

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**

Co-Presidents: Tony Fusco & Pat Mottola

Vice President: Victor Altshul

Acting Secretary: Mark Sheridan

Treasurer: Mark Sheridan

Contests: Joan Hofmann

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

CRR Editors: Ginny Connors & Debbie Gilbert

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

Publicity: David Cundy

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](mailto:patriciamottola@yahoo.com) if you are interested, or if you have questions.

### **POPs on Hiatus for Summer Months**

CPS will host a POP (Poets on Poetry) event on June 16 at 7 pm, via Zoom. We are still developing our schedule for the fall. The June event will focus on haiku. Speaking of POPs, **we are looking for someone to act as co-coordinator the POP program going forward.** Christine Beck did an amazing job in sustaining this innovative and POPular program for the past six years. She will be hard to replace! A new coordinator will have a lot of support as he or she is getting started. Please email Pat Mottola at [patriciamottola@yahoo.com](mailto:patriciamottola@yahoo.com) if interested, or if you have questions.

### **Poetry Class Open to CT Senior Citizens**

Lyme's Senior Center will host an Internet poetry class conducted by **Roger Singer**. This class will be open to all senior centers in the state. The class runs for five weeks, starting on June 9th at 10 am. The classes will be conducted using Zoom software, which is reasonably easy to use. Contact the director of the senior center, Stephanie Lyon-Gould via email at [seniorcenter@oldlyme-ct.gov](mailto:seniorcenter@oldlyme-ct.gov) or Roger Singer at [cabanaph424@verizon.net](mailto:cabanaph424@verizon.net) for more information.

## Presidents' Message

### Poetry: An Essential Service

*The only thing that can save the world is the reclaiming of the awareness of the world. That is what poetry does.*

--Allen Ginsberg

WOW, welcome everyone to the first COVID-19 Presidents' Message! We hope this finds you well and, well, content.

Lately the term "essential workers" is floating around like milkweed seeds. Society is now realizing the value of those who perform essential services that are underpaid, under-protected, and under-appreciated. In this unsettling time of COVID-19 it is clear, now more than ever, that poetry is indeed *essential*. Poets *are* essential for the well-being of our community, our country, and our world.

In looking online recently at a list of *essential services* and *important workers* we found it curious that the list encompassed everything one could possibly think of – except the arts. Where are the arts??

So then – the Merriam-Webster dictionary definition of *healthcare: efforts made to maintain or restore physical, mental, or emotional well-being*. Poets, you all know that we certainly provide a unique form of healthcare. We are doing what poets do, and have always done: offering enlightenment, encouragement, honesty and truth – and documenting historical events for future generations.

Ours is a unique organization. We are growing each and every month. Be assured that your Board is working overtime to ensure that CPS will continue to offer – although temporarily in a

somewhat different format – the best in poetry for you, our members, here in Connecticut and beyond.

We would like to take this time to acknowledge our fellow poets in what they offer to a society that needs to reclaim itself, to understand what it is to be human and to care for one another, listen to one another, and appreciate each other as never before. When you are feeling isolated, remember that we are all connected through poetry, friendship, and the desire to write a better world.

Wishing you health and safety,  
Pat Mottola and Tony Fusco, Co-Presidents,  
CPS

### Have You Renewed Your Membership?

Connecticut Poetry Society dues were due on April 1st (no fooling!). If you are not up to date, you will receive a reminder via email. You can renew your membership three ways: using PayPal online, with a credit card, or by regular mail using the form found on the website. Here is the [link for membership renewal](#).

If you choose to send a check, send it to CPS Membership Chair, 311 Shingle Hill Rd, West Haven, CT 06516. Please make sure we have your current info: address, phone number, and email. It will help us stay in touch with you!

You can keep up with CPS by checking our website and reading our newsletter. Newsletter and announcements are sent by email unless you have none, in which case we will mail them. Our contest dates and guidelines are also on our website.

## **CPS Chapters & Presidents**

COVID-19 has changed the way our chapters meet. Many are now meeting online or through email. We also have some new chapters to report! 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)

### **Farmington Valley**

Terence McCaffrey  
860-416-6684  
[tmccaff24@hotmail.com](mailto:tmccaff24@hotmail.com)

For now, this chapter will share poems and feedback via email.

