



PEACH PRESERVES

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Georgia Poetry Society Newsletter



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Friends and fellow poets, when the Georgia Poetry Society was founded in 1979, its earliest members held a simple yet powerful hope: that poets across our state would have a place to gather, learn, share their work, and strengthen one another in the craft we love. They dreamed of an organization that would outlast them — one that would nurture new voices, honor established ones, and keep poetry alive in Georgia's cultural landscape. Over the decades, GPS grew into exactly that. Meetings were full, "Open Mic Nights" were well attended, contests were lively, and the fellowship among poets was something you could feel the moment you were with them.

No one could have predicted how quickly things would change when the pandemic arrived. Like so many arts organizations, GPS suffered deeply. Our meetings halted. Even with Zoom, membership declined. People were overwhelmed with the realities of life, and poetry — for many — slipped into the background. The Board of Directors, once a strong and active group, began to shrink as members stepped away for personal, professional, or health reasons. By the time the world began opening again, GPS was a shadow of what it had been. The heart of the organization was still beating, but only faintly.

I found myself standing in a role I cared about deeply, but with very little support and even less clarity about how to rebuild. I knew GPS mattered. I knew it had a legacy worth protecting. But I also knew I didn't have the administrative background or the organizational experience to

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bring it back on my own. Some days I felt overwhelmed, unsure what steps to take, and painfully aware that GPS's future might depend on decisions I didn't yet know how to make.

I did know GPS needed someone who believed in poetry, someone who could help me steady the ship and guide us all forward. I didn't know who that person would be. I only knew we needed help.

In April of 2025, that help arrived.

When Michele Alderman joined the Georgia Poetry Society, I had no idea who she was or what she might bring. But during "Open Mic Nights" and after our very first phone conversation, something in me settled. I knew — without hesitation — that Michelle was what we needed. Her background in the arts, her experience in nonprofit administration, her calm, steady presence were exactly what GPS needed. I appointed her Vice President immediately.

Michelle stepped into her role with energy and purpose. She approached the work with respect for our legacy and a clear-eyed understanding of what would be required to help rebuild GPS.

Michelle and I discussed designing programs that could be implemented over the next two years. These programs would introduce GPS across the state to poets and poet-friendly arts organizations through open communication and unifying initiatives. We understood that restoring GPS would take time. We also knew it would require the interest, effort, and commitment of the remaining board members and the existing membership's involvement.

Early on, we identified two critical areas for GPS: revising the newsletter and expanding the Board of Directors. In the fall of 2025, we decided to revamp the GPS newsletter, identifying it as our organizational lifeline. Since taking leadership of the newsletter, Michelle moved it from quarterly to monthly and has filled it with timely articles and information that support and encourage our members' efforts to write and publish their work. As you all know, the newsletter has been a true success and has helped increase our membership.

The second critical area, far more complicated, was recruiting members to fill vacancies on the Board of Directors. This has been

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President's Corner, continued

more challenging and, frankly, unsuccessful. Every effort we've made to recruit interested, active board members has failed. We are both puzzled, as we have served on the boards of several arts agencies and cannot understand why no one wants to get actively involved in helping the Georgia Poetry Society regain its footing and influence in the state.

Right now, only Michelle and I, along with our loyal IT Manager, Marion Owen (paid staff, are making an effort. Marion maintains our website with fresh, up-to-date information and has developed free online courses for members. Michelle initiated a statewide program during April Poetry Month 2026 that connected with various communities and drew the attention of news stations. She continues to develop activities and ideas she hopes we can pursue. But the three of us alone are not enough to take GPS significantly further. We have only been able to maintain a minimum level of activity and development. Many opportunities for further growth have gone unattended because we lack support.

Michelle has become overwhelmed by the workload. My ability to assist her has diminished due to significant personal challenges over the past several months. My health and that of my 96-year-old husband have repeatedly required my attention above all else. Michelle, therefore, has been forced to work alone. Our repeated requests for help, participation, or even simple acknowledgment have gone unanswered. The GPS Board of Directors, once a steady, focused, and united force, has dwindled to almost nothing. The organization is standing, but only barely.

Friends, we need to expand our board of directors. YOU are desperately needed NOW, not tomorrow! Your participation will not require experience in any given area. It will only require the solid commitment of patience, persistence, and a willingness to do the slow, often invisible work of rebuilding GPS. Michelle and I will be there to guide and help you, and work with you in your availability.

