



write where you are



REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY

2019 AND 2020

A large, three-dimensional sign for 'the muse writers center' is mounted on a building. The word 'the' is in a small, lowercase, sans-serif font. 'muse' is in a large, lowercase, sans-serif font. 'writers center' is in a smaller, lowercase, sans-serif font. The sign is white with a purple shadow. The background is a purple-tinted photograph of the building's facade.

the muse writers center

The Muse Writers Center

This is the place in Hampton Roads where writers belong. Connect. Share. Make meaning from thoughts. It's more than a place, it's an experience.

There is a deep longing inside writers that compels us to use words as tools to communicate our thoughts, feelings, and insights. Using only the 26 symbols of the alphabet, we are able to transfer—however briefly and imperfectly—our own humanity into the mind of another through stories, essays, poems, songs, and scripts. We listen and practice to more precisely convey our awareness of life and its significance.

Through the hundreds of classes, we learn the craft of writing. Our events bring us together to share ideas, dreams, and friendship.

Thousands of writers of all ages and backgrounds have found this to be a unique place where we find others who speak our language and encourage us on our writing paths.

While The Muse experience is felt and lived, it is also an organization that requires practical and tangible resources to enable it.

Our Mission

The Muse Writers Center fosters and celebrates the literary arts throughout the community through high-quality education, networking, and support for aspiring and experienced writers of all ages, backgrounds, and means; engaging and creative outreach; and diverse and culturally relevant literary events.

Sustaining the place we have come to love takes a great investment of time, talent and money from the staff, board, volunteers, and the community.

Without the vision and dedication of our leaders and the gifts of thousands, we could not support our offerings or continue our remarkable growth since our nascent beginning in 2004.

We have been the fortunate recipient of state, federal, and community grants and individual contributions that allow us to pay staff and teachers, provide classrooms, and meet our operational needs.

We are grateful for every contribution that has made our literary center the special place it is. We would not exist without your verve and generosity, and we thank you.



- 3** Chairwoman's Letter
- 4** Executive Director's Letter
- 5** Programs and Events
- 7-8** Classes
- 9-11** Outreach
- 13-14** Timeline
- 15** Partnerships and Affiliations
- 16** Staff
- 17** Teachers
- 18-19** Board Members
- 20** Interns, Volunteers, and Hosts
- 21-22** 2019 Financials
- 23-24** 2020 Review
- 25-26** 2020 Financials





From the Chairwoman

There is no question that The Muse Writers Center is home to a dynamic and growing literary arts community in Hampton Roads, Virginia. From its beginning days of offering a handful of classes in borrowed space, to present time where thousands are touched each year by its myriad writing programs and other literary events, we have grown to become one of the top literary centers in the country.

The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 challenged us in ways we could not have predicted; and it also transformed us, made us better in ways we had not yet imagined. The creativity and resiliency of our writing community showcased the significance of the literary arts and its healing capabilities in difficult times.

The secret to its success can be found in the magic mixture of talent, passion, and enthusiasm demonstrated by Muse staff, teachers, students, board members, and community partners in welcoming, encouraging, and providing a place where writers of all ages and in any stage of development can come together to practice their craft.

In addition to classes that touch on nearly every genre of writing, the Muse's outreach programs serve young writers, military veterans, and elderly populations across the region; and now, with expanded virtual programming, across the world. It's personally gratifying to know that we've been able to do all of this and never had to turn away someone who lacked the funds to pay.

Our donors, sponsors, members, and community partners make that possible. We are grateful for your support, and for sharing our vision of The Muse Writers Center as the hub of Hampton Roads' vibrant literary arts community long into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karen Corrigan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Karen Corrigan

**CHAIR, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
THE MUSE WRITERS CENTER**



From the Executive Director

When I was 13, I wanted to write a book. That summer, hopped up on caffeine from hot tea, I typed every night into my new computer the story of five friends who were saving the world. In all, I wrote about 120 pages. But after that, I had no one to turn to for guidance on what to do next. How I wish there were a Muse back then for me to come to and use as a resource—as a place for education, encouragement, and inspiration.

The Muse Writers Center saw great growth in 2019, and in 2020, we met the challenges of both the pandemic and our culture's desire for social justice by finding silver linings wherever we could.

In the past decade and half, we've built an amazing literary center that in 2019 brought the literary arts to 12,000 people, including more than 1,400 adult and youth students, nearly 300 of whom received tuition

help. Plus, we brought literary programs to nearly 2,000 people in hard-to-reach populations such as those in senior living communities, youth programs and schools, and military and veterans groups.

In March 2020, we stopped all in-person classes, events, and outreach, and our staff worked tirelessly to create entirely new virtual ways to bring the literary arts to the community. While we had a small decrease in the number of student registrations, the silver lining was that we were able to reach people we hadn't before. Students from as far away as Tokyo joined former students who were eager to reconnect with The Muse and our teachers. No longer limited by fire codes, our virtual events have been able to reach thousands more attendees, and our virtual outreach is still enriching the Hampton Roads community and beyond.

Now, we are poised to slowly begin in-person programs later this year while keeping our virtual programming available for those who are outside the area or unable to travel to our center.

Thank you for your continued support of our dream to create and sustain one of the nation's most vibrant literary communities. Your backing has helped us continue our mission while we strive to reach more people every day who wish to express themselves with—or be enriched by—the amazing power of the written word.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael". The signature is stylized with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Best regards,
Michael Khandelwal

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CO-FOUNDER
THE MUSE WRITERS CENTER**

Aaron Lawhon, Sheila Sheppard, Celina
Santana, Jane Wertz, and Stephanie
Catherines at the Book Lovers Bash

Programs and Events

The Muse is more than a place to take writing classes—it is a gathering place where people who love the literary arts can find “their tribe.” Our events and programs offer nearly 400 opportunities per year to gather together to meet the community’s needs. In 2020 all our events and classes were offered only online. Moving forward we will provide a combination of online and in-person programming.

