

**The Connecticut
Poetry Society
Newsletter**

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

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

CPS Honorary Board

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate

Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022

Rennie McQuilkin, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2015-2018

Marilyn Nelson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2001-2006

Vivian Shipley, CSU Distinguished Professor Emeritus

CPS Officers

President: Pat Mottola

Vice President: Sharon Smith

Secretary: Amy Graver

Interim Treasurer: Patti Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

Contests: Kathleen McIntosh

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

CRR Editors: Ginny Connors & Debbie Gilbert

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: Jeanne LeVasseur

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola

Youth Outreach: Nancy Manning



A Beautiful Day for the CPS Picnic

POP: Poets on Poetry

Our popular POP series will continue to be in a ZOOM format this fall. The Zoom links will be available soon.

On September 29, at 7 pm, CPS president **Pat Mottola** will host a workshop on ekphrastic poetry.

On October 20, at 7 pm, **Jim Finnegan** will share information about poet Linda Gregg.

On November 13, also at 7 pm, **Margaret Gibson** will moderate a session on the Poetry of Grief and Remembrance.

Connecticut Youth Poet Laureate Named

Congratulations to Naugatuck High School senior **Jaida Tavares**, who was named Connecticut's inaugural Youth Poet Laureate. This honor was conferred by the Connecticut Office of the Arts and Connecticut Department of Education.

President's Message

Dear wonderful CPS members,
Fall is in the air! Just one week ago I enjoyed seeing many of you at our Annual Summer Picnic! Each CPS gathering brings us closer to and more appreciative of each other. It's so important to be part of a poetry community such as ours. We certainly energized each other with our fabulous open mic. So much in the works for CPS this coming year!

Our first **POP** of the season, via Zoom, will take place on September 29th at 7 pm. Topic: Ekphrasis Revisited. Presenter: **Pat Mottola**. (yes!) More details to follow. You will find the entire POP lineup for Fall on our CPS website. Thank you yet again to our POP Director, **Jeanne LeVasseur**, for her dedication and expertise in organizing this amazing POP series.

The next **MOM** will be on September 23rd at 7 pm. Join us via Zoom and share your poems at this wonderfully relaxed and informal open mic. Check your emails for more info and Zoom link.

President's Workshops resume on September 25th at 6:30 pm. October dates are set for October 2 and October 16. Please let me know if you would like to participate.

Speaking of workshops, CPS welcomes a new Chapter—the Orenaug Chapter—led by Woodbury Poet Laureate **Sandy Carlson**. See more details about the Orenaug Chapter in this newsletter.

Our summer intern, **Cindy Truong**, is back at school, majoring in English at New York University. Her contributions this summer have

enriched CPS immensely and we look forward to having her back next summer. She will continue managing our Social Media while in New York and we are extremely grateful to her.

Connecticut River Review has been mailed out, so look for your copy! It's outstanding, as always. Thank you to our editors, **Ginny Connors**, **Debbie Gilbert**, and **Luisa Caycedo-Kimura**. Check the CPS website for details about the upcoming CRR readings to be held on October 1 and October 15.

Check the website also for upcoming contests — five this year! The Vivian Shipley Poetry Award is currently accepting submissions through September 30. Thank you to our fabulous contest chair **Kathleen McIntosh**!

Nancy Manning, Youth Outreach Coordinator, has planned some marvelous workshops, readings, and open mics for Connecticut High School students. We welcome three new Student Ambassadors — **Addie Graver**, **Ria Saxena**, and **Nick Jokl** — and we look forward to working with them. Check the website and emails for more details.

You can see that because of our dedicated Board Members—volunteers who work tirelessly and often behind the scenes—CPS has grown and continues to grow in all positive directions. Thank you, **Ginny Connors** for these wonderful quarterly newsletters. Thank you, **Patti Fusco**, our Membership Chair and Interim Treasurer, for keeping us in business! Thank you, **Tony Fusco**, for maintaining our website and for all your constant dedication to CPS.

Thank you, **Amy Graver**, our Secretary, who has made room on her over-flowing plate to serve CPS. And last but not least, thank you to Vice-President **Sharon Smith**, who enthusiastically assists me in all things no matter how large or small.

