

**The Connecticut  
Poetry Society  
Newsletter**

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

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Board Members at the Spring Fling

**POPs: Poets on Poetry**

Our series of discussions about important poets continues to be popular with members. The next session, moderated by Antoinette Brim-Bell, will focus on the poetry of Cornelius Eady. This is a Zoom event to take place on Thursday, June 23 at 7 pm.

Cornelius Eady, poet, musician, and co-founder of Cave Canem, has authored eight collections of poetry. We will explore Eady's early collection, *you don't miss your water*, 21 poems chronicling the time the poet spends with his dying father.

Our moderator, Antoinette Brim-Bell, is the author of three full-length poetry collections. Additionally, Brim-Bell has hosted a series of Black History Month television programs for the OneWorld Progressive Institute and is a former recurring guest host of Patrick Oliver's Literary Nation Talk Radio

## President's Message

Dear wonderful CPS members,

I write this message the day after our **Spring Fling**. I am still ecstatic and energized from seeing all of you *in person* after so long! We CPS poets are a close-knit family, and that was very clear at Sunday's gathering. We welcomed new members and renewed our friendships with long-time members. And we blew bubbles on the patio!

**Sarah Marze's** spectacular presentation, "Let us Sing: Contemporary Art Songs for Young Singers," was a joy. She shared with the audience how she hears the music in a poem and is able to set the lyrics to song. We heard poems set to music, including one by a CPS member. She'll be working with high school students to set some poems by other members to music. Sarah's incredible talent combined with her beautiful voice elicited comments like "the best CPS program I've ever attended," and "Sarah Marze left us all dazzled." Thank you, Sarah!

Our next **POP** will take place via Zoom on June 23 at 7 p.m. It will feature the poetry of Cornelius Eady, moderated by Antoinette Brim-Bell.

I'll soon be sending the flyer and Zoom link. The next **MOM** will be on June 24 at 7 p.m. Join us and share your poems at this wonderfully relaxed and informal open mic. Check your emails for more info and Zoom link. And don't miss them because MOM and POP are taking the summer off!

The last two **President's Workshops** before the summer break will be held on June 12 and June 26, and are already filled! But they will also return after summer break.

Introducing new members to our team: **Cindy Truong** will be joining us as our first ever summer intern. Winner of last year's DeCaro contest, she is an English Major at New York University. Many of you met her assisting on Sunday at the Spring Fling; her positive energy was contagious!

Joining us on the Board are **Sharon Smith** as Vice-President and **Amy Graver** as Secretary. You'll be hearing a lot more about them! Let's welcome them both, again.

So, dear CPS members, enjoy the summer and look forward our next event, which is in the planning stages already. As I mentioned on Sunday, we will address bylaws at that time – more later on that.

And so why not close on these words by Miss Emily:

*To see the summer sky is poetry, though never in a book it lie – true poems flee.*

–Emily Dickinson

See you soon!

Pat Mottola, President



Sarah Marze

## CPS Chapters & Presidents

COVID-19 has changed the way our chapters meet. If you want to know more about meeting with a specific chapter, please get in touch with the chapter president.

### Bethel

Liz Massey  
[finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com](mailto:finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com)

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 2-4 pm. Masks required. 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. Email Debbie to submit your poem for critique and to receive the Zoom link. So as to have enough time to respond to each poem, we cap each meeting at ten participants.

### Greater Hartford

Julia Paul  
[Julia.Paul@cox.net](mailto:Julia.Paul@cox.net)

Currently, this chapter is meeting via Zoom. Members are looking forward to the resumption of in-person meetings.

### Haiku Chapter

Marita Gargiulo  
[MarGarArts@mail.com](mailto:MarGarArts@mail.com)

This online chapter welcomes CPS members interested in reading and writing haiku. Members of the group share haiku and senryu regularly.

### Manchester

Matthew Borrelli  
[matthewborrelli296@gmail.com](mailto:matthewborrelli296@gmail.com)

Manchester's Wit and Wisdom group moved to a ZOOM format in February and will continue meeting on the second Saturday of each month. It is hoped that Face to Face meetings will resume soon.

