



Volume 24—Number 8

News & Views

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President's Message

Navigating Today's Turbulent Waters

Our generation was counseled on correct behavior in the workplace and elsewhere. Frequently we were coached not to discuss race, religion, and politics outside of our homes. Adherence to such guidance shielded many of us from many workplace, social, or public disputes. We played it safe and focused on our well-being.

Further, some of us may feel a tad smug when observing a backlash associated with controversial social media postings on Facebook or Twitter when a person claims to be “just speaking their mind.” We think we know better.

Currently, there is an assortment of societal issues triggering difficult conversations. Requiring people to wear masks, treatment of U.S.-born children whose parents are “illegal immigrants (DACA),” racial inequality, voting rights, disparities in medical care and judicial treatment, and economic unrest are just some.

In June, the quiet hamlet of Clifton got ensnarled when it posted a “Welcome to Clifton Where Black Lives Matter” banner on Main Street. The mayor, attorney William R. Hollaway, said it was intended to spur discussions about racial inequality. But it also prompted outrage, including from conservative Ginni Thomas, wife of Supreme



Photo in the Washington Post by Salwan Georges

Court Justice Clarence Thomas, who told Hollaway in a letter: “You should be smarter than promoting such a group [BLM] as this, who uses race to foment chaos to destabilize the nation.” The town council voted to allow the banner to remain in place.

LLI/NOVA is not naïve or in denial, and most of us desire positive progression and inclusivity. We readily recognize we are the beneficiaries of our predecessors who spoke out, suffered, and made a difference. Advocates such as the suffragettes, civil rights leaders, and union organizers, among others, endured countless sacrifices and “push backs” to make our lives as comfortable as they are.

Today we are watching new leaders – many of them young and culturally diverse – risk their own safety for all of us. However, sometimes they bring up issues that do not necessarily resonate with us or make us comfortable. Some of their ideas do catch our attention . . . even if just to

dismiss. For example, the idea of defunding police departments and questioning their priorities. We may ask: Should a police department be equipped with military tanks?

Within LLI/NOVA, education is part of our mission, and over the years we try to devise ways to maintain a healthy balance between being informed and being drawn into the fray. LLI/NOVA does a great job adhering to our core principles, which are akin to what our elders advised: not to discuss race, religion, and politics outside of our homes. Still, we understand and embrace the need for being informed. Recently, I received several member suggestions ranging from establishing a cultural awareness SIG to inviting Forum speakers who could provide us with insights we otherwise may not be privy to, such as community policing and the practices of various community cultures.

We are not oblivious to the divisive and destabilizing events peppering us from every direction as we chart a path dealing with Covid19. We try to honor our core principles of education, travel, and social experiences without getting into political and controversial subjects. Please provide us with your ideas and suggestions.

Best, Anna

Scholarship Awards

Ten LLI/NOVA scholarships for the 2020-2021 academic year, totaling \$12,000, drew 280 qualified applicants. Final selections were made and winners notified by NOVA's Office of Student Financial Aid. Here are notes we have received from three of the recipients.

Student: Joud Alnabali

I, Joud Alnabali, would like to sincerely thank the donor for offering me this extremely valuable scholarship. It's my first year at NOVA and I was

trying my absolute best throughout the fall and spring semesters. My mom greatly invested in my learning during my high school years, and now is the time to thank her and make her happy with the scholarship that you generously awarded me. Thank you so much for helping me achieve my greatest goal, getting my college degree, and making my mother proud. I am immensely grateful!

Student: Alexa Espinoza

I am writing to thank you for your generous LLI Academic Scholarship. I am very happy and thankful to learn that I was selected as the recipient of this scholarship. You have lightened my financial burden which allows me to focus more in school. This money means opportunity to study further. Thank you again.

Student: Dillon Salka

Thank you for awarding me this scholarship. This will go a long way towards helping me on my part to becoming a doctor by freeing up some much needed time for studying and extracurriculars. With the competitive nature of medical school admissions, any opportunity to improve my resume is appreciated, and the financial assistance offered through this scholarship grants me more freedom in doing so.

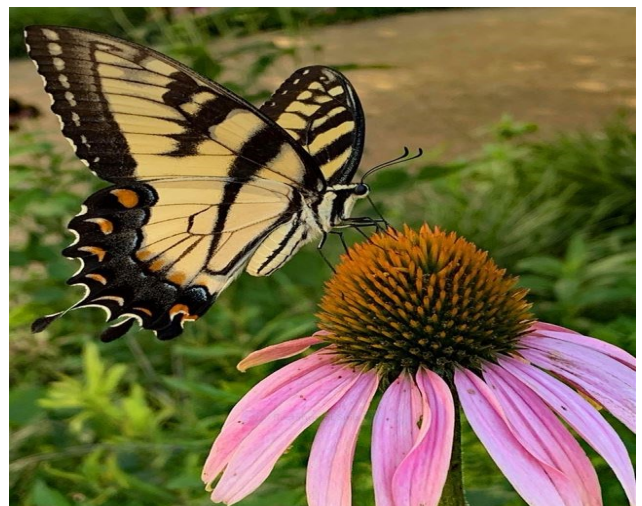


Photo by LLI/NOVA member Mary Lu Bednarsky



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Poetry and LLI/NOVA

If someone asks when you read your last poem, you may not be able to recall. For many of us, our most recent experiences with poetry were in school when we learned to read poems curated by high school English teachers or college professors, usually from a small group of classics that helped us pass a test or join a late-night dorm conversation. Or perhaps it was those angsty teenage poems you wrote in your bedroom, late at night, when you were trying to figure out the meaning of life.