EDUCATIONAL

We provide high quality instruction in writing and related fields through classes, workshops, seminars, and camps.

CULTURAL

We deliver community events that promote the literary arts, including readings, open mics, visiting authors, write-ins, book launches, and community functions with partner organizations. Our location in Ghent is a resource center and library.

SOCIAL

We provide opportunities for writers to network and find support, such as writers’ coffee breaks, happy hours, neighborhood jams, support groups, mentoring, and online networking.

THE MUSE NEIGHBORHOOD JAM

AUTHOR READINGS AND SIGNINGS

SUNDAY AFTERNOON TEACHER READINGS

FIRST FRIDAY WRITERS COFFEE BREAK AT CAFÉ STELLA

WEDNESDAY NIGHT WRITERS HAPPY HOUR

SUMMER CAMPS FOR ADULTS AND YOUTH

TEEN OPEN MIC

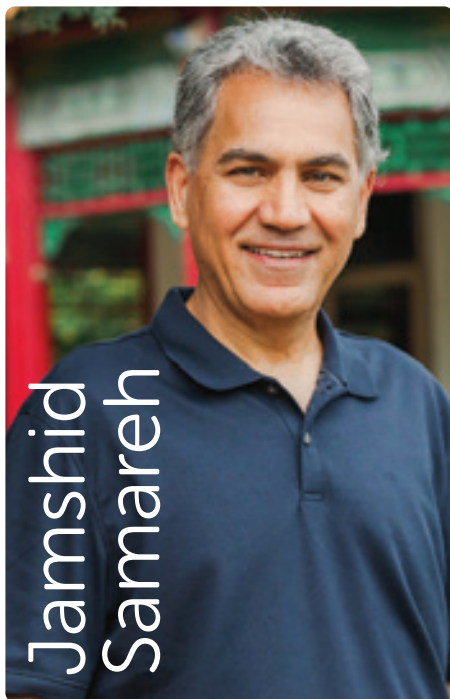
JUST WRITE SATURDAY

BOOK LOVERS BASH

ONLINE DISCUSSIONS, READINGS AND CLASSES

Cory Bland and Kristin Mehaffey
connect at a writers reading.





Jamshid
Samareh

Through writing, I learn what I think.

As a NASA engineer and researcher, **Jamshid Samareh, Ph.D.**, has written many technical papers and reports. But it wasn't until his wife died of cancer in 2016 that he felt a need to write creatively.

"I had lots of stuff in my head," says Jamshid, who lives in Norfolk. He didn't want to burden his children with his grief, so he began taking classes at the center to learn to express his feelings through writing memoir essays.

"It has been very therapeutic," he says.

"Through writing, I learn what I think."

Jamshid, who immigrated to the U.S. from Iran and speaks English as a second language, says writing creatively "puts everything into perspective."

As an engineer Jamshid was used to writing professionally in a rigid format. "I've learned to write from my emotions and to show rather than to tell. I write very differently now."

⚡
WRITER'S STORY

“

The Muse offers so much to so many, without judgment and with open hearts and arms. What a gift you have given to this community. Thank you for being dedicated in giving such a beautiful gift in this, oftentimes weary world.

”



Tina
Carey

I owe The Muse so much more than it has given me.

Tina Carey says it is no exaggeration to say that The Muse saved her life.

In 2018 her brother died of a heroin overdose, and five days later another brother committed suicide.

"I found myself writing through my grief. Then I came upon an online post from The Muse," says Tina, 46, of Chesapeake. "They were offering a class called Writing Through Trauma and Grief. I was willing to do anything constructive to let out my pain."

Since then she has taken many classes to continue the healing and to be around a "community of people who have been nothing but positive, encouraging and kind."

A personal chef, Tina has been published in a number of journals and is working on getting her chapbook published. She is also writing a novelette.

⚡
WRITER'S STORY

Classes

Whether our students write fiction, nonfiction, plays, poetry, screenplays, or songs, or want help getting their work published, learning storytelling or keeping a journal, we have a place for all.

We embrace people of every age and background, as well as persons from underserved and financially disadvantaged populations. We are the only writing center in the nation to offer tuition assistance to anyone who wants to take a class but cannot afford to pay. Going forward, we will provide both in-person and online classes.

Independent from a college or university, we serve the community by exposing youth and adults to the literary arts, supporting them to reach their highest level of craft and fullest potential.

The Muse is a respected, well-supported, financially strong organization with skilled and creative staff, high-quality instructors, and a welcoming environment.



Poet Tim Seibles reads his work in class to Celina Santana, Diane Zinna, Carol Howard, and David Cascio.

“

The Muse does a great job for the community by providing first-class instruction and encouragement to aspiring writers and a great platform for accomplished writers.

”

A sampling of classes, workshops, and seminars at The Muse Writers Center.
For complete class listings, visit the-muse.org.

INTRODUCTORY, INTERMEDIATE, AND ADVANCED

Comic Book and Graphic Novel
Fiction
Nonfiction and Memoir
Poetry
Screenwriting and Playwriting

OTHER GENRES

Children's Books
Food Writing
Journaling
Romance
Songwriting
Storytelling
Visual Journaling
Writing Through Trauma
and Grief
Classes for Military/Family
and Caregivers
Classes for Teens and
Younger Writers

WRITERS CRAFT, RESEARCH, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Agents and Publishing
Author Platforms and Social Media
Creativity
Dialogue, Characters, and Story
Editing and Revision
Languages
Police Work and Other Professions
World Building



Sylvia
Liu

© K. Woodard Photography

The Muse has been a constant source of learning and community.