### Middletown

Pamela Guinan  
860-563-5761  
[Pamela.cps@hotmail.com](mailto:Pamela.cps@hotmail.com)

### New Haven

Laura Altshul  
[lauraaltshul130@gmail.com](mailto:lauraaltshul130@gmail.com)

The New Haven chapter has been meeting on the third Saturday of each month. Presently they meet via Zoom, for the safety of all members.

### Pomfret

Christine Kalafus  
[CEKworks@charter.net](mailto:CEKworks@charter.net)

This chapter is resuming in-person meetings. Meetings will be held at the Pomfret Library, 449 Pomfret Street, from 7-9 pm on the second Monday of each month.

### Ridgefield

Barb Jennes  
[barbjennes@gmail.com](mailto:barbjennes@gmail.com)

This chapter will meet every fourth Saturday from 10 am to noon, via Zoom until the Ridgefield library re-opens. Email Barb to get the library registration page URL, which changes monthly. Interested CPS members can register on the library website ([barbjennes@gmail.com](mailto:barbjennes@gmail.com)); they will subsequently receive the Zoom link and an email address to which their poems should be sent.

### Wilton

Ray Rauth  
[Rayrauth@optonline.net](mailto:Rayrauth@optonline.net)

The Wilton Workshop will meet from 10:30 until noon on the third Friday of each month, via Zoom. Registration will be through the Wilton Library. We are hoping to resume in-person meetings before long.

## A Thank you

CPS wishes to thank departing board members **Victor Altshul, David Cundy** and **Mark Sheridan** for their valuable contributions to the organization. Although we're sad to see them go, we're pleased to welcome two new board members and a summer intern, who will help keep our society moving ahead.

### CPS Welcomes New Board Members

**We welcome new Vice-President Sharon Smith!** Sharon Smith has enjoyed an interesting, intense, and varied career. She worked in the corporate world for thirty-three years in many capacities. She was a programmer, managed teams and multi-million dollar projects, and was a management consultant. For several years, she managed a team of facilitators trained in cutting edge group design processes. She facilitated management teams across the country in problem solving, mission and strategy development. In the early years of AIDS she was active in the Farmington AIDS task force and facilitated the strategic planning session for the National Leadership Coalition on AIDS in Washington DC in 1990. In 2005 Smith decided to retire and pursue other interests. In 2006 she trained to become a yoga instructor at the Kripalu Center in Massachusetts. She has taught ever since at West Hartford Yoga and other venues in the state.

While taking a course on World Religions, Smith studied the mystics and found great beauty in the way poetry can, with few words, move us right to the emotional center. She fell in love with poetry's ability to reflect the human condition. She has been a

member of CPS since 2017 and an active participant in its Farmington Valley Chapter. Smith has also participated in the Faxon Poets group, the Riverwood and Wintonbury Poetry Series, and she is currently working on her first book.

### We welcome new Secretary Amy Graver!

Amy Graver holds a Journalism degree from Northeastern University and began her career as a writer and photo-journalist for the *Boston Globe*. She moved back to Connecticut to take a position as a graphic designer and photo editor at a design agency. Currently, she works as the marketing and events manager for Women & Family Life Center in Guilford.

Amy actively participates as a member of the Connecticut Poetry Society and always looks forward to her New Haven Chapter's monthly workshops. She is the author of the book, *Grids and Page Layouts*, which has been translated into seven languages and is being used as a textbook in university graphic design programs around the world.

When not working, designing, gardening or writing, Amy enjoys baking – her specialty is macarons – and she started her own cottage industry baking business called "Oui Patisserie."

**And, let's extend our gratitude to Patti Fusco for filling in as Interim Treasurer!** Patti needs no introduction! She is our amazing Membership Chair, and a great supporter of CPS for many years. Thanks, Patti!

## Poet in the Spotlight: Srinivas Mandavilli

When he's not writing articles about clinical research for pathology journals, or working as co-author of a pathology textbook, **Srinivas Mandavilli** writes poetry. Although he's written poetry sporadically since his time as a medical student, during the past ten years he's devoted more time to it. Many of his poems capture something about his childhood growing up in India, including memories of summers spent with his grandmother, but he also writes about nature, travel, and sometimes about his work as a pathologist. Recently, he's begun experimenting with various forms of poetry, such as the Haibun.

