

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 Emerita

### **CPS Officers**

President: Pat Mottola

Vice President: Jeanne LeVasseur

Secretary: Amy Graver

Treasurer: Patti Fusco

Membership: Patti Fusco

Contests: Kathleen McIntosh

Webmaster: Tony Fusco

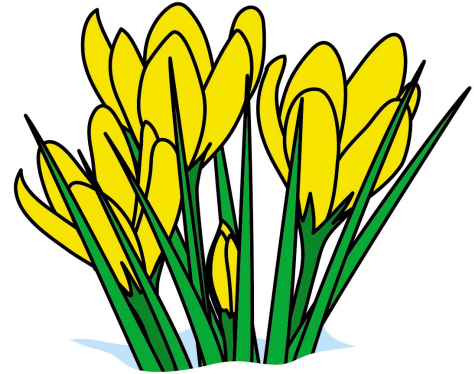
CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert, & John Surowiecki

Newsletter: Ginny Connors

POP Director: B. Fulton Jennes

Youth Coordinator: Amy Graver

Chapter Liaison: Pat Mottola



### **Unboxed: Artwork and Poetry**

The members of our Manchester chapter, known as the Wit and Wisdom Club, have written ekphrastic poems to go with a new exhibit at Work\_Space Gallery on Main Street in Manchester. The current exhibit, **Unboxed**, is a unique and varied display of art made from recycled or repurposed packaging. 30 artists have “evolved the ordinary into extraordinary by transforming trash into treasure,” and poets have interpreted that art! The exhibit is showing through April 5th. There will be an Open House on Saturday, March 9th from 10 am to 2 pm.

### **Renew Your Membership**

Membership dues should be paid by April 1st. Dues are \$30 for one year (\$15 if you are a student). CPS membership includes membership in the National Federation of State Poetry Societies. NFSPS sponsors hundreds of contests for its members. Look for the renewal email from Patti Fusco, our Membership chair.

## President's Message, March 2024

Dear CPS members,

I'm happy to get to know so many of you through our in-person events, through MOMs and POPs and President's Workshops via Zoom, and at the very impressive readings I've attended. I do think of CPS as family, woven together like the fine threads of a tapestry – and what a beautiful picture we make! Each of you contributes so much to the richness of the design. Together, through our poems, we are a collection of memories, experiences, and emotions that shape our identity and define who we are.

I want to thank you for your support. Our membership is quickly approaching 300! April is Poetry Month, and also membership month. Maybe we'll reach the 300 mark!

We are planning more in-person events this spring, summer, and fall. Our first one – our annual Spring Fling – will be held on June 1 at the Glastonbury Riverfront Community Center. I'll be contacting you with the details via email. And, as always, our events are posted on our Facebook and CPS website. [ctpoeetry.net](http://ctpoeetry.net)

As Cheshire's first ever Poet Laureate (that really happened!), I will be inviting you to readings and events in my town as well. I hope you will come and say hello!

Congratulations to the winners and honorable mentions of our recent contests. Your poems are proof of the vast talent in our state and beyond. Poetry definitely thrives in Connecticut.

Once again I would like to thank our Executive Board Members, our volunteers, and our generous donors. Good people doing good things for the benefit of all.

I'd like to share this quote from Billy Collins with you: *Poetry is my cheap means of transportation. By the end of the poem the reader should be in a different place from where he started. I would like him to be slightly disoriented at the end, like I drove him outside of town at night and dropped him off in a cornfield.*

–Billy Collins

See you soon!

Pat Mottola, President

Connecticut Poetry Society

## Honors for Amy Graver

Congratulations to **Amy Graver**, who has a poem coming out in April in an anthology entitled *The Central Avenue Poetry Prize*. Another poem of hers was a finalist in the Bedford International Poetry Competition.

## Poetry Reading at the Barney Library

**Debbie Gilbert** and **Marilyn Johnston** will launch their latest poetry books at a reading on Saturday, May 18, 1 pm, at Barney Library, 71 Main Street, in Farmington. Debbie Gilbert will read from *Finches in Kilmainham*, and Marilyn Johnston from *Downward Dreaming*. The reading includes an open mic. All are welcome. Both books are available through Grayson Books (<https://graysonbooks.com/>) or online retailers such as amazon.com.

## **CPS Chapters & Presidents**

COVID-19 has changed the way some of our chapters meet. 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](mailto:mgarry1955@gmail.com)

This chapter meets at the Bethel Library on the second Saturday of each month, from 1-3 pm. 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. 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](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com)

This chapter is going virtual and has a new meeting schedule. It will meet on the second Monday 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](mailto:pegideitzshea@aol.com) to be placed on the email list.

### **Haiku Chapter**

Marita Gargiulo  
[margararts1000@gmail.com](mailto:margararts1000@gmail.com)

Members of the group share haiku in response to a prompt. The chair collects the poems in advance and emails them to all chapter members so that the poems can be discussed during the meetings.

