

Arts & Entertainment

Community prepares for inaugural festival

By TODD DEUTSCH
Staff Intern

and I loved it. I never liked reading books, but always poetry."

Blomquist Gustavson, 59, works haltime as a psychotherapist and spends the rest of the time writing poetry. However, even when she is with patients, poetry finds a way into her work. With most of Blomquist Gustavson's patients, she uses a technique called poetry therapy. Poetry therapy is a way to get people to write what is on their minds.

"You can use it with anybody, but it works especially well with teenagers and women," said Blomquist Gustavson, who has published six books on the subject. "People are always amazed at what comes out of them."

Blomquist Gustavson said she uses poetry in different ways to help each patient. For instance, if the client is a young child, she might read the poetry. She has also found that when people have conflict when working in groups, poetry can be very effective.

"I think an awful lot of poetry comes from our unconscious," Blomquist Gustavson said. "And you will have people

all the time say, 'I can't believe that came from me.'"

Blomquist Gustavson, whose mother, Dorothy Jorgenson, lives in Afton, has lived in Tulsa for 11 years and hasn't lived in the Stillwater area in 16 years. A 1965 Stillwater High School graduate, both of her children attended the school in the 1980s. When her daughter, Britta, was in the orchestra, Blomquist Gustavson became friends with Jim Hainlen, the school's longtime orchestra director.

"We shared a love for music and poetry," Hainlen said. "That is about as good of a fit as you can get with me."

The idea for the White Pine Festival came largely from Hainlen and he has been an active member of the festival's

board. Shortly after Hainlen and others decided to launch the festival this year, Hainlen wrote an e-mail to former orchestra members and sup-

style of poetry fit with this festival," Hainlen said. "She is not a poet in the sense that she is an academic poet, not like Robert Frost, or someone who is very well known."

out singing it."

With Blomquist Gustavson, Hoagland and Bonair-Agard, Hainlen thinks the festival has the perfect mix of poets.

"As soon as [Blomquist Gustavson] contacted me, my initial response was 'yes,' because I suddenly saw that we had three different aspects of poetry," Hainlen said. "What we want the festival to focus on is to be something that many different populations find interesting."

Blomquist Gustavson will do a workshop at Boutwells Landing, something Hainlen said will be very helpful to the center's residents. "It is not anything startling to say that at the end of your life you are trying to think about if you have lived your life with meaning," Hainlen said. "By doing a workshop there, we specifically want to engage people in their writers group and people to find someone who can guide them through that."

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What's next

- ◆ **What:** The White Pine Festival is an arts and ideas festival in the St. Croix Valley. The festival aims to explore ideas from a wide range of artistic and intellectual perspectives.
- ◆ **When:** June 20-23. Tickets available at www.whitepinefestival.org, Valley Bookseller in Stillwater and at the Phipps Center in Hudson, Wis.
- ◆ **Who:** St. Petersburg String Quartet, Tony Hoagland, Roger Bonair-Agard, Layton "Skip" James, Cynthia Blomquist Gustavson and River Falls Brass.
- ◆ **Where:** Arcola Mills (May Township), Trinity Lutheran Church (Stillwater), Ascension Episcopal Church (Stillwater), The Phipps Center for the Arts (Hudson, Wis.), Boutwells Landing (Oak Park Heights), Stillwater Public Library, The Twisted Grille (Hudson, Wis.), Lakefront Park (Hudson, Wis.)

porters. Blomquist Gustavson promptly responded, saying that she would like to be a poet in the festival. At the time she replied, Hainlen and other board members were still trying to decide what type of artists they wanted to have at the inaugural event.

"Our question was, did her

about American lifestyle.

On the other end of the spectrum from Hoagland is Roger Bonair-Agard, who will give audiences a different style of poetry. Bonair-Agard won the National Individual Slam Championship in 1999, and Hainlen describes his work as "kind of hip-hop poetry with-

In the end, however, Blomquist Gustavson was the perfect complement for the diverse field of poets scheduled to perform at the event. Headlining the festival is Tony Hoagland, a nationally-known poet whose work is described as smart and funny, and who writes mostly



Cynthia Blomquist Gustavson

If her second grade teacher could only see her now. While listening to her teacher read poetry daily after lunch as a second grader in Afton, Cynthia Blomquist Gustavson developed a passion for poetry.

Now more than 50 years later, Blomquist Gustavson will reach out to others in the St. Croix Valley and share her poetry craft. Blomquist Gustavson will join several other prominent poets and musicians from June 20-23 during the White Pine Festival at various sites throughout the St. Croix Valley. The festival, in its inaugural year, will feature 16 events.

"Dr. Suess got me hooked," Blomquist Gustavson, who now lives in Tulsa, Okla. (My teacher) would read us poetry everyday after lunch