



**Worcester County
Poetry Association**
Growing Poetry Since 1971

WORCESTER COUNTY
POETRY ASSOCIATION
**ANNUAL
REPORT
2024**



Worcester County Poetry Association

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

WCPA ANNUAL REPORT 2024

2024 HAS BEEN A LANDMARK YEAR FOR THE WCPA.



We created a five-year Strategic plan.

- 17 Board members came together for a full day in September to draft the ideas. Led by consultant, Wayne Daigle of BP Consulting, we explored strategic imperatives and drafted them together.
- Thanks to a grant from The Greater Worcester Community Foundation, our Administrator, Irena Kaçi, was able to seek feedback from partner organizations and organize this draft into a document that is exciting and will be easy to follow in the days ahead.
- Implementation has already begun! Please find the document on our website and join us in making our strategic imperatives happen.

We welcomed our newest partner organization, The Poet's Cauldron, under the WCPA tent. Just like the Worcester Writer's Collective before them, The Poet's Cauldron has already added new energy and dedication to the WCPA.

We created the foundation for a new publication which will be dedicated to local authors. After an open call for nominations from our members, the name Triple Decker was chosen by our editors. The first issue will be launched in April in partnership with the Worcester Cultural Coalition and will feature the works of Worcester's Poets Laureates.

The first Dan Lewis Fellowship winner, Laura DiCaronimo, completed her project and the second, Daniel Letona, was selected. CONGRATULATIONS both.

Long time editor of The Worcester Review, and past president of the WCPA, Rodger Martin, was presented with the Stanley Kunitz Medal in honor of a life dedicated to poetry.

The Clemente Course in the Humanities, Worcester, celebrated its tenth year and gave

thanks to the support it has so gratefully received from a wide base of supporters in our area.

Most importantly, WCPA programs continue to thrive under the leadership of VP of Programs, Joe Fusco, and Public Program Administrator/ Outreach Coordinator, Irena Kaçi.

Every day, it is becoming more and more exciting to be a member of the WCPA. As we expand our scope into all genres of creative writing, there will be something for everyone. No matter what your experience or skill level, our goal, as laid out in our Strategic Plan, is to create a third space; a home, a welcome, where Worcester area writers can connect, reconnect, share, find friendship, purpose, inspiration – create community as a formula for fulfillment.

Please help spread the word!

Thank you all for being our WCPA members.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Bacon, President

02 SECRETARY'S REPORT

WCPA ANNUAL MEETING FOR 2023

The 52nd Annual Meeting of the Worcester County Poetry Association was held in the ballroom of the Salisbury House, 61 Harvard Street, Worcester, MA, on March 3, 2024, at 2:00 PM.

Board Members in Attendance:

- Rodger Martin
- Joe Fusco
- Kate McIntyre
- Kate Gregoire
- Ann Lewis
- Brett Iarrobino
- Mary Driscoll
- Jay Lavelle
- Therese Carr
- Elizabeth Bacon
- Joe Aguilar
- Linda Warren
- Robert Steele
- Rob Baker
- Sam Capradae
- Phil Lemos
- Robert Steele
- Carolyn Oliver
- Susan Elizabeth Sweeney
- Ashley Marcum
- Tarique Cooper
- Oliver de la Paz
- David Thoreen

Members in Attendance:

- Laura DiCaronimo
- Irena Kaci
- John Gaumont
- Rhett Watts
- Sherese Carr
- Ned Bacon
- Judith Ferrara
- Carolyn Oliver
- Vanessa Gonzalez-Oyola
- Youlanda Thorpe
- Susan Elizabeth Sweeney

Elizabeth Bacon read “A Streetbeatina,” by Paul Szlozek.

Call to Order and President’s Message:

Elizabeth Bacon, President, called the meeting to order, asking the members to sign in as required for voting. She welcomed The Dirty Gerund and The Worcester Poetry Collective representatives, and 8 new board members. She noted that poems have always been about uncertainty, exploration, questioning. Poetry brings all of us together throughout the world. She invited all present to join our efforts to steward the WCPA.

Secretary’s Report:

(The Secretary’s report is in the printed and online version of the Annual Report 2024 booklet.) Linda Warren referred members to the Annual Report booklet and asked for a

motion to accept the minutes. Beth Sweeney made a motion that the board accept the Secretary's minutes as reported in the 2023 Annual Report; Rodger Martin seconded the motion. The motion carried by a show of hands.

Treasurer's Report:

(The Treasurer's report is in the printed and online version of the Annual Report 2024 booklet.) Ashley Marcum highlighted notable gifts and grants, including a gift from Richard Fox's family in his memory, and a \$3000 grant to be used to hire a strategic planner for membership growth.

Rodger Martin pointed out to the membership that on paper we have \$400,000, but \$360,000 is restricted in endowments. Our board's job is to shepherd those funds. Beth Sweeney motioned that the board accept the Treasurer's Report as presented in the Annual Report 2023. Elizabeth Bacon seconded the motion. The motion carried by a show of hands

Committee Reports:

(These reports are in the printed and online version of the Annual Report 2023 booklet.)

Membership Committee:

Ann Lewis highlighted changes to Memberships, as set forth in the Annual Report. She mentioned as membership benefits the new Bookshop page on our web site, and pointed out streamlined navigation for renewing memberships or giving gifts to WCPA. She also mentioned our grant to hire a strategic planner who will work to expand membership and benefits.

Programming Committee

Joe Fusco summarized the Programming Committee report, noting highlights, including sponsoring The Thirsty Lab, which hosted 16 readings and 400 listeners; the Stockmal reading, organized by Beth Sweeney; a tribute reading for Richard Fox, which hosted 83 listeners; the Annual Women's Reading, hosted by Susan O'Brien, which reached 74 listeners; Poetpouri, which featured 9 poets and hosted 42 listeners; Arts in the Garden, featuring local poets and musicians, averaged 30 listeners; the Poetry Extravaganza; and the Baseball poets. Additionally, Susan O'Brien runs a zoom workshop at the Worcester library.

Rain Poetry

Kate Gregoire summarized the Rain Poetry project, and noted we had a roomful of rain poets at this annual meeting. The Rain Poets' Reading was last Sunday Feb, 23. This year we will be calling for poems during poetry month, and will decide on the winners in June. The project is expanding – this year she hopes to produce a publication for all of the poems. She asked the membership to let her know if members would like to be involved.



Mapping Worcester in Poetry:

Beth Sweeney shared some details of the Mapping Worcester in Poetry project, which is sponsored by Holy Cross. The project celebrates 7 major poets from Worcester, and hopes to inspire new poems about places in Worcester, particularly public places. Beth has 2 student research assistants this year, who locate historical photos, conduct research, and are planning an event to celebrate poems in Worcester's parks. They are also setting up an Instagram Account. Beth also highlighted the In and Out of Places contest, and thanked Oliver de la Paz for his judging of the contest last summer. She apologized for delay in the In and Out of Places contest and stated that winners have been announced. She wants as many of the poems as possible to be read and appreciated, and will host readings to invite many of the poets who submitted to the contest.

The Worcester Review:

Carolyn Oliver, editor for The Worcester Review, shared comments for Vol 44, which features more than 20 poets, 18 fiction writers of Flash fiction, and also included Clemente writers. She welcomed Eve Rifkah, Rachel Lloyd, and Mandy Gutman-Gonzales to Volume 45's editorial board, and introduced new editor Phil Lemos, who will take over from Carolyn as editor.

