



## *News Release*

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### **Storyteller Kevin Kling Captivates Century Audience**

Author and storyteller Kevin Kling told a Century College Campus Conference audience on April 20 that he is always analyzing what is funny and what is sacred as he struggles with the larger question of where we all come from.

“I think we can survive anything if we have a sense of humor and a sense of self,” said Kling.

“Minnesotans have both of these because of the weather.”

Kling, best known for his popular commentaries on National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered*, told several stories related to his own struggles with disability. Kling was born with a short left arm with no wrist or thumb. His right arm was rendered useless when he suffered a motorcycle accident several years ago that severed the nerves in that arm.

Lying on the pavement after his accident, bathed in gasoline, Kling remembers feeling as though he were heading toward a sense of peace. But then he felt as though he had a choice, and he remembered the

beauty of Australia. At that point, he chose to come back to the pain and the surgeries and the joys of this life.

“I need a sense of tension in my life,” said Kling. “I am the kind of guy who wears socks with his sandals because I know it ticks people off.”

Kling finds much of his material just by tenderly observing the characters who live in Minnesota. For example, the cat lady on the bus who wore a button that says, “I feed my husband. I talk to my cat.” She was left with an honorary role to play when the drunk guy on the bus (the one with “a penny in his fuse box”) grandly exited and said, “She’s in charge now.”

He also recalled the Minnesotan who dutifully called WCCO when a tornado hit in 1965 and the windows were blown out of his car. “The school carnival has been cancelled,” said the man.

After his talk, Kling met a Century student who was born with the same congenital birth defect that he has. “I have never met someone with the same disability,” said the student. With the theme of “Connections,” that moment between Kling and the Century student was a time of poignant connection.

In addition to the Kling keynote address, Century students participated in a poetry slam, presented intercultural communication projects, performed scenes from *The Seagull*, sang with the Chamber Singers in The Nest, heard Professor Kris Peleg’s account of her year as a Fulbright Scholar in Bangladesh and were involved in many other workshops and presentations.