

A COMMON WEALTH OF POETRY

Newsletter of the Poetry Society of Virginia

JULY 2015

A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT _____

I am humbled and pleased to be elected President of the Poetry Society of Virginia. I was introduced to it years ago by Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, to whom I am still grateful and admiring, and have followed her example, reading my work whenever possible, and serving the Society when able: as member, Advisor, and Executive Director. As President, I will continue doing what I can to help the Society move forward by going backward a little, perhaps.

I would like to push our membership level to the numbers we once enjoyed (over 500, as opposed to 360 or so), which will involve the heavy recruitment of young people by increasing the Society's visibility in the neighborhoods of colleges and universities by additional readings and indirect solicitation through faculty members. Another goal will be to work with the past administration to identify ways to spend less while earning more.

The budget, the budget. Everything always finds its way back to money or the lack of it. The Society's bylaws call for a Finance committee to assist the Treasurer. If I can find enough qualified people to create one, I will. Another area of concern is our Poetry in the Schools program, which was once the pride and joy of the Society. The program must be rebuilt; and, I believe, we have the right people to do it.

Another thing to look at will be the bylaws. To the extent it is possible to follow them I pledge to follow them or seek amendments. We'll follow the rules, whether I like them or not.

Of course, there are other things to work on, but it must be said that we're already doing a terrific job with talented and dedicated people. Our festival in May was superb, from readings to workshops, and, for the most part, rolled out in an orderly and spirited fashion. Ed Lull's Saturday readings continue to be a mainstay of the organization, our adult poetry contests of national interest, our Web site and newsletter top of the line, our ceremonies appreciated, and our regional organizations active and important to their communities.

So let's all give ourselves a pat on the back and rest up to start our engines again when it's time.

Best,
Bob

A LETTER FROM THE 2016 ANNUAL POETRY CONTEST PROGRAM CHAIR _____

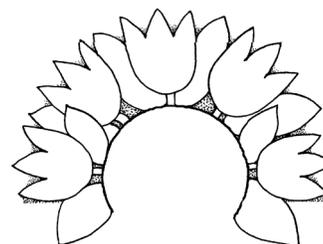
Dear Poetry Virginia Members,

I'm delighted to tell you I will serve as Program Chair for the 2016 Annual Poetry Contest. I would like to receive suggestions for improvements or features, so that our committee can be successful in organizing the best contest and awards ceremony possible.

Please send me comments. I particularly would like to know if you would like new categories added to the contest, or a category removed. Also let me know your preferred location for the ceremony to be held (i.e., Richmond, Charlottesville, or some other location within the Commonwealth of Virginia). Any comments or suggestions received will be greatly appreciated, and all comments will receive serious consideration by our committee as we begin planning for 2016.

I can be reached by e-mail, at beaches01@sprynet.com or young22600@earthlink.net; my land phone number is 434-589-1899.

Best,
Lauvonda Lynn M. Young, Program Chair, 2016
Annual Poetry Contest and Award Ceremony



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POETRY

Your Face Is In Corona

By R.L. O'Kelly

Your face is in corona,
back lit by the sun,
and you ask me
why I've come here.
This is all
I know to tell.

I didn't come
for your prosperity,
nor for the light line
of your conversation,
nor for the fullness
of your thighs, at night.

I came here
for the commonplaces:
to see your coat hung
in closet next to mine,
to pass you by
in a narrow doorway;
to hear your voice sounding
from another room.

Maine Ghosts, 1952

By Sally Zakariya

A knob-kneed moose comes quietly at dawn to browse
the tender plants in the garden next door, tilting
the broad bowl of his antlers.

It's the closest I've been to the wild. We've driven up
to Maine in the old Plymouth, Daddy singing, Mother fretting,
we kids squabbling in back.

The pond calms us all with its placid waters. We jump in
feet first from the dock, hair fanning out like brush strokes
on a watercolor morning.

