



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

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

Strophes

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Dear Poets,



I am honored you have elected me to be the 37th president of NFSPS. My first elected position was 2nd Vice Chancellor in 2006 with the appointed role of Youth Chair. Since then I have slowly moved up in the ranks and have been an executive board member for twenty years, so this feels like it has been a long time coming. At the 1960 NFSPS convention in Philadelphia, Ceilia Parsons Miller (a member of PPS) was elected the first president of NFSPS. It has finally circled back to another Pennsylvania Poetry Society member and feels a long time coming as well.

My first convention ever attended was the 2001 NFSPS Convention in Melbourne, Florida, and hosted by the Florida State Poetry Association, which happened to be my first solo trip away from home as well. I booked my hotel room, took Amtrak from Philadelphia to Orlando, rented a car, and drove to Melbourne. It was a last minute decision so I never registered to attend, just showed up. Volunteers work hard to put together the annual conventions and for me to just show up was certainly an inconvenience. In hindsight I could have easily been turned away, instead FSPA and NFSPS were very welcoming.

As a volunteer organization, we have many tasks that need the dedication of members to step up and fill the roles which enable us to continue to carry out our mission. Having been on the elected board for two decades, I have been appointed to many of the volunteer roles, Youth Chair, Manningham/Youth Awards book editor, CUP book editor, Barbara Stevens book editor, Audit Committee Chair, Finance Committee Chair, and Convention Planning Committee, sometimes covering several positions at the same time. When volunteers stop showing up, either one individual takes on multiple roles, or organizations are forced to make adjustments to how they conduct business. When membership dismisses the call for volunteers, they need to ask themselves what will they miss the most when it is no longer offered because the volunteer well has dried up?

No stranger to volunteering, I currently hold membership in four state societies plus two local poetry groups. I serve on the board of the Ohio Poetry Association in the capacity of Governance Chair and previously served a term as Secretary; I serve on the board of the Pennsylvania Poetry Society in the capacity of Treasurer, zoom reading coordinator, and conference workshop coordinator, plus a few others roles (and almost always willing to jump in when needed), and have served as President, Acting President, Vice President, Trustee, Contest Chair, Membership Chair, Newsletter Editor, and Anthology Editor; I am on the leadership team of the River Poets (a local group in Bloomsburg, PA) and for the past five years have served as their publications editor.

My life partner of 27 years was also about service. During my term as President, in Robert's memory, I am going to give a Poetry Service Award to recognize an individual for their volunteer service to poetry. I gave similar recognition when I served as Youth Chair: the Above and Beyond Award. I am still working out details, however, I do know that NFSPS membership will not be a requirement of eligibility for the award. The winner will receive a plaque, and I intend to provide funding for a stipend for the individual to attend the NFSPS Convention to receive the award. Full details will be forthcoming.

I am excited to be part of our future as much as I am honored to have been part of its past.

We still have a lot to accomplish. And I look forward to us doing this together.

Yours in poetry and service,

~ Steven Concert, 37th NFSPS President

ADVOCACY! ACTIVISM! COMMUNITY!

The National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS) Annual Convention marked a triumphant gathering of literary voices, showcasing the enduring strength and unity of the national poetry community. Bringing together poets, literary enthusiasts, and state organization leaders from across the country, the convention offered a vibrant schedule of educational workshops, craft discussions, and open mics. Attendees experienced a seamless blending of traditions, where long-standing literary heritage met new creative energies, fostering an environment of collaborative learning, mutual encouragement, and shared passion for the written word.

A defining moment of civic pride came through the dedicated efforts of organizer M. Palowski Moore, who secured an official mayoral proclamation. Representatives from the Overland Park Mayor's office attended to formally present the proclamation, bestowing civic recognition on the gathering and setting an elevated, celebratory tone for the entire event.

Another highlight of the gathering was the BlackBerry Peach National Poetry Slam, which served as an electric celebration of performance poetry. Designed to bridge the gap between "page" and "stage" poets, the competition delivered high-caliber, deeply moving spoken word performances that captivated audiences. Competitors brought raw energy, impeccable craft, and vulnerable storytelling to the stage, proving once again that performance poetry remains one of the most powerful mediums for personal expression and cultural connection.

