

## IMPORTANT UPDATE FROM NCTE:

### National Day on Writing

To draw attention to the remarkable variety of writing we engage in and help make writers from all walks of life aware of their craft, NCTE is working to establish October 20, 2009, as the National Day on Writing.

Why have a National Day on Writing?

Let's imagine America writing. Let's imagine essayists and auditors, poets and nurses, tweeters and technicians, blogging beauticians, church bulletin scribes, advocates and analysts, authoring. Let's imagine memoirs and memos, rants and remembrances, oral histories, letters to the future, postcards from the past, profiles profane and sacred, instructions, directions, reflections, retorts, factual and fancied. Let's imagine a living American gallery of writing checked with salons, fitted by school or site, by genre or by identity, but most importantly by you, salons in which a homeless man's story hangs next to the finance major's wedding vows. Let's imagine school kids linked to college students, teachers to professors, and all to city halls, shelters, boardrooms, all linked by writing.

For important information and ideas about how to participate in the National Day on Writing, check out the following website:  
[http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Involved/DayonWriting/NDW\\_Flier.pdf](http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Involved/DayonWriting/NDW_Flier.pdf)

TYCA Midwest Messenger  
Illinois Central College  
One College Drive  
East Peoria, IL 61635-0001

SPRING 2009



# Midwest Messenger

Two-Year College English Association (TYCA Midwest)

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## Message from the Chair

Paul Resnick • Illinois Central College

Dear TYCA Colleagues,

According to the U.S. Census, only 27% of adults over the age of 25 are college educated. Of the 27%, few have graduated from college with a "liberal education" in the traditional sense. Add to the mix the high cost of a college education, the current economic downturn, and the right-wing assault on humanism, and we see the uphill battle we face as English teachers.

Worse, our students are tired, pessimistic about the future, and apathetic about our leaders. They are trying to balance working to pay for college and attending classes, not to mention how they spend their personal lives.

We as educators find ourselves skeptical, tired, and pessimistic, just like our students. We have college assessment demands hanging over us, committee work to complete, state budget cuts to worry about, and plenty of essays to grade. Our 401 Ks are getting rocked and local businesses may be laying off people sooner rather than later. So, are you depressed yet? What can we as educators do to turn this tide?

Elizabeth Rosner, author of an excellent novel titled *Speed of Light*, visited our campus a few years ago. She said that if we could reach at least one student every class, then that class was a success. There is hope. Teachers reaching students begins with that one student and expands from there. We have many different strategies and assignments, but our goals are the same: How do we teach our students to become better writers and critical readers? How do we get them interested in ideas, cultures, and events, outside of their own spheres of influence?

Over 190 colleagues attended the TYCA-Midwest Conference in Duluth in October, 2008. This great number of people is a testament to the hard work of conference organizers, but also to the faith we have in each other. This faith is in the belief that our shared experiences and mutual concerns can be addressed in such a way that we can become positive agents of change with our students, in our workplaces, and with ourselves.

I look forward to seeing each of you in Madison in October for our next TYCA-Midwest Conference.



**tycamw.org**



## FORWARD: WRITING OUR FUTURE TYCA MIDWEST 2009

MADISON, WI

### 2009 TYCA Midwest Conference Madison, Wisconsin October 1-3

Sarah Z. Johnson • Madison Area Technical College

#### Conference Theme

Welcome to Wisconsin! Our theme for 2009, “Forward: Writing Our Future” takes its inspiration from the Wisconsin state motto, “Forward.” In fact, you’ll see Forward herself on the logo. She stands atop the capitol dome, a symbol of leadership and anticipation of the future.

Our theme for the 2009 conference asks the question: What will the two-year college English classroom look like in five years? In ten? The future will undoubtedly bring changes. Who will be our students? What tools will we use? How will we be funded (and how well)?

I invite those of you with insights and ideas on these issues to propose a paper or panel for this conference. If you have more questions than answers about the future, the proposal form also includes opportunities for open discussion forums. As we gather next October, let’s ask ourselves how we perceive the future of our profession and how we are preparing for the technological, social, and economic changes that will impact our classrooms and our students. How will we and our students write the future of two-year college English education? The deadline for proposals is June 1, 2009.

