



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

An educational and literary organization dedicated to the writing and appreciation of poetry in America.

Strophes

Vol. LXI No. 2

www.nfspd.com

October 2024



Joseph Cavanaugh
36th NFSPS
President

Dear NFSPS Poets,

I am happy to present in this Strophes Edition the following report on our preliminary planning for the Poets for Peace Program.

1) RESOURCES FOR ORPHANS in Ukraine. Working with Ihor Pavlyuk, the People's Poet of Ukraine, we have identified a specific project in an Orphanage in Volyn, Ukraine to implement a

Transforming Trauma program for the orphans there. The project includes hardware, software, installation and staff training for an interactive video game system that uses play therapy specifically designed to overcome trauma caused by the war. It is part of a larger effort to help all of the people of Ukraine to deal with the losses and stress that they are experiencing.

The total cost of the project is estimated at \$10,000. We have received pledges of financial support from a number of individuals and are well on our way to our goal. Our hope is that our anthology of Poems For Peace and a series of events we will organize will generate additional revenue.

2) POETS FOR PEACE ANTHOLOGY M. Palowski Moore, has been instrumental in presenting preliminary planning ideas which have been discussed and we have a dynamic and talented group of individuals who have volunteered to work on it. I am confident we have the team to make this happen. More information will be made available in the next update.

3) EVENTS starting in the Spring are in the early planning phases. The concept we are working on involves a series of multicultural events to include Poetry, drama and music to be sponsored by local poetry organizations and held in conjunction with nonprofit Ukrainian groups active in the USA. Coordination is in progress. If you have an interest in working on an event for your area, let me know and we will include you on our Events Team.



We are still in the early stages of organizing Poets For Peace. The future organization structure that I envision will be independent of NFSPS, although I am sure many of the member poets will be members of NFSPS. I made a report to the NFSPS Board at our meeting in September and will have a report on the feedback in the next update. If you are interested in working together as a member of the team, please let me know your interests and availability.

There are also a number of Committee and Appointed Positions still available on the NFSPS Board and a variety of meaningful ways to serve. We have a special need for a Contest Chair. We are also in need of a Co-Chair for the Stevens Manuscript Competition. Just drop me a note at president@nfspd.net to begin the discussion about how you can become a valuable part of this exciting endeavor.

Thank you again for giving me this opportunity to serve as your President for the next two years. I welcome your comments, suggestions and help. Peace, love, and poetry, ~ Joe Cavanaugh, 36th NFSPS President

NFSPS 2025 ANNUAL CONVENTION UPDATE!

The 2025 NFSPS Annual Convention and BlackBerry Peach SLAM "Enchanting Words" will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico July 23-28 at the Sheraton Albuquerque Airport Hotel. The Keynote Speaker will be Naomi Shihab Nye. Naomi Shihab Nye describes herself as a "wandering poet." She has spent more than 40 years traveling the country and the world to lead writing workshops and inspiring students of all ages. Nye was born to a Palestinian father and an American mother and grew up in St. Louis, Jerusalem, and San Antonio. Drawing on her Palestinian-American heritage, the cultural diversity of her home in Texas, and her experiences traveling in Asia, Europe, Canada, Mexico, and the Middle East, Nye uses her writing to attest to our shared humanity. Naomi Shihab Nye is the author and/or editor of more than 30 volumes. Other details will be announced as we know them.

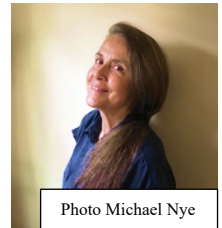


Photo Michael Nye

NFSPS QUARTERLY CONTEST ON SUBMITTABLE

The NFSPS quarterly contest window will be open on Submittable from October 1 to October 31. **This Quarter the subject is Winter and the form is Any. There is a 40 line limit. The Entry Fee is \$2** Poets may submit one poem. Judging will occur in November, and the top three poems will be published in the next issue. Prizes for first, second, and third place will be a percentage of the combined entry fees (\$2 per poem, 1 poem per person), at 45%, 35% and 20%. This contest aims to help our members become comfortable with the Submittable system. This way, when the 50 annual contests are open for submissions, our members can enter via Submittable and save on printing and postage costs. This will also make the process smoother for our contest chair and judges as they will have immediate access to the submissions. Don't worry, we aren't moving entirely to Submittable yet! This is just a way to assist the membership in transitioning to Submittable. **The next quarterly contest window will be October 1 – 31.** If you would like to attend a free Submittable Learning Central Session via ZOOM, please email admin@nfspd.net and details will be sent to you. There are also helpful videos and help sheets posted on the Learning Central page at nfspd.net

