



Ivy Page

# MFA GRADUATE REDEFINES COMMUNITY IN NEW HAMPSHIRE'S NORTH COUNTRY

By Dawn Coutu

Ivy Page is a poet with a terminal degree and a passion to connect with people. Since graduating from the MFA Program in Poetry two years ago, Ivy has been instrumental in creating ways to build a sense of community among the poets of New Hampshire's northern woods. Ivy traces her strong sense of community to the interaction she experienced with aspiring poets and her mentors at NEC. She has found ways to satisfy her own need to connect with people by leading a writing group, compiling a literary arts magazine, directing two reading series, and teaching as an adjunct professor.

Ivy has taught at Colby-Sawyer College, Plymouth State University, Keene State College, Axia College, and New Hampshire Technical Institute. Although she lives more than an hour from each campus, her passion for her craft and her strong sense of community inspired her to keep traveling the distance. "I have attacked my teaching with manic energy and with both hands. I am getting all that I can out of every moment."

She taps into that same energy when it comes to organizing two reading series: The Mill Fudge Factory and the White Mountain Kitchen Series. "It's time consuming to run two open mics. I negotiate time and money with authors. After I secure them, I list them on the Internet, with community TV stations, in newspaper articles, and then I put up local posters."

Through the White Mountain Kitchen Sessions, held at Ivy's home, she encourages poets to read new work that has not been presented before. Kitchen Sessions feature camp outs, late-night poetry readings, s'mores, and a morning poetry workshop – all within distance of

indoor plumbing. Some participants have described the sessions as "Woodstock for poetry, except with wine."

"The best thing about working with poets is that they are so accessible," notes Ivy. "They're not shut off. In a way, poets are their own agents and they have to be willing to talk to anyone."

Ivy has teamed up with husband Stephen and a number of NEC alumni from the MFA program to start a print and online literary and visual arts journal called *Organs of Vision and Speech Magazine* – or *OVS*. Cinnamon Stuckey, MFA '09 serves as Associate Editor, Lisa Sisler, MFA '09 serves as Assistant Editor, and guest editors have included several other MFA alumni.

As for her own work, Ivy maintains her high-level momentum by sending out new submissions as soon as she receives a response and keeps up to twenty-three journal submissions out at any given time. Her goal has been to publish each poem in her first manuscript within one year. "I do the research, and I spend the time. If you put submissions out shotgun style, it feels like a waste of time when you get the rejection letters back."

This approach has proven successful for Ivy, whose debut manuscript, *Any Other Branch*, was accepted for publication by Salmon Poetry within six months of submission. Even before Ivy's first manuscript went to print, Salmon Poetry accepted her second manuscript, *Elemental*, for publication in 2014. Salmon Poetry has also published works by noted poet Ray Bradbury.

Inspired by the encouragement of her mentors and colleagues, Ivy Page continues to redefine the meaning of community and connectedness through poetry.

## MFA PROGRAM CELEBRATES ITS TENTH ANNIVERSARY

This year, the Master of Fine Arts in Poetry program at New England College celebrates its tenth anniversary! From its beginnings, the MFA program has attracted an international faculty of leading figures in contemporary poetry who are both award-winning and widely published. The MFA in Poetry low-residency program continues to be recognized as one of only two single-genre creative writing programs in the country and combines a rigorous curriculum with innovative concentrations in performance, new media, prose, and translation.

The anniversary kick-off celebrations began with a reading organized through the New Hampshire Writers' Project as part of their first annual New Hampshire Book Festival in October.

A variety of special events are planned for the 2011-12 academic year that include a faculty and alumni reading in Chicago during the annual AWP conference in February. Additional programming will feature an alumni reunion over the June 23-24 weekend during the on-campus summer residency, which will host a book fair of alumni and faculty publications, readings, writing workshops and panels taught by returning alumni and guest faculty and open to the public.

For more information about New England College's MFA program, visit the program's blog at [www.Tygerburning.blogspot.com](http://www.Tygerburning.blogspot.com) or contact the New England College Graduate Office of Admission at 603-428-2252.