

Lit Youngstown
2016 Annual Report

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Letter from the Directors

We are closing in on the end of our second year, and Lit Youngstown is really feeling like a community. We look forward to seeing “our crowd” at the monthly First Wednesday readings—writers and readers from the city and suburbs; members of longstanding writing groups; students, graduates and faculty from YSU. At some point, we began pushing the tables together to make a larger space for conversation.

The poetry, fiction and non-fiction readings have been engaging and represent much breadth in the world of publishing. And many brave souls, from teens to 70s, share their work at the open mic, giving themselves a chance to hear their own writing voice, and giving us a chance to hear the kind of writing that’s happening here.

Thanks to our teaching artists, our workshops have also been a success, with many writers crossing genres to try new kinds of writing. One class continues to meet, several months after the workshop ended.

Our collaborations and events throughout the community have brought us into contact with hundreds of people from all walks of life on the South Side, North Side, East Side, West Side and downtown. Even in a blizzard, a huge room full of people came to celebrate the publication of our first book, *Phenomenal Women: Twelve Youngstown Stories*. After a staged reading, the room rose to its feet. We will never forget that meaningful night.

We have worked hard and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly. Our energy and motivation come from a deep belief that writing, reading, and storytelling, and being in the company of others engaged in these pursuits, strengthens our community and enriches our quality of life.

People often tell us that they are keeping an eye on what we’re up to, and will join us as soon as they can, after their kids get a little older, or their work schedule settles down, or they deal with a health issue. Our hope is that as writers and readers continue to find us, they will discover something interesting that fits into their schedule.

We couldn’t do it alone, and are deeply indebted to our board of directors, volunteers, participants and contributors, for believing in what we are now, and what we aspire to. We are learning from your feedback, and taking strength from your encouragement. One workshop participant’s evaluation noted, “Very privileged to have time with such a knowledgeable teacher... Was pleased with the participation from others in the class too. Thank you.”

Contributor Karen Willyoung told us, “I can hardly believe all you have accomplished in two years.” We look forward to continuing to challenge ourselves as we grow as an organization and find our place in the Valley. Thank you for being part of it all.

Liz Hill & Karen Schubert

Our Year, By the Numbers

- Numerous award-winning Ohio poets and writers graced our monthly First Wednesday stage, including Philip Brady, David Giffels, Mary Biddinger, Mary Quade, Lawrence Coates and Christopher Barzak. Dozens of writers read at the open mic after the readings. Each reading brought in between 20 and 120 audience members.
- Many of our First Wednesday featured writers, teaching artists and workshop writers saw their work published and awarded, from first-time publications to Ohioana and American Library Association awards.
- The Strand Project, a collaboration between Lit Youngstown and Selah Dessert Theatre, a production of original dramatic monologues by board of directors member Kris Harrington, played to a packed house and critical acclaim. A second year production is underway.
- The reception for *Phenomenal Women: Twelve Youngstown Stories*, held at the First Presbyterian Church, celebrated the publication of the book and honored the women whose narratives are within. The staged reading by Kim Voeks, Sierra McCorvey and board member Davita Fitzgerald, scripted by Strand Project producer Kris Harrington, received a standing ovation.
- At the East Side Better Block and North Side Corn Roast, grants from YNDC and 30 Mile Meal allowed us to give nearly 200 copies of *A Walk in the Garden*, by Dar Hosta and 6th Graders of Chaney Middle School, to neighborhood children. At the Idora Neighborhood Farmer's Market on the South Side, we wrote zip code haiku with local residents, and at the Garden District Fall Festival on the West Side, we invited visitors to write poetry on paper leaves.
- Our spring, summer and fall workshops received over 70 registrations for such topics as memoir, getting published, children's picture books and spoken word poetry. We paid our teaching artists with modest class fees or provided free workshops with Lit Youngstown funding. We also offered scholarships for those with financial need.
- For National Poetry Month we hosted poetry readings at four sites, including Gallagher's Lunch Bucket where 50 adults with disabilities from the Purple Cat joined us, many reading poems they had written.
- We partnered with visual arts venues and artists. From fall 2015 to spring 2016 at the Thomases Gallery in the Jewish Community Center, we featured 16 poets and writers at five readings, corresponding with changing visual art installations.
- Critically acclaimed native Youngstown poets Allison Davis and Rochelle Hurt, both visiting home, read at the Soap Gallery, with over two dozen in attendance, and the Soap hosted a Halloween reading with poet Jay Newman and horror writer Christopher Lesko.
- We taught several workshops for children at the South Side Arts Academy after school arts program.
- At the Summer Festival of the Arts booth, we folded stories we had selected in a contest into Storygami shapes and hosted a reading that featured three writers and a staged reading, excerpted from the Strand Project. We also drew the winning ticket for an oil painting by acclaimed local artist Christopher Leeper, splitting the \$1300 purse with the artist, nearly doubling our raffle proceeds from 2015.

