

# **WISCONSIN CHAPTER**

## **OF**

### **NATIONAL AT-RISK EDUCATION NETWORK**

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*Feb. 2006*

“We must capture a student’s heart, before we can capture their mind”.

#### **From the President:**

I want to share with you this time an e-mail that was sent to me last week. Last week was a very trying week, where nothing seemed to be going right. I was busy putting out fires and not much time to do the work I needed to do. Needless to say it was easy to lose focus and to start to forget those things and people who mean the most to you. I hope this story which is true, will be an encouragement to you as it was to me.

The Sandpiper, by Robert Peterson

She was six years old when I first met her on the beach near where I live. I drive to this beach, a distance of three or four miles, whenever the world begins to close in on me. She was building a sand castle or something and looked up; her eyes were as blue as the sea.

“Hello”, she said.

I answered with a nod, not really in the mood to bother with a small child.

“I am building”, she said.

“I see that. What is it”? I asked not really caring.

“Oh, I don’t know, I just like the feel of sand”.

That sounds good, I thought, and slipped off my shoes.

A sandpiper glided by.

“That’s a joy”, the child said.

“It’s what”?

“It’s a joy. My mama says sandpipers come to bring us joy”.

The bird went gliding down the beach. Good-bye joy, I muttered to myself, hello pain, and turned to walk on. I was depressed; my life seemed completely out of balance.

“What’s your name”? She wouldn’t give up.

“Robert”, I answered. “I am Robert Peterson”.

“Mine’s Wendy.... I’m six”.

“Hi, Wendy”.

She giggled. “You’re funny”, she said.

In spite of my gloom, I laughed too and walked on. Her musical giggle followed me.

“Come again, Mr. P, “she called “We’ll have another happy day”.

After a few days of a group of unruly Boy Scouts, PTA meetings, and an ailing mother, the sun was shining one morning as I took my hands out of the dishwater. I need a sandpiper, I said to myself, gathering up my coat.

The ever changing balm of the seashore awaited me. The breeze was chilly but I strode along trying to recapture the serenity I needed.

“Hello, Mr. P”, she said. “Do you want to play”?

“What did you have in mind”? I asked, with a twinge of annoyance.

“I don’t know. You say”.

“How about charades”? I asked sarcastically.

The tinkling laughter burst forth again. “I don’t know what that is”.

“Then let’s just walk”.

Looking at her, I noticed the delicate fairness of her face. “Where do you live”? I asked.

“Over there”. She pointed toward a row of summer cottages.

Strange I thought, in winter.

“Where do you go to school”?

“I don’t go to school. Mommy says we’re on vacation”.

She chattered little girls talk as we strolled up the beach, but my mind was on other things. When I left for home, Wendy said it had been a happy day. Feeling surprisingly better, I smiled at her and agreed.

Three weeks later, I rushed to my beach in a state of near panic. I was in no mood to even greet Wendy. I thought I saw her mother on the porch and felt like demanding she keep her child home.

“Look, if you don’t mind”, I said crossly when Wendy caught up with me, “I’d rather be alone today”. She seemed unusually pale and out of breath.

“Why”, she asked. I turned to her and shouted, “Because my mother died”! I thought, My God, why was I saying this to a little child?

“Oh”, she said quietly, “then this is a bad day”.

“Yes”, I said, “and yesterday, and the day before and..... Oh, go away”!

“Did it hurt”? She inquired.

“Did what hurt”? I was exasperated with her, with myself.

“When she died”?

“Of course it hurt”! I snapped, misunderstanding, wrapped up in myself. I strode off.

A month or so after that, when I next went to the beach, she wasn’t there. Feeling guilty, ashamed and admitting to myself I missed her, I went up to the cottage after my walk and knocked at the door. A drawn looking young woman with honey-colored hair opens the door.

“Hello”, I said, “I’m Robert Peterson. I missed your little girl today and wondered where she was”.

“Oh Yes, Mr. Peterson, please come in. Wendy spoke of you so much. I’m afraid I allowed her to bother you. If she was a nuisance, please accept my apologies”.

“Not at all.... She’s a delightful child”. I said, suddenly realizing that I meant what I had just said.

“Wendy died last week, Mr. Peterson. She had leukemia maybe she didn’t tell you”.

Struck dumb, I groped for a chair. I had to catch my breath.

“She loved this beach so when she asked to come, we couldn’t say no. She seemed so much better here and had a lot of what she called happy days. But the last few weeks, she declined

rapidly..." Her voice faltered, "She left something for you... if only I can find it. Could you wait a moment while I look"?

