

# VATE VOICES



September 2016

## Thank You for Reading Tori Otstot, Editor

I'm back! After a three-year break, I find myself once again as your VATE Voices editor, and I couldn't be more excited. In the meantime, I've seen your faces as your VATE President and conference coordinator, represented my school division as Teacher of the Year, moved from the high school to the middle school, and kept a now-threenager alive, healthy, and (mostly) happy. I've been busy!

Speaking of busy, we are all about to be very, very busy. Perhaps you've already gone back to school, or maybe, like me, you are soaking up the very last days of summer vacation! Either way, I recommend jumping right in – have you registered for our Annual Fall Conference yet? There's still time – visit our website at [www.vate.org](http://www.vate.org) to register for this year's conference which is being held October 21-23 at the Hampton Crown Plaza on the Marina.

As you begin the new school year, remember that you aren't alone. You can stay connected with VATE and English teachers across the state by "liking" our Facebook page and following us on Twitter!

## VATE Board Members Attend NCTE's Affiliate Leadership Conference



## Celebrating Waves of Success Through Literacy



Please join us in Hampton, Virginia at the Crowne Plaza Hotel on the Marina October 21-23! Register NOW at <http://vate.org/annual-conference/>

## VATE Conference Preview: Speaker Biographies

### Shekema Silveri



As the founding Executive Director of the Silveri Service Learning Academy, Shekema Silveri brings to the table an extensive community service background and first-rate academic credentials. Silveri employs multi-layered instruction and well-defined practices in all things charter school, throughout the State of Georgia.

During her eight-year tenure inside the public school classroom, Silveri required students to produce evidence of learning, justify their perspectives, evaluate their reasoning, and set their future goals. As part of her well-rounded approach to instruction, Silveri integrated multimedia into her lessons, using websites and blogs as well as shooting and editing video—which lead to her being featured on CNN's Perry's Principles, NBC's Education Nation Teacher Town Hall Atlanta, and America Achieves. Through these methods, Silveri's students not only learned the information but also came to understand the pedagogy behind it, which is why her AP Literature classes were consistently filled to capacity and include students who are not normally on an honors or AP track.

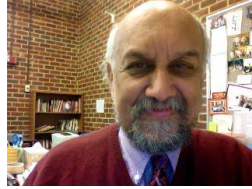
Silveri's leadership skills extend far beyond the four walls of the classroom. As a member of State Superintendent Dr. John Barge's Teacher Advisory Council and a member of Georgia Governor Nathan Deal's Education Advisory Council, she continues to mentor colleagues, leads implementation of various professional development series, and serves as a consultant for curriculum redesign teams. In addition to being a coveted conference and keynote speaker, Silveri is a published author with pieces appearing in The New York Times, the Huffington Post, Success at

the Core Blog, and more.

Silveri is Educational Technology Partner at Digital Mind State (a leading technology consulting firm), a frequent presenter at educator conferences, and serves as professional mentor for the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Leadership Awards.

### **Derek Kannemeyer**

Derek Kannemeyer was born in Cape Town, raised in London, and educated at the University of London and University of Virginia. He recently retired from St. Catherine's School in Richmond where he taught Creative Writing and French for the last 34 years. He has published his poetry in dozens of journals, including: Fiction International, Marco Polo, Alimantum, the St. Ann's Review, the New Virginia Review, Rattapallax, Smartish Pace, and Rolling Stone. His first novel, *The Memory Addicts*, was a finalist for the award of Best Unpublished Novel. He is currently the Central Region Vice President of the Poetry Society of Virginia. Over the last several years, his work on the Poetry Society's Annual Poetry Contest has contributed significantly to the success of the contest that has drawn over seventeen hundred entries annually. Derek makes his home in Richmond.



