

Connecticut Poetry Society



June 2025

CPS website is <http://ctpoetry.org>.

Contact us at ctpoetryline@gmail.com

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

CPS Honorary Board

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022

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

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Membership: Patti Fusco

Contests: open position

Webmasters: Patti Fusco & Tony Fusco

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

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: Jim Finnegan

Publicity & Social Media Director: River Ripa

CPS, an affiliate of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS), is dedicated to the promotion and enjoyment of poetry.

Check out our NEW website:



Spring Fling Celebration

The CPS annual Spring Fling, our fabulous in-person social event, was held in Glastonbury last month, and was especially well-attended. Enthusiasm and camaraderie were evident as approximately 60 members mingled, lunched, and participated in a stellar open mic where poetic talents were in full bloom. We all had fun viewing the Museum Challenge, after which members had time to write an Ekphrastic poem inspired by one of the entries. We welcomed many new members and are so grateful to all for supporting poetry and each other. Save the Date: Our Summer Celebration in-person event is set for August 2. More details to follow!

President's Message

Dear CPS members,

It is no surprise that poetry is flourishing in Connecticut, and that it is positively contagious! Poets are observant and sensitive. We appreciate and interpret life in unique ways. We write our reactions to the world—and we have much to write about. So often I think of the quote by F. Scott Fitzgerald: "You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say." The ability to express ourselves as we do is a gift. I look back at some of the poems of the past and realize more and more that it is poets who are the true historians.

What Kind of Times Are These

By Adrienne Rich

There's a place between two stands of trees where
the grass grows uphill
and the old revolutionary road breaks off into
shadows
near a meeting-house abandoned by the
persecuted
who disappeared into those shadows.

I've walked there picking mushrooms at the edge of
dread, but don't be fooled
this isn't a Russian poem, this is not somewhere
else but here,
our country moving closer to its own truth and
dread,
its own ways of making people disappear.

I won't tell you where the place is, the dark mesh of
the woods
meeting the unmarked strip of light—
ghost-ridden crossroads, leafmold paradise:
I know already who wants to buy it, sell it, make it
disappear.

And I won't tell you where it is, so why do I tell you
anything? Because you still listen, because in times
like these

to have you listen at all, it's necessary
to talk about trees.

As Poet Laureate of Cheshire, I would like to recommend that you check out Connecticut Council of Poets Laureate website. On it you will find a list of amazing poetry events initiated by the Poets Laureate of their respective towns. Does your town have a Poet Laureate? If not, then *why not you?* Check the CCPL website for information. The more we spread the message of poetry, the better our world. <https://ctpoetlaureates.com/>

Welcome new Board Member River Ripa, Publicity and Social Media Director. Formerly from Long Island, NY, River breezed into Connecticut like a breath of fresh air. She sees poetry as a modality to connect humans with nature. Read her full bio on the CPS website "About Us" page. ctpoetry.org

Need \$1000? Enter CPS's Experimental Poetry Award June 15–July 31 (details on our website)! The winner could be you.

Be sure to catch our next **Poets On Poetry** June 18, "Rilke and the Birth of the Modern," led by Branford Poet Laureate Judith Liebman. Our POP director, Jim Finnegan, has a knack for finding the best of the best. Thanks, Jim. See you there!

To all CPS members, thank you for inspiring and supporting one another in our efforts to help make the world a little bit better. I would like to spread the message of a very dear friend, who lives by the acronym he created: OPIAO. It stands for "Only Positivity In And Out." I am grateful to have such people in my life, and I repeat the words I expressed in my last message: "In these trying, uncertain times,

I turn to friends like you, the wisdom of poetry, and the belief in goodness and kind hearts."

Pat Mottola, President
Connecticut Poetry Society



Museum Challenge, Spring Fling

CPS Website: New and Improved!

We are always thinking of ways to enhance and enrich your CPS experience. Take a look at our brand new, state-of-the-art CPS website: ctpoetry.org . Our goal is to make your browsing a breeze! Find valuable information and opportunities at your fingertips. We are still adding to it, so check it often and enjoy!