Ultimately, the combined success of the NFSPS Convention and the BlackBerry Peach Slam highlighted a flourishing post-event momentum within the poetry landscape. The atmosphere was defined not just by competitive spirit, but by an overwhelming sense of camaraderie, cross-pollination of ideas, and uplifting peer support. As participants return home inspired and equipped with fresh perspectives, the event stands as a resounding success, reinforcing the vital role of community in nurturing the next generation of American writers and performers.

We invite poets, lovers of the written word, and performance artists alike to join us for our next annual convention (in Phoenix, Arizona) to keep this vibrant creative momentum growing—stay tuned for upcoming dates and location details, and prepare to be part of another unforgettable gathering! ~ Julie Cummings

BLACKBERRY PEACH SPOKEN WORD 2026 POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

The winners of this year's BLACKBERRY PEACH SPOKEN AND WRITTEN WORD POETRY COMPETITION were chosen by this year's contest judge, Katie Zale from Tuscon, AZ. The winners were announced by the Contest Chair, Benjamin Gardea. First place winner Lydia Gates, from Flagstaff, AZ. Second place went to Kaniinyee Sirinani from Horsham, PA. Third place was awarded to Ebony Stewart from Baytown, TX. They were followed by 6 Finalists: Susan Chambers, MN; Andres Di Bernardo, NE; Matt Mason, NE; Sean Patrick Mulroy, NY; Avery Volk, AZ; and Pam Whitfield, MN. Poets were asked to pick their 4 best poems and submit them in Written and Spoken (audio) form to be eligible for the prizes.

The top three winners will be included in a video to be produced and placed on YouTube, and have their poems published in a book, published by NFSPS titled Blackberry Peach Written and Spoken Word Poetry Prizes 2026.

Please consider entering next year's competition by following the guidelines outlined on the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS) website. Entries will be accepted from January 1 to March 15, 2027. If you have any questions, comments, or need additional information, please contact Kelsey Bigelow at Kelsey.Bigelow@nfsp.net ~ Kelsey Bigelow, Chancellor and Blackberry Peach Director



2026 BLACKBERRY PEACH NATIONAL POETRY SLAM RESULTS

After two nights of preliminary rounds and an incredible final stage, the BlackBerry Peach National Poetry Slam crowned its national champion. Ephraim Nehemia (Ohio) won our first-place prize of \$2000. Daniel Garwood (Michigan) won second place and \$1000, Soph Pashtunyar (California) garnered third place, winning \$500 and Frankie Marchivi (Arizona) earned fourth place, winning \$250.

Each poet in the competition competed in a preliminary bout on Thursday night and another on Friday night. Each prelim saw every poet perform two poems with the top twelve poets advancing to the Final Stage on Saturday night. Final Stage was comprised of three rounds of poems, with 4 poets eliminated each succeeding round.

Taking place on Saturday was our Youth Mini-Festival, where we witnessed young writers be brave in getting on the mic to share their poems and stories in a room full of adults. Justice Ellsworth impressed us all with his insightful work, and ultimately won the Youth Slam.

Sunday morning the BlackBerry Peach Form Slam took place and 10 poets competed. Each poet had to submit their poems prior to competing. Julie Cummings (Colorado) won first place, Lydia Gates (Arizona) won second, Sammy Mercedes aka Samantha Wilson (Arkansas) won third place, and Sin the Stonewalled Poet aka Steven Concert (Pennsylvania) won fourth. It was a very good morning of poetry.

This year continued to increase the camaraderie and understanding between “page” and “stage” poets. Come next year and be part of the conversation. We’ll be in Arizona in July! ~ Kelsey Bigelow, Chancellor and BlackBerry Peach Director

NFSPS MEMBER SOCIETY NEWS

ARIZONA STATE POETRY SOCIETY The 60th Year Annual State Conference, will be held October 24, 2026, in Mesa, Arizona. We are finalizing our plans for our annual conference with the theme of The Past, Present & Future of Poetry. Our program includes a welcome speech from the current Arizona State Poet Laureate, Laura Tohe, and presentations/workshops from Paul Tunis, Penny Peyser, and Rosemarie Dombrowski. There will be a panel discussion on the topic as well. Participants are invited to join us Friday evening, 23rd, and Saturday evening for open mic readings. Also, Sunday afternoon, 24th, Penny Peyser will be featured in a performance at additional cost. The invitations will be going out in the next month. Anyone that would like an invitation should email christywhite.smp@azpoetry.net or visit our website: azpoetry.net

