



# Lit Youngstown 2018 Annual Report

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Prepared by Karen Schubert and Liz Hill

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# Letter from the Director

2018 was another year for the books! We are already rounding out our fourth year. Sandy Denny's lyrics ask, *Who knows where the time goes?* But we know we have learned so much, and are grateful to have worked with talented and spirited people on several projects.

## Winter

We kicked off 2018 with an opening reception at the Soap Gallery for Words Made Visible. Over 100 writers, artists and friends jammed into the gallery for readings by poets from all over Ohio, and to see YSU-student drawing, painting, ceramics and digital art that responded to the literary art. Many writers met the artists whose work was inspired by their poems, and many works of art were sold. It was one of the most meaningful events we have been part of. It was also our first Ohio Arts Council grant project. Our community partners, like the Soap Gallery and the YSU Art Department, engage us more meaningfully with the community, and bring so much to the table.

Also in early February we had an all-day writers retreat at St. John's, in and around our office—just a quiet place to write all day—ending with a potluck dinner and conversation.



A few weeks later, while the cold winds still blew, 80 writers of all ages came to St. John's Episcopal Church and the Public Library of Youngstown & the Mahoning Valley, also wonderful community partners, for our first Winter Writing Camp. Teaching artists from the Valley led sessions on beginner poetry writing, memoir, writing on illness, and many other topics. We ate pasta by Cultivate

Café and enjoyed poems and stories at the open mic. Our cookie table was wedding-worthy!

A new feature of our monthly e-newsletter is the Literary Valley Message Board, allowing us to help writers and programs connect locally and regionally.

## Spring

In March we offered a workshop on poetry & film by Columbus poet Rikki Santer. In April, with Trumbull Neighborhood Partnership, we co-hosted food policy researcher Andy Fisher, who led a roundtable on food banks and food access, and Mark Winne, who led a follow-up workshop from last year, on bringing nutritious food to low-income neighborhoods. Mark had returned to the Valley to conduct research for his forthcoming book. We also co-hosted, with the City Club of the Mahoning Valley, Belt Publishing Editor Anne Trubek.

Also in April, National Poetry Month, we boarded a purple bus offered generously by community partner Purple Cat, and headed to Kent State to the Wick Poetry Center's reading by past Poet Laureate Natasha Trethewey.

Before summer break, we finished the Food for Thought book discussion series on the American experience, hosted by our community partners at Cultivate Café. The books gave us insights on legal rights of contemporary Native American women, Americans in the Korean War, and the early AIDS epidemic in Appalachia, among many topics.



## Summer

For a third year, our collaboration with Selah Dessert Theater, The Strand Project, sold out. This staged production of original dramatic monologues featured many local actors, some new to the stage, performing the work of writers from the Valley and beyond.



In July, hundreds of visitors to our Summer Festival of the Arts tent decorated paper sidewalk squares that now grace our office. We also raffled a birdbath by Tony Armeni, our highest earning raffle so far.

Kelly Bancroft, Beesan Odeh, Liz Skeels and Ginny Taylor read their poems and stories at the YWCA Women's Show. This is the third year we have been invited to bring writers to this dynamic art show.



Also in July, we received great news. Our second Ohio Arts Council project grant was approved, for our second annual Fall Literary Festival.

## Fall

The 2018 Fall Literary Festival doubled our first festival attendance with over 160 invited faculty, presenters and participants. We moved the conference to YSU's Kilcawley Center, and held evening events at St. John's Episcopal Church and the Hilton DoubleTree. The highly acclaimed visiting faculty were insightful, engaging and accessible. We had so many excellent proposals, we were able to offer five consecutive sessions all day for two days. Nearly 70 writers and community members enjoyed an elegant dinner in the 12th floor ballroom at the DoubleTree.

This year's fall fest was our most ambitious endeavor to date. One attendee noted that the event was a "triumph for Northeast Ohio," and another, "The quality, quantity and variety of sessions so exceeded my expectations." Our early bird festival registration fee was only \$35, and many registrants sponsored a writer, allowing nearly one dozen more writers to attend. The Ohio Arts Council judging panel expressed concern over our plans to fund an event that cost more than our 2017 budget, but thanks to our board, planning committee, attendees and many community partners including YSU College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences, the Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts, St. John's, Purple Cat and the Nathalie & James Andrews Foundation, we came out standing.

