

Illinois State Poetry Society

The Illinois State Poetry Society was chartered in 1991 at the yearly convention of the National Federation of State Poetry societies which was held in Madison, Wisconsin. Of the twelve charter members, Carol Spelius and Glenna Holloway were present. William Stafford, the guest speaker, acted as witness. Glenna agreed to serve as the first president of the society which was formed "To encourage the crafting and enjoyment of poetry in the state of Illinois."

Officers normally serve for a two year term with the exception of two members who split a presidency. The present term runs from July 1, 2009, and ends June 30, 2011. Susan T. Moss is the current president preceded by John Quinn, Wilda Morris, Mardelle Fortier, Alan Harris, Mardelle Fortier, Larry Turner, Don Cornwell, Phil Zurowski, William Marr, and Glenna Holloway. The membership stands at one hundred and eighteen and continues to grow.

Four chapters meet in public libraries or art centers in alternating months in order to provide members several workshops to attend in any two month period. The first chapter began in the southwest suburbs of Chicago where it has continued to meet since 1991. In September of 2006, a second chapter was started in a northern Chicago community. Then in August, 2009, a third chapter began to serve the middle area of Illinois. In November, 2010, a fourth chapter was formed in Southern Illinois and meets in Anna, near Carbondale. Future chapters are a further goal.

There is a bimonthly newsletter sent both electronically and as hard copy dependant on member request. It includes a message from the president, members' poems, interviews with ISPS poets and forthcoming society events as well as those sponsored by other local and some national organization. ISPS also has an extensive website www.illinois.org with fulltime webmaster. A one page brochure including membership enrollment is available on the website and in hard copy.

ISPS sponsors a poetry contest every year which is open to state members and all poets throughout the world. Information is available on the website. The society also participates in the Manningham contest for students, with a follow up an awards gathering for winners and mention of their poems on the ISPS website.

The society sponsors workshops on poetry writing and related topics for members and the public of all ages plus opportunities for featured readings by members followed by a public open mic at libraries and other venues throughout the year. There are also monthly gatherings for members' poetry and public open mic at a coffee house in a western suburb on Sunday afternoon. Another opportunity to showcase poets' work has been through themed poetry displays at participating public libraries at various times throughout the year and especially during Poetry Month. Further recognition of members' work will be in the 2011 twentieth anniversary anthology, *Distilled Lives*.

As a relatively young society, Illinois State Poetry Society strives to deepen a commitment to develop a rich and growing history. Equally important is the goal to offer opportunities for improving and sharing the crafting of poetry.

Prepared by Susan T. Moss
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