Our Annual Youth Contest was very successful drawing from students all over the state. Our winners in each category, 1st Grade – 4th Grade, 5th Grade – 8th Grade, and 9th Grade – 12th Grade will be published in our 2026 *Sandcutters* anthology this fall. I was impressed with the quality of the work in all age groups and was pleased there was a good response. Our judges included: Daisy Bassen, poet, community child psychiatrist & clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at Brown University; Tabatha Yeatts, poet,

editor, blogger, writer & arts advocate; Anna Jones, editorial intern at Brick Cave Media with a BA from ASU in Creative Writing. Winners and judges received a booklet of the winning poems and judges' comments.

Our 2026 Annual Contest, June 1-August 31, is currently in full swing and accepting entries. We have 21 categories with free verse, haiku, rhyming, and much more. The very important contest flyer can be accessed here and electronic entries with fees can be uploaded as well here

<https://azpoetry.net/contests/#AnnualContest>

This year we have been offering monthly Zoom workshops in a variety of topics. June featured EcoPoetry with member Gene Twaronite. July features Publishing 101 with Ciera C. Crea, ASPS member and editor with PopTab Press. August features In Praise of the Hidden with Liezel Graham, poet and textile artist from Glasgow, Scotland. Member fees are \$20, nonmember fees are \$25. Registration can be found here <https://azpoetry.net/a-upcoming-events/#Workshops>

ASPS had a very exciting and energetic 2026 slam season leading up to the BlackBerry Peach finals at the NFSPS Convention with slammer, Skyeline Riggs-Davis coming out on top as our ASPS representative. State slams were held in Flagstaff, Sedona, Mesa, Phoenix, and Tucson with the final held at the Ghost Poetry venue in Phoenix on June 10th. The slams are high energy and have given ASPS a fillip (encouraging stimulus), forging partnerships and friendships throughout the poetry community.

Our Tucson Arts Poetry Series (TAPS) program continues under Katie Zale's guidance. Recently, the newly crowned Tucson Poet Laureate, Logan Phillips was the feature reader. Other features have included, and continue to include, Arizona poets and ASPS poets. ~ *CChristy White, Co-President*

The COLUMBINE POETS are exceptionally active! Columbine offers multiple opportunities to its members **every Saturday morning 10am – 12 noon**. The first Saturday of the month is an online critique group conducted by Marleine Yanish. Members submit a poem in advance and the participants provide feedback on each poem. The 2nd & 4th Saturdays are in-person workshops at a local area coffee shop; and the 3rd Saturday is an online Zoom workshop. All workshops are presented by members who choose their topic, including poetic techniques and forms, well-known poets, genres, and historical aspects of poetry. Each workshop is interspersed with prompts for the attendees to create their own poetry related to the topic. Workshop presenters included Anita Jepson-Gilbert ("Poetry Here and Now" and "The Art of Slant Rhymes"); Lynne McNamara ("Poetry of Protest"); Jordana Pilmanis (elegiac poetry); and Valerie Szarek ("On Naming: How the Lyric Poets spoke the world into existence").

National Poetry Month, April 2026, gave inspiration for further events. On April 19 in Fort Collins, the **Columbine Northern Chapter**, led by Lorrie Wolfe, hosted an open mic for members and a presentation of poetry and sound art by the duo, Opposite of Blink.

On June 12, the Columbine Poets of Colorado held their **annual meeting** that included the annual report, financial overview, election of board members, chapter reports and an open mic along with a taco bar lunch hosted by President, Julie Cummings. The outgoing board members—Cathy Casper, JoAnn Rowley, Lorrie Wolfe, and Marleine Yanish—were thanked for their dedication and countless hours of service. The newly elected members of the Board of Directors are:

- Julie Cummings, President
- Lynne McNamara, Vice President
- Amy Wray Irish, Correspondence Secretary
- Anita Jepson Gilbert, Treasurer
- Carla Jordan, Membership
- Valerie Szarek, Performance Poetry Chair:
- Brenda Wildrick, Co-Outreach Coordinator
- Naomi Villa, Co-Outreach Coordinator

Calls were announced for the Columbine Members Contest and the Columbine Members cookbook and poem anthology. Winners of the contest will be announced and will read their winning poems at the annual **Poet Fest on Sept. 12**, where the Anthology will be available as well. Scott Wiggerman of Albuquerque, New Mexico, will be the featured poet.