Another benefit of the Festival was the connections people made; every participant who responded to our feedback form said they met someone new. At the literary nonprofit administrator's caucus, attendees agreed that more statewide communication and collaboration would be beneficial to the dozens of literary arts organizations and programs throughout Ohio.

During the Fall Festival, we kicked off the first annual Memorial Lou Yuhasz Scholarship. The recipient, D.T. Dillon, a student in the Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts, read original work after a poignant tribute to our friend and fellow writer Lou. We were so pleased to have Lou's wife and daughter in attendance.

The last leg of the Words Made Visible project was to permanently stamp poetry excerpts into sidewalk squares. Signmaker and artisan Michael Staaf stamped poetry by Laura Grace Weldon of Litchfield and Jeanne Bryner of Newton Falls outside the Commerce Building on Walnut St. in downtown Youngstown. In September, poetry by Jeff Murphy of Youngstown and David Lee Garrison was stamped next to a walkway at St. John's Episcopal Church, near Lit Youngstown's office. Sculptor Tony Armeni has offered to install a sculpture nearby to give the poems more presence. We will dedicate the poems when all the writers are here for next year's Fall Festival.

The monthly First Wednesday Readers Series mixed it up with accomplished writers of creative nonfiction, essay, poetry, historical fiction, storytelling and world poetry, and in December, featured Mike Geither, a playwright reading his original play. This year's readers included faculty from numerous colleges and universities, as well as YSU student essayists and local and regional poets and writers. Readings were followed by open mics where many community members read their poems and stories. We pay writers a modest travel stipend if they come in from more than 30 miles away. We are grateful to have a beautiful, quiet home for this series at the Soap Gallery, and each month look forward to seeing the current exhibit.

This year the Writers Circle built a core group who bring new work each month to St. John's to share with one another, creating a welcoming environment to writers of all experience levels.



## More Community Engagement

Thanks to our community partner YSU, we were fortunate to have outstanding interns: Joshua Nauman, an undergraduate student in the Professional and Technical Writing program, and Beesan Odeh, studying creative writing with the Northeast Master of Fine Arts.

We continued to take Phenomenal Women: Youngstown Stories out into other communities, this year to Kent State-Trumbull and Sinclair Community College in Dayton. We also presented on Lit Youngstown to the Youngstown Business & Professional Women, and staffed an informational table at the Northside Farmers Market, OH WOW's Silly Science Sunday, and the Lakeland Literary Festival in Kirtland, Ohio.

Again this spring and fall, we answered phones on behalf of Lit Youngstown during WYSU's pledge drive. And we



were honored to be chosen to make a pitch for funding at the first Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley's Valley Soup.

We had a few changes to the board, wishing a fond farewell to Lee Murray, Stacey Schneider and William Soldan, and welcoming Courtney Kensinger and Liz Skeels. The newest members join Kelly Bancroft, Anne Garwig, Liz Hill, Nicole Robinson, Ginny Taylor and Molly Toth, forming a seasoned, enthusiastic and hardworking board.

This year we also crossed a finish line: we can no longer say we are an all-volunteer organization, having paid our first director stipend. Why is that important? As the Ohio Arts Council judging panel noted, if we work to develop and compensate our administration, we will be a stronger and more sustainable organization into the future.

Another initiative we started was to select a literary arts nonprofit and send a donation and letter of encouragement. This year we picked Lake Erie Ink, a fantastic Cleveland organization that works with youth.

The hundreds of people working with us—visiting writers, teaching artists, workshop participants, board members, YSU interns, audience members, funders and volunteers—help us make Lit Youngstown a community, and are proof to us that a literary arts organization has a good home in Youngstown. When we look back over our four years, we feel very enthusiastic about looking forward.

## Looking Forward

And we are looking forward!

The 2019 First Wednesday Readers Series is underway, with novelists, short story writers, essayists and poets from throughout Ohio. This year's Food For Thought book discussion will highlight authors who have recently visited the Valley, beginning with two visiting Fall Literary Festival faculty books: Lesley Nneka Arimah's short story collection *What Happens When a Man Falls From the Sky*, and Jon Kerstetter's memoir *Crossings: A Doctor-Soldier's Story*. Each month, we will take up a book by a visiting author: Allison Pitinii Davis, Robert Olmstead, Austin Channing Brown, Kelly Link, Scott Simon and Cokie Roberts.

The Winter Writing Camp committee is planning another high energy day February 16 for writers of all ages at St. John's and the Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County. In order to be as inclusive as possible, the day will be free to participants, and will include lunch and free child care.