Later, sun shimmering around us, we row out from shore
to the smooth belly of the pond. Big-eyed dragonflies
skim the surface with glassy wings.

We recite the litany of trees that rim the shore: alder, ash, black
willow, paper birch—what Indians used for their canoes,
root lashed, slender, swift.

At night the loon's staccato cry brings those first people back
to almost life, slipping silent through woods where no cabins
stand, gliding half-seen in birch bark canoes.

~ first appeared in *The Broadkill Review*, November/December
2014

[A slightly different version of this poem appeared in *The
Broadkill Review*, Nov/Dec 2014.]

O, Butterflies

By Nancy C. Allen

Butterfly summer
Sunlight huge green leaves
Butterflies bend with the wind
Sky blue as the sea

Nothing says summer or signifies full of life like a butterfly.
When it comes to butterflies, imagination rules especially at
the Butterflies Live Botanical Gardens Exhibit where I recently
visited. There, the tropical butterflies explode from joyful yellows
to prestigious pinks reminding me that butterfly wings were the
way my dreams took flight. Their classic beauty brings wonder to
the eyes of children and fuels the artistic drive of painters/writers.
The tropical butterfly world is no doubt one of variety, beauty, and
vibrant colors. Their quiet, peaceful spirit always spills over into
my day and...

Suddenly, a breeze
like the smell of summer rain
when butterflies fly.



Summer at City Point

By Martha Steger

Lincoln's Grant had done well the besieging
of Vicksburg last spring and summer:
"...the key is in our pocket," Lincoln had said.
Now Grant heard spring, summer again in the chatter of City Point
bank swallows as he tunneled and trenched toward Petersburg—
herons skimming the James for food as he set up
a soldier's food chain from the James and Appomattox
for his hungry Billy Yanks digging in.
Wheat lugged from railroad cars to troops he oversaw,
his image made under this pine tree for posterity
as he wondered how long it would all take.

My retriever darts in and out of the low canopy
of crepe myrtle, fig bushes and grape arbor
that Dr. Eppes's family skirted in haste
to flee Grant's troops marching to these grounds.
Beetles today carnage only the honeysuckle, tulip vine;
mourning doves coo in tree tops.
We have no quail or men to bear down on,
my retriever and I—no feints, just frolic
in the morning's haze before
the tourists come.

PSV CENTRAL REGION WORKSHOP HOSTS JOSHUA POTEAT

Smack dab in the middle of our fair state, a wonderful poetry workshop was hosted on June 20, by Central VP, Derek Kannemeyer. The Henrico County Library saw an invasion of writers eager to hear guest poet, Joshua Poteat, share his magic and delight us with his word crafting.

Joshua is a tall man with full beard and a very soft voice, a kind of gentle giant. His poetry is magical with varied subject matter, a relaxed style, and filled with fantastic images. He shared with us from three of his books; each poem so different, it was encouraging to see how diverse a writing life be.

A simple explanation of his workshop can be described by his handout of a topographical map he used to show where he grew up and how one's life setting can help us to write poems cataloging our life's journey. When he asked us to write a poem using our own created map as a prompt, we all jumped in, writing stimulating variegated poems, many of which were shared later. Joshua was amazed at how quickly most people were able to write such in-depth poems on such short notice. He confessed that he was seldom able to write poems "on the spot," but stored the impressions and put them on paper, usually late at night.

Those of us familiar with PSV workshops have come to expect quality presenters like Joshua who challenge us to write about unfamiliar topics with little, if any preparation. Our host, Derek, made everyone feel at home—the Richmond natives; the Norfolk, Williamsburg, and Charlottesville travelers, alike—by his warm welcome and the group poem he helped us create for fun. Those who attended came away with another memorable day of poetry under our belts and in our notebooks. Thank you, Joshua.