### **Vanessa Barger**

Vanessa Barger was born in West Virginia, and through several moves ended up spending the majority of her life in Virginia Beach, Virginia. She is a graduate of George Mason University and Old Dominion University, and has degrees in Graphic Design, a minor in Medieval and Renaissance Literature, a Masters in Technology Education, and is finishing a School Library Media Specialist Certification at Marshall University. She has had articles published in *Altered Arts Magazine*, has had some artwork displayed in galleries in Ohio and online, spent eight years teaching technology education, and is now a Library Media Specialist. She is a member of the SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators) where she is the Tidewater area event coordinator, a member of the Virginia Writer's Club, and the Hampton Roads Writers. When not writing or teaching, she's a bookaholic, movie fanatic, and loves to travel. She is married to a fabulous man, and has one cat, who believes Vanessa lives only to open cat food cans, and can often be found baking when she should be editing.



## **#WhyIWrite: Celebrate NCTE's Seventh Annual National Day on Writing – date TBA**

The National Council of Teachers of English believes

The expression of ideas without fear of censorship is a fundamental right.

Words are a powerful tool of expression, a means to clarify, explore, inquire, and learn as well as a way to record present moments for the benefit of future generations.

Students need many opportunities to write for a variety of purposes and audiences in all classes. Teachers who regularly engage students in such writing should not be expected to read or grade all compositions.

Teacher feedback should avoid indoctrination because of personal beliefs and should be respectful of both the writer and his/her ideas, even those with which the teacher disagrees.

English language arts teachers are qualified to frame and assign student writing tasks, but students should, as much as possible, have choice and control over topics, forms, language, themes, and other aspects of their own writing while meeting course requirements.

Teachers should avoid scripted writing that discourages individual creativity, voice, or expression of ideas.

Teachers should engage students fully in a writing process that allows them the necessary freedom to formulate and evaluate ideas, develop voice, experiment with syntax and language, express creativity, elaborate on viewpoints, and refine arguments.

Teachers should foster in students an understanding and appreciation of the responsibilities inherent in writing and publication by encouraging students to assume ownership of both the writing process and the final product.

Teachers should explicitly teach the distinction between violent writing and violence in writing. Students should expect teachers to uphold the law in reporting all instances of violent writing.

When writing for publication, students should be provided with high-quality writing instruction and be taught how to write material that is not obscene, libelous, or substantially disruptive of learning throughout the school.

Administrators should work in collaboration with students who write for school publications such as school newspapers or literary magazines and, within the limits of state law or district/school policies, should avoid prior review.

Districts should encourage the development and adoption of policies that support student writers as they learn to make choices in their writing that express their intent while still maintaining ethical and legal boundaries.

## New (School) Year's Resolutions Dan Trump, High School Member-At-Large

For the rookie teacher or the veteran (and sometimes even more for the latter of the two) this time of year brings hopes and fears, anxieties and excitements, promises and plans. And, just as scores of new teachers will be told this year, the success you have in any new endeavor is often determined by how it starts. However, this doesn't just apply to classroom management and a maniacal adherence to not smiling until the second quarter (or Christmas, or spring break, or the SOLs or over, or EVER apparently, because that rule is for grumpy gusses who don't enjoy life). Starting strong means setting goals--ambitious, audacious, insane goals--that set us on a path to success that we may not have ever taken before. That may be because it's not possible, sure, but it may also be because we often focus on what is going to keep us from reaching our goals ("I've heard this upcoming group of [any grade level] is a rough bunch...") instead of all the things we can do and serendipities we can hope for to guide us on our way. With that in mind here are my goals for the year. Maybe you think they're easy, maybe you think they're insane, but I hope that no one thinks that they are not worth achieving.

