

# WORD!

## Back on campus

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Lillywhite, age 12

Welcome to our Fall 21 issue! This semester, we met back on campus, muffled through masks, and tried to gain a semblance of “regular, everyday life.” Nope. But even with challenges, PRWR has loads of good news.

Drs. **Zosha Stuckey** and **Carrie Grant**'s G.I.V.E. program (Grantwriting In Valued Environments) was one of four awardees for Baltimore-Towson U Partnership Awards.

Recounting their experiences in G.I.V.E, **Carrie Grant**, **Zosha Stuckey**, **Thea Robertson** and **Uche Anyanwu** also presented “Trust and Collaboration as Counterstory” at the *Conference on Community Writing* in Washington, DC.

Some of G.I.V.E.'s recent grants include **Anjie Wilson**'s \$5,000 grant from Ravens Foundation for Black Girls Cook. **Briana Searfoss** received \$500 from Aldi for Black Girls Cook and a second grant for \$5,000 for inclusion & equity programming at Marshy Point Nature Center. **Thea Robertson**'s grant proposal won \$5,000 from Weight Watchers for Black Girls Cook. Thea also received \$52,000 from West Baltimore Renaissance Foundation/Lifebridge Health for Black Girls Cook.

More accolades: Professor **Jeannie Vanasco** has sold her third book. Alumnus **Sean Sam** won Terrain's 12th annual Fiction contest, and had an honorable mention at Zoetrope's 25th short fiction contest (out of 2,000+ entries!). Dr. **Zosha Stuckey** is nominated for a 2021 University of Maryland System Board of Regents Award.

*Your Computer Is On Fire*, featuring



*The G.I.V.E. team & partners with their awards*

work by Dr. **Halcyon Lawrence**, is listed as one of the Best Business Books of 2021.

Alumna Dr. **Chen Chen** has two new research pieces out. Alumna **Ashley Wagner** has new poetry out. **Kathleen Wallish** has been awarded the Robert M. Ward Endowed Scholarship in Creative Writing award. *Ligeia*, founded by alumni **Sean Sam**, **Ashley Wagner**, and **Matt Lee**, featured 6 Pushcart nominations. And there is more!

Speaking of alumni, congratulations to **Tyrone Barrozo**, **Renee Conway**, **Andrea Doten**, **Katie Iser**, **Kathleen O'Neill**, **Thea Robertson**, **Madeline St. Clair**, **Eric Welkos**, and **Mandy Wolfe** on graduating this semester with their M.S. in Professional Writing.

Also in this issue: Dr. **Harvey Lillywhite**'s path to professional writing, interviews with alumnae **Amen Onuoha** and **Kathleen O'Neill** about moving from the role of students to professionals, and Dr. **Halcyon Lawrence** shows another side of being a professor: the international conference planner. Last, Professor **Michael Downs** updates us on his Fulbright in Poland. Join us!

—Dr. Sarah Gunning, Interim PRWR Director

# PRWR spotlights

## Writing on a team, not in a vacuum

**Thea Robertson** is a current PRWR student, graduating in Fall 2021. She is working for G.I.V.E., the Grants In Valued Environments program at Towson. G.I.V.E. has raised over \$403,000 in grants for local nonprofit organizations (NPOs).

In her role as Non-profit Writing and Community Engagement Coordinator, Robertson plugs away alongside interns and Dr. Zosha Stuckey, the Executive Director of the program. G.I.V.E. recently won a BTU award for their fundraising efforts.

Working with G.I.V.E. means that Robertson gets to become an expert in a handful of local non-profits as she works with them to write grant proposals. A few non-profit organizations that she has worked with are the Family Survivor Network, Black Girls Cook, and the Friends of Patapsco Valley State Park. As far as the rewards of being a grant writer with G.I.V.E, Robertson reflects on personal growth. “I never know

what’s going to happen,” says Robertson. “I really have to be flexible and work on a team. When it comes to writing, people think you’re working in a vacuum. Working with G.I.V.E. reinforces the idea that writing should be a collaborative idea.” So, team work does make the dream work, as does a flexible, growth mindset.

When it comes to the Family Survivor Network, Robertson began a working relationship as a grant writer just as the Founding Director, Cornelius Scott, passed away unexpectedly in December 2019. “He [Cornelius] was the heart and face of the organization,” states Robertson, “When Cornelius passed away there was a lot of board turnover.”

