



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
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The YMCA's Downtown Writers Center,  
Syracuse University's Burton Blatt Institute,  
and Nine Mile Magazine Present

# NUMBERLESS DREAMS

Online Creative Writing Workshops  
for Disabled Teens

FALL 2020 PROGRAM GUIDE

# ABOUT THE PROGRAM

## Is your teen fired up about writing? We want them to join us in Numberless Dreams!

Numberless Dreams is a unique new series of online creative writing workshops specifically geared towards teens with disabilities. The writing instructors for this program are not only all professional, published authors—they are themselves members of the disabled community, ensuring that your teen will receive not only knowledge but support and understanding.

Each week, we will meet together on Zoom to engage in writing exercises, learn the tools of the trade, and share and respectfully critique student work. Four different classes will be offered simultaneously, and students will be able to choose between poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Class sizes will be limited to 8 students each, to make space for individual attention. All Zoom sessions will include captioning, and where needed, instructors will describe visual images in text.

**Due to the generous support of our funders, this program is free for all registered students.** The only thing students will need in order to participate is an internet-ready device that is capable of using Zoom, and a passion for writing and learning. Because we are meeting online, there is no geographical barrier to participation: this program is open to youth from any state.

A second session of this program will be offered in Winter-Spring 2021. After that season is ended, *Nine Mile Magazine* will publish an anthology of student work, including poetry and prose by youth from both the fall and spring sessions. Selections of students' work will also appear in upcoming issues of *Wordgathering: A Journal of Disability Poetry and Literature*.

**Poetry • Fiction • Nonfiction**

**Grades 9 - 12**

**Saturdays, 2:30-4:30 EST**

**8 weeks, beginning October 10, 2020  
(no class 11/28)**

*See the last page for registration information.*

Questions? Call us at (315) 474-6851 x380, or email [dwcworkshops@ymcacny.org](mailto:dwcworkshops@ymcacny.org).

## ABOUT OUR TEACHING WRITERS

**Ona Gritz** is the author of the poetry collection *Geode*, a finalist for the Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award, and *On the Whole: a Story of Mothering and Disability*, a memoir that Paige Bennett of *Blogher* says, “reads like poetry” and “should be required reading for all new moms.” Her work has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Utne Reader*, *MORE magazine*, *Ploughshares*, *The Bellevue Literary Review*, *Beauty Is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, and many other journals and anthologies. Ona’s essay, “It’s Time,” which appeared in the *Rumpus*, was named a Notable Essay in *Best American Essays, 2016*. Ona has also written two children’s books, including *Tangerines and Tea*, *My Grandparents and Me*, which *Nick Jr. Family Magazine* named Best Alphabet Book of the year, and *Scholastic Parent & Child Magazine* named one of six Best Books for 2005 and included in their list of Teacher’s Picks.

**Stephen Kuusisto**, who has been blind since birth, is the author of *Eavesdropping: A Memoir of Blindness and Listening* and the acclaimed memoir *Planet of the Blind*, a *New York Times* “Notable Book of the Year”. He has also published two books of poems, *Only Bread*, *Only Light* and *Letters to Borges*. Recognized by the *New York Times* as “a powerful writer with a musical ear for language and a gift for emotional candor,” Steve has made numerous appearances on programs including *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Dateline NBC*, National Public Radio and the BBC. His most recent memoir is *Have Dog, Will Travel*, and his newest book of poems will be published in fall 2020 by Tiger Bark Press.

**DJ Savarese** is a public speaker, writer, and activist who works to make literacy-based education, communication, and inclusive lives a reality for all nontraditionally speaking people through artful advocacy, teaching, and community organizing. A 2017-19 OSF Human Rights Initiative Youth Fellow alum, he is also the co-producer of the Peabody award-winning, Emmy-nominated documentary *Deej: Inclusion Shouldn’t be a Lottery*, which unearths discrepancies between insider and outsider perspectives of his lived experience as an alternatively-communicating autistic person. DJ is the author of the chapbook *A Doorknob for the Eye* and has published poems and prose in *The Iowa Review*, *Seneca Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Nine Mile Magazine*, *Autism in Adulthood*, and *Stone Canoe*.