### **Manchester**

Victoria Dubiel  
[victoria.dubiel@hotmail.com](mailto: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.

### **Middletown**

Pat Mottola  
[ctpoeetryline@gmail.com](mailto:ctpoeetryline@gmail.com)

This chapter is resuming. Contact Pat for information on how to participate.

### **New Haven**

Tony Fusco  
[tfusco357@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:orenaugchaptercps@gmail.com)

The Orenaug chapter meets in person on the third Saturday of each month at 9:30 am. Contact Sandy for the location. The ekphrastic workshops are held at the Woodbury Public Library on the first Saturday of each month at 1 pm.

### **Wilton**

Ed Ahern  
[salmonier@aol.com](mailto: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.

## Poet in the Spotlight: Tony Fusco

**Tony Fusco's** long writing career began when he was sixteen. That's when two of his poems were published in his school's annual anthology. Now he is the author of six poetry books and three chapbooks. He was a winner of the prestigious Sunken Garden Poetry Prize. In the past he has edited *Connecticut River Review* and *Caduceus*, an anthology of the Yale Medical Group Art Place, and he edited and published ten poetry anthologies with his press, Flying Horse Press. Fusco also writes short stories and feature articles. In addition, he has produced a televised poetry series for CTV: *West Shore Poets*.

Fusco has a long involvement with the Connecticut Poetry Society. Over the past several decades his contributions to the organization have been invaluable. He has served as president, vice president, membership chair, website designer and master, secretary, workshop leader, and publicity chair. He's enjoyed meeting lots of local poets through CPS, and has appreciated opportunities to hear the poems of others, to workshop his own poems, and to attend CPS-sponsored events.

His poetry often features nostalgia, comedy, and/or insightful views of society and relationships. Sometimes he produces rants. List poems are a favorite format for some of his work. He often chooses some of his humorous poems to share with audiences because that provides a nice counter-balance to the very serious or sad poems that many people write and share. When he is crafting a poem, Fusco looks for metaphors that are con-

sistent with the theme of the poem. He pays a lot of attention to sound. An opening hook to grab the reader's interest and a strong ending to make the poem memorable are important elements of his work. Finding an appropriate title can be difficult, but is important. As he's revising, he looks at his line breaks and enjambments. He has found that classes and workshops offered by Vivian Shipley have helped him strengthen the quality of his work.

When Tony Fusco is not writing, he might be found pursuing his interests in photography, cinema, reading, or art. During his childhood, Fusco often went to the movies with his father, and he has been a movie-buff ever since. He has produced many programs for public television, on poetry and other topics, and has also worked as part of a crew, doing camera work, lighting, or set design for various programs. He reads all sorts of books, as well as journals and news stories. Lately he's been reading poetry in the journal *Naugatuck River Review*, and in **Joan Hofmann's** book *Coming Back*, **Karen J. Ciosek's** *Navigating the Poet's Sky*, and **D. Walsh Gilbert's** *[M]AR[Y]*.

Tony Fusco's life continues to be characterized by curiosity and creative energy.



## Contest News

We're pleased to announce the results of two recent contests. Last fall's **Vivian Shipley Award** was judged by Connecticut poet laureate **Antoinette Brim-Bell**. The following poets received awards:

First Place: **Maia Elsner**, "Exhibition Opening"

Second Place: **Ellen Zhang**, "Home / Hospital 汤 (Soup)"

Third Place: **Kelly Houle**, "Landscape With A Blasphemy Of Stars"

Honorable mentions were awarded to **Victoria Buitron** for "Still No Rain" and to **Jodi Balas** for "I've Thought About Calling You."

The just-completed 2024 Nutmeg Award was judged by **Steve Straight**. Winners were:

First Place: **Julia Meylor Simpson**, "Catharina Vermeer Poses for Her Husband"

Second Place: **Patricia Hale**, "Bar Room Pantoum"

Third Place: **Terri Yannetti**, "Darkness and Light"

Three honorable mentions were also awarded:

**Catherine DeNunzio**, "The Couple"; **Adele Evershed**, "Lies and Other Things I Found Behind the Bins"; **Judith Liebmann**, "On the Beach under a Night Sky."

All of the above poems are now posted on the CPS website: <http://www.ctpoetry.net/contests.html>.

The Lynn DeCaro Poetry Competition for Connecticut high school students continues through March 15 and will be judged this year

by **Pegi Dietz Shea**. Student poets may submit at <https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/submit>

Upcoming: The Connecticut Poetry Award will open for submissions on April 1 and will be judged by CPS Honorary Board Member **Vivian Shipley**; the Experimental Poetry Competition will again be held in 2024, to be judged this year by **Claire Donato**.

## Submit to *Connecticut River Review*

*Connecticut River Review*, a national poetry journal, accepts submissions from February 1 through April 15.

