

SVC

Four students to have novels published

By Derek Carson

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BENNINGTON » Four student-authors from Southern Vermont College read excerpts from their novels at the college on Wednesday, novels which will soon be published thanks to a partnership with Shires Press.

Shires Press, the publishing and printing arm of the Northshire Bookstore, entered into an agreement with SVC in June of 2014 to create a four-course curriculum at the school, during which students would write, edit, and eventually publish full-length novels of their own. At the time, Northshire co-owner Chris Morrow praised then-SVC president Karen Gross for getting the program off the ground. "We like it in large part

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because it democratizes publishing," he said, "Partnering around a book and getting students to publish books is exciting. This is Karen's initiative, and we're thrilled to be involved."

The four students who read from their works on Wednesday all started the program the fall after it was announced, and will have their finished books printed this spring. Shires Press will print five copies of each book, with more available for an additional fee. The students will also receive an ISBN and barcode, retail shelf exposure at both of Northshire's locations, an online listing of the book at Northshire's website, and royalty fees for any sales of the book.

Professor Jennifer Burg said she was constantly surprised by her students, especially at their, what she called, "ruthless" revising. She also praised their willingness to let the story take

them where it will, rather than imposing their wills on their stories. "It's been a real blast to read their stuff," she said.

The first reader was Cameron Curtiss, a senior creative writing major from Milton, Vermont, who wrote a western, in which a tragedy forces a family's eldest son to run away from home. While his father leaves home to search for the boy, the child, Myles, finds a group of travelling companions. However, in the excerpt Curtiss chose, they are forced to hand the child over to the dangerous outlaw, Crazy-Eyed Charlie, to whom they owe money.

The second book was a psychological thriller written by Lucas Gelheiser, a senior creative writing major from Williamstown. Gelheiser crafted the story of a post-apocalyptic world in which only two competing cities survived "The Great Blast," a nuclear war that destroyed the rest of humanity. In his excerpt, his main character, Laura, was fleeing through the woods after being attacked by a mysterious sniper, when she comes across a mutilated human corpse, and a horrific stench. Laura passes out and finds herself dreaming of a horrible creature, who takes the faces of her friends and loved ones as it slowly strangles her to death.

The third book, tentatively titled "Don't Cut Your Butt on Shingles," is by author Sarah Weiler, a creative writing and English major from Sandgate. Weiler's comedic tale follows a student from the early '90s, with no life plan except a vague desire to be a history professor. Instead, she finds herself

working at a hobby shop in a small town, which Weiler said she based off of Rupert and other similarly sized towns in Vermont. While the other three excerpts were very serious, Weiler had the audience laughing as she described the main character's attempts to hide from eighth-grade antagonists.

The final author to read was Jose Ferreras, a creative writing major from Brooklyn, New York. Ferreras, unlike the others, chose to read from the final chapter of his book, which described an epic battle between the heroes, who use magic and other super powers, such as super strength and speed, and the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. By the end of the chapter, the heroes had lost several companions, and had sworn revenge on the victorious horsemen. Ferreras told the audience not to worry about the lack of resolution, however, as he has a full trilogy planned.

The four students all agreed that the classes had improved their writing, as well as secondary skills such as time management. Many of them used friends, family members, and even SVC faculty as inspiration for their characters. When Ferreras said that he based his characters off of real-life acquaintances, one audience member replied, "You've got some cool friends."

"To be at the point we are now, where it feels possible, we've written so much," said Gelheiser, "it's really amazing. It's very fulfilling."

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