Over the past year, Michelle has worked tirelessly to stabilize GPS. She has created organizational frameworks, developed communication plans, revived the newsletter, and brought clarity to our administrative processes. She has consistently prioritized GPS stewardship over her personal life and responsibilities.

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President's Corner, continued

She has accomplished this while helping me navigate decisions that once felt overwhelming. Michelle's dedication has been a blessing not only to me, but to the entire Georgia Poetry Society.

Friends, sadly, we are not fully restored yet. Rebuilding GPS will take time, and we will still face challenges. But we are no longer standing on the edge of collapse. Why? Because, we are moving forward. We are growing. We are reconnecting with members. We are welcoming new members, and we are striving to rebuild the Board. We are rediscovering the hope that inspired GPS's founders nearly half a century ago.

As we enter Fall 2026, I want to say this clearly: GPS is still here!!! We are still committed to you, to poetry, to community, and to the belief that words matter. We are still guided by the hope that brought this organization into being, and we are still trusting that, with steady leadership, GPS will continue to thrive.

But I must also speak plainly.

The future of the Georgia Poetry Society depends on the willingness of YOU ... its members to step forward now. We cannot rebuild an organization on the shoulders of only two or three people. We cannot sustain programs, meetings, contests, outreach, or publications without an active Board of Directors. We cannot continue offering a statewide platform for poets if no one is willing to help carry the workload.

If we do not fill these board positions — if we do not have volunteers willing to assist with all that's required— GPS will eventually come to a slow and uncomfortable end. Sooner rather than later. Not because poetry has lost its value, but because the structure that supports it will no longer be able to stand. I don't want to see this happen! Michelle doesn't want this to happen. And I know many of you don't want this to happen either.

So I am asking — sincerely, prayerfully, and with hope — for those who care about this organization to consider stepping forward. Whether you can serve long-term or simply help with short-term projects, your participation matters. Your willingness to give even a small amount of time could make the difference between decline or

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President's Corner, continued

renewal. Michelle and I will be there to help you, support you, and work with you to accomplish the tasks ahead.

If you'd like to help, or if you would like to inquire about board positions or volunteer opportunities, please contact Michelle at vp@georgiapoetrysociety.org.

Friends, fellow poets, please know you will not be alone. Michele and I will be here to guide you, answer your questions, and help you find the role that fits your abilities and availability.

GPS has weathered many storms before. With your help, we can rise again — stronger, steadier, and ready and willing to carry GPS forward for the next generation.

We are having a Membership Meeting at 11:00 a.m. on Saturday, October 24, 2026. Please accept this as a personal invitation to attend, as this will be an important opportunity to discuss GPS's future and the roles we urgently need to fill.

Thank you for believing in this organization and thank you for being part of the story of the Georgia Poetry Society — past, present, and future.

Thank you for your continued support,

Barbara Nishanian
President, Georgia Poetry Society

Quarterly Membership Meeting Saturday, October 24 at 11 a.m.

The Georgia Poetry Society will hold its next Quarterly Membership Meeting on Saturday, October 24 at 11 a.m. This gathering is especially important for the future of GPS. We'll discuss upcoming plans, organizational needs, and how members can help shape the direction of our society as we move forward.

Your presence matters. Whether you've been with GPS for years or have recently joined, your voice and participation help keep our poetry community strong. We hope you'll join us for this meaningful conversation and help shape the decisions that guide GPS into the coming year.

The Power of Membership & Involvement

If you've ever wondered what it really means to support a nonprofit poetry organization, the truth is that your presence and your willingness matter more than any special expertise. GPS thrives when members step in to help with the small but meaningful tasks that keep us moving — planning events, welcoming new voices, assisting with communications, offering steady hands during busy seasons, and helping guide the organization's future. Every contribution, whether creative, organizational, or simply showing up with consistency, strengthens the foundation we rely on. If you're curious about how you might get involved, consider what parts of GPS you care about most and where your time or talents could make a difference. Even a little help from many hands can carry GPS forward in a powerful way.



 **GEORGIA POETRY SOCIETY**

OPEN MIC

Thursday, October 15, 2026

Hosted on Zoom • 7:00 PM

Join us for an evening of poetry, community, and connection. All are welcome—whether you'd like to read, listen, or simply enjoy the company of fellow writers.



Hosted by:
Barbara Barry Nishanian
President,
Georgia Poetry Society

Bring a poem to share, or come to enjoy the voices of our GPS community.

Zoom Link:
www.georgiapoetrysociety.org

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