Send up to three (3) original, previously unpublished poems on no more than four (4) pages in a single Word or pdf document. (Poems posted on social media or on personal blogs are considered previously published.) Please submit only once during each reading period. Additional submissions during the same submission period will not be read.

**Electronic submissions only:** Please send us your work via our Submittable Page.

To submit with an optional \$5 donation, use this link: <https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/submit/243787/connecticut-river-review-journal-2024-with-5-donation> Thank you!

To submit without making a donation, use this link: <https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/submit/243788/connecticut-river-review-journal-2024-no-donation> We don't want financial considerations to prevent anyone from submitting!





We mourn the passing of **Laura Altshul**, an outstanding poet who contributed so much to CPS over the years. She died in January after a long battle with cancer.

Laura was the co-founder and founding Board Chair of Horizons at the Foote School, a summer learning program for New Haven youths of all backgrounds, focused on developing early literacy, math and STEAM skills. For decades she served as a teacher and administrator at the school. She also served on the board of Music Haven, a tuition-free music program for area youths with a passion for playing and performing classical music. She was a board member of the New Haven Road Race, in which she participated for many years.

*The Shearing*, the most recent of her three published poetry collections, was published in 2021.

She is survived by her husband Victor Altshul, as well as three sons, four step-children, and eleven grandchildren.

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We are also sad to report the passing of another fine poet, **Elizabeth Kincaid-Ehlers**, who died in January at the age of 90.

Her interest in poetry was evident throughout her life. As an undergraduate at the University

of Michigan, she received the Hopwood Award in poetry.

Elizabeth Kincaid-Ehlers taught at several different colleges and universities, and acted as a visiting writer for a number of public schools in Connecticut. She also worked as a psychotherapist and had an office at the Hartford Family Institute.

She read at the inaugural Sunken Garden Poetry Festival at the Hill-Stead Museum and shared her poetry at countless other venues. She was the author of three books of poetry. Elizabeth is survived by four sons as well as numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

### **National Federation of State Poetry Societies**

All CPS members are also members of NFSPS. You can read their newsletter, *Strophes*, find out about poetry contests they offer, and take advantage of other resources by going to <https://www.nfsps.com/>. Their annual offering of over 50 poetry contests, with prizes ranging from \$25-\$1000, has a **March 15 deadline**. We love to see Connecticut poets taking home some of these prizes, and getting well-deserved recognition for their efforts. Check it out!

### **The Arts Café Mystic Celebrates 30 Years**

Outstanding programs continue to be presented by the Arts Café Mystic. On March 15 at 7 pm **Major Jackson** will be featured. **Tina Cane** and **Marie Howe** are the April and May featured poets. Visit <https://theartscafemystic.org/> for more info.

## New Books by Our Members

Impspired Press in London has published **John Stanizzi's** latest poetry book, *SEE*. This is a book of ekphrastic poems, poems inspired by art. Lorette Luzajic, editor of *The Ekphrastic Review*, has this to say about his book:

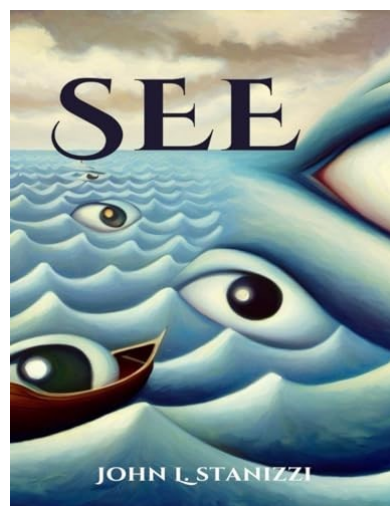
"John L. Stanizzi's poems show us what it means to pay attention. He directs us to the details that surround us, in nature, architecture, art, and world events, to all the ways our stories merge, compound, and unravel...A treasure of a collection."

**Laura Rodley** has a new book coming out from Kelsay Books. It's called *Ribbons and Moths: Poems for Children*. This is one of several books she has authored over the years.

**Debbie Gilbert**, publishing as D. Walsh Gilbert, recently published *Finches in Kilmainham*.



This is a fictional verse-story of Ann Gallagher, also known as Dill, jailed in 1850s Ireland—just one little girl trying to make her



her way in the world even as the evils of famine, nationalism, and anti-Catholicism conspire to test her courage and restrain her from finding her true Irish roots. She is jailed for the crime of stealing a parsnip.

The book is available through Grayson Books or online retailers such as amazon.com.

## Poems from CT's Four Corners

You won't have to leave your favorite armchair in order to enjoy the monthly programs hosted by **Barb Jennes: Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners**. Each program features five poets, four from the "corners" and one from the Hartford area. Register for these online events through the Ridgefield Library

<https://ridgefieldlibrary.librarymarket.com/event/online-poems-cts-four-corners-85728>

On March 6, Jennes will be hosting poets **Luisa Caycedo-Kimura, Brian Cordell, Julie Cook, Daniel Donaghy, and Dolores Hayden.**