### **Greater Hartford**

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

### **Haiku Chapter \* New Chapter \***

Marita Gargiulo  
[MarGarArts@mail.com](mailto:MarGarArts@mail.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. Our first event will be the POP "Basho and Chiyo-ni" on June 16 at 7 pm via Zoom.

### **Manchester**

Kimball Hunt  
[kimballhh@gmail.com](mailto:kimballhh@gmail.com)  
860-384-4163

### **Middletown**

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

## **New Haven**

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

The New Haven chapter has been meeting via Zoom on the third Saturday of the month. They usually workshop 12 poems, with several participants offering comments.

### **Pomfret**

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

The quiet corner has switched to an email poetry exchange. A few days before the scheduled meeting, Christine emails a reminder and directs people to email their poem. On the meeting date, a group email is sent with the poems as attachments. Participants take the week to respond directly to the poem's author.

### **Ridgefield \* New Chapter\***

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 \* New Chapter \***

Roger Singer  
[cabanaph424@verizon.net](mailto:cabanaph424@verizon.net)

The first meeting of this chapter will be held June 10, 2020, from 7-9 pm. It will be a Zoom meeting. RSVP Roger to confirm and get Zoom particulars.

### **Southbury**

Marion McGauhy  
860-354-2157  
[Mcgauhy@aol.com](mailto:Mcgauhy@aol.com)

### **Wilton**

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

## Poet in the Spotlight: Christine Kalafus

**Christine Kalafus** leads a CPS chapter in north-east Connecticut, the “Quiet Corner.” She invites anyone and everyone to the meetings, in the belief that we all need to hear as many stories from as many people as we can.

Kalafus loves that the Connecticut Poetry Society is all about spreading the love of poetry. “It’s been said by many others, but it’s worth saying again: poetry makes you slow down, get quiet, and reflect. We Americans would benefit from a surplus of all three.”

She moved to the area in 2007. Elsewhere, her grandmother was developing dementia; her mother and aunt were taking care of her. Kalafus had young children and couldn’t be there physically to help, but “I could always make my mother laugh. So, I started writing essays that poked fun at my ineptness with rural life and emailed them to her every Monday. The discipline arose from a desire to lighten my mom’s spirit, if only for a moment. The unexpected benefit to me was that the regular practice made my writing better. Pretty soon, I closed my sewing business and went to graduate school.”

“The flip side of humor, and where humor is born, is pain and trauma,” she says. “I’ve certainly had both. In grad. school I wrote a memoir about my husband’s affair, becoming pregnant with twins, developing an aggressive cancer, and the regular flooding of our basement—events that occurred within a twelve-month period. Of course, writing helps us understand ourselves better, but to have access to that understanding, we have to be honest, accept that within us there is as much darkness as light, and acknowledge that we need

both.”



The themes that surface most in her own writing these days all connect to the body. She uses metaphors of architecture, landscape, inheritance, and physical labor.

She is inspired most by visual artists and poets. Some of the poets whose work she’s currently reading are Katie Condon, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Anne Carson. Kalafus approaches the reading of poetry as a spiritual practice, one without expectation. She says, “I love nothing more than lighting an incense cone, drinking some tea, and reading other people’s poems aloud. Because my nineteen-year-old twins are home for the summer and think I’m nuts, I do it even louder.”

## Christine Beck Reflects on Her Tenure at CPS

*Christine Beck has been at the forefront of the revitalization of our state poetry society. Other demands on her time have led her to withdraw from her leadership role at CPS, although she will continue to actively participate as a member. Here are some of her reflections on CPS.*

In 2006 I received a phone call asking for my help. The current leader of Connecticut Poetry Society, Joan Ketrys, was stepping down and the organization needed a jolt of energy. Was I willing to help? Tony Fusco, editor of *Connecticut River Review*, and Gus Stepp, Treasurer, were willing to stay on. I called two fellow poets, Ginny Connors and Julia Paul, and together we created a new leadership team for CPS.

In 2006, CPS received poem submissions from a post office box in Waterbury for their contests. We had no website and no ability to communicate over the Internet.

