

Giving Thanks

By Brian Harrell

Twenty page papers, 150 pages to read, trying to push our way into a discourse community; this is the life of a graduate student. Normally, this work would make one swear under their breath, but for me I realize the papers, reading, and the want to be published gives me a sense of thankfulness. I am thankful that I am here, working toward a Master's degree in English Composition.



It hasn't been an easy road. When I was 22 years old, I lived in what I called a "mobile home." I lived in my car. Not knowing where my next meal was coming from, I embrace the opportunity I have here at The University of Akron. I was homeless for a year, until I raised enough money, working at Burger King, to rent an apartment.

Five years later, I met my future wife, my baby momma. In 2002, we were married, and by July of 2004, we were the proud parents of a beautiful daughter. Three months later, my wife was diagnosed with leukemia, beginning a two years struggle and pain. She died in August of 2006, making me a single daddy of a two-year-old daughter.

I think about the last 14 years, and where I was, to where I am now: A happy single father, engaged to a wonderful woman, finishing my Master's degree in the summer of 2012. I am thankful for what I have gone through and what The University of Akron has provided for me.

And now my question for you: What has this university provided for you?

In This Issue

Giving Thanks	1
November Deadlines	2
Spotlight	2
Canned Food Drive	4
Events	5
October Highlights	5

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November 2011

Academic Pursuits Committee

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Kevin Kelsey
Brian Harrell

November Deadlines

Barn Owl Review: November 1st

<http://www.barnowlreview.com/Submissions.html>

Barn Owl Review is an independent literary annual dedicated to publishing the highest quality poetry from emerging and established writers. A handsomely designed print journal, the *BOR* seeks work that takes risks while still connecting with readers. More information on this Akron-based journal and details regarding submissions can be found at the above link.

The Muse—An International Journal of Poetry: November 10th
<http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/42146>

'The Muse-An International Journal of Poetry' is calling for submissions of original and unpublished (both print and online) poems, research papers on poetry and book reviews of the latest poetry books for its December 2011 issue. Go to www.themuse.webs.com for submission guidelines.

New Voices, a Graduate English Conference: November 30th
<http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/43179>

The human body in all of its glory and gore has fascinated scientists and artists since the cave paintings of the Neanderthals. This year's conference, *Bodies of Influence: The Human Body in the Humanities and Sciences*, will explore every facet of the body, focusing on its representation in literature, rhetoric, visual art, theater, dance, film, oratory, journalism, history, science, sociology, and anthropology, among other fields. Please send individual paper proposals and panel proposals of 300 words by the above date to be considered for this conference held January 12th-14th at Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA.

Rubbertop Review is Accepting Submissions

This journal blends tradition with innovation and is looking for excellent craftsmanship in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. Each issue of *Rubbertop* will feature 1/4 of its content from undergraduate and graduate students at The University of Akron. The remainder of the journal will feature the very best of work by writers living in Ohio. We will consider submissions from any Ohio resident. No university affiliation is required; we solely consider the quality of writing and the passion for the craft. Please adhere to the following guidelines: 3-5 poems only, short fiction/creative nonfiction of no more than 4,000 words, paste submissions directly in email, include a brief summary of you and your work, electronic submissions only with your name and genre in the subject line to the appropriate editor—fiction.rubbertop, poetry.rubbertop, or nonfiction.rubbertop@gmail.com



“Whatever
you can do,
or dream you
can, begin
it...Boldness
has genius,
power, and
magic in it.”

-Goethe



Spotlight: Nick Sturm

By Kevin Kelsey

This month, Academic Pursuits turns its spotlight on Nick Sturm, second-year Graduate Assistant and MFA candidate. Nick happens to be the creator/coordinator of the Big Big Mess poetry reading series; we often feature pictures of the events in our newsletter. We sat down with Nick in order to find out more about this refreshing series.

Q. What is THE BIG BIG MESS?

THE BIG BIG MESS is a contemporary poetry, fiction, and nonfiction reading

SAGES:

A student organization that focuses on helping graduate students of all tracks (Composition, Fine Arts, and Literature) in the English field develop professionally during their time at The University of Akron, by providing members with resources to help them publish, present, and prepare. SAGES also strives to promote unity among graduate students of the three tracks by creating events and providing resources that will benefit scholars regardless of their field.

Ask an officer
how to
**Become a
Member**
and
JOIN TODAY!

series based in Akron, Ohio that brings nationally known poets and writers together with local students and writers in an attempt to consolidate as much of the energy and potential of the Northeast Ohio writing community as possible into one barroom. The goal is not only to provide a venue for well-known writers...but also to have the opportunity for our community of writers to meet and interact with the individuals we all look up to....Beyond that, I wanted the series to be a venue for people to develop a more direct connection with the small press industry that produces so much of the poetry and prose that MFA students are reading and excited by. An amazing list of small presses have been generous enough that every reading has been sponsored by a different nationally known small press, each of which donates free books to the series.

Q. What led to the formation of THE BIG BIG MESS Series? What role did you play in its creation?

Over the course of a few months early this year I became increasingly aware of a network of writer-run reading events hosted in bookstores, bars, and apartments all across the country....One night in April I was sitting around and was like, Wait, why can't this happen in Akron? I immediately called Michael Goroff, a passionate, amazing fiction writer in the NEOMFA here at Akron, and ran the idea by him. He helped me right away to see into the specifics of the kind of event I was imagining and gave me the confidence to believe it would work. After that, I made the connection with Annabell's Bar & Lounge to host the readings in the basement bar, which has ended up being a perfect space. Then I had the hard part in front of me: convincing writers I loved and had never met that coming to read in Akron for little to no money was worth it. But once I had the first reading set in May, everything started to fall into place at an incredible rate. By August I had the entire series booked through April....

