Appalachian to host creative writing workshop for veterans and staged reading of “Deployed”

BOONE—Poet and Vietnam veteran Bruce Weigl will teach a creative writing workshop for veterans March 28 at Appalachian State University. The workshop for students who are veterans, as well for area veterans and their families, will be held from 1-4 p.m. in Plemmons Student Union’s Three Top Mountain Room.

Weigl also is the featured author March 27 at 7:30 p.m. in the student union’s Table Rock Room for the Hughelene Bostian Frank Visiting Writers Series.

Weigl is a distinguished professor of English at Lorain County Community College in Lorain, Ohio. He received a Bronze Star for his service in Vietnam. His poetry collection “The Abundance of Nothing” was a finalist for the 2013 Pulitzer Prize.

The workshop is sponsored by the College of Arts and Sciences, the Office of Academic Affairs, and the Department of English.

A staged reading of “Deployed” will follow the workshop at 5:30 p.m., also in Three Top Mountain Room. Presented by the Touring Theatre of North Carolina, “Deployed” is an hour-long compilation of poetry and prose written by veterans and their families. It depicts the experiences of seven wars: World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, First Gulf War, Iraq and Afghanistan.

It was adapted for the stage by Touring Theatre founder Brenda P. Schleunes and North Carolina Poet Laureate Joseph Bathanti, who also is a professor of creative writing at Appalachian.

The production premiered in November 2013 in Greensboro. Lenise Willis wrote in the Greensboro-based publication YES! Weekly that “Deployed” was a “touching compilation of raw emotions and experiences, varying from the physical limitations of flying bombers for more than 16 hours a day in World War II
missions, to the guilt felt by a Vietnam veteran” and that “there’s much to be absorbed from the heartfelt drama and the chance to really feel a part of something.”

In an article published in the Greensboro News and Record, Dawn DeCwikel-Kane wrote, “In dramatic detail, their stories describe the pressures of war preparation, deployment and battle, and returning home to readjust to a life never quite the same,” referring to the veterans’ whose writings comprise the script.

“Deployed” is sponsored by Appalachian’s Office of Equity, Diversity and Compliance.

“The performance of ‘Deployed’ – on the heels of Dr. Weigl’s workshop, delivered by one of the great living vet writers – will be a palpable, extremely valuable program for veterans and their families and will dramatically increase the visibility of veterans on campus,” Bathanti said.

Bathanti’s signature project as North Carolina Poet Laureate has been to work with veterans and their families to harvest their stories through poetry, fiction, personal essay and playwriting. He has traveled the state during the past 17 months conducting writing workshops for veterans and their families, in a variety of settings.

In an article published in Our State magazine, Bathanti wrote of the veterans’ writing project and the therapeutic benefit it brings its participants.

“What astonishes me most when I’m teaching a workshop among veterans is how good the writing is, period. In fact, there’s reason to believe that an entire wave of a wholly new genre of literature, borne of our 21st-century wars, is being minted by this hybrid generation of combat veterans,” he wrote. “And, yes, it is therapeutic: Empirical scholarship shows that writing about trauma is instrumental in overcoming trauma. I often hear the injunction in veterans’ writing workshops: Either you control the memory or the memory controls you.”

For additional information, about the events contact Joseph Bathanti at bathantjr@appstate.edu.

Parking is free on campus after 5 p.m. and in the College Street parking deck after 5 p.m. The deck provides the nearest access to the student union which can be reached by crossing College Street and following the walkway between the chiller plant and the University Bookstore, passing the Post Office and entering the student union on the second floor. For further parking information or a map see http://parking.appstate.edu or call the Parking and Traffic Office at 828-262-2878.

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