Yes, your Board Members are always thinking and planning new offerings for you, our incredible members. **You** are the best of CPS. Your generosity of spirit, your donations of time, money, and services, keep our organization thriving. I am so grateful to you.

“As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.” –JFK

Sincerely,
Pat Mottola, President



Cindy Truong and Pat Mottola

Connecticut Welcomes Its 8th State Poet Laureate

Congratulations to **Antoinette Brim-Bell** from West Haven, recently named Connecticut's 8th State Poet Laureate! Antoinette Brim-Bell is a poet, printmaker, and author of *These Women You Gave Me*, *Icarus in Love*, and *Psalm of the Sunflower*. She has received recognition as a Cave Canem Foundation fellow, a recipient of the Walker Foundation Scholarship to the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, and a Pushcart Prize nominee. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Whiskey of our Discontent*, an anthology of essays commemorating Gwendolyn Brooks.

In addition to her literary accomplishments, Antoinette hosted a series of Black History Month television programs for the OneWorld Progressive Institute and is a former guest host of *Patrick Oliver's Literary Nation Talk Radio* (KABF 88.3, Little Rock) for which she interviewed a variety of entertainers, literary figures, political pundits and community developers. Antoinette is a Professor of English at Capital Community College.

A Thank you

CPS wishes to thank departing board member **Luisa Caycedo-Kimura** for her invaluable service as co-editor of *Connecticut River Review*. Her insights and expertise have contributed to the journal's success.

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

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

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

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

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

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

New Haven

Laura Altshul
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

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.

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

Sandy Carlson
orenaugchaptercps@gmail.com

This new chapter meets on the first Saturday of Each month at 3 pm. Participants meet virtually. Contact Sandy Carlson for more information.

Ridgefield

Barb Jennes
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); they will subsequently receive the Zoom link and an email address to which their poems should be sent.

Wilton

Ray Rauth
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.

Poet in the Spotlight: Karen Torop

Karen Torop, a psychotherapist who likes to call herself “a backwoods chicken farmer,” writes primarily about what she observes in nature, including poems about her beloved hens. She has also written poems about her experiences as a Hospice volunteer. When she met Victor and Laura Altshul in a Clinton Art Gallery workshop several years ago, they encouraged her to contact Rennie McQuilkin, who runs a poetry press. Karen’s first book, *The Fire in Hand*, was subsequently published by his press, Antrim House.

Karen is an avid gardener and runner. She loves being outdoors in (almost) any weather. Her favorite poet is Elizabeth Bishop; Karen’s copy of Bishop’s *The Complete Poems* is now in tatters. She says she had been passionate about poetry for many years but did not start writing her own poems until she enrolled in Wesleyan’s Graduate Liberal Studies program where she studied with Tony Connor and Edwina Trentham. A graduate of Smith College and Boston University School of Social Work, Karen is also a trained yoga teacher.

The Covid years have been hard: she has missed attending in-person workshops and readings. She is currently working on new poems for a chapbook and is also editing a (mostly) prose manuscript she undertook to write every day for a year: her observations and thoughts on early morning walks with her dog. The manuscript was originally intended for her grandchildren, with whom she was unable to take those daily walks.



Karen Torop

Poetry at Riverbound Farm

Connecticut Poetry Society, in collaboration with the Coalition for a Sustainable Cheshire, is sponsoring a reading at the picturesque Riverbound Farm Sanctuary in Cheshire on Sunday, October 9, at 2 pm. Margaret Gibson, Connecticut’s Poet Laureate from 2019–2022, will be the featured reader. Join us in this poets’ paradise. Check for more details on our websites: ctpoetry.net and <https://www.sustainablecheshire.org/>.

Poems Become Songs

Sarah Marze, the talented University of Connecticut student who was a featured presenter at the CPS Spring Fling, plans a book release for her *book Let Us Sing! Contemporary Art Songs for Young Singers*, featuring lyrics based on poems by several CPS members. The event will take place on November 4th at 5 pm at at Von Der Mehden Recital Hall on the UConn campus. The songs to be performed are based on poems by Susan O. Nedd, Mary Hills Kuck, Sandy Lee Carlson, Jack Sheedy, Melanie Rose Greenhouse, and Ginny Lowe Connors.

