

NEWS 'N' NOTES

Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

(<http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>)

February 2016

President's Address:

I have a tendency to slow down on writing at the end of the year. I use the excuse of holidays and family time to justify my laziness. Maybe you do, too. As the limbs on a tree get old and brittle, no longer sustainable, they fall to the ground. So it is with the old year, it will no longer sustain us, as it falls away. The great news is we can get up, dust ourselves off, and grow into the new year.

I kicked off the new year with a couple of contest entries. One is the PRA monthly contest which is free with membership. Not many members are taking advantage of this. Entering contests is a way to cultivate the mindset of writing. I was at a branch meeting recently where a member threw out a subject and asked for some thoughts that might lead to a poem. Wow! I was amazed at the different directions taken with a simple subject like SKY. Monthly contests present a variety of subjects and forms to challenge the writer in you.

The Board has met and discussed a number of the items from your responses to the survey. There are some well-thought-out ideas presented and we are looking for ways to implement them with hopes of not only improving PRA but also reaching new members. I would like to report that we have a new branch at Fort Smith that is up and running. Also, Kate Lacy has initiated the online group for those who aren't mobile. If you are interested in becoming a part of that group, please contact Kate. Some of the members of the White County Creative Writers group plan to meet in February and work toward implementing a new branch in the Searcy area. They have poets who would be a great addition to PRA.

Spring Celebration is coming early this year. It will be in April at El Dorado and the SAPOP branch is getting it all together for a good time. Make your plans to attend. I look forward to seeing you there. Keep writing.

Life is too short to be without poetry.

Dennis

Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration April 23rd at El Dorado:

South Arkansas Poets of the Pines in El Dorado invite PRA members and friends to the annual Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration on April 23rd at St. Mary's Episcopal Church Parish Hall. Registration begins at 8:15 AM. The meeting opens at 9AM and features PRA's award-winning, past President Betty Heidelberger as speaker. Lunch will be served on site. (See tentative agenda below.) **Remember to mail your 3 spring poetry contest entries by March 15th** to the sponsors listed on page 9 of the yearbook. These contests are for PRA members only. Winners will be announced on April 23rd. Members are invited to **send one or two poems for critique to Jim Barton by March 23rd**. Comments on these poems will be presented as part of the program. Also, attendees may submit a serious or light poem at registration before the program begins. (See yearbook page 10 for guidelines.) Winning poems will be determined by attendee vote. **(PLEASE NOTE: PRA's Monthly contest for April will move to May because of the April conference.)**

On Friday, April 22, early attendees are invited to a special Open-Mic Night from 8-10 PM at PJ's Coffee Shop on the downtown Square. Featured performer will be PRA's own Karen Hayes, performance poet extraordinaire, fresh off appearances in Little Rock and Hot Springs. Plans also are underway for those who would like to meet for the evening meal earlier downtown at the Square.

Tentative Agenda for April 23, 2016 in El Dorado

- 8:15 - Registration/Light Breakfast/Early Dues Payments
- 9:00 - Welcome/Opening/Brief on Dr. Lily Peter
- 9:30 - Reading of Light and Serious Verse

- 10:00 - Introduction of Speaker
- 10:40 - Break
- 10:50 - Critiques
- 11:30 - Lunch
- 12:30 - Student Winners
- 1:00 - Special Presentation/Business Meeting
- 2:30 - Adjourn

Directions to PJ's Coffee (on the Square in downtown El Dorado) – (Contact Jim Barton, 870-951-0171)

From 167 South from LR, turn left just past overpass at El Dorado to stay on 167S bypass. Continue south and take second exit (Main Street) to the right. Follow Main Street west all the way downtown. Just past the County Courthouse, PJ's is on your right, on the corner of Main and Washington.

From Hwy 7 South from Camden, stay on 7 south to El Dorado, where it becomes 167 south bypass. Continue south to Main Street exit, and turn right. Follow to downtown. PJ's is just past the County Courthouse at Washington and Main.

From Hwy 63 from Pine Bluff/Warren, follow 63 into El Dorado (it becomes Main Street.) Stay on Main to downtown. PJ's is just past the County Courthouse at the corner of Washington and Main.