#### Keynote Speaker

Our keynote speaker is Madison native Joan Houston Hall, chief editor of the Dictionary of Regional American English, the final installment of which is set to come out in 2009, and whose slogan is “On to Z.”



MATC employees say, “Come join us in October!”

#### Location/Lodging

The conference will be held at the Madison Concourse Hotel (Reservations: 800-356-8293), just a block from the Capitol Square and State Street in the heart of downtown Madison. Come and enjoy a show at the Overture Center, a meal in one of our fabulous restaurants, or a stroll through the Saturday Farmer’s Market. Be sure to make your reservations early, since we share our conference weekend with the World Dairy Expo (no kidding) and a Badger football game.

The next TYCA-Midwest conference is sure to offer both professional inspiration and personal refreshment and recreation.

**Looking forward to seeing you in October ’09!**

## Adjunct Representative Report

TYCA-Midwest EC/AC Board Meeting • October 2, 2008

Nancy McMahon • Adjunct Representative

Higher education institutions across the country are increasingly hiring “non-secure” faculty for teaching the range of English courses and in writing centers. These employees may be identified as adjunct, part-time, contingent, non-regular, and other labels. “Contingent” is often preferred because this covers both full and part-time faculty. Writing teachers were well represented at the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labor (COCAL) national conference held in San Diego at the San Diego State University campus August 8-10. My attendance at COCAL VIII included viewing with a TYCA lens as well as representing my college and union. Nationally, adjuncts and all “insecure” faculty struggle with issues of teaching support, curriculum, and inclusion in institutional decisions that directly affect them. Please inform adjunct faculty of information available at <http://www.cocal-ca.org/viii/confhome.htm> and <http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/contingent/>. Four-year college students are seldom taught basic writing and rhetoric by tenured faculty, so teaching issues abound with the teacher turnover and lack of teaching resources at many schools. Two year colleges employ many adjuncts to teach writing and English courses, and there is

increased use of a variety of writing center staff, many as contingent labor.

Many thousands of students receive their English instruction from contingent faculty, but time, fiscal, and communication issues frequently interfere with professional development opportunities. TYCA-Midwest is to be commended for offering the \$5.00 adjunct membership and providing the \$150 award for a winning individual adjunct proposal, \$300 for a panel. We encourage all TYCA members to follow the lead of some two year colleges such as Madison Area Technical College where the Arts & Sciences English Department has offered and paid for the TYCA-Midwest membership for part-time English faculty who wished to join.

As an elected officer of AFT Local 6100 MATC Part-Time Teachers’ Union, I serve on the Academic Leadership Council (ALC), a statewide leadership group of technical college faculty who are concerned about Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) mandates that change/adjust curriculum without input from faculty or considering the best interests of the students. These WTCS decisions come from

a business/bureaucratic bias, neglecting educational needs. Of particular concern in Wisconsin are some changes in the nursing programs. Will the general education courses be next? Adjunct faculty seldom have representation in such a group, but the ALC has included adjuncts since so many students are receiving instruction from contingent faculty. See [http://www.weac.org/facultymatters/9\\_4\\_08.htm](http://www.weac.org/facultymatters/9_4_08.htm) for developments.

Colleges’ current fiscal decisions may result in a lack of professional development funds for all faculty. Unions have the opportunity to include conference money in their contract language as the situations present themselves. If your college has no faculty union, NCA Higher Learning Commission standards such as those with the Academic Quality Improvement Process (AQIP) may be helpful to advocates in distribution of resources. Please urge your colleges to provide professional development support for contingent faculty.

When MATC hosts the TYCA Midwest conference in October 2009, we hope to have a high percentage of our adjuncts participating, so please urge your schools to send both full-time and adjunct faculty as well.

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*TYCA Midwest Messenger*  
is the bi-annual publication of the  
Midwest Two-Year College  
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## Reflections on '08 Conference

Kelli Hallsten • Lake Superior College

A week before the conference, the emails and phone calls were flying back and forth among me and Amy Jo Swing, the other program chair; Karen Busch, the local arrangements chair; the graphic designer at the school; the copy center; our English department members; and various presenters. The skies were dark and, as is typical of northern Minnesota, fall was beginning early with the leaves starting to change at the end of September and the temperature dropping steadily. Between teaching and completing last-minute conference preparations, I kept looking out the window, worrying about folks flying in from Missouri and Nebraska. What are they going to think about this place? I mused. They're going to freeze!!

