



June, 2024

## The Connecticut Poetry Society

The CPS website is <http://ctpoetry.net/>.

While you're online, *Friend us* on Facebook.

### CPS Honorary Board

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022

Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, CSU Distinguished Professor Emerita

### CPS Officers

President: Pat Mottola

Vice President: Jeanne LeVasseur

Secretary: Amy Graver

Treasurer: Patti Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

Contests: Kathleen McIntosh

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert, & John Surowiecki

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: B. Fulton Jennes

Youth Coordinator: Amy Graver

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola



### Spring Fling Held in Glastonbury

Poetry, camaraderie, music, flowers, and good food were all part of the mix on June 1st at the Glastonbury Riverfront Community Center as members gathered for the annual Spring Fling hosted by CPS. Attendees celebrated the 50th anniversary of Connecticut Poetry Society during this event, and were treated to a reading of some of the milestones of our growing organization. Music was provided by John Suro. A catered luncheon was provided. Members displayed and sold some of the books they've published, and the open mic gave everyone a chance to hear poems by many of our very talented members.

### Renew Your Membership

Don't forget to renew your CPS membership. Dues are \$30 for one year (\$15 if you are a student). CPS membership includes membership in the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. NFSPS sponsors many contests for its members.

## President's Message, June 2024

Dear CPS members,

HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY! CPS, founded in 1974 in Hartford with 15 members, has grown to a membership of 300+ strong. We celebrate with a beautiful new CPS logo, designed by our Secretary and graphic designer Amy Graver!



I am happy that so many of you were able to attend our annual Spring Fling last weekend! There was so much heartwarming camaraderie and great poetry and great music. Also a fabulous open mic! And your amazing books at the Book Fair! Your talent is evident, acknowledged and appreciated. I know that everyone enjoyed meeting new people and making connections. It's energizing to be able to gather in person, and at such a beautiful venue.

Please know that I am exhilarated each time so many of you ask me, flabbergasted, "How do we (CPS) offer so much when dues are only \$30 per year?" I so appreciate your gratitude, and I often wonder that myself. But I know the answer. Our Board Members—**Jeanne LeVasseur, Ginny Connors, Patti Fusco, Tony Fusco, Debbie Gilbert,**

**Kathleen McIntosh, Amy Graver, John Surowiecki, Barb Jennes**—give so much of their time, *for free*, and have been doing so for many years! Their generosity is limitless. How unique each of these individuals is. And each brings such an amazing amount of wisdom, expertise, and dedication to our organization.

And let's not forget our Chapter Presidents, who do such important work around the state. The benefits reaped from these workshops are priceless.

I also thank our generous donors, who go above and beyond in their support of CPS and our educational programs. Many of you choose to remain anonymous, but please know that we are all extremely grateful to you.

*Poetry is the opening and closing of a door, leaving those who look through to guess about what is seen during the moment.* —Carl Sandburg

Enjoy the summer, check your emails for more in-person summer events, and I'll see you soon!

Pat Mottola, President  
Connecticut Poetry Society



Spring fling

## CPS Chapters & Presidents

If you want to know more about meeting with a specific chapter, please get in touch with the chapter president.

### Bethel

**Michael Garry**

[mgarry1955@gmail.com](mailto:mgarry1955@gmail.com)

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 1-3 pm. Bring copies of a poem to discuss.

### Farmington Valley

**Debbie Gilbert**

[debbiewgilbert@hotmail.com](mailto:debbiewgilbert@hotmail.com)

This chapter meets on the first Monday of each month, from 7-9 pm. Meetings are held in person at One Huntington Glen Road in Avon. Bring ten copies of your poem to share for critique.

### Greater Hartford

**Pegi Deitz Shea**

[pegideitzshea@aol.com](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com)

This chapter is going virtual and has a new meeting schedule. It will meet on the second Monday of each month (except for July and August) at 6:30 pm, via Zoom, and will be managed by Pegi Deitz Shea. We welcome all current CPS members of towns in the Hartford area. If you would like to join, please contact her at [pegideitzshea@aol.com](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com) to be placed on the email list.

