



A grain of poetry serves to season a century – José Luis Martí

Language of Enchantment

**News from the New Mexico State Poetry Society (NMSPS)
2024 Number 1**

Welcome to the newsletter of the New Mexico State Poetry Society (NMSPS). To keep information flowing at a manageable rate, we have reinvented our newsletter to an email format. Look for it in your inbox every quarter.

In this issue:

- A Word from the President
- Kudos to Our Members
- Members' Musings
- Atlanta, Here We Come!
- Convention Madness! Poetry Contest
- Invocation Poems for NFSPS Convention
- Blackberry Peach National Poetry Slam
- Last Call
- Seeking Poetry Contest Judges
- And Meanwhile . . .



A Word from the President

Bernadette Perez, NMSPS President

Dear Members,

This is a new version of the email I sent out on 15 February asking for help. It's long, but please read it to the end for important context and more specifics. Our Society is facing a critical shortage of volunteers to serve in various capacities that support Society initiatives and projects. I am asking for help from all NMSPS members (and anyone else who will join NMSPS).

We must reevaluate how NMSPS functions. The ways we connected before Covid worked then, but the in-person social energy that powered us in the past is fading. We have over 100 members, but only about 20 percent of them do all the work, and even that number is shrinking. Current leaders are getting burnt out and hope to hand the torch to a new crew at the 2025 election. We need new blood and new ideas.

I want to share with you some of the challenges, decisions, and ideas the NMSPS Board has discussed at recent meetings. To clarify terms, the full NMSPS Board consists of three elements:

- **Executive Board** (President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer)
- **Elected Board** includes the Executive Board plus Chapter Chairs **elected** by their respective members in Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Silver City, and Valencia County
- **Appointed Board** (Membership and Youth Chairs, Newsletter Editor, etc.), people I appoint to temporary **or** permanent projects. While their projects are active, they have a seat (and vote) on the full Board

Any NMSPS member can observe Zoom full Board meetings by requesting a zoom link from NMSPS Secretary Stan Crawford secretary@nmpoetry.com at least 24 hours in advance. The Board welcomes your insights, suggestions, even constructive criticism; but, if you have a concern/complaint, please also propose a solution and name someone willing to implement it. At any time, you may submit concerns in writing to president@nmpoetry.com.

Challenge A: Improving Social Interactions among NMSPS Members

NMSPS members are spread across our huge state and beyond, making it hard to participate in person. Hesitation about doing so (compliments of Covid) still persists. In-person events that once drew us together have been replaced by Zoom. As a result, attendance has been sparse at recent NMSPS conventions and festivities. That factor influenced the decisions and options discussed below.

Board Decisions

1. NMSPS State Conventions will occur only in odd-numbered years to coincide with Board elections. A Zoom General Membership meeting will be held in even-numbered years to comply with the NMSPS Constitution. We need someone to chair a Convention Committee that oversees these events. Call me (Bernadette) at 505-991-1376 for details.

2. An Annual Poetry Fair will be held each October. We will keep the same location and approximate date (like they do for Poets' Picnic) to establish this as an NMSPS tradition. The fair could include various activities—from onstage haiku slams to bake sales, music performances to games. It will be free and open to the public. We will need volunteers of all kinds—emcees and cookie bakers, judges and ticket takers.

Other Ideas and Associated Requirements

1. Monthly Zoom Open Mic *for members only* to supplement, not replace, chapter meetings. We'd need volunteer(s) familiar with Zoom meetings to set up and host it and guide attendees in Zoom use and protocols.

2. Online or hybrid (combination Zoom and in-person) workshops, readings, presentations, or book release events *featuring NMSPS members*. These events would require volunteer(s) experienced in (or willing to learn) how to conduct hybrid meetings and operate associated equipment. YouTube know-how would be a plus.

Challenge B: Improving Member Involvement in NMSPS and the Community

Better communications and publicity are needed to maintain membership numbers at or above critical mass, increase youth involvement, keep members fully informed, and improve NMSPS visibility and collaboration with arts, education, and civic communities.

Board Decisions

1. *Language of Enchantment*, our newsletter, will be published quarterly and provided to all members in good standing. We need people adept at MailChimp to help with providing content, doing layout and graphics, and sending it out electronically.

2. The NMSPS Board is committed to improving advance planning and publicity so that NMSPS members and the public (where appropriate) will have enough time to plan for and avoid conflict with other community events, thereby increasing participation in our own.