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF
STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.**

Organized October 17, 1959 ~
Mary B. Wall, Founder

Honorary Chancellor: TBA

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STROPHES

Strophes, the newsletter of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc., is published four times a year: August (*June 25th) ~ October (*August 25th) ~ January (*November 25th) ~ April (*February 25th). News items and information on contests may be sent via regular mail or email, which is preferred, by authorized members of NFSPS member state societies to:

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* Submission Deadlines

Strophes is available without cost to all paid-up members of NFSPS member state societies when mailed/shipped in bulk to the president or other designated person, who is responsible for ordering the number needed by the submission deadline for each issue. Individual subscriptions are \$4.00 a year to cover handling costs. Special orders are mailed separately. To order a single issue: specify the issue ordered, include a SASE with adequate postage for up to 12 pages and \$1.00 per copy.

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NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

POET'S ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS' 2024 Poetry Day Conference is scheduled for October 19 in the Fireplace Room on the campus of Central Arkansas University in Conway, Arkansas. Registration will begin at 9:00 am and the conference will begin at 9:30 am. The featured speaker is Phillip Howerton of Missouri State University at West Plains. Howerton earned his BS and MEd at Drury University and his PhD at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He has been published in *American History* through *Literature*, *Arkansas Review*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Concord Saunterer*, *Encyclopedia of American Environmental Literature*, *Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *Plainsongs*, *Red Rock Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, *Teaching American Literature*, *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, and *Writers of the American Renaissance*. In addition, Golden Antelope Press published his poetry collection, *The History of Tree Roots* in 2015. He received the 2019 Missouri Literary Award from the Missouri Library Association for *The Literature of the Ozarks: An Anthology* which was published by University of Arkansas Press. He was a nominee for Missouri Poet Laureate in spring 2019. He is the owner and managing editor of Cornerpost Press Book Publishing, Associate Editor of *The Heartland Review*, General Editor of *Elder Mountain: A Journal of Ozark Studies*, and co-founder and co-editor of *Cave Region Review*. His second poetry collection, *Gods of Four Mile Creek*, was released by Golden Antelope Press in October 2023. Poetry Day is the main poetry event in Arkansas. Each year this conference honors Arkansas Poet Laureate Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni (1953-1970). As a result of her efforts to promote poetry in Arkansas, Governor Ben Laney proclaimed October 15, 1948, the first annual Poetry Day in Arkansas. For conference questions, contact John McPherson at mcperson8391@gmail.com or 501-305- 9972. ~ *Laura Bridges, Vice President*

CALIFORNIA STATE POETRY SOCIETY is thriving in its middle age. Established in 1972, it passed its 50th anniversary mark in 2022, but the Board decided to move the celebrations to 2024, marking the 50th volume of the *California Quarterly*. The journal started to appear in 1972 and was initially called the CQ, since there was another California Quarterly being published in the state. After the competition was discontinued, the journal has had its current name. Since two of the four-issue volumes were divided between two years each, we reached the 50th anniversary only this year. How to celebrate? At CSPS, our focus is on the printed word, so we decided to publish the best poems of the past 50 years in a 50th Anniversary Anthology, edited by r.g. cantalupo who will select four poems per CQ volume to form a total of 200 most impressive poems published in our journal. The winners of the 37th Annual Poetry Contest were selected from 214 entries by Marlene Hitt. First Prize: Gurupreet K. Khalsa, "Polymorphic: Tumbled Stuff," Second Prize: Louise Moises, "Lighthouse," Two Third Prizes Ex Aequo: Deborah Bachels Schmidt, "In the Season of the Crows," and Joel Savishinsky, "An Archeology of Ignorance." Ms. Hitt selected 10 honorary mentions (r.g. cantalupo, Carolyn Jabs, D.B. Schmidt, Rosemary Ybarra-Garcia, Brian Cronwall, Jonathan Bennett, Carla S. Schick, R. Ybarra-Garcia, Joe DeCenzo, and Claire Scott). In addition she picked over 30 other poems to be published in the *Quarterly* vol. 50 no. 4, along with the awardees. The quality of submissions was very high! ~ *Maja Trochimczyk, Ph.D., President*