Contest News

Congratulations to the authors of the winning and honorable mention poems of the 2022 **Connecticut Poetry Award**, which was judged by **Terry Blackhawk**. These poems are now posted on the CPS website, and will appear in next year's *CRR*.

1st Prize: **Aaron Fischer** for "Got My Mojo Working"

2nd Prize: **Shellie Harwood** for "What Bloomed in Dresden"

3rd Prize: **Kathryn Jordan** for "White Flag"

Honorable Mentions went to **Jayne Marek**, **Jennifer L. Freed**, and **Dominic Bellido**.

The **Experimental Poetry Contest**, which is in its second year, concluded on July 31; results are forthcoming and will also be posted on the CPS website.

The **Vivian Shipley Poetry Award** is currently underway and will be open to submissions through the end of September. The 2022 contest will be judged by **Charles Rafferty**. Please see the contest announcement on the CPS website and consider submitting! The 2021 winning poems are posted there as well.

Upcoming contests include the **Nutmeg Contest**, CPS's annual contest for Connecticut poets, which will begin on the first of December, and a special contest to be held in the coming year: the **Margaret Gibson Poet Laureate Poetry Award** will offer 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes for poems which focus on *nature in a time of global climate crisis*. The submission period will begin on March 1st. Guidelines are in the 2022 *CRR* and on the CPS website.

CPS Members Among NFSPS Contest Winners

The National Federation of State Poetry Societies sponsors a large group of poetry contests open to members of any state poetry society. This year several of our members submitted poems that earned prizes in some of the contests.

Elaine Zimmerman earned first prize in the Georgia Poetry Society Award, third prize for the Power of Women award, and an honorable mention in another contest.

Patricia O'Brien earned first prize in the Al Laster Memorial Award and an honorable mention in another contest.

Laura Altshul won second prize for the Margo Award and **Kathleen McIntosh** took second prize in the Columbine Poets of Colorado Award.

Gwen Gunn earned a third prize in the New York Poetry Forum Award, as well as honorable mentions in three other contests.

Pegi Deitz Shea and **Veronica Schorr** each earned an honorable mention. It is great to see our members recognized for their talented writing.

Barb Jennes Wins Lascaux Prize

A poem by **Barb Jennes**, "Glyphs of a Gentle Going," has been awarded the Lascaux Prize by *Lascaux Review*. This is an award that recognizes previously published or unpublished work, spotlighting "accessible" poetry of "literary quality." The poem was originally published in *Connecticut River Review*. Congratulations, Barb!

Poetry in the Preserve

The Wilton Chapter of the Connecticut Poetry Society, in partnership with the Wilton Land Conservation Trust and the town Library, will present *Poetry in the Preserve*, a reading by several local poets. An open mic will follow. The event will be on Saturday, October 15th from 2 to 4 pm. It will take place in the Walter Preserve in Wilton on 688 Ridgefield Road. As it is an outdoor event, please bring your own seating. All are welcome.

More information and a registration form can be found at:

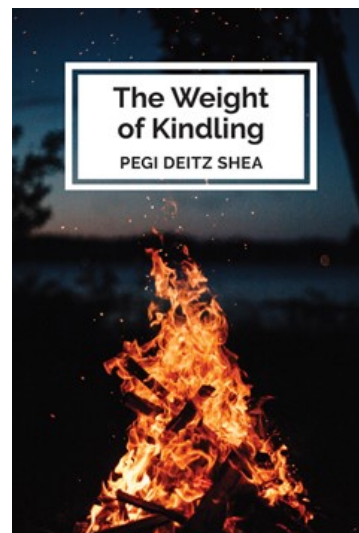
<http://www.wiltonlandtrust.org/poetry-in-the-preserve-1/>

Poetry for Breast Cancer Awareness Month

To mark Breast Cancer Awareness Month, **Debbie Gilbert** and **Catherine Hoyser** will host a reading on Sunday, October 16, at 3 pm at Middlewoods of Farmington, 509 Middle Road, in the Fireplace Room. Catherine will read selected new poetry, and Debbie will read from her chapbook, *Once the Earth had Two Moons*. Masks are required.

