

Connecticut Poetry Society

June 2026

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

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Vice President: Amy Gray

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Treasurer: Patti Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

Contests: Ed Dzitko

Webmasters: Patti Fusco & Tony Fusco

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Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: Jim Finnegan

Youth Chair: Amy Gray



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

CPS Spring Fling a Super Success!

CPS members gathered in Avon for another amazing in-person social event. It was highlighted by **Monica Ong's** inspiring presentation on Visual Poetry. A fabulous luncheon and open mic were part of the festivities. It was a beautiful day all around and I am very grateful for the enthusiasm of each and every one of you who attended, read their work, volunteered, and helped make the event such a success. The warmth, energy, and creativity in the room reminded us how powerful community can be.

—Pat Mottola, President



Save the Date!

Our CPS Summer Celebration in-person event for members is planned for **August 15** in Woodbury. Enjoy our exceptional camaraderie, luncheon, and special program.

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 third Saturday of each month, from 10 am to noon. 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 Tuesday 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

cpshaiku@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. and then look for them on our website at the members' poems page. <https://ctpoetry.org/member-poems/> Make sure you sign your name as you

want it to appear. This program is for CPS members only!

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.

Orenaug Chapter: Woodbury, Watertown, Southbury, Roxbury, Bethlehem

Sandy Carlson

orenaugchaptercps@gmail.com

The Orenaug 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.

President's Message

As we reach the half-year mark of 2026, I want to take this opportunity to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our poetry society and the vibrant spirit that keeps our community thriving. I am so proud of how, through the years, we continue to welcome so many new members, expand participation in our workshops, readings, and Zoom events, and provide a creative space where voices of all styles and experiences can be heard.

"A few well-chosen words are worth a thousand pictures." –Stuart Watson

Like all poets, I celebrate the power of words. Indeed the open mics at our events clearly demonstrate the power of individual voices. As people stand up and share their words, it educates and enlightens each one of us, especially in broadening our perspectives. I am so proud of the accomplishments of all our members.

I would again like to thank our Executive Board as it sets a stellar example of how sharing our time and talents and working together with respect and cooperation accomplishes so much for the benefit of so many.

I would like to share this poem, "Words are Birds," with you by Francisco X. Alarcón. Enjoy!

Sincerely,
Pat Mottola, President



Words are Birds

by Francisco X. Alarcón

words
are birds
that arrive
with books
and spring

they
love
clouds
the wind
and trees

some words
are messengers
that come
from far away
from distant lands

for them
there are
no borders
only stars
moon and sun

some words
are familiar
like canaries
others are exotic
like the quetzal bird

some can stand
the cold
others migrate
with the sun
to the south

some words
die
caged—
they're difficult
to translate

and others
build nests
have chicks
warm them
feed them

teach them
how to fly
and one day
they go away
in flocks

the letters
on this page
are the prints
they leave
by the sea

Final Experimental Poetry Contest Starts June 15

Experimental poetry is a broad category of verse that rejects traditional structures, such as fixed meter, rhyme schemes, and narrative rules, to push the boundaries of language and form. It prioritizes innovation, often treating words as visual, auditory, or conceptual materials rather than just tools for storytelling.

If you write anything like that, or have tried over the past year, dust off your best attempt. Your chance to win \$1000 is coming up when the CPS's last experimental poetry contest opens for submissions. Keep an eye on your email for details about participating.

Two Calls for Submission from Orenaug Mountain Publishing

We invite submissions on the subject of **home**. What is it, and where? How do you know when you are home? Who's there? Tell us about your experience of this special place.

Also, **needlework**—sewing clothes, mending tears, embroidering decorations—These skills have an ancient history as domestic art as well

as fine art. Share your story, your family history, your craft, your attraction to the art.

Contributors receive a complimentary PDF, may participate in live or online readings, and are featured on Orenaug Mountain Publishing's book page. Visit www.orena



Please contact membership chair **Patti Fusco** to update your address and contact info soon, especially so that a copy of the 2026 *Connecticut River Review* can be mailed to the correct address.

V. Penelope Pelizzon and Edgar Kunz Win Guggenheim Fellowships

Two poets with Connecticut connections were awarded with Guggenheim Fellowships in 2026. The Guggenheim Foundation offers fellowships to exceptional individuals in pursuit of scholarship in any field of knowledge or creation in any artform.

