

A View From the Mountain

a newsletter from the Lillian E. Smith Center



Maymester update

Piedmont College students studying at the LES Center this past May learned about the geology and the history of the region. The 10-day "Maymester" courses included a section on Exploring North Georgia's Geology, taught by professor of earth science Dr. Deb Dooley; and a session on History and Politics of Cherokee Displacement, taught by assistant professor of history Ryan Franklin.

In addition to discussing assigned readings at the Center, students took trips to several offsite locations: Vulcan Mineral Quarry; Dahlonega Gold Mine and Museum; Smithgall Woods; Tallulah Gorge; and Minnehaha Falls. Each one of these places is located within 45 miles of the property of the LES Center. By visiting these sites, students were able to get a good sense of the rich landscape and varied history of northern Georgia. The class also had an opportunity to visit the Dahlonega studio of LES Center residency fellow Tommye Scanlin, who showed them some of the work she has completed at the Center over the last few years.

"One obvious attraction of the LES Center is that it provides students and faculty with a tranquil and serene environment in which to explore their studies," Professor Franklin said. "While this is great in itself, I believe the best things the LES Center offers are the central tenets of Lillian E. Smith's life and work: tolerance and equality."

Report on the residency program

The 2014 season was busy, with a total of 22 residents at the LES Center from mid-May to the end of October. Our guests enjoyed a productive time of creativity and hard work, mixed with periods of reflection and relaxation. Most of the artists expressed an interest in coming back next year, which is always a good sign. Five of the residents this year were first-timers, another indication of a successful season. Several of our residents made the short trip down to Piedmont College for a tour of the Demorest campus.

"Residents on occasion ate and drank together, talked, and exchanged thoughts and works, heard new concepts and argued over some, laughed and even cried," said John Siegel and John Templeton, the residency managers for the LES Center. "In many ways we think our summer was much of what Lillian Smith would have loved."

A message from one of our new residents this year:

"Hard on the heels of having had to dislocate my 93-year-old mother from her 110-year-old house so Terminix could tent it and fumigate it, I dragged my weary bones to the Lillian Smith Center for a 10-day residency. The two Johns welcomed me with flowers, banana bread, and warm Southern charm. Wiggy, my round stone cottage, welcomed me with expectations of rest and good work to be accomplished. Wiggy was right on both counts. I completed rewrites on more than a hundred pages of my novel manuscript! Thank you to everyone who keeps this artist residency program alive and well!"

-Dana Wildsmith, author: *Back to Abnormal*



Rosemary Dodd, 2014 resident artist

During this year of transition with Piedmont College as the new steward of the LES Center, Craig Amason and a committee of faculty from the college examined all aspects of the residency program and developed a new set of guidelines and a slightly-altered application form, all of which are now available on the website at www.piedmont.edu/residency-application. We are currently accepting applications for the 2015 season, so check out the website if you are interested in working next summer on the mountain (www.piedmont.edu/lillian-smith-center).

Writer-in-Service Award

"It's amazing how being secluded from your daily chores makes you so productive."

~ Scotty E. Kirkland

Scotty E. Kirkland, curator of history at the History Museum of Mobile, was the recipient of the 2014 Lillian E. Smith Writer-in-Service Award.

Kirkland, who holds degrees in history and political science from Troy University and the University of South Alabama, is writing a book on the intersection of politics and race in 20th-century Mobile. He spent two weeks in July at the Center working on his manuscript, which is under review with a university press.

Kirkland has won research and writing awards from the Alabama Historical Association, the Gulf South Historical Association, and the Alabama Department of Archives and History. He has also served as a guest lecturer for the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History and the Alabama Humanities Foundation. The LES Center residency allowed Kirkland to take some time away from the museum and concentrate on his work. "It's amazing how being secluded from your daily chores makes you so productive," he said.





(Far left) Michelle (Chelle) Furlow

Michelle Llewellyn's mother

The story of a former camper

My mother was Michelle (Chelle) Furlow. She won a scholarship to the camp in 1929 when she was 13; it was sponsored by Rich's Department store in Atlanta. She attended the camp that year and for four or five years as a camper and then for another four or five as a counselor. She graduated from Agnes Scott College in 1937 and taught school for two years, which allowed her to continue as a counselor. From what I have pieced together, her last year at the camp was 1939 or 1940, at which time she was hired by the U.S. Weather Bureau as one of the nation's first radiosonde operators (and one of two women operators).

My mother absolutely loved the camp and got her fee discounted the next year based on my grandmother recruiting new campers. My grandmother's best friend was Muriel Pace, and Muriel's daughter Mimi soon followed Mother to camp. Mimi was about five years younger than my mother. [Muriel "Mimi" Pace Newcomb in later years helped proof Lillian Smith's books. She

earned a pilot's license at age 16 and flew as a stunt pilot for barnstorming shows.]

Two years ago, my husband and I traveled to Clayton and met with the Fichters. I gave them my mother's scrapbook, some copies of the camp newsletter, and about 40 or so loose pictures. I think she said they would be turned over to the collection at UGA. In the early 1980s, someone from UGA had written to my mother asking for her camp memorabilia; my mother replied that they could have it after she died. Mother had no idea that the LES Foundation existed, but I am sure she would have approved of my taking her items to Nancy [Fichter].

