

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: Joan Hofmann

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

Although Covid-19 has created obstacles, our chapters continue to work through or around them, so that members can share their poetry.

The Quiet Corner chapter continues to meet on the second Monday of each month. While conforming to all Connecticut Covid-19 protocols, the group will return to in-person meetings beginning in September. They've moved from the Old Town House (which charged for use of the building) to the Pomfret Library (which does not).

The Pomfret Public Library address is 449 Pomfret Street (Route 169), Pomfret, CT. We still meet the second Monday of the month from 7-9 PM.



The Shoreline Chapter conducts Zoom meetings on the second Wednesday each month. New members have joined, and the group is looking forward to welcoming others as the year progresses.

President's Message

Hello September! Be amazing!

Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower. –Albert Camus

Dear Poets,

September marks the beginning of Autumn! We can count on Mother Nature to bring color into our lives as she gifts us with magic and beauty to sustain us through the coming winter months. Yes, it is that time of year when we prepare for change. As we all prepare to embark upon this change of season, CPS is also preparing for transitions ahead.

I am honored to be your new President. I have been entrusted with the leadership of CPS as Tony Fusco, my Co-President, steps away to focus his time and talents on his role as Poet Laureate of West Haven, as well as continuing on as Webmaster for the CPS Webpage. Our partnership as Co-Presidents these past years has been extremely rewarding and successful in so many ways, to the benefit of CPS. As you all know, Tony has devoted his time and his expertise to CPS in many different capacities over many years. I express my sincere gratitude to him for seeing our organization through the lean years, the tough times, so that we are able to be where we are now – the longest running poetry organization in Connecticut, recognized for excellence in all respects, and over 200 members strong!

I would also like to thank the CPS Executive Board for their professionalism, and for their dedication to CPS. They spend countless hours behind the scenes to keep CPS running like clockwork.

In closing, please know that I welcome any and all correspondence, and I look forward to giving you my very best.

Sincerely,

Pat Mottola, President

connpoetry@comcast.net



CPS Members Have New Publications

Our members continue to publish actively.

Donna Marie Merritt's latest book is *Bible Poems for Reflection and Response*. It includes over 200 poems based on Bible passages. The poems range from traditional rhyme to haiku to free verse. Applicable Bible verses are listed with each poem, and both the Old and New Testaments are represented.

Cortney Davis has published *I Hear Their Voices Singing: Poems New & Selected*. Davis' vocation as a nurse has inspired much of her poetry, which is fearless, clear, and compassionate.

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

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

Greater Hartford

Julia Paul
Julia.Paul@cox.net

Haiku Chapter * New Chapter *

Marita Gargiulo
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.

Manchester

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

Middletown

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

New Haven

Vic and Laura Altshul
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

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 * 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

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

Wilton

Ray Rauth
Rayrauth@optonline.net

Poet in the Spotlight: Garrett Phelan

CPS member Garrett Phelan has worked as a chicken farmer, fruit picker, batik artist, Peace Corps volunteer, and teacher. He's lived in Ireland, El Salvador, Guatemala, and England, and the Washington DC area, where he taught high school students for thirty-five years. Phelan has taught creative writing under the auspices of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Washington National Opera, and other organizations. He has edited a mindfulness meditation newsletter, *Along the Path* for the Mindfulness Practice Center of Fairfax, Virginia. Currently he lives in Bloomfield with his wife Jane.

When Phelan returned to Connecticut five years ago, after living in the DC metropolitan area for many years, he looked for poetry connections. He found the Wintonbury Poetry Series, led by Tom Nicotera and Marilyn Johnston (and now Sherri Bedingfield) to be very welcoming and generous. He also joined the Middletown chapter of CPS, where he met many poets who have become his friends.

Poetry has been important to Garrett Phelan since he was a student studying Hamlet. When he had to memorize a soliloquy, "O that this too too sullied flesh would melt..." he felt the expression of his own adolescent angst and confusion. He wondered how mere words could accomplish so much.

Now he writes every day. He uses a journal to collect impressions, ideas, and lines of poetry. "I doodle, draw and sketch, paste in articles, poems, art. Write down observation and snippets of conversations when out and about...and then I start playing with images and words and details and see what comes up. After I finish a journal, I

type up all those drafts (30-40 poems) and start editing to see if I have any gems that might become finished poems."