We also thought we should mix it up with a few mixers, to enjoy one another's company. Literally a Party was held in January, and watch for Literally a Picnic in summer, the latter featuring a literary potluck, where guests will be invited to bring a dish from literature.

This year, we will offer writing workshops on submitting work for publication and flash fiction.

The Fall Literary Festival planning is in the works for October 4-5, 2019. Kilcawley Center is booked and we have an exciting visiting faculty: Christopher Barzak (North-east Ohio Master of Fine Arts, speculative fiction), Jill Christman (Ball State, creative nonfiction), Michael Crowley (Denison University, fiction), George Ella Lyon (former Kentucky Poet Laureate, poetry), Philip Memmer (Downtown Writer's Center, poetry) and Philip Metres (John Carroll University, poetry).

Lit Youngstown is partnering with the Public Library of Youngstown & Mahoning County on an NEA Big Read grant, that will allow the purchase of 1000 copies in English and Spanish of Luis Alberto Urrea's *Into the Beautiful North*. A monthlong series of events hosted by numerous community partners will take place across the communities: discussions on the book, panels on related issues, the YSU Hispanic Heritage Festival, writing and art contests, cooking classes and much more. The culmination will be a reading by Urrea, who will keynote the Fall Literary Festival.

This year we deepened our dot on the literary map, and literally, literarily, left our mark on the community. We won't always double our budget, but thanks to so many, this year, we did.

Write On!  
Karen Schubert, Director

## 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.



## With Gratitude

Thank you to all those who worked to bring the light to Lit Youngstown in 2018.

Current Board of Directors: Kelly Bancroft, Anne Garwig, Courtney Kensinger, Liz Hill, Nicole Robinson, Liz Skeels, Ginny Taylor, Molly Toth

Outgoing Members of the Board of Directors: Lee Murray, Stacey Schneider, William Soldan

Staff: Director Karen Schubert ; Bookkeeper Lisa Bennett

Workshop, Winter Writing Camp and Fall Literary Festival Faculty: Mari Alschuler, Lesley Nneka Arimah, Melissa Barger, Rebecca Barnhouse, Terry Benton, Jeanne Dutton, Nikki Ericksen, Anne Garwig, Allison Graf, Kris Harrington, Jon Kerstetter, Jacqui Lipton, Dave Lucas, Terry Murcko, Craig Paulenich, Tom Pugh, Nicole Robinson, Rikki Santer, Stacey Schneider, Ginny Taylor, Judith Vollmer, Robin Wesson

YSU Student Interns: Josh Nauman, Beesan Odeh

Readers and Open Mic Emcees:

- January: Cleveland of Institute of Art Creative Nonfiction Writer and Cleveland State Poet-Playwright Krysia Orłowski, open mic emcee Sarah Lowry



- February: YSU Student Essayists from CROW, Compose: Compose: A Review of Writing and YSU creative nonfiction writer Stacy Graber
- March: poets Stephanie Sestic of Kent State and Adam Hughes of Maryland, open mic emcee Liz Skeels
- April: poets Jennifer Jackson Berry of Pittsburgh and Christian Anton Gerard of the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, open mic emcee Tyler Rothbauer

- May: nonfiction writers Lori Bodkin of Pittsburgh and Stacey Schneider of the Northeast Ohio Medical University, open mic emcee Karen Schubert
- June: fiction writer Melissa Barger of Youngstown and historical fiction writer William Heath of St. Mary's University in Maryland, open mic emcee Amanda Miller
- July: Storytelling Night featuring Tom Beck, Art Byrd, Becky Ann Harker, Skye Hildebrand, Sue Hukari
- August: Athens Poet Laureate Kari Gunter-Seymour, poet Sherri Saine of Ohio



University and poet Kathleen Strafford of Leeds, England, open mic emcee Jeanne Bryner

- September: World Poetry Night: Dragana Crnjak, Mahmoud Kambris, Steve Reese, Karen Schubert, Sony Q. T'Aime, open mic emcee Stephanie Stearns
- October: poet Kathleen McGookey of Michigan and Rikki Santer of Columbus, open mic emcee Chris Gibowicz
- November: Cuyahoga Falls poets Clarissa Jakobsons and Barbara Sabol, open mic emcee Karen Schubert
- December: Cleveland State playwright Mike Geither, open mic emcee Bridgid Cassin