Poetry in the Wild

Connecticut Poetry Society collaborated with the Bethany Land Trust to open an inspirational and unique poetry walking trail in Connecticut. **Jeanne LeVasseur,**

Vice President of CPS, worked with the land trust to identify poems that could enhance a walk in nature. Bethany Land Trust is calling this installation "Poetry in the Woods." They have installed a collection of nine poems throughout several walking trails on their lands. Small, inobtrusive signs with QR codes allow these wild poems to be found when hikers point their cameras at them. The digital code takes them to a website where they hear the author read a poem quietly in the forest. Sometimes there is a bench nearby, a view of a beaver dam, or of indigenous stonework. Always it is leafy and beautiful.

In celebration of National Poetry Month, the official launch of the trail occurred on April 13, when **Jeanne LeVasseur, Pat Mottola,** and **Ginny Connors** of Connecticut Poetry Society held a live poetry reading with the Land Trust on one of their trails for a large gathering of hikers. Poems from the digital sign collection were read to an assembled group at various points during the hike. Future hikers can use their phones to hear these poems read by the authors. Information about the Bethany Land Trust trails and monthly hikes can be found at <https://bethanylandtrust.org/> .

If other regional poetry groups would like to start a similar collaborative project with local land trusts or towns, Connecticut Poetry Society stands ready to help identify a list of potential poems, materials useful for durable signs, and copyright considerations.

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

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 1-2 pm. Bring copies of a poem to discuss.

Farmington Valley

Debbie Gilbert
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

This chapter 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.

Haiku Chapter

Tony Fusco
tfusco357@gmail.com

Members of the group share haiku in response to a prompt. The chair collects the poems in advance. Poems are due by noon on the 15th of the month. Send poems to Tony Fusco with "CPS Haiku for (month & year)" in the subject line. Type your haiku (one only) directly onto the email and include your name.

The suggested theme for June is "celebration."
CPS members only, please.

Manchester

Victoria Dubiel
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.

New Haven

Tony Fusco
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

The Oreanaug chapter meets in person on the second Saturday of each month at 9:15 am. Meetings occur at Hollow Park from June-September and at St. Paul's Church in Woodbury from October-May.

Wilton

Ed Ahern
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: Catherine Hoyser

Catherine Hoyser is Emerita Professor of English at the University of Saint Joseph, where she taught literature and cultural studies, advised the student arts journal, and hosted the annual Peter Brazeau Poetry readings. When she allowed herself the pleasure of writing poetry, she discovered that writing it is freeing and inspiring, not only for students, but also for herself. Hoyser's poems have been published in several journals and anthologies.

The pleasure that poetry provides is something she has experienced throughout her life. Hoyser explains, "Poetry has been a comfort and inspiration to me from my early childhood. I created songs while standing on a stepstool and washing the dishes. The rhythm settled me; the poems crystalized my feelings. For my eleventh birthday, I asked for copies of Edna St Vincent Millay and Sara Teasdale books; I still have the books."

She believes that collaboration and community are crucial, in poetry and in life. She's published articles on the role of collaboration in higher education, as "ways to cope with disaffection and burnout. Administrative demands and political pressure on faculty make it more and more difficult for teachers to remain in the classroom."

A classroom technique she has used and written about involves a close reading technique called *Lectio Divino*, with students sharing insights, telling stories about their experiences during this experience, and writing poems in response to their partner's insights or to one of the stories shared during the process. Teachers or organizations that might want her

to lead such a process are welcome to contact her; she's found this process enlightening to students of all levels, as well as to colleagues, administrators, and psychologists.

In an article about her collaboration with artist Jane Dalton, she described how the two of them have generated artwork and poems in response to each other's work. She says, "The collaboration with Jane and other academic friends is much like CPS membership. CPS provides a supportive, friendly community of talented poets. I admire the quality and variety of the poetry writing and creativity when we workshop or participate in the ekphrasis events. The support CPS members provide each other keeps us going in an otherwise isolating pursuit."