While at Laurel Falls, Michelle Furlow met Tazu Shibama a camper from Japan. On Aug. 6, 1945, Shibama, a teacher in Hiroshima, survived the atomic bombing of the city, which killed 350 students and 18 teachers at her school. She spent much of the rest of her life working for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

Mother always had an interest in Tazu Shibama. I was always fascinated by the picture, and I remember every August my mother would wonder what had happened to her. My parents went to my father's 50th high school reunion in Pensacola in the early 1980s and my mother sat next to one of his schoolmates who had been a Presbyterian missionary to Japan and who had taught her Japanese students Latin. Mother mentioned she had only known one person from Hiroshima and mentioned Tazu. Without looking in her address book, the missionary gave my mother the address of Tazu. Mother wrote to her and received an answer. On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the bombing the NBC evening news showed an interview with Tazu; I thought my mother would dive into the television as she was so excited.

Michelle Elwer Llewellyn

Michelle Llewellyn



The Decatur Book Festival

The LES Center and Piedmont College were well represented over the Labor Day weekend at the Decatur [Ga.] Book Festival. The crowd for Saturday and Sunday was estimated at approximately 80,000. Hundreds of people stopped by for bookmarks, newsletters, promotional literature, and of course, lollipops! The two-day event offered a great opportunity to help us spread the word about Lillian Smith, her contributions to the arts and social change, and the work that Piedmont College is doing at the LES Center.

**What kind
of an
extremist
are you?**

Lillian E. Smith Symposium on Arts & Social Change

March 14, 2015 | Piedmont College -- Athens Campus

Observations and activism from the 1940s, '50s, and '60s are perfectly relevant today. Throughout her career as a writer and humanitarian, Lillian Smith examined how the arts engage people around issues of social injustice, segregation, and isolation. With a strong commitment to sustain the author's legacy and to address societal challenges in an open forum, Piedmont College established this symposium.

“The question in crisis or ordeal is not: Are you going to be an extremist? The question is: What kind of extremist are you going to be?”

— Lillian Smith

The inaugural symposium will set the stage for storytelling that challenges participants not only to contemplate sensitivities and struggles surrounding race relations but also to initiate social change in their own spheres of influence. The moderator for

the symposium will be Barbara Brown Taylor, Butman Professor of Religion at Piedmont College and acclaimed author of 13 books, including *New York Times* bestsellers *Learning to Walk in the Dark* and *An Altar in the World*. This one-day event will offer ample opportunities for thoughtful consideration and stimulating conversation. With the launch of this symposium, Piedmont College is privileged to engage current and future generations in the values and convictions that shaped the life and work of Lillian Smith.

“Probably all of us have memories tucked away of occasions when racism made us prickle with anxiety, rage, or other poignant emotions. Our hope is that this symposium will channel that energy to effect change for the good.”

— Rev. Dr. Ashley Cleere, symposium organizer

Visiting poet in January

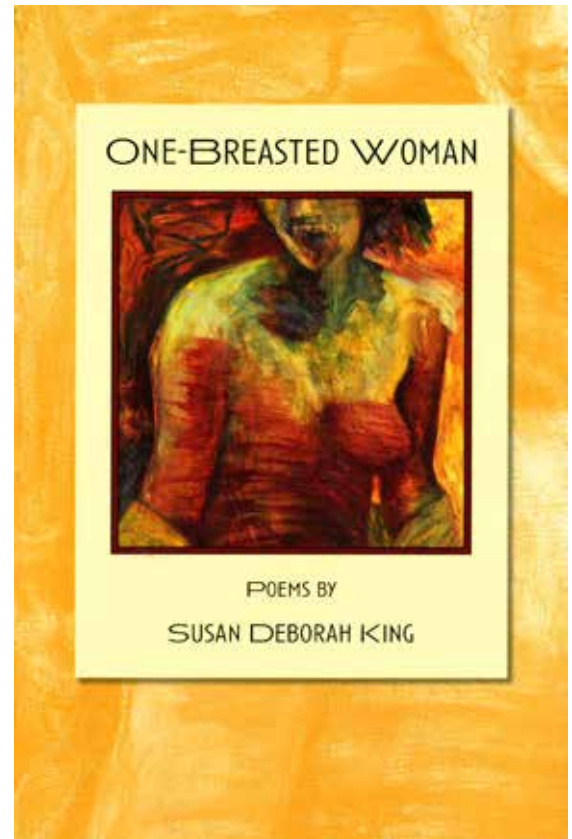
Susan Deborah King

Celebrated poet Susan Deborah "Sam" King will be in residence at the LES Center in January 2015 and will also be working with Piedmont College students in poetry writing classes.

Ms. King has taught writing at various institutions in the Minneapolis area, including the University of Minnesota, SASE, the Write Place, the Loft, and United Theological Seminary, where she has been artist in residence since 2012. She has also been poet in residence at Whittier Community School for the Arts and Artist in Residence at United Seminary. She is the author of several collections of poetry including *One-Breasted Woman*, *Bog Orchids: Island Poems*, and *Dropping into the Flower*.