Sylvia Liu of Virginia Beach left her job of 10 years as an environmental attorney to pursue success in a literary career, and she found it.

When her girls were young, she decided to try children's illustration and that led to writing a picture book. She wanted to write middle grade novels, so she began taking classes at our center.

"It's through The Muse that I learned the craft of novel-writing from the instructors and my fellow talented writers.

Now I have a couple of book deals with large, traditional publishers."

Her book, *Manatee's Best Friend*, will be published by Scholastic in 2021, and *Hana Hsu and the Ghost Crab Nation*, will come out from Razorbill/Penguin Random House in 2022.

She says The Muse experience changed her life by giving her the tools to become a published author. "The Muse has been a constant source of learning and community."


WRITER'S STORY

Outreach

SENIOR OUTREACH PROGRAMS

We created the **Senior Outreach Program** when a Muse student living in a senior living facility asked us to host a poetry reading where she lived because many of the residents were unable to travel.

We now provide Muse teachers and volunteers to many different senior facilities, hosting classes in memoir and other genres, memoir writing clubs and reading sessions.

TEEN WRITERS FELLOWSHIP

The Muse Teen Writers Fellowship provides teen writers the opportunity to further their skills in classes and workshops. The first of its kind in Hampton Roads, it provides an opportunity for eight high school sophomores or juniors to develop their craft, gain professional skills, and experience literary community. These fellows receive one-on-one mentorship from a professional writer.

The Teen Writers Fellowship is tuition-free and is valued at \$2,350 per student for the instruction, classes, feedback, mentorship, administration, and supplies.

OUTREACH FOR YOUTH

Nearly a thousand young people in our regular creative writing classes and camps for pre-teens, teens, and young people have explored their creativity in multiple literary genres far beyond the limitations of school classes. We give them the opportunity to perform or hear their peers share their work in spoken word programs, open mics, and readings attended by their families, local teens, and others within The Muse community. **The Teen Writers Fellowship** is an expansion of this part of our program.

We also go into local schools and youth organizations for monthly outreach classes and creative writing activities, including literary arts programs in places where teens currently receive services such as after school programs, community centers, and residential facilities.

We believe in the benefits of creative writing and expression as we witness young people struggling with myriad challenges blossom into writers growing up telling their stories.





David
Cascio

It's a place where I can be myself.

Retired Navy Seal **David Cascio** of Virginia Beach decided in 2014 that he had a story to tell, and he now draws on his career to inform his writing.

In the past six years Cascio has racked up nearly 60 classes, and he is amazed at the improvement in his writing. While he had done technical writing in the military, he hadn't written creatively until finding us.

"The Muse has given me the confidence to put myself out there for critique and evaluation in a friendly and knowledgeable atmosphere,"

he says. "In short, it's a place where I can be myself."

While his primary interest is writing military science fiction, his first two novels, *FrogFlyer* and *Alienode*, are science fiction. He hopes to publish his books and has received several encouraging nibbles.



I am very grateful for all The Muse contributes to our community. It is an oasis of sanity in an increasingly crazy world.



Alicia
Dekker

The Muse has made me a more confident writer.

Alicia Dekker of Norfolk has been a writer all her life, but it was only 12 years ago that she thought she might try writing as a profession.

"The Muse has made me a more confident writer," she says. "It moved me into writing with intention." She attributes our center with giving her the confidence to begin and earn a MFA at Queens University in Charlotte, NC.

Now she is focused on completing a novel that she started as her thesis and is beginning a second one while teaching classes. She has taught the intermediate-level fiction workshop

for adults and several seminars, and next would like to teach an introductory workshop.

"The Muse is the center of so much to me—my social life and professional life," she says.

"I'm very grateful for the friendships, the fun, the activities, the encouragement, and the growth."





MILITARY AND VETERAN OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Hampton Roads is unique in the nation as the home to both the world's largest military bases and also one of the largest populations of veterans.

In the past, we have collaborated with the **Wounded Warrior Project** and **HerStory**, and we have seen the power of writing for people dealing with the challenges of military life and retirement. Today we partner with the **Armed Services Arts Partnership (ASAP)** to offer creative writing classes for military service members, veterans, their families, and caregivers.

We also created a program that offers special classes and events on military bases to eliminate barriers to participation, classes and events at The Muse, and outreach and marketing activities to ensure that military personnel, their families, and caregivers are included in our area's larger writing community.

LIBRARY

Our **library** contains thousands of books, featuring great works of fiction, creative nonfiction, poetry, screenwriting, plays, writers' resource books, books on craft, reference books, and more.

The Brame Family International Poetry Library also contains poetry from more than 100 countries, providing an international resource to the Hampton Roads area.

ART GALLERY

The Art Gallery provides local artists exhibition space. Preference is given to artists with a connection to The Muse.

WRITERS RESERVOIR

The Writers Reservoir is an open Facebook group for writers where they can share articles, essays, and personal experiences about being a writer in the world and information about places to submit, contests, conferences, and more. In this online community, writers can share, learn, connect, and find that often elusive creative spark.



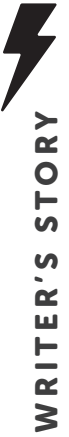
Derek
Spohn

I have learned to take pride in my passion for creative writing.

As a middle school student, soon-to-graduate college senior **Derek Spohn** used to get off the bus and head to his bedroom, shut the door, and write stories in secret, because he was ashamed of his desire to write.

