

By Sarah Avery
The Digital Bullpen

Frank Warren, founder of the PostSecret project, created a forum for University of South Florida students to voice their secrets on Tuesday night in the Marshall Student Center Ballroom.

Students and members of the community shared their secrets, ranging from broken thumbs to broken hearts, with a crowd of 600 attendees.

“Inspiration.” When asked before PostSecret started what she hoped to get out of the event, Kara Hennis, a third-year Psychology and Criminal Justice major at USF, answered with the aforementioned word. “I’m hoping to get inspiration to know that not everybody is necessarily as different as we think they are.”

PostSecret was founded in 2007 by Frank Warren. The project is a collection of decorated postcards mailed in anonymously that has one or more of the writer’s secrets written on it, and the collection now consists of more than 500,000 cards. PostSecret participants and supporters are strongly urged to donate to IMALIVE, a foundation that helps people struggling with issues of depression and suicide, as Warren is a volunteer with 1(800)SUICID. “One of the reasons I started PostSecret was because I was keeping secrets from myself,” said Warren. “I quickly learned that we might think we’re keeping a secret, but the secret might be keeping us.”

In the past year, Warren has traveled worldwide, from destinations spanning from Sydney to Singapore, sharing the PostSecret project. Warren has written three PostSecret books, which consist of large compilations of the postcards sent to Warren’s residence. In Warren’s lectures, he intertwines his own personal gems of life advice with postcards forbidden by the books’ publishers, as well as postcards that he felt to be the most impactful.

USF’s University Lecture Series decided to bring Frank Warren to USF as a guest speaker, after contemplating a long list of other potential guests. “He stood out to us because his project is so unique, we knew that it would mean a lot to the students here,” said Olivia Simmons, event planner of ULS. “I hope that students got everything they came for tonight by either sharing secrets or hearing secrets from others.”

The PostSecret event came to its conclusion by Warren inviting all members of the audience that felt comfortable enough to approach the microphone and share their secrets.

One USF student that chose to remain anonymous shared the following secret: “I’ve had to face my sexual abuser for 12 years now. He’s my brother. No one in my family knows, and I’ve just started going to counseling for it, so things are getting better.”

“It’s cool that people can be honest with each other in a forum where we all feel comfortable enough to share,” said Blair Wilson, corporate consultant and PostSecret supporter. “I think there’s something very genuine happening with PostSecret, spreading the message that it’s cool to be caring.”