

2012 Annual Report of the New Mexico State Poetry Society to the NFSPS Board

Dear President and NFSPS Board,

This year really began for the NMSPS with the unanimous ratification of a new Constitution on 9 April 2011 that not only changed how the Society operates but also revamped its culture and personality. In our last report to the NFSPS Board, we had 83 members in 4 chapters. I am delighted to report that we now have 150 members in 8 chapters, and/or signed up as at-large members. Here are the highlights of this last year.

At the Dearborn convention in June 2011, I was asked to inquire whether NMSPS would host the 2013 convention. On July 7, 2011, our society met to brainstorm the idea and lay the groundwork. We did a great deal of talking with members, knowing we would need broad support to make it happen. I firmly believe the prospect of hosting the Convention was a prime factor in our recent growth.

On August 10, Christine Delea visited with members of our Society in Belen, New Mexico, and explained many issues regarding the National Conventions, from function to funding.

On September 10, our Board voted to bid for the 2013 Convention to be held in Albuquerque.

During August and September, we chartered three new chapters in Taos, Corrales/Rio Rancho, and Santa Fe.

On September 24 we held our first Poets Picnic as part of the worldwide event called 100,000 Poets for Change. Our participation took the form of an outdoor festival that featured music, guest poets, and artists of the Albuquerque region. It received such positive response that it will probably become an annual event.

Also in September, we carried out our first online Board Meeting and voted to take over the ownership and management of our website. This has proved to be the most far-reaching decision since I came to office. Our entire management of the Society, from membership applications, to voting on constitutional amendments, to publicizing contests and other events, to registering for our first ever State Convention happens through this website.

Perhaps its greatest value is that we are now hosting a free calendar of events for any New Mexico poetry group, bookstore, or performance venue that wishes to publicize its poetic events. This has enabled us to reach out and serve as the Mother Ship for any other poetry group in any part of the state, and it has resulted in mutual partnerships to advance our mission of bringing poetry to all New Mexicans.

For example, in April, Albuquerque announced its first ever Poet Laureate. The program's organizing and selection committees consisted of 11 people, 4 of whom were Society members, including the man who envisioned and founded the program. Among the 10 Founding Sponsors listed in the commemorative program, one was our Albuquerque Chapter and 3 more are NMSPS members. This in a city that has hundreds of active poets.

In October we held a membership sweepstakes with a \$50 Amazon gift certificate as the prize. For the first time in at least a decade, our member list passed 100.

In November the NFSPS Board accepted our 2013 Annual Convention bid. We immediately contacted the Albuquerque Convention & Visitors Bureau to find a suitable site.

In March 2012, the Turtleback Mountain Poets chartered a new chapter in the town of Truth or Consequences.

In April, we signed a contract with the hotel where we will hold the 2013 convention and learned that our State of New Mexico requires other documentation in addition to the non-profit 501 3(c) status to avoid certain state taxes. New Mexico has a gross receipts tax that could have been a serious problem for the 2013 convention, had we not gotten it fixed, largely with assistance from the hotel we will use in 2013.

Also in April, we ran our NM Children's Poetry Project, now in its fourth year. This program consists of a team of NMSPS members going through a training program and then going into elementary schools to hold poetry writing workshops for 4th and 5th graders. We also recently named a Project Leader for Youth who will be coordinating various chapters' student programs, working with other teachers and leaders of youth poetry programs in New Mexico, exploring the Poetry Out Loud program, and working toward establishing a statewide online Youth Chapter.

Our crowning achievement this year was to host our first State Convention since the NMSPS was founded in 1969. We had an attendance of 60 people, and the day-long event included an annual meeting, workshops, fellowship, an awards banquet, music, celebrity guest poets, featured and open readings, as well as a pre-conference reception and celebration on the night before the convention at a local bookstore. The convention was practice (and, I hope, an augury) for the 2013 NFSPS convention. It came in under budget, on time, and with no major glitches. Best of all, it generated much anticipation for next June's event.

Respectfully submitted,
Shirley Blackwell
President of NMSPS