## Words Made Visible

Faculty: Dragana Crnjak, Missy McCormick, Chris McCullough, Dana Sperry

Judges: Jennifer Cline, Mary Quade, Steven Reese & Nicole Robinson

Artists: Venise Abell, Allison Begala, David Belgrad, Mandolin Bell, Michaela Best, Tammy Bigley, Vanessa Bilas, Jalen Bosker, Dylan Brammer, Emily Burnham, Victoria Buskirk, Lexi Chismar, Cheryl Ciavarella, Angela Cozart, Tom Davidson, Weslie Detwiler, Lorenzo Devine, Justine Dietrich, John Elias, Rachel Emerson, Kathleen Gallagher, Laura A. Garvin, Kristie Gearhart, Kerriane Ghinda, Laura Goist, Cassidy Griffin, Shannon Henrich, Haley Holt, Aislinn Janek, Caroline Lacusky, Joseph Lanzilotti, Kelly Livi, Matthew Luonuansuu, Rachel Marchese, Abigail Martin, Vinny Matthews, Kyle Maurice, Jacob Melott, Craig Miller, Matt Miligan, Kaylee Mondock, Kaitlin Moran, Keagan O'Brien, Marah Peek, Arielle Pilolli, Patrick Potter, Mike Rock, Ivory Schneider, Kim Schüler, Torri Session, Tiffany Snow, Amanda Spinosa, Sean Staser, Christian Steff, Miranda Timmins, Taylor Valerio, Ashley Vaughan, Vincent Village, Evan von Thaeer, Bailee Walton, Lydia Tarleton Weisman, Chelsea Wells, Alaina Woofter



Photo Credit: Melanie Rae Buonavolonta

Writers: Valentina Ranaldi-Adams, Mari Alschuler, Pamela Anderson, Carol Barrett, Dianne Borsenik, Steve Brightman, Jeanne Bryner, Neil Carpathios, Juliet Cook, Allison Pitinii Davis, Riley Gable, Joshua Gage, David Lee Garrison, Lori Anne Gravley, Kari Gunter-Seymour, Jennifer Hambrick, Jessica Hollabaugh, Kayla Jeswald, Diane Kendig, Paula J. Lambert, Michael Levan, Sarah Marcus-Donnelly, Robert Miltner, Jeffrey Murphy, Elliot Nicely, Sergio Ortiz, Craig Paulenich, Caitlyn Ryan, Sherri Saines, Ari Sheik, Robert Smith, Kerry Trautman, Julie Warther, Laura Grace Weldon, Catherine Wing



Artisans: Melanie Rae Buonavolonta, Laura A. Garvin, Michael Staaf, Jason Vaughn

## Financial Support

Patrons and Foundation funders (\$500 or more): The Nathalie & James Andrews Foundation, Liz Hill, The Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts, The Ohio Arts Council, The Purple Cat, Lowell & Ellen Satre, St John's Episcopal Church, Youngstown State University College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Donors: Fred & Mary Lou Alexander, Kelly Bancroft & Steve Reese, Nancy Beeghly, Thomas Block Barbara Brothers, Jeanne Bryner, Callista Buchen, Catherine Calla, Gayle Catinella, Ann Cliness, Community Foundation of the Mahoning Valley, Rosemary Dapolito, Allison Pitinii Davis, Shari DellaPenna, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Youngstown, Chris Gibowicz, Anita Gorman, Kari Gunter-Seymour, Sarah Kiepper, Julia Leichtenberg, Barbara Lyras, Donald Martin, Terry Murcko, Jeff Murphy, Craig Paulenich & Karla Krodel, Rebecca Moon Ruark, Carol Sacherman, Barbara Sabol, Stacey Schneider, Lee Schwebel, J.D. Smith, Robert & Ann Smith, Sojourn to the Past, Stephanie Stearns, Melanie Timlin, Jeanne Tucker, Crist & Rosemary Weaver, Mary Rose Webster, Karen Willyoung, Lorie Yuhasz, Harrington, Hoppe & Mitchell.