A volunteer for the organization, Dorian Walker, stepped into the role of Executive Director. He is close in age to Robertson and thought it would be a good idea for there to be younger people on the board. It was at this point that Thea Robertson became a board member, a position which she is still excited to have today.

“There was a need for more hands on deck. I knew a lot about how the back of the house works, it was an easy transition,” she remarked.

She is getting ready for a huge transition in her own life: graduating this fall. Writer, board member, and community advocate. What does the future hold for Thea Robertson? She wants to continue grant writing and grants management. Although she has an impressive portfolio, she remains humble and a cog in the wheel of nonprofits. A grant writer knows how important it is to keep the vision and mission of the Executive Director in the forefront. Robertson wants to make sure that this message isn’t lost. “I try to enforce that the non-profit are the leaders of the ship. I am following their lead.”

—Daniella Bacigalupa



Editor  
Sarah Gunning,  
PRWR interim director

Writers  
Briana Richert,  
Daniella Bacigalupa  
PRWR graduate assistants

Design and Layout  
Briana Richert,  
Daniella Bacigalupa

Masthead logo  
Brianna R. Rostkowski,  
PRWR alum (2018)

WORD! is the newsletter of Towson University's Professional Writing graduate program.

For additional information about the program, write to [prwr@towson.edu](mailto:prwr@towson.edu) or contact Sarah Gunning, program director, at [sgunning@towson.edu](mailto:sgunning@towson.edu)

# PRWR spotlights (cont.)

## PRWR alum becomes TU English professor

Fresh from earning her PRWR degree, alumna **Amen Onuoha** resumes her place at Towson University, now as an undergraduate English professor.

Onuoha graduated PRWR in Spring '21 in the Teaching Writing track. She says that when she was a student, she purposefully joined professors on elevator rides to pick their brains and express her interest in becoming a professor herself. Her dreams of teaching began in middle school.

"I became fascinated with all my teachers, especially my English teachers," says Onuoha. "I wanted to get on their level, empowering students through writing."

In her ENGL 317 Writing for Business and Industry course, Onuoha fulfills that dream. She teaches her students how to write workplace documents that are useful for their careers. With her guidance, the students gain experience writing cover letters, resumes, memos, offer and negotiation letters, and other documents common to the workplace. Onuoha says that PRWR helped prepare her teaching approach.

"I learned a variety of writing skills and found each class to be relevant in growing me into a well-rounded writer," she says. "The required courses covered many writing topics, so I was challenged to think and write outside my comfort zone. I now make a point to challenge my students in this way as well."

Onuoha says that her favorite part of teaching is reading her student's work, praising them, and giving feedback on their assignments.

"Sometimes assignments tell me how well a lesson was received," she says.

While she finds the onset of lesson planning a bit challenging, Onuoha says she enjoys finding ways to encourage her students to engage with their work and with each other. Instead of long, breathless lectures, she poses surprising questions to the class or individual students.

The choice to build her career at TU came out of Onuoha's passion for the school and her interactions with faculty and staff members. She says her quick transition from PRWR student to English professor ran smooth thanks to the support of her professors.

"My former teachers, now colleagues, congratulated me and offered to help in any way," says Onuoha. "Even after the semester started, they still reached out to see how I was handling everything. Though virtual, I felt their care and support."

—*Briana Richert*

## Dr. Lawrence coordinates tech comm conference

On October 12-14th, SIGDOC, the Association of Computing Machinery's Special Interest Group on the Design of Communication, hosted its 39th conference. Researchers met in Brazil, China, Ireland, the U.S., and online to discuss the latest research in user experience, technology, and communication design.

Dr. **Halcyon Lawrence** shares her experience as Program Co-Chair, coordinating with 150 authors, 90 reviewers, and board members. What does a program co-chair do? "This year? Everything! At least it felt like it," says Lawrence. Dr. Lawrence began conference planning the first week of January, finishing in late October.

"First, we determine a theme for the conference, which is used in the call for papers. Then, we are responsible for coordinating reviewers who make decisions about the paper submissions, adjudicate on borderline decisions (accept/reject), and communicate those decisions to would-be participants." Upon acceptance, authors write and present a full paper, published online in conference proceedings. To prepare, Dr. Lawrence and her co-chair learned several software platforms to collect papers, coordinate with reviewers, make papers "camera-ready," and ensure Zoom presentations worked.