Directions to St. Mary's Parish Hall (512 Champagnolle Road, El Dorado) --

From 167 South from LR, turn left just past overpass to stay on 167 bypass. Continue south to first exit, Champagnolle Road. Turn right and stay on Champagnolle all the way to Madison Ave. at the signal light by Young's Funeral Home. Turn right and take second drive to the right into St Mary's Parish Hall parking lot.

From Hwy 7 South, same as above for PJ's, except take first exit off 167 bypass (Champagnolle Road), turn right and go to Madison Ave at light by Young's Funeral Home. Turn right on Madison and take second drive to the right to enter St Mary's Parish Hall parking lot.

From Hwy 63, just past the Mobil convenience store, turn right (North) onto 167 bypass. Go to first exit (Champagnolle Road), turn left onto Champagnolle (west) and follow above directions to Parish Hall.

Several national motels have locations in El Dorado. *Hampton Inn, Holiday Inn Express, Comfort Inn, La Quinta Inn* are clustered near the Intersection of Highways 82B and 167 just South of town. *Country Inn and Suites* is located West of town on West Hillsboro (US 82 B). *Union Square Guest Quarters* is located on the Square downtown.

Poetry Day Contest Sponsorship Forms Due 2-28-2016:

Please consider sponsoring &/or judging a contest for Poetry Day. Or if you know of a potential sponsor (business or private) please alert PRA President Dennis Patton. The Contest Sponsorship form is attached. Send completed forms with appropriate payment to PRA Treasurer Jim Barton (P.O. Box 263, Huttig, AR 71747) by February 28, 2016. See also page 21 in your yearbook for more information on sponsorships. Last year PRA offered more contests than in previous years, plus more substantial awards. Entries increased 42% from poets in Arkansas, 14 other states and Canada. It's fun! See what you can do to add to the fun. The Poetry Day contest brochure will be produced in March and posted promptly on the PRA website, so you'll have plenty of time to write winning poems. Brochure copies also will be mailed with the May newsletter to members who do not have internet access. (Our thanks to the Hot Springs Poets who have graciously agreed to host Poetry Day this year, and to Betty Heidelberger who has volunteered to act as PD Contest Chair.)

January Board Meeting Results

The board completed another very productive meeting in January. Some of the items addressed include: voting to make the current Arkansas Poet Laureate an Honorary member of PRA; allowing college contest entrants who are currently PRA members an exemption from paying the \$15 entry fee; agreeing to award a one-year membership to the adult Best-of-Show winner in the 2016 State Fair poetry contest; discussing the member survey results and deciding on first actions (see attached summary); deciding to place advertising in the print media for Poetry Day and contests; deciding to seek long-term sponsors for the Spring Celebration contests and to acknowledge them on the website with a link to their business; deciding to post yearbook information, minus the members' addresses, on the website, and research delivering yearbooks electronically for fiscal year 2017; deciding the Sybil Nash Abrams contest subject (*Arkansas Musicians*) along with subjects for 3 other sponsored contests for Poetry Day; and voting to approve an allowance of up to \$50 in reimbursements for branches hosting Spring Celebration and Poetry Day. Contact President Dennis Patton with any questions.

Partners/Sponsors Needed for Spring Contests:

Currently PRA is seeking new sponsors for 2 of the 3 spring contests so they can continue to be free for members. If you know of potential sponsors for the Verna Lee Hinegardner Memorial Award and Mary Harper Sowell Award, please alert President Dennis Patton. Each contest needs \$100 per year. Sponsors will be noted on PRA's yearbook and website. Alert Dennis too of potential sponsors/partners (business or individual) for new or other contests. PRA is grateful to several long term sponsors for adult contests, including the Sybil Nash Abrams family, Rosa Zagnoni Marinoni family, and O'Neal family. Outreach partners for student contests currently include the SNA family, NFSPS, Arkansas State Fair, AETN and colleges across the state.