- Our fall art raffle/fundraiser brought in over \$1500, and winners took home a wooden bowl, painted scarf and earrings by local artists, as well as a bundle of books written by First Wednesday visiting writers.
- We hosted a reading and literary arts business venue at the Historic Ward Bakery Spring Open Studio. We alternated readings by local poets and acoustic musicians, and brought in an independent book store, letter press business, and arts and crafts boutique.
- In conjunction with the YWCA women's artist show, we hosted a reading with creative nonfiction writer Kelly Bancroft and YA fiction writer Colleen Clayton.
- The Food for Thought Book Club met monthly to discuss books with a food theme, including *Garden of the World* by First Wednesday featured writer Lawrence Coates, and *Yes, Chef!* by Marcus Samuelsson.
- We have benefitted from the time and effort of many dozens of volunteers, who have emceed the monthly open mic; staffed tables at the neighborhood events and festivals; greeted guests, served food and sold books at the *Phenomenal Women* reception.
- YSU's internship program provided us with one graduate and two undergraduate student interns, who have worked with us on various projects, including layout and design, web writing, the *Phenomenal Women* book project, teaching at the South Side Arts Academy, communicating with visiting writers, and hosting events.
- Lit Youngstown was the lead organizer for a panel presentation on the impact of place on literary arts nonprofits. The panel will be presented at the annual conference of Association of Writers & Writing Programs (AWP), held in Washington DC February 2017. Partners in the presentation are Indiana Writers' Consortium, Literary Cleveland, Literary Detroit & Wick Poetry Center.

Our Mission, Values and Vision

Mission

The mission of Lit Youngstown is to increase opportunities for writers to hone their craft, share and publish their work; for writers to teach and support other writers; and for writers and readers to experience and enjoy the literary arts. We believe that the acts of writing and reading foster creativity, an increased understanding of the self, a strengthening of community, and a broader knowledge of the world.

Values

Our values help us achieve our goals.

- We provide a platform for writers to share their work
- We offer access to visiting writers with a wide range of styles and experience
- We pay our teaching artists
- We keep our classes affordable and inclusive
- We foster a nurturing environment for helpful critical feedback
- We collaborate with other community organizations to extend our reach and build on the work being done here
- We recruit volunteers to help broaden the face of our organization, and help strengthen our connection to individuals

Vision

We envision a society where literacy, reading, literary creativity and ideas are valued and shared, promoting empathy, self-awareness, critical analysis, active citizenship, information and knowledge.