Despite a demanding job as Chief of Pathology at Hartford Hospital, where he works closely with surgeons, oncologists, residents, and fellows in pathology, Mandavilli makes time for reading and writing poetry. When he's reading, Mandavilli responds most strongly to imagery. He agrees with what Emily Dickinson once said: "If I read a book [and] it makes my whole body so cold no fire can ever warm me, I know that is poetry. If I feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off, I know that is poetry. These are the only ways I know it. Is there any other way?"

Currently, he's reading *The Heart of American Poetry* by Edward Hirsch, *The Pushcart Prize XLVII: Best of the Small Presses 2022 Edition*; and recent books by Ocean Vuong, John Surowiecki, and Ada Limon.

Mandavilli has had some of his poems published in journals and as well as in a chapbook. He credits workshop teachers and poet



friends who have taught him elements of the craft and have provided meaningful feedback, allowing him to further improve his poems. Through CPS, he's formed friendships with many wonderful poets. He says, "I still recall attending one of my very first CPS events, perhaps ten years ago — it was a session devoted to providing resources to poets. That one evening did so much to help point me in the right direction."

## Influential Poems and Poets

Included in Dean Radar's project, *Poems That Changed Me*, are thoughtful commentaries by Ellen Bass, Arthur Sze, Sharon Olds, Victoria Chang, and our very own **Luisa Caycedo-Kimura**. Her contribution is a discussion of Sandra Cisneros's *My Wicked Ways* "Preface" and the way it served as an impetus for Caycedo-Kimura to become a poet.

## Contest News

The **Lynn DeCaro Contest** for Connecticut high school students concluded on March 15 and was judged by **Pit Pinegar**. Winners of this year's contest were:

**1<sup>st</sup>**, Sophia Arnaout, Wilbur Cross High School, New Haven

**2<sup>nd</sup>**, Elizabeth Johnson, Rockville High School, Vernon

**3<sup>rd</sup>**, Kaylin Maher, Rockville High School, Vernon

Congratulations to these outstanding student poets! See their poems, along with judge's remarks on the CPS website.

The submission period for the **Connecticut Poetry Award** ended on May 31; the winners, to be chosen by judge **Terry Blackhawk**, will be posted on the CPS website and will appear in next year's *Connecticut River Review*.

### Upcoming contests:

The submission period for the second **Experimental Poetry Contest** will begin on **June 15**. It will again be judged by **Richard Deming** of Yale University.

The winner of last year's contest was **makalani bandele**, of Lexington, Kentucky, an Affrilachian poet and Cave Canem fellow, for the poem "Afropessimism 101: Quiz on System of Weights used (1619-Present)."

The submission period for the **Vivian Shipley Award**, also in its second year, will open on **August 1**. The 2022 contest will be judged by **Charles Rafferty** of Albertus Magnus College.

Last year's winning poem was "At This Table We Sing with Joy, with Sorrow" by **John Sibley Williams**, author of eight poetry collections as well as the recipient of numerous prizes and awards. He is a twenty-six-time pushcart nominee and founder of the Caesura Poetry Workshop series.

The **Experimental Poetry Contest** and the **Vivian Shipley Award** are open to all poets; please see the CPS website for submission guidelines.

## Hartford Book Festival

Hartford Public Library and Hartford's L.I.T. (Literary Integrated Trailblazers) are hosting the fourth annual Hartford Book Festival, September 23-September 25, at the library on 500 Main Street in Hartford, as well as at a second location to be announced. The festival will feature local authors, bookstores, workshops, panels, presentations, performances, and open mics.

This exciting weekend festival is seeking vendors and participants. Hartford's L.I.T. is a group of local authors, artists, and entrepreneurs whose aim is to revitalize literary arts and communication. They network with Hartford communities, including underserved and non-traditional communities. For more information about this festival, contact Russell Blair (860-559-4873).



### David K. Leff

Connecticut's poetry community is sad to note the passing of **David K. Leff**, poet, essayist, editor, historian, environmentalist, and so much more. He was enamored with the writings of Emerson and Thoreau. Leff himself was a prolific writer. His work focused on the connections between people, communities, and the natural environment. He edited the collection *Voices from Walden: Poems Inspired by Thoreau's Life and Work* (2021), and with co-editor Eric D. Lehman, he edited *New England Nature: Centuries of Writing on the Wonder and Beauty of the Land* (2020). He wrote books such as *The Breach: Voices Haunting a New England Mill Town* (2019), *Canoeing Maine's Legendary Allagash* (2016), and *Hidden in Plain Sight: A Deep Traveler Explores Connecticut* (2012), as well as collections of his own poems and many other books.

