



## UW-Whitewater Researchers Work to Curb Food Pantry Stigmatization

In Wisconsin food scarcity affects over 600,000 citizens each year. An often overlooked and understudied concern is how this food insecurity impacts the perceptions of those affected. Jessica Maiers, Corporate Health major, and Dr. Christina Jones (Communication) are teaming up with the Fort Atkinson Food Pantry to help understand the stigmatization and stress that users of food pantries often face. Their project was funded by the [Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship Program in Community Based Research](#).

People in the community that need extra help aren't always aware of the services available to them due to the lack of communication, Maiers explains.

The work Maiers and Jones began this summer will apply the findings of their research at the St. Vincent de Paul food pantry in Madison, the largest food pantry in Dane County, to the user-choice pantry of Fort Atkinson. User-choice pantries operate similarly to grocery stores, therefore communication and interaction are often limited. Maiers, Jones, and the Fort Atkinson Food Pantry are "open to understanding lots of ways to make the program better," says Jones.



Christina Jones and Jessica Maiers

Currently, communication between the Fort Atkinson Food Pantry volunteers and the users of the pantry is limited. "I want to find out if that has an impact on the users' experience of this pantry," Maiers says. Through publications, stories, and supportive communication, the work of Maiers and Jones will aid in improving the well-being of volunteers and users at the food pantry. Additionally, there is a need to better educate the community about the needs of pantry users. "People have a very narrow perspective of what food insecurity is and why people use food pantries," explains Jones. Maiers remarks, "I want my research to figure out why there is food stigmatization going on in food pantries." This research is about more than just communication-it is about creating a positive, supportive experience for food pantry users.

### Upcoming Events

[National Black Student Union Conference, November 20-22](#)

[Fall & Winter Baseball Clinics](#)

Coming in February: [Fairy Gardens Workshop](#)

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Next month, Maiers and Jones will present their final report to the Fort Atkinson Food Pantry board. They will discuss their results relevant to the provision of social support from volunteers to clients, as well as provide them with an updated resource guide for clients and a new volunteer training tool. "The tool informs volunteers of the importance of their role and recognizes their contributions to furthering the mission of the pantry," Jones says.



## Festival Celebrates Talented Young Writers

Each fall, approximately 700 high school students and teachers participate in the [Creative Writing Festival](#). This year's festival will be held on November 18 and will offer participants a day of stimulating exposure to the writing of their peers and the chance to hear their work discussed and evaluated by professional writers in a college setting. Students submit their work in eleven categories including poetry, song lyrics, science fiction, and drama.

For the second year, Erin Ceello (Languages and Literatures), is directing the festival. "In my first year heading up the festival, I was most struck by the energy in the room and amazed at the talent of the students who attend the festival" Ceello notes. The public is invited to hear some of the writers at the open mic events from 3:00-5:00 pm in the Hamilton Room in the University Center. "I'm so proud to be part of an event like this that fosters creativity and the arts for young writers," says Ceello. "I walk away from it feeling energized and looking forward to the next year."

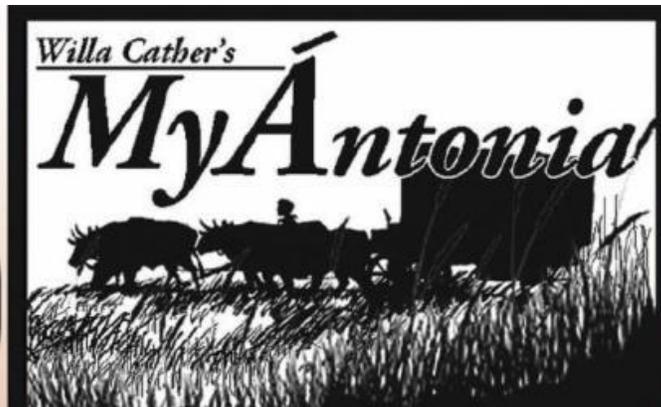




## Partners Come Together for the Big Read 2015

Over a dozen community partners have come together to collaborate under the leadership UW-Whitewater's [Young Auditorium](#) on events for the 2015 Big Read. This year marks the seventh year the Young Auditorium has been named a grant recipient for the [National Endowment for the Arts \(NEA\) Big Read](#) community reading project, serving community members in Rock, Walworth, and Jefferson counties.

This year's Big Read will offer a variety of programs related to the novel *My Ántonia* by American author, Willa Cather. Cather's book is revered as a classic novel of the American immigrant experience and events will highlight themes relating to American life and personal journeys past and present. Events include exhibits, film viewings, book discussions and faculty lectures hosted by libraries, the Hoard Museum in Fort Atkinson, and Fairhaven Senior Services, among many others. Susan Huss-Lederman and Marilyn Durham (Languages and Literatures) will lead events in Whitewater, Lake Geneva, and Fort Atkinson and Anne Stinson (Curriculum and Instruction) and members of the Dream Scholars and Colleagues will lead a talk in Elkhorn. Events take place through December 4. The complete calendar of events can be found at <https://youngauditorium.wordpress.com/>.



A program of the NEA, The Big Read is designed to broaden the understanding of our world, our communities, and ourselves through the joy of sharing a good book. Managed by Arts Midwest, this initiative offers grants to support innovative community reading programs designed around a single book. To date, more than 1,100 grants have been awarded to communities in the U.S. to host Big Read events since the program's 2007 national launch.

## Helping Educators Prepare Students for College-Level Writing

According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), only 24% of students between grades 8 and 12 are proficient writers. Secondary teachers and university faculty are concerned with how to effectively teach and assess writing so that students are prepared to write at the college level. In order to address this concern, UW-Whitewater, in partnership with the Wisconsin State Reading Association (WSRA) and the Cooperative Educational Service Agency #2 (CESA2), held a 3-day writing workshop this summer that paired teams of middle school and high school teachers with an advisor to explore new ways of preparing students to be effective writers.

About ninety middle school and high school teachers from across the state, worked with 20 advisors from UW-Whitewater, the WSRA, and district educators in collaborative teams at the summer [Writing Institute](#). An especially popular aspect of the Institute was using UW-Whitewater faculty members as advisors. They offered perspectives on student writing in their classes, and help give middle school and high school teachers an idea of what skills students need to develop to write at a college level. Having both sides, the pre- and post- high school writing, helped give a more complete picture of how students develop as writers, and how educators can help assess and prepare them. According to Linda Nortier, who helped organize and plan the conference, "All of the time that they spent here was really productive." Currently, the advisors are following up with their teams to get feedback on how implementing the plans into the classroom is going and what concerns still need to be addressed. Advisors are also collecting teachers' observations about the impact this the toolkit has had on their students.



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