

**The Connecticut
Poetry Society
Newsletter**

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

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

CPS Honorary Board

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate
Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate,
2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate,
2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, Connecticut State University
Distinguished Professor at SCSU

CPS Officers

President: Pat Mottola

Vice President: Victor Altshul

Acting Secretary: Mark Sheridan

Treasurer: Mark Sheridan

Contests: Kathleen McIntosh

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

CRR Editors: Ginny Connors & Debbie Gilbert

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

Publicity: David Cundy

POP Director: Jeanne LeVasseur

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola

CPS Secretary Position Open

CPS is looking for someone to fill the position of Corporate Secretary. Please email Pat Mottola at patriciamottola@yahoo.com if you are interested, or if you have questions.



CPS Chapter News

The **Bethel Chapter** is now Zooming its monthly gatherings. While our December meeting is the 19th; in January we will revert to our usual 2nd Tuesdays at 2:00 - 4:00. Newcomers are welcome. If you wish to participate, please email **Liz Massey** at finchwhistlehaven@gmail.com, and attach the original poem you would like to present. While we're using Zoom, we try to keep our gatherings to 90 minutes. We do this by having each participant submit their poem 5 days before the meeting day. The poems are compiled into a packet which is emailed out to everyone planning to participate, so we can read over and prepare our comments ahead of time. If you contact Liz, she will go over with you our process during these COVID days.

The **Farmington Valley Chapter** is trying a similar approach on December 7th; if it's successful we will go forward with Zoom meetings until we can once again safely meet in person.

President's Message

Dear CPS Members,

Here we are near the end of 2020, the year of infinite challenges, and I am happy to say CPS has come through it as strong as ever! We are definitely doing something right! We are thriving, thanks to the continued support of our members and the enormous continued dedication of our Executive Board. All good news here. Financially, we are stable. We overcame those early lean years a while back to become a super-strong, solid organization of poets—the longest-running poetry organization in Connecticut.

Our membership continues to grow by leaps and bounds. POPs are thriving, and our contests are attracting more and more attention nationwide. *Connecticut River Review* remains a respected national poetry journal, and copies are selling more than ever. Our website and newsletter keep us informed of the old and the new: our past, present, and future endeavors. I must say they are quite impressive.

We have hosted successful online events that have attracted record participation, including some members who have been unable to participate in the past when time and travel were concerns, and we are planning many more to come in 2021 now that we've "got the hang of it." I am looking forward to the day we can get back to our fabulous in-person events and renew our bonds and our friendships, as well as form new ones. As I look at the membership list, I am thrilled to see so many new members whom I have not yet met; I welcome each and every one of you to our CPS family. Know that I am here to serve you and I am eager to answer questions or receive suggestions at any time.

I also wish to thank our chapter presidents who give so much of their time and expertise as they provide a most valuable service to our members by hosting Chapter Workshops throughout Connecticut.

I leave you with a message from Emily as we prepare to enter 2021 with hope, kindness, and resilience like never before.

"Hope" is the thing with feathers -

That perches in the soul -

And sings the tune without the words -

And never stops - at all -

-Emily Dickinson

May your holidays be safe and happy, and may the New Year bring us joy, peace and continued good health.

Pat Mottola, President

Connecticut Poetry Society

CPS Hosts MFA Poetry Reading

On Tuesday, December 1st, CPS hosted a reading by the graduate students in Southern Connecticut State University's MFA program. The poetry class this semester was taught by Professors **Vivian Shipley** and **Pat Mottola**. Many of our CPS members were in attendance, along with other poets in the U.S. and beyond, enjoying the camaraderie of the event and hearing the voices of these very talented poets, an eclectic mix of personalities whose poems reflect the world past and present and future in a most extraordinary way. Readers included: William Conlon, Terri Davis, Brenna Harvey, Nancy Manning, Princess Zuri' McCann, Ben Pello, Jessica Rawling, Elizabeth Richter, Ira Rosovsky, and Tamera Sternberger.

CPS Chapters & Presidents

COVID-19 has changed the way our chapters meet. Many are now meeting online or through email. 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

Farmington Valley

Terence McCaffrey
860-416-6684
tmccaff24@hotmail.com

This chapter will share poems and feedback using Zoom. Please contact Terence for more information.