I nodded stupidly, my mind racing for something to say to this lovely young woman. She handed me a smeared envelope with "Mr. P" printed in bold childish letters. Inside was a drawing in bright crayon hues--- a yellow beach, a blue sea, and a brown bird. Underneath was carefully printed:

**A SANDPIPER TO BRING YOU JOY.**

Tears welled up in my eyes and a heart that had almost forgotten to love opened wide. I took Wendy's mother in my arms. "I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry", I uttered over and over, and we wept together. The precious little picture is framed now and hangs in my study. Six words---one for each year of her life---that speak to me of harmony, courage, and undemanding love.

A gift from a child with sea blue eyes and hair the color of sand---who taught me this gift of love.

This is a true story sent out by Robert Peterson. It happened over 20 years ago and the incident changed his life forever. It serves as a reminder to all of us that we need to take time to enjoy living life and each other. The price of hating other human beings is love oneself less.

Life, our jobs can be so complicated, the hustle and bustle of everyday traumas can make us lose focus about what is truly important or what is only a momentary setback or crisis. This week, be sure to give those who you love an extra hug and tell them you love them and by all means, take a moment...even if it only ten seconds, to stop and smell the roses. Everything that happens to us happens for a reason. Never brush aside anyone as insignificant. Who knows what they maybe able to teach us. I wish for you a SANDPIPER.

Randy

## **Getting to Know Your Board of Directors**

### **Laura Lindberg – Region 5 Representative**

Laura Lindberg is a teacher in the Alternative Education Program at River View Middle School in Kaukauna. The program began six years ago through DPI's grant. The goals of the program include increasing attendance and self-esteem, improving student attitude toward school and learning, reducing the number of class behavior problems and school suspensions, and decreasing the number of failing grades and advancing to the next grade level.

Laura is also a member of the Youth At-Risk Consortium (YAR) that meets monthly at the Fox Valley Technical College in Appleton. Prior to this year she served as a co-chair on this committee for two years and then was the chairperson for two years. This group provides support, learning opportunities, and guidance to at-risk teachers.

For the local teachers union in Kaukauna she serves as the Secretary. Some of her duties include attending school board meetings, assisting with Contract Maintenance Committee, participating in the Action Committee, and serving on the Executive Board.

On a personal note, Laura is married to Keith Lindberg and they live in Kaukauna, Wisconsin. They enjoy raising three teenagers (Dillon 18, Leslie 16, and Zachary 13) and being involved with their various activities.

Laura enjoys being involved with NARENWICH and the opportunity to work with an organization that provides support to at-risk programs. Please feel free to contact Laura at (920) 766-6111 ext. 4139, or 101 Oak Street, Kaukauna, 54130. She can also be reached at [lindberg1@kaukauna.k12.wi.us](mailto:lindberg1@kaukauna.k12.wi.us).

## **NEWS TO KNOW!**

In this section of the news letter we would like to highlight upcoming training opportunities and conferences. If you are aware of any information that you feel would benefit other members or their programs, please send us that information so we can help get out the word.

This will also be where we will try to keep you informed with state and national NAREN news. If you are aware of grants, laws, or news that would impact our teachers, students and programs, please send that information to me.

- Take a look at the new NARENWICH website at: [www.Narenwich.org](http://www.Narenwich.org).
- The 2006 NAREN National Conference will be February 22 – 25, 2006, at the Edgewater Beach Resort in Panama City, Florida. Build it into your budget for next year.
- The 2006 NARENWICH State Conference will be March 9 – 10, 2006, at the Plaza in Wausau, Wisconsin.
- **ALERT** – if you have not been getting your newsletter, or you have moved and/or your email has changed, please contact Betsy Haltinner at [haltibet@gscd.k12.wi.us](mailto:haltibet@gscd.k12.wi.us) or call (715) 265-4266 ext. 6220.

## **IT'S CONFERENCE TIME**

At the time of writing this newsletter, there are just **28** days remaining before the third annual “Reclaiming the Dream” conference. I can’t wait to see everyone again and this conference looks to be the best ever. We are in a new location that is just awesome. Dr. Patricia Wolfe will stir all of our hearts, and I will guarantee you won’t want to miss the surprise keynote address on Friday. A hint, he was a sectional speaker last year and people loved him. I was personally challenged and thrilled by what he had to say. The following are some tidbits you need to know and think about prior to coming to the conference.

**Credits** – are being offered for the conference. This year you can have a choice. Marian College is offering one (1) credit for \$150.00 and UW-River Falls is offering two (2) credits for \$625.00, for the conference. Registration for both credits will be at the conference.

