



Illinois Poets

News of the Illinois State Poetry Society

January – March 2020

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President's Message



Longer light and more bird chatter bring hope and inspiration surmounting snowflakes and lingering chill. I am assured that spring can't be too far away.

April is Poetry Month, and it brings opportunities to share poems in many public libraries throughout Illinois. This year's theme is "water," and the topic offers a broad spectrum of possible interpretations. The library locations where specific members' poems will be displayed are forthcoming in early April. In addition, you will have an opportunity to read some of your poetry at a special Poetry Month event at the Evanston North Branch Library on Monday, April 13. Please let me know if you are interested in reading at this early evening event: stm48@hotmail.com.

This year ISPS will once again participate in the Poetry Fest held at the Harold Washington Library in Chicago on April 25 from 11:00 to 4:00. Members will have an opportunity to sell personal poetry books at a designated table space.

Mark your calendars for the June 11-14th National Federation of State Poetry Societies convention in Kansas City, Missouri. The keynote speaker will be the excellent poet Diane Glancy. Next year the rumor is that Ohio will host the event.

In the first stanza of Leonard Cohen's poem, "There Are Some Men," he states "There are some men/who should have mountains/to bear their names to time." Many poets share the desire to have their poetry carved on some metaphorical mountain—a book, plaque or on history's memory. There are others who feel that their work isn't good enough to share and submit to journals or other public outlets. Time passes, as do our lives. William Stafford said in "Earth Dweller," "The world speaks everything to us./ It is our only friend." Perhaps what we seek is to express our own responses to being human—the desire to shout personal joy, angst, longing and wishes from a private mountain we carry within us and which beckons us to touch its pinnacle. Like the singing spring birds that will soon return, consider sending your voice into the world.

Happy writing,

Susan T. Moss

Update on the Illinois State Poet Laureate Issue

Illinois currently has no Illinois State Poet Laureate, since the resignation of Kevin Stein several years ago. He was the fourth person to hold that title and the first to resign rather than “die in the traces.” He was preceded by Gwendolyn Brooks, who served from 1960 until her death in 2000. Brooks was preceded in that role by Carl Sandburg, who served for five years. Howard Austin, a folksy poet who was appointed in 1936 when the role was first created, held the title until his death in 1962.

The city of Urbana created a citywide poet laureate post in July of 2019. If there are other cities or municipalities in Illinois with a poet laureate position, the ISPS Board would appreciate further information. ISPS has been in contact with the governor’s office about reinstating the Illinois statewide position, and we are collecting information from other states that currently have poet laureates. Wisconsin, for example, has a mixed system that includes a state poet laureate plus some city positions and some countywide posts. Many states have a 2- or 4-year term for the statewide position, which typically has a relatively modest stipend, authorized by the state legislature.

City of Urbana Arts & Culture Commission Creates Poet Laureate Position

With an intent to “celebrate and nurture the City of Urbana’s cultural and artistic diversity” and to “build creative public spaces and showcase the City of Urbana as a thriving destination for arts and culture,” the Urbana Arts and Culture Commission selected the poet Will Reger as the Inaugural Poet Laureate of Urbana, IL.

Reger is a founding member of the CU (Champaign-Urbana) Poetry Group (cupoetry.com). He teaches in the Department of History at Illinois State University in Normal, IL, and at Parkland College in Champaign. Reger is the author of three chapbooks and one full-length book of poetry, *Petroglyphs*.

Reger also translates poetry from Dutch, Russian, and German, and has published more than 100 poems in the past few years. He archives published poetry at <https://twitter.com/wmreger>. He has long been an advocate of poetry in the community and local public schools, as well as at Danville Correctional Center. In his new role, he teaches workshops and speaks on the value of a poet laureate to a community like Urbana-Champaign.

Reger sees this position as an opportunity to support young people in their writing activities and to help more established writers get their work into the public eye. He began with the sense that he wanted to help specific populations, such as youth and veterans. In Champaign-Urbana, a number of different poetry groups already were strong. Reger says he has “tried to create activities that will bring these groups together, mix it up a little, so the groups aren’t too insular.”

In a “Poet Laureate’s Showcase” in February of 2020, Reger brought together a number of local poets with distinct poetical “voices” who had been unaware of each other’s work. That memorable evening of performance was received enthusiastically by the poets as well as the overflow audience. The “Laureate Likes” program puts poets’ work on a digital sign in the foyer of the Urbana Free Library. A planned “Poems on Glass” contest will display the work of selected poets publicly for about two years. And he has planned a number of other readings, workshops, and contests for the last few months of his one-year tenure. Will Reger is setting a high standard for future poet laureates in Urbana and hopefully elsewhere in Illinois.

Chapter Meetings...

(in alphabetical order by location).

Southern Chapter (Carbondale)

Sunday, May 3, 2020, 1:30 p.m.,
Carbondale Public Library, 405 West Main, Carbondale,
62901 (618) 457-0354

<http://www.carbondale.lib.il.us>

Kathy Cotton, Facilitator: kacotton7@frontier.com

Please bring 10-12 copies of a poem for critique.

Central Chapter (Champaign)

Saturday, April 4, 2020, 12:30 - 3:20 p.m.

Champaign Public Library,

200 W. Green St., Champaign, IL 61820

www.champaign.org, (217) 403-2000

Kathy Robinson, facilitator: krobdzyns@gmail.com

Please bring 6-8 copies of 1 or 2 of your poems, and
a covered drink if you wish. No snacks are permitted
in the library conference rooms.