Volunteers: Melissa Barger, Bridgid Cassin, Dante DelBene, Kathleen FitzGerald, Dom Fonce, Dana Kambris, Mahmoud Kambris, Beth Kauffman, Gerard Kelly, Courtney Kensinger, Amanda Miller, Josh Nauman, Hope Petrie, Barbara Sabol, Taylor Swan, Michelle Tarka



NORTHEAST OHIO  
MASTER OF FINE ARTS  
CREATIVE WRITING



# Lit Youngstown Statement of Financial Position Summary As of December 31, 2018

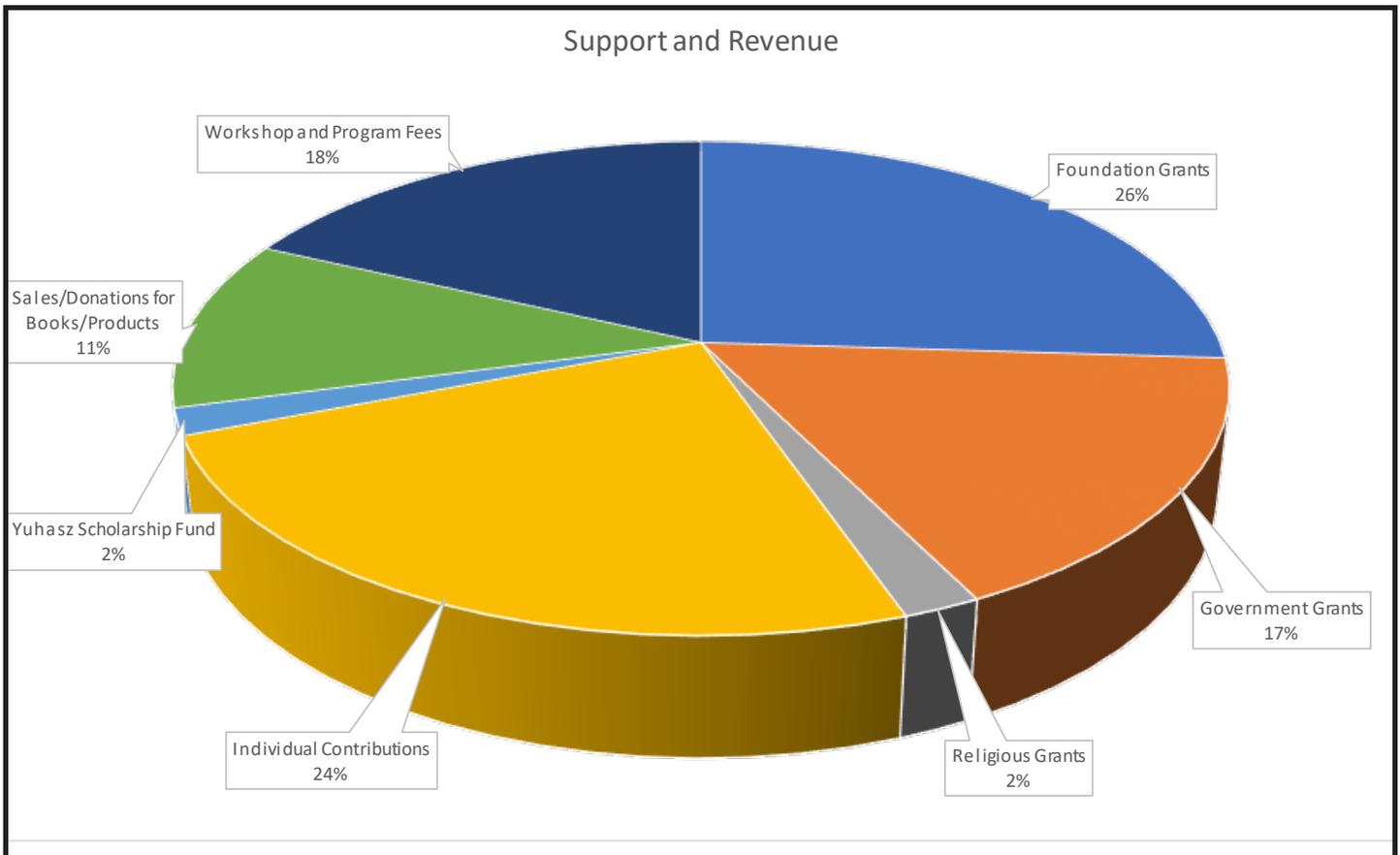
ASSETS	
Bank Accounts	\$7,560
Total Current Assets	<u>\$7,560</u>
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	0
Total Liabilities	<u>0</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
NET ASSETS	\$7,560

Lit Youngstown  
Statement of Activities  
Year Ended Dec 31, 2018

# Support and Revenue

Foundation Grants	\$6,420
Government Grants	4,116
Religious Grants	500
Individual Contributions	6,002
Yuhasz Scholarship Fund	430
Sales/Donations for Books/Products	2,767
Workshop and Program Fees	4,442