V. Penelope Pelizzon teaches at University of Connecticut, while **Edgar Kunz**, who grew up in Manchester and was a student of **Steve Straight's** at MCC (Connecticut State Comm. College - Manchester), now teaches at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Poet in the Spotlight: Elaine Zimmerman

Elaine Zimmerman is an award-winning poet and the author of two chapbooks: *Rasp* (Orchard Street Press) and *Era's End* (Finishing Line Press). Her current project is a chapbook on addiction and its impact on the whole family—the ups and downs, and the humility and grace that occur during recovery. *Poets & Writers Magazine* interviewed her and published some of her thoughts in a column called “Winners on Winning” after she won the prestigious 2024 Oberon Poetry Prize.

Zimmerman especially appreciates two mentors who influenced her development as a poet: **Scott Momaday** and **Robert Hass**. She says, “Scott Momaday taught me, at U.C. Berkeley, about the sacred in each word and the strength of silence. Robert Hass, through a series of poetry seminars, helped me see how to tie content together that might seem disconnected, but when joined at unexpected junctures, built a more poignant and textured piece.”

Zimmerman works with states, tribes, and non-profits on child and family policy and on poverty reduction. When she worked for the federal government, she distributed a poem a month to all employees. These were by various poets, each poem considering a particular topic. She often opens or closes public policy briefings with a poem. “Similarly, I guide children and youth in poetry and painting to share their views of difficult topics such as 9/11, Newtown, and Katrina. In fact, we held poetry readings of children and youth about

natural and unnatural disasters at the Connecticut Legislative Office Building.”

Her own writing often focuses on current events. “For example, during Covid, I routinely strove to write up what was happening from this unknown virus. At the start it was unclear what was occurring. Then it became a speeding train. The journal entries became a poem in *Era's End*, on the first 100,000 deaths. When I began that chronicling, I had no idea that I would be writing about both death from Covid and the death of George Floyd. But they came together for the nation in a split second. George Floyd was choked to death just as the country reached 92,541 Covid deaths. The country rose up just as we were reaching 100,000 Covid deaths. The national upswell in reaction to race bias became the urgent end to the poem.

“I have recently been writing on erasure of words, institutions, data and democracy. As a federal civil servant who was dismissed with 30,000 others by Elon Musk and Secretary Kennedy, I watched language and civic practices disappear. I finished a piece on the words we are not allowed to use in federal programs. Marge Piercy recognized this poem recently in the Joe Gouveia Outermost Poetry Contest led by WOMR (Outermost Community Radio, Provincetown).”

Zimmerman appreciates Connecticut Poetry Society for the exposure it encourages to a community of diverse writers with whom she can interact. She likes learning about authors, courses, and submission opportunities, and getting to know Connecticut poets.

She says, "I believe poetry can bring people together, help with healing...As the country is increasingly in oppositional mode, with language full of ideology, it's important to discover fresh words and new ways of saying what matters to keep the soul alive."



Elaine Zimmerman

New Books by CPS Members

Mark Saba's fourth poetry collection, *Looking for Kerouac* was published recently by Kelsay Books. In poems that appeal to all of the senses he searches for hints that will assuage fear for a troubled world, gleans lessons from unpredictable nature, and weaves them into his own life.

Ed Ahern has a new chapbook out: *Peculiar Perspectives*. To find out more about it, enjoy this brief video: <https://youtube.com/shorts/teV-jEppykg?si=IVHBoOlsWqZ-TZKk> .

Pegi Deitz Shea's new book of humorous hybrid works, *TICK TICK TICK TICK*, is now available from Impspired Publishing. After 27 years of relapsing Lyme disease, Pegi sat down to write a revenge book on ticks. But an inner Robin Williams came up with a World Tick Pageant, Tick Dating Apps, and more zany pieces, aimed to lift the spirits of tick-borne disease sufferers and their caregivers.

The Wilton Chapter of CPS put out a collection called *Words at Play*. They held a book launch with open mic in April that was well-attended.

Ellen Hirning Schmidt's latest publication, *Oh, Say Did You Know / This Much I Know*, is a collection of poems in two parts. This provocative collection poses questions but leaves them unanswered, urging new perspectives and fresh thoughts. "A bracing read, Schmidt's powerful poems are good company as we navigate these turbulent times," poet and editor Mary Azrael says of the poems in this collection.

Amy Gray Wins Accolades

Four of **Amy Gray's** poems have been accepted for publication in *Ink Magazine*. She also won second prize in the Bedford International Poetry Contest, which received 2800 entries from people in 61 countries. Her prize-winning poem is called "Spells for Protection."

Saturday Night Poetry, Vanilla Bean Café

On June 20th, readings and an open mic will be held at the Vanilla Bean Café, 450 Deerfield Road in Pomfret. The featured readers are **Laura DiCaronimo** and **Sarah Beth Wheeler**. DiCaronimo was a nominee for the 2025 Spoken Word Artist of the Year through the Boston Music Awards. Wheeler is co-creator of the album, *The Unforgivable Ghetto* where her poetry is powerfully accompanied with a musical underscore. To register for the open mic, contact [karen.warinsky@gmail](mailto:karen.warinsky@gmail.com) .

