

Georgia Poetry Society Newsletter, February 2026

President's Corner

Winter storms passed over much of the country this month, and although we were spared here in Macon, my thoughts have stayed with those who faced the brunt of it. Times like these remind me how comforting writing can be. Poetry settles the heart in ways little else can, giving us a quiet space when the world feels unsettled.

Last year, I was invited to visit several of our local libraries during February, March, and April to represent GPS, and I enjoyed every moment. Meeting local poets, listening to their work, and sharing the joy of poetry was truly meaningful. My health doesn't always let me be out much, but I still tried to do a little—and I encourage each of you to do the same in whatever ways you can. Small efforts can open unexpected doors.

As I always do, I want to remind you of our monthly Open Mic. It's a wonderful time to gather with other members and share your poetry. Open Mic is always held on the third Thursday of each month, at 7 p.m., and it's always special. I truly hope to see you there, especially since this month's Open Mic falls on my 60th wedding anniversary. My husband, Peter, is 96. We'll celebrate our anniversary the following Sunday, since I'll be with you for Open Mic. I feel deeply blessed to still have my mate, knowing how few wives at my age are able to say the same. We thank God that we are wonderfully made and have reached this momentous occasion. I want to remind everyone that our Reach of Song anthology will soon be open for submissions. We are currently building a webpage and submission portal for Reach of Song, and anticipate it being ready sometime early this month. Thank you for your patience while we make the submission process easier for our members.

As we move into 2026, I hope this new year encourages each of us to reconnect—with writing, with one another, and with the simple joy of being part of a creative community. GPS has new opportunities taking shape, and I hope you will reach out, join in, and let yourself be part of what we are building together.

Before I close, I want to share that beginning with this February edition, our Vice President, Michelle Alderman, will be serving as our newsletter editor. I'm very grateful to her for stepping into this role, and I know she will bring warmth and care to each issue.

I truly look forward to seeing all of you at Open Mic on February 19th, and any guests you invite. Until then, stay warm and safe.

Sincerely,

Barbara



GPS & MWCA “Hearts on Display” Community Poetry Project

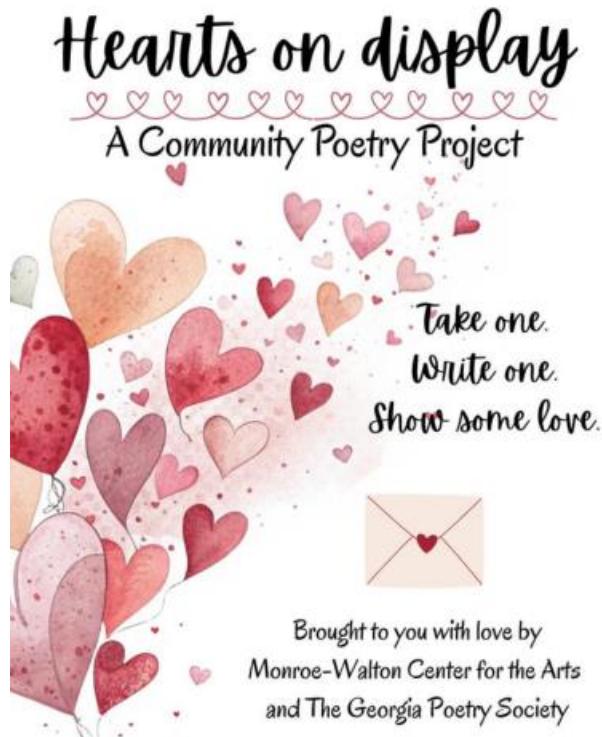
The Georgia Poetry Society is delighted to partner with the Monroe–Walton Center for the Arts this February for a community-wide poetry initiative designed to bring creativity into the heart of downtown Monroe.

From February 1 through Valentine’s Day, MWCA and GPS invite members — and anyone who enjoys a spark of poetic play — to take part in Hearts on Display, a simple, joyful project connecting local businesses and local voices.

Visitors can stop by participating downtown shops to pick up a Valentine postcard, write a short poem or love-themed message, and post it right there in the business. After Valentine’s Day, MWCA will gather the postcards and create a community display at the arts center.

This is a wonderful chance for GPS members to join in, support a fellow arts organization, and help poetry bloom in unexpected places. If you’re nearby or up for a short drive, we’d love to see you in Monroe during the first two weeks of February.

And this is only the beginning. GPS and MWCA are already planning additional collaborative events for March and April, including activities leading into National Poetry Month. More details will be shared soon.



Quarterly Members Meeting — January 31, 2026

The Georgia Poetry Society held its first Quarterly Members Meeting of the year on January 31. A full recap of announcements, updates, and member highlights will appear in the March newsletter. Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to a strong start to 2026.

