

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



CPS at Connecticut Literary Festival

Connecticut Poetry Society authors were well-represented at CTLit Festival, with several tables of books by our authors on display and selling to poetry-lovers from all over the state. This was also an opportunity for people to learn more about our organization, and there was lots of interest shown. Book sellers, literary magazines, college programs and others were represented at the Festival, which also featured readings by some of our local poets laureate and other Connecticut authors.



President's Message

Hello dear CPS Members,

With another New Year ahead brimming with possibilities, what better time to recognize and to be grateful to those who have enriched our lives. I appreciate your membership in CPS and I thank you for your continued support. You are the reason we are the longest-running poetry organization in Connecticut. I would especially like to say thank you for the very generous donations we have received in support of CPS and our programs. And, as always, thank you to our amazing Board of Directors who give their valuable time and expertise to keeping our organization running so smoothly.

I wish you the happiest holidays and many, many blessings this coming year. I look forward to seeing you all soon!

"...be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here. And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore, be at peace with God, whatever you conceive Him to be. And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world." –Max Ehrmann, Desiderata, c.1937

Pat Mottola, President
Connecticut Poetry Society

CPS Chapter News

There are several changes of note in our CPS chapters.

Victoria Dubiel is the new president of Manchester's Wit & Wisdom Poetry Club. This chapter meets on the second Saturday of each month at the Manchester Historical Society, located on 175 Pine Street.

For the time being, **Tony Fusco** will lead the Saturday workshops for the New Haven Chapter, which generally meets on the third Saturday of the month between 10 and 12, via Zoom.

Ed Ahern is the new coordinator of the Wilton Poetry Group. This group meets in person at the Wilton library, and the next meeting is on Saturday, December 16, from 2-4 pm. Participants can email a poem to Ed ahead of time to be attached with others for review, or simply bring copies to the meeting.

The Farmington Valley chapter now meets in person at One Huntington Glen Road in Avon, which is the clubhouse for the Hunter's Run condos. The group meets on the first Monday of each month from 7-9 pm, and there is a backup via Zoom for those who may be unable to meet in person. Email **Debbie Gilbert** to submit your poem and receive the Zoom link. The meeting is capped at ten participants so that adequate time can be spent discussing each poem.

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

Michael Garry
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

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, with Zoom backup. 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
juliapaul3b@gmail.com

This chapter meets at the home of Mike Lepore, 2205 Main Street in Glastonbury, on the second Sunday of each month, from 12:30-2:30. Bring copies of your poem.

Haiku Chapter

Marita Gargiulo
margararts1000@gmail.com

This online chapter will resume in the new year. 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

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

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

New Haven

Tony Fusco
tfusco357@gmail.com

The New Haven chapter meets on the third Saturday of each month from 10-12. Presently they meet via Zoom.

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

Sandy Carlson
oreanaugchaptercps@gmail.com

The Oreanaug chapter will meet 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

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.

Contest News

Congratulations to the winner and finalists of this past summer's **Experimental Poetry Contest**, judged by **Richard Deming**. The winner is **JoAnne McFarland** for her poem "American Graphic." See this interactive poem on the CPS website, <http://www.ctpoetry.net/experimental-poetry.html>

Three finalists were also recognized for their excellent poems:

Claudia Creed for "to be winged"

Emily Van Kley, "For the Director of Music"

M.P. Carver for "In Vitro"

The 2024 **Nutmeg Contest** is underway now through January and will be judged by **Steve Straight**. All Connecticut poets are welcome to submit; CPS members may do so free of charge. Submit at: <https://connecticutriverreview.submittable.com/submit>.

Watch for the results of the 2023 Vivian Shipley Award, forthcoming on the CPS website.

Perennial Earth: Poetry by Wallace Stevens and Paintings by Alexis Serio

On December 12 at 7 pm, join a Zoom event hosted by Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens, pairing poems by celebrated Connecticut poet Wallace Stevens with paintings by **Alexis Serio**. This book, edited by **John N. Serio**, was selected for a 2023 PEN/Oakland Josephine Miles Award for Excellence. Register in advance to get the Zoom link. <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcqce-grD4jHdSCpnN4VTUDL-ASl4fAiiMm>



Remembering Stanley Kavan Sr.