Declaration Deep Dive

On June 14 at 3 pm, the Closing Keynote Program of the *Declaration Deep Dive* Series will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This series is a collaboration between Keeler Tavern Museum & History Center and Ridgefield Library.

Dr. Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut's eighth Poet Laureate and a professor of English at Connecticut State Community College, Capital, will read and discuss an original poem that engages with the traditions of inaugural poetry to envision our nation's future.

Held at KTM&HC's Garden House at 152 Main Street, Ridgefield, this program is free for all. Registration is required:
<https://114542.blackbaudhosting.com/114542/Decl-Deep-Dive-Dr-Antoinette-Brim-Bell>

Rose Garden Reading

Pat Hale and **Debora Kuan** will be featured readers for the annual Rose Garden Reading. On Saturday, June 20 at 6 PM, bring a lawn chair or blanket to Elizabeth Park in West Hartford, to hear them share poems from the bandstand near the famous rose gardens. If the weather seems problematic, check stevenspoetry.org for information about a possible cancellation.



Remembering Two Poetry Greats

Our poetry community mourns the loss of two outstanding poets who passed away this spring. Award-winning poet **Charles Fort Jr.**, born in New Britain, Connecticut, passed away a month before his 75th birthday. He authored more than a dozen poetry books and chapbooks. He was a Distinguished Emeritus Endowed Professor at the University of Nebraska at Kearney and Founder of the Wendy Fort Foundation Theater of Fine Arts. His daughters remember him as "Charming and kind to every stranger he met...He loved life. Fully."

West Hartford's inaugural Poet Laureate, **Maria Sassi**, passed away in April at the age of 98. She encouraged and mentored countless aspiring poets over the years. She had a wealth of stories to tell about some of the prominent poets she got to know. A playwright as well as a poet, her book *Rooted In Stars* was selected to be admitted to the Rare Book Library at Yale University.

Poetry Hops Open Mics

Spoken Word, music, and comedy will be on tap June 10, July 15, and August 12 at Hops on 44, located at 625 Middle Turnpike in Storrs. You can sign up for the open mic at 6:15, and the fun begins at 6:30. The first round consists of 5-minute performances, followed by a round of 3-minute performances. Great food and drinks. Ages 16 and up.

Keeler Tavern's Poetry in the Garden

Bring a lawn chair and enjoy some acclaimed poets as they share from their work in the beautiful walled garden at Keeler Tavern, 152 Main Street in Ridgefield. The readings begin at 7 pm. Some of these poets will also offer afternoon workshops. Check

<https://keelertavernmuseum.org/events/calendar/> for more information on the workshops.

Here's the lineup:

July 6: **Patricia Spears Jones** and **January Gill O'Neil**

July 13: **Richard Blanco** and **Benjamin Grossberg**

July 20: **Sean Thomas Dougherty** and **Charles Rafferty**

July 27: **Cornelius Eady** and **Marilyn Nelson**

Poems from *The Nutmeg Anthology*

The Killingworth Library, 301 Route 81 in Killingworth will present a special program focusing on *The Nutmeg Anthology* on Saturday, June 27 at 11 am. Editor **Ginny Lowe Connors** and several contributors to the anthology will be sharing poems from the collection and talking about how this anthology of poems about Connecticut came to be. Come to hear the poems, participate in the discussion, buy a book, and enjoy light refreshments. You can register in advance at

<https://killingworthlibrary.libcal.com/event/16779098>

Not About Gratitude: Poetry in a Fractured World

Another enticing PoP (Poets on Poetry) program will be offered on June 22, at 7 PM via Zoom. **Tina Cane** will lead an exploration on this provocative question: Beyond beauty and solace, what can poetry offer us in a fractured world? She claims it can offer us "a lot, and it doesn't have to do with gratitude."

The author of several poetry books, Cane has served as the Poet Laureate of Rhode Island. She is the founder and director of *Poets in the Schools, RI* and was creator/curator of the series *Poetry Is Bread*.

Register for this program at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/VzpiQX6lShWn0TTz3mdvEq#/registration>

Farmington Valley Poets Present

Members of the Farmington Valley Chapter of CPS will share some of their poems at the Barney Library, 71 Main Street, Farmington on July 18 at 10 AM. Come and enjoy good poetry, good conversation, and yummy refreshments. Books by member will be available for sale. This program will also feature a special tribute to **Maria Sassi**.



Enjoy your summer!