



St. Andrews
PRESBYTERIAN COLLEGE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 6, 2008

Area readers invited to participate in St. Andrews Reading Program

The critically acclaimed book “The High Heart” will be this summer’s reading assignment for incoming freshmen at St. Andrews Presbyterian College.

The author, Joseph Bathanti, will appear in Laurinburg in September with times scheduled with area residents as well as students at St. Andrews. Community readers are also encouraged to read the book.

Bathanti is a former faculty member at St. Andrews.

Winner of the 2006 Spokane Prize for Short Fiction, the stories in “The High Heart” are linked through some heartbreakingly vivid characters headed by the young Fritz Sweeny and his volatile and eccentric parents. The setting is Pittsburgh in the sixties and seventies, when the city still lay in the trough of industrial collapse. Through the painfully honest perplexity of Fritz, readers are given a clear view of the family, the neighborhood, the city, and the era.

“I was thunderstruck,” said Bathanti upon hearing the news his book had been selected. “A writer likes to believe that folks actually read his book, but to be assured of a readership that a program like this guarantees is a dream come true. As much as anything, I was absolutely taken unawares.”

The Community Reading Program provides a common text for students, parents and community members that will be read, studied, discussed, debated and written about in classrooms, dorm rooms, family rooms, and library reading rooms throughout the area.

“The College hopes this effort will foster a larger sense of community built around the intellectually stimulating activities of reading, writing and open discussion,” said Professor David Herr, director of Quest I and associate professor of History. “This effort will also draw patrons to the College and public libraries while emphasizing the life-long pleasures of reading.”

Bathanti grew up in Pittsburgh and arrived in North Carolina in 1976 as a VISTA volunteer in the state’s prison system. He is the author of four books of poetry, the most recent of which, “This Metal”, was nominated for the National Book Award, as well as two novels, “East Liberty” and “Coventry”, for which he received the 2006 Novello Literary Award.

“More than anything, I feel honored,” said Bathanti, “not only that the book garnered this kind of attention, but that St. Andrews, a college that I not only taught at for a year, but a place that I hold in great esteem as one of the last outposts of what a true liberal education embodies, was the college that chose ‘The High Heart’.”

The recipient of numerous other honors, among them the Linda Flowers Prize, the Sara Henderson Hay Prize, and the Sherwood Anderson Award, he teaches creative writing at Appalachian State University.

Bathanti remembers fondly his days at St. Andrews. “It’s no secret that I consider Ron Bayes my literary Godfather so I was thrilled to be around him daily and work with the St. Andrews Press, St. Andrews Review, and the Writers Forum. That year with Ron was a kind of literary apprenticeship for me.

“In addition to Ron, it was also a privilege to have as colleagues gifted, wonderful teachers like Dick Prust, Dub White, Bill Alexander, Neil Bushoven, Bob Hopkins, Carl Walters, Bill and Edna Ann Loftus – people who have dedicated their lives to St. Andrews. Clyde Edgerton and David Rigsbee, two of North Carolina’s terrific writers, were also on the faculty at the time. I even got to teach a SAGE class entitled ‘Prison Literature’, the coolest composition class I’ve ever taught.”

“Every year, members of the St. Andrews faculty consider a variety of sources for the summer reading,” said Herr. “This year ‘The High Heart’ offers an exciting opportunity for the College as we invite area readers to join our summer reading program.”

The summer reading becomes part of general education coursework when the first-year students begin their fall classes. Entering classes in recent years have read Tim Tyson’s “Blood Done Sign My Name”, Kaye Gibbons’ “Ellen Foster”, Bill McKibben’s “Enough”, Gregory Maguire’s “Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West”, and Yann Martel’s “Life of Pi”.

For more information, go to the St. Andrews website at <http://www.sapc.edu/academics/quest/summerreading.php> or call Gary Greene, Communications Director, 277-5671.