Clemente:

Elizabeth Bacon reported that the 10th Clemente class will be graduating May 12th. Over 1000 people have participated in the Clemente project over the years. During the month of May, Clemente will be staging a public art auction in collaboration with the Inside/Out project and the Worcester Art Museum on the exterior wall of the museum's Lancaster Street entrance.

Stanley Kunitz Medal:

Judy Ferrara reported that Paul Szlozek was the winner of the Kunitz Medal this year, and thanked the committee for their work. She noted that 2024 nominations close March 31, and encouraged members to see the online guidelines if they wish to nominate someone. Judy noted that this was her last year as chair of the committee and quoted Kunitz in closing: "My association with others, particularly poets, has been one of the happiest chapters of my life."

O'Hara Prize:

Joe Fusco, Jr., summarized the O'Hara Prize as a yearly contest open to all poets from the WCPA area. He noted that last year's contest had 126 entries, and was judged by Karen Schofield. Dennis Perone will be this year's judge. The submission deadline is March 31. Joe thanked Irena for her contribution to this project.

Communications Committee:

Linda Warren reported that in addition to our traditional communications channels, WCPA this year has emphasized expanding our online media outreach. Highlights are a new website redesign by Rob Baker, including streamlined membership donation pages and a new members' Bookshop page. This year we've also introduced a new online newsletter, designed and maintained by Brett Iarrobino.

Public Program Manager and Outreach Coordinator’s Report:

Irena Kaci outlined the projects through which WCPA has expanded outreach this year, including:

- Black Excellence Academy Children’s Workshops, for which she thanked Gloria Hall for her collaboration on a 7 week program for children’s poetry.
- The Worcester Writers’ Collective partnership, coordinated with Brett Iarrobino
- The Dirty Gerund partnership, coordinated with Sam Capradae
- Worcester Common Ground Day of Giving event
- stART on the Street festival participation
- Receiving a Strategic Planning grant from GWCF

Dan Lewis Award:

Ann Lewis recapped the award, made possible by an endowment by Dan’s Family which will offer an award of \$2500 to a Worcester County poet to be used to fulfill a need that otherwise would not be met. Dan was active in WCPA, and had the opportunity to take advantage of workshops, membership opportunities, and events such as the Dodge poetry festival. She introduced this year’s recipient, Laura DiCaronimo. Laura is a Hubbardston resident who has been selected as one of the winners of the Rain Poetry project. She runs the Openist Mike reading series, and plans to use the award to further her commitment to creating a poetry community. Paul Szlozek read Dan’s poem, Manifesto, at Ann’s request.

Nomination of Board Members:

Kate Gregoire presented the slate of members to serve on this year’s board. Additionally, there was a nomination from the floor for Venessa Gonzalez-Ayola. Rodger seconded the nomination motion. Beth Sweeney motioned to accept the slate of nominees. Carolyn Oliver seconded. The motion was approved unanimously.

Board members approved:

Joe Aguilar
Elizabeth Bacon (*President*)
Rob Baker
Sam Capradae
Tarique Cooper
Mary Driscoll (*Treasurer*)
Joe Fusco, Jr. (*VP- Programming*)

Kate Anderson Gregoire
Brett Iarrobino
Jay Lavelle
Phil Lemos (*Managing Editor, TWR*)
Ann Lewis
Rodger Martin

Kate McIntyre
Oliver de la Paz
Robert Steele
Beth Sweeney
David Thoreen
Linda Warren (*Secretary*)

Awards of Recognition:

Elizabeth presented Carolyn Oliver (retiring Managing Editor of The Worcester Review) with a broadside signed by all WCPA Board Members with whom she served.

Elizabeth also presented Ashley Marcum with an acknowledgement for her efforts of taking over the work of Bob Gill and translating it into separate tasks to ensure that they can be fulfilled going forward. Ashley also served as Treasurer after Bob Gill’s retirement.

Reading by Rhett Watts:

After a short break, Joe Fusco introduced Rhett Watts as our reader this year.

Motion to Adjourn:

Rodger Martin made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Elizabeth Bacon seconded. The motion was approved.

03 TREASURER'S REPORT

PRESENTED BY MARY DRISCOLL, TREASURER

As the Treasurer, I also tackled momentous changes in 2024. We created a monthly report for program managers that proved helpful in keeping expenditures in line. We are pleased to report that all program managers honored their budget guidelines. Total annual expenditures came in \$2k under budget for 2024.

Unfortunately, membership dues missed their budgeted goal by a wide mark. WCPA's board saw this as an opportunity to examine root causes and address the need for more effective and more frequent outreach initiatives.

The generous gift of \$80k from The City of Worcester was a welcome lift last year. This money came from the City's final release of American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, (ARPA) covid era relief funds. Please note: This is a one-time corporate contribution. We are allocating and tracking these funds very carefully. In all "gross revenue" (revenue before expenditures) came in at \$191.4k compared to the \$150.8k we expected. This result demonstrates the impact of the one-time contribution from The City of Worcester.

We also had four streams of revenue that were deposited just outside the January to December dates:

Greater Worcester Community Foundation's Operation Grant (GWCF) - \$10,000: GWCF Strategic Planning Grant - \$8,000: Fox Funds - \$1500: and Clemente Worcester Annual Fund match kindness of the Clearbrook Fund iof the GWCF - \$10,000. Including these, current revenue for the year totalled \$220,902.97.

We are grateful to our many donors and partners and especially to The Family of Curt Curtin who under the leadership of his wife, Dee O'Connor, has created our seventh endowment at GWCF with a gift of \$5000 which was matched with \$5000 from our ARPA funds. We look forward to seeing it grow. Respectfully submitted,

Mary Driscoll, Treasurer



Budget vs. Actuals FY24

January - December 2024

	Actual	Budget	Total over Budget
REVENUE			
4010 Individual Contributions	9,616.40	14,709.31	-5,092.91
4020 Corporate Contributions	83,500.00	15,000.00	68,500.00
4230 Foundation / Trust Grants	53,714.00	67,934.00	-14,220.00
4231 Mass Humanities Admin Grant	10,000.00	10,000.00	0.00
4232 GWCF Community Support		9,000.00	-9,000.00
4233 GWCF Strategic Planning Grant		8,000.00	-8,000.00
4234 Rain Poetry - Academy of American Poets	15,000.00	15,000.00	0.00
4235 Fox Funds		1,500.00	-1,500.00
Total 4230 Foundation / Trust Grants	78,714.00	111,434.00	-32,720.00
5180 Program Service Fees			
5181 Annual Contest Fees		300.00	-300.00
5182 Clemente Faculty Stipends	15,750.00		15,750.00
5183 Workshop		350.00	-350.00
Total 5180 Program Service Fees	15,750.00	650.00	15,100.00
5210 Membership Dues	3,617.33	7,100.00	-3,482.67
5300 TWR Revenue	205.24	2,000.00	-1,794.76
Total Revenue	191,402.97	150,893.31	40,509.66
GROSS REVENUE	191,402.97	150,893.31	40,509.66
EXPENDITURES			
7500 Consultant and Contractor Expenses	1,100.00	31,000.00	-29,900.00
7515 Consultants & Contractors	39,009.96	25,200.00	13,809.96
7520 Accounting Fees	3,506.90	4,000.00	-493.10
7540 Clemente Stipends	57,977.78	25,000.00	32,977.78
7550 Other Services	100.00		100.00
Total 7500 Consultant and Contractor Expenses	101,694.64	85,200.00	16,494.64
7600 TWR Honoraria	754.78	1,600.00	-845.22
8100 Supplies, Web, Etc.			
8110 Supplies	2,202.60	415.00	1,787.60
8120 Web Hosting Fees	359.88	620.00	-260.12
8121 Website Expenses		2,250.00	-2,250.00
8130 Telephone & Communications	19.99	456.00	-436.01
8140 Postage & Shipping	500.37	1,321.16	-820.79
8170 Printing & Copying		4,000.00	-4,000.00
8180 Books, Subscription & Reference	988.01		988.01
8190 Bank & Merchant Fees	65.79	100.00	-34.21
Total 8100 Supplies, Web, Etc.	4,136.64	9,162.16	-5,025.52
8210 Rent / Lease	24,188.29	20,926.43	3,261.86

