

ENRICHMENT EVENT #1 “EMBRACING THE PERSONAL STORY”



The first Enrichment Event, entitled “Embracing the Personal Story”, took place on June 7 in the Anam Cara Room. The evening began with a brown bag supper at 5:30 PM. While we ate, we sat around tables, catching up with old friends and making new ones.

At 6 PM Janice Lautier was introduced to the group. Janice is a graduate of our own Internship in Spiritual Direction. She has been very active in the Women’s Leadership Institute and holds a Master’s Degree in Spirituality from Hartford Seminary. Janice is a board certified chaplain and currently serves as the Director of Spiritual Care and Education at Griffin Hospital in Derby, CT.

Rather than lecture, Janice engaged us in an interactive process, encouraging us to express insights and provide examples of the themes she discussed. We talked about creating a sacred space and exploring the “between” of the speaker and listener. We looked at how to “bracket” our own resistance so that the story can more easily emerge. We also considered the potential for standing on “numinous ground” with the seeker, as well as the necessity of being fully present. Some of the points discussed had a familiar quality, but we viewed them from the chaplain’s perspective, which shed new light upon them.

Then Janice led us in a guided meditation designed to help us get in touch with one of our own personal stories. When everyone had in mind a story they were comfortable sharing we divided into pairs, seeking out a partner we did not know well. That was not too difficult, as we had several persons new to the Center in attendance. Each member of the dyad took a turn sharing their story, while the listener sought use what they had learned earlier. I was particularly pleased to recognize that my partner and I entered into the numinous space Janice had described earlier. Then everyone came back together to process what we had experienced.

Participants are still talking about that evening. A sample of their comments includes the following statements:

- I greatly appreciated being back in the Anam Cara Room in a sharing and compassionate circle once again. I was also grateful for the chance to share myself with people I have known, but whom I had not previously encountered so personally.
- The gathering of the community for this story telling evening was full of warm energy. For a moment I felt like I was back at the "little white house ".
- Janice provided helpful, tangible suggestions for listening deeply to people's stories. Practicing with a partner gave immediacy to what we learned, and I discovered some important ways that I can create more space for people to tell their stories.
- I liked the reminder about honoring the sacredness of the story and the healing power of being deeply listened to. This type of gathering helps to hone our skills as Directors.
- I appreciated the discussion on how we can be open to the other person without losing ourselves in their story. The power of reframing things and the benefits of exploring what a story from the past means to the teller today impressed me also.
- Getting together with another person whom you have never met and sharing a bit of your story with them was a transcendent experience! We certainly went beyond our separateness into a deeper understanding of just being human!
- I loved the way we experienced holding the other's story with compassion and without judgment.

In conclusion, the first of our Enrichment Events was a great success, and we are very grateful to Janice Lautier for the great job she did. I know that those who took part are eagerly looking forward to the next Enrichment Day. I hope you can join us then. Stay tuned for information on the topic, day, and time.

Blessings

Oscar

[to read about the rationale for the new series of Enrichment Events, click here.](#)