In summary, the Columbine Poets are enjoying the poet life! Please join us in celebration of poetry! ~ *Lynne McNamara, Vice President*

The FLORIDA STATE POETS ASSOCIATION held its Spring Fling entirely online and free to attendees this year, eliminating barriers of distance and cost for those who love poetry. Including both workshops and information sessions, speakers included Shutta Crum, Sue Brannan Walker, Al Rocheleau, Susan Chambers, Marc Davidson, Denise Duhamel, Peter Gordon, Camara Gaither, Elaine Person, Katherine Nelson-Born, Lola Haskins, and leaders of the organization. There was an average of 30-40 participants per session, with a total of approximately 140 non-duplicated attendees. We are currently working toward our Fall Convention, *FSPA's Autumn Assembly of Poets*, to be held in Sanford, Florida, October 2-4, along the shores of Lake Monroe. Our annual poetry contests are also underway, with 29 categories to enter. Details for both our convention and contests are available in the upcoming issue of our magazine, *Of Poets and Poetry*, available online at flpoets.org. ~ *Diane Neff, Secretary*

ILLINOIS STATE POETRY SOCIETY is celebrating its 35th year. Our adult poetry contest begins August 1st with a September 30th deadline. Keep checking our new website for more details: illinoispoets.org. ~ *Mary Beth Bretzlauf, President*

The SUNFLOWER POETRY SOCIETY OF KANSAS has continued to embrace our mission to promote poetry, poetry education, commitment to making poetry accessible to all and community outreach. Through dedication, commitment and volunteerism, our members have represented the spirit and tenets necessary to raise poetry awareness and inspire poetic expression.

In February, members of SPSK shared poems and discussed poetry during the *William Stafford and Ronda Miller: Remembering Two Kansas Poets annual Memorial Reading* sponsored by the Kansas

Authors Club at the Watkins Museum of History. This year the event was held as a Bards Against Hunger Fundraiser. This event has been hosted by founding members of SPSK Ronda Miller in the past. This year's host was M. Palowski Moore.

The Sunflower Poetry Society of Kansas holds monthly workshops as part of The Sunflower Poets' Roundtable series. SPSK workshops are a safe space for poetic expression. We have members of varying skill levels. Constructive criticism is key. Our workshops aim to nurture creative expression and elevate the importance of embracing your poetic voice. Works in progress are encouraged. It is also important to provide an embracing space for exploration, errors, challenging themes, conflicting ideologies, etc.

In April, SPSK member M. Palowski Moore wrote an article titled *Poetry and The Healing Community: The Sunflower Poetry Society of Kansas* that was published by Midnight Garden Publishing. The article focused on poetry as a healing process for communities in pain, a source for building meaningful connections and a tool for advocacy. The article emphasized of the active engagement of poetry groups with their communities and the challenges facing those communities.

SPSK is honored to continue our association with Poets for Peace. Their mission to raise monies and awareness for orphans of war in Ukraine through sales of the *Sunflowers Rising* anthologies is an important example of the power of poetry. Advocacy through poetry can change lives. This year, under the leadership of Mary Beth Bretzlauf, who is president of the Illinois Poetry Society and member of SPSK, the anthology committee is working hard to create another offering of poems about peace and the shadows of war. All proceeds/royalties from the creation and sales of this book have benefited orphans of war in Ukraine. This continues our commitment to promoting peace, understanding and guidance which was instrumental in the compilation of the *Sunflowers Rising Volume 1* anthology.

The Sunflower Poetry Society of Kansas continues to improve community outreach, foster poetry education and provide opportunities for poetic growth. Our members have been active participants in community events across the state of Kansas. From April 2nd-3rd, member of SPSK and CEO of Arthropoetry Sheri Hall organized the 5th year of the Rite of Joy annual conference. This event utilized the power of words and poetry to address trauma, create spaces for healing, community bonding, sharing of educational resources and nurturing of personal empowerment. M. Palowski Moore served as a committee member and wellness advocate for the event. In May, M. Palowski Moore was a headliner at the First annual Free state Book Festival sponsored by the Kansas Authors Club.