Website Updates Ahead

We are planning updates to the GPS website throughout 2026 to improve clarity, accessibility, and ease of use. Keep checking back to see what's new and follow our progress:

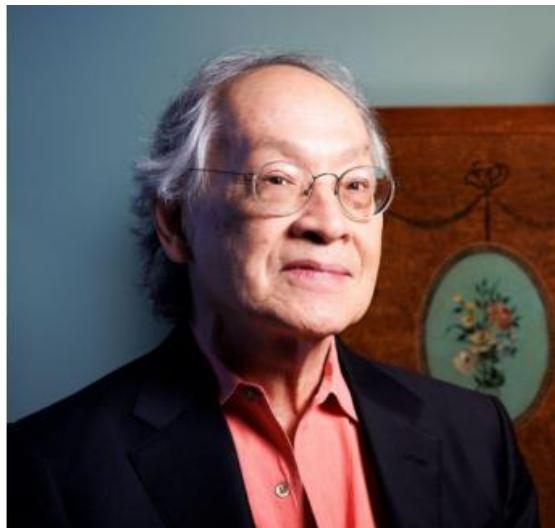
www.georgiapoetrysociety.org

Introducing the New U.S. Poet Laureate: Arthur Sze

The Library of Congress has named Arthur Sze the 25th United States Poet Laureate, serving for the 2025–2026 term. A celebrated poet, translator, and editor, Sze is the first Asian American to hold this national role. His appointment recognizes a lifetime of innovative work that blends Southwestern landscapes, global literary traditions, and a deep attentiveness to the natural world. Sze is the author of twelve poetry collections, including *Into the Hush* (2025) and *The Glass*

Constellation (2024). His work has earned numerous honors, among them the 2024 Rebekah Johnson Bobbitt National Prize for Poetry and the 2019 National Book Award for *Sight Lines*. During his laureateship, Sze plans to highlight the importance of poetry in translation, emphasizing how poems from many languages deepen our shared understanding and attention in a fast-paced world.

Born in New York City to Chinese immigrant parents, Sze has spent much of his life in New Mexico, where he served as Santa Fe's first poet laureate and taught at the Institute of American Indian Arts. His appointment continues the tradition of poets who bring unique regional and cultural perspectives to the national stage.



Poetry Paths Across Georgia

Georgia's poetry and arts scene stretches from the mountains to the coast, offering vibrant spaces for writers to gather, listen, and share their work. Here are three events that highlight the creative energy happening across the state — now with direct links for easy reference.

Athens — Open Poetry Night at Hendershot's

A lively, long-running open mic blending poetry, music, and community. Poets of all levels are welcome, and the atmosphere is warm and eclectic.

Event Link:

Hendershot's Events Calendar

<https://hendershotsathens.com/events>

Columbus — RiverCenter Literary Salon

While the salon itself is a recurring community event, the RiverCenter's official site provides the most accurate schedule of literary and performing arts programming.

Venue Link:

RiverCenter for the Performing Arts

<https://rivercenter.org>

Blue Ridge — Art Center Poetry & Prose Showcase

Hosted by the Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association, this showcase brings together poets, storytellers, and prose writers in a scenic mountain arts setting.

Venue Link:

Blue Ridge Mountains Arts Association (The Art Center)

<https://www.blueridgearts.net>

SUBMISSIONS & OPPORTUNITIES — FEBRUARY 2026

February is a wonderful month to send your work into the world. Whether you're polishing new drafts, revisiting older pieces, or simply looking for a place to begin, the opportunities below offer a range of welcoming venues for poets at every stage. We encourage members to explore, submit, and share their successes so we can celebrate together in future newsletters.

The Ekphrastic Review — Ongoing

A welcoming journal devoted to writing inspired by visual art. Poets may submit ekphrastic poems, flash fiction, or creative nonfiction year-round. No submission fee. This is an excellent opportunity for both emerging and established poets, with a responsive editorial team and frequent themed challenges. The Ekphrastic Review - The Ekphrastic Review

<https://www.ekphrastic.net/>

Rattle — Poets Respond (Weekly)

Rattle accepts poems responding to current events every Friday through Sunday. Selected poems are published the following week. No fee. This is a strong venue for timely, reflective work and a great way to stay engaged with the world through poetry. Rattle Poetry

<https://rattle.com/>

The Sunlight Press — Poetry

A warm, community-minded online journal seeking reflective, narrative, or spiritually resonant poems. Submit up to two poems at a time. No fee. Their editors are known for thoughtful responses and an encouraging tone. The Sunlight Press

<https://www.thesunlightpress.com/>

Southern Poetry Review — General Submissions

Open through March. This long-standing regional journal welcomes strong, polished poetry from writers across the South. No fee. A wonderful fit for Georgia poets looking to place work in a respected publication with deep roots in Southern literary tradition. Southern Poetry Review - Covering Florida, Georgia and North Carolina

<https://www.southernpoetryreview.org/>

Frontier Poetry — New Voices

Frontier's "New Voices" category is open year-round and free to submit. This category is specifically for poets who have not yet published a full-length collection. A supportive venue with a national readership and a mission to uplift emerging writers. Frontier Poetry - Exploring the Edges of Contemporary Poetry

