

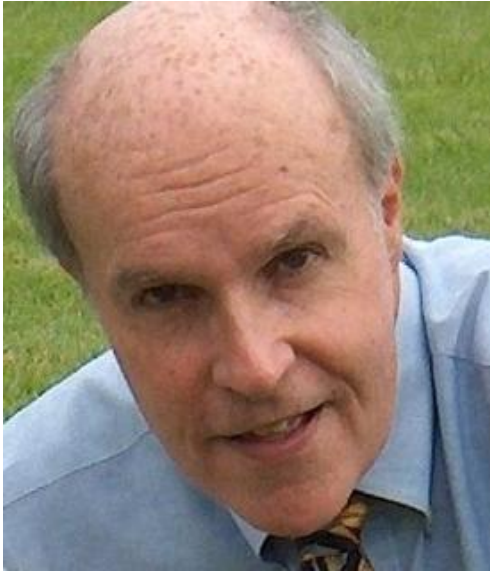


"Because Not All Radio Stations Are Created Equal"

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(Neb.)-Graves Series Presentation Focuses On Poetry



By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 02/20/2014 08:13 AM

(Chadron)- A poem can be a partner in the healing process, provide humor and bring hope Rich Kenney, Chadron State College social work faculty member, told a capacity audience assembled at the King Library for the first Graves Lecture Series of the year.

In the presentation entitled "Poemhenge: Poetry on the Rocks" Kenney explored the many healing and helpful aspects of writing, reading and listening to poetry.

In a unique approach, he included four of his CSC students who read poems interspersed throughout the program Tuesday night.

Jazzy Seumalo, Mustapha Barry, Megan Kizer and Val Rahrs shared a total of 14 pieces ranging from poignant to whimsical to thought-provoking.

Kenney journeyed through his years as a bartender, journalist and social worker in a nursing home sharing stories of human heartbreak, intolerance and wonder.

"Many times as a bartender, I wanted to serve up a shot of Nye or Bly or a jigger of Dickinson," he said.

During one slow shift he wrote poems on cocktail napkins that he stacked at the end of the bar only to find later that a server had distributed them around the bar when she commented on all the "study groups" reading them.

He acknowledged that like Carhenge in Alliance, healing places and wisdom can come in many different forms for people with different interests such as brushhenge, songhenge or wrenchhenge.

Kenney surprised his wife, Linda, by reading a poem he wrote celebrating the dance lesson they took when they first met eight years ago describing her as a “ballroom poet.”

He told the moving story of his childhood friend J.D. who stuttered except when he sang, but their impatient teacher, Miss Lynch, shut down that outlet for J.D. by a tap on the shoulder that indicated to students that they should stop singing because she had deemed their contribution to the choir unsatisfactory.

Using poetry to praise one another, heal relationships and find and make surprising connections in nature were other topics Kenney covered during the program.

Laughter filled the room as Kenney described a colorful nun from his school years who “moved in on” an unruly football player in her classroom “like bad weather.”

Kenney explained that it is possible to become a certified poetry therapist, a credential that he would like to pursue someday.

In an impromptu offer from the audience, local resident and WWII veteran Ed Bieganski stood and recited “Flanders’ Field” from memory.

Shawn Hartman closed the gathering with a message that Meredith Graves, wife of the late Dr. Dorset Graves, for whom the lecture series is named, had recently passed away.

The live streaming video of the program will be available next week on the CSC YouTube channel.

—Tena L. Cook, Interim Marketing Coordinator