COLUMBINE POETS, INC. held their annual meeting in July and elected some new and also re-elected some existing officers. Julie Cummings, President, Anita Jepson-Gilbert, Vice President, Lorrie Wolfe, Membership Secretary, Cathy Casper, Corresponding Secretary, Jo-Anne Rowley, Treasurer, Marleine Yanish, Outreach Coordinator, Amy Irish, Youth Coordinator, and Valerie Szarek, Performance Poetry Coordinator. We also celebrated, via hybrid meeting, our NFSPS winners; we enjoyed readings by all of the winners and a fabulous Taco Bar.

Our 2024 Annual Columbine Poet Fest was held on September 14 at the Lafayette Library. Diane Glancy presented an amazing generative workshop and then captivated all of us with her insightful poetry. Diane's vast knowledge, wisdom, and awareness were perfectly received and thoroughly welcomed. We also enjoyed the opportunity to have an 8th-grade student, Keeley C., join us; she has won numerous youth contests from around the country, including NFSPS awards. Keeley was able to stay for the entire day and we were pleased to listen to our youth verbally share her poetry with us.

The results of our annual member contest were announced during our Poet Fest. In the Free Verse Category judged by Paul Ford: Lorrie Wolfe, 1st, Janet Kamnikar, 2nd, and Jo-Anne Rowley, 3rd. In the Any Form Category judged by Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer: Dawn Kawahara, 1st, Jo-Anne Rowley, 2nd, and Lorrie Wolfe, 3rd. In the Prose Poem Category judged by Diane Glancy: Sandra McGarry, 1st, Janet Kamnikar, 2nd, Lynn Kincanon, 3rd.

Columbine Poets has welcomed a new chapter, Colorado Mountain High Poets, representing the high-altitude poets in the Evergreen / Conifer region as well as welcoming poets from all over the state who wish to join them. They meet every other Friday for critiques, poetry fellowship, and readings. The Foothills Chapter of Columbine Poets continues to meet every Saturday, via Zoom and often in person. As Columbine Poets grows, we continue to draw in a wide array of diverse poets, strengthening our membership as well as expanding our poetry opportunities. ~ *Julie Cummings, President*

CONNECTICUT POETRY SOCIETY: Poetry is thriving in Connecticut! There is hardly a day of the week, including weekends, where there is not a major Poetry Event. On October 22, in Cheshire CT, "Poetry Outdoors and Out Loud" will feature an in-person reading by CPS's own Board Members! We welcome this opportunity to highlight these poets who keep our organization running. This will be followed, of course, by an Open Mic.

Each of our quarterly newsletters features a "Poet in the Spotlight." This quarter featured Ed Lent, who was recently named Poet Laureate of Madison, CT!

Our educational POPs (Poets On Poetry) are offered each month via Zoom and are open to all poets. September featured Patrick Donnelly, Program Director of The Frost Place, on "Sentimentality, Character, and the Health of Your Poem;" October POP will feature Martin Espada and Dr. Jose B. Gonzalez on "Poetry as a Tool for Social Justice." In November, Frederick-Douglass Knowles II will present on "The BreakBeat Poets." Check our website for details! ctpoetry.net ~ *Pat Mottola, President*

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY: This summer ISPS held our monthly open mics at Brewed Awakenings in Westmont. This hybrid event features several of our incredible poets – Carole Novak and Mike Orlock in June; Karen Fullet-Christensen, Poet Laureate of Aurora, IL and ISPS Student Contest Winners Piper and Henry Sobel and in July, and Lennart Lundh and Dr. E.J. Wade in August.

Our Annual Contest is live! Deadline is October 31st. You can find the contest flyer here. ~ *Mary Beth Bretzlauf, President*

MASSACHUSETTS STATE POETRY SOCIETY met on Aug. 10th and gave a tribute to well-respected deceased member Ray Whittier. Each person related incidents and interactions with Ray. His marvelous diction and ability to memorize his poems was applauded by all.

