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Intuitive Writing Project holds book launch

By Emma Wong



IWP teachers Gretchen Cion, Elizabeth Perlman, and Melissa Quiter Photos provided

Children, teens, and parents gathered at Orinda Books on Sept. 30 to celebrate the Intuitive Writing Project's launch of its biennial anthology, titled "Reemergence." There, young writers across age groups read aloud their newly published pieces.

The event reflects how far the Intuitive Writing Project (IWP) has come from its humble Bay Area beginnings, which included a studio in Orinda. Still, the organization holds to its roots by providing a safe space for students to express their emotions through writing.

Headquartered in the Bay Area, the IWP was founded by Elizabeth Perlman in 2013 to amplify the voices of young women and gender-expansive youth, celebrating various genres of writing, from fiction to general prose. Since then, the IWP has published over 750 works of student writing in their anthologies.

"I first had the dream for the IWP when I was 13, but I couldn't figure out how to implement it until many years later when I was in graduate school studying Transformative Arts," Perlman said. "I spent a year writing the 'Intuitive Leadership' curriculum, designing the brand materials, and developing a proper business plan."

Grounded in the principle of intuition, the IWP emphasizes a holistic approach to writing. Each session offers students ample time to jot down responses to a prompt, which they can revise and spin into larger pieces submitted to the anthology.

Many IWP students are local Orinda residents, having discovered the class via friends and family. "My sister has been writing with the IWP since she was in sixth grade - she's a sophomore in college now - so I became familiar with the organization through this connection," IWP student and high school junior Ava Moga said.

Parents were drawn to the IWP for its emphasis on uplifting teen voices. "I first remember seeing the writing space in Orinda's Theatre Square, with their beautiful photos and quotes outlined in pink in the windows," parent Sonya Grover said. "I loved their mission statement: 'declare what you know to be true!'"

As parents and IWP students filed into Orinda Books, they purchased copies of "Reemergence." While the anthology's title spotlights post-pandemic recovery and reclamation, student works run the gamut of genres, from dystopian fiction stories to poetic vignettes. When the open mic began, students read aloud from these pieces, having chosen passages or entire works to read.

"I loved reading [my work] aloud because there's so much more emotion and truth you can capture with your voice and facial expression," Grover, a high school junior, said of her essay about social media's impacts on Generation Z. "I think you can touch the heart of the piece more easily when reading it live."

Sonya Grover, who attended the reading to support her daughter, added, "My daughter was included in the last two anthologies, so we knew about the launch. It's great that the reading was at Orinda Books this year - they are a wonderful local bookstore."

New writers also took to the stage, including high school junior Ava Moga. "I've never been published before, so this is really exciting for me," Moga said. "I decided to read and enter this piece into the anthology because I just really loved the entirety of it."

Writers weighed in on such topics as identity, mental health, and self-image. Many highlighted discussions of gender roles and societal expectations of young people. Ultimately, the anthology reading underscored the need to amplify teen voices through writing. Not only does creative writing allow for the expansion of young people's imaginations, but it also forms a crucial outlet for the youth to advocate for causes they support and call for change, allowing teens to feel truly supported.

"The value of sharing your writing is that it reinforces what we share in all our classes," Perlman said. "It's that who you are matters and that all your thoughts, feelings, stories, and ideas are valuable, important,

and need to be heard."

Readers interested in a free class trial should contact elizabeth@intuitivewritingproject.org or visit www.intuitivewritingproject.org.



Josslyn Grover reads her piece "Declarations of a Gen Z Stargazer" Photos provided

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