

Lit Youngstown
2017 Annual Report

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LitYoungstown.org

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Letter from the Director

As I look back on our third year, I continue to be astonished at all we have been able to do together. To me, it speaks to the mutual interest we have in the literary arts—books, writing, creativity, curiosity. It also speaks to the generous spirit of our community, the willingness to come out and try something new or listen to poems and stories of someone who traveled to share their work with us.

And Lit Youngstown was *also* on the move. Conferences bookended our year, with the Association of Writers and Writing Programs in D.C. in January and the C.D. Women Writers Conference at the University of Central Arkansas in November. We shared the story of *Phenomenal Women: Twelve Youngstown Stories* with writers and program directors all over the country.

And we, personally, were on the move. Our founding co-director, Liz Hill, left for sunny Mexico in July. Liz is helping our new bookkeeper/first paid staff learn the ropes, thanks to electronic communications. In other aspects, I have taken the helm, with support from the board.

Our board transitioned, as well. We thanked Debra Weaver, Davita Fitzgerald, Melissa Papini, Kris Harrington and Sean Posey as they moved on to other endeavors, and welcomed Nicole Robinson, Anne Garwig, Stacey Schneider, Ginny Taylor and Kelly Bancroft. The newest members join Molly Toth and William Soldan in a congenial, hard-working governing body that is a tremendous pleasure to work with.

In September we broke ground with our first Fall Literary Festival, hosting acclaimed writers and editors and enrolling dozens of writers from the region for a day of workshops, craft talks, and panel discussions. Asked about highlights of the festival, attendees named “the sessions where I could write and/or work on my writing. The fellowship. The cake. The McDonough. The chapel,” and “The workshops, the craft talks, the mingling with other writers.”

At the end of the year we transitioned our monthly reading series to The Soap Gallery on S. Champion St. We thank Suzie’s Dogs & Drafts for hosting our readings for three years, and look forward to our new partnership with a gallery that is supporting arts and artists in our community.

Thanks to our teaching artists, our workshops have also been a success, giving writers the opportunity to strengthen their screenwriting or the voice in their characters.

Our collaborations and events throughout the community have brought us into contact with hundreds of people: local food policy committees who met with author Mark Winne in April; artists and friends at the YWCA Women Artists’ Show; opera enthusiasts at Opera Western Reserve’s *Highland Fling*; modernist literature lovers at McDonough Museum’s *Salon de Fleurus*; creative non-fiction writers at the Boardman Library.

The many 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. We have some big plans for 2018. Thanks for being part of it.

All best,
Karen Schubert, Director

Looking Back on 2017

The **First Wednesday Readers Series** is a cornerstone of Lit Youngstown, putting our city on the literary map, bringing in visiting writers and giving local accomplished writers a venue to share their work. Many readings are followed by an open mic, where courageous writers aged twelve to seventies read their poems and stories. We love our open mic emcees, too! See our Gratitude page for a full list of this year's readers and emcees. In April, we hosted **nationally recognized food policy author Mark Winne** who led a community workshop on nutritious food access in low-income neighborhoods.

In the wider community, we were invited to read original work at the Women Artist's Show at the YWCA, contemporary Scottish poems at Opera Western Reserve's *Highland Fling*, and modernist works at McDonough Museum's *Salon de Fleurus*, a recreation of Gertrude Stein's Parisian salon.

For a second 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.

This year's **writing workshops** included classes on strengthening voice in fiction writing, setting stories in a post-industrial landscape, and editing. A modest enrollment fee of \$25 for a 6-week course has allowed us to pay our teaching artists, while keeping classes affordable. Scholarships are available to those who need funding support. This year three scholarships were provided.

We kicked off the annual **Fall Literary Festival**, partnering with St. John's Episcopal Church and the Public Library of Youngstown and the Mahoning Valley. Our stellar faculty included NEA and Guggenheim fellows Denise Duhamel and Robert Olmstead, Ohioana poet Nin Andrews, poet-editors Susana H. Case and Margo Taft Stever, and local writers Kelly Bancroft and William Soldan.

Looking Forward

Our **2018 reading series** features novelists, short story writers and poets from as far away as Arkansas and Maryland. We are adding a storytelling night, world poetry night, and the staged reading of an original play.

In partnership with the Public Library of Youngstown & the Mahoning Valley, we will hold our first **Winter Writing Camp**, Saturday, February 24, a cost-free day of writing and reading activities for all ages and experience levels. Free childcare and lunch will be provided.

The **Strand Project** continues into its third year, our **workshop series** will continue, with a variety of topics taught by experienced teaching artists, throughout the year, and our **book discussion** will take up different points of view in the American experience.