Southwest Suburban Chapter (Lisle)

Sunday, April 5, 2020, 1 - 4:30 p.m.

Lisle Public Library

777 Front Street, Lisle, IL 60532-3599

www.lislelibrary.org, (630) 971-1675

Barbara Eaton, Facilitator: Eatonb1016@aol.com

Please bring a snack to share as well as your own drink,
and up to 20 copies of 1 or 2 of your poems.

Haiku Chapter (Northbrook)

Thursday, April 19, 2020, 1 - 4 p.m.

Northbrook Public Library, Civic Room

1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL 60062

<http://www.northbrook.info>, (847) 272-6224

Tom Chockley and Jim Sullivan,

facilitators: tom.chockley@outlook.com

Please bring 8-10 copies of 6-10 haiku
on a single page for critique, if you wish.

North Suburban Chapter (Northbrook)

Sunday May 17, 2020, 1 - 5 p.m.

Northbrook Public Library, Civic Room

1201 Cedar Lane, Northbrook, IL 60062-4513

<http://www.northbrook.info>, (847) 272-6224

Mary Beth Bretalauf, facilitator:

mbbretzlauf@comcast.net

Please bring 8-10 copies of 1 or 2 poems
if you would like to have them critiqued.

North Central Chapter (Pontiac)

Saturday, April 11, 2020, 1:00 p.m.

Cup and Scone Coffee Shop, 815-255-9870

213 W. Madison St., Pontiac, IL 61764

<https://thecupandthescone.com> (scroll down
for driving details).

Kathleen Murphy, facilitator,

kathleenmurphy@mail.com

Please bring 6-8 copies of 1 or 2
of your poems for critique, if you wish.

Events and Open Mics

The Pontiac chapter of ISPS will hold a poetry reading on Saturday, March 28 from 6 to 8 pm at the **Cup and Scone Coffee Shop in Pontiac** (see venue details in Chapter Meetings column). ISPS members will read their poetry, and there will be a public open mic session for anyone to read their own work or favorite pieces from literature. All are welcome!

Two Chicago-area poets will be featured on Sunday, March 29, at **Brewed Awakening in Westmont, IL** from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m., followed by an open mic session. The cover charge of \$12 plus tax entitles each person to coffee or other beverage and a snack. Brewed Awakening is at 19 West Quincy, across from the Westmont METRA station.

Poetry reading at the Evanston North Branch Library on Monday, April 13. (See President's Message on p. 1 for more information.)

The Annual Poetry Fest will be held Saturday, April 25 from 11:00 to 4:00 at the **Harold Washington Library** in Chicago.

ISPS Members' Work on Display

Listed below are the libraries that will have displays of ISPS poets' work in the month of April, National Poetry Month. If you know of a library not listed here that would agree to participate in this statewide celebration (and you are willing to set up the display), contact ISPS President Susan Moss at stm48@hotmail.com. The submissions period for poems to display has ended. A list of the specific poets represented at each library will be available in early April. Watch for an email announcement from our own William Shakespeare.

Downers Grove Public Library
Evanston North Branch Public Library
Glencoe Public Library
Highland Park Public Library
Indian Prairie-Darien Public Library
Lake Bluff Public Library
Lisle Public Library
Northfield Public Library
Northbrook Public Library
Romeoville Branch Public Library
Warren Newport Public Library
Waukegan Public Library
Wilmette Public Library
Winnetka Public Library
Woodridge Public Library

Distilled Lives 5 info coming soon...

April is also the month when members may submit up to 4 poems or 10 haiku for possible publication of 2 poems or 6 haiku in the ISPS anthology, *Distilled Lives*. All members are encouraged to participate; details will be provided soon. Pre-ordered copies of the anthology will be available for distribution at our November Gala event (and chapter meetings later).

New Members

We have nine new members since the last newsletter. For more information about new members, see the Bios section of the ISPS website, illinoispoets.org. Reminder to all ISPS members: You may need to provide a bio, or update your existing one!

Juanita Marie Bergman, Carbondale Chapter

Michael Lee Johnson, Lisle Chapter

Cielo Ines Jones, Champaign Chapter

Gari Light, Northbrook Chapter

Raphael Lantigua, Champaign Chapter

Vincent Letto, Northbrook Chapter

Carol Marcus, Lisle Chapter

Susan Nelsen, Northbrook Chapter

If you have bio updates to share, send to oasis@alharris.com; for possible member news, send to ISPS newsletter editor, Kathy Robinson, at krobdzyns@gmail.com. The ISPS website is at: illinoispoets.org.

How to Join the Illinois State Poetry Society (ISPS)

Membership is open to anyone who is interested in poetry. You do not need to be a resident of Illinois. To join, fill out this form (or a copy) and send it with a check for the **yearly dues (July 1 -June 30) of \$20** (\$30 for patron status, \$50 for benefactor status) to:

Illinois State Poetry Society
PO Box 307
Western Springs, IL 60558

You are invited to send a short (1 paragraph) bio for the newsletter and, for the website, a possibly longer bio (see existing bios for examples). Send a paper copy with your dues, or email bios as directed in the box above.

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please indicate which chapter/location you wish to consider your "home" (you may visit other chapters):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carbondale (Southern Illinois) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisle (SW Suburban Chicago) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Champaign (Central Illinois) | <input type="checkbox"/> Haiku (meets at Northbrook, separately) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Darien (W. Suburban Chicago) | <input type="checkbox"/> Northbrook (N. Suburban Chicago) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pontiac (North Central Illinois) | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At Large (for residents outside Illinois – full member benefits apply) | |