



## Writers Jam: A learning tool, a bonding experience

**By Lynne T. Menon**

Twice a month, through poetry, prose, testimony and song, Writers Jam brings together a diverse group of people willing to stand before an audience of their peers and share their most intimate thoughts and feelings. Most are novices at creative writing and public speaking, so exposing long-hidden vulnerabilities takes an enormous amount of courage. Yet, common among the participants is a feeling of great accomplishment, a sense that they have taken long

strides on the road to discovery — of where they are in life and where they want to go.

St. Luke's Lifeworks is a nonprofit agency dedicated to providing transitional and permanent supportive housing and educational opportunities for individuals who might otherwise be homeless or living in a public shelter. Some are recovering addicts who may also be struggling with the added weight of an HIV/AIDS diagnosis. Mental illness is also not uncommon among this population.

The concept of the Writers

Jam came from a local writers' group known as Poem Alley, whose members often attend the meetings along with guests from other organizations.

"There is a give and take among all the groups," says Writers Jam founder and LifeWorks Life Coach Lisa Beth Crowley. "Staff members also share their experiences. Participants see how they've triumphed in similar situations."

Writers Jam helps everyone continue their quest for self-actualization. The teaching and the learning flow both ways.

The Writers Jam has met

with such success that St. Luke's Lifeworks, Poem Alley and other organizations have joined forces and will be staging the second of a series of readings, titled Writers Express. It will be held this Saturday, Feb. 27, from 3-5 p.m. at the Unitarian Church of Stamford, 20 Forest St., Stamford. The general public is cordially invited and encouraged to attend. Refreshments will be served.

*Lynne T. Menon is director of marketing and communications for St. Luke's LifeWorks.*

# Heaven

By Patrice

## A Trip To Heaven

I took a trip to heaven  
But only in my mind  
I wanted to know what  
it's like

To leave all your love  
behind.

So I closed my eyes,  
and started to see

Just how beautiful  
heaven can be.

I could see the pearly  
gates of white

And behind them was  
the most radiant light.

I saw an angel as she  
was passing by

So incredibly beautiful  
that a tear fell from  
my eye.

Everyone looked perfect  
and with the angels  
they did sing.

There are no earthly  
words to describe the  
beauty of their wings.

As I sat on a bench in  
the most incredible garden,

I asked God for all of  
my sins to be pardoned.

I took one last look at  
all of the beauty around  
And when I opened  
my eyes, it was peace that  
I found.

Still Missing Taisheen

Still Missing Taisheen

# Hello, I Am Rich.

By Richard

In 1997, I was diagnosed with  
HIV/Aids, which led to a life of  
self-destruction. I thought that  
my life was over. I began to drink  
heavily and began to live a life full  
of crime. I did this because I felt  
that my life was over. I became  
very irresponsible and didn't care  
what happened to me, as I felt I  
was dying. I ended up homeless  
and in jail due to my actions.

I have since learned that you  
can live with HIV/Aids and have  
a life... I am now living with Aids,  
and my life goes on. It hasn't been  
easy, but I decided that I wanted  
to live.

I have recently been re-certified  
as a Nurse's Aide. And I have  
become very involved in giving  
back to others, because in the  
past, I was always taking. I have a  
house to live in and three meals a  
day, and I am striving to be a productive  
citizen. So, life does go on  
after HIV/Aids, but you have got  
to want this change, as I have. I  
deal with all of these issues now  
without the use of drugs or alcohol.  
I am not perfect, so I must do  
this on a daily basis.

Today... without a drink or  
drug... is beautiful. Like I said,  
"one day at a time." I can never  
say that I will never use or relapse.  
But today, I can say that I  
am sober, living with HIV/Aids  
and enjoying my life.

Please always believe in yourself.  
It's not always easy, but if you  
strive for it and believe, you can  
pull through anything. God Bless  
all of you.

my coat.

I lay on the floor, hot and  
sweaty, not wanting or able  
to move.

The room now a blur, I  
find I've lost my groove.

Needing some help and  
grace from above,

I call a friend, and they  
come share their love.

Giving me care, knowledge  
and food, life is easier  
to bear.

The trembles and the  
purging stop after a while,  
then I notice something  
new,

I had started to smile.  
Day by day is a struggle  
enough, without drink in  
my way.

Now I live dry and sober  
and crave for another day,  
to enjoy, share and live,  
clean at last. One more day.

# Untitled

By Anne F.

I am mother of 4  
4 children I adore  
Then why did I leave  
It must be my disease  
It robs me of love  
From below and  
above  
I have no peace of  
mind  
No, not for my kind

Will you find me out  
I must not laugh or  
shout  
You will think I am  
manic  
And then you will  
panic  
You do not understand  
stand  
That my emotions  
Are not at my command  
I do my best  
To fit in with the rest.

# Unconditional

## Love

By Cheryl H.

When a heart

Is unable to express the  
feelings  
That pump and flow  
through it,  
It bleeds tears of sadness.  
And when a heart bleeds,

It heals itself  
And loves unconditionally.  
And how you respond to  
that love  
Has to be from the heart  
Unbelievably.

# SUNRISE

By Lynne M.

You tried to make me  
think

you're different from  
the rest.

Well I got news for ya'  
babe;

you failed your own  
test.

Your effort to change,  
discard the evil way;

seemed so commend-  
ing

'til yet this final day.

I understand the conflict;

I've got one of my  
own.

But who am I to say  
your oats have not

been sown?

Yea, I'm just as independent  
and happy with just me.

And maybe I'm slightly  
scared

to let the right some-  
one see.

At least I was willing  
to try

with some give and  
some take.

But it doesn't seem to  
be worth

the effort that I make.

Oh well, c'est la vie,  
another game of  
chance.

Sunrise tomorrow  
commences a new  
dance.

# SOBER

By Deborah S.

Silent and alone, left to  
myself, nothing but a drone,  
working hard for some-

one else, morning light  
stings, as my eyes water and  
blink, thoughts clouded,

stomach knotted from last  
night's drink.

The day moves slower,  
with Recovery on my mind,  
thinks back to when I

was once Sober, loving and  
kind.

Now all alone I feel sad  
and sorry for myself, with  
nothing much I own,

I grab the bottle off the  
shelf.

A hair of the Dog I grin  
and chuckle to myself, this  
will improve my mood I con-

vince myself.

The first taste is rough as  
I swallow it down fast, look-  
ing back at the bottle wonder-  
ing how long it will last.

Knowing soon my mood  
will change, I fill up my  
glass once more.

Feeling warmed, com-  
forted and no longer  
strange, I turn up the mu-  
sic, dancing around with  
the tunes, toke on a smoke  
and then start cleaning the  
rooms. Debris all over from  
the evening before; cans,  
cups and soda splashed up-  
on my door.

I take a big sip and tackle  
the mess, fall down on my  
knees,

realizing I'm still wear-  
ing yesterday's dress.

A pathetic sight as bile  
rises up in my throat,

as I run for the restroom  
losing my way, I vomit on

Editor's note: The following are pieces written by Writers' Jam participants.