**Ralph James Savarese** is the author of *Reasonable People: A Memoir of Autism and Adoption* (Other Press 2007), which *Newsweek* called a “real life love story and a passionate manifesto for the rights of people with neurological disabilities.” It won the Independent Publishers Gold Medal in the category of health/medicine/nutrition, and a chapter was selected as a “notable essay” in the *Best American Essays* series of 2004. The book was featured on CNN’s *Anderson Cooper 360* (twice), ABC’s *Nightly News with Charles Gibson*, and NPR’s *Diane Rehm Show*. Savarese is also the winner of a National Endowment for the Humanities summer fellowship and a Mellon-funded Humanities Writ Large fellowship, which enabled him to join the Neurohumanities Research Group at Duke University’s Institute for Brain Sciences for the academic year 2012-2013.

**Daniel Simpson** is the author of the poetry collection *School for the Blind*, published in 2014 by Poets Wear Prada. His work has appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *The Cortland Review*, *Beauty Is A Verb: The New Poetry of Disability*, *The New York Times*, and elsewhere. The recipient of a Fellowship in Literature from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, he served, along with his wife Ona Gritz, as Poetry Editor for *Referential Magazine*, an online literary journal, from 2013 to 2016. He also co-authored, with Ona Gritz, the poetry collection *Border Songs, a Conversation in Poems*.

## ABOUT OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

**The Burton Blatt Institute (BBI) at Syracuse University** reaches around the globe in its efforts to advance the civic, economic, and social participation of people with disabilities. BBI builds on the legacy of Burton Blatt, former dean of SU’s School of Education and a pioneering disability rights scholar, to better the lives of people with disabilities. BBI has offices in Syracuse, NY, New York City, Washington, D.C., Lexington, KY, and Atlanta, GA.

Given the strong ties between one’s ability to earn income and fully participate in their communities, BBI’s work focuses on two interconnected Innovation Areas: Economic Participation and Community Participation. Through program development, research, and public policy guidance in these Innovation Areas, BBI advances the full inclusion of people with disabilities.

**Nine Mile** publishes twice yearly, showcasing authors whose work, energy, and vision seem strike the editors as the most deeply entangled with life. The magazine’s title comes from Nine Mile Creek, a 25-mile long waterway formed 14,000 years ago by glaciers in upstate New York. Like its namesake, Nine Mile is varied and surprising, with different writings coming together to form a cohesive whole.

Nine Mile’s purpose is to bring great writing—and great talk about writing—to readers, without consideration of school, style, or form, but with a special focus on Central New York. This includes writers within and outside the mainstream, writers with disabilities, writers of color, writers with marginalized genders and sexual orientations, and writers from different cultures and religions. The magazine is produced in inclusive and accessible formats.

# NUMBERLESS DREAMS REGISTRATION - FALL 2020

## REGISTRATION DEADLINE: Monday, October 5

*Numberless Dreams is a free program for all qualifying students.  
However, because space and funding is limited, we ask  
that you do not register your teen for this program  
unless they intend to make every effort to attend all program sessions.*

***We are limited to a maximum of 32 students for this season.  
All space will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis. Register early!***

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Desired genre (*please circle*):      Poetry      Fiction      Nonfiction      No preference

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address (*street, city, state, zip*): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a YMCA of Central New York Member? YES / NO (If yes, branch: \_\_\_\_\_)

Are you a YMCA Member from another YMCA? YES / NO (If yes, location of YMCA: \_\_\_\_\_)

Optional Information: Please tell us anything about your teen that you believe will help us to improve their experience. All student information will be kept entirely confidential.

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\_\_\_\_\_

My child may \_\_\_\_\_ / may not \_\_\_\_\_ be photographed for promotional and/or archival use by the YMCA of Central New York. Parent Signature below: \_\_\_\_\_

***This program is made possible by funding from the County of Onondaga, administered by CNY Arts; the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature; and the Gifford Foundation. We thank them for their support!***



**Council on  
the Arts**