Greater Hartford

Julia Paul
Julia.Paul@cox.net

Haiku Chapter

Marita Gargiulo
MarGarArts@blue.com

This chapter welcomes CPS members interested in reading and writing haiku. Members of the Haiku Chapter will be invited to share haiku via email on a regular basis.

Manchester

Kimball Hunt
kimballhh@gmail.com
860-384-4163

Middletown

Pamela Guinan
860-563-5761
Pamela.cps@hotmail.com

New Haven

Laura Altshul
lauraaltshul130@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter has been meeting on the third Saturday of the month.

Pomfret

Christine Kalafus
CEKworks@charter.net

This chapter is set to resume 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
<https://ridgefieldlibrary.librarymarket.com/events/online-ct-poetry-society-monthly-workshop-0>

This chapter will meet every fourth Saturday from 10 am to noon, via Zoom until the Ridgefield library re-opens. Interested CPS members can register on the library website; they will subsequently receive the Zoom link and an email address to which to send their poems.

Shoreline

Roger Singer
cabanaph424@verizon.net

This chapter held their first meeting in June of 2020. Contact Roger to get particulars about upcoming meetings.

Southbury

Marion McGauhy
860-354-2157
Mcgauhy@aol.com

Wilton

Ray Rauth
Rayrauth@optonline.net

The Wilton Workshop has secured meeting dates for the coming six months. We will meet from 10:30 until noon on the third Friday of each month, via Zoom, of course. Registration will be through the Wilton Library. After next June we are hoping, perhaps, to once again have in person meetings.

Poet in the Spotlight: Julia Paul

For many years, Julia Paul was membership chair of the Connecticut Poetry Society. She has enjoyed getting to know other Connecticut poets and attending some of the events sponsored by CPS. It provides her with a nice balance to the solitary act of writing poetry. Currently she is involved with running the Riverwood Poetry series, a longstanding reading series which operates out of Real Art Ways in Hartford (and via Zoom for the time being).



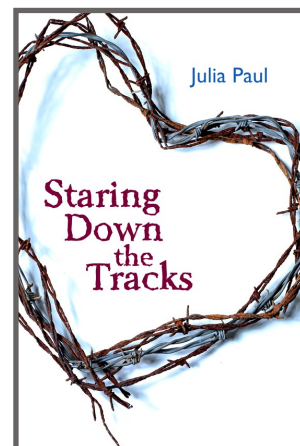
Paul has a law practice in Manchester, where she focuses on elder care. She says she turned to poetry in lieu of having a mid-life crisis. One thing she enjoys about writing poetry is the way it allows her "...to escape all the other roles that have defined me, and to nurture my own voice. My main writing experience other than poetry is with writing motions, briefs, and memorandums of law. There is no 'poetic license' in legal writing, which has to be based on fact and supported by case law and statutes. The one purpose these two kinds of writing have in common is to be convincing."

Like anyone with a true interest in poetry, Paul

reads a wide spectrum of poetry. In the poems she reads, she looks for an emotional connection or words that compel her to consider something from a new perspective. Currently she is reading *When the Light of the World was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through*, a Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry, edited by Joy Harjo. Another book she's reading is *Post-Colonial Love Poem*, by Natalie Diaz.

Paul's recent chapbook, *Staring Down the Tracks* (March 2020, The Poetry Box), addresses the struggles of addiction, a raging epidemic in this country, fraught with stigma and shame. Two poems in the collection were recently nominated for Pushcart prizes: "Black Dot," nominated by the publisher and "One Summer Day," nominated by *Here: a poetry journal*. Paul is also the author of a full-length poetry collection called *Shook*.

Much of her recent work reflects an attempt to process the overdose death of her oldest son, which occurred in January of this year. Poems about grief speak to a wide audience, as almost everyone experiences grief at times during the course of a lifetime. About her poems on this theme, Paul says, "Poetry taps into places that Hallmark verses don't even know exist. These poems are my way of holding hands with others."



CPS Contests: A Thank You and a Welcome

CPS would like to extend sincere thanks to **Joan Hofmann**, who has served as our Contest Chairperson for the past six years, 2014 – 2020. Her excellence in juggling the responsibilities of Contest Chair, some of which include selecting judges, organizing publicity, receiving and processing contest entries, notifying winners, etc. is unsurpassed. Joan brought her signature stamp of perfection to her role and made it seem easy—our CPS Contests have run seamlessly under her direction. The recent CRR Contest (Aug 1 – Sept 30, 2020) was an incredible success due to the fact that Joan was at the forefront in suggesting the ever-so-timely, and important, contest theme (the environment), which coincided with Connecticut Poet Laureate **Margaret Gibson's** environmentally-themed anthology.