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS FY24

Budget vs. Actuals FY24

January - December 2024

	Actual	Budget	Total over Budget
8300 Travel & Meetings			
8310 Travel	71.65	500.00	-428.35
8320 Meetings & Conferences	648.30		648.30
8330 Meeting Meal	100.22	1,500.00	-1,399.78
Total 8300 Travel & Meetings	820.17	2,000.00	-1,179.83
8400 Event Expenses	14,337.22	7,400.00	6,937.22
8410 Frank O'Hara	375.00	650.00	-275.00
8420 Poet Pourri	600.00	500.00	100.00
8430 Stockmal		700.00	-700.00
8440 Fox Fest	790.00	1,500.00	-710.00
8450 Rain Poetry	4,415.17	15,000.00	-10,584.83
8460 College Contest	370.00	400.00	-30.00
8470 Stanley Kunitz Medal	201.51	1,160.00	-958.49
8480 Dan Lewis Fellowship	2,000.00	2,500.00	-500.00
8490 Stockmal Reading		630.00	-630.00
Total 8400 Event Expenses	23,088.90	30,440.00	-7,351.10
8532 Dues and Subscriptions	336.26	1,011.00	-674.74
8570 Advertising Expenses	551.68	1,156.00	-604.32
8580 Filing Fees		100.00	-100.00
8581 Donations	2,000.00		2,000.00
8600 Supplies for Programs	843.72	8,791.72	-7,948.00
Total Expenditures	158,415.08	160,387.31	-1,972.23
NET OPERATING REVENUE	32,987.89	-9,494.00	42,481.89
OTHER REVENUE			
5310 Interest Income	6.55	22.00	-15.45
6800 Realized/Unrealized Gains/Losses	37,404.19		37,404.19
Total Other Revenue	37,410.74	22.00	37,388.74
OTHER EXPENDITURES			
9000 GWCF Administrative Fees	3,971.89		3,971.89
Total Other Expenditures	3,971.89	0.00	3,971.89
NET OTHER REVENUE	33,438.85	22.00	33,416.85
NET REVENUE	\$66,426.74	\$ -9,472.00	\$75,898.74

BUDGET VS. ACTUALS FY24

Statement of Financial Position FY24

As of December 31, 2024

	As of Dec 31, 2024	As of Sep 30, 2024 (PP)	Total
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Bank Accounts			
1030 Paypal	4,332.64		4,332.64
1040 LCU TWR Checking	1,099.30		1,014.64
1041 LCU Membership Savings (0000)	5.00		5.00
1050 MNB Checking (8031)	18,717.47		21,266.06
1060 MNB Savings (8049)	7,521.79		7,520.84
1070 MNB CD (8015)	20,408.67		20,408.67
1075 MNB Admin 1050	5,411.86		6,711.85
1080 MNB Strategic Planning	1,000.00		8,000.00
1085 MNB Writers (0358)	500.00		500.00
BOA Clemente Bank Account (NEW)	19,590.36		13,988.70
Total Bank Accounts	78,587.09		83,748.40
Other Current Assets			
Undeposited Funds	80,062.00		72.00
Total Other Current Assets	80,062.00		72.00
Total Current Assets	158,649.09		83,820.40
Fixed Assets			
1300 Website	10,000.00		10,000.00
1350 Accumulated Depreciation	-12,700.00		-12,700.00
1600 Fixed Assets			
1640 Fixed Asset Furniture	1,352.84		1,352.84
1670 Computers / Office Hardware	14,396.85		13,972.91
Total 1600 Fixed Assets	15,749.69		15,325.75
Total Fixed Assets	13,049.69		12,625.75
Other Assets			
1500 GWCF Agency Fund			
1510 Founders' Fund	39,205.07		39,250.61
1520 Worcester Review Endowment Fund	100,301.66		100,418.21
1530 Stanley Kunitz Award Fund	25,753.03		25,782.98
1540 Gregory Stockmal Reading Fund	19,417.52		20,073.00
1550 College Contest Fund	12,215.56		12,229.75
1560 Dan Lewis Memorial Poetry Fund	104,371.11		108,039.35
Total 1500 GWCF Agency Fund	301,263.95		305,793.90
Greater Worcester Community Foundation	1,000.00		
Total Other Assets	302,263.95		305,793.90
TOTAL ASSETS	\$473,962.73		\$402,240.05

	As of Dec 31, 2024	As of Sep 30, 2024 (PP)	Total
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
Liabilities			
Current Liabilities			
Credit Cards			
2100 BOA Card	-53.77		3,698.62
Total Credit Cards	-53.77		3,698.62
Total Current Liabilities	-53.77		3,698.62
Total Liabilities	-53.77		3,698.62
Equity			
3000 Net Assets	405,589.76		405,589.76
Board Restricted Funds	0.00		0.00
2023 Poet Pourri Event	100.00		100.00
2023 Rain Poetry	1,337.91		1,337.91
Administrator Contract Position	5,376.72		5,376.72
Annual Contest The Frank O'Hara Prize	70.70		70.70
The Worcester Review	4,043.43		3,566.34
Total Board Restricted Funds	10,928.76		10,451.67
Opening Balance Equity	2,000.00		2,000.00
Restricted Funds Contra Account	-10,928.76		-10,451.67
Net Revenue	66,426.74		-9,048.33
Total Equity	474,016.50		398,541.43
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$473,962.73		\$402,240.05

04 PROGRAMMING AT THE WCPA 2024

CELEBRATING POETRY THROUGH COMMUNITY AND COLLABORATION



WCPA sponsored the Thirsty Lab on Zoom hosted by Susan Roney O'Brien with technical support from Lex Thomas. Sixteen readings with over 300 supporters.

Susan also coordinated **The Gregory Stockmal Reading** on 9/26 at Clark University featuring poet Mary Bonina. Phil Lamos coordinated from the Clark end. Over 40 patrons.

The Women's Zoom Reading on 3/10 had 25 poetic voices.

Poet-pourri 3 was held on 5/8 featuring the works of nine divergent writers. Over 40 in attendance. Joe Fusco Jr hosted.

Joe Fusco, Jr. also hosts the WCPA-sponsored Richard Fox Poetry Series at Root and Press Books and Cafe where a monthly feature and open mic honors the memory of Worcester poet Richard Fox. Twenty people are the average crowd.

The Poetry Extravaganza is a monthly event promoted by the WCPA that is financially self-sustaining. It ran for two years at Redemption Rock Brewery and will rise again on 3/19 at The Mill in West Boylston. Also, hosted by Joe Fusco Jr.

The WCPA helped to select the poets for Arts in The Garden for a 3rd year at an outdoor venue in Worcester hosted by Carl Gomes.

The 1st FoxFest was held on 11/21 at Bedlam Books coordinated by Irena Kaci and Bruja the Villain.

Daniel Letona was the winner of the slam-poetry contest. The WCPA FoxFund supported the event.



Daniel Letona

The WCPA once again assisted the National Baseball Poetry Festival in promoting its events in early May and hosted their open mic at Boland's Irish Bar.

