



# September 2022 Newsletter



## Back to School: First Friday Event Tonight

WCM is kicking off the school year with a "Back to School" First Friday event at independent bookstore Shakespeare & Co. in Missoula **TONIGHT, 5-8pm**.

Come hear about the experience of teachers, students, and coaches at this fun open house event, with a short program and raffle drawing from 7-7:30pm. See raffle prizes below! For those who cannot attend the event, all [online donations](#) will be put toward raffle ticket purchases from now until 7pm.

Homemade gourmet snacks and wine will be provided.

*Pictured: Thank you to our generous event sponsor--Montana Public Radio--and to our donors! Prizes donated by Bernice's Bakery, Big Creek Coffee Roasters, Le Petit Outre, Lake Missoula Tea. Co., LindaLu Jewelry, Linda Whittlesey (Licensed Massage Therapist), Meadowsweet Herbs, Montgomery Distillery, and Shakespeare & Co.*



# Montana Public Radio

[BUY RAFFLE TICKETS](#)

## New Coach Workshops--Help WCM grow!

WCM is holding two new coach workshops during the month of September:

- [In-person](#), Wednesday, September 8, 6-8:45pm at University of Montana;
- [Online](#), Thursday, September 15, 6-8:45pm.

If you are not yet a trained coach, please consider signing up through the above links! If you are a trained coach, **please recruit your friends and colleagues, as we always need additional community members to support our students.**

Remember: coaches do not need to be writing or literacy experts. Instead, we're looking for people from diverse backgrounds who are willing to learn with the WCM community to guide students' growth.

[REGISTER FOR WORKSHOPS](#)

## WCM 2021-2022 Annual Report

WCM is very proud--and thankful--for the community impact our coaches made during the 2021-2022 school year. Peruse our [annual report](#) to read about WCM's programming achievements and a vision for the future.

We can't wait to make an even bigger impact during the 2022-2023 school year!

[FULL REPORT HERE](#)



## Involvement Fair at Flathead Valley Community College

WCM will set up a table on campus on September 7, from 12-2 PM, to recruit college students to join our pool of coaching volunteers. Attendees can enjoy Sweet Peaks ice cream and learn how to get trained to become a writing coach. Resource and engagement opportunities will be available at this tabling event. We can be found at the Covered Walkway, 777 Grandview Dr, Kalispell, MT 59901.



## Growth Mindset: A Coaches' Blog

We are excited to announce a new WCM monthly resource: Growth Mindset! Our blog will be authored by outstanding coaches who have learned through the process of working with students and want to share their insights with the wider community.

Our first story is penned by long-time and dedicated coach, Herbert Swick.

### The Joys of Coaching...

...are many. I have volunteered as a Writing Coach for ten years, and I am looking forward to the new school year. How many times have I coached? A lot, during visits to middle schools and high schools throughout Missoula, Bonner, Condon, Florence, Stevensville, and Hamilton.

One of the joys of being a coach is simply meeting students -- the eighth graders tackling their first persuasive paper, the seniors polishing a research paper, students confronting for the first time a literary analysis. Last year, a freshman high school class was reading and analyzing John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. The four

students with whom I worked were all struck by the power of the book, noting that it was a really good story, even if it was written so long ago!

One of the joys of being a coach has been to interact with students, always showing respect for them as individuals and valuing what they bring. The students with whom the Coaches work come from diverse backgrounds, and their writing skills vary tremendously. Many students, regrettably, have had little opportunity to interact one-on-one with an adult who is neither teacher nor parent. Sometimes, this personal interaction with a coach can lead quickly to building trust. Two vignettes spring to mind. Some years ago, a middle school student told me about how she had been affected by the death of an infant sister two years before and, through tears, said she had never shared her feelings of grief with anyone, even her parents. We talked about how hard it can be to grieve. A few years later, a high school student was doing an analysis of *Crank*, by Ellen Hopkins, a jarring tale that addresses a number of serious social issues including, for example, physical abuse, drug and alcohol addiction, and parental abandonment. When I asked the student why she selected this book, she replied “because it reminds me so much of my own family.” We abandoned her paper and talked about her personal situation, at the end of which she thanked me. What a privilege for a coach to have such opportunities.

One of the joys of being a coach is that I have learned something every time I have coached, without exception. An eighth grader had been assigned a persuasive paper on gun control. His ‘hook sentence’ was the best I have encountered: “The AK-47 is not a fashion accessory.” A high school student hated writing. His first love was skateboarding, and he eagerly demonstrated for me several skateboarding techniques, using the miniature skateboard he always had with him. By the end of our time together, he was eagerly jotting down ideas for his reflective paper on personal expression. I did not, however, rush to the nearest skateboard park!

One of the joys of being a coach is seeing students make progress, noting the smiles and the gleams in the eye when they suddenly grasp a concept that had been elusive. Or challenging students in a positive way about the sources they use for a research paper, helping them understand how to distinguish a reliable source from the dross that floods the internet. Or laughing with – never at – students when we together discover a humorous anachronism in their papers. Or admiring the honesty with which some students acknowledge the very difficult home situations they experience, and the gratitude they show when a non-judgmental adult shows some degree of empathy.

One of the joys of being a coach is seeing the skill and dedication that public school teachers bring to their classrooms, and the way they foster each student’s learning.

I hope these few observations help convey the richness of the coaching experience. To serve as a Writing Coach is a joy. It is also a privilege.

Herbert Swick

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**We look forward to being in touch soon with coaching opportunities! fall 2022**

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