Members of SPSK worked with The Advocacy and Awareness Group of Johnson County and the City of Overland Park to organize this year's Juneteenth celebration in Thompson Park. Attendees celebrated and honored the histories of those who walked before with music, education and poetry in Downtown Overland Park.

SPSK celebrates the successes and publications of our poets. Many members of SPSK have released collections of poetry that are currently available including Iris Craver's *Between The Tracks and The River* (Anamcara Press LLC), Lon Wartman's *Those 60's Boys: Memoirs of a Decade*, and Christina Hauck's *Alive Finishing Line*

Press). SPSK and Mississippi Poetry Society member William Hill's book *A Poem, A Life* is also available and he was recognized as Mississippi Poet of the Year at the MS Poetry Festival.

With pride, The Sunflower Poetry Society of Kansas is honored to serve as cosponsor for the 65th National Federation of State Poetry Societies Inc's Annual Convention and BlackBerry Peach SLAM (a qualifier for the world SLAM competition). From senryu to slam, experimental to traditional and all forms of creative expression through words, The Sunflower Poetry Society of Kansas will continue to provide a platform for the poetic voice.

In closing, It is with a heavy heart that we share news of the passing of founding member Jeff Meredith. He was an inspiration, devoted poet and precious friend. We share an excerpt from the poem *For a Star Not Allowed to Shine*:

and what is to be done?
we ask
with tears streaming
down forlorn faces
and answers come
bright and shining like you.
we will remember
your life, your humor
the gift of your spirit
the courageous heart
that touched
so many lives
the love we carry
to tomorrow.

MAINE POETS SOCIETY will meet on Saturday, September 19, 2026, at Saint Luke's Episcopal Church, 59 High Street in Wilton. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. It will be a hybrid meeting. Lunch will be provided for those attending in-person. The morning session will include the results of the September contest with the judge, Bill Schulz. Following lunch, there will be the long-awaited launch of our 2026 Anthology, *Timberline and Shoreline* (now available from Amazon). The anthology commemorates the society's 90th anniversary. All members present, either in person or on Zoom, will be invited to read one of their poems from the publication. The meeting is expected to end around 3:30 p.m. Then on Saturday, October 17, Bill Schulz will conduct a workshop on the poetry of place at the Windham Public Library, 217 Windham Center Road in Windham from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. It will also be a hybrid meeting. Details about both events will be available on the society's web page, www.mainepoetsociety.com, as are membership application forms. ~ Sally Joy, Reporter

MASSACHUSETTS POETRY SOCIETY met in April for a workshop titled "Unforgettable" which encompassed the subjects of big life experiences, personal milestones, transforming moments, human connection, adrenalin and risk, creative personal expressions, or quiet and powerful moments. After lunch, attendees shared their original poems. Our final meeting will be in August when many memories will be shared. All poetry entries for our National Poetry Day Contest will be given or mailed to the judges for the winners to be chosen. ~ Beverley Barnes, Reporter

The **POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN** (PSM) is proudly celebrating 90 years of encouraging poets throughout the Great Lakes State and beyond.

Our Spring Conference was held May 2 at the Castle Museum in Saginaw, Michigan. The event featured writing workshops led by Jan Worth and M. L. Liebler and provided members with an opportunity to gather, learn, and share their work. The spring edition of *Peninsula Poets*, featuring poetry by PSM members, was also launched during the conference.

During the business meeting, members elected a new leadership team for the 2026–2028 term. We are pleased to welcome Shonda Buchanan as President and Debra Belcher as Vice President. Buchanan, author of *The Lost Songs of Nina Simone* and *Black Indian*, is an Assistant Professor of English at Western Michigan University and serves on several literary and arts organizations throughout Michigan. Belcher previously served four years as Membership Coordinator and three years as editor of the spring issue of *Peninsula Poets*.

Congratulations also go to Sher Ratnabalasuriar, winner of the Traveling Trophy Reading at the Spring Conference with her poem, “Gravity’s Origin Story.”