Total Support and Revenue \$24,677

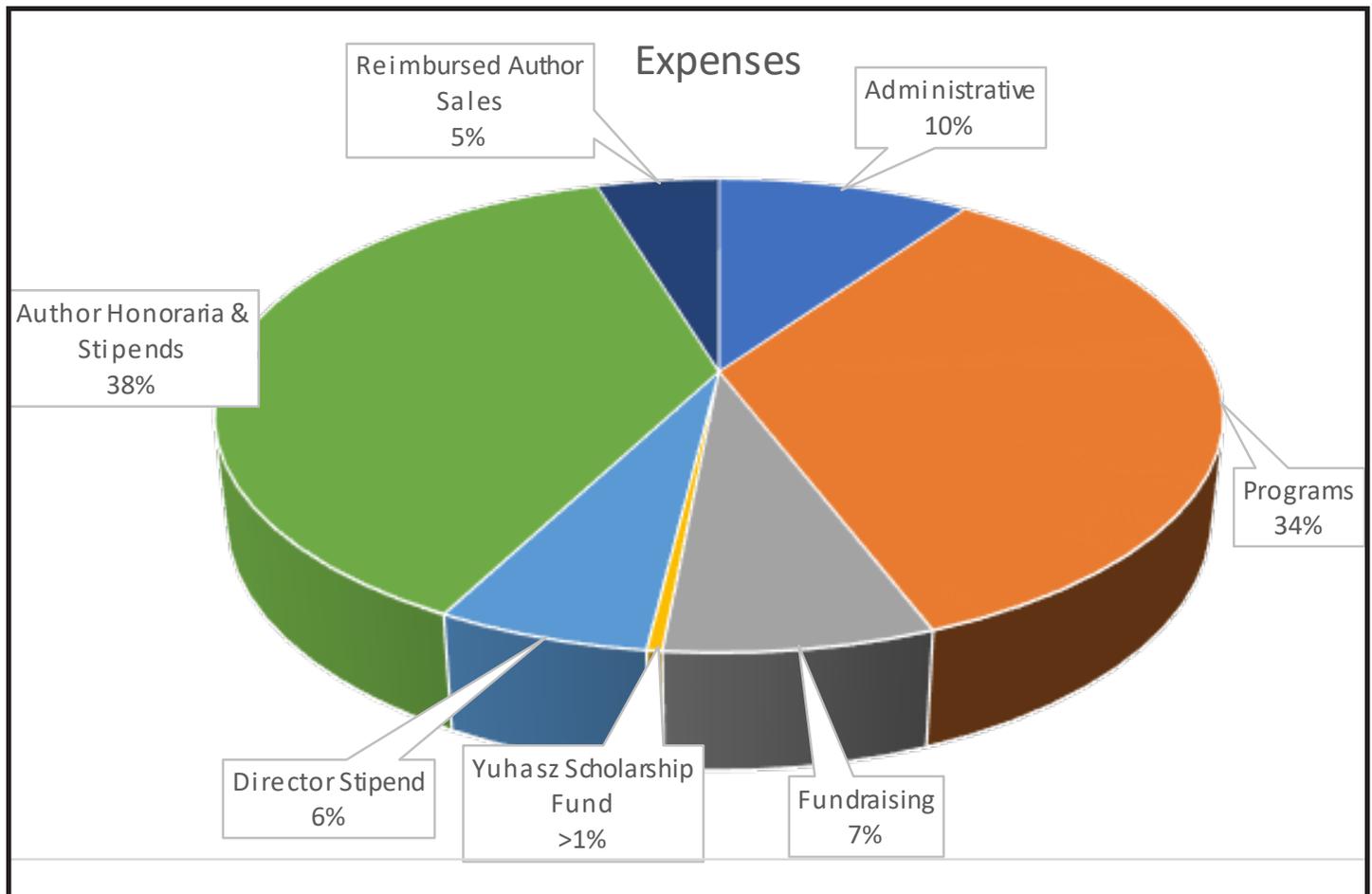


# Expenses

Administrative	2,348
Programs	8,369
Fundraising	1,767
Yuhasz Scholarship Fund	100
Director Stipend	1,400
Author Honoraria & Stipends	9,126
Reimbursed Author Sales	1,137

Total Expenses \$24,247

Change in Net Assets	\$ 430
Net Assets Beginning of Year	7,130
Net Assets End of Year	7,560



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