~ Jack Callan and Judith Stevens

POETRY VIRGINIA SPONSORS POET AT THE VIRGINIA HIGHLANDS FESTIVAL

Once again this year, Poetry Virginia will sponsor an outstanding poet at the Virginia Highlands Festival Writers' Day in Abingdon, on Friday July 31. Jesse Graves, an Associate Professor at East Tennessee State University, has two acclaimed volumes of poetry. *Tennessee Landscape with Blighted Pine* (2012) won the Weatherford Prize from the Appalachian Studies Association. *Basin Ghosts* (2014) received the James Still Award for writing about the American South from the Fellowship of Southern Writers.

Jesse will present two workshops. One is entitled "Home-places, Gifts, and Other Voices." Ideas offered here will help students learn and practice the techniques, habits, and discipline of writing literary poems.

The other is on a subject not often treated in poetry workshops. "Collaboration and Productivity in Writing and Editing" will offer advice for writers looking to gain the most productivity out of their writing time, and who wish to help build a community around the solitary practice of writing. Graves will share his own experience of editing the Southern Poetry Anthology series, forming a productive writers' group, and co-writing a long poem in sequence. This session will include time for questions from the audience, and a discussion of how to organize one's life around literary work.

Registration for Writers' Day is \$30.00 and includes a free ticket to a "Words and Music" event on the evening of the workshops. Preregistration is available at <http://vahighlandsfestival.org/event/writers-day>. Registration at the door is also available.

The Virginia Highlands Festival is a 10-day gathering that features a large antiques mart, an art show and sales, daily music, drama at two Barter Theatre venues, and many other events and activities. For further information, see <http://vahighlandsfestival.org/>.

THE POETRY SOCIETY OF VIRGINIA'S ANNUAL CONTEST: FROM 1954 TO 2016

To visit the society archives you ride the elevator to the top floor of the VCU Library, and you check in at the Special Collections desk. A librarian locates us on a database computer, disappears into the back, and re-emerges with a bunch of boxes. Files are sorted by date and kind, but the collection was set up in the late sixties, and pre-fifties material is rare. If you're hoping to learn any earlier history—for example, the origins of our annual contest—you may be out of luck.

In the contest piece I gave Brian O'Rourke, our Web guy, I attached a PDF of the oldest contest flyer I found, from 1954. (See the online "Selection of First Prize Poems" article.) I learned there were 10 categories back then, with top prizes not much changed from now (\$50 or \$25), but very few runner-up awards. Instead of submitting two copies of a poem, one unsigned, poets used a pseudonym, their true name tucked inside a sealed envelope. Could one recycle one's pen names until everyone knew them? Have multiple users of the popular ones, like William Shakespeare, or Edgar Allan Poe, or 1234? Was it deemed

wise to mix in upper and lower case letters, symbols, and numbers? Who knows, but the romance of the subterfuge appealed to me; I was tempted to suggest we revert to it. The 1950s Awards Ceremony was a one-hour segment of the annual Festival, which seemed routinely to feature some major poet. (A flyer from 1959, when Muriel Rukeyser presided, is also up on the Web site.)

By 1992, the number of contest categories had shot all way up to 12. The top prizes were still pretty evenly split between \$25 and \$50, but the \$100 Edgar Allan Poe Memorial was now in place, and five categories had runner-up prizes. In the April 1993 newsletter, it was revealed that 374 poets had entered 874 poems in the 13 categories proposed (I apparently won two firsts and had three placements, although I didn't look at the Prize Poems file to see what for), and that the luncheon/celebration had lasted till 3 p.m.

This year, we offered prizes in 26 categories—trimming half a dozen from 2014—and received entries from just 141 poets, although the number of poems submitted, 1,883, was proportionally similar to 1993. We met from 10 to 12:30, at which point about half of us adjourned to lunch. Make of the comparisons what you will.

I thought it was a wonderful event, but since I was the MC and the judges were kind to me, I should probably not be the one to say so. The big winner was Erin Newton Wells, with six terrific first place poems. The full list of winners is on the Web site; so are seven of the winning poems; and five more winners are featured in this newsletter.