Respectfully submitted,
Joe Fusco, Jr., VP Programming

ANNUAL POETRY CONTEST: THE FRANK O'HARA PRIZE 2024

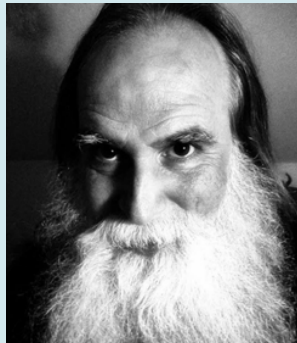
PRESENTED BY IRENA KACI AND JOE FUSCO JR., CONTEST CO-CHAIRS.

Another successful year for the WCPA's Annual Poetry Contest: The Frank O'Hara Prize is complete. We held an in-person Winners' Reading on September 22, 2024, in the Boardroom at 61 Harvard Street.

The 2024 winners are as follows:

First Place

Paul Szlosek of Worcester, Massachusetts, for his poem "*Neither In Nor Out*"



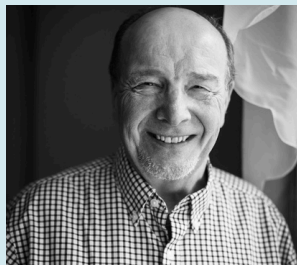
Second Place

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy of Worcester, Massachusetts, for "*Off the Coast of Trapani*"



Third Place

Art DuBois of Uxbridge, Massachusetts, for "*Senses*"



Honorable Mention

Matt Zingg of Waltham, Massachusetts, for "*Maturity*"



Our contest judge in 2024 was Dennis Barone. Barone is the author of seven books of short fiction, including *On the Bus: Selected Stories* (Blaze Vox, 2012). He is also the author of two novellas, *Temple of the Rat* (Left Hand Books, 2000) and *God's Whisper* (Spuyten Duyvil, 2005), and the author of a collection of prose poems, *The Walls of Circumstance* (Avec Books, 2004). Bordighera Press published his study of Italian-American narrative *America / Trattabili* in 2011. Barone is editor of *Beyond the Red Notebook: Essays on Paul Auster* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), *New Hungers for Old: One-Hundred Years of Italian-American Poetry* (Star Cloud Press, 2011), and *Garnet Poems: An Anthology of Connecticut Poetry Since 1776* (Wesleyan University Press, 2012). He is Professor Emeritus at the University of Saint Joseph, and currently serves as the Poetry Editor for the *Wallace Stevens Journal* and as President of the Hartford Friends and Enemies of Wallace Stevens.

Seventy people submitted a total of 188 poems, an increase from 2023. 74% of submissions came in via Submittable, the online portal we leverage, thanks to *The Worcester Review*. The remaining entries came in by mail. **DeMisty Bellinger** is our 2025 Contest Judge. Irena Kaci manages the 2025 Frank O'Hara Prize.

06 THE DAN LEWIS FELLOWSHIP ANNUAL REPORT

JUDGES SUSSY SANTANA, KYLE POTVIN AND RODNEY OBIEN SELECTED WORCESTER POET JOSÉ DANIEL LETONA GONZALES AS THE RECIPIENT OF THE 2025 DAN LEWIS POETRY FELLOWSHIP.



Poet José Daniel Letona Gonzales, recipient of the 2025 Dan Lewis Poetry Fellowship.

Letona Gonzales is a Honduran poet who, after graduating as a graphic designer, moved to the United States to pursue a career in software development. During this journey, he found himself confronting questions of culture and personal identity. In Cambridge, he discovered slam poetry, a medium that ignited an exploration of self-discovery and meaning.

Through his poetry, Daniel delves into his cultural roots, memories, and trauma while also highlighting the transformative power of spoken word. He views spoken word as his heritage —a way of preserving knowledge across generations.

He indicated he will use the fellowship to visit and rediscover the Mayan ruins so essential to his Central American indigenous history.



ABOUT DAN LEWIS:

Dan Lewis started writing poetry and short stories in his teens and did it sporadically through college and while in Provincetown. Upon moving to Worcester, he became acquainted and involved with the Worcester County Poetry Association. This was a turning point in his poetry as he was now in a community that offered support, assistance, and encouragement. Through this organization, he learned about many opportunities and, with assistance, could attend the Dodge Festival several times and the Monadnock Pastoral Writers Retreat. In addition, upon retirement, he had the time to publish three poetry collections and one chapbook.



Dan Lewis

Dan published five poetry collections, won the Frank O'Hara Prize in 2012, and was awarded the Stanley Kunitz Medal in 2016. He described himself this way: "Lives on the edge of Worcester's Patch Reservoir. Old enough to know better, he finds himself walking in the world agog."

About the Fellowship:

After his death, Dan Lewis's family created an endowment managed by the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Worcester County Poetry Association to support an annual fellowship bequest in his name to provide an aspiring Worcester County poet the means to fulfill a need in that poet's development that might otherwise go unmet. The 2025 Fellowship award will be \$2,500.

Fellowship Guidelines:

The fellowship limits the use of the funds provided to support, nurture, and develop the literary capacities of an annual recipient poet via education, engagement, related travel expenses, and literary research and production that will best nurture that poet's creativity.

- The applicant must be a legal resident of Worcester County, Massachusetts.
- The applicant will demonstrate how this fellowship will fill a need not otherwise readily available to the poet. Upon notification, the recipient will receive 80% of the fellowship award to be awarded at the WCPA's Annual Meeting.
- The remaining 20% will be paid upon the WCPA receiving a final certification to the community (within 30 days of the conclusion of the fellowship, which generally would arise one year after the award).
- Such a report could include, as examples as reading, publication, or talk showcasing how the fellowship supported the poet's development.
- This report should include a one-page document detailing the fellowship's support to the poet.
- Three judges independently judge each application to determine the 2025 recipient fellow, ensuring as much equity as possible.

07 STANLEY KUNITZ MEDAL AWARD

THE 10TH STANLEY KUNITZ MEDAL WAS CONFERRED AT A CEREMONY ON THURSDAY, JULY 25TH FROM 6:30 – 8:30 P.M. AT THE WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM.

The recipient, Rodger Martin, was honored for his lifelong commitment to poetry, therefore emulating the spirit and energy of Worcester native, Stanley Kunitz (1905-2006). Speakers included William Wallace, Executive Director of the museum and WCPA President Elizabeth Bacon.

Committee members John Hodgen, Heather J. Macpherson, and Susan Elizabeth Sweeney read poems by Stanley Kunitz, followed by the keynote reading by Rodger Martin. The event closed with a 1991 recording of Stanley Kunitz reading “My Mother’s Pears.”

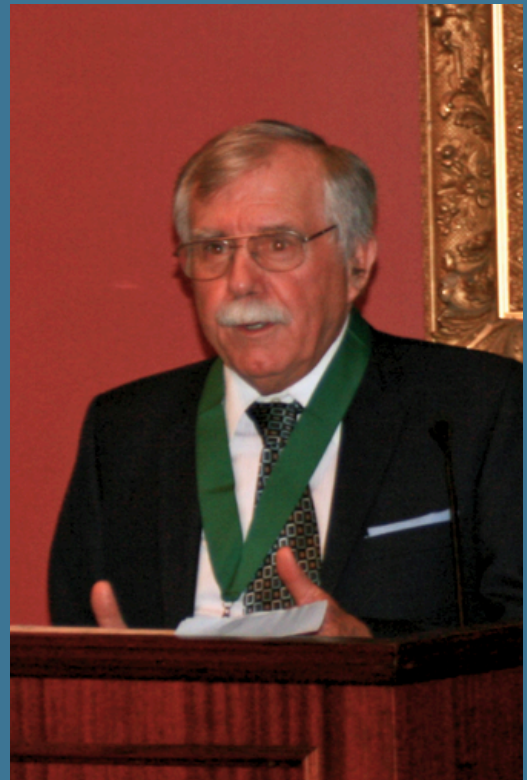
Music was supplied by writer, poet, and musician Mark Wagner. Refreshments followed, including a sheet cake displaying an image of the medal, which was donated by Carol Stockmal, curator/owner of the Stanley Kunitz Boyhood Home.