Pres. Jeanette Maes presented a workshop entitled, *Smile how a smile can communicate with others, how many songs and words have been written about this subject*. The group proceeded to write their own poem re Smile. After workshop and lunch, each shared 3 of their own poems.

Sponsorship application forms for 2025 National Poetry Day Contest are now available from Pres. Jeanette Maes to submit by 11/1/24. Mail completed form and prize money check to Jeanette Maes, 64 Harrison Ave., Lynn, MA 01905. ~ *Beverley Barnes, Strophes Reporter*

LEAGUE OF MINNESOTA POETS is producing a Publishing Workshop Series on Zoom that will run from November 16th, 2024 – May 17th, 2025. Each 90-minute workshop will feature a presentation and discussion of an important aspect of publishing poetry books. Workshops will be held on the second Saturday of the month from 10:00 am to 11:30 am Central Time. They are free and open to the public. If you're interested in attending, please email leagueofmnpoets@gmail.com to request the Zoom link.

Nov 16, 2024 Publisher Choices. Who will publish your manuscript? How do you (start to) find a publisher? What are the different kinds of publishers? What are the advantages and disadvantages of self-publishing?

Dec 21, 2024 Support Systems. The different types of professional helpers: agents, coaches, and mentors; Applying for residencies and grants; Informal support groups and networks.

Jan 18, 2025 Manuscript Preparation. What do editors, publishers, and reviewers look for? What do they expect the writer to include? What are submission no-nos?

Feb 15, 2025 Design considerations. What are the options for layout? Who is responsible for typesetting

and other formalities? How are covers decided on? What makes a good cover?

Mar 15, 2025 Marketing I. What is involved in marketing? What are the writer's responsibilities for marketing? How do you pitch your book to potential readers? How do you reach them? What are the associated costs?

Apr 19, 2025 Marketing II. How is social media best utilized for marketing? Where can you sell your book? How can you contact retailers? How can you book readings?

May 17, 2025 Financial Considerations. What costs are associated with finding a publisher or with self-publishing? What are the tax implications? Are there potential liability risks? How much money can you make?

Once again, if you're interested in attending, please email leagueofmnpoets@gmail.com to request the Zoom link.

MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY has an on-going project to acquire submissions for an oral history of Mississippi poetry. We continue to seek opportunities to reach out to groups in local communities in order to foster a love of poetry and encourage creativity.

Central Branch is working with the local library system to develop opportunities for programs for young people and adults, to include home-school groups. We are gratified by the response to Open Mic nights at Pacesetter Gallery, and look forward to an upcoming session featuring ekphrastic works on the art of delta artist D. Kosmo. Our members welcome and respond to opportunities to make presentations at various community gatherings. Regular branch meetings include brief programs called *Moments With the Masters*, which are always enriching.

North Branch has begun a series of members-only contests, and has seen great interest. We will host MPS SpringFest in April, 2025, and have begun planning for that.

South Branch has begun outreach to senior citizens centers, libraries and schools. We are creating gifts of poetry, focusing on providing a gift with a personal touch, inexpensive, but still providing a lasting memory for the recipient. Our branch meetings rotate among various Coast locations. ~ *Patsy Twiner, President*

The **NEBRASKA POETRY SOCIETY** has added three in-person spoken word/open mic events to broaden our reach and build a community of poets. We still have monthly poetry readings featuring a Nebraska poet on first Tuesdays, and monthly workshops on Saturday mornings on zoom. All of our events are open to all. Our Performance Poetry Contest just concluded, and the winners will be announced next month. Our print poetry contest is now open, with cash prizes for 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. ~ *Charlene Pierce, President*

NEVADA POETRY SOCIETY has been energized having Reno Poet Laureate Jesse James Ziegler and Iain Watson on board - they are both great role models, locally active with Open Mike Poetry, hosting and judging on-going events - always busy and involved!

Our numbers grow as we welcomed new member Dr. Emory D. Jones who hails from Iuka, Mississippi.

For the first time, since 1976, NPS has found its place within our community. We have connected with several local literary and artistic creative groups which has strengthened all our bases. The year bodes well ~ *Phyllis Peacock, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF OKLAHOMA: In March of 2024, we held our Annual Spring Contest Awards and had a great luncheon. It was at this meeting that a proposal was made by Karen Kay Bailey, Treasurer, to publish an anthology to celebrate our 90th Anniversary. Karen Kay is our editor along with a team of people.

