

# MCTE News

Newsletter of the Minnesota Council of Teachers of English

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Spring 2003

## President's Column

Now that I'm in the last weeks of school, days away from retiring, I am continually being asked, "How many days are left?" I always pause and look as if I'm befuddled or thinking. I hate to answer too quickly, too eagerly. I do not want to give the impression I'm anxious to leave my "home" for the past 34 years.

Actually, retirement is like selling a home. I lived for 16 years in a small two-storied house. I remember the joy, the excitement at finding that perfect little house, going to closing, and then, laboriously hauling in our meager possessions. My wife and I anxiously moved in, only to be divorced the following year. I had some lonely times there and also some happy moments. A girlfriend and I picked out a couch, a five-piece sectional pit. My niece, now 17, used to run around the circular layout of the interior, from kitchen, to TV room, to living room, to dining room, and back to the kitchen. We dyed Easter eggs at the dining room table. My father helped install some bathroom fixtures and was very proud of his contribution. It was in this home where my mom, sister, and I planned my father's funeral.

I had many pleasant memories, many parties, many guests. I invested a lot of time, money, and energy there as well. I rearranged and redesigned my living space several times, adding a deck, a fence, completed over three years, painted walls, tore up carpeting, refinished floors, and reinstalled carpeting. I replaced a furnace and added a new roof. I made it my home. It was very comfortable and reflected my personality. Homes, I think, always require work, remodeling, maintenance. A home needs a lot of care.

And so it was with teaching. Southwest Junior High, has been my home for 34 years. I have been in the same room, same desk all that time. My room reflects me, who I am, and what I enjoy. I have reorganized, restructured lessons to suit the need. I have ten file drawers packed with hanging folders, some good ideas, and some which didn't work as well, but which I still saved, just in case. I have spent a lot of time, energy, and yes, even money on my lessons. I was always working on adding, creating something new.

When it came time to sell my home I felt a bit melancholy, a bit sad. I wanted someone to move in who would enjoy it the way it was, not change it, not rip out the antique woodwork I had searched for, installed, and finished. I did not want someone to paint the house purple or take over my role as neighbor. I did not want someone to rip out the deck, to replace the kitchen cabinets, or even to change the wallpaper. I thought it was pretty good the way it was. After all, I had worked many years to get it there. Of course, I was happy when the home sold. I was happy to move to a better, easier lifestyle, a town house on the lake.

In many ways leaving teaching is the same. I am ready and anxious to move onto to something else, something new, and fulfilling. I am ready. It is time. But, I do feel like I'm leaving something of myself behind. I feel like I am selling my old home of 34 years.

GERRY LIDSTROM



## Congratulations

Charon  
Tierney



Charon is the new Language Arts Specialist at CFL. She has also worked in the Department as a MEEP coordinator. She has also taught senior high English in the Paynesville and Osseo school districts. Charon will also serve as the CFL Liaison on the MCTE Advisory Board. Welcome, Charon!



Kylene  
Beers

On June 1, Kylene will join the faculty at Yale University as a Senior Reading Researcher in the Center for School Development at Yale, where she will be focused on school reform and public policy issues. Congratulations, Kylene!

Jean Marie  
Burtness



JeanMarie is the new Executive Secretary of MCTE, replacing Marsha Besch who served in this position for six years. JeanMarie has served as Creative Writing Chair and has been the Minnesota coordinator for NCTE Writing Achievement Awards for the last eight years.