Committee members Joe Fusco Jr., Heather Macpherson and John Hodgen also donated refreshments. A Power Point slide show featuring images from the nine previous ceremonies was shown before and after the ceremony.

Photographer John Gaumond, who was unable to attend, designated A.J. Leto to document the event; John created two memento booklets, one of which was presented to Rodger Martin, while the second will be archived with the collection at 4 Woodford Street. R

Rodger’s name was added to the medal’s plaque, also donated by Carol Stockmal, which displays all recipients’ names and is kept at Woodford Street.

Respectfully submitted by **Judith Ferrara, Committee Chair, 2022-2024.**



Rodger Martin

08 COLLEGE CONTEST 2024

We hosted it on Sunday April 21st 1-3pm in the Boardroom. Our Judges were Tarique Cooper, and Matthew Henry. The winner for the Bishop Manuscript Prize was Joss Bracero, of Worcester State, and the runner-up was Regina Valencia, of WPI. The winner of the Knight Performance prize was Morgan Flodman, of Assumption, and the runner-up was Rudra Patel of MCPHS. It was well attended and really fun.

RAIN POETRY 2024

Our fourth year of the Rain Poetry Project has been our biggest yet! In 2023 we opened our call for poems to all poets within Worcester county; in 2024 we expanded our number of poems from 13 to 25 and included age categories for school-age poets in Worcester County. Our poems were heard on the airways at WCUW and videographer Ben Oliver created an informational video for the project that is now proudly posted on the WCPA website.



*Stencil Letters on Picnic Bench
at Broadmeadow*



Vanessa Gonzalez-Oyola and her children, 2024 Rain Poet JE. rome, 2023 Rain Poet Daniel Gregoire and daughter, and 2021 Rain Poet Elijah Johnson

2024 Rain Poets, in no particular order

- Lea Bisceglia with “A Walk in the Woo”
- Laura Solis-Matthew with “[tripping over cracks]”
- JE. rome with “Dear Worcester,”
- Lori Cornelius with “[Bumpy sidewalks]”
- Emma Couillard with “Goldenrod”

- Sarah Chestnut with “I turn back, umbrellaless”
- Rosanna Garcia and Leticia Garcia Bradford with “Aging in Place”
- Pamela Gemme with “Worcester Pouring Rain”
- Edward Beale with “You Belong”
- Maia Campbell with “When you asked me to go”
- Elizabeth Bacon with “Cherry Blossom Snow”
- Marissa Eleni Lourake with “[Bridges and benches - Elm Park]”
- Fadi Yousef with “Quinsigamond Lake”

Grades 9-12

- Asa Oywech with “The Divine Voices of Worcester”
- Leandro Jean-Pierre with “[Growing up in Worcester’s embraces]”
- Aidan Moon with “A place in my heart”

Grades 6-8

- Isabella Frauches with “[I feel each drop of water soaking my clothes]”
- Dylan Stankus with “The Summer Side”
- Jaryn Hazard with “Nature of Spring”

Grades 3-5

- Cyrus Acquista with “Busy days and relaxing nights”
- Lily Joh Chestnut with “Peace”
- Finn Horan with “[MCAS buy the gum]”

Grades PK-2

- Carmyne Acquista with “Burncoat neighborhood”
- Joel Cummings with “[Out my window I see birds:]”
- Noah Cummings with “[I like nature camp]”

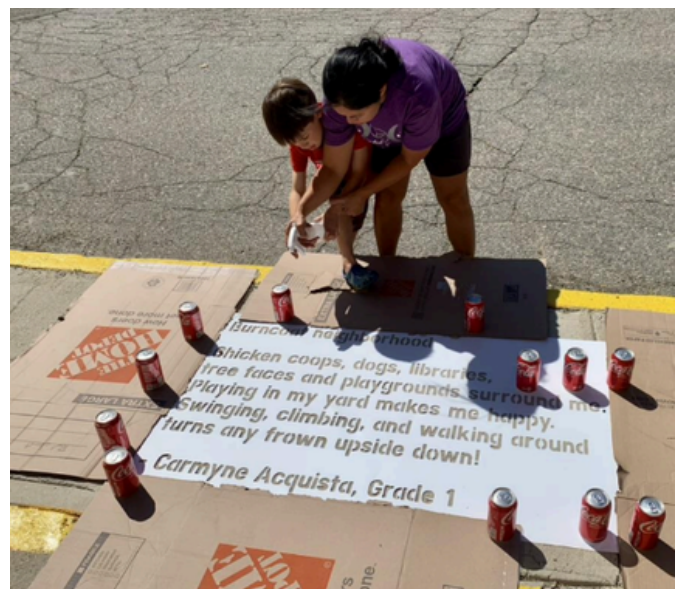
2024 Rain Poetry Honorable Mentions

- Maia Campbell with “Bancroft’s Notes”
- Elizabeth Bacon with “Treat Athlete”
- Peter Horan with “[Cone Island’s hot dogs]” (6th Grade)

A grant from the American Academy of Poets completely funded this expanded Rain Poetry Project, with special funds designated for a future publication of all four years of Rain Poems. The grant is part of a fellowship awarded to Oliver de la Paz.

To drum up excitement for the 2024 Call for Poems, we brought our Rain Poets to the air waves at local radio station WCUW and hosted writing workshops at the Grafton Public Library. Rain Poets from previous years, including John Zywar, Fadi Yousef, and Evan Plante, recorded their poems at the WCUW station as brief “Rain Drops” that played in between songs. Kate Gregoire hosted three workshops at Grafton Public Library for young children, for teens, and for adults respectively.

In the first weekend in September, teams of volunteers, including many Rain poets from this and previous years, prepped stencils and painted their poems at bus stops around Worcester and at the schools of the winning student poets using Rainworks’ hydrophobic paint and stencils as large as 18 square feet. Although there was a significant lack of rain in the fall of 2024, the Rain Poems were visible well through November to pedestrians in Worcester when the droplets started falling from the sky again.



Mother Rosa Nguyen with 2024 Rain Poet Carmyne Acquista

We encouraged submissions from poets of all ages, walks of life, and in any language that spoke to the poets' experience of Worcester. The poems were selected in blind readings by a panel of judges that included Worcester Poet Laureate Oliver de la Paz, WCPA Board Member and 2022 Rain Poet Tarique Cooper, Clemente Graduate Walter Molina, 2021 Rain Poet and Worcester Writers' Collective director Brett Iarrobino, and 2023 Frank O'Hara Prize winning poet Rebecca Cross.

The 2024 Rain Poets will read their poems at a ceremony open to the public at the JMAC Pop-Up Space on Sunday, April 13th at 4:00pm. We will launch the 2025 Call for Poems at this event as well as our plans for a Rain Poetry publication.



