

# Writer shares power of poetry with others

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## EYE ON THE ARTS

Poetry has served as a healing tool for Margaret Dubay Mikus.

After receiving a degree in microbiology and then teaching at Lake Forest College, Dubay Mikus found life taking a different turn when she started to write poetry as therapy after a battle with multiple sclerosis.

"I can write no matter what happens to me. It is healing in its own way," said Dubay Mikus, who used poetry to cope when she was diagnosed with breast cancer a year later.

Leaving teaching in April 1995, Dubay Mikus has written 3,700 poems. She also leads classes with adults and children, showing them how poetry can be a form of personal expression.

"What you do with this is up to you. It can help you cope, sort out things in your life," she said. "You don't need to express it out loud."

Dubay Mikus recently met with a group of sixth- through ninth graders, who studied her works as well as wrote their own at a Poetry Jam at Vernon Area Public Library in Lincolnshire.

The Poetry Jam is one of three art classes the library plans each year for teens, said Eileen Glazik, who works in youth services.

"We want to build a solid base so they will still come to the library at this age. Sports can take over at this age in some cases," Glazik said.

Dubay Mikus said poetry can say something silly or express deep, emotional thoughts.

"I like to express myself, not make up things, and write what I'm feeling," said 11-year old Lauren Arnold of Buffalo Grove.

There's always something to write about, said Dubay Mikus, of Lake Forest. It can be nature or family, a fright to the reader or a show of gratitude. She said poetry also can be used to create a painting or a word picture.

"I sometimes have problems thinking of things to write about," said 12-year old Isabel Jacobsen of Lincolnshire. "I hope this will help me."

In the Poetry Jam, Dubay Mikus showed how to use meditation and breathing techniques to find creative energy. Among them, the group practiced cross crawling, integrating the left and right brain, and ear uncurling, bringing energy to the ears and opening the mind to information.

Before the group began writing, Dubay Mikus talked about basics:



**Margaret Dubay Mikus, a published poet, directs a Teen Café Poetry Jam workshop at Vernon Area Public Library in Lincolnshire, IL.**

Daily Herald Photo: Carey Best

what makes a poem, such as rhythm, rhyme and emotional impact; what a poem looks like; and how to use symbolism, citing a line of her poem, "my mind is a tree, with roots in my past and leaves in my future."

The writers also compared styles as Dubay Mikus read two poems. The first, "to Dance Is To Be," inspired after seeing a Hubbard Street Dance Company ballet, was smooth and flowing, whereas "Risk" was choppy and dramatic.

"The way you read it, it feels like you're doing ballet," said one teen about her first poem.

The young writers then practiced free-flowing poems, where the person writes the first thing that comes to mind.

"It is not thinking about writing, it is developing your own voice and letting that voice speak. You worry about style and grammar later," she said.

Dubay Mikus said she doesn't expect everything she says to apply to everyone. "They'll take away some piece useful to them," she said. "They will see writing as something they can do for themselves."