

Press Release

11 March 2020

National Centre for Writing teams up with drug and alcohol recovery service to publish a new book of poems

This week a new anthology of poems by writers recovering from addiction was launched at the National Centre for Writing (NCW) at Dragon Hall in Norwich.

Anonymous Memoirs is a partnership project between NCW and the Matthew Project, a charity supporting children and adults across Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex with issues around substance misuse and wellbeing.

The six-month project was designed to give participants in addiction recovery the opportunity to explore their voices through the written word, via a series of creative writing workshops led by local writers Lewis Buxton and Margaret Meyer, as part of a recovery programme. The programme culminated in a special anthology launch event at Dragon Hall on Monday afternoon.

Mark, a participant on the programme, said:

‘The Matthew Project has been fantastic. Not only has it got me in a group environment, it’s got me looking at myself and my different behaviours. It was a blessing to realise that I had all these people who are willing to help me.

‘Today I read out a poem by a guy called Cameron. In my twenties I was crippled with anxiety. Coming into my forties and now being clean and sober, I’ve recognised the need to step out of my comfort zone. Allowing me to get better and to grow. When coming here today...I didn’t allow it to eat me up like I would have done years ago. It’s the first time I’ve done something like this in twenty years.’

The participating writers took to the stage with their finalised poems, choosing to read their own or work by a friend from within the group. In attendance were their family and friends, and programme partners.

Andy Sexton, CEO of the Matthew Project said:

‘This partnership between the National Centre for Writing and the Matthew Project, funded by Broadland Meridian, has been incredibly important in helping build resilience in people in recovery. The process of writing, being published and being able to read aloud their work to an audience has been powerful. It enabled the participants to not only express their feelings about their past and current situations but helped them to look beyond the past to a stronger future.’

Hannah Garrard, Learning & Participation Manager at NCW said:

‘Partnering with the Matthew Project to bring creative writing into their recovery programme has been an inspiring experience for all involved. We learned a huge amount about how to facilitate a creative space for those in addiction recovery and learned equally as much from the writers who took part—so thank you to them for being so open and up for the challenge.’

Additional support for the project was provided by Broadland Meridian Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, and Arts Council England.

/END

Notes to Editors

1. Press enquiries to: Stephanie McKenna, Communications Manager, National Centre for Writing at steph@nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk or by calling 01603 877177
2. About National Centre for Writing (NCW)
NCW is a literature development organisation based in Norwich, England’s first UNESCO City of Literature. The National Centre for Writing at Dragon Hall promotes great literature, inspires communities through the power of writing, reading and literary translation, nurtures literary talent and hosts world-class events. www.nationalcentreforwriting.org.uk
3. The National Centre for Writing’s key stakeholder funders are Arts Council England, the University of East Anglia and Norwich City Council.
4. About the Matthew Project
For 34 years, the Matthew Project has been supporting vulnerable adults and young people in the East of England. Our work focuses on reducing drug and/or alcohol misuse, providing employment

support, and improving individuals' mental wellbeing. Over this time, we have built up a reputation for delivering high quality, effective services, focusing on both prevention and treatment. We believe that every person, no matter their age or background, deserves the chance to improve their physical and mental wellbeing. www.matthewproject.org/

5. Selected poem from *Anonymous Memoirs*:

A New Me

Karen

New home, new road

new life, new leaf

new page for me

to place my feet.

New dreams, new hopes

new thoughts, new goals

or are they old

just like 'new' Gold?

Gleaming, polished

and sparkling,

they're fitting like

the perfect ring.

They've swept me up

and pulled me in.

Right here, right now

my life begins.

Untitled

Ashley

One of the most amazing things is life:
the ups and downs the struggles, the strife.
One life starts, another ends
but life carries on, it curves round the bends.
One of the most amazing things is the rain
how it cleans everything, this dust, the pollution,

the air that we breathe, the smog that we see,
the microbes we don't, pulling them down,
Trapped in a boat.

The rain is amazing, keeping me afloat

As I lay here amazing, in a boat.

Where am I from?

Stephen

I'm from brothers and sisters that didn't get on,
I'm from having sex for the first time in the underpass
And feeling like a million dollars.
I'm from shamelessly stealing other people's ideas,
And passing them off as my own.
I'm from a day of civil disobedience that lasted for ever.
I'm from being scared at night on the way home.
I'm from peace plans that involved guns and roses.
I'm from hand-me-downs that I was proud to wear.