Planning is underway for our **2018 Fall Literary Festival, September 21-22**. Our faculty will include National Book Award *5 Under 25* winner, fiction writer Lesley Nneka Arimah, NEA-fellow poet Judith Vollmer, veteran-surgeon memoirist Jon Kerstetter, fiction writer and copyright attorney Jacqueline Lipton, and YA novelist Jeanne Dutton. The two-day festival will offer readings, craft talks and sessions on publishing and legal aspects of publishing.

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.

Lit Youngstown
Statement of Financial Position Summary
As of December 31, 2017

ASSETS	
Bank Accounts	\$7,130
Total Current Assets	<u>\$7,130</u>
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	0
Total Liabilities	<u>0</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
NET ASSETS	\$7,130

Lit Youngstown
Statement of Activities
Year Ended Dec 31, 2017

Support and Revenue	
Foundation Grants	\$3,500
Religious Grants	1,000
Individual Contributions	4,026
Sales & Donations for Books	2,059
Workshop Fees	1,827
Total Support and Revenue	<u>\$12,412</u>
Expenses	
Administrative	2,077
Programs	4,868
Author/Instructor Stipends	4,370
Fundraising	496
Total Expenses	<u>\$11,811</u>
Change in Net Assets	\$ 601
Net Assets Beginning of Year	6,529
Net Assets End of Year	7,130

With Gratitude

Thank you to all those who worked to bring the light to Lit Youngstown in 2017.

Current Board of Directors:

Kelly Bancroft, Anne Garwig, Nicole Robinson, Stacey Schneider, William R. Soldan, Ginny Taylor, Molly Toth

Outgoing Members of the Board of Directors:

Davita Fitzgerald, Kris Harrington, Melissa Papini, Sean T. Posey, Debra Weaver

Staff:

Director Karen Schubert ; Bookkeeper Lisa Bennett

Workshop and Festival Faculty:

Nin Andrews, Kelly Bancroft, Chris Barzak, Lori Bodkin, Susana H. Case, Daniel Clifton Colvin, Allison Pitini Davis, Denise Duhamel, David Giffels, Robert Olmstead, Stacey Schneider, Karen Schubert, William R. Soldan, Margo Taft Stever, Ginny Taylor.

YSU Student Interns:

Sarah Davis, Shanon Maple

Readers and Open Mic Emcees:

January: Kent State Poets Robert Miltner and Molly Fuller, emcee Sarah Davis

February: YSU student essayists published in *CROW: Compose: A Review of Writing*

March: Poets Sean Thomas Dougherty (Erie) and Terry Murcko (Youngstown), emcee Mari Alschuler

April: Food policy author Mark Winne (New Mexico), Q&A by Dr. Tim Francisco (YSU)

May: Creative nonfiction writers Lori Jakiela (Chatham University, Pittsburgh) and David Giffels (University of Akron), emcee Tom Pugh

June: Poets Nin Andrews (Youngstown), Rochelle Hurt (University of North Carolina) and Allison Pitini Davis (University of Tennessee), emcee Anne Garwig

July: Historian Thomas Welsh (Youngstown) and Fiction writer Robert Pope (University of Akron), emcee Bill Soldan

August: Poets Jason Irwin (Pittsburgh), Jen Ashburn (Pittsburgh), and Roger Craik (Kent State), emcee Brandon Noel

September: Poets Meg Johnson (Iowa) and Caryl Pagel (Cleveland State), emcee Ron Book

October: Fiction writers Nancy Christie (Youngstown) and Everett Prewitt (Cleveland), emcee Venise Abell

November: Creative nonfiction writer Kevin Haworth (Carlow University, Pittsburgh) and poet Steve Reese (Youngstown State), emcee Courtney Kensinger

December: Northeast Ohio Master of Fine Arts Alumni Creative nonfiction writer Chris Alonso, fiction writer Bill Soldan, poet Sara Tracey, emcee Melissa Guthrie

Patrons and Foundation funders (\$500 or more):

Frederick and Mary Lou Alexander
The Nathalie & James Andrews Foundation
St John's Episcopal Church

Donors: Anonymous; Dianne Borsenik; Robert and Nancy Bukaty; Book Organizations of Colorado; Barbara Brothers; Gayle Catinella; Ann Cliness; Joyce Davidson; Barry and Miriam Davis; Andy Gray; Liz Hill; Pam Lilak; Anthony Manna; Dominic Marchionda Jr.; Donald Martin; Sue and Gary Sexton; Jimmy Sutman; Urig Family Foundation; Vaughn Wascovich.; Karen Willyoung.

Volunteers: Mari Alschuler, Shari Dellapenna, Kelly Bancroft, Sarah Davis, Anne Garwig, Melissa Guthrie, Courtney Kensinger, Adrianna Lamonge, Karen Lapidus, Melissa Miller, Jeff Murphy, RSVP SeniorCorps Members, Dia Scruggs, Lou Yuhasz