Looking ahead, our Call for Entries is now open for the Fall/Contest Edition of *Peninsula Poets*. Entries must be received by noon on August 10. Complete contest information is available on the PSM website.

PSM’s Fall Poetry Conference will be held Saturday, October 17, 2026, in the Lake Michigan Room at the Library of Michigan in Lansing. One anticipated highlight of the conference will be the launch of our Five-Year Anthology, featuring the work of PSM members active between 2021 and 2025.

As we celebrate our 90th anniversary, we continue to welcome poets from Michigan and beyond. PSM currently has members from several states outside Michigan, and we invite poets everywhere to learn more about our publications, contests, conferences, and membership opportunities by visiting our website. We look forward to continuing our tradition of encouraging poets for many years to come.

~ Susan Herman,
Historian

The **MISSISSIPPI POETRY SOCIETY’S** annual festival, hosted by South Branch (Branch President, Rene Penrose), was held in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, in April at the Holiday Inn Express and the Mary C. O’Keefe Cultural Arts Center. We celebrated our nation’s 250th anniversary by sharing poems about Americans who played key roles in shaping our country. Some were dressed in character. Much festival time was dedicated to the reading of winning contest entries and the presentation of door prizes. Our keynote speaker was our state’s Poet Laureate, Anne Fisher Wirth—celebrated author, instructor, and environmentalist. The main topic of her keynote speech was prose poetry. She addressed the differences in prose poetry and free verse and shared concise examples of her prose poetry. She also shared poems from her book *A Life in Poetry*. Recognition of Bill Hill of Southaven, MS, as the MPS Poet of the year was followed by a reading and book signing. The following members received the very special Lifetime Achievement Award: Patsy Twiner, Pete Massey, Bill Hill, Mary

Lee Terry, and Peggy Shumaker. A large group of student contest winners came and read their winning poems. What a breath of fresh air young poets are!

MPS is celebrating the accomplishments of members who have recently had books published. All are still available. For some, Amazon links are given. **Bill Hill:** *A Poem, a Life* and *It's Not Even Past*. . . Amazon; **Vivian Danielle Wyatt:** *More Than Me*, Amazon link-- <https://a.co/d/0deQn0TZ>; *A Fragile Heart*, <https://a.co/d/00QdV7g1>; and *Dixie Dust*, <https://a.co/d/01fBC1Ye>; **Janice Canerdy:** *From Serious to Slapstick: Poems Like life*, a.co/d/1w7JJV0; **Mary Beth Magee:** *Songs of Childhood, Echoes of Years; Life and All: The Journey; Grandpa’s Mustache; The World Through Tears; Paw Prints on My Heart*; and *Tending the Light*—all on Amazon; **Sharlee Shumpert:** *To a Future Reader*, Amazon; *Would You Follow?* (under Sharlee Cheyenne), Amazon and Barnes & Noble (online); **Kychell Little:** *The Voice of a Woman Inside of a Child*, Amazon; **Lorraine Jeffery:** *When the Universe Brings Us Back*, Amazon; *Tethers, Saltwater Soul*, and *String-Held Kite*—Amazon and Kelsay Books; **Daniel Pickett:** *A Separate Self*, <https://a.co/d/0abjgZ6s>; **Brenda Brown Finnegan:** *Horn Island Vista*, brendafinnegan@gmail.com; **Philip Levin:** *Reflections; The Magnolia Plantation; Dragons, Wizards, and a Magic Storybook; Once Upon a Time in Mississippi; Tracy's Tidbits; and Underwater Gods*—Amazon and Dr. Levin’s website Doctors-Dreams.com; **Ann Carolyn Cates:** *Prize Winning Poetry of Ann Carolyn Cates*, annccates@aol.com; **Linda Watson Owen:** *A Gift of Dappled Light*, a.co/d/9rxf7o9; **Ruby J. Jones, Ph.D.:** *See Us: Colored, Negro, Black, African American, Person of Color*—Amazon and Barnes & Noble, online; **Pamela J Hatch:** *Saga of Mama's Family, a trilogy:* (1) *The Opposite Side of Lonely*, (2) *Always Room for One More*, and (3) *Forgive Is--As Forgive Does; The Pen of a Ready Writer; Life That's Unrehearsed; Reflections from a Shoebox*, and *Learning with Chocolate*---All on Amazon and Heart’s Compass Imprint

