

# Connecticut Poetry Society

March 2025



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

**Contact us at [ctpoetryline@gmail.com](mailto:ctpoetryline@gmail.com)**

**While you're online, *Friend us on Face-book.***

## **CPS Honorary Board**

Antoinette Brim-Bell, Connecticut Poet Laureate  
Margaret Gibson, Connecticut Poet Laureate, 2019-2022  
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  
Youth Coordinator: Amy Graver  
Treasurer: Patti Fusco  
Membership: Patti Fusco  
Contests: open position  
Webmasters: Patti Fusco & Tony Fusco  
CRR Editors: Ginny Connors, Debbie Gilbert, John Surowiecki & Pat Hale  
Newsletter: Ginny Connors  
POP Director: Jim Finnegan  
Publicity Director: Shawn Von Briesen

CPS, an affiliate of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS), is dedicated to the promotion and enjoyment of poetry.

## **Are You Up for a Challenge?**

We're counting on you to participate in the "CPS Museum Challenge." (It's patterned after the Getty Museum Challenge, but with a twist!) Below is a link to the Getty Museum Challenge, where you are challenged to recreate a famous artist's masterpiece. You can be personally in the recreation, or you can fabricate the recreation using ordinary household items you have at home. (see examples below) We presented this idea at our Fall Festival. This will be great fun! See for yourself!  
<https://www.getty.edu/news/getty-artworks-recreated-with-household-items-by-creative-geniuses-the-world-over/>

Let's really have fun with this! Create your "re-creation" and photograph it. Bring the photo, as well as a photo printout of the original artist's masterpiece, to the Spring Fling, where CPS members will vote for our favorite re-creation. Yes, there will be prizes! And, in addition, we will each have a chance to write an ekphrastic poem based on one of the entries. ***Start planning now! You can do it!***

## President's Message

Dear CPS Members,

Spring is just around the corner! (Think positive!) And **April is Poetry Month!** So many poetry events to choose from. Be sure to subscribe to Jim Finnegan's list [jforjames@aol.com](mailto:jforjames@aol.com) so you won't miss anything! CPS will also be emailing you regarding special CPS programs and events.

**Dues are renewable in April.** Please read more details on this elsewhere in this newsletter.

The CPS **Connecticut Poetry Award** Contest opens on **April 1.** (no fooling!) Open to all poets. <https://ctpoetry.net/contests.html>

April 29 is "**Poem in Your Pocket Day!**" So many ways to bring poetry to the forefront and enlighten your community!

Our next POP is on March 27. Don't miss this one!

### Poets on Poetry (PoP) Series

***"There's No Such Thing as Free Verse:  
Prosody in Ultra Talk Poetry  
or What Makes a Poem a Poem?"***

A talk and discussion led by  
**Bruce Cohen**

Thurs. March 27, 7pm via Zoom

Our ever-popular annual **Spring Fling** is scheduled for May 3 at the Riverfront Community Center in Glastonbury. This in-person event is an opportunity to meet other

CPS members and have fun! More details to follow.

Dear members, I am thankful for the kindness I see in our organization. We are very supportive of each other, and our love of poetry extends to our love and respect for each other. Your expressions of thanks and appreciation mean so much to me and to our Board of Directors who give so much of themselves to keep our poetry community alive and thriving. In these trying, uncertain times, I turn to friends like you, the wisdom of poetry, and the belief in goodness and kind hearts. "*In the long run, the sharpest weapon of all is a kind and gentle spirit.*" —Anne Frank

Pat Mottola, President  
Connecticut Poetry Society

### Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners

Feeling like you're living in some post-apocalyptic purgatory? What you need is *POETRY!* And March is going to deliver just the medicine you need!

Online: Wednesday, March 5 at 7 pm, join us for the next edition of *Poems from Connecticut's Four Corners* as we host **Melissa Buckheit, Donna Disch, Joan Kunsch, Michael "Chief" Peterson, and John Popielski.** With thanks, as always, to our Zoom host Ridgefield Library.

Please register using this link to receive the Zoom invite: <https://bit.ly/42PnrD5>

## Poet in the Spotlight: Kelly de la Rocha

Kelly de la Rocha has worked as a journalist and a technical writer, and she's also applied her writing skills in public relations work. But poetry is closest to her heart.

She wrote her first poem, "Anger for an Unbalanced Oven Rack" when she was a teenager. She says, "That poem memorialized the moment I realized my father was really gone. It details a small change in routine – placing five sweet potatoes in the oven instead of the typical six – and reveals a girl grieving an unceremonious end to childhood. Poetry writing comforted me when nothing else could. That's been true ever since."