"I'd heard it said too much that writing isn't practical for a career," says the 24-year-old Chesapeake resident. He has since stopped hiding his writing interest. "I have learned to take pride in my passion for creative writing."

Derek is grateful to The Muse for helping him turn his dream of becoming a published writer to reality. It is also a place where Derek, who is on the autism spectrum, has found his tribe. "I have struggled to make friends throughout my life, but The Muse has helped me get to a point where I can stand tall and say I have friends."



The Muse is an amazing place and the fact that it is available even when I can't afford to pay speaks to the true support of writing and all creativity. It is a quality place and I am learning so much. Thank you!



Lauren
Hope

The Muse gave me confidence that my stories were worth telling.

Lauren Hope, 35, of Suffolk helps people in drug addiction recovery by day, but by night she is a writer and a fan of The Muse.

Lauren, who started writing 10 years ago, found us when she wanted help writing and publishing a memoir. "The Muse gave me confidence that my stories were worth telling," she says. Her stories and blogs have been published on various mental health websites.

Our community has enhanced her life in many ways. "There were so many seasons of life when I wanted to take classes, but did not have the funds,"

she says. "The Muse always had a scholarship available"

Lauren is so positive about her experience that she tells other aspiring writer to attend classes there. "The Muse helped me discover myself as a writer, and speaker," she says. "It is THE community writing center in Hampton Roads."



History of the Muse



First poetry class begins with six students.

2004

Rents space from SOFA in Ghent Market Shops.

Incorporation and nonprofit status approved.

2006

Signs lease for own space with two classrooms in the Chelsea area of Norfolk, many new classes, programs and partnerships begin.

2008

Surpasses 500 student registrations.

2010

Annual registration approaches 1,000 students.

2012

2005

Classes begin with two teachers and 20 students.

Files for nonprofit status and incorporation.

2007

Moves location to Drawn to Art in Ghent Market Shops.

2009

Tuition assistance program begins.

Offers first classes to young writers; stand-up comedy, songwriting, food writing, and many other classes begin.

2011

Awards three \$500-college scholarships.





Grand re-opening held at current location.

First Book Lovers Bash held at the Slover Library with hundreds in attendance.

Begins association with veterans' groups.

Establishes first endowment through the Hampton Roads Foundation.

Online classes begin with local, national and international students and teachers expanding our reach outside of Hampton Roads. Red Chalk Studios helps to update the Muse brand identity system.

2014

Summer writing camps for kids begin.

2016

2018

2020

2013

Board of directors expands from two to 13 members.

2015

Offers 178 classes for 906 students.

Signs lease for new 2,700-square-foot facility in Ghent.

2017

More than 1,200 register for classes.

Outreach programs for senior citizens begin.

2019

New website launches.

Membership program begins.





*Gretchen Gillen, Kate Copeland,
and Cindy Carlson attend an
event at the Association of Writers
and Writing Programs (AWP).*

Thank You Partnerships

We collaborate with many community organizations and programs to help us offer classes, programs, and events throughout the area. Thank you to these organizations for their contributions of time, space, talent, and resources.

Chesapeake Bay Writers

Christopher Newport University
Writers Conference

Friends of the Norfolk Public Library

Hampton Roads Writers

Hope House Foundation

Horizons Youth Services

Mentally Healthy Norfolk Coalition

Nauticus

Norfolk Academy

Norfolk Collegiate

Old Dominion University
Literary Festival

Old Dominion University Writers
in Community (WINC)

Prince Books

Push Comedy Theater

Sierra Club Norfolk Chapter

Teens with a Purpose

The Armed Services Arts
Partnership

The Book Exchange

The Chesapeake Public Library

The Chrysler Museum

The Hampton Public Library

The Newport News Public Library

The Norfolk Public Library

The Poquoson Public Library

The Slover Library and The Slover
Foundation

Tidewater Arts Outreach (T.A.O.)

Virginia Beach SPCA

Zeiders American Dream Theater

Zeta Phi Beta

Affiliations

We are grateful for our many partnerships, affiliations, and friendships with other organizations. We believe that any thriving creative community relies on these associations.

The Muse is a proud member of:

Association of Writers and Writing
Programs

AWP's Writers Conferences and
Centers

Hampton Roads Business Outreach

Hampton Roads Writers (HRW)

LitNet

The Downtown Norfolk Council

The Ghent Business Association

The Ghent Neighborhood League

The Poetry Society of Virginia
(Lifetime Member)

The Virginia Writers Club
(Lifetime Member)

Virginians for the Arts

The West Ghent Civic League

Staff



Michael Khandelwal
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michael holds a BA and MPW from the University of Southern California. He is an award-winning writer and teacher. He writes poetry, fiction, editorials,

profiles, and feature articles, which have appeared in *Rattle*, *Coastal Virginia Magazine*, *Alt Daily*, and elsewhere. Michael teaches poetry and fiction workshops for The Muse, and is chairperson of the Norfolk Electoral Board and a member of the Norfolk Commission on the Arts and Humanities.



Shawn Girvan
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Shawn received his MFA in creative writing from Goddard College and worked at Second City in Chicago. His work has appeared in *The Pitkin Review*,

Wraparound South and *West Texas Literary Review*. He is finishing his first memoir.



Rebekah Coxwell
PROGRAM MANAGER
(FOR THE YEAR 2020)

Rebekah received her MFA from Arcadia University. She recently completed her first manuscript and is in the midst of another.

She has published short stories and poetry in *The New Southern Fugitives*, the *Opiate*, *Bridge Eight*, *50 Haikus*, *Brief Wilderness*, and *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, and has work forthcoming in *A Room of Her Own* and *Midnight and Indigo*.