We asked Dr. Lawrence if she had tips for other faculty members considering serving as a conference chair: 1. Play to your teamwork strengths, 2. Lean into the messiness, and 3. Ask lots of questions from people who came before you. Planning an international conference has many variables, but you will have read a whole year's worth of new research by the end of the process and will have met dozens of new people along the way.

—*Dr. Sarah Gunning*

# PRWR spotlights (cont.)

## PRWR student helps girls navigate adolescence in her first publication

**Kathleen O’Neill** loved reading *Girls’ Life* magazine as a middle school tween. Now in 2021, as she completes her final PRWR semester, she’s published her first national bylines in the magazine’s October/November ’21 issue.

“Being able to influence other girls to make good decisions and live their best lives is really inspiring,” says O’Neill about her work at *Girls Life*.

O’Neill, who studies in the Journalistic track, started her career at *Girls Life* as an Editorial Intern, which she used toward her PRWR internship credit in Fall 2020. “I’m so glad that I found an internship that matched up perfectly with my interests,” she says. *Girls Life* hired her for a full-time position soon after, promoting her from intern to Editorial Production Manager and Content and Marketing Assistant.

With the exception of a personal blog she created in high school, *Girls’ Life* is O’Neill’s first publication experience. She says that the October/November ’21 issue is particularly special to her. This issue features her article on the harmful effects of diet culture in social media and another story she wrote that advises teens on how to deal with being excluded by friends and social groups. Not only does the issue contain her first two nationally published stories, but this is also the first issue she produced and edited on her own as Editorial Production Manager.

“It was so fulfilling,” says O’Neill on the experience. “I’ve been writing ad copy for the magazine and proofreading for a few months now, but getting to write two full pieces about topics I’m passionate about was a really exciting process.”

O’Neill says that at *Girls Life*, she has the freedom to pursue any aspect of the magazine industry that sparks her interest. Looking to the future, she says she is excited to learn as much as she can about media and publishing, and she hopes to try out writing in many of the magazine’s different categories—including fashion, beauty, and health. While this first publication is a huge step in her career, O’Neill says what really excites her is the opportunity to help young girls through her writing.

“Being a teen isn’t easy,” she says. “I hope that my stories can help girls navigate mental health, relationships, and all the tricky things that come with adolescence.”

—Briana Richert

## Postcard from Poland: A Fulbright Update from Professor Downs

*Szanowni Państwo,*

Kraków in late fall offers scant daylight – fog, smog, and shorter days leading to an uptake in municipal consumption of Vitamin D. Cafes offer some refuge, a way to spark that other vital heartbeat that comes with cappuccino and books. As I write this I’m sitting in Massolit, an English-language bookstore and café, one of many gathering spots for Kraków’s writers. “California Dreaming” by the Mamas and Papas is on Massolit’s soundtrack.

I’m working and living in Kraków as a U.S. Fulbright Scholar. At the Fulbright orientation in Warsaw, we learned that to cope with the late autumn gloom we ought to make plans for most nights. So we have. For example, Sheri (the wyf) and I have a standing Tuesday night Polish language lesson. It’s only an hour-and-a-half, but it’s a lantern to light the dark. Also, we’re learning the language of our host country which seems at least polite. Though, to say “we’re learning the language” seems cheeky. It suggests we’re in the midst of something we plan to—or can—finish. “We’re doing laundry.” “We’re eating dinner.” “We’re learning a language with seven cases, three genders, and an unusual approach to plural nouns.” A linguist here with a specialty in Polish language acquisition tells me that it takes thirty years for an adult to become fluent as a native speaker. I’m fifty-seven. Do the math. Fluency in Polish can’t be my goal.



Kathleen O’Neill holding the Oct/Nov ’21 issue of *Girls’ Life*

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# PRWR spotlights (cont.)

But as my friend Waldek the linguist says, fluency ought not be the point for most adults.

What then? For a writer (me), weekly Polish lessons bring the delight of learning new words and phrases, wrapping my tongue around the music of Polish pronunciation, and especially giving me to consider the way languages shape our engagement with the world. Consider, for example, that Poles use the same word for east as for sunrise. So, if, you're on a trip from Kraków to Rzeszów, you take a train to sunrise. West and sunset? Same thing.