PRA Partnership with Arkansas State Fair:

PRA is sponsoring the Best-in-Show poetry winners for 4 age groups at the 2016 Arkansas State Fair. The 4 overall winners will receive \$25/adult (age 19+), \$25/senior youth (14-18), \$15/junior youth (9-13) and \$10/youth (5-8). The adult winner also will receive a free PRA membership through June 2017, and the 3 student winners will receive certificates. Press releases will be submitted to the hometown newspaper of each winner, with pictures if provided. Watch the State Fair's website (Arkansasstatefair.com) for updates in May with details on poetry contests. Entry is free to all Arkansans. Also, this year for the first time the fair will accept poetry by mail to encourage more entries from around the state. Mailed poems (with entry form) must arrive at the fair by September 30, or they may be hand delivered by the dates printed in the general rules. The fair also will provide mailing information to PRA on all poetry entrants to allow information sharing about more contests. The fair's Creative Arts Handbook online will include PRA's website so entrants may research PRA and let the fair know if they do not want their address released. This is a test year for the new partnership. We are hoping for a success.

2016 Collegiate Contest Progress:

PRA's first college contest is now underway, with entries due by 3/15/16. Fifty colleges across the state were contacted between October and January. Our thanks to the many PRA members who helped in the statewide outreach; to Charlie Southerland for conceiving the idea; to Stephen Johnson, Pat Durmon and Diane Stefan for helping refine the idea; to the PRA board for agreeing to test the contest this year; and to the team of Laura Loughridge, Robin Burrows and Donna Smith for implementing it. We are hoping for good results. Remember that all entrants will receive a 1-year membership in PRA (& NFSPS) through 6/2017 with access to 45 free or low cost contests in the state, another 50 contests at the national level, plus free access to PRA's State Critic services. It's a wonderful opportunity for all who enter. Winners will be decided in April and may read their poems at the Spring Conference. Please help us to welcome these new members to PRA and encourage them in their poetry. We're hoping some will start new PRA branches on campus. (Note: The PRA Board decided in January that student entrants who are currently paid members of PRA will not have to pay the contest entry fee.)

Volunteers Wanted

If you or someone you know would be willing to help PRA's Youth Chairman Laura Loughridge as a K-12 school resource for poetry, please contact her at lauracurt102@att.net.

Did You Know?

Kate Lacy, PRA's Membership Chair and President of Poets Northwest Branch, is leading an online PRA branch for members across the state who can't attend a branch meeting. Currently about ten PRA members participate: Kate, Kathy Helmer, Robin Burrows, Polly Bakker, Helene Stallcup, Freeda Baker Nichols, Betty Pittman, Sara Gipson, Geneva Emerson and Margaret Weathers. What a great pioneer group! They have been challenging each other monthly since November. Our thanks and congratulations to Kate for starting this new service. If you are interested in joining her online group contact Kate at voicedancer2002@yahoo.com.

2015 Member Survey Results:

Thanks to all who participated in the 2015 PRA Member Survey. We had a 25% response rate, about average for such a survey. Results were discussed at the January Board meeting and a summary is attached along with board decisions for actions this year.

Yearbook Corrections:

Please make the following additions/corrections to your 2015-2016 yearbook:

**The Spring Celebration Contest deadlines changed to 3/15/16 this year for the April conference.
The April Monthly Contest has been moved to May because the Spring Conference will be held in April.**

For security reasons, member addresses will not be posted in the newsletter or on the web in the future.

New officers for the Siloam Springs Writers Branch:

President - Gene Linzey

Vice President - Ted Weathers

Treasurer - Jane Weathers

Secretary - Rachel Kulp

Publicity - Rosemary Matthews

Meetings - First Thursday each month, 6PM. currently at First Baptist Church, Dawn Hill Rd., Siloam Springs.

Pop Quiz on Yearbook – Do you know where to find the monthly contest information? Or what it takes to become a member or establish a branch? These and other answers are currently on PRA's website and in your printed yearbook. Soon more of the yearbook information will be posted on PRA's website, excluding member names/addresses. Board members also are working on a plan to deliver yearbooks electronically for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Printed books will still be available to members who need or want them.