Stanley Kavan, one of the founding members of CPS, died in October at the age of 100. He won several poetry awards and judged national poetry competitions for Milford's Fine Arts Council for many years. As well as being a community activist, Stanley had a notable career as an executive at Columbia Records. He was instrumental in the careers of a number of leading recording artists. He was also involved with recording books for Connecticut's program for the blind and physically handicapped. He will be missed.

POP: Poets on Poetry

CPS is presenting a two-part POP program this winter inspired by world events. Part I, to be held on December 21 at 7 pm, features **Susan Muaddi Darraj** and will focus on contemporary Palestinian poetry. Register to receive the Zoom link at

<https://bit.ly/3QSgGc6>

Part II, with **Rachel Neve-Midbar**, will focus on contemporary Israeli poetry. It will take place on January 21 at 1 pm. Register to receive the Zoom link at

<https://bit.ly/3QSgGc6>.

Note that these dates have changed. The programs are being presented in order to provide those who attend with a sampling of contemporary poetry from both countries—you are encouraged to attend **both** sessions!

Poet in the Spotlight: Ellen Hirning Schmidt

For decades **Ellen Hirning Schmidt** wrote poems but did not pursue publication. When she turned 70, however, something shifted, and the desire to share her work outweighed her feelings of vulnerability and fear of rejection. An acquaintance read a few of her poems on display at an art show and encouraged her to find a publisher. Now, a few years later, Schmidt's poetry is widely published. She has won an award in a CPS contest, and been named a finalist in *American Writers Review*. She's also received the Helen Kay Chapbook Prize, a Pushcart nomination, and published her first full-length poetry collection, *Armed to the Teeth*, through Antrim House Books. The poems in her book reflect the tug between despair and hope experienced frequently by the poet, and by so many of us. Sample poems from this book can be found at <https://antrimhousebooks.com/schmidt.html>.

Her goal in writing is to connect with others. Schmidt says, "I think a poem can be the shortest distance between two people." She also feels that through the specific details of a poem, the universal can be found.

Schmidt's connection with CPS "has been nothing short of wonderful!" In her experience, highlights include "the President's workshops. I learn much from the work of fellow poets and their valuable, specific, and kind comments. **Pat Mottola** and **Vivian Shipley** set the tone, provide their insights, and guide us brilliantly. I also love the POPs—so many poets and cultures I knew

nothing, or almost nothing, about."

Schmidt runs a class, "Writing Through the Rough Spots," which helps participants use writing to create clarity about challenging situations. The classes met in person until the pandemic hit; since then, they have been online. Students range in age from teens to seniors, and have come from all over the United States, as well as from 15 other countries. During the summer, she leads week-long writing workshops at Star Island, New Hampshire.

Schmidt loves to read. A couple of poetry books that have captured her interest recently are *Healing the Divide: Poems of Kindness & Connection*, edited by James Crews with a preface by Ted Kooser, and *43 Poems for People Who Don't Read Poetry*, from the editors of *Abandoned Mine*.

She lives with her husband on two acres that they've turned into a nature preserve. "To some it might seem like neglect, but it has been purposeful in attracting birds, insects, a huge variety of plants. I have become increasingly interested in plants, which represent 85% of all living beings on the earth! Like many poets, my observations about nature lead to insights, and of course metaphors."



New Books by CPS Members

Each poem in *Pickle Verse: Half-Sour Humor*, **Ed Ahern's** new book of verse, offers a fresh perspective on everyday experiences, from the quirks of human behavior to the mysteries of existence. The poems invite readers to both chuckle and reflect.