- 1. I will shut up.** If you can't tell by reading this, I can be a talkative guy. I love talking to my students and having discussions with them, but I really need to make sure that I am not talking *for* them. They're smart kids; I need to let them figure that out for themselves.
- 2. I will teach my students to absolutely LOVE citing sources and MLA documentation.** There is nothing more satisfying to me than when a high school junior turns in a research paper with an absolutely perfect works cited page, and I want that feeling a lot. I know I'm not going to get it through fear-mongering, so I'm going to make citation fun this year. How? Don't know yet, but it's going to happen.
- 3. I will have a meaningful personal interaction with every student in my school.** Granted, Amelia County High School has just under 600 students enrolled this year, but that still seems daunting. I love my job because I love kids, so why should I let the school schedule dictate which ones I get to love the most?
- 4. I will embrace student choice.** I love *The Scarlet Letter*, I love *Huckleberry Finn*, I love *Macbeth*. That's a lot of "I" with very a scant few correlating "they." Is *Romeo and Juliet* perfect for teaching dramatic irony? Sure it is, but so is pretty much every horror movie ever, and it takes a lot more work (and functional understanding) to find and explicate an example of dramatic irony in any book ever than it does to look where I'm strongly hinting when we get to act 5.
- 5. I will never give up trying to be better.** This is what this list whole list is about. If I stop trying to get better, I know that I never will. I might still stall here and backslide there, but that's life. As long as I'm trying to be better at everything I can control, then I'll get a lot more right than I get wrong.

What are your goals for the year? As this year gets started, what do you want to do that you know will make you better at what you do? More importantly, what's stopping you? I encourage you, in the spirit of reckless goal setting, to make a list of things you wish you could do this year and set about figuring out how you're going to make them all happen. Now, in the spirit of my first goal, I'm shutting up. If you come up with some goals of your own, we at VATE would love to hear them and we'd love to help you make them come true. We're about making English education in Virginia the best it can be. What's a better goal than that?



*Virginia Association of Teachers of English*

Please contact Chuck Miller at [cmillercrz@roadrunner.com](mailto:cmillercrz@roadrunner.com) to update your email and post office address so that you will not miss a publication or announcement. Encourage others to join VATE online at [www.vate.org](http://www.vate.org).

## VATE VOICES

Editor, Tori Otstot  
114 Whistle Walk  
Williamsburg, VA 23188  
Email: [totstot@ycsd.york.va.us](mailto:totstot@ycsd.york.va.us)  
Phone: 231-420-1151 (cell)

The Virginia Association of Teachers of English is committed to enhancing the quality of the teaching of English and language arts in the Commonwealth.



# Letters About Literature

**Read.**  
**Be inspired.**  
**Write Back.**  
A Library of Congress National Reading and Writing Foundation Program

This annual writing contest for young readers has been made possible by a generous grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation and by gifts to the Library of Congress Fund and the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, which promotes the contest through its affiliate Centers for the Book, state libraries and other organizations.

- Competition Levels:**
- Level 1 Grades 4 - 6
  - Level 2 Grades 7 - 8
  - Level 3 Grades 9 - 12



## How did an author's work change your view of the world or yourself?

*How to Enter*

### READ

Select a fiction or nonfiction book, a poem or play you have read and about which you have strong feelings. (Sorry, no song lyrics!) It might be a book that helped you through a difficult time or it might be a book that simply touched your heart or inspired you.

### REFLECT

Think before you write. How did this author's work change you or your view of the world? How do you know it did? How and why are you different now than you were before you read this work?

### Persuade

Write a personal letter to the author, stating how reading his or her work changed you. Be personal but also persuasive! Support your ideas with specific details, including details from the work itself. This is not a fan letter but rather a reflection on how an author influenced you.

### WRITE

Type your entry in letter format - do not send handwritten letters. Your name and complete return address (either school or home) must appear in the upper right corner of the first page of the letter.

### SEND

Mail your letter with the required entry coupon by the deadline date.

Need some tips to get started? Not sure how to write a personal letter? Visit [read.gov/letters](http://read.gov/letters) to read winning letters from past competitions and to access the Letters About Literature Teaching Guide.



For updates on the program, please refer to the contest website, [read.gov/letters](http://read.gov/letters).

# Letters About Literature

## Deadlines

Entries will be accepted beginning November 2, 2016

Entries must be postmarked by the following dates



**LEVEL 3**  
Grades 9 - 12



**LEVEL 2**  
Grades 7 - 8



**LEVEL 1**  
Grades 4 - 6

The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress selects a panel of judges to award National Winners and National Honor Winners.

## Awards

Each state recognizes and awards prizes to winning participants.