Jason Gunning
OPERATIONS MANAGER

Jason studied accounting at Towson University in Maryland where he was named All American in football. He coaches sports in Hampton Roads,

allowing him to use his love of sports to support youth and encourage physical health.



Susan Deutsch
PROGRAM MANAGER

Susan holds her B.A. from Middlebury College. She has worked as a freelance book editor, read submissions for the New England Review and

published several short stories. Her history with The Muse began in the Teen Writers Workshop during middle school.



Leslye Reaves
WEBSITE DEVELOPER

Leslye PJ Reaves is a full-stack web developer with more than 17 years of professional experience. She holds a B.A. in film from Howard University and

an M.A. in multimedia from California State University, East Bay. She is an award-winning author and independent filmmaker. Her novel, *Song of Blood & Stone*, was named one of TIME Magazine's top fantasy books of 2018.



Remy Smidt
YOUTH COORDINATOR

Remy is a first-year MFA fiction student at Columbia University. In addition to her work at the Muse, she is working on a novel.



Anna Fitzgerald
PROGRAM ASSOCIATE
(SERVED THROUGH 9/2020)

Anna holds a degree in art education and has taught K-12 in multiple settings, including at the

international school in Costa Rica. She holds a master's degree in radio/TV/film from the University of Texas at Austin, TX. Her published research includes the history of concert posters and music subcultures.

Additional 2021 staff members include Sierra Folz and Charles Rhodes.



Sheila Sheppard



Chris De Matteo



Tim Seibles

Teachers

Our nearly 100 instructors have advanced degrees, are published authors, or working writers. Many have taught at universities, colleges, or for community organizations and are recipients of prestigious awards, including:

Desiree Cooper

2015 Kresge Artist Fellow; Pulitzer Prize-nominated journalist; award-winning author of flash fiction collection, *Know The Mother*; award-winning filmmaker for *The Choice*; founding board member of Cave Canem, national residency for emerging black poets; author of poetry, fiction and essays published in numerous journals and collections.

John DeDakis

Winner of Reviewers Choice, Forward INDIES, and Feathered Quill book awards in 2017 for his fourth novel, *Bullet in the Chamber*.

Luisa A. Igloria

2020 Poet Laureate of Virginia, inaugural Glasgow Distinguished Writer in Residence at Washington and Lee University in 2018, the 2018 winner of the Center for Book Arts Letterpress Poetry Chapbook award, 2015 inaugural winner of the Resurgence Poetry Prize, author of more than a dozen books.

Joe Jackson

Winner of the PEN/Jacqueline Bograd Weld Award for biography, finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Awards for Biography, author of a novel and seven nonfiction books.

Patti McCracken

Twice a Knight International Press Fellow.

Dinty W. Moore

Author of the award-winning memoir *Between Panic & Desire* and the writing guides *The Story Cure* and *Crafting the Personal Essay* among many other books, essays and stories; founding editor of Brevity, the journal of flash nonfiction, teaches world-wide.

Tim Seibles

Poet Laureate of Virginia in 2016, finalist for the National Book Award in 2012, National Endowment for the Arts fellowship recipient.

Diane Zinna

Author of the novel, *The All-Night Sun*; creator of Writer to Writer Mentorship Program for the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, creative writing teacher for 10 years.

Board Members Executive Committee



Karen Corrigan
CHAIR

Karen spent 30 years as a healthcare executive, strategy consultant and small business entrepreneur. Over the course of her career, she published two books, authored numerous articles and white papers, and was a sought-after speaker on industry trends and innovations. Karen serves as vice president for communications on the board of the FBI National Citizens Academy Alumni Association, and is past president of the Norfolk chapter.



Stephen Burgess
**FIRST VICE-CHAIR
AND PAST CHAIR**

Stephen serves as first vice chair for the Executive Committee. In that role, he chairs the Board's governance and nominating committees. He is also the immediate past chair of the Board. Stephen is retired from the practice of law.



Cindy Carlson
**VICE CHAIR AND
GRANTS COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Cindy spent a long career in youth development and now spends her retirement as a writer. She is a winner of the Hampton Roads Writers contest for creative nonfiction, co-founder of the local chapter of Women Writers Who Submit, and her work has appeared in literary and travel journals.



Holly Chacon
TREASURER

Holly has had a diverse career, much of it spent as an award-winning graphic artist. For the past 20-plus years, she has worked with her husband as co-owner and art director of Colley Avenue Copies & Graphics. She has trained many graphic artists over the years.



Diane Fine
SECRETARY

Diane Fine has been a professional screenwriter and "script doctor" in Hollywood for more than 20 years. Her credits include *Storm*, *Firetrap*, *Art Heist*, and *Purgatory Flats*. The BET movie-of-the-week she co-wrote, *Fire & Ice*, was one of the highest-rated MOW's in BET's history and was nominated for an NAACP Image award. A graduate of USC's School of Cinematic Arts, she currently teaches screenwriting at Old Dominion University as well as at The Muse.



Michael Khandelwal
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Michael is a co-founder and executive director of The Muse. He is an award-winning writer and teacher.

Emeritus Board Members

Ellen Bryson

Stephanie Catherines

Kathryn Copeland

Alicia Dekker

Sean Devereaux

Patti Hinson

Brad McMurran

Tim Seibles

Ann Sullivan

The Muse Writers Center also thanks and acknowledges the contributions of Jennifer Edwards, Lydia Netzer, and James Ververka for their board service during the 2019 and 2020 fiscal years.

