

## Columbine pupils to share poems

Writing to heal, four to read works at Auraria coffee shop

By [Holly Kurtz](#)

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Alex Marsh reads "details of other mass atrocities to get perspective." Allison Carter can't take a single step without knowing "somebody was murdered here, and it's all my fault, I couldn't save them."

Four Columbine High students have been healing line by line, verse by verse.

Now Marsh, Carter, Devon Adams and a girl who asked to remain anonymous are ready to share their words with the public, poem by poem, in person and out loud.

Tuesday at 7 p.m. they will read their writings at The Daily Grind Coffee House on the Auraria campus. Afterward they will sign copies of their chapbook, *Screams Aren't Enough*.

Some of their work is untitled. None of it rhymes.

All of it comes from the heart.

"I'd go insane unless I did it," Adams said of her poetry. "This is my leveler. This is the time I get to express myself and take a deep breath."

Publisher Catherine O'Neill Thorn and her friends since last May have used poetry to let fresh air into the girls' lives.

It started when Columbine students were finishing the 1998-1999 school year at Chatfield High, after the April 20 shootings at Columbine that left 15 people dead and more than 20 injured.

Thorn is a poetry therapist. Words are keys she uses to pick the locks that guard uncomfortable emotions. She figured Columbine students had some pretty uncomfortable emotions.

She gathered her friends, including Joy Sawyer and Clarissa Pinkola Estes, and held a writing workshop at Chatfield for Columbine students. Then they began poetry club meetings after school.

Guiry's Paint Wallpaper & Art Supplies offered a spare room and told the group they could draw and write on the walls. The students soon were surrounded by life-sized works of art.

When Guiry's needed the space back, the group moved to SHOUTS, a Littleton teen center near Columbine High that opened after April 20.

"They made it home," Thorn said.

The early poems were honest, but short. It was tough at first.

"The kids made me pass some sort of test but you never know when the test is," Thorn said. "You just know you passed it. Oftentimes we felt like spectators rather than participants."

The group eventually became just four students, making it more intimate.

Last week's meeting felt like a slumber party. Group members sprawled on beanbag chairs calling each other nicknames and making jokes.

But between the jokes and the tips on making curfew were poems filled with horrific images -- like razor blades buried in innocent-looking apples.

The girls were rehearsing for their reading.

Carter read about feeling as if the school turned on her and swallowed her life, of seeing her classmates run and scream, of planning, at age 16, to be an overprotective mother.

"I will always remember wondering why God let it happen," she read.

In *Vodka*, Adams remembered Columbine killer Dylan Klebold. A different, younger Dylan who swam and played and danced.

"Oh Devon," Thorn said, after Adams finished, "that must have been hard for you ... God, I'm so proud of you guys!"

Later, Adams wondered out loud whether people would really want to hear the poems. Whether they might rather ignore and forget.

So Marsh told a story:

One day an assistant principal called her into the office for sharing "disturbing" thoughts in class.

"No changes will happen unless people are disturbed," Marsh said.

"Are you the one to disturb them?" the administrator asked.

Marsh thought a moment.

"Every revolution," she replied, "begins with a single voice."

*For more information on Tuesday's free poetry reading, (303) 733-7282.*

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