Farewell to Magdalene Collums (1927-2015)

PRA member Magdalene Collums (88) of Hope, AR passed away November 19, 2015. She was born in Washington, AR, June 3, 1927, to Rufus Lafayette and Maggie Evans Neal. She married J. B. Collums in 1947. They and their young daughter moved to California, returned to Arkansas after 1½ years, and enjoyed the rest of their lives in Hope. Magdalene graduated from Guernsey High School, Texarkana Junior College, and Henderson State College. She taught 7th and 8th grades; 9th grade Algebra and 11th grade American History at Emmet High School; English and Literature at Spring Hill High School and the all-Black Lincoln High School at Washington, Arkansas. She published numerous articles in an area historical magazine, *The Old Time Chronicle*, and won many poetry awards from the Arkansas Writers Conference, Arkansas Poetry Conferences and several other state conferences. She worked at the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives for 23 years helping to collect and provide historical and genealogical material for patrons of the twelve southwest counties. Magdalene, her sister, and niece researched their own family history and made several trips to Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama and Texas to see sites where ancestors had lived. She was a member of the Hope Church of Christ, The Dear Old Town Literary Club at Washington, Poets Roundtable of Arkansas, and the Arkansas Retired Teachers' Association.

Farewell to Arkansas Poet C. D. Wright (1949-2016)

Carolyn Wright was an award-winning Arkansas poet and author whose work was known for being experimental. She was a long-term advocate for poets, a publisher, exhibit curator, professor, National Book Award finalist for poetry, and National Book Critics Circle Award winner in 2010. C. D. Wright was born in Mountain Home, Arkansas to Alyce Collins and Judge Ernie Wright. She has one brother, Warren. She graduated from high school in Harrison, Arkansas (1967), received a BA in French from Memphis State University (1971), and earned an MFA in creative writing from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville (1976). In 1977 Wright's poetry collection was the first volume published by *Lost Roads Publishers*, founded by Arkansas poet Frank Stanford. After Stanford's death in 1978, Wright directed *Lost Roads*. In 1979 she moved to San Francisco and co-edited *Lost Roads* with poet Forrest Gander who became her husband in 1983 and father of their son Brecht. In 2005 *Lost Roads* changed directors and moved to Washington State. Wright received a National Endowment for the Arts Award for poetry in 1981 and moved to Mexico to complete her next book. In 1983 she served Brown University in Rhode Island as director of the Graduate Program in Literary Arts and the Israel J. Kapstein Professor. Among her many awards, she won two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship and a Lange-Taylor Prize from Duke University. She also served as Poet Laureate of Rhode Island (1994-1999). She wrote many books over the years, including one on Arkansas writers published by the UofA Press in 1994 along with a poster documenting writers from Hernando de Soto to post-WWII. In 2004 she was recognized by the John D. and Katherine T. MacArthur Foundation for 25 years of poetic and cultural achievement, and was awarded a 5-year fellowship. In 2013 she was elected as a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets. Throughout her career Wright used language for startling effect and she reminisced about Ozark Mountain living. Wright died on January 12, 2016, just days after publishing her last book. (See more at encyclopediaofarkansas.net.)

Poetic Wins, Activities and Publications:

Don't be shy! Please send notice of your accomplishments to Donna Smith, 58 Briarwood, Greenbrier, AR 72058 (tndsmith@live.com). It's very encouraging for your peers to hear that poetry is thriving in Arkansas.

PRA Monthly Contest winners are: November - 1st Liz Faulkner, 2nd Karen Kay Bailey, 3rd Jim Barton, 1HM John McBride, 2HM Karen Hayes, 3HM Dennis Patton; December – 1st Barbara Blanks, 2nd Cathy Moran, 3rd Jim Barton, 1HM Ann Carolyn Cates, 2HM Pat Laster, 3HM Cathy Parker; and January - 1st (tie) John McBride and Barbara Blanks, 2nd Cathy Moran, 3rd Betty Heidelberger, 1HM Jim Barton, 2HM Don Crowson, 3HM Vivian Hoskins. Check monthly contests and winners on PRA's webpage: <http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>.

Lee Ann Russell (Member-at-large – Springfield, MO) won a 1st Merit Award from League of Minnesota Poets, 2 HMs from the Poetry Society of Texas, and from GREEN RIVER WRITERS she won a 3rd place in short story, a 1st HM in creative non-fiction, and a 1st HM in Limerick. FYI – Lee Ann also is the author of a book entitled *How to Write Poetry, Ballad to Villanelle* with 184 pages, 448 definitions, 205 poetic forms, 102 examples and 173 famous poets' life spans. Contact Lee Ann at 1004 N. Rogers, Springfield, MO 65802, or lar1111@sbcglobal.net for more information.

