

Poetry Conference Returns to WCU



Poetry Center Student Lunch –Attendees included, from left, Veronica Mattab, Sarah Hyson, Alfred Corn, Marlene Miller, Kyle Faber, Ann Mascherino and Sam Gwynn.

Carlin Romano of the *Philadelphia Inquirer* has called the West Chester University Poetry Conference “the nation’s most intellectually rigorous conference for poets.”

But don’t let that description intimidate you. While the conference does offer intensive workshops in

traditional poetic craft and provides a national forum to discuss trends in contemporary poetry, it’s designed to be an inclusive event, bringing together faculty, students, critics, poetry lovers, and those merely curious about poetry. This year’s conference will be held June 8-11. The entire WCU community, as well as the general public, is invited to free poetry readings on June 9 and June 10 in the Madeleine Wing Adler Theatre.

R. S. “Sam” Gwynn, program director of the 2016 conference, and Ann Mascherino, conference business manager, have been getting ready for the event since fall, but preparations are now in high gear. Earlier this month, Gwynn invited WCU students to a lunch with Alfred Corn, a poet who will present a one-day workshop at the conference. Corn has taught creative writing at Yale, Columbia, and UCLA, and served as poet-in-residence at WCU April 3-6.

Little details are being attended to, as well, like a fresh coat of paint throughout the first floor of the Poetry Center, which is located at 823 South High Street. “We will have the coffee pot going from early in the morning until late,” says Gwynn. “In-between workshops and other scheduled events, I encourage participants, as well as all members of the University community, to drop by the center and connect with each other.”

“I have participated in all but one of the previous conferences,” he adds. “I have been a workshop leader and a member of many of our panel discussions. In 2014, I led a critical seminar on Dylan Thomas and served on four panels. I am proud of the University’s commitment to keeping the conference going as we enter our third decade.”

The West Chester Poetry Conference is the nation’s largest poetry-only conference and features a variety of workshops, seminars, faculty and participant readings, a picnic, late-night carnival and more. On the closing night, singer Iris DeMent will perform from her 2015 album, *Trackless Woods*, a collection of poems by 20th century Russian poet Anna Akhmatova adapted to music.

Charles Martin has been named the 2016 WCU Poetry Conference poet laureate. Martin's fifth book of poems, "Signs & Wonders," was published by The Johns Hopkins University Press in 2011. Rhina P. Espaillat, author of many collections of verse and the Spanish translator of Robert Frost, will serve as poet emerita. The conference keynote speaker is Sir Andrew Motion, the poet laureate of the United Kingdom from 1999 to 2009.

To register for the conference, or for more info, go to:

http://www.wcupa.edu/_academics/sch_cas/poetry/poetryConference.aspx.