

From local writing workshops

WORDS ABOUT LIFE

By Lee Sharkey

One of life's unsung joys is having someone put into words an insight we've had but haven't found the language for. Once said or written, an insight can be held onto and passed on to others. Language is our common cloth.

Every other Monday for the last 20 years, a small group of people has gathered for a writing workshop I facilitate at the LINC Social Club, a club in Augusta for adults with mental-health issues.

The workshop is a place that honors creativity, where art provides the freedom to tell the truth, where language shapes reality and its rules are flexible.

We write poems and read them to each other. We read aloud poems by published writers, discuss what in them intrigues us, and steal ideas from them. We collaborate on poems, writing one line then passing the page around our circle, everyone in turn adding a line, trying to keep the poem coherent by giving up control over where it may be going. In this way, over the years we have become a community of writers.

I type out the poems from each session so people can appreciate their work in print and pass it on to others. About 10 years ago, I also began printing phrases from the poems in large type on 8½-by-11-inch sheets of colored paper, which we taped up around the club.

These LINC Words were our way of injecting the spirit of the workshop into the club as a whole. "I am here to say something," they announced. The words spoke from heart to heart and evoked laughter or reflection. They bore no author's name to show they came out of our collaboration.

The current members of the LINC Club writing workshop are Ruth Cohen, Cindy Dow, Greg Gagne, Mark Shedd and Deb Westbrook. The poems on this page are LINC Words that have emerged from our work together over the last year. These words have no pretensions. They look candidly within and they speak truth to power. They croon tenderly and give vent to anger. They rejoice in life and puzzle out its complications. And the language sounds as if it just popped out of someone's mouth.

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Kindness
may kill us
but not
just yet.

The
king's
army
stands
strong
against
the
winds
of
change.

I
needed
FRIENDS
and
all
I got
were
answering
machines.

I am here to say something.
The words taste strong in my mouth.

SOMEONE
has to make things happen,
whether it's a SINGER or a SWORDSMAN.

It is
my
lost
memory.
It is **I** who
is searching.

I am
temporarily
away—
I have
filed
MYSELF
for
LATER.

BARBIE
decides to divorce
Ken and marry
her **MIRROR.**

BIG
brains
sometimes
think
small.

Your students were faithful
and
have
left you.

Hang
in
there,
GOOD
BODY,
GOOD
FRIEND.

Continue to praise this mutilated world.

My regret does not lift me
to new heights of possibility.

The net is too small;
some fish escape.
Someone will starve tonight.

Look to the sky for beauty
and to your feet
to get from here to there.