

# Writer introduces 'Young Authors Project' to high school students

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PDHS English Teacher Tony North, students Tori Sharp, Lacey Schwartzentruber and author Lauren Kirshner look over information on the Young Authors Project which starts in January. Photo by Casandra Bellefeuille

She's Toronto's best emerging author and she hopes to help influence and mentor young, creative minds in Paris.

Lauren Kirshner was at Paris High on Wednesday for a meet and greet in a lead up to the start of a series of workshops designed to help youth find their creativity and discover their passion for writing, editing and publishing. The workshops, which run from January to March, are funded by an Ontario Trillium Grant, sponsored by the Brantford Expositor and organized in co-operation by the County of Brant Library and Kids Can Fly.

Youth ages 12-18 are invited to take part in the 'Young Authors Project.'

Kirshner has been involved in arts education since 2005 and regularly leads writing workshops in schools, community centres and libraries.

Kirshner was invited as the writer-in-residence after maintaining a connection with the community from her 2010 visit to Paris as the One Book One Brant author.

"I'd love to see a group of young people realize in practice that a career in writing and the arts is viable, that it is possible and it can be extremely rewarding," said Kirshner during an interview with The Paris Star. "I want youth to embrace their creativity and have a lot of fun in expressing their ideas."

Tori Sharp and Lacey Schwartzentruber are both in a media class at PDHS and were referred to the program by their teacher. They attended the information session on Wednesday to get more details of the program.

"Writing is always something I've been interested in," said Schwartzentruber. "It's an amazing opportunity to work with a published writer."

Sharp said she wants to strengthen her writing skills and determine if she is capable of pursuing a career in the field.

Now an established, gifted writer, Kirshner remembers the days when she was still finding herself, through her writing. As a child, she'd read newspapers, annotated the articles and took them in her own creative direction. In high school, Kirshner said she was further influenced by one particular English teacher.

"I was exposed to great Canadian female and American writers. He was very encouraging in giving me that mentorship that is crucial for a young writer," Kirshner recalled.

The upcoming workshops will present youth with the opportunity to explore different genres from poetry to creative writing and writing for the news. They will take part in every process from writing to editing and eventually publishing. At the end of the project, the participants will unveil a magazine that showcases all their talent.

Kirshner said she wants the kids to have control in the illustrations and creative design of the pages as well.

The magazine launch takes place on Saturday, March 26.

All applications for the program must be returned to the library by January 8, 2011. Only 11 applicants will be selected to take part in the project, said Zita Phillippo, children's librarian. Program organizers will determine who is best suited for Kirshner's workshops, based on enthusiasm and writing samples. Accepted students will be notified by January 15.

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