Board Members Directors



Leslie Entsminger

Leslie worked at Mobil Oil as a geophysicist before retiring. She is a graduate of Old Dominion University's MFA program in creative writing and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize by the Cincinnati Review. Her work has been published in a number of literary journals.



Gretchen Gillen MARKETING CHAIR

After a career in technical writing for a large computer software company, Gretchen began volunteering in her community, working with her children's schools, the Junior Women's Club of Hilton Village and the Newport News Medical Society Alliance, for which she served as president. Her essays have been featured on NPR's Writer's Block.



Charles Hecht-Leavitt

A practicing neuroradiologist with special interest in MRI of multiple sclerosis and traumatic brain injury, Charles has had a lifelong interest in poetry. He has a special interest in The Muse's mission to enrich the lives of seniors and the elderly by encouraging the writing of memoir.



Carol Howard

Carol, a native New Yorker and a Thomas Hunter Honors Scholar, holds a Ph.D. from Old Dominion University in urban services. She is the director of Birthright, a pregnancy crisis center in Norfolk.



Luisa A. Igloria

Luisa is the 2020 Poet Laureate of Virginia. She is one of two co-winners of the 2019 Crab Orchard Poetry Open competition. In 2015, she was the inaugural winner of the Resurgence Prize for ecopoetry and was the 2018 recipient of the Center for the Book Arts Letterpress Poetry Chapbook Prize. She is the author of four books of poetry and teaches on the faculty of the MFA Creative Writing Program at Old Dominion University.



Richard Levin

Richard is the owner of Levin's of Norfolk, The Ghent Market Shops, and other shopping centers and retail properties. He is an active member of the Ghent Business Association.



Laurine Press

Laurine is a patron of the arts and an advocate for genealogy. Now retired after 40 years with The City of Hampton Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department, she has found the joy of enhancing the spoken and written word to hone her love of storytelling.



Kelly Sokol

Kelly is author of the novel, *The Unprotected*. In 2018 she was awarded the National Parks Artist-in-Residence and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her work has been published in numerous literary journals.



Jane White

After spending 20 years in the military, Jane moved to Norfolk where she began taking fiction writing at The Muse. She has been a volunteer at The Muse for several years and chaired the Book Lovers Bash. She is director of convention services for the Virginia Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau.



Lakeah Wilkins

After spending 20-plus years in Corporate America as a human resources professional, Lakeah is now a leadership development advisor and personal life empowerment coach. She is a published children's author, an editor, and a monthly contributor to an online newspaper.

Interns, Volunteers, and Hosts

Our interns, volunteers, and hosts assist the staff to provide valuable services that help our office operations run smoothly and much more. We appreciate the donation of their time and talent.

INTERNS

Jorja Connelly
Samantha Coyne
Sierra Foltz
Faith Handley
Gabriela Igloria
Chloe Kasper
Derek Spohn
Santia Wilkins

VOLUNTEERS

Kimberly Ammons
Beth Bilderback
Samantha Coyne
Tina Carey
Kindra McDonald
Allyson Jackson
Gail Kent
Malcom Massey
Rodney Williamson

HOSTS

David Cascio
Karrie McDaniels
Judith Moffitt
Charles Rhodes
Fran Ward



Recognizing a Legacy of Service

Kathryn "Kate" Copeland first joined the board of directors in 2013 and served as treasurer and on the executive committee from that point until her retirement from board service in January 2021. During her tenure, she chaired the finance committee and fundraising committee, and contributed countless behind-the-scenes volunteer hours to support The Muse Writers Center.

"Board service is one of the toughest volunteer roles of all, and Kate performed with dedication and passion for our mission," said Karen Corrigan, chair of The Muse's board of directors. "She has been integral to the important advances we have made as an organization."

Muse Executive Director Michael Khandelwal has come to rely on Kate since she joined the board. "From the very beginning, she's been a sounding board for me and one of the first to volunteer for a new project," says Khandelwal. "When we moved to our new location in 2016, Kate was there, climbing on counters and painting walls. She wanted to make sure the center was inviting and beautiful."

To recognize Kate's contributions to The Muse Writers Center, the board of directors voted to recognize Kate as an emeritus board member.

2019 Financials

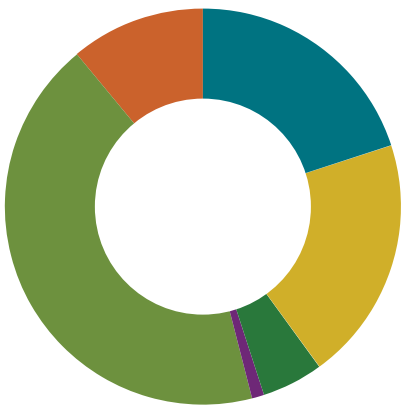
The Muse has not only grown in numbers and space, we have grown financially. Since the first year when we operated on a shoestring, we have become a financially strong nonprofit. In 2013 we operated on a budget of \$141,852. In 2019, our revenue grew to \$342,152.82. This tremendous growth has been possible through the continued support of grantors, businesses, fundraising events, individual and community donations, and student tuition.

For two years in a row, we won the award for most donations to a Hampton Roads nonprofit during the Give Local 757 fundraiser. Many donations, often in small amounts, are from grateful students. Our annual Book Lovers Bash has become a very successful fundraising event featuring a silent auction, and in 2019, a presentation by humanities scholar, author and educator Clay Jenkinson, best known for public radio’s The Thomas Jefferson Hour.

The board of directors has carefully managed our funds to finance its strategic initiatives. Our funds are used to support operations, salaries, teacher stipends, scholarships, and tuition assistance for those who cannot afford to pay for classes—no one is ever turned away. We are the only center in the nation to offer this benefit to the community, and about 20 percent of our students are on tuition assistance.