My favorite example of how language shapes our engagement with the world and differentiates Polish from English is that in Polish, the pronoun "You" is capitalized, while it isn't necessary to capitalize "I". For a writer in English, this makes writing emails to Polish colleagues a repeatedly corrective process. (Delete *you* type *You*). More interesting, though, is how pronoun capitalization might change how we perceive and treat each other. Polish is a more formal and respect-filled language than English, and likely as a consequence Polish society, too, is the same. You and i; i and You. So stores don't post hours when the doors are open. Rather, they tell passersby the hours at which "we invite" people: "zapraszamy." Young people are quicker to give up seats for older people than in the United States. An elder asking a question of an 18-year-old might call her *pani*, which isn't ma'am but isn't "lady" either, or even miss but only a general title of respect given to any woman. "Would she like to please sit down?" might be a way the word works. *Pan*, in turn, serves for any man.

There's also some deep-rooted gender assumptions in the Polish language. A poet is always *poeta* which is a feminine noun. A dog is always masculine.

*"{Learning the Polish language} leads me to re-consider my own world views and how English shapes them by how it names things."*

Men's names never end in A. Women's names always do. All this leads some Poles to engage in conversations about what they call the "gender-sexual asymmetry" of the language and how it might change.

To contemplate such varieties of expression leads me to re-consider my own world views and how English shapes them by how it names things. What is a name, after all, but a metaphor, sound and some sense attached to a person or thing or place by generations? What is a word except an extraordinary tool by which we share each other's lives?

*pozdrawiam,*

*-- Prof. Michael Downs*



*Across the street from where Downs is taking Polish language lessons.  
Dobry wieczór.*

# Summitting the peaks of professional writing and beyond

By Daniella Bacigalupa

Hired in 1984 to develop the editing course, Dr. **Harvey Lillywhite** is a staple in the PRWR community. Though that's a far cry from where his story begins.

Lillywhite grew up in Salt Lake City, Utah. Salt Lake City is a quaint, warm cup of tea, at the base of the Oquirrh Mountains to the west, and the snow capped Wasatch range to the east - which boasts the wintry Twin Peaks, at an awesome 11,330 feet above sea level.

"It was pretty neat," Lillywhite recalls, "I started cross country skiing and downhill skiing. I was big into winter camping."

Lillywhite also rock climbed with friends. When asked about his climbing experience, Lillywhite says, "Rock climbing was a kind of therapy for me...it teaches utmost mindfulness, it's athletic, it requires you to work in a team and you get a sense of accomplishment whether you get where you're trying to go or not."

For context, the sport of rock climbing as most know it today looks very different from how Lillywhite and his friends climbed. "We didn't like pitons because they defaced the rocks. We were doing what people back then called clean climbing," Lillywhite says. "Mainly when we'd meet other climbers who taught us to rappel and basic stuff like that."

We had cheap harnesses, a belay thingy, and carabiners. But we saw the rock and tried to climb it, getting ourselves into ridiculously dangerous life-and-death situations. Somebody up there must have been looking out for us because none of us ever took a fall that landed us in the hospital.



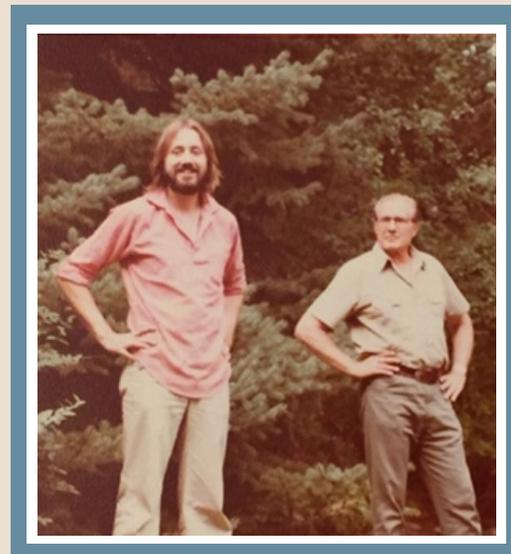
*Dr. Lillywhite playing banjo in college.*

Sometimes ignorance is bliss and sometimes it's just stupid."

Lillywhite recalls a man, Gino August Sky, a poet from Utah, who climbed the Grand Teton in cowboy boots with no additional climbing gear. Sky was a mentor to Lillywhite, and inspired his decision to write poetry seriously, learn to use a printing press, publish a poetry journal...and eventually go to grad school. That was yet to come, though. During the summer of his freshman year of college at the University of Utah, in the early 1970s, Harvey Lillywhite applied for a job as a ditch digger for the city. "I applied for a job as a ditch digger because my dad always used to tell me if you don't do such and such you'll grow up and be a ditch digger. So I thought I would do it, how hard could it be?" he says. But instead of getting a call back for the ditch digging position, at 6 am on June 1, he got a call from the city for a firefighter position.