Most of our revenue came from contests because at that point poetry contests were still relatively rare. Ginny Connors enlisted Tony Fusco to help create our first website. She also took on managing contests. Julia Paul managed memberships. After Pat Mottola became Editor of *Connecticut River Review*, Tony Fusco updated our website to the robust source of information it is today. When Gus died, Mike Lepore became Treasurer. Under

his leadership, we brought CPS into the digital age, added Submittable for poetry submissions, adopted PayPal for payments, and due to Mike's initiative, solicited sponsors for our CPS contests.

I believe strongly in rotation of leadership. It is not healthy for an organization to rely on the energies and vision of only one person as it changes and grows. When I stepped down as President in 2008, Emerson Gilmore took my place for two years, until he left the state. At that point, Tony Fusco agreed to become President, but with both our website and membership to manage, he needed help. Pat Mottola agreed to become Co-President when she stepped down as *CRR* Editor, a post Ginny Connors now holds, along with Debbie Gilbert, the new Co-Editor. We also welcomed Mark Sheridan as Treasurer and Joan Hofmann as Contest Chair. Patti Fusco now handles memberships and curates our Facebook and Instagram accounts. David Cundy has become our PR Representative.

Five years ago last April, I began an initiative to promote part of our CPS mission statement: **poetry education**. We called our initiative Poets on Poetry, or POP, a monthly discussion by one poet of another well-known poet. We began at the Hartford Public Library once a month on Saturday mornings. After some successful fundraising by Mark Sheridan, our current treasurer, we expanded to five other local Connecticut libraries. The POP series is now alive and well on Zoom. POP will benefit from management by a committee of members to bring a diversity of viewpoints to the poets under discussion and the format for the series.

Another reason I am stepping off the board is to

devote more volunteer time to an organization called Adult Children of Alcoholics. I am now the major organizer of over 50 volunteer writers, editors, proofreaders, and readers who will help this group develop and promote literature.

I will continue to be an active member of CPS; I treasure the friends and colleagues I have met here. It has been my pleasure to serve CPS and I hope to continue to do so in the future.

### Poets Are Zooming

While things have changed so much from what we would call “normal,” due to the COVID-19 virus, many things that are familiar and so integral to our lives have not. Poetry—whether it is read from books, or listened to from recordings, or shared in workshops—is familiar and comforting to those who are sheltering in their homes. We can find inspiration, solace, entertainment, and companionship in our mutual love and sharing of our art form.

Several groups and CPS chapters have gotten together using e-meeting software. For some, anything computer-related seems beyond the realm of possibility, but it is no more difficult than many of the tasks people do now that we once thought beyond our learning ability. If you or your group of favorite poets have not already tried it, I strongly recommend it; people by nature are social and in its way, this helps fulfill some of that need.

—Tony Fusco

### Joan Seliger Sidney's Recent Publications

**Joan Seliger Sidney** writes in multiple genres. Recently her poem “Hit and Run” was published in the poetry journal, *Here*. “Regrets” was reprinted in *Kaleidoscope*, and her non-fiction essay, “Childbirth,” appeared in *Centering*, a new online journal of personal stories. Gina Barreca’s anthology, *Fast, Funny Women*, will include her flash non-fiction essay, “I Married a Mathematician.” Her productivity and talent continue to inspire many of us.

### Connecticut Office of the Arts Awards

The Connecticut Office of the Arts has recently recognized artists and writers in the state with awards. The following poets were included:

**Jose B. Gonzalez** was given an award for artistic excellence. **Brian Clements**, **Daniel Donaghy**, and **Alison Moncrief Bromage** were each awarded artistic fellowships. Congratulations to these outstanding poets!

### A Covid-19 Poem

During these extraordinary times, many are writing pandemic poems. A poem by Laura Altshul honoring Tanisha Brunson-Malone is featured prominently on New Haven’s Community Leadership Program’s website. Here is the link to it:

<https://clpnewhaven.org/covid-19-heroine-daffodils/>



## In Memoriam: JoAnne Bauer



We are sad to report that CPS member JoAnne Bauer, a well-known poet, artist, and activist for social justice, passed away on April 3rd. She lived in Hartford. Joanne held multiple degrees, including a doctorate in Communication Arts and Technology. She received many awards for her work. Her infectious energy and passionate advocacy earned her many friends. JoAnne's passing is a loss that many of us feel deeply.

