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Office of University
Communications

October 8, 2015

Jamie Hughes ('04) Creates Writing Course to Help Participants Explore Emotions

By Jill Blank, Communications Intern

“Some of my more personal writing stems from my life-long battle with depression,” said Gardner-Webb alumnus Jamie Hughes.

“The ability to journal and the incredible benefits experienced from it, are, as I see, gifts from God that have been used for centuries to help heal broken hearts and manage life’s difficulties.”

Almost two years ago, Hughes was inspired to create a therapeutic writing class after reading about similar groups that had been created in the United Kingdom. This idea has formed into Writing for Well-Being, a course offered in the Upstate South Carolina region that helps participants explore and express important emotions and circumstances in their lives through various writing methods. Hughes shared that studies about therapeutic writing have continued to show that writing about traumatic events, deep fears, anxieties, emotions, painful experiences and memories has health benefits such as long-term improvements in mood and depressive symptoms.

Hughes has been journaling and writing poetry for over 20 years and wanted to share the healing benefits of expressive writing with others who struggle with difficult life circumstances. Having contended with clinical depression since the age of eight, Hughes began writing around the age of nine after his mother died from a terminal liver disease. His first stories were personal versions of the comic books that captured his attention and imagination. Writing methods such as journaling, poetry, fiction, and letter writing quickly became outlets for heavy emotions that Hughes could not express or share with others.

Later, Hughes fell in love with poetry and composing poems. “Inspiration is everywhere,” said Hughes. “My personal writings reflect the beauties of life, including struggles and loss, relationships with people and with Jesus, and the amazing world around us. I have had many opportunities throughout the years to share the gift of writing with others who suffer from depression, and now, through Writing for Well-Being, I have been able to expand that ministry.”

A 2004 graduate of Gardner-Webb, Hughes majored in psychology. He commented that many of the principles he learned as an undergraduate have served him well while leading the therapeutic writing classes that tend to function more as a support group than a lecture. “The counseling portion of my degree instilled such basic principles as listening, questioning, group process, and confidentiality,” he stated. “The professors at GWU also stressed ongoing education for any field of work in order to stay relevant and to build expertise.”

Currently, Hughes lives in upstate South Carolina with his wife, children and pets. Besides being the founder and facilitator of Writing for Well-Being, he is also a certified instructor and journal facilitator, as well as the author of two books, “The Jesus I Know,” and “The Game Plan for Defeating Depression.”

As important as writing is to Hughes, sharing that blessing with others is equally as important. His desire to help others has been the driving force behind Writing for Well-Being and a new workshop titled, “The Power of Forgiveness,” which focuses on helping people recognize and overcome obstacles to forgiveness. “Learning to explore this principle using personal writing methods can bring freedom from bitterness, guilt, and doubt,” shared Hughes, “and this workshop will begin that powerful process.” The workshop will be offered on Saturday, Oct. 10, from 1-4 p.m. at the Cyrill-Westside Library in Spartanburg, S.C. Registration for this free event is available by emailing one’s name and number to info@writingforwellbeing.net.

“My greatest desire is to share hope with people who might only see darkness or pain in their lives,” said Hughes. “Writing is such a dynamic and beautiful art form that leads to healing like no other treatment can.”

Writing for Well-Being is offered as either a six-week, small-group class or as a six-hour one-day workshop. For more information or to register, go to writingforwellbeing.net.