill feelings of excitement and joy to all who participate in its programs, aiming to create a positive community experience. The NWP consists of devoted educators who thrive on the delight of teaching writing—a creative outlet where ideas are born and nurtured.

As I was sitting in the General Session meeting at the NWP Annual Conference, I was surrounded by the buzz of dedicated teachers. I felt a sense of community like no other. I could feel our common goal alive in the air: creating thinkers who question, expand, connect and enjoy the art of writing. At first, I was amazed to hear that in 2004-2005 the NWP provided programs to more than 95,000 teachers, but then I realized it was the sense of community and passion that first drew me into the NWP.

In my first two years of teaching, prior to attending the Maryland Writing Project (MWP) Summer Teacher Institute (STI), my desires were for all of my students to be thrilled to learn and to create the perfect home-school connection. I found these desires were easier thought of than accomplished. Many



of my lessons, especially in writing, lacked excitement. I wanted a way to pull parents into the classroom and into their child's education, but many of my efforts were futile. I was often frustrated, beaten down and exhausted. These were the exact reasons I turned to the NWP. I believed it would help me out of the rut I was beginning to fall into.

Because of the experiences just mentioned, I was not surprised to hear at the NWP

General Session meeting that half of new teachers quit within the first five years of teaching. On the other hand, new teachers who participate in NWP programs teach an average of 14 years. Also 98 percent of NWP teachers stay in education, while 72 percent stay in the classroom. Again, these statistics did not shock me as it is the NWP which has bestowed on me a true love of teaching, not only of writing, but of all subjects. The NWP has provided me with the tools I needed to wrench out some inherent problems in the educational system, to inspire students and families with opportunities. I feel that my experiences with the NWP are constantly renewing my faith in the teaching profession and in my students' abilities. Being a part of the NWP has fueled my desire to stay fresh in terms of professional development opportunities and in terms of my own personal advancement. It has totally transformed me as a teacher. I no longer feel frustrated; now I feel empowered.

As a 2006 Frederick STI Teacher Consultant, my main goal is to promote the rejuvenation of the Southern

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*Pictured from left: Bonnie Hain and Cindy Jounall-Hoch.*

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Maryland site, which was canceled last summer due to low enrollment. Several NWP Annual Conference sessions provided me with the know-how to revive the site. It was so inspiring to collaborate with other program coordinators from all over the country to find out what works for them and what snafus they have had along the way creating and sustaining their local sites. I believe I am now ready to share my enthusiasm for writing with the soon-to-be revived Southern Maryland site. I hope to create the same writing frenzy that I experienced.

As I reflect back on my time at the Frederick STI, the NWP Annual Conference and my current MWP exploits, my mind still reels. Never have I experienced such thrill and joy in writing, such passion and fervor for teaching, and such an unbridled sense of community that just keeps coming. Like Walt Disney World and Opryland, I believe I have been endowed with a great gift that is meant to be shared.

Dear T-C Friends,

My heartfelt thanks to each one of you for the many get well cards, words of encouragement and humorous notes, prayers, flowers and phone calls I received during my recent illness. I am overwhelmed and touched by your concern and kindness. Receiving so many lovely cards and hearing from kind friends truly boosted my spirits during my recuperation.

I am thankful to be back at work at the MWP with the three most wonderful and caring women I know: Barbara Bass, Mary Stelzig and Katie Hearn. Their love and support not only for me, but for my entire family, got us through this ordeal. I am forever grateful to them and to all my T-C friends and family.

Sincerely,  
Kris Moylan



*The fellows and coordinators of the 2006 Summer Teacher Institute at Towson University.*