Announced this past spring, our treasurer and anthology editor, Karen Kay Bailey, won the 2024 Oklahoma Book Award for Poetry. Her book is entitled *SAND At the Mercy of Wind* written under the name Karen Kay Knauss.

We had a great summer workshop on August 10th with workshop sessions led by our very own Judith Rycroft and Trina Lee. Rob Burgess even had an exercise for everyone. There was much excitement that we had writing workshops, and most people came away with one to six poems that they can now work on. We also had a special rendition of the Pledge of Allegiance written by Ron Young called Happy Birthday, America.

This summer is a sad one as well. We lost our very own Carl Sennhenn, a long standing member of PSO. There was a beautiful memorial service as we remembered his life and his legacy of poetry. He will be greatly missed by our society.

As the fall approaches it will be exciting to celebrate our 90th Anniversary of the Poetry Society of Oklahoma, as well as introduce the newest PSO Anthology celebrating our founder, Zoe Tighlman. Then following up with our National Poetry Day celebration and awards in October. ~ *Rob Burgess, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TENNESSEE: In July, the Board approved nine county-based regions to facilitate Regional Connections Committee work. Regional assessment is underway. Program presenters this summer included award-winning authors Jane Hicks, Jim Minnick, and Annie Woodford. Jake Lawson chairs. Small groups also met monthly for readings and workshops.

The summer buzzed with contest work:

- PST launched the 2024-2025 members-only contest slate. Russell Strauss chairs.
- PST launched the Full Moon Poetry contest sponsored by the Middle Tennessee region.
- For its 68th Annual Festival (April 26, 2025), PST issued a call for festival contest sponsors. Deborah Adams coordinates.
- Board member Cynthia Storrs is developing a cover art contest.
- The Northeast Region (Fred Tudiver) is developing a collegiate contest.
- PST's student contest (grades 2-12) should launch in

early fall.

In August, PST released Tennessee Voices Anthology, 2023-2024. Planned for September are a September 3 launch party and reading at the Northeast region's cosponsored open mic, PoetTEA and a September 14 virtual launch party and reading.

PST's bookstore featuring member authors is live. This fall PST will feature anthology and bookstore poets on its social channels.

Get society information on website (www.poetrytennessee.org) and blog (<https://poetrytennessee.com>). Follow PST on Facebook and instagram: @poetrysocietyoftennessee. ~ *Lisa Kamolnick, President*

POETRY SOCIETY OF TEXAS: On July 13, 2024, the Poetry Society of Texas held a special program, "Zoom Along with PST" in lieu of our annual summer conference. Susan Maxwell Campbell hosted the Zoom meeting, and PST Director Ann Howells presented an interesting and informative program on prose poetry while Susan displayed much of Ann's information and poetry examples on the screen. After questions and answers, Robert Schinzel, winner of the 2023 Catherine Case Lubbe Manuscript Prize, offered by PST, read several of his poems from *When Stones Speak*, which were displayed for attendees to see. Then it was Susan Maxwell Campbell's turn to show us a few of her poems as she read from *Just Looking*, winner of the 2024 William D. Barney Memorial Chapbook Contest sponsored by the Fort Worth Poetry Society in cooperation with PST. After the announcement of the winners of our July General Contest and Laugh Lines Contest by our new Monthly Contest Chair, Lynn Roberts Grice, we heard the winning poems by Cade Huie, General Contest, and Dave Weber, Laugh Lines Contest. Julie Cummings was the judge for the July General Contest. "Zoom Along with PST" closed with an open mic for those in attendance. The Denton Poets' Assembly "Merging Visions Exhibit," in which poets collaborated with area visual artists, closed on August 3rd with a reception and program which featured 15 poets reading their poems while an image of the paired art work was displayed on a large screen. Many of the poets and artists were in attendance. It opened on May 11, 2024, and in July, a number of the members of the Mockingbird Poetry Society in McKinney traveled to the exhibit to meet with members of DPA where they enjoyed the art and DPA members reading their poems on display. The members of the two PST chapters then went out to lunch together, and had a good time. Our regular monthly PST meetings start back up in September. ~ *Catherine L'Herisson, President*

