Mira Bartók Reads from The Memory Palace for GCC’s First Annual Writers Harvest

By Mary McCrath, ’82

Going hungry isn’t an isolate issue for North Quabbin author Mira Bartók. Growing up with a mentally ill mother meant many days when Bartók and her sister didn’t get enough to eat and Bartók knew her sometimes homeless mother went hungry in her later years. These memories are some of many Bartók writes about in her New York Times bestselling memoir, The Memory Palace, and part of why she’s pleased to read from her book at GCC’s first annual Writers Harvest event. Bartók is a Chicago-born artist and writer who lives in the North Quabbin area where she runs Mira’s last (abandoned) blog, a blog that helps artists find funding and residencies all over the world. Writers Harvest: Mira Bartók will take place in the GCC Library on Thursday, October 27 from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. and is free and open to the public. Donations of cash and non-perishable food will be accepted to benefit the GCC Food Pantry. The event will include light refreshments and a book signing. Bartók commented on the Writers Harvest event saying, “At the heart of my book is a message of empathy, to help students understand what it’s like to grow up with a mentally ill mother and other homeless women, women who, especially in this economy, could be your mother, your friend, your sister. You’ll read about my mother and other homeless women, women who, especially in this economy, could be your mother, your friend, your sister.” Bartók is the author of twenty-eight books for children and her writing has appeared in several literary journals and anthologies.

GCC joins colleges around the country that host Writers Harvest events to highlight the work of local authors and raise money for food banks and food pantries. Writers Harvest was started by Feeding America, a national organization that supports food banks. GCC English Professor Wendy Barnes first experienced a Writers Harvest event while a graduate student at Mills College in California. She said, “I was very moved by that event and ever since have wanted to organize a Writers Harvest. Now that GCC has a food pantry, it feels very appropriate. We are especially happy to have Mira Bartók read because her memoir is beautifully written and addresses themes of homelessness and hunger.” GCC’s Food Pantry was created by GCC’s College Affairs Committee after they recognized that some GCC students go to class hungry. They worked with Amy Clarke of the Franklin County Community Meals Program to help that organization set up the GCC Food Pantry last spring. One of the Written Harvest organizations, GCC Library Assistant Hope Schneider, said, “In the first two weeks of the fall semester, 48 people visited the GCC Food Pantry to get food. The GCC Food Pantry is an important way to help GCC students be successful in their studies. Students can’t concentrate on their studies if they’re hungry or are worried about feeding their families.”

The GCC Food Pantry is supported by donations from people on campus, community members, and area businesses, and is stocked with food purchased from the Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

For information about Writers Harvest: Mira Bartók, contact Wendy Barnes at wbarnes@gcc.mass.edu or (413) 775-1283 or Hope Schneider at (413) 775-1383 or schneiderh@gcc.mass.edu. For information about the GCC Food Pantry, visit http://gcc.mass.edu/foodpantry or contact Julie Shaw-MacDougall at shaw@gcc.mass.edu or (413) 775-1436. For information about Mira Bartók and The Memory Palace, visit www.mirabartok.com or www.mirabartok.info.