Rain Poem at the Indian Lake Community Garden

MAPPING WORCESTER IN POETRY NEWS, MARCH 2025

WORCESTERCOUNTYPOETRY.ORG/MAPPING-WORCESTER-IN-POETRY/
CONTACT: SUSAN ELIZABETH SWEENEY, [SSWEENEY@HOLYCROSS.EDU](mailto:ssweeney@holycross.edu)



Here's the latest news about Mapping Worcester in Poetry, an initiative funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation (through Scholarship in Action at Holy Cross) and directed by Susan Elizabeth "Beth" Sweeney, with the Worcester County Poetry Association as community partner and Katherine Gregoire as liaison with the WCPA.

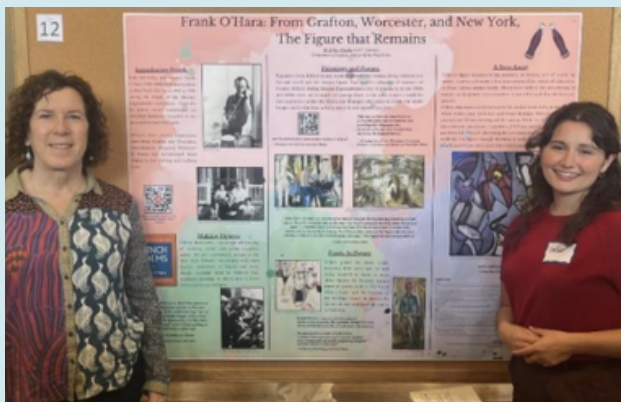
MWiP identifies, documents, and marks sites related to some of the city's best-known poets—including Stanley Kunitz, Elizabeth Bishop, Charles Olson, Frank O'Hara, Etheridge Knight, Mary Fell, and Chris Gilbert—while nurturing brand-new poetry about places in Worcester and Central Massachusetts.

MWiP Project Update

In fall 2024, Beth worked with two new student research associates, Madeleine "Tessa" Whalen-Zafón and Anna Claire Pruitt, who identified places and objects mentioned in poems; profiled neighborhoods; and documented poetry organizations and venues for "The Poem Next Door," a collaborative exhibit with the Worcester Historical Museum that opens in May 2025. We acquired an official MWiP "feather" and redesigned our webpage. In 2024, the project was featured in the Holy Cross Magazine, Worcester Magazine, and The Spire. Pictured from left: associates Anahi Paulino Rumaldo '27, Anna Claire Pruitt '26, Beth, Ava Mareanna '26, and Tessa Whalen-Zafón '26; absent: Katie Knippler '22.



Frank O'Hara and the Human Figure



Tessa Whalen-Zafón won a grant in summer 2024 to work for MWiP on two virtual, driving, and walking tours devoted to O'Hara—one in Grafton, one in downtown Worcester—and to conduct archival research at UConn and the Museum of Modern Art. With Beth's help, she compared traces of people in O'Hara's poems to abstract expressionists' depictions of human figures. Tessa's research was profiled in Holy Cross Magazine. Pictured: Beth and Tessa with her poster at the Summer Research Symposium.

“Across the Mutual Landscape”: Feature Section in the Fall 2024 Worcester Review

MWiP’s major accomplishment in 2024 was a feature section of the Worcester Review, edited by Susan Elizabeth Sweeney, that explores how poems about shared spaces in our city can connect us across the generations.

It focuses on six Worcester poets whose work evokes interiority, geography, urban environments, and movement through space: Kunitz, Olson, Bishop, O’Hara, Fell, and Gilbert. The feature section includes seven scholarly essays on their spatial poetics; seven new poems, mostly from entries to MWiP’s “Poems in and out of Places” contest, about locations related to these writers; and historic photos of sites mentioned in the poems.



As an additional bonus, “Across the Mutual Landscape” offers a new poem by Fell and an interview with her. Pictured: Covering the Blackstone River canal on Green Street, 1895-1905; courtesy, Worcester Historical Museum.

Elizabeth Bishop Graveside Readings

MWiP hosted two annual readings at Bishop’s grave in Hope Cemetery. At our birthday celebration on February 7—this year titled “Elizabeth Bishop’s Love Poems & Valentines”—a dozen local poets performed her dry, sardonic valentines and tender, intimate love poems, many unpublished during her lifetime. At our memorial reading on October 11—“Elizabeth Bishop: Paintings in Poems”—readers shared her poems about drawings, paintings, or scenes sketched with a painter’s eye.



Literary Social and Valentine Workshop

On February 6, 2024, at Holy Cross’s Dinand Library, Susan Elizabeth Sweeney spoke about the history of the American valentine (including the pivotal role played by Esther Howland of Worcester) and its significance for Massachusetts poets, especially Boston-born Edgar Allan Poe, Amherst native Emily Dickinson, and Worcester’s own Elizabeth Bishop. Afterwards, participants crafted their own valentines. This event was cosponsored with Holy Cross Libraries and the Holy Cross English Department.

Opening Reception: Correspondence (for Elizabeth Bishop)

On October 4, 2024, Elizabeth Bacon, Beth, and Heather Treseler represented MWiP and WCPA at the opening reception for the installation of Crystalle Lacouture’s new wall painting, Correspondence (for Elizabeth Bishop) at the Worcester Art Museum. Pictured: We had the best view of Lacouture’s painting in the entire building from our display table on the second-floor balcony!

11 THE CLEMENTE COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES, WORCESTER



In late September 2023, Clemente Worcester celebrated its tenth academic year at the Worcester Art Museum and Trinity Lutheran Church with a full cohort of 29 students. It was a year full of joy and celebration in honor of all the support we have received from so many organizations and individuals over the past decade, and most importantly, our dedicated and committed students.

In early May, we staged an art action in partnership with The Inside/Out Project and The Worcester Art Museum. 50 original portraits of our students, faculty, Advisory Board members, supporters and alumni were enlarged and pasted to the outside of the Worcester Art Museum's Lancaster Street entrance. (See photos).

On the Saturday before graduation, we hosted a Dance Party for supporters, students, faculty and alumni. (See photos.) At the party, Worcester Clemente graduate, Walter Molina, Class of 2022 was awarded the Trachtenberg Prize in the Humanities by Academic Director, Amy Richter (seated in photo). A great time was had by all.

In addition, our Community Coordinator, Elizabeth Bacon, was awarded The 2023 Governor's Award in the Humanities by Mass Humanities and she and Clemente graduate, Vanessa Gonzalez-Oyola spoke at the Worcester Art Museum's Annual Meeting.

Recruiting was accomplished, for a second year, by Jude Samuels, an 2018 graduate. 65 applications were received and 41 people were interviewed. Three students who had not completed last year's class returned to try again. Every year we remain true to our motto, "Once a Clemente student, always a Clemente student."



*Walter Molina, center, with Amy Richter, seated and friends
Clemente Worcester's Trachtenberg prize in the Humanities' 2024*

With great excitement, faculty, graduates, and Advisory Board members welcomed the new class and their families at a Community Dinner held in their honor on Tuesday, September 27th at Trinity Lutheran Church. Orientation followed the dinner at the Worcester Art Museum.

Thanks to the generosity of Mass Humanities, our largest funder and supporter, all students were supplied with Chromebooks and internet connections, if needed. Chromebooks have allowed class to go on-line when necessary. However, it is our belief that The Clemente Course is best taught in person. It is important that we all bring our full selves into conversation with each other. Clemente's power lies in the structure of the living classroom, where each participant joins together to "repost the street signs, fight propaganda with poetry and find our way on the long road to knowledge in the aftermath of atrocity." (Jill Lepore, The Last Archive Podcast, titles, "the Inner Front," May 13, 2021.)