Pat Durmon (Free Verse Poets of Mtn Home) completed a third reprint of her book **Push Mountain Road**. It's about the Ozarks and the area where she lives. Contact Pat for more information.

SAPOP (South Arkansas Poets of the Pines) members were pretty busy in December. Cindy Mabry, Marilyn Joyner, Janet Ryan, and Jim Barton were invited to read at a public presentation of BETWEEN THE LINES, the literary journal published by South Arkansas Community College in El Dorado. Each of these SAPOP members had works published in the journal's 2015 edition. Also in December, Marilyn Joyner, Jim Barton, and Cindy Mabry presented readings of their Christmas poetry along with a few favorite standards for a luncheon at First Presbyterian Church in El Dorado. On February 12th SAPOP will hold an Open-Mic Night at 8 PM at PJ's Coffee on the Square in El Dorado. Featured Poet will be Ben Cagle. The public is welcome to join in by reading, singing, reciting or simply enjoying. (Another Open-Mic Night is being planned for March too.)

Charlie Southerland (Free Verse Poetry Group of Mtn. Home) published several poems over the past year in the following publications: *The Rotary Dial* (2 poems), *Trinacria* (nominated for the 2016 Pushcart Prize coming up, plus 2 or 3 more poems this spring), *The Amsterdam Quarterly* (1 poem in 2015, another in 2016), *First Things* (a sapphic stanza poem), *The Raven Chronicles* (plus an interview with the editor on a sonnet sequence about how to BBQ ribs), *The Road Not Taken* (a sapphic), *Kansas City Voices* (a trimeter sonnet), *British Journal The Oldie* (1 poem), *The Rotary Dial* (a villanelle, plus another this spring), *The Asses of Parnassus* (a short formal poem this spring), and *Measure* (a 2015 Howard Nemerov Sonnet Award finalist poem).

Cathy Moran (River Market Poets of Little Rock) won a 1st place and an HM in poetry from the 2015 Annual Art Affair Writing Contest of Oklahoma City. See more at <http://www.shadetrecreations.com>.

Sara Gipson (Online Group) won an HM in poetry, 1st place in Western Short Story and 3rd place in Short Story from the 2015 Annual Art Affair Writing Contest of Oklahoma City.

Dennis Patton (Saline County Poets) had a poem published in *Calliope's* winter issue. *Calliope* is published by the Writer's Special Interest Group of American Mensa, Ltd.

Geneva Emerson (Online Group) won in 2015 a 3rd HM for poetry from the Arkansas Writers' Conference; a 1st place and 1st HM from PRA; and a 2nd place and 4th HM from Mid-South Poetry Festival Society of TN. She also won two 1st places, one 2nd, and one 3rd for creative writing. And she is working on a second historical, creative non-fiction book.

John Crawford (Hot Springs branch) will lead a discussion of poetry forms at the Garland County Library each second Monday from February through November. The meetings are free and will study sonnets, various lyric forms, free verse, and poetry by popular song writers. John also will read poetry at the Ozark Writers League in Branson, Missouri in February, and lead a discussion on what makes good poetry/markets. OWL meets quarterly and sponsors contests during the year. It focuses on writing fiction and non-fiction but includes poetry as well.

Congratulations to our excellent poets and branches for promoting the art of poetry!

Upcoming Deadlines, Events & Contests

2nd Saturday each Month: PRA's Monthly Contest entries are due by mail to Chairman Stephen Johnson, 93 Old Tracy Road, Mountain Home, AR 72653. See guidelines on page 7 of PRA's Yearbook. **Please note that the April monthly contest has been moved to May to accommodate the April Spring Conference.** For

information about poem forms check <http://shadowpoetry.com/> and <http://www.rhymezone.com/>. **PRA members may send poems for critique – one free per month - to PRA’s State Critic Jeff Rawlings, P.O. Box 76, Yellville, AR 72687 (jeffr50@yahoo.com.) Jeff accepts poems by email.**

January 1 – March 15: PRA has launched its first poetry contest for college students in Arkansas, ages 18-25. See guidelines posted on PRA’s website poetsroundtableofarkansas.org. Arkansas residents currently in college may enter for a \$15 fee, become a student member of PRA and NFSPS, and win up to \$500. Mail entries to Stephen Johnson, 93 Old Tracy Road, Mountain Home, AR 72653. (Students who are currently PRA members do not have to pay the entry fee.) Fifty colleges across the state have been contacted. Our thanks to many PRA members who helped promote this contest with colleges in their area.