Next year, the Awards Ceremony moves back to Charlottesville, under the stewardship of Lynn Young. We look forward to having 375 poets enter, to top 1993, and to seeing a hundred or so of you there in person—all of you, why not, with big winning grins on your faces. Keep an eye out for the 2016 flyer, and come book your place in the archives!

~ Derek Kannemeyer, Central Region Vice-President, member of the Contest Committee for both 2015 and 2016

A SELECTION OF FIRST PLACE POEMS, FROM THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL CONTEST, 2015

At this year's Annual Awards Ceremony, held in Richmond this past April, Bill Glose videotaped seven of the twenty-six first place winners as they read their winning poems. In the last year or two, Bill has begun to compile an impressive collection of poetry videos—Virginia poets, reading their work at podiums across the state—and to post them to his YouTube site **Virginia Poetry Online**. Click the *Created Playlists* tab, find *Poetry Virginia Contest Winners*, and you'll see six of the seven videos he made that day.

The text of five of those poems appears below, followed by comments from their authors.

The texts of seven other first place poems can be found in an article now posted on the Poetry Society of Virginia Web site, and reprinted on our Facebook feed.

Some explanations of the numbers:

- 1) Bill didn't tape us all because he didn't have the space on his camera. Bill's approach is not to attempt a staged, official production, but to catch what he can, cinema vérité style. Some of the first place poets weren't caught; his apologies, but we'll take what we can!
- 2) It's in some dispute whether this kind of caught-as-it-happens videotape site constitutes "publishing" the poem. Some literary reviews will reject a poem that has previously appeared in this fashion; some will not. To be safe, some writers ask not to appear on Bill's site unless the poem he's taped has been previously published. For this very reason, one of the seven winners he recorded at the Awards Ceremony, Erin Newton Wells, requested that her reading of "A Lacework Of Bone" be taken down. So six remain.
- 3) Most literary reviews (not all, so I'm told) will consider a newsletter like this one, or a Web site like our society's official one, to constitute a previous publication. Chapman Hood Frazier, one of the other winners Bill videotaped, has requested that we not print his poem here, as he is in the process of sending it out. I'm appending Hood's comments on his poem "Crow" anyway, and encouraging you to go to Bill's site to listen to it; and I'm also including Erin's comments on "A Lacework Of Bone," for those of you who caught it before it vanished!
- 4) I wanted us also to offer to publish the first place poets whom Bill did not videotape. I e-mailed them (if anyone failed to receive my e-mails, I apologize), and six poets took me up on the offer. I added one of my own first place poems to the mix, making seven poems you can now read, with author comments, on the Poetry Virginia Web site. Several poets declined, as I fully expected, because they are circulating their work elsewhere.
- 5) Should we demand that our prizewinners allow us to publish their poems, on the Web or in the newsletter? Too many members insist that they wouldn't enter our contests if that were the case; so I would say absolutely not. (I am delighted, in fact, that this year we can bring you as many as twelve of the twenty-six.) But I would urge us to consider ways to make our

Web publication a more prestigious one—by hosting, for example, a contest webzine, and inviting work from our illustrious judges—to showcase the work of those who are gracious enough to grant us the rights to it. They have earned that respect.

~ Derek Kannemeyer; contact me at derekkannemeyer@gmail.com

3: Bess Gresham Memorial: Friends & Friendship

Forever Friends

By Terry Cox-Joseph

I miss you. Your hair, wild as tumbleweed.
Temper, quick to rise, quicker to vanish.
Always, your giggle-laugh. Our summers
at Round Lake, waterskiing before breakfast,
your brainless dogs paddling after us.
Plump geese nestled in our laps like poodles.
Paperback pages turned in silence as we lazed
on the couch, ankles entwined.

What I have always wanted to tell you is this:
I got stomach cramps when your parents
treated you like exhaust-caked gutter snow,
me, a field of pristine white.