Joan Hofmann

Joan, through her generosity and professionalism, has mentored our new Contest Chair, **Kathleen McIntosh**.

Kathleen's first official duty is our current contest, the Nutmeg Award, which began accepting submissions on December 1st and runs through January 31. Kathleen is Professor Emerita of Hispanic Studies at Westfield State University in Westfield, Massachusetts, where she also helped to found a Women's and Gender Studies program in the 1980's. She began her poetry journey after retirement, which led her to Connecticut's rich poetry community. We will be hearing more from Kathleen in the coming months. Welcome, Kathleen!



Kathleen McIntosh

Connecticut Book Awards

Several CPS members have published books that were named as finalists for the 2020 Connecticut Book Award in Poetry. Kudos to these fine writers, each identified as a finalist:

Robert Cording: *Without My Asking:* **HONORABLE MENTION**

Dolores Hayden: *Exuberance*

Susan Kinsolving: *Peripheral Vision*

Amy Nawrocki: *mouthbrooders*

Margot Schlipp: *Afterswarm:* **WINNER**

Karen Torop: *The Fire in Hand*



In Memoriam: Jeffrey Kaimowitz

We are sorry to note the passing of Jeffrey Kaimowitz, of West Hartford, long-time head of special collections at Trinity College's Watkinson Library. In that position, he organized some very interesting programs related to poetry. His translation of the *Odes of Horace*, in modern, metrical English verse, published by Johns Hopkins University Press, was named the 2009 Outstanding Academic Title, by *Choice*.

Wintonbury Poetry Series

The Wintonbury Poetry Series, hosted by CPS members **Tom Nicotera** and **Sheri Beddingfield**, continues to be a popular venue. On December 17th at 7 pm, their virtual program features Lori Desrosiers and Benjamin S. Grossberg. Desrosiers' third full-length book of poem is *Keeping Planes in the Air*. Books by Grossberg, the current Poet Laureate of West Hartford, have won prestigious awards. Grossberg's latest book is called *My Husband Would*.

If you are interested in attending this event, sign up at BPLCT.org for the Zoom link and to register for the Open Mic.

Paul Szemanczky's Latest Publications

Paul Szemanczky has a poem, "Dribbling Byzantine Empires" in *Soundings East*, the literary journal of Salem State University. His newest collection of poetry is called *Timelessly Now Herds Mull*.

Riverwood Poetry Series

On December 8 at 7 pm, Riverwood Poetry Series @ Real Art Ways will feature **Rhonda Ward**, poet laureate of New London, followed by an open mic. The event is presented via Zoom. Please visit the Riverwood Face Book page for the link and email riverwoodpoetry@yahoo.com to sign up for the open mic or for more information or questions.

On January 12, 2021, at 7 pm, Riverwood Poetry Series @ Real Art Ways will bring together six Connecticut poets for a virtual book launch. They have each had books come out during the pandemic. Poets **Rennie McQuilken**, **Ben Grossberg**, **Nancy Kerrigan**, **Debra Sansone**, **John Stanizzi** and **Julia Morris Paul** will each offer a sampling of poems from their books. The event will be presented via Zoom. Please visit the Riverwood Face Book page for the link and email riverwoodpoetry@yahoo.com to sign up for the open mic or for more information or questions.

Writer's Digest Prize Goes to CPS Member

Barb Jennes, Poet Laureate of Ridgefield, recently won First Place in the rhyming poetry category of the 89th Annual *Writer's Digest* Writing Competition and was awarded a \$1,000 prize. Her winning poem, "Lessons of a Cruel Tide," can be read here:

https://www.writersdigest.com/wd-competitions/rhyming-poetry-first-place-winner-lessons-of-a-cruel-tide?fbclid=IwAR1fHmAnCK1_KW_q0_liqcC2IFpv8HC0FRT97Sa1mqpSJOvf5egslyAWOXU

Continue Your Poetry Education!