During the COVID lockdown, when everything felt scary, she wrote poetry to gain stability. She participated in several virtual poetry groups, including a weekly one run by CPS member **Garrett Phelan**. At one point she looked back at the oven rack poem she had written in her youth, and wondered if she could rearrange the words to portray her adult perspective. She printed the words of the poem on magnetic paper and spent time rearranging them on her refrigerator, eventually bringing a new version of the poem to a critique group. And that sparked an idea that has led to a new endeavor: Poem RENOVATION.

She explains, "Here's how it works: Every day, [poemrenovation.com](http://poemrenovation.com) presents visitors with a scrambled snippet of literature. Selections are culled from works ranging from Sylvia Plath's *Mushrooms* to Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* to pieces by up-and-coming wordsmiths, including several CPS members. Users select words that resonate with them, then move them around on a digital canvas to

create something new. There are no rules. The sole objective is to create. Site visitors can share and save their creations, reveal each day's passage in its original form, and learn more about it.



Kelly de la Rocha

Teachers have observed that the program enhances creativity and interpersonal skills in middle and high school students. Poem RENOVATION has been used by more than 1000 students. In May of 2024 poem RENOVATION was a winner at the Yale Innovation Summit. The concept also won prizes last year at the HAYVN HATCH New Haven pitch night and at Hartford-based reSET's Venture Showcase. Poem RENOVATION has been used in continuing care homes in Ohio. Kelly de la Rocha will take part in a two-week-long United Church Homes Entrepreneur in Residence program in Marietta, Ohio in April.

To learn more about this program, contact Kelly at [kdelarocha@poemrenovation.com](mailto:kdelarocha@poemrenovation.com).

### **CPS Chapters & Presidents**

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. Bring ten copies of your poem to share for critique.

#### **Greater Hartford**

Pegi Deitz Shea

pegideitzshea@aol.com

This chapter 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.

#### **Haiku Chapter**

Tony Fusco

tfusco357@gmail.com

Members of the group share haiku in response to a prompt. The chair collects the poems in advance. Poems are due by noon on the 15th of the month. Send poems to Tony Fusco with "CPS Haiku for (month & year)" in the subject line. Type your haiku (one only) directly onto the email and include your name.

The deadline for March Haiku is March 15th at noon, and the suggested theme is "fury." CPS members only, please.

#### **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

ctpoetryline@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.

#### **Oreana Chapter: Woodbury, Watertown, Southbury, Roxbury, Bethlehem**

Sandy Carlson

oreanaugchaptercps@gmail.com

The Oreanaug chapter meets in person on the second Saturday of each month at 9:15 am at St. Paul's Church in Woodbury. 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.

## Oreanaug Publishing Opportunities

The [Oreanaug Mountain Poetry Journal](#) has a rolling deadline, and all are welcome to submit. On the [Oreanaug Mountain Publishing](#) site, poets will see that two anthologies are coming up. One is [Lost Love](#) . Another is an as-yet untitled baseball anthology. A monthly [Zoom poetry roundtable](#) is also offered.

## Riverwood Poetry Series

Riverwood Poetry Series @ Real Art Ways will host **Julie Choffel** and **Richard Michelson** on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, 7 pm, at Real Art Ways, 56 Arbor Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

There will be an open mic this month for the first ten who sign up that evening. Please bring one poem, one page, to read.

The authors' books will be available to buy for book signing & conversation, and beer, wine, soft drinks, and snacks will be available for purchase.

## WordHouse Reading Series

**brett a. maddux** and **Ginny Lowe Connors** are to be the featured readers on Saturday, March 8, at 2 pm at the Noah Webster House, 227 South Main Street in West Hartford. The program will begin with an open mic, so bring a poem to share.

**brett a. maddux** lives in Hartford. His recent collection of poetry and photography, [american variation](#), was released at the end of 2024 by which/is/why press.

**Ginny Lowe Connors** is the author of six poetry collections, including *White Sail at Midnight (The Poetry Box, 2024)*.

## Coffee House Portraits

**Garrett Phelan** and **Debbie Gilbert** will celebrate the opening of Garrett's art exhibit, *Coffee House Portraits*, at the Hoppin Gallery of Barney Library, 71 Main Street, Farmington on Saturday, March 15, at 12:30. An open mic and their poetry will be part of the program. All are welcome. Ample parking in the lot off Church Street.

