

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

Amanda Zieba, Teacher & Author

It makes sense that late in my high school career I struggled with the decision of naming my soon-to-be college major. Education or communications? Each fall a new school year would arrive and it was hard to distinguish which brought me more joy—a fresh start to learn something new, or a backpack full of brand new supplies, chiefly empty notebooks waiting to be filled with ink from carefully selected pens.

In the end practicality won out. I knew lots of teachers. I knew what their daily lives looked like, what type of pay scale to expect, and what kind of training was required. I had never met anyone who claimed “writer” as a real job, and likewise had no clue how to obtain the ambiguous title. So education it was.

Over a decade later, I am happy with my choice. I love teaching my students at Tomah Middle School to read and think critically. I treasure our passionate discussions about favorite books. I thoroughly enjoy working with colleagues who soldier on to educate their students, despite surmounting limitations.

But.

But the writer-wanna-be in me refused to go quietly into the night. It would speak up as envy while reading a novel, or whisper an idea in a dream, or as exasperation when reading a poorly written picture book to my sons.

In 2012 I decided to do something about it. While browsing online I saw an article entitled: *Get Paid For Doing What You Love*. It was in this article that I first heard about the Yahoo Contributor Network, a group of content writers for Yahoo.com. I quickly joined and published my first piece, a silly limerick, which to this day has only been viewed 74 times. Now two and a



OEC member Amanda Zieba displaying her published youth books

half years later, I have published over 100 articles with 50,000+ views.

Writing for Yahoo gave me the confidence and credibility to pursue other writing opportunities. While I have had my fair share of rejections, I have also had the privilege of being published on blogs, a few articles in a regional magazine and—my greatest accomplishment—four books.

I am thrilled I no longer have to choose between two career paths I love. I am proud to be both teaching and writing and I look forward to the journeys both have in store for me.—*Amanda Zieba*

*If you are looking for a freelance writer or an author to visit schools/libraries/workshops/etc., contact Amanda at: Amanda.zieba@yahoo.com. Like her Facebook page: **Amanda Zieba – author** to stay connected with her current projects and publications. Amanda’s nonfiction articles (on family life, education, books, sports and more) can be seen at: http://contributor.yahoo.com/user/1533842/amanda_zieba.html. Books can be purchased from her directly or on Amazon.com.*



Please enjoy an excerpt from “Breaking The Surface,” Amanda Zieba’s debut adult novel:

Overview:

When Flynn gets the chance to leave her home on the ocean floor to spend some time on the surface, she has a long list of things to do. Things like: make friends, eat a cheeseburger, go to the beach, shop, go on a date and get her driver’s license. She didn’t really expect “reverse a science experiment gone wrong” or “save family from impending doom” to show up on the list. But now that they have, what will she do?

Chapters 2 & 3:

After a quickly eaten breakfast, Flynn did one last sweep of their family pod looking for anything she might have forgotten to pack (even though she had double and triple checked the packing list she had been agonizing over for months). She checked mostly so her mom would stop asking her if she had everything, because every item she laid eyes on was needed for survival in the aquatic life, not for her soon-to-be sun filled surface life.

She gifted rare hugs to her brothers and shoved her expertly packed luggage into the Tube before returning to her mom for one last really good hug.

“Enjoy your time on the surface,” Mrs. Brinestone said, fiercely hugging her daughter.

“I promise I will,” Flynn whispered back, suddenly emotional.

Flynn pulled away from the embrace and was shocked to see the people of her underwater prison had quietly gathered to wish her farewell. She almost didn’t mind that saying goodbye to each of them individually delayed her leaving. Almost.

Finally she stepped into the Tube to join her patiently waiting father. She offered up a small wave and a smile to her departure party. She half laughed, half sobbed when they sent out a chorus of cheers and goodbyes to send her off.