### Haiku Chapter

**Marita Gargiulo**

[margararts1000@gmail.com](mailto:margararts1000@gmail.com)

Members of the group share haiku in response to a prompt. The chair collects the poems in advance and emails them to all chapter members so that the poems can be discussed during the meetings.

### Manchester

**Victoria Dubiel**

[victoria.dubiel@hotmail.com](mailto:victoria.dubiel@hotmail.com)

Manchester's Wit and Wisdom group meets on the second Saturday of each month from 1-3. They meet at the Manchester Historical Society, 175 Pine Street in Manchester.

### Middletown

**Pat Mottola**

[ctpoetryline@gmail.com](mailto:ctpoetryline@gmail.com)

This chapter is resuming. Contact Pat for information on how to participate.

### New Haven

**Tony Fusco**

[tfusco357@gmail.com](mailto:tfusco357@gmail.com)

The New Haven chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10-12. Presently they meet via Zoom.

### Oreanaug Chapter: Woodbury, Watertown, Southbury, Roxbury, Bethlehem

**Sandy Carlson**

[oreanaugchaptercps@gmail.com](mailto:oreanaugchaptercps@gmail.com)

The Oreanaug chapter meets in person on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 am. Contact Sandy for the location. The ekphrastic workshops are held at the Woodbury Public Library on the first Saturday of each month at 1 pm.

### Wilton

**Ed Ahern**

[salmonier@aol.com](mailto:salmonier@aol.com)

The Wilton Workshop meets from 2-4 on the third Saturday of each month at the Wilton Library. Email a copy of your poem to Ed in advance, or bring copies when you attend the meeting.

## Poet in the Spotlight: Pegi Deitz Shea

Growing up in the 60's, **Pegi Deitz Shea** turned to writing as a way to process and understand the Vietnam War, famine in Biafra, and the assassinations of JFK, Malcolm X, RFK, and MLK Jr. As a young adult, she was able to travel, which exposed her to various cultures. She still writes often about social justice and political issues.

Shea writes in many different genres. She has a journalism background and has written many children's books too. In college, she got a good poetry education by studying with **Alicia Suskin Ostriker**, "who proved in the 1970's that writing about sex, womanhood, and family life—the good and the bad—is not only compelling but essential." While at Rutgers she was also exposed to some of the Beat poets. Apparently, she even partied with **Allen Ginsberg**. Shea writes mostly narrative poetry. That's evident in her book *The Weight of Kindling*. Her current manuscript is a novel-in-verse about Jeanne Barret, the first woman to circumnavigate the world. It's "a culmination of all my writing skills and interests: history, poetry, nonfiction, narrative, and social issues."

Shea turned to CPS when she decided, after a 25-year career as a writer of children's books, to refocus on writing for adults. She is amazed at the warmth and talent of Connecticut's poetry community, and is proud to participate in it. She says "I joined the Greater Hartford chapter, whose group was run expertly by **Julia Paul** at **Mike Lepore's** beautiful home. I recently took over managing that group, which now meets monthly via Zoom. Going to POPs

when I first joined helped me get my eye and brain back to analyzing and discussing poems... I look forward to each new issue of *Connecticut River Review*, and have been honored with publication in it a few times. The connection to the national federation and state chapters has led to wins or placings in several contests. And I must say, the parties have been lovely. Community!"



Like most good writers, Pegi Deitz Shea is constantly reading. She reads *Poetry*, *Poets & Writers*, and *American Poets Magazine* and tries to keep up with work by Connecticut poets. That helps in her recruitment of readers for the series she leads, *Poetry Rocks*, and also complements her work in leading the Connecticut Coalition of Poets Laureate. (She is the Poet Laureate Emerita of Vernon.) Of course, Shea reads more than poetry. She likes fiction, nonfiction, newspapers, and magazines on a variety of topics.

Pegi Deitz Shea can be thought of as one more excellent example of the energetic, multi-talented people who participate in the Connecticut Poetry Society.