## Poets at Large

On March 29, at 7 pm, the spoken word series sponsored by Poets at Large will present **Carol Hobbs** and **Miriam O'Neal**. This program will take place at the Vanilla Bean Café, 450 Deerfield Road in Pomfret. There is an admission charge which includes entry to a raffle.

Carol Hobbs' recent book, *New-found-land*, garnered a New England Pen Discovery award. Miriam O'Neal is the author of several poetry collections and serves as the current poet laureate of Plymouth, Massachusetts.

## Got a Minute?

CPS is looking for volunteers to assist us now and then as "members at large." We are looking for people willing to join us as we plan in-person events, or to perhaps pick up a few supplies, make signs, or to help with set up or organization before the event begins. Please email Pat Mottola with any questions or suggestions. Thank you!



## In Memoriam

With sadness we note the recent passing of CPS members.

Poetry was an integral part of life for **Claire Steiger**, who died on February 3. Always intellectually curious and adventurous, she lived life to the fullest and was especially proud of her four children and five grandchildren. She will be missed.

**Lynn Johnson** was part of the group that started the open mic at the Quaker Meeting House. She spent much of her life promoting environmental healing, nuclear disarmament, and working locally and internationally to make a better world. She made a difference in the lives of many.

**Edward Charles Harris**, husband of honorary board member Vivian Shipley, passed away on January 15. For many years he helped host summer CPS gatherings at the lovely seaside home he and Vivian shared. A very successful businessman, he went on to earn advanced degrees from Columbia and Harvard Universities and later had an exemplary career in academia at Southern Connecticut State University. He is survived by his wife, five children and nine grandchildren.

## Poetry in the Woods

*"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood..."* – Robert Frost

In celebration of National Poetry Month, the Bethany Land Trust is unveiling a new kind of adventure: *Poetry in the Woods*. You've probably heard of wine trails, and maybe even chocolate trails, but a poetry trail? The Bethany Land Trust's *Poetry in the Woods* poetry trail will be the first of its kind in the state of Connecticut!

Join us as we introduce the initial section of the trail at Mendell's Folly during a guided hike on Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup> from 1-3 pm, the first hike of the 2025 monthly hikes series. Find us at 390 Beacon Road in Bethany. During this approximately one-mile hike we will stop along the way at three or more locations to hear readings by members of the Connecticut Poetry Society. Permanent plaques will be installed on wooden posts at these locations, allowing hikers to enjoy these poems at any time; hikers will be able to scan the plaque's QR code with a phone's camera to hear an audio recording of the poem, read by the author!

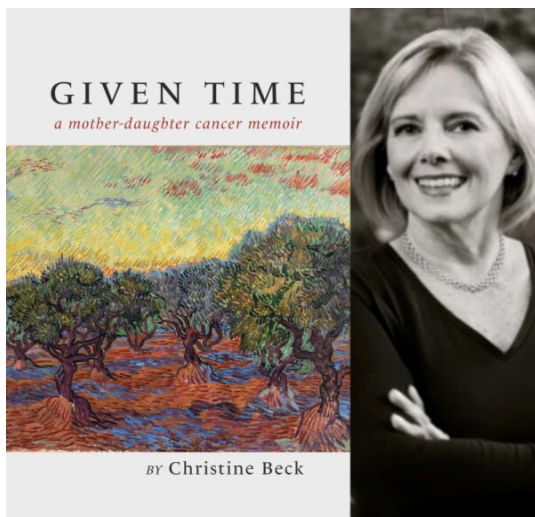
In time, as the initiative continues, more of these *Poetry in the Woods* treasures will be found throughout the Land Trust's many preserves

## CPS Members Publish!

**Jen Payne** will share selections from her book *Sleeping with Ghosts: Poems and Musings* on March 8 and on April 27. Known for her meditations about our outside world, Jen takes readers inside this time, into the heart and mind of a poet.

Join her on March 8, 1 pm, at Blackstone Memorial Library, 758 Main Street in Branford for a fireside chat and poetry reading honoring International Women's Day. She will also be appearing at Breakwater Books, 81 Whitfield Street, Guilford on April 27, at 1 pm.

**Christine Beck's** latest publishing effort is *Given Time: a mother-daughter cancer memoir*.



*Given Time* is a memoir in poetry about the breast cancer of Beck's mother and her own recent diagnosis. These poems juxtapose loss and hope, then and now, and two women—mother and daughter—as they twine their lives together, much like the trunks of the olive trees

painted by Van Gogh. The book is available for pre-order through Finishing Line Press.