And, after college, did you keep reading poetry? Perhaps not so much. You got on with discovering and enjoying your new life as an adult: getting a job, developing a circle of friends, perhaps marrying and raising a family. You may have thought you were too busy for poetry.

However, as we've aged, retired and become more reflective, we've had time to rediscover things we'd put up on the shelf with the intention, "We'll get back to that." For instance, woodworking, bicycling, singing or playing an instrument, drawing or painting. To such a list we would add poetry.

Does Poetry Really Matter?

Poetry widens our vistas. It introduces us to other people, other places, other times as well as to ourselves, our inner selves. It explores the basics, the big issues and our senses; it feeds our emotions; it helps us relate to one another and build community; it starts things, and it ends them. Poetry encourages us to pay attention to what we may have missed in our often screen-filled lives. But sometimes it's about the journey itself, not the endpoint, and as such, it allows the readers to supply their own background, views

and aims.

Poetry is not required, nor does it promise, to give the same thing to each reader, but it can connect with the many different experiences people bring to it. So, as you can see, poetry does not have a single, absolute purpose. And, although it cannot heal or correct injustice or other wrongs, it can educate; it can comfort; it can give us courage and insight; it can make us laugh.

Or, as poet William Carlos Williams so eloquently put it in this excerpt from his poem, "Of Asphodel, That Greeny Flower":

It is difficult
to get the news from poems
yet men die miserably every day
for lack
of what is found there.

Therefore, we would say "yes," for all these reasons, poetry is important; it does matter. Access to the arts and literature, which includes poetry, is especially necessary in a world turned upside down as ours is now with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ah, now that you're nodding your head, let us tell you about LLI/NOVA's wonderful poetry classes . . .

LLI/NOVA's Poetry Classes

Were we to distill LLI/NOVA's two poetry classes to their essences, "Richard Risk's Poetry and You" would be all about connection, while "Poetry Writing – Let's Make It Happen!" is concerned with storytelling.

"Richard Risk's Poetry and You" (the connection part)

LLI/NOVA's four-session "Poetry and You" class was started by Richard Risk, one of LLI/NOVA's original founders. The first class probably was

held just a little over a year after the organization's founding in 1996, and it continues to be offered almost 23 years later!

One of the main characteristics of the class is member participation. This is not a lecture class but instead is created by the individual poem choices read by class members. We share poems – contemporary or classic – illustrating a theme, occasion, form or school/movement, or we may read and discuss poems by the same poet, as selected the prior week by class members. This is a wonderful way to get to know other LLI/NOVA members, as it creates connection and community within the class.

Sadly, Richard Risk passed away at the end of 2017 after a long illness, and the class is now led by LLI/NOVA and long-time "Poetry and You" class member Kathryn O'Toole. The class was renamed "Richard Risk's Poetry and You" in honor of the man who gave it life.

We'd love for you to join us when "Richard Risk's Poetry and You" class is next given in August. And, should your interests lead you that way, this class can be your gateway to LLI/NOVA's second poetry class, "Poetry Writing – Let's Make It Happen!"

"Poetry Writing - Let's Make It Happen!" (the storytelling part)

A single-session "Poetry Writing" class was offered first in February 2013 and taught by NOVA's Jennifer Daniels, professor of Creative Writing and American Literature. Since it was Valentine's Day month, the class focused on the contemporary love poem. This was followed in summer 2013 by a multiple-session class entitled "Poetry Writing for People Who Think They Aren't Poets," which was led by two long-time LLI/NOVA members, Ed Sadtler and Helen Harvey, both of whom have been reading and writing poetry for many years. Ed and Helen are members of George Mason University's Osher Life-

long Learning Institute's (OLLI) Poetry Workshop, and Ed is a member of and co-leads the Osher Writer's Workshop.

Ed and Helen continued to lead the class (renamed "Poetry Writing – Let's Make It Happen!" for LLI/NOVA's 2014 winter-spring semester) until Helen retired in 2016. Then, Ed was joined by Carolyn Wyatt for the fall 2016 class. Carolyn has co-lead several classes with Ed at LLI/NOVA and OLLI, and they continue to lead the poetry writing class for LLI/NOVA.

The class welcomes all levels of experience: from those who pen poems frequently to the poet "wannabe." All you need is a desire to write poetry. Generally, class begins with a short lesson, followed by writing a poem in response to a prompt, and sharing the poem you've written if you are so inclined.

In the beginning, class members thought it would be impossible to write a poem in a half hour or so but found that, with direction and encouragement, they actually could do it! It's a very satisfying feeling -- so satisfying that in 2016 class members produced an anthology containing some of the poems they'd written. The class will be offered next in November. Please consider joining us and discover or re-visit the poet within you! For more information, [click here](#) for contact information for me.