Please visit our website, **misspoetry.net**, to learn more about MPS. You might enjoy reading our newsletters. Check the next *Strophes* for our spring '27 contest guidelines. ~ Janice Canerdy, MPS Secretary

The **POETRY SOCIETY OF OKLAHOMA** scheduled its annual Summer Workshop 18th July at Warr Acres Metropolitan Library in Warr Acres. We have an exciting workshop planned with our key-note speaker, Kristen Grace, a well-known voice in the Oklahoma literary and journalistic community. In addition to her nursing background, she regularly covers arts, culture, and business for 405 Magazine and Art Focus. A graduate of Oklahoma City University’s Red Earth MFA program, she has published several poetry collections, including her folk-horror-inspired work *The Skull Tree*, published by Literati Press Comics and Novels, reimagines traditional folklore and mythology to honor those who have had to become “monstrous” to survive. The collection became an Oklahoma best seller, blending her distinct storytelling voice with themes of survival.

At this time, we also honor our winning poets for the Summer Workshop Poetry Contests as we share winning poems. We also enjoy a summer, picnic lunch!

PSO is looking ahead to Autumn and celebrating National Poetry Day in October which is also our annual business meeting. To celebrate National Poetry Day 2026, we will focus on the theme of WONDER. We will also read winning poems, recognize poets and give out awards.

Our PSO Anthology, *Answering the Call*, was accepted and catalogued in the Oklahoma History Center research Library—located at 800 Nazih Zuhdi Dr., Oklahoma City.

Karen Kay Knauss (Bailey) was selected as the featured poet in the May/June issue of *Oklahoma Today*, the official magazine of the Route 66 Centennial Celebration in Oklahoma. The title of her poem is “Owning the Air on Route 66.”

Soul Sitting by Robyn K. Hesley-Cowherd is a collection of poetry and prose which the author describes as thoughts gathered while sitting with her soul. The book is inspired by thoughts relating to these categories: The Soul of Rest, The Soul of Prayer, The Soul of Life, The Soul of Play, The Soul of Prophecy, and The Soul of Lamentations.

On a sad note, we honor long-time member, Sandra Soli, who passed away 26th May 2026. Sandy was PSO Senior Advisor for many years and also an Honorary member. She will be missed. It is always difficult to say good-bye to our fellow poets and dear friends.

We invite everyone to check our new website poetrysocietyofoklahoma.weebly.com and our Facebook page for current PSO information. As always, we welcome all to “Come and grow at PSO!” ~ *Patti Koch, President*

WYOPOETS Celebrate A Weekend to Remember: How Veronica Golos and David Pérez Transformed Our Spring Workshop

We have had some amazing presenters over the last several years, Camille Dungy and Aaron Abeyta immediately pop to mind. Naturally, our expectations have grown, and each year I find myself thinking that there’s no way we’ll be able to satisfy this incredible hunger and excitement built around poetry and our community.

And then Veronica Golos entered with a generous offer to bring her husband, David Pérez, to present with her at this year’s workshop. In an incredible support of our community, they offered to tag-team the event for the price we’d normally pay a single presenter.

If you missed this year’s workshop, I’m truly sorry. You missed one incredible event. From Veronica’s session on extravagant poetry to David’s exercises on performance, it was a weekend I will not soon forget.

Veronica has this way of gently nudging a poem into something powerful. Listening to each participant’s work illuminated how small shifts in language can be applied to a wide variety of styles to create something deeper, more beautiful, and more direct.

Then came David’s session. I don’t think I have ever heard so much laughter during a workshop. We have incredible poets in our organization who are fearless in their writing, but to see them bring that same fearlessness to performing was inspiring. To hear the poems we’d listened to throughout the day gain in power, momentum, and life in just a few exercises was astounding.