Options and Associated Requirements

1. Regularly (e.g., every 2-3 years) publish an NMSPS anthology of members' poetry, like *Glissando!* (2023). We'd need a small committee chaired by a Chief Editor to solicit entries, receive submissions electronically, compile, edit, publish, and distribute the book. Editor will have a seat on the Board during the full production process and will coordinate with the Executive Board on decisions to be made at each stage.

2. Expand our Poets in the Classroom (PITC) program. Members who have contacts (friends, relatives) in schools that might welcome our program can be great scouts for new PITC venues. We must make sure that a designated person on site (teacher, librarian, principal) will organize all administrative and logistical details for the visits. Chapter Chairs are best situated to get their members to turn out as participating poets.

3. Explore strategies to increase involvement of young people in NMSPS. Fill Youth Chair vacancy. Invite youth to send representative(s) to Board meetings so that they have a voice and can share valuable insights on best ways to recruit more youth members.

4. Publicize ways to support the Society besides holding a leadership post or taking on long-term tasks. Events like conventions or fairs will need book room attendants, T-shirt sellers, and those who just show up. For those who can't make it to outside events, home is a great place to judge a poetry contest, make phone calls to new members, or write an article for our newsletter. Even a few hours' service now and then can benefit the Society. Volunteers do not always need to be experts; they just **need to care**.

Challenge C: How Do We Pay for What We Want?

NMSPS annual dues of \$20 are barely enough to keep the lights on, and only if we have a minimum of 100 members. In making this point, we owe you, our members, an explanation of how your \$\$ is spent. Among the expenses are:

- annual filing and registration fees to State and Feds to keep our nonprofit status
- website fees (domain names, software, maintenance)
- USPS box rental, postage, shipping costs
- Zoom services for Board and Chapter meetings
- Chapter support (room rental, speakers' honoraria)
- membership in the NFSPS (National Federation)
- support for non-NMSPS events (AZ-NM Book Awards, Poets' Picnic) that promote our own members and mission
- miscellaneous supplies (posters, flyers, pencils, ink cartridges)

Options and Associated Requirements

1. Increase dues, currently set at \$20 for those who have reached their 22nd birthday; anyone younger can join NMSPS for free. For each member on our rolls, we send the NFSPS \$3 per year (that includes youth). We haven't raised dues since about 2012.

The perennial question from prospective members is, "What will I get for my money?" and we expect that current members might ask, "What more will I get if my dues go up?" To maintain—much less expand—services, we need more money or more helpers, and probably both.

2. Conduct FUNraisers, such as the fall festival, which provide entertainment and revenue. Experienced emcees, organizers, PR pros, and those willing to do plain old grunt work are vital for such events to succeed.

3. Solicit donations for NMSPS. The ideal volunteer would have contacts with businesses and community organizations willing to give us merchandise, money, or services.

4. Apply for grants. An experienced grant writer would be a godsend for NMSPS. We need someone who knows how nonprofits should go about getting grants and will write the applications.

Volunteerism is **huge** with grantors; many will give money to match "in kind" work done by our members, as long as we record the hours we put in on a project. Grantors often require applicants to pledge "matching funds," for which donated hours often substitute. See? Your time IS money for NMSPS!

Challenge D: Filling Vacant NMSPS Officer and Board Positions

The posts listed below need filling RIGHT NOW. We have noted the skills needed and duties of each job. If you are willing to serve in any of these posts, please call or write me. Contact information is below and on our website www.nmpoetry.com.

Vice President - A leader open to change and dedicated to promoting NMSPS interests and programs; keeping communication open among all members; honoring the Society's history, traditions, and culture; and familiar with standard fiduciary principles. Will be mentored by the current President in expectation of assuming the presidency of NMSPS upon election in 2025.

Treasurer - The Treasurer is ESSENTIAL to the smooth running of our Society. He/She works closely with the Webmaster and the Membership Chair. This job needs someone who knows or will learn how to work with Excel, has bookkeeping skills, and will keep financial records current. The Treasurer will deliver financial reports at quarterly Board meetings

(Zoom) and attend NMSPS activities involving money transactions—typically, the state convention on odd years and the annual fall festival. Candidate should be generally reachable, since some issues that demand a quick response come up between scheduled meetings. Workload peaks around the time of quarterly Board meetings; summers are slow.

The Treasurer is responsible for annual filing of three official forms with the IRS and NM agencies regarding our nonprofit status; each of these filings takes only a few minutes to do online. The Treasurer will oversee our PayPal transactions and monitor our Non-Taxable Transaction Certificates (NTTCs). NMSPS has automated software to manage member dues, and it is compatible with various other bookkeeping software.