The **UTAH STATE POETRY SOCIETY** has had a change of leadership. Michael Spears has finished his time as UTSPS President and has accepted the role to be the Advisory President. The new UTSPS President is Michael Parker. Michael is the published poet of the 2017 chapbook, *When the Wolves Come After You, Hang On*, and the 2021 UTSPS Book of the Year award-winning collection *Divining the Spirits In The House Of The Hush And Hush*. Michael's poetry and book reviews have appeared in PoetsArtists, MiPOesias, Moss Trill, Littoral Magazine (UK), Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought, Blue Fifth Review, Ygdrasil, New Letters Literary Magazine, Literary Revelations Journal, The Penwood Review, and elsewhere.

Looking forward, Michael Parker sees there are two key things that need to be addressed and worked on, and they are 1) ways to grow the membership and 2) continue to seek and create ways to involve youth and young adult poets in the poetry society.

Michael Parker is welcome to hear from other presidents and members of the NFSPS. He can be reached at note.to.mp@gmail.com. ~ *Michael Parker, President*

VIVA OUR VOICES!

As we approach the winter months, I thought I would offer some new ideas on writing poetry and revisit the topic in light of the authors I have been reading lately and what they have to say on the subject.

As for my ideas, I would call the first one Alphabet Soup. Just grab a string of letters from the alphabet and compose a list of words that come to mind using it. So, let's start with A-G. Anger, Banana, Castanet, Drip, Elephant, Foie-Gras, Grass. Then write some lines using the string:

I didn't think I was angry
about the banana he left on the counter
until I saw the castanets in the cleft
between the fridge and sink and the
drip drip drip of it felt like an elephant.
What do I care about foie-gras if I think
you aren't going to cut the grass?

This passage feels like a first pass. Maybe the only thing I take away is the idea of a poem about a tense relationship. Or maybe I only like the phrase "until I saw the castanets in the cleft/between the fridge and sink".

The second idea is about using a line from conversation you overhear. I would call it Overheard Words. Last night I was at The Dream Café and the couple behind me seemed so happy, so involved in talking about their lives together and going on a trip to watch someone who was in a golf tournament in Arizona. Then the conversation turned to Katie. He said, "I hope Katie is making friends." This idea involves taking the line of dialogue and using it as the title of a poem in three parts. The three parts follow the arc of a story, which includes the rising action, the peak, and the falling action. In this case there needs to be some sort of conflict for Katie. Part I, Katie's problematic first day of school. Part II, Katie's successful interaction with a bully, and Part III, Katie's heroic victory and the development of friends. Or the less happy version: Katie's successful first day of school, Katie's unsuccessful interaction with a bully, and finally, Katie is being shunned by the cohort of kids. I don't really expect poems to come from writing exercises but sometimes, for whatever reason, I am sitting down to write and nothing is happening and an exercise takes me somewhere.

Now to some more highfalutin comments. I find Julia Cameron's ideas on poetry interesting and paradoxical. (She's the author of the popular book on creativity called *The Artist's Way*.) In an interview with James Navé, she says that she writes when she is at her "wit's end" and "whenever I have despair." She says that it "ventilates feelings." But later in the interview, in response to people who claim that poetry is written out of pain, she claims that it is written from ecstasy. She also says that poetry opens "an inner door" and gives us a sense of "deeper connection" and includes listening to our Higher Self. How do these statements jibe? To me, it seems like she writes from both directions, from the Higher Self as it transmits

down through the human Julia, and from the human Julia (who has pain) up and out to the world.

Along the lines of ventilating feelings, Sharon Olds tells her interviewer Michael Laskey, "You know when you have something that you long to say to someone, and you could never say it to them, to their face? Then here's a place where you could speak." I find, as well, that sometimes my poems are telling the tale that is hard for me to actually say to the source of my issue. These kinds of poems are full of emotional energy and that is a sort of engine. Then the question becomes, would I put this out to the world? And Sharon Olds has answered that question with a "yes" in many cases. Sometimes these poems are private poems. Then the question becomes, can I have the conversation with the person?

Michael Laskey asks a question on the role of poetry: "You think poetry has to get out there?" Olds replies:

Yes, I think that most of the poets I know lack self-confidence. And yet, each one of us knows that we have some kind of gift that we're born with, that has to do with language and making stuff. Something. We owe that to the community. We pass it on. You are given a gift. You give a gift.