February 28: Poetry Day Contest Sponsorships are due. Send completed forms and payment to PRA Treasurer Jim Barton. See attached sponsorship form.

March 15: **The deadline for PRA’s Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration Contests has been moved up to 3/15/16.** Contest details on page 9 in the PRA Yearbook are correct, but the date published there is wrong. These contests are for members only. Winners will be announced April 23rd at the conference in El Dorado.

March 15: Deadline for entering NFSPS poetry contests. See details at www.nfsp.com.

March 15: Deadline for Writers-Editors Network Annual International Writing Competition of New Hampshire. See details at <http://www.writers-editors.com/>.

March 23: Send 1 or 2 poems for critique at the spring conference to Jim Barton, P.O. Box 263, Huttig, AR 71747. OR send them via e-mail to jbob214@yahoo.com, either in the email body or as an attachment using doc, docx, or rtf. Poems will be accepted no later than March 23.

March 31: Watch for PRA’s Poetry Day Contest Brochure to be posted on the PRA website. Brochures will be mailed with the May newsletter to members who do not have access to the website. This year’s topic for the Sybil Nash Abrams poetry contest is: *Arkansas Musicians*. See SNA guidelines on page 8 of your yearbook. Contest entries are due August 15th to PD Contest Chair Betty Heidelberger.

April 10: Deadline for "Let's Write" Literary Contest sponsored by the Gulf Coast Writers Association of Long Beach, MS. See details at gcwriters.org.

April 22-23: PRA’s 2016 Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration will be in El Dorado on Saturday, April 23rd. A Friday night open-mic event also is planned. Our thanks to the South Arkansas Poets of the Pines for hosting.

April 24: Deadline for hotel reservations at the NFSPS conference rate. Contact Hotel 340 in St. Paul, Minnesota at hotel340.com or 651-280-4120, and reference the League of Minnesota Poets for discounted rates.

May: PRA is partnering with the Arkansas State Fair to sponsor the 2016 Best-of-Show poetry winners in four age groups: Adults (age 19+), Senior Youth (14-18), Junior Youth (9-13), and Youth (5-8). See details posted this month at arkansasstatefair.com in the Creative Arts Competition Guidelines. Entries are free, for Arkansans only and due in September by posted deadlines. Prizes will be awarded in October by mail after the State Fair.

May 4 – June 1: Deadline for Writer’s Digest Annual Writing Competition offering a \$5,000 grand prize and a trip to the WD Conference. Poems and several other writing categories are accepted online or by mail with an entry fee determined by entry date. See guidelines at writersdigest.com.

June 3-4: Watch for the Arkansas Writers’ Conference. See details at arkwritersconf.org.

June 9-13: NFSPS Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota. See details at www.nfsp.com. (The 2017 and 2018 national conferences will be held in Texas and Colorado, respectively.)

June 30: Deadline for PRA membership dues and information updates for the 2016-2017 yearbook. Send fees (\$15 seniors and students, \$20 regular members), along with updates on address, phone and email to Membership Chair Kate Lacy, 2017 East Magnolia, Fayetteville, AR 72703 (voicedancer2002@yahoo.com). Copies of all updates will be forwarded to yearbook editor Cathy Moran. Please remember to share your email address so you can receive newsletters and information updates promptly. Branch Presidents, please provide updates on your officers, meeting dates, places & times. New yearbooks will be printed in July with the available information.

July/August: Watch your mailbox for PRA's new 2016-2017 yearbook to be printed in July with available information and mailed to paid members in August. Information from the yearbook, except member names/addresses, also will be posted on PRA's website.

August 15: PRA's Poetry Day contest entries and fees are due in one envelope postmarked by August 15, 2016 to Poetry Day Contest Chair Betty Heidelberger, 4371 Hwy. 316 North, Lexa, AR 72355.

September 30: Mail-in deadline for the Arkansas State Fair Poetry Contests. See details posted on the Fair's website at Arkansasstatefair.com. PRA will award Best-of-Show prizes in 4 age groups at the Fair in October.