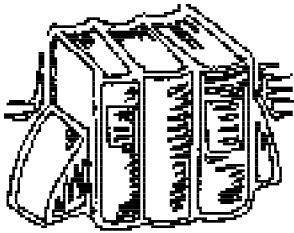
# The Page & The Stage: Spring Conference 2003

*April 25 & 26 - St. Cloud Civic Center*

*Clockwise from upper left: The Shakespeare Man (Alfie Wolfram) and Rob Gardner, teacher at Apollo High School. Lynette Reini-Grandell models finery from Shakespeare in Costume. Video poet David Bengtson, Janet Field-Pickering from the Folger Shakespeare Library. Roundtable discussion on new literacies. Poet Joyce Sutphen. Drawing winners Patricia Mattson and Evelyn Glenn. Author David Haynes. Roundtable of pre-service teachers from Bethel. The Three Sisters' Poetry Slam. Center: Conference Chair Teresa Saum*



Janet Field-Pickering, education director for the Folger Shakespeare Library, presented a pre-conference workshop on Shakespeare in the Schools on Thursday, as well as two break-out sessions on Friday. Main speakers included Mankato poet Joyce Sutphen, author David Haynes, and Mike Hazard and David Bengtson who shared their experiences with video poetry collaborations. Special Shakespeare events included a performance by Alfie Wolfram, The Shakespeare Man, nine break-out sessions with a Shakespeare theme, and a special vendor Shakespeare in Costume. About 160 participants attended the conference. See [www.mcte.org](http://www.mcte.org) for more conference highlights.



# Book Ends

## Professional Reading



*Inquiry and the Literary Text: Constructing Discussions in the English Classroom*, James Holden and John S. Schmit, editors, NCTE 2002.

This was a hot-seller at the Spring Conference, after Jim and John as well as Sharon Eddleston, Martha Cosgrove and Raymond Phillipot, all among the contributors to this anthology, gave a popular session on some of the inquiry methods contained in the book.

For a table of contents as well as ordering information, go to [www.ncte.org/books/holden.shtml](http://www.ncte.org/books/holden.shtml)

## Young Adult

**Note:** YA author Paul Zindel died March 27 after recently being diagnosed with cancer. He was 66 years old. An eloquent tribute written by Don Gallo has been posted on the ALAN (Assembly for Adolescent Literature) website [www.alan-ya.org](http://www.alan-ya.org)

*Heart of a Champion*, Carl Deucker, 1994

Though this isn't a new book, it's a great recommendation for the season -- a winning combination of sports action and the meaning of friendship. Sixth-graders Seth Barham and Jimmy Winter start practicing baseball together with Jimmy's intense and volatile father. Through the years that follow, Seth, a competent player, is concerned about Jimmy's recklessness as he ultimately cuts classes to get an early start on his drinking. Though this conflict together with a team on the cusp of a winning season combine in a predictable outcome, developing readers will get caught up in the action and relationships in this book.

*Shakespeare Bats Cleanup*, Ron Koertge, 2003

While recovering from a bout of mono, 14-year-old Kevin Boland is given a notebook by his writer father and begins to experiment with various forms of poetry. He also explores a variety of personal experiences: the recent death of his mother, his friends, his love for baseball, his growing interest in poetry, and girlfriends past and present. The poems have an authentic voice and would make effective models for student writing. This book has many similarities in plot and them to *Heart of a Champion*. It would also make a good companion to Sharon Creech's *Love That Dog*.

## Website from the Spring Conference:

Folger Shakespeare Library [www.folger.edu/Home\\_02B.html](http://www.folger.edu/Home_02B.html) Check out the Shakespeare for Kids and the Teacher Resources sections.



MCTE News is published four times a year as a benefit to members.

Next newsletter deadline:

**JUNE 1, 2003**

Contact Sandy Hayes [sjhayes@aol.com](mailto:sjhayes@aol.com) 19019 180th Avenue,  
Big Lake, MN 55309

Member of NCTE Information Exchange Agreement

## Fast Forward>>

### Humor from the Internet

Why did the chicken cross the road?

GEORGE W. BUSH: We don't really care why the chicken crossed the road. We just want to know if the chicken is on our side of the road or not. The chicken is either with us or it is against us. There is no middle ground here.

RALPH NADER: The chicken's habitat on the original side of the road had been polluted by unchecked industrialist greed. The chicken did not reach the unspoiled habitat on the other side of the road because it was crushed by the wheels of a gas-guzzling SUV.