While at Piedmont College, she will be engaging several students who may not spend much time reading poetry or writing for pleasure or self-reflection. Students will have the opportunity to work with a seasoned poet to improve their writing skills, while discovering the depths of this literary genre and composing meaningful poetry of their own.

The specific date for Ms. King's reading at Piedmont College will be announced on our website and Facebook page.



Thom Fogarty's Production of Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*

The stage adaptation of Lillian Smith's first novel, Strange Fruit, had a limited run on Broadway in 1945. Smith was not pleased with the experience and declared that the script would not be used again. She entertained the idea of rewriting the script but never did. Now we are excited to announce that New York actor and director Thom Fogarty has written an adaptation titled Lillian Smith's Strange Fruit, which will be produced at Piedmont College in October 2015. Thom will be working with the Piedmont Theatre Department and students for six weeks to prepare for the show. "The Piedmont College Theatre Department is very excited about Thom Fogarty joining us in the Fall of 2015," said Theatre Department Chair Bill Gabelhausen. "We eagerly await his creative process that will breathe life into 'Strange Fruit.' Our department thrives on the strong vision of the director, the message of the playwright, and the heart of the performer." Thom and his wife, Leslie Dennis, are both LES Center artist fellows. Thom has used his time at the Center over the last few years to work on the play, and Leslie has been organizing documents and memorabilia at the Center. You can find out more about Thom Fogarty's work at his website www.360repco.org.

The Bunkhouse Project

An appeal for support

With the opportunities presented by Piedmont College's new role at the LES Center comes the need to expand the facilities. We want to take full advantage of the Center's location, beautiful setting, and rich natural resources with facilities that can house large groups of students, faculty, staff, and members of the public for extended overnight stays.

One of the most important steps in this direction is the construction of two "bunkhouses" designed for groups. Housing up to 12 people each, these bunkhouses will be located adjacent to two of the existing residential structures: Esther and Peeler Cottages. The new buildings will be slightly higher up the ridge, with wide porches facing the surrounding mountain vistas. The houses will be equipped with heat pumps, which will allow them to be used virtually year-round.

The cost of constructing each of these houses, along with site preparation and expanding the utilities, is \$57,000. Piedmont College has allocated funds for building one of these houses and is seeking donor support to construct the second one. Please consider an additional gift this year to help us reach this very important financial goal.



Construction is under way for the first of two "bunkhouses" at the LES Center.

We are growing!

WIFI EXPANSION

Access is now available in all the cottages.

WATERLINE INSTALLED

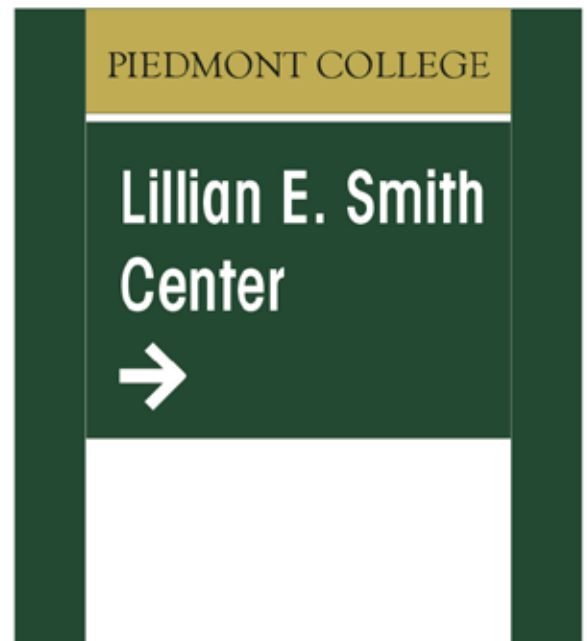
A larger waterline has been installed feeding all the cottages.

REPAIRS

Repairs have taken place in Peeler and Common Room Cottages.

SIGNS

New signs on the way!



DONOR SPOTLIGHT

Kyes Stevens

Kyes Stevens of Waverly, Ala., is an Alabama native whose strong sense of place is tied to family land in rural Chambers County. Often described by Stevens as a vortex in the universe, Waverly is a small spot on the planet that has held her family tight since the 1950s. It was there that Stevens developed an intense love for the natural world, and it was there that she first began to understand the implications of class and race for the people of her community. And as she grew, it was there that she began to contemplate her state and the world beyond. Stevens studied women's history and poetry at Sarah Lawrence College in

New York, where she first learned of Lillian E. Smith. After returning to Alabama in 2001, Stevens began teaching poetry at the Talladega Federal Prison through a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Department of Justice, "which marked the beginning of an amazing journey," she says. Stevens is the founder and director of the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project at Auburn University. She is a recipient of a Writing Fellowship from the Alabama State Council on the Arts and was the co-recipient of the first Lillian E. Smith Writer-in-Service Award.



*A view of
Screamer
Mountain*



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COLLEGE

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www.piedmont.edu/lillian-smith-center