Leff served as the Poet-in-Residence for the New England National Scenic Trail for two years, as Town Historian for Canton, Connecticut, and at the time of his death he was Poet Laureate of Canton. He also spent many years as a volunteer fireman for the town of Canton. Leff was an agricultural and environmental policy advisor to the state legislature, and for many years was deputy commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Environmental

Protection. He is survived by his wife Mary Fletcher and two adult children.

### Poetry Readings Return to the Julia de Burgos Park

Two Connecticut Poet Laureates (current and past) are among the popular poets in the Curbstone Foundation's Poetry in the Park series, which returns this June after a pandemic hiatus. The readings, featuring established and emerging poets of diverse backgrounds, are held in the pretty Julia de Burgos Park at the corner of Curbstone Way and Jackson Street in Willimantic. They take place on the fourth Thursday of June, July, August, and September. All readings begin at 6:30 p.m., except September, which begins at 6:00 pm. An open mic usually follows.

The readings, sponsored by the Curbstone Foundation, are free. Guests are welcome to bring lawn chairs, blankets, a picnic, and, if they wish, a poem. In case of rain, the readings will be moved to Zoom. Announcements will be made on Facebook at [facebook.com/CurbstoneLiteraryProject](https://facebook.com/CurbstoneLiteraryProject).

The July 23 event features **Margaret Gibson** and **Steve Straight**.

On July 28, the featured poets are **Danielle Legros Georges** and **Sean Frederick Forbes**.

On August 25, enjoy presentations by **Marilyn Nelson** and **Fred Arcoleo**.

The September 22 event, which begins at 6 pm, will include **Bruce Cohen** and **Karen Anderson**.

## Poetry Chapbooks by CPS Members

A new chapbook, *Once the Earth had Two Moons*, written by **Debbie Gilbert**, has been launched by Cerasus Poetry. Written in metaphor with extraordinary imagery, the poems narrate the author's journey through cancer diagnosed over thirty years ago, and reveal the surreal nature of major surgical transformation. The book is available from the author, [cerasuspoetry.com/books/](http://cerasuspoetry.com/books/), or through Amazon.

*Blinded Birds*, by Ridgefield Poet Laureate **Barb Jennes**, was recently named Winner in the "Poetry: Chapbook" category of the 2022 International Book Awards, a competition sponsored by the American Book Fest.

## Summer Poetry Readings in Ridgefield

**Barb Jennes**, poet laureate of Ridgefield, is curating a second summer of free evening poetry readings to be held in the historic walled gardens of Keeler Tavern Museum. The readings will occur at 7 pm every other Monday from June 27 through August 22. The Ridgefield Symphony Orchestra will perform on alternating Mondays.

Featured poets include:

June 27: retiring CT Poet Laureate **Margaret Gibson** and **H.E. Fisher**

July 11: formalists **Meredith Bergmann** and **Kyle Potvin**

July 25: **Joan Kwon Glass** and **Jordan Franklin**

August 8: **Suzanne Frischkorn** and Westchester Poet Laureate **B.K. Fischer**

August 22 (spouse night!): **Aaron Caycedo-Kimura**, **Luisa Caycedo-Kimura**, **Laurel Peterson** (Norwalk Poet Laureate) and **Van Hartmann**

Attendees should bring a lawn chair and are invited to bring a picnic dinner. The readings will be held in the Garden House in the event of rain.

## Juneteenth Celebration

The Gunn Memorial Library, the Minor Memorial Library, and the Burnham Library will welcome poet, activist and educator, **Frederick-Douglass Knowles II**, at 6 pm on June 14, when he will appear at the Gunn Memorial Library in Washington.

Knowles will deliver a poetic performance, reading, and discussion that illustrates what Juneteenth is all about, why it is so important, and the significance of it being a federally recognized holiday.

This is an in-person event that is free and open to the public. Registration is requested and can be found on Gunn Library's website at [www.gunnlibrary.org/programs](http://www.gunnlibrary.org/programs).



Frederick-Douglass Knowles II