

Summer Camp at Young Women Writing for (a) Change

Summer Camp at YWW provides a special opportunity for girls and young teens to enjoy being themselves through many channels of creative exploration. A day at camp is a day in paradise for girls and young teens who love to write.

Camp is held in mid-July at the historic Poplar Grove Schoolhouse, a building that served eastern Monroe County as an elementary school in the early 1900s. Poplar Grove now houses offices and writing space for Women Writing for (a) Change, a writing program in Bloomington since 2004, offering youth programming since 2009.

A typical day of camp begins with writers gathering in a circle formed by comfortable pillows and chairs around a center cloth. Facilitators open the day by reading a poem, often followed by an invitation for writers to dive into their first short burst of writing. In these “fast write” exercises, emphasis is placed on writing freely, keeping the pen flowing, and turning off the inner critic who insists on perfect grammar, sentence structure, and spelling. The result is writing that holds depth and insight, with interesting associations that arise from the non-analytical side of the writer’s mind.

Participants are given the opportunity to share their writing fresh from the pen, in varying ways. This might include partner-sharing, reading out loud in small groups, and large group. Careful attention is given to how writers listen and create safe space for one another, and it is always honorable to pass if a writer chooses not to share at any given time.

One way young writers learn to listen and respond to one another is through the recording of “read back lines” which are resonant words or phrases captured

by listeners and read back to the writer at the end of her sharing. Hearing one’s words echoed back is an affirmation to the writer, contributing to an “acoustics of intimacy” that strengthens a writer’s connection to her voice. This support of authentic voice is the underlying mission of Young Women Writing for (a) Change. The added benefits are self-confidence, a sense of belonging, and deep engagement in the creative process.

Camp is led by trained facilitators, and a low teacher-student ratio of 1:5 is maintained. Leaders participate in writing exercises and share their writing alongside students. Hands-on craft activities, music,

movement, and visual writing prompts are often incorporated, as well as writing outdoors under the shade tree in the large back yard.

At the end of each day, participants reflect on their experience before closing the circle for the day. At the end of the week, camp culminates in a special read-around for parents and friends. One parent reflected, “This was a beautiful experience...these girls are courageous and creative. You do a phenomenal service for them in providing a safe place for them to be brave.”

For more information about Young Women Writing for (a) Change, please visit www.womenwritingbloomington.com.



Courtesy photos

“I just love being able to be me.”

Young Women
Writing for
(a) Change®



2011 SUMMER CAMP
for girls who love to write

Held at the historic Poplar Grove Schoolhouse on Bloomington’s east side.

Two half-day sessions:
Mornings 9am–noon: Grades 4, 5, & 6
Afternoons 1–5pm: Grades 7, 8, & 9

Information and registration:
www.womenwritingbloomington.com