All faculty returned:

Kristin Boudreau, PhD, Instructor of Literature, WPI (<https://www.wpi.edu/people/faculty/kboudreau>)

Elissa Chase, PHD and JD, Instructor of Art History, Assumption
<https://www.assumption.edu/people-and-departments/directory/elissa-chase-jd>.

Laura Kane, PHD, Instructor of Philosophy, Worcester State
<https://www.worcester.edu/Faculty-Profiles/Philosophy/Laura-Wildemann-Kane/>.

Amy Richter, PHD, Chair of the History Department at Clark University
<https://www2.clarku.edu/faculty/facultybio.cfm?=335> continued in her leadership role as Academic Director.

Claudia Bastante, www.monanoart.com, continued in her leadership role as Clemente Children's Program Manager. This year, she was joined by her husband, **Jack Bastante**, as her assistant. Our excellent children's program mirrors for the children of our students what their parents are learning so that they all can talk more about it at home.

2023 Summer Bridge Course Instructor, **Lucia Knoles**, PHD, Assumption University, <https://assumption.edu/people-and-departments/directory/lucia-z-knoles-phd>, invented a totally new pedagogy which she calls a "Story Circle." We recruited a mix of new students and graduates for this hybrid course. The course resulted in the culminating, self-printed publication, "Finding our way Home: Members of Worcester's Clemente Course in the Humanities share their stories." This collection of student work is also published on www.masshumanities.org.

Our 2025 Graduation will be held for the fourth year in The American Antiquarian Society's Antiquarian Hall on Saturday, May 10th at 2pm. All are welcome.

We thank our wonderful Advisory Board; our funding partners: Mass Humanities, The Alden Trust, The Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Clark University, QCC, Anna Maria College and The Clearbrook Fund of the Greater Worcester Community Foundation; our program hosts: the Worcester Art Museum and Trinity Lutheran Church; our faculty, alumni, and students for another inspiring year of thoughtful dialogue and community making during these challenging and fractious times. Most importantly, we thank the WCPA for everything it does to make Clemente Worcester possible. It is a joy to be under your roof.

Respectfully submitted,

Elizabeth Bacon, Community Coordinator,

The Clemente Course in the Humanities, Worcester WCPA Board Member

"Between friends, there is no need of justice, but people who are just need the quality of friendship, and indeed friendliness is considered to be justice in the fullest sense. It is not only a necessary thing, but a splendid one." Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book VII, Ch. 1

12 THE WORCESTER WRITER'S COLLECTIVE ANNUAL REPORT 2024 2024

The Worcester Writers' Collective (or WWC) enjoyed an incredible year of growth, success, and community in 2024! From January 1st through December 31st, we held 45 individual weekly Tuesday night meetings at the Jean McDonough Arts Center, which continues to gracefully and generously provide us with a home for most of our ongoing activity. Across those 45 meetings, 128 individual writers attended some or all of the 3-hour process, including our one-hour period of silent reading, revising, and editing, followed by our two-hour reading and workshopping of attendees' writing. Several of our meetings hosted Q&A seminars or workshops featuring established, seasoned writers in our network, including Yasmine Ameli, Katie Bender, Paul Iarrobino, and Matthew M. Bartlet. Weekly attendance is strong and steady, with anywhere from 20-30 writers in attendance every night, frequently calling for us to hold simultaneous meetings that strategically split up our writers based on genre, medium, and interests.



WORCESTER WRITERS' COLLECTIVE



While weekly collective meetings remain the lifeblood of our sprawling community, the leadership team is especially proud of all the meaningful ways we catalyzed local writing beyond Tuesday nights at the JMAC. In April and May 2024, we partnered with the Poetry Extravaganza to turn out our contingent of meeting attendees for two WWC

veterans featured at both mics. Collective representatives set up shop at a number of cultural events across the city to help spread the word about both the WWC and the WCPA, with tabling regularly conducted at the Poet's Cauldron, stART on the Street, Downtown Worcester BID's Out to Lunch festivals, El Salón, One Worcester, the Thicket's Thickenic, and Color the City Festival. We look forward to deepening our relationship with many of these like-minded organizations in 2025 in the true spirit of cross-pollination, and the understanding that we will all thrive and move our artistic agendas forward through collaboration.

In July and August 2024, the Worcester Writers' Collective produced its inaugural showcase, "From Page to Stage," a collection of original Worcester poetry, playwriting, and flash fiction, presented as a one-hour theatrical performance at the Prior Performing Arts Center and the JMAC's BrickBox Theater. Co-sponsored by MassHumanities and developed in partnership with the Worcester Cultural Coalition's creative residencies program, our showcase brought six different pieces of writing to life using actors, sound and lighting technicians, projections, and a commitment from everyone involved to create an entirely new vehicle for experiencing Worcester creative writing. With sold-out shows both at the Prior and the BrickBox, it is clear

this mode of storytelling is needed and desired in our city, and the WWC has every intention of institutionalizing it as an annual tradition for our programming and attendees.

The WWC is fortunate to have received funding for all this wonderful work from MassHumanities' #MH50 Years of Storytelling grant, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and 15 local cultural councils in the state, with a combined total of \$7,810 supporting our development, promotion, and cultivation of local Worcester writing. So much of the incredible success in this report was made possible by our sensible and mutually exciting relationship with WCPA, and we are incredibly grateful for their commitment to growing Worcester's literary arts scene together!



Brett Iarrobino

The contents of this report were written, reviewed, and endorsed by the entirety of the Worcester Writers' Collective leadership team. We are thrilled to share them with our friends at the Worcester County Poetry Association and look forward to many more annual reports to come.

Regards,

Brett Iarrobino, Emma Couillard, Irena Kaçi, Jeff Raymond, & Nick Baker

13 THE POETS CAULDRON ANNUAL REPORT 2024



The Poet's Cauldron is a monthly spoken word poetry open mic event in Worcester, MA, founded and hosted by multidisciplinary artist (Ana Perez) BrujaTheVillain. The event combines live music from the house band, Melo Green, with performances by poets, musicians, and artists from diverse backgrounds.

Held at the White Room on 138 Green Street from 6 to 9 pm on the third Sunday of every month, it serves as a safe and inclusive space for marginalized communities, particularly BIPOC, LGBTQ, and immigrant artists. Over the course of 13 events, The Poet's Cauldron directly engaged 185 artists and performers through our open mic series. Additionally, we proudly featured 12 headlining artists as part of our programming. Collectively, these events attracted an estimated total of 960 attendees, with an average audience size of approximately 80 guests per event.



14 ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE WORCESTER REVIEW 2024

It's been a whirlwind year taking over duties as editor-in-chief of The Worcester Review. I want to thank my predecessor, Carolyn Oliver, for her generous help with the transition, as well as the staff:

Poetry Editors

- Therese Gleason
- Mandy Gutmann-Gonzalez
- Hope Jordan
- Tianli Kilpatrick
- Karen Elizabeth Sharpe
- David Thoreen

Art Editor

- Joe Aguilar

Feature Editor

- Susan Elizabeth Sweeney

Fiction Editors

- Joe Aguilar
- Mandy Gutmann-Gonzalez
- Cheryl Isaac
- Rachel Lloyd
- Heather Long
- Eve Rifka

Contributing Editor

- Kate McIntyre

We're saddened to learn that our printer, Hobblebush Press, has closed its doors, which has us looking for a new printer on short notice to publish Issue 45. As we work on that, submissions for Issue 46 has just begun, which we hope to complete by the holidays so we can get back on schedule. Transitions can be learning experiences, and we hope to take these life lessons into 2025 and beyond.