<https://www.frontierpoetry.com/>

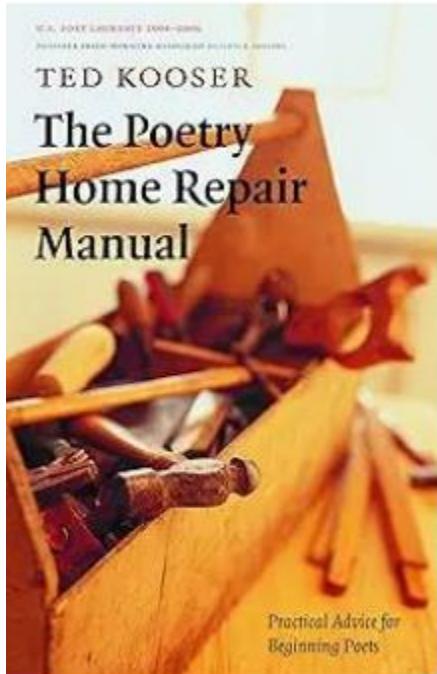
Member News & Publications

GPS members are invited to share recent publications, awards, readings, or upcoming events. We love celebrating your accomplishments. Send your news to the newsletter editor for inclusion in the next issue.

Resource Spotlight: The Poetry Home Repair Manual by Ted Kooser

Former U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser offers one of the most welcoming craft guides available — practical, encouraging, and written in the same clear voice that defines his poetry. The Poetry Home Repair Manual focuses on helping poets strengthen clarity, imagery, and emotional resonance without jargon or intimidation. Kooser's advice is grounded in everyday observation and the belief that poetry is for everyone, not just specialists. A wonderful resource for poets at any stage who want to deepen their craft with gentle, steady guidance.

Amazon link: <https://www.amazon.com/Poetry-Home-Repair-Manual-Practical/dp/0803259786>
(amazon.com in Bing)



Spotlight on Elizabeth John

Elizabeth John is a woman as layered as the poems she writes. The mother of three grown children and a high school French teacher, her life is marked by a blend of nurture, discipline, and purposeful creativity. When we spoke, she was baking muffins — a small, vivid detail that captures her gift for balancing work, home, writing, and her role as GPS's Membership Chair with quiet grace.

She joined GPS in 2024 and soon stepped into the role of Membership Chair, a position that keeps her connected to the broader poetry community in Georgia. Although her interest in writing began with short stories, she shared, "Poetry became the vehicle that allowed me to tell the stories I needed to tell." Writing under the pen name Elizabeth Michaud, she has developed a singular poetic voice that speaks with truth and power to the history and lived experience of African Americans. "My work is grounded in Black history and love — my two favorite subjects," she added.



Elizabeth's debut collection, *Five Dreams* (2023), is like a patchwork quilt — pieced-together stories of life, love, loss, and longing. Her poems invite readers to wrap themselves in her words and feel the weight of emotional history, the cultural truth stitched into every verse.

In her second collection, *The Bones in the Garden (and other things found there)* (2024), her voice deepens and widens, addressing the legacy of slavery and the inhumane treatment of Black people with clarity and compassion. She writes in the collective voice of those whose stories were silenced. "As Black people, that's what we do. These stories are important."

Together, Elizabeth's poetic works reveal a writer who can hold both the weight of history and the tenderness of the everyday. She writes with equal fluency about collective trauma and personal love, about the echoes of the past and the intimate moments that shape a life. Her work is grounded in Black history and love — and "sometimes," she adds, "nature finds its way in too."

Elizabeth is currently working on a new poetry collection and revisiting a book of short stories she wrote years ago. She anticipates releasing her next poetry collection toward the end of 2026. Her creative life continues to expand, guided by curiosity, emotional truth, and a deep respect for the stories that matter.

A Note of Appreciation For Kimberly Wright

One of the greatest gifts of being part of GPS is the friendships we build with people who share our hopes and dreams. I want to take a moment to thank Kimberly Wright for everything she has brought to this organization.

I've had the pleasure of working with Kim since I became Vice President in October 2023. At that time, she was serving as Secretary. I really came to appreciate her flexibility in aiding me in my terms as vice president and president in a variety of ways. She always made sure I was well prepared and ready for various tasks. Kim would even call me at home with instructions I needed – especially regarding computer tasks and Zoom meetings. She knows without her help I never would have gotten there or I'd have been very late. Her sense of humor and her willingness to share her time is something I can look back on with gratitude. As I like to say, "Kim has always had my back".

For instance, at the NFSPS national convention held here in Georgia in 2024, I spoke several times at various meetings as the convention co-host and President of the Georgia Poetry Society. I told convention attendees, "I wish you all had someone like Kim on our board."

Last summer, Kim added Editor of the Newsletter to her responsibilities, showing once again her willingness to do whatever she could to support GPS. Kim has given not only her skill to help this organization grow, but also her heart and her enthusiasm, while remaining cheerful, steady, and dedicated in every role she has taken on.

I found Kim to be a one-in-a-million person, gladly willing to step up wherever she was needed. Kim has been a joy to work with, and she will be greatly missed here at GPS. Someone is going to have a difficult time filling her shoes because of the many hats she wore.

I'm gonna miss you Girl, and you know it!

Love ya,
Barbara