Save the date for our next Poets on Poetry series (POP), which will be on Sunday, January 17, 2021 at 2 pm. We will discuss and read the poet Pascal D'Angelo. The event will be moderated by **Dennis Barone**, Professor Emeritus of the University of Saint Joseph. More information will be available soon on how to register for this program.

Pascal D'Angelo (1894-1932) published an extraordinary immigrant autobiography in 1924, *Son of Italy*. He interspersed poems throughout it. Although he had some success as a poet in the mid-twenties, he died in New York City, destitute. When he came to America as a teenager with his father to work, save money, and eventually return to Italy (so they had planned), he knew not a word of English and yet his poem "The Toilers" appeared in the October 1922 issue of *The Literary Digest* on the same page as poems by Edna St. Vincent Millay and Rudyard Kipling.

Dennis Barone, Professor Emeritus, University of Saint Joseph, has authored and edited many books including *New Hungers from Old: One-Hundred Years of Italian-American Poetry* and *Garnet Poems: An Anthology of Connecticut Poetry Since 1776*.

Would you like to be a Popper in 2021? Please contact our new director of Poets on Poetry if you are interested in moderating a discussion of a favorite poet on zoom. Please contact Jeanne LeVasseur at Rx4Poetry@gmail.com.

Reading Suggestions

During the next few months, as we continue to sequester, let's take this as a good opportunity to read more widely in poetry, maybe by poets unfamiliar to some of us. As well as buying books by our members, take a look at these anthologies, which come highly recommended.

Take a Stand: Art Against Hate, edited by Anna Balint, Phoebe Bosche, and Thomas Hubbard (Raven Chronicles Press, 2020)

"*Take a Stand, Art Against Hate Anthology* comes at a critical time in our nation's cultural discourse surrounding intersections of identity, resistance, and looking at the past to forge a path forward...Thought-provoking and heart-wrenching." –Larry Reid

When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through: A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry, edited by LeAnne Howe, Jennifer Elise Foerster, and Joy Harjo

"This landmark anthology celebrates the indigenous peoples of North America, the first poets of this country, whose literary traditions stretch back centuries. Opening with a blessing from Pulitzer Prize–winner N. Scott Momaday, the book contains powerful introductions from contributing editors who represent the five geographically organized sections. Each section begins with a poem from traditional oral literatures and closes with emerging poets." –Amazon.com listing information

Connecticut Literary Anthology

The Connecticut Literary Anthology, financed by a grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, includes prose and poetry by many of Connecticut's finest writers, including several CPS members: **Ginny Lowe Connors, Joanie DiMartino, Barbara Jennes, Claudia McGhee, Jean P. Moore, and Vivian Shipley.**

Director for Connecticut Center for the Book, Lisa Comstock, stated that after the trauma we are going through with Covid-19, "this anthology glues us back together and helps us find ways to heal and talk with one another." Virtual readings from the anthology will take place on December 10th and December 17th. If you'd like to enjoy these readings, register in advance for the December 10th reading here:

https://www.crowdcast.io/e/celebrating-the-2020-2/register?utm_source=profile&utm_medium=profile_web&utm_campaign=profile

And here for the December 17th reading:

https://www.crowdcast.io/e/celebrating-the-2020-3/register?utm_source=profile&utm_medium=profile_web&utm_campaign=profile

CPS Members Are Also NFSPS Members

As part of their membership benefits, CPS Members belong to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. This allows access to a national newsletter and to an annual series of poetry contests. (You can enter 50 different contests!) Click here for more information about NFSPS. <http://www.nfsps.com/>

CPS Poetry Contest News

Results are in for the Connecticut River Review Poetry Contest, which was nature-themed. Connecticut's Poet Laureate Margaret Gibson served as judge.

Congratulations to these winning poets:

First Prize: **Kathleen O'Toole** for her poem "Sierra Lament"

Second Prize: **Christie Max Williams** for "Rock Me Mama"

Third Prize: **Mark Caskie** for "Natural History"

In addition, **Jonathan Andrew Pérez** and **Molly Sturdevant** earned honorable mentions.

The Nutmeg Award, for Connecticut poets only, is now accepting submissions. Sean Frederick Forbes will be the judge. He was the first-place winner several years ago.

The DeCaro Contest for Connecticut high school students will begin accepting entries on January 1st. Luisa Caycedo-Kimura will serve as judge for this contest.

You can find out more about poetry contests sponsored by CPS on our website: <http://ctpoetry.net/contests.html>

