

Two Women Making a Difference

By Cathy Tyson



From left, Caroline Lovell and Mary Tuchscherer Photo Cathy Tyson

They met through the School of Holistic Studies at John F. Kennedy University, connecting through their use of story via the written word for Mary Tuchscherer and photographs for Caroline Lovell. “I think we are perfect examples of women over a certain age finding our passions and having a lot of energy at this stage of our lives,” said Tuchscherer.

Tuchscherer, an Adjunct Faculty member at JFK, founded Voice Flame Writers in 2003 to support and instruct women to

value their experience through legacy and story. She just finished teaching a writing retreat for women in Lafayette, entitled *Your Story: Your Legacy*. “If you write about a loss or a fear and you’ve held it so tight, writing allows for the space to really think about it,” she reflected. The goal of her workshop is self-exploration to open and heal the heart and celebrate the wisdom of one’s life experience.

Travelling through Malawi with friend and fellow JFK faculty member Masankho Banda in

2007, Tuchscherer felt a distinct chemistry with the local women. “As it turned out, my second day there a group of women and I found an immediate connection through books – *Eat, Pray, Love, Three Cups of Tea*. They have access to amazon.com.”

After finding out that there were no books published by Malawian women, she realized, “it was one of those moment in life where I just knew that I was called to do this, that I could serve.”

In 2009 Tuchscherer and Lovell are going back Malawi to host writers’ workshops and write a book encapsulating their experiences with Lovell providing the photographs, and produce a video documentary. “I see groups of women in Malawi getting together to tell their stories for future generations,” said Tuchscherer. Lovell has a vision for the finished photographs as part of a multi-media exhibit, “large portraits of the storytellers; within the images are embedded parts of their stories, along with a button to hear their voices, and take home story cards for viewers.” She feels that

stories need to be released back into the world again where they have the possibility of affecting new people.

“I want to invite the people of Lamorinda to get involved – fundraising, grant writing, through workshops here. We are sponsoring a book drive to raise books to ship to Malawi. What we want to do is invite people to donate books and particularly because this is all about women, to bring in a book by their favorite female author, so that we can expose the women of Malawi to other cultures and what’s possible,” said Tuchscherer.

Book donations can be dropped off at Orinda Books or Canetti’s Book Shop, also in Orinda, as well as the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce. The next local writers’ workshop will be held on July 12 in Lafayette, contact Mary Tuchscherer at www.voiceflamewriters.com for more information.