Phil Lemos (he, him, his)

Visiting Assistant Professor for Creative Writing Coordinator,
Creative Writing Major, Department of English, Clark University

PUBLIC PROGRAM MANAGER AND OUTREACH COORDINATOR'S REPORT



Irena Kaçi

This year has been filled with opportunities and changes. Of note, the WCPA has expanded its reach into the community through the following projects:

Strategic Planning Grant

In October 2023, the WCPA was granted \$8,000 by the GWCF to engage in Strategic Planning. To that end, we began engaging in earnest self-assessment and community engagement to gather information for the process.

In partnership with our fiscal sponsee The Worcester Writers' Collective, we became fixtures at a variety of local festivals, and weekly local community events, including things like Lunch on the Commons, the Poet's Cauldron, and countless others. During our tabling process, we disseminated a survey, collecting information about how we are viewed, where we have room for growth, and what we are known for.

After spending most of the spring and summer, collecting information about our public image as well as how we can best serve our community, we began our final stretch of writing the strategic plan in the fall. I attended a series of 'Board Governance' workshops through ONEWorcester, and began understanding the structure of the document. In September, I called a meeting of local Artistic and Literary nonprofits to engage possible partnerships and learn more about our role in the Worcester Nonprofit scene. We were able to meet with Fabian Barracks, Worcester Cultural Development Officer. The meeting was a precursor to our internal training, and served as an on-ramp toward the high-speed journey of self-discovery.

The Board hired Wayne Daigle, of Business Performance Collaborative to host an all day workshop during which our Board Members, as well as myself came to terms with the results of our research, and clearly defined our vision for the future. Together we spent a whole Saturday really taking apart the nitty gritty of our vision and finding our own common ground. The key to the process was the copious notes being taken by Daigle's assistant Lily Daigle. We left that meeting with a clear vision and a united voice.

The months of October, November and December were spent writing and revising draft after draft of the document that will outline the path for the next 5 years. By the end of the year, we had a comprehensive and immaculately designed product in hand, of which we are very proud. With the clear articulation of our plan, we intend to attract similarly minded visionaries and entrepreneurs with whom we will transform the Central Massachusetts Literary landscape.

The Worcester Writers' Collective Partnership

The Worcester Writers' Collective Partnership is the gift that keeps on giving. Brett Iarrobino is now a vetted Board Member, who manages our newsletter and Emma Couillard has been attending committee meetings and participating in advancing our programming. But, the WWC is a force in and of itself. In the Summer of 2024, the WWC mounted their first showcase, twice.

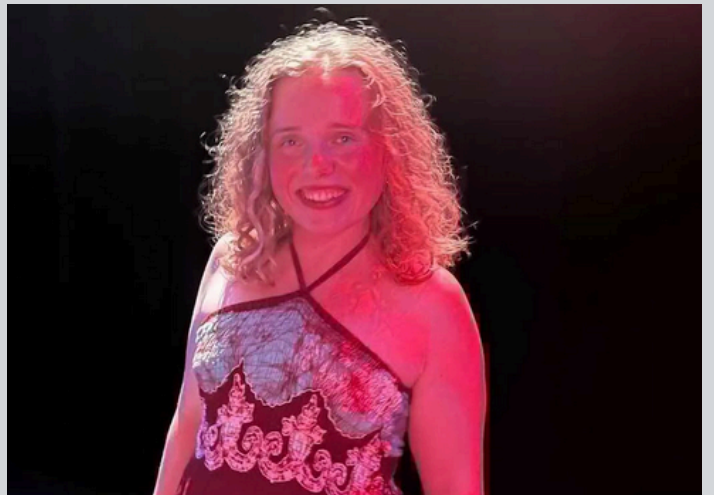
The WWC partnered with Holy Cross University and was able to use the Prior Center's Booth Media Lab to present six different performances written and produced by its members. The show then took place again at the Jean McDonough Arts Center, both times exceeding expectations.

The WWC added recurring guest writers/speakers to their roster of programming, hosting speakers on playwriting, poetry as well as publishing. They have sustained their Editor-in-Residence program, having two such editors, who have taken on the role as additional facilitators as well. The leadership has grown from 3 to 5 people, and aims to continue to grow.

Lastly, the WWC worked tirelessly to secure grants from all over Worcester County to represent many of its members from all over Central Massachusetts.

The Poet's Cauldron

One of our massive wins of the year has been finally taking the Poet's Cauldron on as a fiscal sponsee. The Poet's Cauldron, comprised of Bruja TheVillain and Sharon Amuguni, approached the WCPA early in the year in order to join forces in collaboration and in sharing our 501c3. We are incredibly impressed and very supportive of the Poet's Cauldron's mission, and immediately began talks of expanding our reach via this collaboration.



Finally in the end of summer, Bruja TheVillain and Sharon Amuguni signed the documents to join our team, and hence the WCPA gained two more Board Members, who contribute more than their fair share to the work that we do. The Poet's Cauldron has had several wins this year, headlining Color The City Festival, and continuing to provide a quality show every month in the White Room at the Crompton Collective.

New Publication

When Rob Baker and Tarique Cooper met during one of our Board Meetings, they immediately began talking of their passion for having a new publication. After some research, Tarique and Rob discovered that the WCPA already has a past secondary publication known as the Issue. Cooper and Baker agreed to take on the revitalization of the Issue.

After making the discovery and doing the legwork, Cooper and Baker arranged a meeting with Fabian Barracks, from the Worcester Cultural Coalition to talk about the city's support of this initiative.

The City of Worcester is looking for a new dimension to their Poet Laureate program, and

having a publication that focuses discreetly on Worcester County Writers and Poets seemed like a great fit.

After a wonderful naming campaign, where several local poets and writers participated, the Issue transformed into ThreeDecker, named by local journalist Kayti Burt. While ThreeDecker has existed as a concept only this year, its conception really transformed the scope of the WCPA, as we are well poised to feature the Poets in our own community, and we look forward to the first reading period of ThreeDecker, coming up in April 2025.

stART on the street

In September of this year, the WCPA and the WWC joined forces once more to have one final chance to commune with the most well known street festival of the city. stART on the Street announced that 2024 would be its final year running, so we had no choice but to make sure that we were a part of that history. Brett Iarrobino, Nick Baker, Emma Couillard, Debbie Huard are a few of the local writers who spearheaded the effort to be present at stART and talk to all local artists who presented and all attendees.

We promoted our upcoming events, including the O'Hara Prize Reading, the Dan Lewis Fellowship, and talked a great deal about our budding publication. Though we will miss stART dearly, we are so grateful that we were able to give them the send-off they deserved.

ARPA Win

We were very fortunate to receive a whopping \$60,000.00 from the City of Worcester. Not only will this sum transform our capacity, but it also serves as an incredible validation of the work that we have done and will continue to do. We are so committed to the mission of showcasing and celebrating all literary artists of Central Massachusetts, and receiving this kind of financial boost makes our programming that much more attainable.



To The Future

This was indeed a lot for one year, but we are just getting warmed up. The WCPA is focused on engaging with our greater Worcester community and collaborating with our peers in the city. In the upcoming year we are excited to reprise our performance in all of these aforementioned events, and much more. We are always striving to serve our community and finally have a dedicated employee who is ready to listen and roll up her sleeves.

Please don't hesitate to contact us at wcpaboard@yahoo.com or irena@worcestercountypoe.org and let us know how we can better serve you in 2025!

Together we can level up the literary arts here in the heart of the commonwealth.

Thanks to our funding partners:



**Worcester County
Poetry Association**
Growing Poetry Since 1971

Worcester County Poetry Association

wcpaboard@yahoo.com

www.worcestercountypoetry.org

P.O. Box 804, Worcester , MA 01613