Q. What is your job now?

THE BIG BIG MESS has been unbelievably lucky to host the writers who have been through in the last six months and I'm really honored to curate the series in support of those writers. I do everything from corresponding with all the readers, making the fliers, and writing introductions, to taking them to dinner and pulling out my couch for them to sleep on. It's fun as all hell.

Q. What advice do you have for aspiring poets?

THE BIG BIG MESS wouldn't exist if it weren't for the dedicated, serious, fun loving, out-of-their-minds group of people who come to reading each month. So the most important thing to think about, in my opinion, for an aspiring writer, is how to get involved in your own writing community, not to be passive. The contemporary lit scene, like any arts community, isn't supported by the dominant culture and media, and if it weren't for independently run readings, the blood-and-guts work of small presses and journals, and the willingness of aspiring writers to get the hell out of their bedrooms and participate, American literature would stall out permanently. THE BIG BIG MESS runs completely on the percentage of cash we receive from the bar after every reading. So far, that's paid for gas money, drinks, and dinners for every writer who has visited.

no one shows up, we run dry. The success of the series depends on your willingness to show up and have fun. It's that simple. So my real advice: Come down to Annabell's on November 4, make yourself present, listen to some amazing writing, and maybe even buy one of the writers a drink. They need it.

To find out more about the submission/selection process and other background details, check out the full version of this interview at neomfa.wordpress.com

Canned Food Drive: Project Restock

By Marlia Fontaine-Weisse

Not only does Thanksgiving represent a time to reflect on things to be thankful for, it also embodies the spirit of giving: giving back to the community, volunteering to help a friend, donating money to worthy causes, or even giving someone a break for a change. This year, SAGES would like to do its part by holding a canned and nonperishable food drive called Project Restock to benefit the Haven of Rest Homeless Shelter.

Haven of Rest Ministries is widely recognized and respected for its work among poor, homeless, and destitute people. It fills a vital community need, providing a wide range of programs and services not duplicated by other agencies and organizations. Its doors are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. There is never a charge, and no credentials are required. Help is offered to any person regardless of race, color, creed, or social standing.

To help ease their efforts, we are collecting non-perishable food items in the Graduate Teaching Assistant Office, Room 376 in Olin Hall. Canned food is the obvious and convenient choice; however, the following list details all acceptable items.

The Drive kicks-off tomorrow, October 28th, and will run until Tuesday, November 22nd. Please, encourage all who can to donate so we can do our part to help provide for a community in need, and share in the spirit of giving.

Have Something to Say?

We value student contributions and look forward to your well-written, appropriately-themed articles. To learn more about how to submit or how to become a committee member, email us at:

ua_academic_pursuits@yahoo.com

Main Canned Items Needed

- Peas
- Green Beans
- Fruit Cocktail
- Peaches
- Pears
- Tuna
- Salmon
- Pork & Beans
- Canned/Bottled Punch/Punch Mix
- Canned/Bottled Fruit Juices
- Beef & Chicken Broth

Other Accepted Items

- Peanut Butter
- Sugar
- Spaghetti Sauce
- Rice
- Cereal—all kinds
- Decaf or Herbal Tea Bags
- Regular Ground Coffee
- Potatoes—Instant Mashed, Scalloped, Au Gratin
- Dry Noodles
- Spaghetti, Macaroni, Penne Pasta
- Stuffing Mix

Events

Poetry Reading: GC Waldrep & John Gallaher

Tuesday, November 1st, Student Union Auditorium at 7p-8:30p

Malone University Creative Writing and The University of Akron Press invite you to a reading by Waldrep and Gallaher, collaborative authors of *Your Father on the Train of Ghosts*, a volume of poetry recently out from BOA Editions. The poems of *Your Father on the Train of Ghosts* read as lyric snapshots of a culture we are all too familiar with, even as it slips from us: malls and supermarkets, museums and parades, toxic waste and cheesecakes, ghosts and fire, fathers and sons. Ultimately, these fables and confessions constitute a sort of gentle apocalypse, a user-friendly self-help manual for the end of time. Please join us for the reading and a Q&A to follow.

Professional Development Workshop: Getting Ready to Apply for PhD Work

Thursday, November 3rd, Room 362 from 4p-5p

Thinking about pursuing a Doctorate degree, but not sure what steps are involved? Attend this workshop to learn more about the application process and other requirements to get accepted into your program of interest. Bring questions, comments, concerns, and paperwork if you have it. Open to all graduate students.

The BIG BIG MESS READING SERIES

Friday, November 4th, at Annabelle's Bar & Lounge from 6p-9p

This month's event is featuring Catherine Wagner & Kyle Minor. Don't miss this last event before winter break! For more information, check the BMM blog at <http://bigbigmess.tumblr.com/>, or find them on Facebook.

October Highlights



**BBM Featured
Poet David Dodd
Lee**



**BBM Featured Poet
Louise Mathias**



**BBM Featured
Poet Lesley Jenike**



**BBM Featured
Poet Joshua
Butts**