Catherine Hoyser

Ekphrastic Poetry: CPS at Yale

CPS members were invited to participate in the March Ekphrastic Poetry workshop at the Yale University Art Gallery in New Haven. The workshop was led by CPS Vice-President **Jeanne LeVasseur**, along with CPS President **Pat Mottola** and CRR Editor **Ginny Connors**. Participants enjoyed a brief docent tour and then were free to explore the museum to choose an artwork that spoke to them strongly, inspiring a poem. In the words of Willard Spiegelman, author of *How Poets See the World*, our mission was to “observe, retreat for contemplation, and then reimagine or recreate them.” With a Zoom workshop in between, we reunited two weeks later to read our poems by the artworks. Each poet’s words exhibited a deep understanding and unique interpretation of the art; each poem an effort to understand the world through someone else’s creation. CPS will be offering a similar Ekphrastic workshop in the fall, again organized by VP **Jeanne LeVasseur**. As always, it will be free for CPS members. Visit Yale Art Gallery at <https://artgallery.yale.edu/>.

News from the Orenaug Chapter

The Orenaug Poetry Group, a chapter of the Connecticut Poetry Society centered in Woodbury, will begin meeting outdoors again with its June 14 meeting. Members gather around 9:15 a.m. at the pavilion in Hollow Park, 43 Hollow Road, in Woodbury. Contact **Sandy Carlson** at orenougchaptercps@google.com for more information.



Joseph Brockway at Yale Gallery

Woodbury poet laureate emerita **Sandy Carlson** will lead a poetry workshop on the healing power of nature at Wisdom House in Litchfield on Saturday, July 12, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Visit wisdomhouse.org for more information and to sign up.

Woodbury Poet Laureate **Katie Baker** will host open mics at the Woodbury Public Library on June 11, July 9, August 13, September 10, October 8, November 12, and December 10 starting at 6 p.m. All are welcome. Check the library's calendar [here](#) for the theme of each month.

On July 11, The Hickory Stick Bookshop in Washington Depot will host a launch of *Lost Love*, a collection of poems about what it means to love, to remember, to say good-bye. Published by Orenaug Mountain Publishing, the anthology includes works by 63 authors from around the world, 18 of whom are from Connecticut. The launch will include a reading along with refreshments and the opportunity to purchase a copy of the book.

Free Poetry Events at the Madison Library

Love Spoken Word? Check out the Open Mic at Madison Library, 801 Boston Post Road, on the first Thursday of the month. It begins at 6 pm and all are welcome. The Ekphrastic Poetry Trust also meets at the Madison Library on the second Tuesday of the month from 3-4:30. This is for you if you are interested in the intersection of poetry and art. Everyone is welcome.

Spoken Word at Roseland Park

Poets at Large is happy to announce their first free poetry/spoken word event of the season will be on June 15th, 2-4 pm in the barn at Roseland Park, 205 Roseland Park Road, Woodstock, CT.

This is the sixth year for the regional group to bring poets to the park. Featured will be the emerging voices of younger poets **Eric Petersen**, **Sarah St. George** and **Kashawn Taylor**. Featured Open Mic reader will be **Atom Cyrus Rush**. Sign up for open mic at karen.warinsky@gmail.com.

Eric Petersen is a social worker and resident of Gardner, MA and the author of *Brutal Rhymes for Brutal Times*.

Sarah St. George works in education and is the host of the Rose City Poetry Series in Norwich.

Kashawn Taylor is a formerly incarcerated writer based in Connecticut. He is currently pursuing an MFA. His full-length collection of “prison” poetry, *subhuman*, was released by Wayfarer Books in March 2025.

New Book by William Gertz

WL Gertz's newest book, *Broken Dreams*, has recently been released by Atticus Press. It features beat and surrealistic poetry. View sample poems at <https://www.wlgertz.com/blank-1>. Proceeds from sale of the book go to Teens of Color Abroad, a nonprofit organization dedicated to offering students of color immersive global language learning and cultural exchange opportunities.

