30th Anniversary Visioning: Farmhouse Table Conversations

Hedgebrook’s 30-year Journey
Hedgebrook began with two women, a piece of land and an idea. In 1988, inspired by conversations with friend and writer Sheryl Feldman, Nancy Nordhoff founded Hedgebrook to nurture women writers to do their creative work. For 30 years, Hedgebrook has remained steadfast in this mission: bolstering visionary women writers whose stories and ideas shape our culture for generations.

A Powerful Sisterhood
What began as a quiet retreat in the woods grew with the power of female influence. Hedgebrook is now a global community of women who champion each other. A tribe of writers who through their books, poems, plays, films, songs, TEDTalks, op eds, blogs and podcasts are reaching millions of readers and audiences of all ages. The ripple effect of change that begins quietly in Hedgebrook’s cottages reverberates around the globe.

A Connection to Place
The alchemy of the Hedgebrook experience comes from its connection to the land, and the opportunity to be in solitude and community. The peace and quiet of the place, the inspiration of nature and radical hospitality gift each woman with time and freedom to fully focus on her writing. Each cottage and the Farmhouse Table hold the struggles and breakthroughs of 30 years of writers.

From national bestsellers to award-winning films to Broadway plays, Hedgebrook alumnae are influential storytellers, change makers and thought leaders. But many came to Hedgebrook when they were still emerging writers whose talents were just beginning to reach readers. Nearly two thirds of our alumnae are women of color. Alumnae range in age from 18 to 85 and are from all over the world.

A Female Future
This is our moment. With #MeToo, the groundswell of courage to speak up and support each other’s stories is unprecedented. Hedgebrook’s model of encouraging bravery in women and providing a gateway for equality is more relevant now than ever.

JOIN OUR CONVERSATION
As we enter this 30-year milestone, we are taking time to get rooted in our story, consider the challenges and opportunities of this moment, and envision our future. We’re inviting others to join us in a conversation about how we can harness the collective power of Hedgebrook’s community of storytellers, and of like-minded people who believe in our mission, to create a world that values and amplifies the voices of women and non-gender conforming people.
How Hedgebrook Supports Writers

Writers in Residence
Since 1988, Hedgebrook’s Writers in Residence Program has supported fully-funded residencies for writers from around the world, selected through a competitive review process. Seven writers at a time, each housed in a handcrafted cottage spend their days writing in solitude, then gather at the farmhouse in the evenings to share a home-cooked meal, their work, their process and their stories. Hedgebrook writers have been awarded the Pulitzer Prize, MacArthur Fellowship, Guggenheim Fellowship, National Book Award, PEN/Faulkner, Tony and Obie Awards, and many more! Our alumnae include Gloria Steinem, Eve Ensler, Carolyn Forche and Janet Mock.

Women Playwrights Festival
For 22 years, Hedgebrook’s Women Playwrights Festival has developed hundreds of new theatrical works by some of the most exciting female playwrights of our time—including Lynn Nottage, Sarah Ruhl, Quiara Alegria Hudes and Danai Gurira. Working in partnership with major regional theatres, playwrights, both accomplished and emerging, are nominated through our producing theatre partners. Playwrights work on new plays alongside on-site dramaturges, and culminate their residency with public readings of their latest work.

Master Classes & Writing Workshops
Master Classes combine Hedgebrook’s retreat experience with the opportunity to study with a renowned teacher on Whidbey Island or other exceptional locations, such as Italy and India. VORTEXT is a weekend salon at Whidbey Institute, led by celebrated teachers. Sixty writers connect in small-group workshops and enjoy dynamic keynotes and discussions about opportunities and challenges for women who write. Our Online Class participants experience a taste of our Whidbey Island retreat in their own home studying with teachers from Hedgebrook’s community.

Y-WE Write Summer Camp
Hedgebrook partners with Young Women Empowered (Y-WE) to produce an annual week-long summer writing camp for 30-50 teen girls from diverse backgrounds. Four Hedgebrook alumnae lead workshops in spoken word poetry, fantasy & science fiction, playwriting and performance, songwriting, autobiography, and more.

Songwriters Residency
Songwriters come to Hedgebrook to unplug from life on the road and in the recording studio and write new music. While in residence, cottages are filled with the sounds of guitars, keyboards, banjos, ukuleles and harps. Spontaneous collaborations and impromptu recording sessions in Whidbey’s Sound Trap Studio sometimes happen. Songwriters are nominated by music industry leaders and alumnae include Brandi Carlile, Alison Mosshart of The Kills, Thao Nguyen, Hollis Wong Wear, Suzanne Vega, Sera Cahoone and Joanna Newsom.

HEDGE BROOK FILM PROGRAMS:

Documentary Filmmakers Lab
For ten days, five female documentary filmmakers, chosen from a competitive process, convene with three seasoned Lab Leaders to develop their projects in the rough cut stage. Filmmakers are nominated by partner organizations, including Chicken & Egg Productions, Firelight Media, Fork Films, Humanitas, The Redford Center, Seattle Doc Association, Skylight, Sundance / Catalyst and Women Make Movies.

Screenwriters Lab
Five screenwriters develop their scripts over a ten day residency, led by two mentors from the film industry. Workshops on topics ranging from story structure and character development to pitching your project run throughout the week, interspersed with one-on-one mentoring aimed at supporting each filmmaker and project where she is, and bringing her project to fruition. This program is produced in partnership with Humanitas and the Woolf Pack, a community of Hollywood women in TV and film.