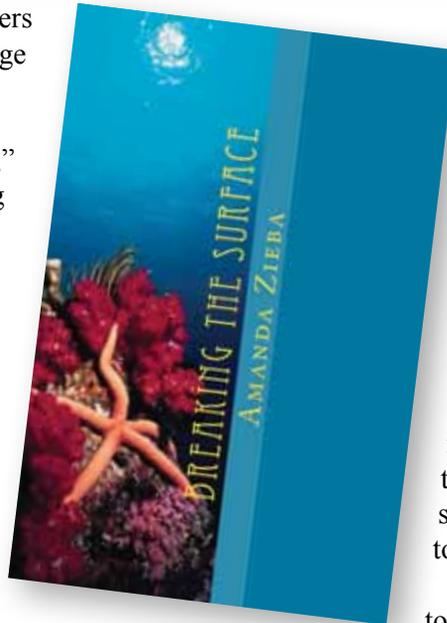
The Tube doors and Flynn’s eyes simultaneously closed. *I can’t believe this is happening. I can’t believe this is actually happening.*

The Tube takes 63 minutes each way, two hours and six minutes round trip. Flynn spent the first 14 minutes sitting with her knees pulled up to her chest and leaning against the Tube wall, mindlessly watching the ocean scenery pass before her. She spent the final 49 minutes pacing restlessly in the 6 foot by 6 foot cube.

Time could not pass any slower. She tugged on her shirt and examined her reflection in the tube glass wall. A reflection of dark hair touching pale shoulders and the occasional glint of a sequin from her flip flops met her stare. *What if I don’t fit in? What if Florida public school kids don’t follow magazine fashion trends? What if, please Poseidon no, they wore uniforms?* She shrugged, resigned to the fact that she could do nothing about her outfit now, and prayed it would be deemed acceptable. With a last glance at her outfit, she pushed her worries aside and continued her pacing.

Back at the ARK...

The small crowd broke up quickly. Before the wake of the Tube had cleared, many left to begin their day’s work. Deep in discussion they filed out the door in pairs or small groups, leaving the remaining three members of the Brinestone family standing alone. They stared at the tiny bubbles of water disturbance that were the only lin-



gering signs of Flynn and Mr. Brinestone.

“With Flynn on the up and up, literally, you boys will pretty much have the reign of the pod,” said Mrs. Brinestone as she stood behind her boys, a hand on each of their shoulders.

“But mom,” Noah said, exasperated, “Why would anyone want to leave the ARK? Seriously! It is beyond cool.”

Mrs. Brinestone thought about attempting to explain to her youngest son the dark recesses and complicated workings of a teenage girl’s brain, but decided to save her breath. Instead she sighed and said, “Well boys I’m off to the lab. Try not to worry too much.”

She walked out of the room, trying to take her own advice. Caspian hesitantly patted Noah on the back and followed in the direction of his mother without another word.

“Ugh! Doesn’t anybody care?!?” Noah shouted after them, and then more to himself, “Flynn would have cared!” Which only reminded him that she was gone and sunk him further into a state of depression.

Not one to sit still for long, Noah gave up his post and began to wander around the home he loved so much. He walked out of the Tube docking station and past the labs where he could see his mother and brother diligently

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As a part of the National Library Week Celebrations, Amanda will be doing a book reading and signing at the Tomah Public Library on Wednesday, April 16, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. All of her books will be available for purchase, and 10 percent of proceeds will benefit the library.

Why Does the Power Blink?

By **Scott Turner, P.E.**

At one time or another, we've all returned home or woken up late for work to see a blinking "12:00" on our digital alarm clock. You then have to reset every digital clock in your household that doesn't have a battery backup, from the microwave oven to the answering machine. Usually, this state of "eternal midnight" was caused by a "blink" in the electrical system.

While blinks can be annoying, they show that an electrical system is working exactly as designed. And while Oakdale Electric Cooperative has taken steps to reduce the number of blinks across its power system, there are measures you can take as well.

Let's look at blinks. These momentary power interruptions can occur anywhere along a power system—from the time electrons are generated at a power plant to being shipped across transmission line to substations, or during distribution from a substation to your home.

Why Blinks?

Blinks are created when a breaker, or switch, opens along any portion of the power system. The breaker usually opens because of a large, quick rise of electrical current. This large rise, called a fault condition, can occur when a tree branch touches a line, lightning strikes, or a wire breaks.

When this happens, a relay senses the fault and tells the breaker to open, preventing the flow of power to the problem site. After opening, the breaker quickly closes. The brief delay, which allows the fault to clear, usually lasts less than two seconds.

