Author: Retelling story a healing experience

Reyna Grande also spoke in favor of immigration reform, saying that current laws divide families.

By DANIELLE PORTTEUS

It was a very healing book,” she explained. “I felt so in line in a way I had never felt before.”

Ms. Grande, the author of “The Distance Between Us,” spoke Wednesday night to more than 100 people at Monroe County Community College’s La-Z-Boy Center.

Her memoir was selected as this year’s Read Monroe, One Book, One Community.

The memoir was published in August, 2012, and depicts her life before and after illegally immigrating from Mexico to the United States. Her mother left Mexico to find work in the United States.

When she was just 2, her father left Mexico to find work in the United States. Her mother followed two years later. Ms. Grande and her siblings were separated from her parents. At 10, she entered the United States.

During her young life, Ms. Grande was separated from her parents. At 10, she entered the country and later became the first person in her family to graduate from college.

See AUTHOR, Page 5A

Reyna Grande, author of the memoir “The Distance Between Us,” spoke Wednesday night to more than 100 people at Monroe County Community College’s La-Z-Boy Center. (Monroe News photo by KIM BRENT)
Tonight

Weather:

Monroe County, Michigan.

Local Statistics:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Local Statistics</th>
<th>Wednesday's High</th>
<th>High temperature record</th>
<th>Wednesday's Low</th>
<th>Low temperature record</th>
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Area Forecast:

Record low for the month of March 2014 was 5°. Normal high for the month is 40°. The record high for the month is 75°.

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Lake E
Immigration issues affect families and businesses and have become a hot topic facing Congress. Speakers will address the issue of immigration reform at a free panel discussion, “Immigration Reform, A Family Issue,” at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the La-Z-Boy Center atrium at Monroe County Community College, 155 S. Baisville Rd.

The panel is part of the One Book, One Community project, which features “The Distance Between Us,” a memoir by Reyna Grande about the trauma that families suffer when they are split up by immigration to the United States.

“A community is composed of families. A way of life is built on families,” said Diego Bonesatti of Michigan United, one of the panel members. “You can’t just throw the bricks if its bricks are broken, and our communities suffer if the families are separated.”

“The immigration system is separating families or keeping families separated and that, foremost among many reasons, is why we need immigration reform,” Bonesatti said.

The discussion is sponsored by The Agora, a student newspaper at MCCC. Editor Julie Wells, a sophomore at MCCC, will moderate the panel.

Panel members include:
- Ms. Bonesatti, director of legal services for Michigan United, where her work includes the legal services program and recruiting and training volunteers to provide immigration services, as well as assistance with the naturalization process.
- He also advocates for community leaders in removal or deportation situations and works to support immigration reform.
- A graduate of Michigan State University, East Lansing, Mr. Bonesatti’s parents emigrated from Argentina.
- Before returning to Michigan, he worked for many of Illinois’ top immigration nonprofit agencies, including the National Immigrant Justice Center, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights and the West Suburban Action Project or “WSAP” in acronym in Spanish.
- David Kochis, director of the Immigration Law Clinic and the Asylum Law Clinic at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.
- The Immigration Law Clinic represents immigration of a variety of legal issues, including abandoned children and abused immigrant women.
- He teaches U.S. immigration law and a comparative U.S.-Canada immigration law course, as well as a seminar on immigration and the law.
- He recently was named Outstanding Immigration Law Professor by the American Immigration Lawyers Association.
- Maj. Troy Goodnough, head of jail operations for the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office.
- He directs the county jail, as well as the Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention facility, which houses roughly 1,200 detainees a year, many on their way to deportation.
- A former MCCC student and Monroe High School graduate, Maj. Goodnough has a bachelor’s degree from Spring Arbor University and a variety of certifications in law enforcement and corrections.
- He also serves as chairman of the Monroe County Sheriff's Traffic Committee, the Raisinville Township Planning Commission and the Monroe County Ambulance Authority.
- Ms. Bergman, Monroe County Hispanic community also has been asked to participate on the panel.

The Monroe News