I find this statement encouraging. To consider it a duty to the community to use our gift. I like that idea of reframing poetry, not as a useless stepchild in a competitive materialistic culture, but as a rightful member of a creative society.

Finally, Tracy K. Smith offers refreshing advice on writing. She says you don't need a ritual to write well. "You don't need one. Your mind will give you something to work with." Freedom from shoulds. Sounds good to me. I've gone from demanding a certain number of sit-downs per week to one-hour increments where I can fit them in. Less corseting. Another bit of advice Smith offered MFA students was to take a "mythic stance in relation to the familiar." What does that mean, practically speaking? I think it means viewing some everyday struggles as having mythic resonance. What myths speak to you? How does something in your life, or those you know or know of, feel like a reverberation of that story? She also suggests finding inspiration in existing texts like news articles and historical letters.

Today, the most important message for me is from Sharon Olds. The idea that poets and poetry matter. We are not irrelevant. We have unique voices we can cultivate for our own benefit and the benefit of our society. Poets are gifted. Viva our voices! ~ *Sarah Wood*

Works Cited

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INCREASING OUR MEMBERSHIP: GROWTH OF OUR STATE SOCIETIES 2.0 - PART II

(revised from a series of articles published in *Strophes* in 2013 Part I - 2.0 published October 2023)

In the previous companion article, discussion centered on the important first steps for growing the membership within our state societies—putting our information out there so potential members become aware of our existence, and identifying where potential members are most likely to be found. What do we do next?

In order to grow our membership, we need to effectively promote our state society. A brochure or rack card that is well-developed and highlights the activities of the society and benefits of membership should be the first item in your toolbox. It will tell a potential member what you can offer to them if they join, and it will be portable so you can take it with you to distribute wherever poets gather. Keep the focus on member benefits, save the society's history information for a "new member" packet or a "history" page on your website. If funds permit, spend a little bit for something that is more polished and attractive than a do-it-yourself photocopied information sheet. Put your best foot forward, which should pay off in the long run.

While developing the brochure, complete an honest assessment of benefits available that will be the most attractive to potential members. If they are going to put up their hard-earned money to join your organization, they want to know what's in it for them that is worth their effort. You want their money, so what do they get in return? The competition for their hard-earned money is fierce—low-paying jobs (most at minimum wage), expensive entertainment costs (movies, video games, cell phones, etc), high fuel costs, student loans, family responsibilities and families to raise, etc. Spell it out for them.

Is your biggest benefit discounted member rates for contest entry fees? If individuals don't enter contests, that's not an attraction to them. If the only thing you provide members is camaraderie, that is available at the local coffee shop and it doesn't cost \$20+ (although, with the cost of coffee, it probably costs more over a year's time – but that's not how most of us think). If the state's membership roster is continuing to shrink, can you up the ante by offering something more?

Once you have a solid marketing plan, you need to build an army of recruiters. Identify state society members who are able to serve as ambassadors willing to seek out new members. Hopefully every member will step up to the plate because they truly want our organizations to thrive. Ambassadors should be willing promote the state society at every possible opportunity—for example, when you are reading at an open mic, acknowledge your membership in the state society. The organization should hold an annual membership drive and challenge each current member to renew as well as recruit at least one new member. If that could be accomplished, your society membership will double in size. Identify if members are able to gift poets a one year complimentary membership so new

individuals who are hesitant can "test drive" the organization to see if it is a good fit for them. When a member does not renew, reach out to them to find out why.

Become active within your individual poetic circles, especially ones that are not a part of the state society. If someone within the organization can provide services as a guest lecturer or conduct poetry workshops, approach educational institutions, libraries, civic groups, churches, and community centers. Does someone hold a poetry contest? Are individuals within the state society willing to serve as judges for their contest? Develop a good rapport and eventually they will be sending individuals in our direction.

Collaborate and network with as many outside sources as possible. Invite non-members and non-member groups to attend your state society meetings and conferences. Allowing non-members to participate in your state conferences has great potential to add to your numbers. Attending a conference gives the non-member opportunity to see what the society is all about as well as how the society functions. They have an opportunity to see if the organization is a good "fit" for them.