He prefers poems that include "vivid, fresh and authentic images that surprise and touch me in deep emotional ways. Poetry for me is compression and the energy created by that compression." He mentions Russian poets such as Akhmatova, Samuel Beckett's plays, and the poetry of Antonio Machado, Lorca, and others as among his favorites. He's recently been reading work by Natalie Diaz, Wanda Coleman, and Terrence Hayes. He likes to listen to Tracy K. Smith's podcast, *The Slowdown* each morning.

Phelan is the author of *Outlaw Odes*, published by Antrim House, and two micro-chapbooks: *Standing Where I Am* and *Unfixed Marks* (Origami Poem Project). He teaches a poetry workshop in West Hartford, now offered via Zoom. Before the pandemic, he also taught poetry and meditation classes at a maximum-security prison. The Riverwood Poetry Series offered an opportunity to read the prisoners' work to a larger audience. He says "The inmates were incredibly pleased and grateful. It was a powerful evening of voices not often heard."

Prize Results, National Federation of State Poetry Societies

Several CPS members participating in the contests sponsored annually by NFSPS earned awards and recognition. Congratulations go to the following poets:

Pegi Dietz Shea, who won first prize in the Morton D. Prouty & Elsie S. Prouty Memorial Award.

Tony Fusco, who won second prize in the Jessica Saunders Memorial Award contest and honorable mention in the League of Minnesota Poets Award contest.

Elaine Zimmerman, who won honorable mentions in three different contests, including the prestigious Founders Award contest.

Laura Altshul, Sheila Murphy and Roger Singer who each earned an honorable mention.

To find out more about these poetry contests and awards, go to http://www.nfsps.com/poetry_contests.htm.



2020 Connecticut Poetry Award

What do two Connecticut poets laureate, the sculptor of the new Women's Rights Pioneers Monument in New York City's Central Park, and the poet-in-residence of Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum have in common? Their poems were recognized by contest judge Jonas Zdanys as deserving of winner or honorable mention status in the 2020 Connecticut Poetry Award Contest. Check out their poems on the CPS website.

Winners

1st Place: **James Miller** (Baytown TX) "Packing the Spices"

2nd Place: **Meredith Bergmann** (Ridgefield CT) "The Trickster"

3rd Place: **Charles Chase** (Oakdale CT) "CORONAVIRUSTIC"

Honorable Mention

Patricia O'Brien (Poet Laureate of Old Saybrook CT) "And Almost Home"

James Zimmerman (Pleasantville NY) "Sunday 9 a.m., Waiting for Sara"

B. Fulton Jennes (Poet Laureate of Ridgefield) "Darker Self"

Calls for Poems Related to Environmental Concerns

Two fantastic venues are looking for your poems related to the environment. Each will review up to three of your poems.

2020 CPS Connecticut River Review Contest

The Connecticut Poetry Society (CPS) devotes 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 are August 1 to September 30 via connecticutriverreview.submittable.com. 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 CPS website: ctpoeetry.net.

Call for Submittal of Poems for a Green Poetry Anthology

All poets who live in Connecticut are invited to send poems to be considered for inclusion in an anthology funded by an Academy of American Poets Grant to the State Poet Laureate, Margaret Gibson. The anthology will be published by Grayson Books in West Hartford and will be released in time for Earth Day, 2021.

The anthology will be comprised of poems that take as their focus the living world that surrounds us in this time of climate crisis. *We are looking for poems that explore what you experience and respond to in the natural world around you, remembering that the natural world is*

impacted by human choices and actions.

Wherever we live— city, town, village, country, woods, seaside, mountain—is affected by our social and political and spiritual choices. Pesticide run-off spoils rivers; industrial waste creates brown fields; incinerators get put in poor neighborhoods; as species go extinct, our lives also become endangered.

In a time of crisis, it is crucial to write “love poems to the earth”— poems that praise and respect what it is to live on this earth and that pay attention to specific living beings. It is equally crucial to write poems that warn of the dangers as temperatures rise, oceans rise, weather pattern alter, and cities begin to sink. Making connections between racial and social injustice and environmental injustice, between ecosystems and social systems, between human and other living beings—all this is “Nature” poetry.

Submissions conclude on October 10.

SEND NO MORE THAN 3 POEMS OF ANY LENGTH, on a single document. You may send previously published poems IF you hold the rights to republish. Electronic submissions only. Here’s the link for submission:

<https://graysonbooks.submittable.com/submit/169406/anthology-of-poems-on-the-environment>

Your poems will be read by several readers. The final judge for the anthology will be Margaret Gibson. Advisors for the anthology include Marilyn Nelson, Bessy Reyna, David Leff.