*Catch & Release* is the debut poetry collection by **Lauren Crawford**; it is soon to be available for pre-order. Susan Kinsolving has said of Crawford's work: "Her originality is unquestionable. Her poems are infused with untethered energy and art. Few young poets are so gifted and sagacious."

Lauren recently received the Dog Daze Summer Contest Award from *Blue Earth* for her poem "'Self-Portrait as a Cleaning Shrimp."

## Instances of Seeing

Poets who contributed to the ekphrastic collection *Instances of Seeing, Volume 2*, will read from the book on March 15 at 6:30 p.m., at Flanders Nature Center, 5 Church Hill Road, Woodbury. The poems were inspired by the art in the Flanders Art and Photography Show in October 2024. All are welcome.

## Personal Freedom

On March 16 at 4 pm., poets **Michael Garry** of Danbury, **Rick Magee** (Bethel Poet Laureate), **Martin Giroux** of Bethlehem, and **Sandy Carlson** (Woodbury Poet Laureate Emerita) will read from the anthology *Personal Freedom*. This program will take place at Byrd's Books 178 Greenwood Avenue, Bethel. Books will be available for purchase. Seating is limited, so please [register](#).

## Poetry Workshop

On Sunday, March 23, at 12:30 p.m. at the C.H. Booth library in Newtown, 25 Main Street, Woodbury's poet laureate emerita Sandy Carlson will lead a poetry workshop celebrating the work of Newtown and Connecticut poets. Participants will read, play, and write. Call the library (203-426-4533) to reserve a place.

## APRIL: Poetry Month, Dues Month!

Thank you, CPS members! We appreciate your loyalty and your generosity, allowing us to offer so many free poetry events and programs, which would not be possible without your support. Please pay your dues by April 1st. Emails have been sent out to those who owe dues. Dues are \$30 per year for adults and \$15 for students. Dues can be paid via PayPal (see <https://ctpoetry.net/membership.html>), or by mailing a check or money order to our Membership Chair, Patti Fusco, 311 Shingle Hill Rd, West Haven, CT 06516.

Please make sure we have your most current mailing address and contact information. We need to update our records to send your free copy of the *Connecticut River Review* this summer. Another perk: membership in CPS automatically gives you membership in the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, and they need your information in case you enter any of the hundreds of contests they offer.

CPS is pleased to say that we have, over these many years, **not** raised our dues, and we **do not** intend to raise our dues. During these trying economic times, we realize some members may have difficulty paying their dues.

In the spirit of kindness, some generous sponsors have come forward and donated money to help cover those individuals; so just let Patti know if you need help. We don't want anyone to be left out of their membership due to financial hardship. We keep that information totally confidential so please don't be afraid to let us know. As well, if anyone has a few extra dollars and would like to contribute to this "scholarship" fund, your donation will be greatly appreciated.

## Wintonbury Poetry Series

Tune into poetry by **Melissa Dione McEwen** and **Jim Kelleher** on March 20 at 7 pm. This program is sponsored by the Wintonbury Poetry Series and is available via Zoom. Here is the link to register: <https://bplct.librarycalendar.com/event/wintonbury-poetry-series-2270>

## Connecticut River Review

Your favorite annual poetry journal, *Connecticut River Review*, is now accepting submissions. We receive submissions from all over the country, and from other countries too, so it's competitive, but every issue so far has featured some poems by talented Connecticut poets, including some CPS members.

Guidelines and quick links to the submission portal can be found on the CPS website, here:

<https://www.ctpoetry.net/connecticut-river-review.html>



## Kindness

by Naomi Shihab Nye

Before you know what kindness really is  
you must lose things,  
feel the future dissolve in a moment  
like salt in a weakened broth.

What you held in your hand,  
what you counted and carefully saved,  
all this must go so you know  
how desolate the landscape can be  
between the regions of kindness.  
How you ride and ride  
thinking the bus will never stop,  
the passengers eating maize and chicken  
will stare out the window forever.

Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness  
you must travel where the Indian in a white  
poncho  
lies dead by the side of the road.  
You must see how this could be you,  
how he too was someone  
who journeyed through the night with plans  
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing  
inside,  
you must know sorrow as the other deepest  
thing.

You must wake up with sorrow.  
You must speak to it till your voice  
catches the thread of all sorrows  
and you see the size of the cloth.  
Then it is only kindness that makes sense  
anymore,  
only kindness that ties your shoes  
and sends you out into the day to gaze at  
bread,

only kindness that raises its head  
from the crowd of the world to say  
It is I you have been looking for,  
and then goes with you everywhere  
like a shadow or a friend.



Photo credit: Matt Collamer, Unsplash