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Writing Across Kansas: Writing Circles Pitch

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

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Writing Circles are a great way to bring together new and experienced writers to share their work, garner support they need, pool resources for publications and readings, and contribute to the larger community. Here's the description from the Arts on Tour program:

- *Poetry Across Kansas -- Reading and Writing Our Way Home*: The Poet Laureate project, *Writing Across Kansas*, strengthens the presence of poetry in Kansas, builds literary communities statewide, and enhances Kansans' sense of place through poetry. The project brings together new and emerging to create original poems and make community with one another through writing workshops and ongoing poetry circles (facilitated by local citizens who receive facilitator training and ongoing support through the project). The components of the project are:
- *Reading and Writing Ourselves Home Poetry Workshops*: This writing workshop, open to teens and adults, helps people discover their own best poetry, and how reading and writing poetry can add greater meaning to their lives and communities. Each workshop, tailored to community needs and interests, draws on Kansas poets for discussion, reflection, study of craft and as writing prompts.
- *Poetry Circles*: One of the greatest gifts for any writer, whether new or experienced, is community with others who value the written word. To facilitate ongoing Poetry Circles in each community where she leads a writing workshop, Mirriam-Goldberg provides facilitator training (including a resource book of materials and ongoing on-line support) for writers, educators, health professionals, librarians, and others in each community who are interested in leading (or co-leading) Poetry Circles.
- *Reading*: Along with the writing workshop and poetry circle training and support, Dr. Mirriam-Goldberg will also present a reading of her work, which can also be a joint reading with workshop participants and/or local poets.

Other points:

- Caryn would be available to come out in spring or early summer 2010 to lead a writing circle, and meet with people in the community interested in learning how to start and sustain a writing circle.
- She has a booklet on how to facilitate a writing circle ready to distribute, and she can work with facilitators long-distance through email or phone.
- She can visit again in six months to lead another workshop and meet with facilitators for more training.
- She has \$ allocated in her Poet Laureate budget to cover travel and part of her stipend.
- She has web resources already developed to help support facilitators and writers.
- We are looking at a conference next fall to bring together libraries, art centers, community leaders and writers in an effort to start writing circles around the state, and this conference -- to be held in a central location -- would reinforce and strengthen existing groups.
- Caryn is a dynamic workshop leader, and she can help just about anyone write something of meaning that helps them see their lives with greater understanding and hope.