

A toast to poet/journalist John Palen

September 28, 2009

What: Artist Soirée With John Palen

Where: Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center) at 1517 Bayliss in Midland

When: 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 4

Cost: \$45, which includes dinner, wine, a signed selection of poetry and a presentation by Palen. Reservations are required by Friday, Oct. 30

For more information: Call (989) 837-1885 or visit www.becreative360.org

MIDLAND -- A former newspaper editor with a penchant for writing poetry will receive a night in the spotlight at Midland's Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center).

John Palen, the author of seven books of poetry, is the guest at one of Creative 360's ongoing "Artist Soirée" evenings during which Great Lakes Bay Region artists, singers, musicians and writers talk about and share their creative process following a catered dinner.

Scheduled for 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 4, at Creative 360, the Palen Soirée has tickets for \$45, which includes the dinner, wine, a presentation by Palen and a signed copy of a commemorative selection of his poems.

Palen is a 34-year resident of Midland. A former newspaper reporter, from 1975 to 1983 he was the editor of the *Midland Daily News*, and from 1983 until retiring in May of this year taught reporting, editing, public affairs reporting and media law at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant.

"Journalism and poetry are not at different from each other as they might seem," says Palen, "except one is constrained by facts and the other isn't. Both are forms of writing that can have very high standards that the writer must struggle to meet."

In addition to teaching and penning poetry, 10 years ago Palen began writing and publishing *Midland Issues*, a monthly mailed and subscription-based newsletter covering Midland city government and public schools. It also has an on-line version updated daily.

"I started it for two reasons," says Palen. "I saw interesting stories that weren't being covered and I believe every community needs all the journalism it can get.

"And I was teaching reporting at CMU and my practical experience was way out of date. Working every day as a journalist enabled me to share my students' struggles and teach them from fresh experience."

As for his poetry, he says he wrote his first poem in a seventh grade study hall -- after he found a poem by Donald Hall in a paperback mixed in with some mystery novels at a general store.

"I loved the poem and I also thought, 'I could do that'" says the man who describes himself as a "grateful, curious, interested and temporary inhabitant" of the world.

He writes a lot about family and small-town life, he says, "because writing a good poem or a short story makes everything all right for me, restores all losses, makes life worth all the sorrows and griefs. For a while, at least."

During the soiree, Palen plans to read some of his poetry as well as selected short fiction he has been working on during the last couple of years.

His poems have appeared in magazines and journals nationwide for 30 years. His seventh collection of poetry, "Drizzle and Plum Blossoms," was published this year. Written in collaboration with Midland writer Li C. Tien, it features translations of 11th and 12th century Chinese poetry.

For more information about Palen and his *Midland Issues* publication, visit midlandissues.com.

The reservation deadline for the Palen Soiree is Friday, Oct. 30. Call (989) 837-1885 or register online at www.becreative360.org.

About Creative 360

Creative 360, formerly known as Creative Spirit Center, is a not-for-profit community arts and wellness organization founded in 1994. The Center's mission is to create an environment for people of all ages to experience the creative process through ongoing classes, art exhibits, events, concerts, speakers and outreach programs; and its goal is to enhance the development of physical, mental and spiritual wellness through the arts and humanities. Visit www.becreative360.org for more information about the fall roster at Creative 360,

or call (989) 837-1885 to request a mailed copy.

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