January-December 2019

REVENUE SUMMARY



Foundation Grants	\$ 69,297.00
Public Support	\$69,796.16
Government Grants	\$17,570.00
Investments	\$16.71
Program Income	\$146,176.95
Special Events Income	\$39,296.00
Total Income	\$342,152.82

EXPENSES SUMMARY



Awards and Grants	\$3,350.00
Business Expenses	\$5,740.60
Contract and Teaching Services	\$105,493.22
Facilities and Equipment	\$49,690.33
Operations	\$14,957.90
Other Misc Expenses	\$38,014.77
Payroll Expenses	\$116,224.39
Travel and Meetings	\$8,628.81
Total Expenses	\$342,100.02
Net income	\$52.80

Grants

Major grants are listed on p.27 under Grants and Foundations. Additional grants include:

Tidewater Jewish Foundation	\$1,930	The Community Foundation (Christine Koubek Family Fund)	\$500
Armed Services Arts Partnership	\$850	Private Foundation (Anthony & Bonnie Cascio)	\$250
Facebook Matching Grant from 2018 Giving Tuesday (Paid in 2019)	\$750	Private Foundation (Paul Brame, Brame Family)	\$50
Network for Good	\$750		

2019 Corporate Donors

Richard Levin	\$6,400	Pat Casey (Casey Charitable Fund)	\$1,000	AmazonSmile	\$304
Colley Avenue Copies and Graphics, Inc.	\$5,000	Koehler Books	\$1,000	Pendulum Fine Meats	\$300
Queen of Virginia Skill & Entertainment	\$5,000	A.G. DiCarlo, LLC	\$950	Wilbanks, Smith, & Thomas Asset Management	\$300
Art Repertory Films, Inc.	\$1,196	MMC Benefits	\$625	Cooper Hurley Injury Lawyers ..	\$300
Book Exchange at Ward's Corner	\$1,018	EM Properties LLC	\$500	Norfolk Quaker Meeting	\$250
		BizConnect Hampton Roads	\$426	Priority Payment Systems	\$194

2019 Individual Donors

\$1,000 AND ABOVE	\$500-\$999	\$250-\$499		
John Cameron	Kim Austin-Peterman	Christine Anderson	Pamela Denyes	Lydia Netzer
Karen Corrigan	Robin Bernath	Karen Armstrong	Gillian Durham	Renee Olander
Leslie Ensminger	Cindy Carlson and Richard Goll	Joni Baker	Barbara Fine	Steve Owen
Facebook Individual Donations	Kathryn Copeland	Marilyn Barton	Karen Fine	Elain Panneton
Diane Fine	Jennifer & Rob Edwards	Dan Becker	Cheryl Fletcher	Dana Parker
Gretchen & Bill Gillen	Robert Howard	Nancy Blumberg	Nell Gallagher	Cary Petzinger
Charles and Leslie Hecht-Leavitt	Tyler Leinbach	Bob Boester	Vivianne Gantous	Missy Schmidt
Carol Howard	Anne Meek	Karl Bogott	Rebecca Greenwald	Tim Seibles
Michael Khandelwal	Ann Sullivan & Steve Burgess	Sandra Brandt	Penny Hutson	Lauran Strait
William McClure	Jane White	Margarita Budrionis	Tracy Jackson	Whitney Weireter
Reeves Mahoney		Tamara Burke	Clay Jenkinson	John Zuck
Lisa Porten		Jean Carideo	Rebecca Jones	
Robert Shapiro		Anthony and Bonnie Cascio	Govind Khandalwal	
Kelly Sokol		Stephanie Catherines	George Kelley	
Barbara Taylor		Jefferson Cooper	Kay Larrieu	
		Stephen Cox	Jennifer Martin	
		Alicia Dekker	Sybil Mays	
		Christopher DeMatteo	Peggy Meder	
			Debora Mosher	
			Kim Nelson	



2020: Silver Linings Among Dark Clouds

With 2020 came unexpected challenges and surprising opportunities at The Muse Writers Center.

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country and brought fear, uncertainty, and isolation, The Muse swiftly pivoted to providing online classes and events. While our classrooms were closed for much of the year, 12,122 people participated in 233 literary events, most of which were online—in all a record number of event attendees.

With the advent of online events and classes, we were able to broaden our reach beyond the Hampton Roads region, attracting students and teachers nationally as well as in Japan, South Korea, Europe, and Canada. Approximately 20 percent of our students live outside of Hampton Roads. In that regard, 2020 held a silver lining for us as we became recognized beyond our geographical borders for providing high-quality instruction and literary events.

A lecture and discussion presented by *New York Times* best-selling romantic suspense novelist Jayne Ann Krentz in September is one example of our expanded offerings. Krentz spoke about “Why Genre Fiction is Important, Even if it is Entertaining.”

The national zeitgeist surrounding protests for racial justice were reflected in diversity events at The Muse. In October we partnered with Urban Word NYC and participants around the country to provide “Diversity 2020: Dynamic Voices for Change.” The opening online event, moderated by our own Luisa A. Igloria, Virginia Poet Laureate, featured poets Ross Gay and January Gill O’Neil. Continuing the series in November, we featured U.S. Teen Poet Laureate Meera Dasgupta in a virtual reading and Q&A with The Muse’s Teen Fellows.

Online events and instruction were so popular and successful that we plan to offer them as an option in the future in addition to in-person classes.

Another important step we took in 2020 was clarifying our mission and updating our branding (see mission statement on p. 1).

