Georgia Southern University student Christopher Combs to receive scholarship for ‘moving’ work

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Georgia Southern University senior Christopher Combs, of Fayetteville, N.C., will receive this year’s Brittany “Ally” Harbuck Scholarship during a reading and reception Thursday, Sept. 6. Award-winning novelist Tina Whittle served as this year’s scholarship judge and will present the award at 7 p.m. in Room 1005 of the Allen E. Paulson College of Engineering and Information Technology building. The event is free and open to the public.

Combs and nine other nominees will read their entries during the ceremony, and members of the Harbuck family will participate in the award presentation. A catered reception will follow the ceremony.

Combs’ winning submission was a collection of 10 poems he wrote in professor Eric Nelson’s poetry writing class in spring 2012. The poems reflect a range of subjects, from serious to playful, including “What the Night Dreams,” “Fifty-two Card Pick-up the Family Pieces” and “Blank Page Phobia.”

“Every time I returned to the pages, I discovered some new facet,” Whittle said of Combs’ poems. “The exquisite tension they held was never diminished by an easy resolution; indeed this writer possessed Keats’ negative capability in spades — to hold irreconcilable ideas in the palm of the hand and not seek to reconcile them. Moving and beautiful and profound.”

The Sept. 6 ceremony will also include readings by Harbuck Scholarship finalists Chad Sanderson and Jackson Sharpe, and award nominees Jennifer Coate, Jennifer Curington, Ryan Evans, Beth Martin, Jamie Morton, Naima Ozier and Jared Sharpe.

Combs is the fourth recipient of the scholarship endowed by David and Debi Harbuck of Savannah to honor their daughter, who died in a traffic accident in April 2005. The Harbuck Scholarship supports sophomore, junior and senior writing majors with at least a 3.0 GPA in their writing courses. To be considered for the scholarship, students must be nominated by faculty in the Department of Writing and Linguistics and must submit 10 to 15 pages of fiction, nonfiction or poetry to the Harbuck Scholarship Committee. The committee narrows the list of applicants to three finalists for judging by an outside author.

Whittle has published two novels: The Dangerous Edge of Things and Darker Than Any Shadow. Her fiction has appeared in Alfred Hitchcock’s Mystery Magazine, The Savannah Literary Journal and Gulf Stream. As part of the Harbuck award celebration, Whittle will hold a reading Friday, Sept. 7, at 7p.m. in Room 1005 of the College of Information Technology.

For more information, contact the Department of Writing and Linguistics at 912-478-0739.