Sandy Carlson, Poet Laureate of Woodbury, had published *Breath Work*, her ninth collection of poems. The sonnets in the book emerge from the inner peace and courage that come with honestly facing life on its terms. Describing the work, Carlson says, “This is an edgier work than my previous few collections. These poems won’t shrug off the madness of our world any more than they will succumb to it. This is to say, these poems take a position on the madness, and they push back.”

Proceeds from the sale of *Breath Work* will benefit the pensioners in Kosiv, Ukraine, who are struggling to survive during Russia's full-scale invasion of its peaceful neighbor.

Highlights from recent books by **Debbie Gilbert** and **Pegi Deitz Shea** will be shared at the Hoppin Gallery in the Barney Library, 71 Main Street in Farmington on February 10th at 1 pm. Debbie's book is called *Deirdre* and Pegi's is titled *The Weight of Kindling*.

Deirdre takes place on Ireland's Blasket Islands, which have been unpopulated since the 1950's.

Joyce Sidman has called Pegi's book “A book that sings, celebrates, and mourns. Shea gathers passion and grit from a life well-lived, and offers us a fierce love of the journey.”

Riverwood Poetry Series

Luisa Caycedo-Kimura and **Nadia Sims** will be the featured readers for the Riverwood Poetry Series on December 13th at 7 pm. The event will take place at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor Street in Hartford. An Open mic opportunity precedes the featured readers.

Luisa is a Colombian-born writer, translator, educator, and former attorney. She has won numerous awards for her poetry. Nadia is the author of the book *A Soft Place to Land*. Poetry has helped her get through difficult times, and she hopes that others will see their challenges reflected in her work, and feel more comfortable talking about their feelings.

Poetry Craft Books to Love!

Thank you all who continue to share your favorite poetry craft books—those books you turn to over and over again, the ones that have contributed most to growth and depth in your own writing! Here are some new titles we've added since the last newsletter!

- *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott
- *Becoming a Writer* by Dorothea Brande
- *If You Want to Write* by Brenda Ueland
- *Art and Fear* by David Bayles and Ted Orland
- *Writing from the Body* by John Lee
- *The Witness of Poetry* by Czeslaw Milosz
- *The Gift* by Lewis Hyde
- *Poetry: A Writer's Guide and Anthology* by Amarak Huey and W. Todd Kaneko
- *Handbook of Poetic Forms* by Ron Padgett
- *Urban Tumbleweed: Notes from a Tanka Diary* by Harryett Mullen
- *The Practice of Poetry: Writing Exercises from Poets Who Teach* by Robin Behn, ed.
- *A Little Book on Form: An Exploration into the Formal Imagination of Poetry* by Robert Hass
- *Ravishing Disunities: Real Ghazals in English* by Agha Shahid Ali, ed.

Wintonbury Poetry Series

In the latest offering from the Wintonbury Poetry Series, **Sitara Gnanaguru** will host Connecticut poets **Catherine Carle** and **Debbie Gilbert** on December 21 at 7 pm. Catherine Carle has published three volumes of poetry and Debbie Gilbert, writing as D. Walsh Gilbert, has published five poetry collections. The reading will be followed by an open mic.

This is a virtual program. Register here to receive a Zoom link for the program.

<https://bplct.evanced.info/signup/EventDetails?Even-tId=12012&backTo=Calendar&startDate=2023/12/01>

Poet Laureate to Appear at New Britain Museum of American Art

On December 10th at 2 pm, the public is invited to join Connecticut's 8th State Poet Laureate, **Antoinette Brim-Bell**, for a poetry reading within the gallery of the special exhibition "Women Reframe American Landscape." The museum is located at 56 Lexington Avenue in New Britain.

Antoinette is the author of three full-length poetry collections: *These Women You Gave Me*, *Icarus in Love*, and *Psalm of the Sunflower*. A printmaker and collage artist, Antoinette Brim-Bell has exhibited both poetry and monoprints in *Jazz: An exhibition of Poetry, Prints, and Photography* at the Sumner McKnight Crosby Jr. Gallery in New Haven, and *Sheroes*, in partnership with the Alliance of Women Veterans at the Grove in New Haven.