"We had a job open up for a wildfire fighter on the side of the mountain. Would you be interested in being a firefighter?" the man on the phone asked. Lillywhite said yes, which ignited a most treacherous, but exciting summer with the National Forest Service's (NFS) new 'Helitack' crew.

Helitack crews are teams of firefighters who are transported by helicopter to fight wildfires. Today, to be a firefighter for the NFS Helitack crew, one must have certain years of experience as a firefighter, be in good physical condition, undergo extended training courses, such as rappelling from a helicopter (a skill which Lillywhite learned from rock climbing), and much more. According to Lillywhite, "they didn't give us any training. They said you are under 175 lbs so you can be a part of this."



*Dr. Lillywhite during graduate school with Pops*

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# Summitting the peaks (cont.)



*Dr. Lillywhite at 12-years-old*

Those were different times, indeed. Lillywhite describes one experience, “they gave me a chainsaw, and I spent 48 hours without sleep, digging, cutting things down with a chainsaw. One of the most hellish and surrealistic moments I had. I was surrounded by fire at many points. I survived, and flew home, and slept for almost 3 days.”

Soon after that blazing summer, Lillywhite married his wife, Eileen Silver-Lillywhite, in Baltimore in 1976 after meeting in grad school in Iowa City (U of Iowa). She taught Writing and Literature at TU for about 20 years.

Today, Lillywhite co-directs a strong writing consultant practice. Lillywhite mentions the story of how it came to be. Lillywhite recalls, “in 1987, I got a knock on my door (at Towson) and it’s a woman looking for a colleague. The colleague never showed up. We got to talking. She worked with the Government Accountability Office (GAO), an amazing agency and Congress watchdog. She wanted someone to teach writing at GAO.”

He speaks about this experience: “I thought I knew everything about writing. But when I got into my first class I was amazed. I had a come-to-Jesus moment where I realized that I knew nothing about writing for people in the workplace. I knew about college writing and writing for teachers. It was a humbling experience. I sought out everyone at GAO that I could. That kind of writing just in general is 100% reader focused, reader-based writing. It was a watershed moment in my life.” A lot of TU editing curriculum and business writing curriculum come out of his experiences in consulting.

For those who have yet to experience Lillywhite’s editing class, it’s not what one would expect. It takes a look at much larger picture concepts around editing. It’s about writing so that the reader understands, and being concise and clear. He teaches best editing practices for the workplace and the curriculum is practical.



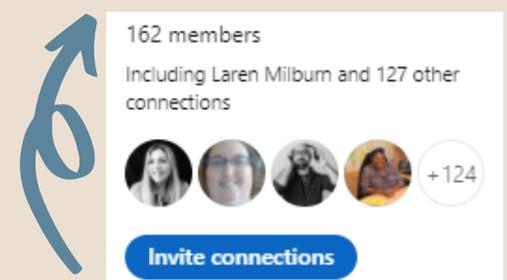
*Dr. Lillywhite in college*

Lillywhite has published two books. A textbook entitled *Mastering Workplace Writing* that shows a portrait of a man climbing on the cover, an homage to his rock climbing days. And a poetry collection called *Your Unfathomable Wardrobe* which he published in 2019.

“Joseph Campbell said ‘follow your bliss,’” Lillywhite says. “Being an avid hiker and camper in the Rocky Mountains, it was pretty natural to want to climb the granite cliffs, the nearly vertical exposures of bedrock. This experience helped to qualify me to fight wildfires for the Forest Service in the Wasatch Mountains and throughout the west as part of the Wasatch Helitack Squad.

One of my poetry heroes was Gary Snyder, who’d spent time working for the Forest Service. I’ve loved writing for a long time. As a grad student, I was asked to teach Business and Technical Writing classes. To earn extra money, I became a writing consultant and became interested in the humble work of writing all kinds of workplace documents. So I’ve just followed my interests, my bliss, and good and lucky things have happened for me.”

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*Join us in Spring 2022 for the next issue of WORD! The PRWR newsletter, volume 28, issue 2.*