Whispered secrets of our twin families pickled
in vodka, doors slammed, tearful nights when
we should have been studying. We shouldered
duty like Atlas, siblings running circles
with scissors and sass.

You were my bridesmaid, I, yours. We moved,
but I moved farther. I know you understood.
Nowhere is far enough. When I visited,
I was jealous when you told me about your son's
yo-yo competition. Between bites of pancakes
I study the gray in your hair.

You planted a half acre of tulips, bonding
with your family over bulbs, trained
your dogs to rival Lassie, mailed handmade
caramels and hand-beaded necklaces
at Christmas, fished muskie and walleye
at Lake Mille Lacs in summer.

What I have always wanted to tell you is this:
I'm proud of you. And me.
You pull up in your minivan and I slide
in next to you in saddle shoes and knee highs.
I listen to your giggle-laugh
as you drive me to the airport.

Comment by Terry Cox-Joseph: I wrote this
poem straight from the heart and directly from
experience. I haven't shown it to my friend yet.
We're from stock that tends not to go all mushy
unless one of us is dying. I'll show it to her...
someday. :)

13. Alfred C. Gary Memorial: Historic event that occurred between 1925 and 1992

(By rule, this poem must be written in iambic pentameter.)

South Boston Man

June 6, 1944

By Richard Rose

With eighteen pounds of cyclonite I sank
when I came off the ramp up to my chin,
the oily water in my nose and flares
ahead to show the beach too far away
because the boat had stuck on railroad ties
the krauts had laid with mines. The churn and shove
rough water gave the bobbing landing craft
made others heave but fishing with my Dad
off Deltaville I had sea legs. A roar
around us like a screaming ballgame crowd,
a steady bullet-river overhead,
poured out once we had come in range. I fell
into a crater underfoot and dropped
and grabbed my gun. My section sergeant kneeled
like at confession on the sand ahead.
A shell sliced through him and the mortar rounds
he carried burst and bloomed around his stump.

Comment by Richard Rose: This is one of three poems
submitted to the PSV Contest in commemoration of the
Normandy Invasion of June 6, 1944. This one is in blank
verse. "Omaha, Dog Red" is in *dróttkvætt* and "In that Hour"
is a villanelle. All are based upon the memoirs collected by
Sergeant Buddy Thaxton, a member of F Company of the 116th
Regiment, from South Boston, Virginia. These men were the first
to land on Omaha Beach.



22. Emma Gray Trigg Memorial: Lyric Poem,
any subject

Bluejay in the Black Walnut Tree

By Bill Prindle

After all the rumors
you are quiet on the branch,
nibbling at the tender tips
of the green shoots
against the brilliant blue.

Nothing at all is said
about viruses ravaging
your gizzard, or about
the vortex driving you south
or any of that; and yet

You are so unlike yourself,
so unusually disinclined
to hector the lesser birds,
that I wonder whether
an awakening has occurred,

Whether you heard it too,
an inkling of an opening
to that more beautiful world,
whether the silence will swell
until we are forced to listen.

Comment by Bill Prindle: This poem came to me from a chance comment made by a fellow student in a poetry class last year. He mentioned hearing that bluejays had mysteriously vanished from the area. Sitting on my deck later, I noticed a bluejay in the large black walnut tree. He was quieter than any bluejay I had ever seen.

25. Loretta Dunn Hall Memorial: Family

Uncle

By Susan Patrick

My mother's brother
lingered in white sheeted beds
in and out of living
until last Wednesday.

After breakfast
and his final nap
my uncle threw up his arms
uttered, "Oh!"

understanding something
either here or There

Comment by Susan Patrick: I'm honored to have had my poem, "Uncle," selected for a prize. My intent was to capture a moment after living and before dying, and having no understanding of it.

23. Karma Deane Ogden Memorial: Any form, any subject

Ars Manga

By Derek Kannemeyer

Not that cosmic trip, comic strip art.
The baser one it bears within
and bares its saber twists to.