## Contest News

We're happy to announce the winners of the **Lynn DeCaro Poetry Competition** for Connecticut high school students, judged this year by **Pegi Dietz Shea**. These fine poems are now on the CPS website: <http://www.ctpoetry.net/lynn-decaro-contest.html>.

**First Place: Julia Liu**, Loomis Chaffee School, Windsor

**Second Place: Abigail Aggarwala**, Rockville High School, Vernon

**Third Place: Iris Hida**, Rockville High School, Vernon

**Honorable Mentions: Len Valentino**, Fairfield Ludlowe High School; **Amy Meng**, New Canaan High School; **Helen Puskar**, Greenwich High School; **Jules Kontozissi-Dahlstrom**, Danbury High School.

The **Connecticut Poetry Award**, underway as the Newsletter is written, will be judged by Honorary Board Member **Vivian Shipley**. Winning poems will be posted on the CPS website.

Watch for the two additional contests to be held this summer: The **Experimental Poetry Award** will be open for submissions June 15 through July 31 and will be judged this year by **Claire Donato**. The **Vivian Shipley Award** will be open to submissions August 1 through September 30. This year's judge will be **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura**. Both contests carry a **\$1000 first prize** and are open to all poets. See last year's winning poems on the CPS website, <http://www.ctpoetry.net/contests.html>.

## Connecticut Poets Laureate

The Connecticut Coalition of Poets Laureate has been able to welcome many towns' Inaugural Poets Laureate: **Gabriella Brand** (North Haven), **Pat Mottola** (Cheshire), **Faith Vicinanza** (Southbury), **Steve Veilleux** (Thompson), **Judith K. Liebmann** (Branford), **Susan Powers** (Scotland), **Sharmont "Influence" Little** (New Haven), and **Larry Zimmerman** (Hebron). New Laureates in towns with long-established posts include **Nzima Hutchings** (Enfield), **Nadia Sims** (Manchester), **Mark McGuire-Schwartz** (Guilford), **Vicky Nordlund** (Glastonbury), **Ira Joe Fisher** (Ridgefield), **Virginia Shreve** (Canton), and **Steve Straight** (South Windsor). Towns in the process of appointing their first poet laureates include Windsor, Woodstock, Coventry, Middlebury, and Lebanon. All of these laureates—current as well as past—are hosting readings, podcasts, workshops, and more! Check the website <https://ctpoetlaureates.com> to learn about the action near you and get ideas for programming in your town. On the website page listing current poet laureates, look for your town. If your town isn't represented, that means YOU could possibly become a poet laureate. Contact Pegi Deitz Shea at [pegideitzshea@aol.com](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com) if you're interested in helping your town appoint a poet laureate.

## Spoken Word Poetry Event in Woodstock

*Poets at Large* is happy to announce their first free poetry/spoken word event of the season will be on June 16<sup>th</sup>, from 2-4 pm in the barn at Roseland Park, 205 Roseland Park Road in Woodstock

Featured readers that afternoon will be **Howie Faerstein, Paul Szlosek, Karen Warinsky** and Featured Open Mic reader **Steve Borodkin**. Sign up for open mic at [karen.warinsky@gmail.com](mailto:karen.warinsky@gmail.com). *Poets at Large* is a project of Windham Arts.

## Women's Writing Retreat

Another project of Windham Arts is the Women's Writing Retreat hosted by **Karen Warinsky**. The program will offer a supportive environment in which to write and share foundational life moments through prompts and group work. Up to eight women may participate. The \$35 fee will cover refreshments, prizes, and the writing experience. Contact Karen at [karen.warinsky@gmail.com](mailto:karen.warinsky@gmail.com) by June 4th at in order to register and receive details.

## Poetry Hops Open Mic in Storrs

Poetry Hops is a new, in-person, open mic summer series! It's being hosted by Hops44 restaurant and bar at 625 Middle Turnpike (Rte. 44 near the intersection of Rte. 195) in Storrs. Beginners through seasoned pros are welcome, ages 16-up. For more information, contact [pegideitzshea@aol.com](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com).

## Images: Photography and Poetry

For this event, poets are encouraged to submit poems that are inspired by photographs. The ekphrastic poems will be displayed at a poetry opening in August run by the Shoreline Arts Alliance.