People and Their Poems: A Podcast

Sandy Carlson leads the new Orenaug Chapter of CPS. She also hosts the podcast *People and Their Poems*. Guests talk about a poem that has influenced their writing and their writing life, and then they share a poem they have written. You can find *People and Their Poems* wherever you get your podcasts, or you can visit peopleandtheirpoems.net. Contact Sandy at imsandycarlson@gmail.com if you would like to be a guest.



Pegi Deitz Shea Launches New Poetry Book

Pegi Deitz Shea's *The Weight of Kindling* (Grayson Books), her first book for adult readers, examines her roots of inspiration—including her grandmother's history, her own world travels, and the family she helped create. Shea, a two-time winner of the Connecticut Book Award, taught Children's Literature and Creative Writing from 2007-2020 at the University of Connecticut. The inaugural Poet Laureate of Vernon, Shea directs *Poetry Rocks*, a quarterly reading series she founded in 2017, and volunteers on the board of the Connecticut Coalition of Poet Laureates.

Readings from her book will take place at Real Art Ways, through the Riverwood Poetry Series, on September 15 at 7 pm, and at Barnes & Noble in Storrs Center on October 13 at 7 pm. Another reading will occur at the Rockville Public Library on November 3, at 6:30 pm.

New Book of Ekphrastic Poetry

Debbie Gilbert has published a book of poems inspired by artwork. In *imagine the small bones: poems in conversation with art*, she takes the reader on a journey that winds its way through life's obstacles toward freedom and empowerment. Fish and birds, creatures that move through elements that aren't completely hospitable to humans, are represented in stunning artwork by such artists as Picasso, Van Gogh, Renoir, and others. The artwork is set alongside the author's vivid poems.

Wordhouse Reading Series Features Laureates of West Hartford

On September 17 at 2 pm, Wordhouse Reading Series, led by James Finnegan, will present its inaugural event at the Noah Webster House, 227 South Main Street in West Hartford. Current and past Poets Laureate of the town of West Hartford, Connecticut will each read a few of their poems. Participating will be **Benjamin S. Grossberg, Maria Sassi, Ginny Lowe Connors, Dennis Barone, Christine Beck** and **James Finnegan**.

Benjamin S. Grossberg, Director of Creative Writing at University of Hartford won the 2021 Connecticut Book Award for his book of poems *My Husband Would*.

Maria Sassi, the first Poet Laureate of West Hartford, is a prize-winning poet and playwright. The Noah Webster House is a venue familiar to her, as she has hosted numerous poetry events there.

Ginny Lowe Connors' most recent poetry book is a lyrical history: *Without Goodbyes: From Puritan Deerfield to Mohawk Kahnawake*.

Dennis Barone is Professor of English Emeritus at the University of Saint Joseph. His most recent poetry book is *A Field Guide to the Rehearsal*.

Christine Beck initiated the very successful POP or Poets on Poetry series for CPS. She was president of CPS for a decade.

James Finnegan has published poems in a wide variety of top-notch poetry journals and anthologies. For many years he served as president of the Friends & Enemies of Wallace Stevens.

Riverwood Poetry Series

The Riverwood Poetry Series takes place on the second Wednesday of the month, September through May, at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor St. in Hartford. An open mic follows the featured readers. The season's opening, on September 14 at 7 pm, features four local poets who have recently published poetry books. The poets are **Steve Straight, Pegi Deitz Shea, Brad Davis**, and **Ginny Lowe Connors**. Their books will be available for sale.

Steve Straight's latest book is *Affirmation*. Among many honors, Steve was named a Distinguished Advocate for the Arts by the Connecticut Commission of the Arts. **Pegi Deitz Shea's** book is *The Weight of Kindling. Trespassing on the Mount of Olives: poems in conversation with the Gospels*, is a recent book by **Brad Davis**. He was lead editor of *Sunken Garden Poetry: 1992-2011*. **Ginny Lowe Connors'** recent book is *Without Goodbyes*. Ginny serves as co-editor of *Connecticut River Review*, and runs Grayson Books, an independent poetry press.