Sure, some are too self-evident to be much fun,
like casual and causal, or boredom and bedroom,
if that's the house you're trapped in. Others feel
overworked, as if some god of the language
were scoring a loud point.
Parental, paternal, and prenatal.
Gestapo and postage. (The banality of evil tra la.)
But I do love the zap-zizz pizzazz of anagrams.
Just to piss-take the starch and the pomp from things sometimes,
like with Episcopal and Pepsi Cola, or Baptists and It's Pabst.
Or Britney Spears and her Presbyterians.

I once had a thug of a teacher
who prepped us for the eleven-plus.
Which had an IQ section, and included anagrams.
I was the quickest at them. He disliked that.
Palest pastel plates. Staple petals pleats.
"This boy," he'd announce, glaring about the room,
rapping his cane on my desk, a hollow, accusatory clap,
"has finished the anagrams section!"
Once, he threw me from his class for smiling at him.
Nothing I could do would charm him.
But thus would I shut him out.
Subtle bustle, bluest sublet.
Scared cadres, sacred cedars.
Cold words are a clod's sword.
This is such shit.

Comment by Derek Kannemeyer: Pretty much every time (item, mite, emit) I look at this poem, I rework the second and third line. I know I should cut that first verse, and start "Some are too self-evident..." (Verse, veers, sever.) But once I begin with the anagrams, it's really hard to quit piling them on. (Begin, being, binge.) The teacher the third stanza was written about was my Junior School headmaster. His name was Beanse, an anagram of Be sane; an exhortation he never quite untangled.

*Poems and comments from the following Poetry Virginia Contest Winners will appear in the next newsletter:

12. Robert S. Sergeant Memorial: Birds

Crow, By Chapman Hood Frazier

18. Raymond Levi Haislip Memorial: Celebrating Technology

A Lacework of Bone, By Erin Newton Wells

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Executive Committee meeting will be on July 11, 2015 at Ashland's Coffee and Tea from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Ashland is a small town outside of Richmond.

Joan Mazza's poem "In Time for Spring: Pantoum for Teresa" was published in the spring 2015 issue of *Hartskill Review*. Joan also published three poems: "A Kind of Time Travel," "Sorting Old Clothes," and "Glose: In the Synapse," in *Offcourse Literary Journal*. She has two poems reprinted, "Sacred Lotus" and "On Being Asked How I Write a Poem Every Day," and a photo at WritingRaw.com. Her poem "Ode to Hatboxes" will be published in the next issue of *Blast Furnace*.

Virginia poets are well represented in **Joys of the Table: An Anthology of Culinary Verse**, which includes 17 poems and 10 recipes by Virginia writers: Eric Forsbergh, Conrad Geller, Jacqueline Jules, Derek Kannemeyer, Carolyn Kreiter-Foronda, Anne Meek, Susan Notar, Dorothy A. Spruzen, and Sally Zakariya, who edited the anthology. Thanks to these contributors for sharing their work—and their tasty recipes. And thanks to Richer Resources Publications, which is based in Arlington, Virginia, for publishing the book.

NEWSLETTER SCHEDULE

The newsletter submission deadline is the 3rd Saturday of the month throughout the year. Please find our newsletter deadlines for the 2015–2016 year below. Any submissions received after the deadline will be included in the following newsletter.

Holiday Break

June 20, 2015: July Newsletter (ad-hoc if enough content)

July 18, 2015: August Newsletter

August 22, 2015: September Newsletter

September 19, 2015: October Newsletter

October 24, 2015: November Newsletter

November 21, 2015: December Newsletter

Holiday Break

January 23, 2016: February Newsletter

February 20, 2016: March Newsletter

March 19, 2016: April Newsletter

April 23, 2016: May Newsletter

CONTRIBUTORS

Nancy C. Allen likes to write about nature because it is beautiful and free like the wide open sky, the green leaves of summer, lovely rivers, and colorful autumn leaves. She enjoys writing haiku poems, also free verse about her heritage and other subjects.