The Library of Congress will announce all National and National Honor Winners and awards and will list all state-level winners on its website.

National Winners in each competition level will receive a \$1,000 cash award

National Honor Winners in each competition level will receive a \$200 cash award

Check [read.gov/letters](http://read.gov/letters) for details on state awards and ceremonies.

**ASSESSMENT:** All entries will be judged on the following criteria:

### Round 1

**Audience:** Is the essay in letter format and does it address the author of the work? Entries that are not in letter format and are written about the author, rather than to the author, will be eliminated.

**Purpose:** Does the essay address the contest theme of how an author's work changed the reader's view of self or the world? Is personal reflection evident in the letter? Entries that are book summaries or fan letters will be eliminated. Letters that meet these criteria advance to Round 2.

### Round 2

**Grammatical conventions:** Is the essay written in a clear and organized way with specific details to support the essay's main ideas? Single paragraph letters with significant grammatical errors will be eliminated.

**Originality:** Does the essay express ideas creatively, communicating a unique or powerful point of view? Letters that are formulaic without evidence of a writer's voice will be eliminated.

Letters that meet these criteria advance to state level judging.

Judges selected by affiliate Centers for the Book choose the top letters in each competition level for their state and coordinate recognition ceremonies and awards. The first-place state-level winners advance to the national level judging.

## HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR LETTERS AND ENTRY COUPON

**Entry Coupon:** Each letter must be accompanied by an entry coupon. Staple the coupon to the last page of the letter. Affiliate Centers for the Book will contact State Winners using this information, so be sure entry coupons are complete and legible! Letters without a coupon will be eliminated.

**Class Set of Letters:** Teachers must submit their name and contact information with a list of the names of each student submitting a letter. This list does not take the place of entry coupons.

Each student's letter must have its own entry coupon. Mail class sets in a flat envelope - 8x10 or larger.

**Ownership:** All letters become the property of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Please keep a copy of your entries, as no letters will be returned.

**Mailing Address:** Indicate the competition level - 1, 2 or 3 - on the envelope. Include a complete return address on your mailing envelope. Mail to:



## Letters About Literature Entry Coupon for 2016 - 2017

Please complete the form, cut and staple to your letter!



Name  Age  Grade

Book / Story Title  Author

**FOR CLASS ENTRIES**

School / Library

Street  City  State  Zip

School / Library Phone  School / Library Email

Teacher / Librarian (signature required)  Email

**FOR INDIVIDUALS**

Fill out ONLY if you are submitting a letter individually. Otherwise, this section is optional.

Street  City  State  Zip

Parent's Signature (required)

Email  Phone

**"Celebrating Waves of Success through Literacy"**

# Teacher Celebration Cruise

**Saturday, October 22, 2016**

**6PM – 9PM**

**\$30 before September 15**

**\$50 after September 15**

**Please register online at VATE.org**

***Special Guest : Nat Boyd and the RPS Good Time Jazz Ensemble***

**There will be a cash bar and complimentary refreshments will be provided.**



## VATE 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Books & Supplies Drive!



At our Annual Fall Conference in Hampton (Oct. 21-23), we'll be collecting books and school supplies for three Hampton Public Schools – Tyler Elementary, Davis Middle, and Hampton High.

Please bring books of all grade levels, pencils, erasers, paper, markers, post-it notes, highlighters, etc. to the conference, buy a book at our conference bookstore to donate, OR donate at our online store (<http://vate.org/shop-vates-store/>). Be sure to share this information with your colleagues who may not be able to attend the conference & bring their donations for them!

## VATE Poster Campaign



Are you READY for something cool??! VATE is doing a poster campaign!

Step 1: Visit our Facebook page for 2 free posters! (PDF versions will be available for download from [www.vate.org](http://www.vate.org))

Step 2: Print the info one for your school's work room and the Maya A quote one for your classroom!

Step 3: Take a selfie with each and use the hashtags #joinVATE and #LiveTeachVATE respectively.

Step 4: Post your selfie on social media, and we will give you extra raffle tickets at our conference!