Connecticut River Review

CPS members should have received their copies of *CRR* (*Connecticut River Review*) by now. It includes poems by writers from Connecticut, from many other states, and from several other countries. Also included are short book reviews and information about the contests sponsored by CPS.

If you would like to listen to some of the contributors read their poems, you can tune in to one or more of three virtual readings slated for October, each one featuring different poets.

Here are the links for the Zoom readings:

October 1, 11 am

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83384775792?pwd=RU5KK3pQRUVlUkJ5cmRNSE9qcW5KZz09>

Passcode: 157569

October 1, 7 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86018078746?pwd=cWM2TlpkRmJiVlM4RDdiZ05Zbm41QT09>

Passcode: 056119

October 15, 7 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84266137530?pwd=dnhVS2FFVWRTc21NUjVjZklnQmxmQT09>

Passcode: 714470

This information is also on the CPS website.

CPS Welcomes Student Ambassadors

Three local high school students will be instrumental in helping CPS reach out to young poets in Connecticut. This year's Student Ambassadors are **Addie Graver**, **Ria**



Saxena and Nick Jokl.

Adaline ("Addie") Graver attends Branford High School as a sophomore and is a high-honors student. In addition, Addie travels Monday through Thursday from her high school to the Educational Center for the Arts in New Haven (ECA), a magnet school for kids gifted in the arts.

Ria Saxena, a senior at South Windsor High School, has had a fondness for poetry ever since they were 13 years old. Their main inspiration for writing comes from amazing poets like Ocean Vuong and Charlie Margolis. Ria loves spending time outside of school helping out on various political campaigns and collaborating a research project with Wood Memorial Library.

Nick Jokl, a junior attending Rocky Hill High School, is beyond thrilled to be taking a position as a student ambassador for poetry. He states, "I grew up with the influence of poetry, as my grandmother is a poet. I believe literature and poetry serve as a platform for vulnerability and emotion, and hence, are very crucial and beneficial."

Bearing Witness to the Wind

Sandy Carlson, who is Woodbury's Poet Laureate, recently published a poetry collection called *Bearing Witness to the Wind*. After her parents' deaths in 2019 and 2020, she spent a lot of time reflecting on the inheritance of loved ones' spirits and how honoring them can help us reimagine our lives and move forward. That was the inspiration for this book.

Poetry Events for Young Poets

High School students interested in honing their skills are welcome to attend a virtual writing workshop hosted by **Pat Mottola** and **Nancy Manning** on October 22nd at 2 pm. A Zoom link for this program will be available soon.

Students who wish to share their poetry should tune in to the virtual open mic on November 2nd, also at 2 pm. The Zoom link will be available soon.

The NFSPS Poetry Contest for Secondary School Students, also known as the Manningham Trust Society Poetry Contest, will be accepting entries September 15 through November 15. This contest includes a Junior Division (Grades 6–8) and a Senior Division (Grades 9–12). Poets may submit one poem through Submittable. Go to www.nfsps.submittable.com and check the appropriate grade level to submit. Each poem must be neatly typed or computer-generated and have no more than 35 lines, including space lines, with no line having more than 60 characters (including spaces and punctuation). There should be no large or unusual fonts or illustrations. Times New Roman is the suggested font.

The poems should not have personal identification on them. That information will go elsewhere on the Submittable form. Ten cash prizes will be awarded in each division.

Memorial Readings to Honor David Leff

A memorial tree planting dedication, poetry reading, and open mic will take place at Bicentennial Park, 50 River Road, in Collinsville (Canton) on September 10th to honor the memory of David Leff. Bring chairs and a picnic. Parking is in the Canton Public Works parking lot next to the park.

On October 2nd at 4 pm, at the Hill-Stead Museum, a reading from David Leff's posthumously published poetry collection, *Blue Marble Gazetteer*, will be presented by a dozen Connecticut poets. After the reading, there will be a musical performance, and at 6 pm **Rennie McQuilkin**, founder of the Sunken Garden Poetry Festival, will be the featured poet. Tickets can be purchased for either in-person attendance or the live-stream of the program through this website: <https://www.hillstead.org/event/sqpf-2022-rennie-mcquilkin/>



Rennie McQuilkin