If the fault clears, every home or business that receives electricity off that power line has just experienced a blink. This could include thousands of accounts if the breaker protects a transmission line or a substation.

Reducing the Blink's Effects

Your co-op employs methods to reduce blink frequency. Tree trimming is probably the easiest and most common way, and one area where you can help. Make sure your co-op knows of any trees or limbs located close to a power line. Call 800-241-2468 to tell Oakdale Electric Cooperative about potential problems.

Meanwhile, you can reduce the frustration of blinks by purchasing an alarm clock equipped with a battery backup. This type of digital clock offers "ride through" ability for momentary outages. It will also keep the correct time and sound an alarm in case of a long-duration outage, provided a charged battery is in place. As an added benefit, these devices only use the battery in the event of a power interruption.

Blinks affect all electrical equipment, not just digital clocks. If there is a blink while you are operating a computer, your computer may crash and you will have to reboot, hoping all the while that there will be few corrupted files.

An uninterruptible power supply (UPS) on your computer can help prevent information loss. The UPS incorporates surge suppression technology with a battery backup and provides you some time to save whatever you were working on and exit your computer properly.

The Future of Blinks

Oakdale Electric Cooperative operates an active system maintenance program and works hard to identify and fix sources of service interruptions. Even though blinks will never disappear from our electrical energy delivery system, by working together with us we can minimize effects of the interruptions and the frequency with which they occur. ■



This article was written by Scott Turner, P.E., a former electric co-op employee, who is an electrical engineering consultant at his firm JD Engineering, PC, in Hamilton, Mont. (www.jdeng.org).

Breaking the Surface

(Continued from page 5)

studying polluted water samples among the rows and rows of workroom tables. Today the tables were covered in seaweed soaking in a variety of portable tanks. Last week it was octopus tentacles; who knows what tomorrow would bring. He rolled his eyes and picked up his pace.

Soon he found himself surrounded by computers and digital screens displaying the thousands of factoids needed to keep the ARK in perfect balance. Water temperature, air pressure, oxygen level... the list went on. Even at age 10, and even though he had lived here his entire life, it was all still pretty impressive. He drifted passed the classrooms careful not to attract the attention of Professor Bebee. He wasn't really in the mood to learn, or talk to anyone right now.

His steps took him up the stairs and over a walkway where he stopped to look out at his favorite view. From here he could see the both the Observation deck and the Obscoral tank. In front of him stood a 50 foot wall of glass, and beyond the glass... the ocean. How could anyone want to leave this? ■

This book is author Amanda Zieba's young adult debut. It is an original dystopian that promises to deliver readers with drama and adventure. Join Flynn as she navigates the perils of high school and as she figures out how to define "home."

YOUTH NEWS

Scholarship Update

If you're planning to continue your education at a college or university next fall, we may be able to help you! Check out our website, www.oakdalerec.com, for updated information about our scholarship program.



Youth Leadership Congress

Calling all high school juniors! Check with your high school guidance counselor for information about this summer's Youth Leadership Congress on the UW-River Falls campus July 16-18. You won't want to miss out on this rewarding opportunity!

ANNUAL MEETING REMINDER

**Oakdale Electric
Cooperative
2014 Annual Meeting**
Saturday, April 5, 2014

Tomah High School
Registration: 9 a.m.
Business meeting: 10 a.m.



**Get ready,
shutterbugs,
to capture
our service
area's natural
beauty.**



Winning photos will be featured in Oakdale Electric Cooperative's 2015 calendar. Contest rules, entry forms, and photo release forms available at www.oakdalerec.com.

Photos accepted from Feb. 1-Aug. 15, 2014

Questions? Call 372-4131 or email dprotz@oakdalerec.com.



Oakdale Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Partner



Bruce Ardel, General Manager

P.O. Box 128, Oakdale WI 54649

(608) 372-4131 • (800) 241-2468

info@oakdalerec.com

Office Hours: Mon.-Fri. 7:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

24-Hour Emergency Power Restoration: (800) 927-6151

Toll-free online bill payment: 866-392-4307

FAX Number: (608) 372-5173

Diggers Hotline: For underground cable locates and power line clearance information, call (800) 242-8511.