NMSPS Youth Chair - We have more youth members than ever before and would like to bring even more into NMSPS. They need a leader who works well with young people and wants to help NMSPS develop or expand youth participation.

Santa Fe, Chapter Chair- Are you willing to lead the Santa Fe Poetry Trails Chapter? This involves coordinating with other members to expedite monthly open mics (the current format). You would be the information conduit to keep chapter members in the loop about local, state, and national poetry matters and to bring their ideas and concerns to the Board.

If we want to survive as a force in NM poetry, we must not only accept, but embrace change. If we want to thrive, we need revolutionary change. We need new volunteers and/or younger members at the helm who believe in poetry and want to help shape its future and that of NMSPS. For every suggestion above, we need people to organize, show up, set up, and clean up. I urge every member to help out where you can. To paraphrase JFK, "*Ask not what your Poetry Society can do for you, ask what you can do for your Poetry Society!*"

Your Society needs you!

Bernadette Perez, NMSPS President

(505) 991-1376

president@nmpoetry.com



Kudos to Our Members

Congratulations to the NMSPS members below, whose works have been published in the past few months on page and stage.

Sarah Kotchian (ABQ Chapter) whose book, *Light of Wings: Poems*, was published this month by UNM Press! Photo of Sarah and her book above. It will be launched at Bookworks in Albuquerque on Sunday, March 10, at 6:00 p.m. For more information, check out her website: <https://sarahkotchian.com/>

Tina Carlson (ABQ Chapter) had her poetry book, *A Guide to Tongue Tie Surgery*, published by UNM Press in August 2023. For more information, check out her website: <https://tinacarlsonpoetry.com/>

ABQ Chapter Chair Janet Ruth saw and heard her sonnet, "A World That Shimmers," brought to life onstage. Her poem won the inaugural 2023 True Concord Voices Poetry Contest. The poem was set to music by Nicholas Ryan Kelly, the winner of the 2023 Emerging Composers contest, and performed by True Concord Voices & Orchestra in Tucson last October. See Members' Musings in this issue for the lyrics and a YouTube link to the performance, and visit her website for more about her poetry: <https://redstartsandravens.com/janets-poetry/>.

River Poets Chair Lynn Zotalis and three fellow poets from the Silver City area—Pamela Warren Williams, Shelly Barnett, and Leonore Hildebrandt—are the collaborative authors of *Upward Spiral, Poems of Opening and Renewal*. They did a soft launch of the book at October's Southwest Word Fiesta, followed by three other readings. They plan to do another reading on April 21 at 10:00 a.m. at the Unitarian Universalist gathering in Silver City. For information, contact Lynn at rp_chair@nmpoetry.com. The authors in the photo below, shown left to right, are Shelly, Pamela, Lynn, and Leonore.



Members' Musings

When Poetry and Music Come Together

by Janet Ruth

When submitting a poem to a contest, I don't suppose anyone expects to win. You hope but don't let your expectations get ahead of you. So, when I responded to the call for the inaugural True Concord Voices Poetry Contest in 2023, where they asked poets to write about how music brings us together, I wasn't holding my breath. And then when I got the notice that my sonnet, "A World That Shimmers," won, I could barely breathe. Especially because part of the prize was to have my poem set to music by the 2023 Stephen Paulus Emerging Composer, Nicholas Ryan Kelly. Months later when Dave and I traveled to Tucson, AZ, to hear the piece performed by the Grammy Award-winning True Concord Voices and Orchestra, I had never heard the music and had no idea what to expect. I was in the audience for the premiere performance, again holding my breath. I have pasted the sonnet and a link to a Score Video of this performance from Nick's YouTube channel below. I have to say that this must be one of the most moving experiences of my life—to have someone else read my poem and then demonstrate that they "got" what I was trying to say by setting it to music! The music of poetry; the poetry of music—a 24-voice choir, piano, cello, and my words.

Photo below (left to right): Eric Holtan (True Concord Music Director), Janet Ruth, and Nicholas Ryan Kelly (2023 Emerging Composer)

A World That Shimmers

Even today this Earth of loss and pain
still sings the regal music of the spheres.
Her children join together, raise refrains

in harmonies that stand against our fears.
A symphony. We're clad in scales and wings,
in branches, fur and skin of every hue.
As one, we praise diversity and sing,
build bridges over the abyss. A new
world shimmers—web of life catches what's bright
on every strand. We celebrate our places,
as instruments who play Earth's ode to light—
Her music holds us in a wild embrace—
the notes, rhythms and melodies that fling
the darkness from our lives, the more we sing.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjvMAADYCpc>

NOTE: If you would like to contribute to Members' Musings in future newsletters (e.g., with an article about poetry or a particular experience with poetry), please send an email to newsletter@nmpoetry.com.



