

Independent publishing brand set to launch virtual zine workshops

Paula Sheil is optimistic about the creative writing space in Stockton and her role as a founder of Tuleburg Press. Located on the first floor of Cort Tower in downtown Stockton, the small independent publishing press is tucked away near the elevator lobby behind two double doors. The Write Place logo, sprawled just above these doors, invites writers of all ages to explore the unique, vintage-inspired space filled with library books and journals. Table display cases are filled with handmade leather bound journals, zines and other trinkets, with a large mural overlooking the workshop area. Many pieces of old technology give guests a sense of nostalgia, as rows of typewriters stretch atop filing cabinets near a space dedicated to their 1901 Pearl Press for letterpress printing.

Sheil, a full time professor at Delta College and published writer, developed a vision for a place in Stockton to foster young writers and creatives to showcase their work and learn new skills. With an accomplished list of published work including The Record and New York Times, her latest venture in developing programs for the organization lay the groundwork for The Write Place. If Tuleburg Press is the pillar of the organization, then The Write Place truly is the heart of each idea and program developed beyond those doors inside Cort Tower.

Before the pandemic, The Write Place hosted several free workshops and demonstrations including zine fest and a rhyme/rap workshop hosted by Orlando “Zeps” Molina, a published author and hip hop performer. Young, local writers throughout San Joaquin County, school districts and charter schools participated in exploring the creative process of book arts. A zine, pronounced zein, is a self-published book created by folding, cutting, and pasting images and words together. While the task seems daunting at first, Sheil explained each unique workshop is an outlet for the community to be creative, expressive, and collaborative in writing and art. "Writing can be an intimidating, solitary act. Writing in community is powerful and uplifting! Think of it as dancing with words! Collectively, we can create a stronger and more vibrant Stockton story," Sheil said.

As nonprofits continue to survive the pandemic over the past year, Sheil applied for grants to maintain her organization and these community workshops in Stockton. This year, grants were awarded to Tuleburg Press from the California Arts Council for Youth Arts Action and the Stockton Arts Commission. Along with these grants, the organization received awards from the Community Development Block Grant program by San Joaquin County and the City of Stockton.

The grants allow another key element for The Write Place, a new team to assist in transforming these hands-on zine workshops onto a virtual platform. The writing project is a collaborative effort between Sheil and her creative team that includes Luna Jimenez, Kota Borsdorf, Viridiana Acevedo Ramirez, Benjamin Sanchez, and Orlando “Zeps” Molina. Molina combines his love for hip hop culture to teach kids how to write and rhyme. He explained the zine process of images and words to create a personal publication to allow kids to express their creativity with a hands-on approach. “Kids like to make collages and dream boards that directly correlate to creating a zine,” Molina said. “Tuleburg offers all these options for kids to expand their horizons, and do what they already love to do.”

The adult and kid zine workshops run through June 30, with staff providing materials and instruction on how to create zines. Along with these workshops, the kids program will include local 4th to 6th grade students from local charter schools and Stockton Unified School District. Borsdorf, a local Stocktonian and artist, will instruct the kid zine workshop. She stated the importance of art in communities, and how these projects can help people communicate and connect with each other. “The skill level doesn’t matter. It is finding what you want to say and having confidence to say it — however you can, through art, music and words,” Borsdorf said.

Jimenez will facilitate monthly community writers sessions, creating a writing prompt for writers to engage and submit work. Over the course of each month, these featured writing prompts will be developed into a digital chapter book and then distributed to the community.

With all of the pages falling into place, Tuleburg Press continues moving forward, assisting and connecting local writers and creatives in their unique space. “Stockton’s literacy rate will rise if we embrace the book and its parts. The means of creation will foster the act of writing,” Sheil said. “Books will never go out of style, and writing will always be an important skill.”

For additional information and Eventbrite registration links, please visit www.tuleburgpress.com