MFA in Creative and Professional Writing grads land book deals
Sara Lewis

Since graduating from WestConn, C.W. Henderson and Kate Meadows have received publishing contracts for projects they began while students in the Creative and Professional Writing program.

“I would not have a book contract with Penguin if Dr. Briggs had not encouraged me,” Henderson said. The book, *Open the Gates to the Ivy League*, started with an idea Henderson had about creating a database of alternative admissions processes students could use to gain admission to Top 40 universities. Professor Emeritus Dr. John Briggs worked with Henderson to develop a book proposal that ultimately led to a book deal with Penguin.

“I came from the news business,” Henderson, founder of *NewsRx*, said. “I did not know a lot about the process of writing books and publishing.” Henderson was part of the first class of MFA in Creative and Professional Writing graduates. In May 2007, he submitted his thesis project, *White Pawn*, a creative non-fiction manuscript about Kalani Rosell, the first non-Hawaiian student to attend a Kamehameha school. Henderson served as press spokesmen for the Rosell family when Kalani’s story became an international news story. Henderson and Kalani have recently launched a new venture: *pubz.me* is a database of articles for the purpose of helping bloggers and journalists generate content.

Kate Meadows also got her start in the news business, working for the local paper in Pinedale, Wyoming at age fifteen. From an early age, Meadows was attracted to “real-life” stories, she said. Meadows entered the writing program at WestConn with the intention of writing about her idyllic—if somewhat unconventional—childhood. Mentors Daniel Asa Rose and Paola Corso encouraged her to dig deeper into her own story, to search for conflict and meaning, and to find a natural balance between the negative and positive.

Meadows was inspired by the workshops at WestConn writing residencies. “I like the candid nature of them,” she said. “It’s a democratic experience.” The book tour for *Tough Love: A Wyoming Childhood* has given Meadows the chance to travel the country and offer her own workshops. “I’m there to teach, but also to learn.” After graduating in May 2010, Meadows began the project of cataloguing the history of Bucky’s, her family’s store in Wyoming. Her goal is to “bridge people through story and expression.” She collected stories about Bucky’s fifty year history from family members and customers, and has recently published them in a book, *Bucky’s: Stories and Recollections of Fifty Years in Business*.

Both Meadows and Henderson chose to enroll in the WestConn Creative and Professional Writing Program because it offers a low-residency MFA. Meadows was able to balance family and writing while living across the country from Connecticut. Henderson said
that he was attracted to the program’s location because he is often in New York City for work. He was able to continue working in journalism full-time while he was earning his degree.