Atlanta, Here We Come!

Check out this year's plans for the **Voices Set Free** NFSPS Annual Convention/ Blackberry Peach National Slam Competition in Roswell (no, not ours), Georgia, June 5-10, 2024. Registration is open for either or both events on our "mothership" website, www.nfsps.net. The NFSPS and the Georgia Poetry Society will co-host the gathering, and the schedule and line-up of workshops, festivities, and speakers is enticing.

NMSPS members who will be in attendance are Bernadette Perez and Shirley Blackwell, as far as we know, but our Society can have up to five (5) voting delegates to represent us and as many more members ready for a *not-your-grandma's* kind of convention. Preliminary info

is in boxes in this issue. Much more will be posted in the April issue of *Strophes*, our national newsletter, which can be found at the website above. Hope to see you in Atlanta (or its Roswell suburb) in June.



Convention Madness! Poetry Contest

Win Your Way to NFSPS Convention

June 5 - June 10, 2024

Roswell, Georgia

Must attend to receive prize

1st Place: 5-night stay at the Doubletree Hilton (\$800.00)

2nd Place: All meals (package) (approximately \$200.00)

3rd Place: Registration Fee (\$125.00)

Any form, any subject, limit one page, 12-point type. May be previously published.
Simultaneous submissions acceptable.

Fee: NFSPS, Inc., Members 3 poems for \$15.00. Non-members 3 poems for \$20.00. Make payment on Submittable to the National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc.

No limit on number of submissions, so long as a new entry fee is included for each set of 3 poems.

To submit: Go to nfspssubmittable.com

Name, address, phone number, e-mail, and State Society membership to be included in

Submittable information. No identifying marks or your name on actual poems. No acknowledgements for previous publication; if a poem wins, the acknowledgement will be included. No illustrations or pictures.

DEADLINE: April 6, 2024. Winners will be notified by April 27, 2024.



Invocation Poems for NFSPS Convention

June 5 - 10, 2024

NFSPS, INC., and the Georgia Poetry Society are pleased to announce the Invitational Poems Contest for Convention 2024.

Subject: No cash prizes, but winning invitational poems will be read by winners at the beginning of convention meals.

Criteria: The paramount consideration is poetic value, not religious orthodoxy: "It must be first of all a poem." Poems should be suitable for a religiously diverse membership, should use gender-inclusive, contemporary language, and should have equal value for the religious and the non-religious.

Form: Any form, not to exceed 30 lines. Name the form on your entry.

Eligibility: Open to all poets. No fee to enter. Limits: 4 Poems per poet. Must be the original work of the poet, unpublished, not submitted elsewhere for publication, and not a previous host-contest winning poem. Typed or printed from the computer. One poem per page.

Deadline: April 30, 2024, postmark.

Winners: Notified individually by mail in April of the year 2024. We place a high value on your reading of your own poem, but we will provide a substitute reader if you cannot be present at the convention in June.

Copies: Two. Your name and postal address and name of your chosen form at upper right corner of one; name of contest and chosen form only in upper right corner of the other. Poems will not be returned.

Ownership: NFSPS receives the right to have the poem read at this convention. You retain all other rights.

Mail entries to: Susan Chambers, 700 Agency Trail, Unit 202, Mankato, MN 56001

Questions? schambersmediator@yahoo.com

BLACKBERRY PEACH NATIONAL POETRY SLAM



ROSWELL, GA | JUNE 5-8, 2024

At the DoubleTree Hilton - Roswell, as part of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies Annual Convention and co-hosted by the Georgia Poetry Society

\$5,000 IN CASH PRIZES

June 5

6:30-8:30 p.m. | Bouts A and B
9:00-11:00 p.m. | Bouts C and D
11:30 p.m. - 1:00 a.m. | Open Mic

June 6

6:30-8:30 p.m. | Bouts E and F
9:00-11:00 p.m. | Bouts G and H
11:30 p.m. - 1:00 a.m. | Open Mic

June 7

10:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. | Youth Mini-Fest
11:30 p.m. - 1:00 a.m. | NUPIC

