"It is in the turmoil of chaos that we discover what, if anything, we are.” -Orson Scott Card

Ask educators why they teach, and you will hear stories of inspiration from family members who were educators to the much-needed support for a struggling student. Cindi Rigsbee, the 2008-09 North Carolina Teacher of the Year, even wrote a book about the influence her first grade teacher had on her teaching career, entitled “Finding Mrs. Warnecke.”

Designing the agenda for the 2014 Emerging Issues Forum: Teachers and the Great Economic Debate, I was afforded the opportunity to meet a multitude of inspiring individuals. One Cimarron in particular, a
Looking for an engaging activity for your K-12 students this summer? Schedule your Summer in the Commons tour today!
For more information, contact Simone Collman.

Help Youth Get FutureWork-Ready This Summer!

IEI has been offered a generous $10,000 donation in support of its summer youth programs aimed at educating K-12 and college students on becoming “FutureWork-ready” leaders for North Carolina.

The catch? IEI must secure another 216 supporters, with gifts of at least $20.16!
Please help us meet this 216 supporters = $10,000 in youth program challenge!

Vivian Connell served on a panel during the 2014 Emerging Issues Forum moderated by John Merrow, education consultant for PBS NewsHour. In this “teacher town hall” session, Vivian was one of six panelists sharing their reasons for having left the teaching profession. She explained that she had left to pursue a law degree, yet she missed teaching dearly, “I miss the letters and the blessing of having a profound impact on students’ lives.” Following her passions, she found herself back in the classroom working with at-risk and ESL students for Chapel Hill – Carrboro Schools.

In the spring of 2014, amidst the planning of a trip to the Holocaust Museum for her students, Vivian was diagnosed with ALS, a progressive neurodegenerative disease. Acutely aware of her limitations, Vivian created the Writing Wrongs program and raised more than $30,000 in just three weeks to bring 25 at-risk students from Phoenix Academy (and some kids from Chapel Hill High School who’d survived Myanmar’s conflicts) to experience Washington, D.C. and the National Holocaust Museum.

former teacher turned lawyer/education advocate, has left a lasting and inspiring imprint on my heart.
Focused on the struggles of her students, and not her own, Vivian’s goal for the trip was to teach the students the importance of engaging their voices. “When they see something going on that’s not right or not just, they need to know how to speak up, not just for themselves, but for others,” Connell shared.

The disease has continued to take from Vivian, but it has not stolen her spirit and passion for education and for her students. Continuing in her efforts to “outrun unrighteousness,” Vivian has maintained a blog, “finALS: My Closing Arguments” during the past two years. Inspired, herself, by the words of 2014 Emerging Issues Forum speaker and Finnish educator Pasi Sahlberg, Vivian has used her blog to “aim for equity” in the hopes of “achieving excellence.”

During this time when many are asking ‘why’ or ‘where do we go from here,’ others are finding inspiration through the heroic actions of ordinary citizens. As I reflect on the sea of violence and injustices that have plagued us as of late, I find hope and inspiration all around me. These stories, like that of Vivian Connell, encourage me look beyond the pain we feel today, and toward the journey of healing and compassion. Inspired by an amazing woman, with the heart and spirit of a champion, I am passionate in the campaign to aim for both equity and excellence in education. I challenge each of you as you move forward to find your own inspiration.

“The pain you feel today is the strength you feel tomorrow. For every challenge encountered, there is opportunity for growth.” -Unknown

A special note from Kendall:

As many of you know, after an immensely rewarding experience with the Institute for Emerging Issues, I have recently accepted an exciting new opportunity with the North Carolina School of Science and Math. As their Director of Distance Education and Extended Programs, I will continue to feed my passion for public education, workforce development, and community engagement through my work with students, schools, and communities across North Carolina. I am hopeful this new opportunity will afford me the ability to positively impact and influence future generations to practice compassion, forgiveness, personal accountability, and, most importantly, mutual
respect. I look forward to staying connected with all of you.

Best,

Kendall

Kendall Hageman
Education Policy Manager
Institute for Emerging Issues

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