Once you've attracted new members, what are you going to do to keep them? ~ *Steven Concert, NFSPS 1st Vice President*

(To be continued Look for **Increasing Our Membership: Growth of Our State Societies – Part III** in an upcoming edition of *Strophes*)

SOCIAL MEDIA TIPS

Social Media, specifically Facebook and Instagram currently have over 3.6 billion users and growing daily. Social Media is a fantastic way to make your information sharing stand out and inform your audience of those things that are important. Here are some basic tips you can use to make your posts memorable, informative, and to broadcast upcoming events with the world around you.

Facebook allows for multiple pictures and videos in one post, and Instagram's gallery feature allows users to share up to 10 videos 60 seconds long in a single post. It is amazing just how much you can share in an instant. You can reach a sizable audience with a few clicks.

Facebook and Instagram stories allow you to upload either live or prerecorded content. You even have the opportunity to offer a donation capability to your story; this is helpful for fundraising campaigns.

When choosing photos be sure they are telling the story you intend. Photos are helpful in drawing attention to readings, fests, and other events. Make sure you have permission to use photos of others.

Hashtags (like #nfspspoetry) help target a wider public audience. This takes time to perfect. Don't get discouraged. Play with it!

NFSPS DEADLINES AND DATES**Manningham Submission Period:**

September 15, 2024 - November 15, 2024

Stevens Manuscript Submission Period:

August 15, 2024- October 15, 2024

CUP Submission Period:

December 1, 2024 – January 31, 2025

BlackBerry Peach (Spoken Word) Submission Period:

January 1, 2025 – March 15, 2025

Annual Contest Submission Period:

January 1, 2025 – March 15, 2025

State Membership Lists and Annual Dues Deadline:

January 15, 2025

Updates due by March 15, 2025

Strophes Reports or Articles:August Issue Deadline: June 25thOctober Issue Deadline: August 25thJanuary Issue Deadline: November 25thApril Issue Deadline: February 25th**BlackBerry Peach SLAM Entry Period:**
Stay tuned for further information!**Contest Sponsorship Forms and Payment:**March 15th for the following year**State Annual Reports:**

One week prior to convention

Board and Committee Annual Reports:

One week prior to convention or when complete in special cases. (Treasurer, Contest Chair)

State President Meetings:

Watch for emails!

Learning Central Meetings:

Watch for emails!

Quarterly Contest Submission Window

October 1-October 31

January 1-January 31

April 1- April 30

August 1 – August 31

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR THOUGHTS!

All members should be receiving a survey via email about Submittable from your state president or mailing coordinator very soon. Please respond! We are very interested in your responses to questions we have. State Presidents will be receiving an additional survey. If you do not have email, please send a letter to Julie Cummings, 9428 Fallen Rock Road, Conifer, CO 80433 and one will be mailed to you.

PLEASE BE WARY OF SCAMMERS

Whenever you get an email with my name as the sender, check to see if the message is actually sent from president@nfsp.net. If it isn't, I suggest you report the email as scam/phishing to your email provider. I will never ask you for money or gift cards in an email or text message.

~ Joe Cavanaugh, 36th NFSPS President

PAST STEVENS MANUSCRIPTS

Prize-winning collections from the past may be ordered from Polly Opsahl for the prices listed on the order form available at <https://www.nfsp.com/StevensOrder.pdf> Add to the price of the book/s mailing costs of \$2.00 for the first book and \$.50 for each additional book. Make checks payable to NFSPS. Her mailing address is on the bottom of the form.

ENCORE PRIZE POEMS 2024

The 2024 anthology of prize-winning poems awarded at the “Voices Set Free” NFSPS convention is available on amazon.com. All royalties from *Encore* sales support NFSPS.

~ Kathy Cotton, *Encore* Editor

NFSPS CONTEST BROCHURE

The NFSPS 2025 Contest Brochure will be mailed to state contacts and will also be available online. You may also request a copy by mailing a SASE with adequate postage for 4 pages to Julie Cummings, 9428 Fallen Rock Road, Conifer, CO 80433.

2025 NFSPS ANNUAL CONTESTS

The 2025 Annual Contests are posted on NFSPS.com and NFSPS.net so interested poets may begin working on entries. As of this publication there is no Contest Chair. Please watch for an announcement.