In Memoriam: Leslie McGrath



With great sadness, we note the passing of an esteemed Connecticut poet, Leslie McGrath, who died of cancer on August 6th. She was the author of the full-length poetry collections *Feminists Are Passing from Our Lives*; *Out from the Pleiades: a picaresque novella in verse*; and *Opulent Hunger, Opulent Rage*. She also published two chapbooks. Among her awards was the Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry. Leslie McGrath taught creative writing at Central Connecticut State University. She served on the Poetry Advisory Committee of the Sunken Garden Poetry Series at the Hill-Stead Museum, and was very active in the Connecticut poetry scene until the end of her life.

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. Click here for more information about NFSPS. <http://www.nfsps.com/>

Grant Winners Announced

Congratulations to the poets who received fellowships or awards through the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development. The **Artist Fellowship Program** provides recognition and funding support for Connecticut artists to pursue new work and advance their artistic careers. The awards are highly competitive. The program recognizes three grant designations with award recognition determined during the review process: Artistic Excellence grants, Artist Fellowship grants, and Emerging Recognition grants.

Frederick-Douglass Knowles II was awarded an Artistic Excellence Award. Artist Fellowship Awards went to **Jonathan Anderson**, **Vivian Shipley**, and **Joan Sidney**.

Connecticut River Review 2020

All CPS members should have received their copies of *Connecticut River Review*, which was published in August. Additional copies are available through the CPS website or through online sites such as amazon.com. Over 600 poets from around the country and from other countries submitted work; it was difficult to select the pieces that ultimately became part of the journal. Please share your copy with others, encourage your library to purchase a copy, and consider submitting to the journal next February, when we open to new submissions.

Poets on Poetry Programs Continue

The well-received programs known as POPs, or Poets on Poetry, continue via Zoom. This allows many people to participate without having to travel. The September and October events are as follows:

Thursday, September 24, 7 pm: Keeping a Beat with **Jack Kerouac**, presented by Dr. **Roger Singer**.

Jack Kerouac took his place as a well-known and prolific writer of the “Beat Generation.” His spontaneous prose and less well-known poetry became a quintessential statement of the “Beats”. This session will discuss his writing, friendships, and storied life.

<https://zoom.us/join/> Meeting ID: 988 9467 488 Passcode: 099460

Saturday, October 17, 10 am: **Naomi Shihab Nye**, presented by **Ginny Connors**. Naomi Shihab Nye is one of the most engaging American poets writing today. Her father was a Palestinian refugee and her mother was an American of European descent. The overlap of cultures she experienced growing up influences her poetry. <https://zoom.us/join/> Meeting ID: 989 0159 5751 Passcode: 249895

In November, Dr. **Andrea Celli** will moderate a discussion on **Dante**, in celebration of the 700th anniversary of *The Divine Comedy*. Date and time to be announced soon.

MODPO: A Great Resource

If you’re serious about poetry, you may want to learn more about contemporary American

poetry and poets. A great way to do this is through the free, high-level online course, MODPO, hosted by the Kelly Writers House at University of Pennsylvania. The current offering begins on September 5th. If you are a few days late registering, you can still participate.

Here is their description: *ModPo is a fast-paced introduction to modern and contemporary U.S. poetry, with an emphasis on experimental verse, from Emily Dickinson and Walt Whitman to the present. Participants (who need no prior experience with poetry) will learn how to read poems that are supposedly “difficult.” We encounter and discuss the poems one at a time. It’s much easier than it seems! Join us and try it! Click [HERE](#) to enroll. It’s free, non-credit, and open to all.*

If you have questions, you can email the Mod-Po team at modpo@writing.upenn.edu. During the 10 weeks of the course, you will be guided through poems, video discussions of each poem, and community discussions of each poem. And (unique among open online courses) we offer weekly, interactive live webcasts. Our famed TAs also offer office hours throughout the week.

Here is a link to find out more and/or register: <http://modpo.org/2018/09/04/modpo-2018-enroll-here-now/>

In-person workshops and programs are great, but there are many other options out there for those who want to learn more about poetry or hone their craft. MODPO is just one offering. Mark Sheridan is happy to share suggestions about some of these. Contact him at mark.a.sheridan@gmail.com.