October: Deadline for PRA's Anthology pages and contest. See details on pages 11-13 in the yearbook.

October: PRA's 2016 Poetry Day Event will be in Hot Springs hosted by the Roundtable Poets of Hot Springs. Dates/details to be announced.

November: Student contest information will be posted and distributed this month. PRA branches are asked to promote these contests with schools in their area. Contact Youth Contest Chair Laura Loughridge with questions.

Check PRA's website for updates on Arkansas events, contests, etc. Also check the NFSPS web site (www.nfsp.com) for national news, contests and links to other state poetry societies. PRA members receive the quarterly News 'N Notes via email and web posting. The NFSPS quarterly *Strophes* newsletter also is available online via link from PRA's website. Copies of both may be mailed upon request for members who do not have Internet access. PRA Branch Presidents are asked to assure that all members have access to these publications.

POETS' ROUNDTABLE OF ARKANSAS

Contest Sponsorship Form for October Poetry Day 2016

Sponsoring a contest: You must contribute a minimum of \$30.00 to sponsor a contest and the first place winnings must be no less than \$25.00.

Form: Complete this form and return it with your payment to assure that your contest is listed in the brochure.

Deadline: The sponsorship form and payment are due February 28, 2016.

Address: Send this form with your check (payable to PRA) to:

Jim Barton, Treasurer
P.O. Box 263
Huttig, AR 71747

Name of award: _____

Subject: _____ **Form:** _____ **Line limit:** _____

Other requirements may be noted here or on reverse: _____

Awards:	First place \$ _____	Second place \$ _____	Third place \$ _____
	First HM \$ _____	Second HM \$ _____	Third HM \$ _____

Eligibility: Open to all poets () Open to PRA Members only ()

Judging: I will be responsible for judging this contest () Please get a judge for me ()

Donor's name: _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **Zip Code** _____

Phone: _____ **Email:** _____

2015 PRA Member Survey Results - Summary

The 2015 PRA Member Survey completed October 31st was designed to seek responses on improving recruitment of new members, better retaining current members, and remaining financially viable. (NFSPS also is recognizing these issues nationally.) PRA members were asked to voice their needs and opinions on 10 questions. Results are summarized below from 25% of the membership who responded. Comments are paraphrased from the most repeated subjects and/or the most unique. (Full data is available upon request.)

Summary of Responses

Question #1: The highest priority need that members want from PRA is, “learning to write various forms of poetry.” Members also listed the most important benefits as:

- 1) Networking, socializing and receiving personal encouragement from other poets.
- 2) Receiving individual and online critiques, plus workshops.
- 3) Sharing their poetry and learning more about publishing in general.

Additional comments included requests to: read their poetry more, have options to participate both in person and online, and add members aged 20 to 50. The latter commented, “They need us and we need them.”

Questions #2 & #3: 87% want “articles by members on various forms of poetry with tips on writing,” plus “access to resources for magazine publication of their poetry.”

Question #4: 77% shared what they most like about PRA, including: opportunities to connect with other poets (locally, statewide and nationally) and to learn from them; access to varied contests across the state and nation; being part of an artistic community that’s keeping poetry alive; learning from our speakers, critiques, and various communications about poets and poetry; fellowship with poets. One stated, “PRA is . . . fun and good to be with other poets. I like that it is an established group since 1931, very organized and trustworthy.”

Question #5: 63% commented on what they like least about PRA - It doesn’t seem very dynamic, youthful or diverse, and it’s hard to get new members. We need to read poetry at the beginning and end of each meeting, and hear more of our winners read their poetry. State meetings need to be more about poetry and less about minor business matters. I’d like more interaction between close branches. Events seem too far away. There’s not enough participation at the state level. Contest rules could be clearer and available to more poets.

Question #6: 63% commented on if and how they recommend PRA to others. All said they share information about PRA (the state organization) but talk mostly about their branch meetings, plus: learning opportunities, association with helpful and open-minded poets, contests, critiques, conferences and publication opportunities. One said, “My big selling point: open minds.”