What Others Say About The Book

“The High Heart is a gripping, soulful collection of linked stories. The main characters are indelible – the young protagonist, Fritz, his passive-but-sweet father Travis, and his explosive mother, Rita, whose dark sexuality and dissatisfaction loom like storm clouds over these stories. The writing can be fierce, funny, and touching. The High Heart satisfies that mysterious quality of great fiction by managing to be both truthful and artful at the same time.”

- Jess Walter, author of *The Zero* and final judge for the 2006 Spokane Prize

“Joseph Bathanti's *The High Heart* pulls us in with an urgency that never lets up, imbuing his own little corner of urban America with the same kind of mythic hyperreality as William Kennedy's Albany novels or Faulkner's *Yoknapatawpha County*.”

- Nino Ricci, author of *Testament*

“I wish I could write like Joseph Bathanti. Sentence by sentence, scene by scene—these characters' lives reveal themselves in all their quirky, dysfunctional, comic, tragic complexity and high-quality detail. This is an author who loves his characters, even the worst of them, and because of this I love them too and will never forget them.”

- Lewis Nordan, author of *Lightning Song* and *Boy with Loaded Gun*

“In this beautifully written and deeply moving collection of linked short stories, Joseph Bathanti gives us all the sad trappings of working-class life—the Rolling Rock beer, the Pall Mall cigarettes, the plastic lawn chairs, the beat-up Bonneville and Impalas. Yet the world of *The High Heart* never feels depressing. It's impossible not to cheer on young Fritz as he struggles to make sense of his eccentric parents, the ever-bickering, memorable couple known as Travis-and-Rita.”

- Rita Ciresi, author of *Pink Slip* and *Sometimes I Dream in Italian*

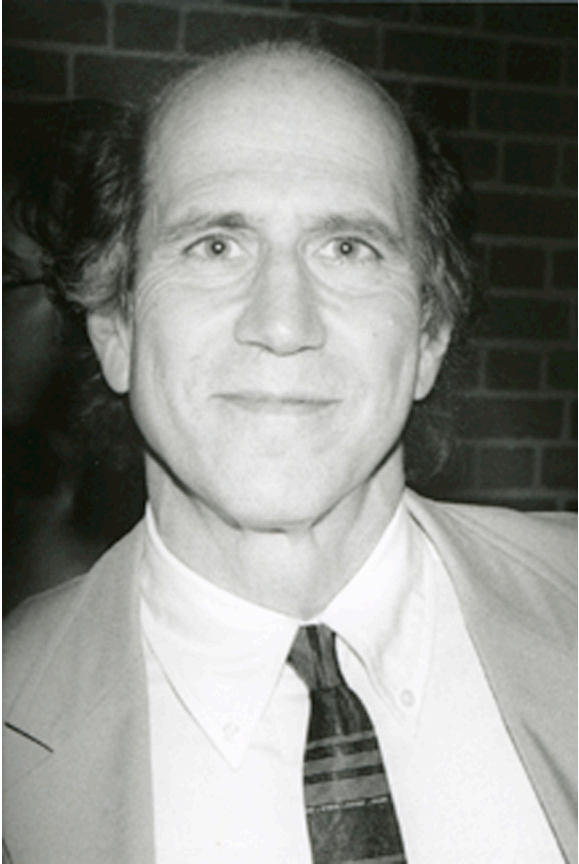
About St. Andrews Presbyterian College

St. Andrews Presbyterian College is a four-year liberal arts and sciences college situated on 600 acres around a 70-acre lake in the Sandhills region of North Carolina. Long known for its innovation and academic excellence, the college boasts an unparalleled interdisciplinary curriculum, a study abroad program on three continents, a multidisciplinary science lab the size of an indoor arena, the first undergraduate college press in the country, the first four-year degree in therapeutic horsemanship and equine business management, and an award-winning bagpipe band. Students enrolled at St. Andrews come from 42 states and eleven countries.

Further information may be obtained by visiting the College's website www.sapc.edu or calling admissions at 800-763-0198 sending an e-mail to admissions@sapc.edu.

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Author photograph – Joseph Bathanti



Book Cover – published by the Eastern Washington University Press

the HIGH HEART

stories by Joseph Bathanti

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