Thursday morning I climbed out of bed, excited to go on the North Shore Scenic Railroad up to Split Rock Lighthouse. I pulled on my sweatshirt and the worrying started again; what if it rained? What if it was too cold? I pulled back the shade and was greeted by a brilliant blue sky. I couldn't believe it. The sun streamed in, and my worry dissipated. Now I was excited.

The TYCA conference has two main aspects: fun and learning. When Amy Jo and I were looking through the presentation proposals, we asked ourselves how we could get the greatest variety of sessions with the most practical information. We agreed that one of the best aspects of going to the conference every year is walking away with broader ideas about how to approach teaching, but also learning something that can be directly applied to classes that very semester. We pasted up a big sheet of white paper in our office lounge and started sticking the post-it notes with the abbreviated session titles in the different times and rooms, moving things around. "We can't have the service-learning sessions at the same time!" "Hey, we need to put the YouTube President session in the middle of the day. That'll wake people up." When Friday morning, the start of the con-

ference, arrived, I half-expected that something disastrous would happen, like we accidentally planned for more rooms than we actually had or that all of the computers would simultaneously malfunction. Like looking at the blue sky the previous day, though, I couldn't believe it when I saw people swarming out of the 9:15 session, smiling. I felt like those kids in the classic Life cereal commercial, getting Mikey to try it: "They liked it! They liked it!" Based on the commentary we received from the session evaluations, people did, in fact, learn. Even the Saturday sessions were well attended (at least one of the last Saturday sessions had 32 people come—with the sun still shining!).

The fun of the conference comes from networking. Many of the TYCA participants have been attending for many years, and seeing our friends from years past was great, and welcoming new folks was fun, too. Our estimates are that we had close to forty new attendees out of the 190 folks registered. Thursday morning we took a train up the scenic north shore to the Split Rock Lighthouse, one of the most beautiful spots along the lakeshore. We then had the opening night reception with a bluegrass band and the Tina and Lena comedy duo (no, we do NOT talk like that!). The appetizers were delicious, and I kept watching the door to see who was coming in. I watched people grinning, shaking hands, and hugging. The camaraderie that exists among the conference attendees created a fun atmosphere.

On Friday night, in the tradition of TYCA conferences, those of us who were familiar with the city led groups to our favorite restaurants. My group of twenty headed to downtown Duluth for some of the local Indian fare, and I was relieved that it garnered Neville Britto's approval. I missed the fun of staying in a hotel with all of the TYCA participants, but I'm hoping that everyone enjoyed staying at the Inn in Canal Park and roasting marshmallows on the lakeshore.

So, what can I say? Much like preparing for the start of a new semester or recent presidential elections, after over a year of planning and anticipation, it was over. I slept well Saturday

night, and I was later pleased to read all of the conference evaluation forms on which a majority of respondents said that yes, based on this experience, they would visit Duluth again. This made me proud. Now that the work is done, I'm eager for next fall's conference in Madison, looking through the lens of someone who has done what the organizers in Wisconsin are doing now with newfound appreciation. Thanks to everyone who attended our conference, and we'll see you in October '09.



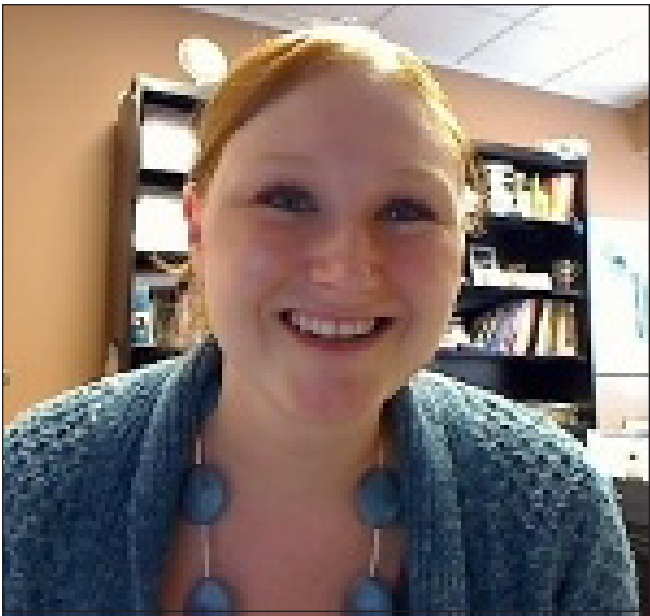
# Get to Know Your New Executive Board Members

My name is Jennifer Dunkel (formerly Flinn), and I am the Lead Instructor for Developmental Writing at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield, Missouri. When I'm not teaching or grading (or thinking about teaching and grading), I'm spending time with my husband, my eight-month-old daughter, and my dog.

