



For the past 15 years, the Knott House has offered the summer poetry workshop for young writers. AMANDA THOMPSON

Empowering poetry

Teens sharpen their rhymes at Knott House workshop

Amanda Karioth Thompson Council on Culture & Arts

The entire country has been captivated by the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing and a wide variety of celebrations have marked the occasion. Locally, there's been an unexpected nod to the excitement.

Celebrating an anniversary of their own, the Knott House marks the 15th year of the "Summer Poetry to Last A Lifetime" workshop and, this year's theme was lunar.

"We talk about the moon as a larger, creative concept," said local poet and workshop facilitator Terri Carrión. "It's a very inspirational thing and there are a lot of poems about the moon. It's a good point to take off from."

The annual workshop provides an opportunity for students in eighth through 12th grades to refine their writing skills, read and evaluate poetry, and find their own voice as a poet. Carrión is especially interested in showing workshop participants different sides of poetry. "You can look at it from a purely creative and academic perspective or you can be more of an activist. I try to tie that in and give them a bigger spectrum and more expansive view," Carrión said.

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Terri Carrión, 100 Thousand Poets for Change
co-founder

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As a child, Carrión was an enthusiastic reader and loved storytelling but, she admits, "I didn't wake up one morning as a kid and say 'I want to be a poet.'" Though poetry wasn't her childhood ambition, she's made it her life's work and strives to encourage others.

She and her husband co-founded the global grassroots movement 100 Thousand Poets for Change. "We work with communities around the world, offering a creative platform for poets and help them do more work with justice, peace and sustainability."

As the Knott House poet in residence, Carrión celebrates the spirit of "the house that rhymes," so called because of its former resident Luella Knott. "She was very clever and wrote poems about objects throughout the house, in the persona of the piano or a lamp. She was also very lyrical and wrote the kind of poetry you'd expect from a society woman in the early part of the last century. There's a lot of poetry at the Knott House. It's in the air here."

A lot has changed since then but a new generation of poets are carrying the tradition forward.

Anabelle Peoples, 16, has attended this workshop for the past four years.

She keeps coming back because "it's an inspiration hotspot. We're encouraged to play around with format and the tools we're given. It feels very open and allows you to think for yourself."

She especially values the collaborative critiques of her work. "That kind of feedback is helpful and it's good to introduce your work to other creative people and get more perspectives. It's a really useful tool and having someone put their piece out there before you can encourage other people to do the same."

For Anabelle, writing is an outlet for her ideas and emotions. She said "getting those thoughts out to other people is my way of getting weight off my chest or telling a story. Having your voice heard is super important. Writing and poetry specifically is my way to go about that."

That sentiment is echoed by Carrión. "Kids have to have the arts as a creative release. People talk about the arts as if it's a hobby or something. No. Poetry, art, music, all that makes you more capable to deal with life and the world. Especially for young people, poetry is a great way for them to express themselves. It's very empowering."

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the Interim Executive Director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).



Carrión looks on as participants draft new poems. AMANDA THOMPSON