A final thought: a headstone in the Long Island, N.Y., graveyard where Jackson Pollock and other artists are buried truly captures the value and necessity of poetry and the arts in this world where we presently find ourselves. It states:

Artists and poets are the raw nerve ends of humanity. By themselves they can do little to save humanity. Without them there would be little worth saving.

-- Kathryn O'Toole



CHILDREN'S BOOK DRIVE

This year marks the fourth annual Children's Book Drive, which will take place in October. The date and drop-off arrangements are yet to be determined.

Our recipient this year is R.E.A.D. (Read Early and Daily). The organization was founded in 2018 by Jennifer Sauter-Price, and has already made a significant difference in many children's lives. Recognizing the critical importance of early access to books, its mission is to reach children in need, from birth through eight years of age. The cornerstone program, "R.E.A.D. My Stories," offers families an opportunity to choose and receive every month one new free book for each child in the household.

The newest initiative is "Give a Book, Nourish a Mind." Recognizing that food deserts and book deserts go hand-in-hand, it has reached out to children either via PTA food pantries or by mailing directly to families identified by the school. So far, 2,300 books have been donated to 1,000 families who are also seeking food assistance.

To learn more about this organization, visit www.readearlyanddaily.org. Questions/comments? To contact Lynne Smaldone, [click here](#).

July's Board Retreat

This year our annual Board retreat was two hours in the morning and two in the afternoon via Zoom.

At the outset, we resolved personnel changes due to the departure of our new treasurer, Richard Davis, who now has commitments that war-

rant extensive travel. Receiving Rich's resignation from the Board cast a major chill because it is a particularly important function. Fritz Ernst agreed to vacate his vice president role to assume that of being treasurer. Fritz has excellent analytical and technical skills. The Board position left vacant due to Richard's departure was assumed by Dick Robison. This, too, is an enhancing personnel shift as Dick will continue to guide the Curriculum Committee. Patti Volz will resume the role she held for the last two years as vice president. This completes the shift with the Board's officers.

Two of our new Board members approached their first meeting bringing ideas and a willingness to work with existing teams to give our website a facelift and to chair and develop a new publicity program. Eugenia Burkes has an IT background and she is our new webmaster with assistance from Buck Myers. Bob Huley and Kathryn O'Toole will continue with the Automation Committee and work with Eugenia. Nan Peck volunteered to assist Natasha Mullin with publicity.

Ideas were floated for discussion and several were voted down. The idea of a diversity initiative, and a member survey were not endorsed. However, there was passionate support for LLI/NOVA to continue our new pilot Scholarship program for another year before determining next steps in partnering with the college. Further, Bonnie Hopley, our 25th-Anniversary co-chair, and Dick Martin, Scholarship Chair, agreed to set a target/program for the 2020-21 Scholarship Drive that will align with the May anniversary event.

As we prepare to execute some of the retreat's plans, it would be most helpful if you would take a few minutes to provide us with your suggestions and concerns.

Best, Anna



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Fall Registration

The catalog for fall offerings will be added to the website during the first week in August. Most of the courses will be offered through Zoom, but a few must be in person. Registration will begin on August 12 and the first class starts on September 3. If you have not done a Zoom class before this, the website also contains easy instructions ([click here](#)).



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Quotes from Goodreads.com

“Two things are infinite: the universe and human stupidity; and I'm not sure about the universe.”
— **Albert Einstein**

“You only live once, but if you do it right, once is enough.”
— **Mae West**

“Never put off till tomorrow what may be done day after tomorrow just as well.”
— **Mark Twain**

“Women and cats will do as they please, and men and dogs should relax and get used to the idea.”
— **Robert A. Heinlein**

“All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt.”
— **Charles M. Schulz**

“The reason I talk to myself is because I'm the only one whose answers I accept.”
— **George Carlin**

“I am free of all prejudice. I hate everyone equally.”
— **W.C. Fields**

“Some humans would do anything to see if it was possible to do it. If you put a large switch in some cave somewhere, with a sign on it saying 'End-of-the-World Switch. PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH', the paint wouldn't even have time to dry.”
— **Terry Pratchett, Thief of Time**

If the world were merely seductive, that would be easy. If it were merely challenging, that would be no problem. But I arise in the morning torn between a desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world. This makes it hard to plan the day.”
— **E.B. White**



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NEW MEMBERS

Welcome, New Members: We hope you will participate in our classes and volunteer your time and talent.

Marilyn Keel

Christina Cinalli

[At any time, if you have established a member ID and password, you can go to the Member Directory to search for contact information for a current member. At the website linova.org click on the “Member Area” and then “Member Directory.”]

Tabletop Games

The June 23 online Trivia game winner is Mary Alexander with 8 out of 10 correct answers. No one got the bonus question: "If you take away one letter, you're left with twelve. What is the word?" (The answer was "dozens," maybe more trick than trivia to this one.)

The July 28 session will be sent out by email with answers due by Aug. 4. If you would like to join us for this game, contact Mary Lu Bednarsky ([click here](#) to search for contact information).