## Staring Down the Tracks

Julia Paul's new poetry collection, ***Staring Down the Tracks***, has been published by The Poetry Box. *Staring Down the Tracks* is a collection of poems that gives voice to those affected by addiction, a population that, despite their numbers and diverse demographics, is often harshly judged and silenced by shame. The mother and son of these poems are your neighbors, friends, relatives, and co-workers who need to have a dialog with you. Approximately 200 people die *every day* from drug overdoses. This book is, as Daniel Donaghy says, "an essential contribution to literature about addiction." This book is available through [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or through the publisher.

## Margaret Gibson Named a Poet Laureate Fellow

The Academy of American Poets has announced its 2020 Poets Laureate Fellows. Among them is Connecticut's Poet Laureate, **Margaret Gibson**. The 23 individuals chosen to receive funding for this initiative serve as Poets Laureates of states, cities, counties, and the Navajo Nation. "As we face the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, more and more people are turning to poetry for comfort and courage. We are honored and humbled in this moment of great need to fund poets who are talented artists and community organizers, who will most certainly help guide their communities forward," said Jennifer Benka, President and Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets.

Through its Poets Laureate Fellowship program, the Academy has become the largest financial supporter of poets in the nation. The fellowship program is made possible by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Margaret Gibson is the author of several collections of poetry, including *The Vigil: A Poem in Four Voices* (LSU Press, 1993), a finalist for the National Book Award. Gibson was named the Poet Laureate of Connecticut in 2019.

She will host some online eco-themed poetry readings featuring Connecticut Town Poets Laureate and local poets that will be available on multiple web sites. Gibson will help produce an anthology of poems by Connecticut authors about the natural world and climate change.

Stay tuned for information about how to share your eco-themed poetry!

## Honoring a Brother's Memory

CPS member **Charles Margolis** has published a book dedicated to the memory of his brother, David Margolis. The book, ***P.S. Poems & Short Stories***, is available through amazon.com. David Margolis was a legendary figure within the department of Justice. For many years he served as Deputy Associate Attorney General. In 2015 David Margolis was honored for 50 years of service. Among the guests present were the Attorney General, the Director of Homeland Security, the FBI Director, and other notables. Charles Margolis read a poem, "Dave" at that event, and about a year later he read "Eulogy for Superman" at his brother's memorial. This book includes poems, family stories, and photographs.

## Submit your Eco-Poetry

The Connecticut Poetry Society will devote its 2020 Connecticut River Review Contest to the natural world. Call it wild, wilderness, environment, the place of the soul. We want great, ecological, and ecocritical poems of praise, complication, outrage and concern that move us, enlighten us, provoke us. The contest judge is Connecticut Poet Laureate Margaret Gibson. Submissions August 1 to September 30. You can submit through this link: <https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/submit/148266/connecticut-river-review-poetry-award-2020>

Previously unpublished, 80-line limit. Prizes: 1st \$400, 2nd \$100, 3rd \$50. Winning poems will be published in *Connecticut River Review* and posted on CPS website. Guidelines on Submittable and on the CPS website: [ctpoetry.net](http://ctpoetry.net).

## Wendell Berry on How To Be a Poet

Feeling stuck? Here is advice from one of our country's best poets, the philosopher-farmer, Wendell Berry.

### HOW TO BE A POET

(to remind myself)

Make a place to sit down.  
Sit down. Be quiet.  
You must depend upon  
affection, reading, knowledge,  
skill — more of each  
than you have — inspiration,  
work, growing older, patience,  
for patience joins time  
to eternity. Any readers  
who like your poems,  
doubt their judgment.  
Breathe with unconditional breath  
the unconditioned air.  
Shun electric wire.  
Communicate slowly. Live  
a three-dimensioned life;  
stay away from screens.  
Stay away from anything  
that obscures the place it is in.  
There are no unsacred places;  
there are only sacred places  
and desecrated places.  
Accept what comes from silence.  
Make the best you can of it.  
Of the little words that come  
out of the silence, like prayers  
prayed back to the one who prays,  
make a poem that does not disturb  
the silence from which it came.