June 8

6:30-8:00 p.m. | Haiku Slam
8:00-11:00 p.m. | Final Stage

Preliminary Bouts: Free to attend

Final Stage General Admission: \$15

Final Stage Admission for

Seniors/Students/Military/First Responders: \$10

Slam Details & Registration at [NFSPS.net](https://nfspss.net)

Last Call

The clock is running out on your opportunity to submit to the 2024 NFSPS Annual Contests and the BlackBerry Peach Prize for Poetry Spoken and Heard (the one with the chapbook, not the Slam competition). Deadline for both is midnight March 15. If you are using <https://nfspss.submittable.com/submit> to enter either contest, be sure to send your poems a few hours early to avoid possible technical SNAFUs or miss a deadline that is in a different

time zone. Good luck to all, and bring home the gold!



Seeking Poetry Contest Judges

NMSPS has agreed to a request from SouthWest Writers (SWW) to judge the poetry entries in its upcoming 2024 contests. As you may know, SWW focuses mainly on prose genres, so they are seeking specialists in poetry to judge in three categories: haiku, limericks, and free verse. Judges will receive blind copy entries by email on July 8. They will have until July 30 to select 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places, plus at least one honorable mention. SWW has given NMSPS free rein to manage and judge the contests as it sees fit. Our word will be final.

Judges will remain anonymous until awards are announced in October. They will not receive honorariums, but they may choose to have a short bio and photo of themselves included in the anthology of prize poems that will be published in time for the October event. NMSPS will also be given a page in the anthology promoting our Society and acknowledging our contribution.

Submission does not open until June 1. Contest information will be posted soon on the SWW website, <https://www.southwestwriters.com/>. Members of NMSPS will be able to enter the contests, and even the poetry judges can enter in a category they themselves are not judging. If you are willing to judge one of the three categories, please contact Shirley Blackwell at (505) 235-5735 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. any day but Sunday.

And Meanwhile . . .

From **River Poets (Silver City) Chapter** – There are some changes in poetry events in the Silver City area. The River Poets continue to meet on the 2nd and 4th Mondays of the month from 1:00 - 2:00 p.m. at the Silver City Visitors Center on the corner of Broadway and

Hudson. In addition, there are several other poetry events. (1) Every 2nd Saturday, the Tranquil Buzz, 300 N. Arizona St., Silver City, hosts a poetry open mic from 12:00 - 2:00 p.m., coordinated by Shelly Barnett. (2) Poetic Outlaws, an open mic format, meets on the 4th Friday at 6:30 p.m. at Javalina Coffee House, 117 W. Market St., Downtown Silver City.

Santa Fe has named Tommy Archuleta as the **New Santa Fe Poet Laureate**. Click here for a few more details: <https://www.aol.com/news/santa-fe-poet-laureate-hopes-043300335.h>

MEETINGS & EVENTS

Upcoming poetry meetings and events are listed below. For complete details on these and future events, click the **NM Poetry Calendar** button below, or go to [this link](#).

NM Poetry Calendar

The NMSPS Board of Directors

Contact Our Board

To contact any of the leaders listed below, go to our website, www.nmpoetry.com, and click on the "Contact Us" tab. Click on the person's name, and a simple form will pop up on which you can comment, and your message will be sent directly to that person in a way that notifies them it concerns NMSPS. Or, you can send it to the email addresses listed below. Although personnel may change, the assigned emails will persist for future holders of the respective offices. The chapter affiliations of current individual board members are in parentheses.

Executive Board

President: Bernadette Perez (RGV) president@nmpoetry.com

Vice President: *position vacant* vicepresident@nmpoetry.com

Secretary: Stan Crawford (ABQ) secretary@nmpoetry.com

Treasurer: *position vacant* treasurer@nmpoetry.com

Chapter Chairs

Albuquerque: Janet Ruth (ABQ) abq_chair@nmpoetry.com

Rio Grande Valencia: Kuan Tikkun (RGV) rgv_chair@nmpoetry.com

River Poets (Silver City): Lynne Zotalis (RP) rp_chair@nmpoetry.com

Santa Fe Poetry Trails: *position vacant* sfpt_chair@nmpoetry.com

Appointive Board (Directors)

Chancellor: Shirley Blackwell (RGV) chancellor@nmpoetry.com

Newsletter Editor: Shirley Blackwell (RGV) newsletter@nmpoetry.com

Membership: Jan Baca membership@nmpoetry.com

Youth: *position vacant* youth@nmpoetry.com

Website questions or comments? Contact webmaster@nmpoetry.com

Have a question, comment, or suggestion? We want to hear from you!

Contact us!

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