R.L. O'Kelly studied poetry at college. He attended Rhode Island School of Design and Brown University. His favorite poets then were W.B. Yeats, Dylan Thomas, Hart Crane, Wallace Stevens, Sylvia Plath, and Richard Brautigan. He became a Design Supervisor for the Baltimore City Department of Planning. Later, he became Chief of Design and Photography for the U.S. General Accounting Office. Now retired, he considers poetry an important self-expressive means. He prefers to write about issues "close to home" as they are lived personally and by others, and to probe the mysteries of consciousness and existence.

Martha Steger finds her journalistic writing and poetry feed off each other, as both genres require building concrete, sensory images for effectiveness. While serving as public relations director for the Virginia Tourism Corporation for 25+ years, she visited and promoted Virginia's many travel-related sites, Civil War sites among them—to media around the world. She was moved to write the poem above after a Sunday morning walk at City Point with her husband and their chocolate Labrador retriever, Tess.

Sally Zakariya's poems have appeared recently in *Boston Literary Magazine*, *Emerge*, *Third Wednesday*, *Evening Street Review*, *Southern Women's Review*, and *Theodate*. Her poetry has won prizes from the Poetry Society of Virginia and the Virginia Writers Club. She has published two chapbooks, *Insectomania* (2013) and *Arithmetic and other verses* (2011). Sally lives in Arlington, Virginia, and blogs at www.ButDoesItRhyme.com.



POETRY VIRGINIA

1709 Memorial Avenue
Lynchburg, VA 24501

<<FIRSTNAME>> <<LASTNAME>>
<<ADDRESS>>
<<CITY>> <<ST>> <<ZIP>>

PSV EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS & ADVISORY BOARD 2015–2016

President	Robert Arthur	robert.peebles.arthur@gmail.com
VP, Eastern Region	Bill Glose	billglose@cox.net
VP, Northern Region	TBA	
VP, Central Region	Derek Kannemeyer	dkannemeyer@st.catherines.org
VP, Western Region	Tom Morris	tpmorris520@hotmail.com
VP, Southeastern Region	Donna Wynn	dwynner@cox.net
Treasurer	Melinda Nolen	nolen@dom.com

Adult Contest Chair	Lauvonda Lynn	
	Meade Young	beaches01@sprynet.com
Archivist	Warren Harris	wmharris@embarqmail.com
Finance	Peg Crews	peg.crews@gmail.com
Membership Chair	Eric Forsbergh	forsber@verizon.net
Newsletter Editor	Andrew Jarvis	newsletter@poetryvirginia.org
Nominating Chair	Nancy Powell	nancyp1734@aol.com
Nominating Chair for Poet Laureate	Ron Smith	smithjron@aol.com
Out-of-State Coordinator	Linda Nottingham	nottlinda@aol.com
Parliamentarian	Ann Marie Boyden	ABoyden717@aol.com
Poetry in the Schools	Cathy Hailey	haileycp@gmail.com
Project Development Chair	Carolyn	
	Kreiter-Foranda	cforonda@va.metrocast.net
Recording Secretary	Claudia Gary	claudiagary611@gmail.com
Student Contest Chair	Trilla Ramage	trilla17@verizon.net
Webmaster	Brian O'Rourke	webmaster@poetryvirginia.org



Executive Directors

Ed Lull	ewlull@verizon.net
Ann Shalaski	ashalaski@msn.com
Guy Terrell	guy.terrell@earthlink.net
Shonda Buchanan	shondabuchanan@aol.com
Henry Hart	hwhart@wm.edu
Sofia Starnes	smstarnes@cox.net

Advisory Board

Joshua Poteat	joshuapoteat@hotmail.com
June Forte	home1270@msn.com
Jeff Hewitt	j.hewitt@me.com
Stu Nottingham	notstu@aol.com
Ron Smith	smithjron@aol.com
Ken Sutton	thebinkerman@aol.com