This was a workshop I’ll remember for years to come. If Veronica and David ever return to Wyoming to teach, do whatever it takes to get yourself a seat. ~ *Suzanne Stephan, Correspondent*

CONTEST CHAIR REPORT

The 2026 NFSPS contests received 6,038 total entries across 53 contests, including 3,566 electronic submissions through Submittable and 2,472 paper submissions. A total of 303 individual poets participated, with 203 entering electronically and 100 by mail, demonstrating a clear preference for the electronic submission process. Of the entrants, 54 were non-members of NFSPS. Excluding Student Awards, 500 contest awards were presented across 50 contests, with 174 different poets winning at least one award. Fourteen non-member poets earned a combined 24 winning poems, highlighting a strong opportunity to invite these accomplished poets to join an NFSPS-affiliated society. Student contests received 144 entries and recognized 25 individual student winners. Four international poets also participated, including two NFSPS members from Canada and Great Britain and two student entrants from Belgium.

NFSPS currently has 31 active state societies, with members from 26 societies represented among this year’s entrants. When poets listed multiple society affiliations, only the first listed society was used for these statistics, and membership was verified for winners of Members Only contests when necessary. Several entries, primarily electronic submissions, were disqualified due to unpaid entry fees or duplicate submissions. Among participating societies, the Poetry Society of Texas had 18 winning poets (out of 23 entrants) who earned 77 awards, with Robert Shinzel (16), Budd Powell Mahan (14), and Barbara Blanks (11) accounting for more than half of those awards. Columbine Poets had the highest number of different winning poets, with 23 of its 38 entrants earning a combined 56 awards.

The 2027 Contest Brochure is almost done and will be published on the website in September. Please consider entering the contests and attending convention in Arizona next year. We’d love to celebrate you during the awards presentations! ~ *Julie Cummings, Contest Chair*

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF STATE POETRY SOCIETIES, INC.

Organized October 17, 1959
Mary B. Wall, Founder

Honorary Chancellor: Diane Glancy

EXECUTIVE BOARD ~ 2026-2028

Elected, NFSPS Convention, June 2026

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**For information on forming a state society, contact
Susann Moeller at smoeller@nfspss.net**

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:

Julie Cummings, *Strophes* Editor

5858 Pintail Way, Frederick, CO 80504-9668

Stropheseditor@nfspss.net

* 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 \$5.00 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 \$2.00 per copy.**

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* Deceased

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

September 15- November 15

Stevens Manuscript Submission Period:

August 15 - October 15

CUP Submission Period:

December 1– January 31

BlackBerry Peach (Spoken Word) Submission Period:

January 1 – April 15

Annual Contest Submission Period:

January 1 – March 15

State Membership Lists and Annual Dues Deadline:

January 15

Updates due by March 15**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:

Held Quarterly. Watch for emails!

Learning Central Meetings:

Held Quarterly. Watch for emails!

HOW TO ORDER PAST NFSPS PUBLICATIONS

Whether you are looking for past editions of the annual *Encore* contest anthology, award-winning books from the College Undergraduate Poetry (C.U.P.) competition, Stevens Manuscript winners, or previous BlackBerry Peach Poetry collections, ordering past titles is straightforward.

1. Visit the Official NFSPS Bookstore:

Head to the official NFSPS website at nfsp.net/nfsp-bookstore or nfsp.com/publications.html to view the current catalog.

If you are searching for an out-of-print back issue or past quarterly newsletter (*Strophes*), reach out directly to the NFSPS publication editor.

Inquiries about publications can be made to Polly.Opsahl@nfsp.net. You will be responsible for shipping.

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 steven.concert@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, nor will any member of the NFSPS Board. ~ *Steven Concert, NFSPS President*

REPORTING LEADERSHIP CHANGES TO NFSPS

When a new president, officer, or other leadership position changes in your society, please send the updated information to both the **Strophes Editor** stropheseditor@nfsp.net and the **NFSPS Webmaster** admin@nfsp.net

Providing this information promptly allows NFSPS to update the official website and include the changes in the next issue of the *Quarterly Strophes* newsletter.

Keeping leadership information current helps maintain clear communication between NFSPS and its member societies and ensures that the correct individuals receive important announcements and updates.

Thank you for helping keep our records accurate.

ENCORE PRIZE POEMS

The 2024 and 2025 anthology of prize-winning poems awarded at the annual convention will be available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). All royalties from

Encore sales support NFSPS. ~ McKenna Hall, *Encore* Editor