I first became involved with TYCA when I was pulled to a TYCA strand session at CCCC in San Antonio by a friend. I had wanted to go back to my room and take a nap, but my friend insisted we attend this session because he knew one of the presenters. It was the best session I attended at that conference because the ideas related to the issues I was facing at the community college. I knew immediately this was an organization I wanted to learn more about.

I love attending the TYCA-Midwest conferences for two reasons: I always take away such wonderful, applicable ideas from each session, and the TYCA-Midwest folk are some of the friendliest, down-to-earth, honestly-care-about-students types of people I've ever met at a conference. I mean, where else are you going to get ideas about how to address at-risk student issues while at the same time seeing your colleagues wear funny hats and sing songs about Minnesotan life?

I'm looking forward to serving TYCA-Midwest as the new Site Coordinator, and I hope to have the opportunity to get to know my TYCA colleagues more.



Hello, fellow TYCAns! My name is Heidi Skurat Harris, and I was elected to be on the TYCA Executive Board at the 2008 conference. I appreciate the support of those who voted for me. And while I can't see Russia from my house or field-dress a Moose, I promise to try to do my best on the executive board in spite of these deficiencies.

I am currently the Instructional Designer for the Division of Online Teaching and Learning at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield, Missouri. In this capacity, I work with instructors across the disciplines to best use technology in their courses. In particular, I work with online courses, which constitute 15% of our total college enrollment. I believe that the basis of any online course is writing, so I'm excited to be able to use my knowledge in composition and rhetoric to influence pedagogy across the curriculum. In my spare time, I have recently been in the final stages of my dissertation for my Ph.D. in Composition and Rhetoric from Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. I also welcomed my first child, a girl, in January.

The membership position on the board excites me because I am a firm believer that TYCA can help instructors at community colleges connect to each other and to larger issues in education across our nation. I first presented at TYCA--MW in Peoria in 2004 and was instantly hooked on the conference. I enjoy seeing colleagues at the conference each year to hear about what others in the Midwest region are doing in their courses. As membership coordinator, I will use these benefits of TYCA membership to encourage more instructors in our region to join the group and attend conferences.

With this in mind, if you have a great TYCA story to share that I could use in promotional and marketing materials, I would be happy to hear it! Please email me at [skurathh@otc.edu](mailto:skurathh@otc.edu).

Again, I'm excited to be on the board for TYCA and look forward to my work with this group of motivated and challenging instructors from across the Midwest.



## 2008 TYCA Conference Award Recipients

### Unsung Heroes Award

Leslie Roberts



### Service Award

Neville Britto



### Outstanding Adjunct Faculty Proposal Award

Lorie Johnson Paldino, Beth Gulley, Maureen Fitzpatrick, Kit Gorrell Frankenfield



## CONFERENCE SESSION REVIEW

### Mutiny on the High Seas: Student Entitlement in the College Classroom

Jeffry Schantz • The University of Akron, Summit College

Many of us are involved in the profession of teaching because we so deeply enjoy the classroom experience. Unfortunately, there are times when a student makes our job, to put it mildly, unpleasant. Of course, how we handle these situations has a tremendous impact on us, other students in the classroom, and even the offending student. This is the issue AnnMarie Kajencki explored in her presentation, "Mutiny on the High Seas: Student Entitlement in the College Classroom." During the session Kajencki presented a series of real scenarios—ranging from the disappearing student, who returns with a heartbreaking story, to the student possessing an I'm-smarter-than-every-one-in-this-room attitude. Attendees were invited to consider their response, as well as their institution's response, to each situation. Possible causes and remedies were also discussed. While the session may not have solved these complex issues, attendees certainly left with new approaches to such problems and a stronger understanding of this increasingly common problem.