Question #7: 47% shared ideas to help PRA improve financing its programs. Most advised more outreach through partners, grantors and sponsors to help promote PRA and share costs. One commented that, “Outreach can lead to financing our programs.” Some suggested more selling of merchandise, plus working with existing literary events, hosting booths, providing a speakers panel, and providing “Poems on Demand” (per Natalie Goldberg in her book Writing Down the Bones.) One suggested we model after other successful state organizations and do one money-making project per year. Two more suggested that PRA act as a print broker or agent for member books and charge competitively for design, editing, proofreading, and formatting. One mentioned adjusting member dues. Several also offered ideas on volunteer outreach activities.

Question #8: 33% commented on whether they want more information from PRA and suggested: a simple flyer to serve as a hand-out on who we are and what we do; more information on what PRA does to reach high school and college students; volunteer opportunities; business cards with meeting information and the PRA website; bookmarks with poems on one side and branch information on the other. One suggested more complete information on the web and yearbook for prospective members and grantors, including: a historical timeline of PRA’s major accomplishments; lists of past Presidents, Arkansas Poet Laureates, and Poetry Day Chairs (to encourage leadership rotation); more on PRA’s federal non-profit status, plus a list of donor names with web links (to encourage donors); a short description of PRA’s affiliation with NFSPS and its benefits.

Question #9: 47% responded on their willingness to be more active at state or branch level, but only 27% responded positively. One said, “Yes. Online promotion of any type or point me in a direction and I will help if I can.” Another said, “Absolutely, yes at outreach activities.”

Question #10: 60% shared other suggestions to improve PRA, including: increase visibility around the state; promote involvement with and appearances by the State Poet Laureate; highlight poets and PRA in local and state publications; support performance poetry (popular with young poets); participate with other writing groups and events; partner with art and literary festivals in the state – experiment with one per year; be more considerate of guests – ask more winners to read their poetry; seek more volunteers to help with schools as poetry resources, readers at nursing homes, and speakers or readers at other events; recruit younger members – we are aging out; increase usage of social media; provide more workshops – try an online workshop; remember the poets who are computer illiterate; provide clearer, more comprehensive rules for contests; consider new programs, and experiment on what works and what doesn’t. One commented, “I think this questionnaire is a great start!”

Changes to Consider:

- 1) **To Improve Recruitment** – Based on Questions 6, 7, 8, and 10
 - a) **Enhance Outreach Information** (electronic and print) - to better promote PRA’s purpose, long history, significant accomplishments, membership benefits, affiliation with NFSPS, non-profit status, critique services, contests, activities, conferences, learning opportunities, and fellowship with other poets. Consider putting enhanced information on the web and in the yearbook. Also consider delivering the yearbook to members electronically. Consider creating print flyers for handouts, and updating PRA’s logo.
 - b) **Enhance Outreach Activities and Visibility** – through contests for all ages, especially with partners or sponsors. Experiment with one new partner each year. Appoint a PRA promotion chair with committee members per branch to research and recommend activities, schedule readings, seek volunteers, solicit grants/partners/sponsors, and help determine outreach information needed. Consider promotional work as part of each board member’s duties. Advertise PRA in the media.
- 2) **To Better Retain Current Members** – Based on Questions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9
 - a) **Provide consistent learning opportunities** through more critiques, more reading of poems at meetings, and more tips on writing and publishing. Continue varied contests, and read first place winning poems at conferences. Better promote the state critic services.
 - b) **Cultivate more networking and socializing opportunities** through branches, state meetings and various communications.
- 3) **To Remain Financially Viable** – Based on Questions 7 and 10
 - a) Seek long-term partners and sponsors to promote PRA through existing events and share costs.
 - b) Seek grantors by using more comprehensive historical information to market PRA’s successful programs.
 - c) Host booths at literary events and sell merchandise, books, bookmarks, t-shirts or “poems on demand.”
 - d) Research other successful state poetry organizations and model them.
 - e) Consider adjusting membership dues.

Action Items Currently Recommended by the Board

The PRA Board discussed the member responses at its January meeting and decided on the following first steps:

- 1) Add references for poetry forms and guidelines to the yearbook, website and newsletter (to help and retain members).
- 2) Encourage more business and private sponsorship of contests. Note sponsors in the yearbook and on the website, including links to the sponsor sites (to improve finances).
- 3) Encourage more public readings to promote PRA and poetry (to improve outreach).