Send your email address by July 14th to [EDWARDLENT@icloud.com](mailto:EDWARDLENT@icloud.com) and you will be sent the link to enter. A \$10 application fee allows poets to get a link to photographic images and to submit a poem. The IMAGES show opens at Kehler Liddell Gallery, 873 Whalley Avenue in New Haven. Poets can attend to see the photos in person and meet the artists. Poems must be submitted by August 8th. A few poets will be asked to read or have their poems read at the poetry opening, and all submissions will be displayed next to the artwork during the Poetry Opening on August 24th.

## Love Working With Ekphrastic Poetry?

Poet and Artist **Ed Lent** hosts the *Ekphrastic Poetry Trust of Connecticut*, a newly formed poetry group, which is held at the E.C. Scranton Memorial Library in Madison from 3 to 4:30 pm on the second Tuesday of each month (June 11 is the next meeting). Meetings are held in the Lifetime Learners room, a room filled with artwork. Members write, read, and discuss their poems at the meeting. For more information, RSVP, please contact: [edwardlent@icloud.com](mailto:edwardlent@icloud.com) ; please put POETRY TRUST in subject line.

## The Rose Garden Reading

You won't want to miss the annual Rose Garden Reading held at Elizabeth Park in West Hartford/Hartford. This event is hosted by The Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens with support from the Elizabeth Park Conservancy. On Saturday, June 15 at 1 pm under the tent in Elizabeth Park, poets **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura**, **Frederick-Douglass Knowles II**, and **Christina J.**

**Baptista** will share some of their poetry. In addition, winners of the Wallace Stevens Poetry Prize and Scholarship, **Asia Hamilton** and **Shammia Martin**, will each be invited to read a poem. Smell the roses and listen to the poetry!

## New Publications by Our Members

CPS members continue to make their marks on the literary world. **Liane Strauss** is the author of *The Flaws in the Story*, which won the 2023 Marsh Hawk Press Prize, judged by **Mary Jo Bang**. The judge said of her collection, *Like Penelope's daily weaving, ripped out each night in order to keep in play the possibility of a happy ending (Odysseus's return, Laertes' death forestalled), each of these fascinating poems is part of a larger story, each an exquisitely observed vignette that pinpoints a moment of conversation, or observaton, or travel, that reveals, much like a chapter in a novel might, a set of characters with moods and conundrums. As the scenes accrue, the individual points in time become an inner life made visible.*

Liane Strauss is also the author of the Substack *How to Read a Poem: A Love Story*.

**Vivian Shipley's** 15th book, *Slow Dancing in the Dark*, has just been released by Louisiana Literature Press. It is getting rave reviews from early readers.

*Era's End* is the title of a new chapbook by **Elaine Zimmerman**, published by Finishing Line Press. Commenting on the collection, **Meredith Stricker** has said, "Elaine Zimmerman's powerful collection, *Era's End*, spans the pandemic through poems of witness and participation. There is immensity and heart-breaking detail in her work...Her work refuses to separate politics from emotion and engaged action—heart and policy, the news and inner life all belong together."

**Steve Ostrowski** has two new publications out: a book of poems called *Life Field*, published by Impspired Press and a novel, *The Highway of Spirit and Bone*, published by Lefora Publications. The novel features a character who is a poet.

*Soul House* is a work by **Mireille Gansel** translated from the French by **Joan Seliger Sidney**. Translating this book is a major accomplishment. **Ilya Kaminsky** praised the book this way: "Mireille Gansel's *Soul House*, in Joan Seliger Sidney's beautiful translation, is something to behold: a book of aftermaths, of ghost-breath in scraps of tales almost told, a post-script, a pact 'beyond words and borders,' it reads like a notation on silence that occurs after crisis...A very beautiful, special book." Joan Seliger Sidney felt drawn to these poems immediately; she and the author are both second-generation survivors. Sidney's participation in a four-course sequence of translation classes at University of Connecticut, taught by **Peter Constantine**, helped her immensely in this project.