

2024 Teaching Artist Mentorship Grant Final Report

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My mentee Natalie and I first had to secure venue locations for our three writing workshops. We first met a couple weeks after accepting our grant to discuss possible venue locations and create the plan for our “Writing Our Way to Wellness” workshops. We also chose a theme of “Writing to Exhale” because this was the goal we set for us and participants. We narrowed down our venues to three potential locations, Farmington, Bloomfield and Hartford locations. For the sake of time, cost and availability, we opted to secure the Hartford Public Library located in the North End of Hartford, Albany Avenue for our final workshop July 20th 1-4pm. We were able to secure the Farmington venue for our first workshop May 4th 1-4pm. With our first and last venues secured, Natalie and I debated on securing the Blomfield location for our second writing experience. However, after the great turn-out for the first workshop in Farmington, Natalie and I decided to secure the Farmington spot for the second workshop as well because the space at the Bloomfield location was significantly smaller and we all appreciated the openness of the Farmington conference room. The second workshop was held June 15th 1-4pm.

During our initial promotion leading up to workshop session one, Natalie and I met several times over multiple days while attending an Authors Conference from April 3rd- April 7th. We started promoting our writing workshops on Social Media April 7th, the final day of the Authors Conference. While at the conference, we created the concept and lesson plans, and finalized our agenda for Writing Our Way (WOW) to Wellness: Writing to Exhale!

“Writing is the foundation of wellness.” Kanaar Bell

This quote guided our lesson plans and workshop goals. Natalie and I wanted to share the “gift of writing to release” by teaching our attendees how to start and continue on their holistic wellness and healing journeys by tapping into creativity through Literary Arts . We wanted to provide access to concrete tools and teach the value of literary techniques like “brain dump” to declutter their minds and “freewriting” to access their own creativity to change their narratives and improve mental health and their holistic wellness. We also incorporated some creative writing prompts to provide participants a taste of how they can write to create a new and hopeful narrative in their own lives and in the beautiful world of Literature!

Lesson Plan/Workshop Details

At the start of each workshop we did “ice-breakers” and introductions and allowed all participants, including us as facilitators to share our intentions for attending the workshop and also agreed to be present and accountable in our shared intentions. At the start of each workshop, we provided space and time for the group to participate in a brain dump. The brain

dump is a simple technique we used to clear the mind by writing down everything that comes to mind. It aids in creative thinking and creating space for new ideas.

Natalie and I included creative writing prompts that allowed us as a group to explore and share so much. The prompts opened up a lot of deep-rooted issues and provided a form of release for many. Together we learned just how much power there is in writing! The sessions were so awesome that the participants felt vulnerable, yet comfortable enough to share things they had not shared before. Together we created a safe space and a community, free to write and explore. Stay tuned for upcoming events.

Overall, I had an insightful learning experience created by the reciprocation of creativity and ideas exchanged by Natalie and I over our entire mentorship partnership. During the process the roles of mentor and mentee became a majestic exchange of our thoughts, ideas, shared literary creativity and love of literature. I learned equally as much as I taught while mentoring, creating and facilitating our "Literary Arts Teaching Artist Mentorship Grant Experience!" The beauty of the safe, brave, judgment-free space created, allowed participants and facilitators to empower, encourage and connect while healing in community. After the first workshop, participants wrote and verbalized their desire to return for the second and third workshops. Many of our first participants returned for the second and third workshops facilitated. Upon completion of the final WOW to Wellness workshop, participants were eagerly awaiting future writing workshops from Natalie and I individually and of course in collaboration! Thank you Connecticut Teaching Artist Hub!!!

"When you realize you have the power to write your own story, not just fit into someone else's, you become your own hero and your value becomes priceless." Kanaar Bell