Student Poetry Shows Love for the Earth

On May 28, children from grades K-12 read their “Love the Earth” poems at the Cheshire Public Library. These poems were the result of a *Love the Earth* writing contest sponsored by a collaboration between the Suburban Garden Club and the new Poet Laureate of Cheshire, **Pat Mottola**. Over 80 people were present to celebrate with the students. Parents, grandparents and teachers were on hand to see the children receive awards. Nineteen students received printed certificates and nature-related books donated by the Suburban Garden Club of Cheshire. Children wrote about their love of the earth in poems that included topics related to gardens, frogs, trees, bees, birds, and clean water. Awards were given by CPS Vice-President **Jeanne LeVasseur**, Chair of the Youth Committee from the SGCC, for excellence in writing across three age categories. Pat Mottola, Cheshire Poet Laureate and President of CPS, officiated at the event and served as the judge and organizer of the poetry contest. It was a festive evening.

Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners

Connecticut's Four Corners is hosted monthly, September-June by the Ridgefield Library and Ridgefield Poet Laureate Emerita **Barb Jennes**. On June 4th at 7 pm, the virtual program will host five diverse and engaging Connecticut poets. Please register in advance to receive the Zoom link: bit.ly/3YKzhf8. The featured poets are **Tracy Caldwell, Greg Coleman, Arlene DeMaris, Rhonda Ward, and Elaine Zimmerman**.

Tracy Caldwell is a spoken word artist (aka Mind.Evolution). **Greg Coleman** is a poet, writer, and political activist. **Arlene DeMaris**, recipient of the Connecticut Poetry Award, is a writer, gardener, and musician. **Rhonda Ward**, inaugural Poet Laureate of New London, is an Old Lyme Witness Stone Project poet. **Elaine Zimmerman**, winner of the 2024 Oberon Poetry Prize, is the author of two chapbooks.

If you're a Connecticut poet and would like to participate in a future online reading, please email [http://barbjennes@gmail.com](mailto:barbjennes@gmail.com).

Poets on Poetry: Rilke and the Birth of the Modern

Judith K. Liebmann will present the program on Rilke and his influence during the June 18th POP program, available via Zoom, starting at 7 pm. The cultural transformation that began in the late nineteenth century and continued well into the twentieth, coincided with Rilke's own development as one of the greatest of European poets. His creative life was entwined from early on with all the major movements that define this era and the great artists and thinkers at its center. Register for this program here: <https://tinyurl.com/bddxdv38>.

Presenter **Judith K. Liebmann** is a poet, fiction writer, and literary scholar. Her translations of works by Rilke, both poetry and short prose, some of which have never been translated into English, will appear in a new collection, *A Rilke Miscellany*.

Best Books of Modern American Poetry

This spring the *New York Times* poetry editor, Gregory Cowles, suggested a "starter pack" of poetry books— "greatest hits" for delving into modern American poetry. The list includes the following books. How many have you read?

- *Field Guide* by Robert Hass (1973): "Drop me into nature, then blow me away"
- *Collected Poems* by Galway Kinnell (2017): "poems that celebrate domestic bliss"
- *Thomas and Beulah* by Rita Dove (1986): "poems with a deep sense of history"
- *Otherwise* by Janey Kenyon (1996): "poems that celebrate quiet, ordinary moments"
- *Deaf Republic* by Ilya Kaminsky (2019): "a modern fable"
- *Citizen* by Claudia Rankine (2014): "mix of essayistic prose poems, free verse, and visual art"
- *Migration* by W.S. Merwin (2005): "these poems speak to eternity"
- *The Wild Iris* by Louise Glück (1992): "tangles with the gods"
- *The Carrying* by Ada Limón (2018): "Make me cry and give me hope"
- *What Work Is* by Philip Levine (1991): "gritty, not ethereal"
- *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* by Terence Hayes (2018): "reverence and innovation side by side"
- *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (1954): "Stevens exerted such an influence on 20th-century" poetry that the list wouldn't feel complete without him."