**Elections** – at the membership meeting on Thursday at 4:00 PM. Elections will be held for regions 3, 4, 5, and 6. Region 3 represents CESA 7 and 8, Region 4 represents CESA 3 and 4, Region 5 is CESA 5 and 6 and Region 6 is CESA 1 and 2.

Each of these positions is for two (2) year terms, except for Region 4 which is fulfilling a position because of a resignation; it will be for just one (1) year. We meet four times a year. We need people who are committed to working with at-risk children and are willing to make an extra commitment to being one of the leaders of this organization. Without you, we cannot exist. If you are interested in serving on the NARENWICH board, please contact Jill Gurtner at (608) 829-9641, or email [jillbg@mcpasd.k12.wi.us](mailto:jillbg@mcpasd.k12.wi.us)

**At-Risk Funding** – the Political Action has been busy this year following up on the memberships request for at-risk funding opportunities. At the conference there will be a “white paper” with a list of Private Foundations, Community Foundations, Corporate Grantmakers, Public Charities, and Miscellaneous Opportunities. We hope that this paper will serve as a resource where your program may be able to find funding.

**Committee Work** – when you at the conference, why not give some thought to working on one of NARENWICH’s standing committees. We currently have three of them:

1. **Conference Committee** – if you’re interested in helping to plan for the annual NARENWICH Reclaiming the Dream Conference please talk with Jennifer Varsik. You will have to be fast, she will be the one that will be rushing all over to make sure you and I have the best time ever at the conference.
2. **Member Services Committee** – please see either Betsy Haltinner and/or Laura Lindberg. The membership committee has been busy updating and publishing the membership directory and is looking to expand it role this coming year to better serve our members.
3. **Political Action Committee** – is it you feeling the state and federal government ought to be doing more to support at-risk programs and children? Do you have a special interest in issues that are affecting our students and their families? Then this committee is for you. Please contact, Debbie Newbauer if you’re interested.

The email addresses for each of these people is at the bottom of this newsletter. Come on; get involved after all it is your organization.

## **TOP TEN REASONS to go the CONFERENCE**

10. Travel to Wausau and no matter from what direction you come from, you get to see beautiful Wisconsin.
9. Stay at a fantastic hotel with crazy and cool people.
8. Awesome food (all diets are off for these days)
7. A change of pace. I know we love our jobs and we love our students, but who doesn’t need a break!
6. NARENWICH Membership Meeting, free drinks (a couple), free food, smart talk, what could be better?
5. Interesting and Helpful Exhibits, they always give away something free!

4. Door Prizes, what has Jennifer cooked up this year?
3. SUPER SECTIONALS, great opportunities to learn, from people in the know.
2. OUTSTANDING KEYNOTE ADDRESSES from Pat Wolfe and ??????.
1. Connections with others in the field and bonding with Randy (just kidding)

WOW! How could you possibly stay away? See you in Wausau on March 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>.

## **HONORS and VICTORIES**

We need to share our stories. It was evident at the state conference that many great things are happening all across this great state. Why wait until the conference to share, let's share now!

Nothing is more uplifting to the spirit then to hear how one of our own has been recognized or a program has been honored for something they have accomplished. All we normally hear about is the bad news, a program has been cut or someone has lost their job. It is time to share the positive news. What about the students you have been working with is there a story you like to share? With all of the students graduating maybe there is one who just stands out among all of the rest. Maybe it would be their story that can bring hope and encourage someone to succeed.

**DC Everest** has elected to continue with the "Volunteens Program" at the middle school (after the grant ended) and in addition another full time teacher to the program.

Congratulations to DC Everest School District and to the Volunteens Program. The community should be proud of its school board for its commitment to at-risk students.

## **Flea Market**

Do you personally, or your program or even your school have something you like to buy, sell, or trade. When money is tight, like it is now, there is a better way to save a buck or two by making a few deals. There are times when we have something we are no longer using, but it just might be what someone else is looking for. Well here is our chance to share, just send in a brief description of what you are looking for, trying to sell, or trade. Don't forget to tell us how to get in touch with you.

Don't forget to share your ideas and news with us. E-mail Randy Hughes. [hughesr@kaukauna.k12.wi.us](mailto:hughesr@kaukauna.k12.wi.us). Here is a update list of your Board of Directors.

Randy Hughes, President	<a href="mailto:hughesr@kaukauna.k12.wi.us">hughesr@kaukauna.k12.wi.us</a>	(920) 766-6100
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Jill Gurtner, Past-President	<a href="mailto:jillbg@mcpasd.k12.wi.us">jillbg@mcpasd.k12.wi.us</a>	(608) 829-9641

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