RUSH LIMBAUGH: I don't know why the chicken crossed the road, but I'll bet it was getting a government grant to cross the road, and I'll bet someone out there is already forming a support group to help chickens with crossing-the-road syndrome. Can you believe this? How much more of this can real Americans take? Chickens crossing the road paid for by their tax dollars, and when I say tax dollars, I'm talking about your money, money the government took from you to build roads for chickens to cross.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY: To die. In the rain. Alone.

GRANDPA: In my day, we didn't ask why the chicken crossed the road. Someone told us that the chicken crossed the road, and that was good enough for us.

JOHN LENNON: Imagine all the chickens crossing roads in peace.

BARBARA WALTERS: Isn't that interesting? In a few moments we will be listening to the chicken tell, for the first time, the heart-warming story of how it experienced a serious case of molting and went on to accomplish its life-long dream of crossing the road.

ARISTOTLE: It is the nature of chickens to cross the road.

KARL MARX: It was an historical inevitability.

SADDAM HUSSEIN: This was an unprovoked act of rebellion and we were quite justified in dropping 50 tons of nerve gas on it.

VOLTAIRE: I may not agree with what the chicken did, but I will defend to the death its right to do it.

RONALD REAGAN: What chicken?

SIGMUND FREUD: The fact that you are at all concerned that the chicken crossed the road reveals your underlying sexual insecurity.

BILL GATES: I have just released eChicken 2003, which will not only cross roads, but will lay eggs, file your important documents, and balance your checkbook — and Internet Explorer is an inextricable part of eChicken.

ALBERT EINSTEIN: Did the chicken really cross the road or did the road move beneath the chicken?

COLONEL SANDERS: I missed one?

# News Briefs

## Vice President Needed

The office of Vice President, which should have been filled by election at the Spring Conference, is vacant. No candidates were submitted nor were there any nominations or volunteers at the annual business meeting on the Friday evening of the conference.

The Vice Presidential year is one of preparation: attending MCTE Board meetings and assisting the President-Elect with the Spring Conference. Moving the following year into the position of President-Elect involves serving as Chair of the Spring Conference, one of the most important functions of MCTE. This Vice President will serve as conference chair for the spring 2005 conference, which will be held in Duluth. The Chair is the organizer and contact person; the Chair is assisted in many of the responsibilities by the entire Board. The main responsibility as President is to organize the Board meetings, typically 4-6 meetings a year. The Past-President is the liaison with the publication editors and oversees the process of recruiting and selecting any new editors.

### Words of encouragement from Gerry Lidstrom, current President:

I had been on the Board for a few years in the position of membership chair when Sandy Hayes and Anne Andersen approached me regarding the position of MCTE vice-president. The bar had been set by previous presidents, and I felt I was more capable of being a limbo dancer rather than a pole vaulter. But, after giving it some thought and being reassured I would have all the help I needed I agreed. That promise became reality over and over again.

I've continued to learn and grow through the experience. It gave me the confidence to share my ideas, through presentations, with other teachers. Being President of MCTE has been a wonderful ride.

So, I encourage you to take on the positions available on the Board. It is an educational opportunity for growth, awareness, and fellowship with colleagues who are experts in Language Arts throughout the state.

## MCTE Offers

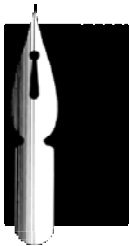
### Classroom Grants

MCTE is offering grants to help teachers fund small classroom projects. This grant program is open to MCTE members only. Teachers of all levels from pre-school through university and encouraged to apply.

An application form is included in this newsletter and is available on the MCTE website. The deadline for mailing the application is June 30, 2003.

- Get additional information
- Find new connections
- Stay in touch with breaking events
- Print copies of forms

[www.mcte.org](http://www.mcte.org)



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Sandy Hayes  
19019 180th Avenue  
Big Lake, MN 55309



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