We examined how we were communicating our mission and brand and found that we had been inconsistent. Eager to present a professional and meaningful image that reflects our mission, we engaged Red Chalk Studios, who volunteered their experience and skills to advise us. With their help, we updated our logo, developed graphic standards, and designed templates and procedures to guide our promotion.

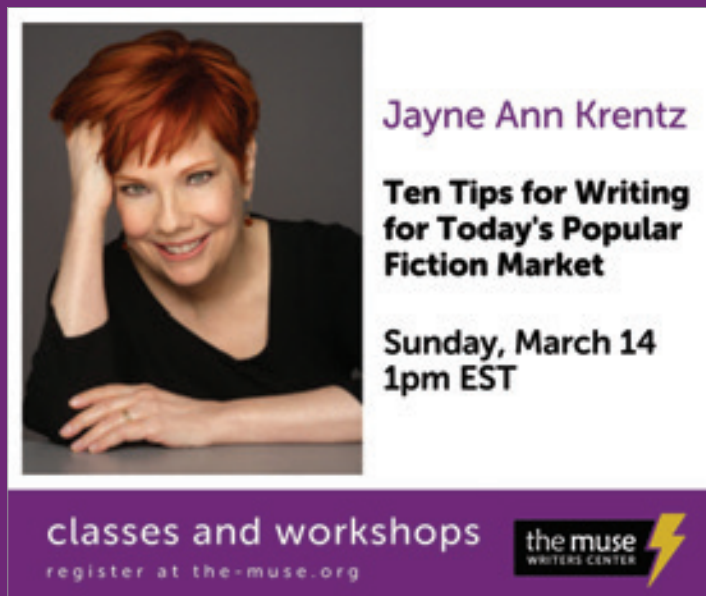
ORIGINAL



NEW

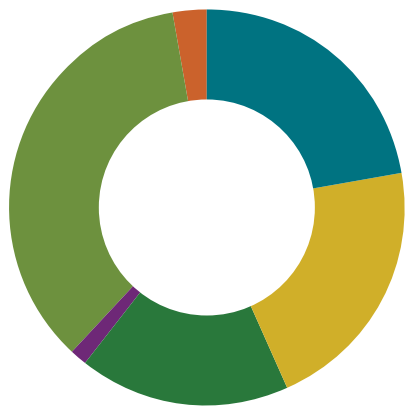


Red Chalk Studios helped us update our visual brand system, including redesigning our social media templates, such as these.



2020 Financials

REVENUE SUMMARY



Foundation and Trust Grants	\$ 85,827.00
Public Support	\$80,805.69
Government Grants	\$65,751.00
Investments	\$29.20
Program Income	\$135,738.22
Special Events Income	\$1,610.00
Total Income	\$369,761.11

EXPENSES SUMMARY



Awards and Grants	\$12,700.00
Business Expenses	\$4,760.78
Contract and Teaching Services	\$188,741.90
Facilities and Equipment	\$51,623.80
Operations	\$51,807.75
Other Misc Expenses	\$10,326.19
Payroll Expenses	\$126,433.84
Travel and Meetings	\$7,746.94
Total Expenses	\$369,410.25
Net Income	\$350.86

2020 Corporate Donors

Colley Avenue Copies and Graphics, Inc.	\$1,924
Decker, Cardon, Thomas, Weintraub & Neskis	\$250
Green Olive Tree, Inc.	\$2,500
Vessel Craft Coffee	\$1,000

Grants and Foundations

A HISTORICAL ACCOUNTING

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Sedona Fund	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$2,000		\$2,000	
Norfolk Commission on the Arts & Humanities			\$3,000	\$5,314	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$8,500	\$9,450
Thistle Foundation				\$7,000		\$15,000	\$10,000	\$12,000
The Virginia Commission for the Arts				\$3,995	\$6,925	\$8,880	\$9,070	\$9,401
Peninsula Community Foundation of Virginia					\$6,514	\$4,514	\$5,757	\$2,757
Business Consortium for Arts Support					\$1,250	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Anonymous Foundation						\$50,000	\$50,000	\$51,000
Literary Arts Emergency Fund								\$25,000
Norfolk Economic Development Authority								\$15,000
National Endowment for the Arts								\$10,000
Hampton Roads Community Foundation								\$4,000
Virginia Humanities								\$4,000

2020 Individual Donors

\$1,000 AND ABOVE

Mary Pat Casey
Ann Chinnis
Kathryn Copeland
Leslie Entsminger
Carol Howard
Michael Khandelwal
Richard Levin
William McClure
Anne Meek
Jeffrey Morse
Elaine Panneton
Kelly Sokol
Barbara Taylor

\$500 - \$999

Jon Berry
Stephen Burgess
Bob Cady
Cindy Carlson & Richard Goll
Gregg Clifford
Karen Corrigan
Diane Fine
Gretchen & Bill Gillen
Pierre Golpira
Govind Khandelwal
Michael Krentz
Katherine Langworthy
Victoria Lavallee
Barry Pearl
Missy Schmidt
Ann Sullivan

\$250 - \$499

Hope Ashby
William Ayres
Wendy Bramble
Paul Brame
David Cascio
Stephanie Catherines
Stephen Cox
Jennifer Edwards
Steven Elmore
Charles Hecht-Leavitt
John Koehler
Christine Koubek
Reeves Mahoney
Kim Nelson
Michelle & Michael Park

Michael Rigg
Kathy Sarosdy
Alison Schoew
James Sexton
Jessica Tyree
Rosanne Walters
Jane White
Beth Williams
Charles Wilson

Thank you to our grantors!



the-muse.org
2200 Colonial Avenue #3
Norfolk, VA 23517
757 818.9880

the muse
WRITERS CENTER