2016 Financial Reports

Lit Youngstown
Statement of Financial Position Summary
As of December 31, 2016

ASSETS	
Bank Accounts	\$6,543
Total Current Assets	<u>\$6,543</u>
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	0
Total Liabilities	<u>0</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
NET ASSETS	\$6,543

Lit Youngstown
Statement of Activities
Year Ended Dec 31, 2016

Support and Revenue	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Total
Foundation Grants	\$1,500	\$2,600	\$4,100
Individual Contributions	3,233		3,233
Donations for Books	1,813		1,813
Workshop Fees	935		935
Total Support and Revenue	<u>7,481</u>	<u>2,600</u>	<u>10,081</u>
Expenses			
Administrative	445		445
Programs	2,989	1,588	4,577
Author/Instructor Stipends	1,539		1,539
Fundraising	830		830
Total Expenses	<u>5,803</u>	<u>1,588</u>	<u>7,391</u>
Change in Net Assets	\$1,678	\$1,012	\$2,690
Net Assets Beginning of Year			3,853
Net Assets End of Year			6,543

Thank you to all those who work to bring the light to Lit Youngstown in 2016.

Volunteer Board of Directors: Davita Fitzgerald, Kris Harrington, Melissa Papini, Sean T. Posey, William R. Soldan, Molly Toth, Debra Weaver

Volunteer Staff: Co-directors Liz Hill and Karen Schubert

Faculty: Nin Andrews Kelly Bancroft, Rebecca Barnhouse, Christopher Barzak, Terry Benton, Molly Fuller, James Hain, Robert Miltner, Rhonda Miska, Sean T. Posey, Caitlyn Ryan, Barbara Sabol

Readers: Amy Allen, Mari Alschuler, Kelly Bancroft, Christopher Barzak, Cherise Benton, Mary Biddinger, Philip Brady, Greg Brown, Savannah Campbell, Paula Clarke, Colleen Clayton, Lawrence Coates, Erin Collins, Andrew Cruickshank, Allison Davis, Jamie DeMonte, Donna DiBlasio, MB Earnhardt, Anthony Genovese, Charin George, David Giffels, Rachel Gobep, Adam Hughes, Rochelle Hurt, Arya-Francesca Jenkins, Chris Jennings, Cooper Johnson, Alec Kan, Bill Koch, Michael Kosonovitch, Bill Lawson, Christopher Lesko, Lynn Lurie, Jamie Marich, Carson Markley, Marie Messuri, Pedro Morales, Jeff Murphy, Jay Newman, Nick Palermo, Martha Pallante, Randi Barlow Pappa, Craig Paulenich, Sean T. Posey, Mary Quade, Chayla Regano, Caitlyn Ryan, Thomas Sabatini, Barbara Sabol, Lennon Sackela, Terry Shears, Johanna Slivinske, Bill Soldan, Cathy Seckman, Tobin Terry, Maddy Urig, Annie Vallas, Stephen Vidman, British Wagner, Robin Wesson, Cee Williams

Interns: Samuel Amazing, Samantha Ensminger, Adrianna Mayes

Patrons and Foundation funders (\$500 or more): The Nathalie & James Andrews Foundation, Liz Hill, Raymond J. Wean Foundation

Donors: Anonymous, Sawsan Alhaddad, Dorothy Bodnar, Louisa Berger, Sharon Braunbens, Nancy Bukaty, Lynn Cardwell, The College Club of Buffalo, Deb Cunningham, Allison Davis, James DeMonte, Kathleen Dragoman, Adam Earnhardt, Barbra Estrada, Barbara Hart, Robyn Armeni Isaac, Alex Jennings, Jessica Jewell, Elizabeth Kauffman, Miriam Klein, Ronald Kuch, Christine & Elliot Legow, Daniel Machuzak, Jeanne Mahon, Donald Martin, Angela Messenger, Robert Miltner, Janet Misel, Beesan Odeh, Neno Perrotta, Susan Russo, Barbara Sabol, Karen Schubert, Tracy Segreti, Tobin Terry, Gregory Todd, Ana Wetzl, Carol Wiegand, Karen Willyoung, Lou Yuhasz.

Volunteers & Emcees: Chris Alonso, Eric Anderson, Louisa Berger, Deborah Cunningham, Allison Davis, Sarah Davis, Adam Earnhardt, June Ewing, Tom Hetrick, Courtney Kensinger, Sarah Lowry, Sarah Mikulka, Kennedy Romeo, Christine Trinckes, Robin Wesson, Lou Yuhasz.