

Executive Board 2020

President
Elizabeth Kerlikowske
mme642@aol.com

Vice President
Jennifer Clark
jenengeman@aol.com

Treasurer
Susan Anderson
(231) 429-2443
Treasurer.PSM@gmail.com

Recording Secretary
Phillip Sterling
sterlinp@ferris.edu

Membership Coordinator
Debra Belcher
membership.psm@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor
Phillip Sterling
(616) 897-4258
sterlinp@ferris.edu

Webmaster
David Jipson
davidkjibson@gmail.com

Peninsula Poets Editor
Melanie Dunbar
editor.psm@gmail.com

Contest Chairperson
Melanie Dunbar
psmcontestentry@gmail.com

Historian
Inge Logenburg Kyler
(517) 646-9569
ingekyler@gmail.com

Parliamentarian
Jerry Lang
Jerry.lang61@comcast.net

Honorary Chancellor

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Poetry Society of Michigan



"Encouraging Poets Since 1935"

December 2020

President's Message

Despite the pandemic, we had a really good mini-conference on Zoom on October 24 (in lieu of the Fall Meeting). **David James** joined me in reading some poems written from the prompts I've been posting on Facebook. I led a workshop; he led a workshop; and we heard from our outgoing Chancellor, **Laurence Thomas**. It was successful enough that if we are still under the Covid 19 gun this April, we will plan another Zoom conference in lieu of our Spring Meeting because it is better than nothing. (After this is all over, I think all I will want to do is hug people!)

Sadly, we have lost more than one Michigan poet in recent weeks. Long-time PSM member **James Ahearn** passed away on November 23. I remember the first PSM meeting I came to, Jim was very welcoming. I think he was also at our last in-person gathering at the Swedish Club of Detroit a year ago. He was a good poet and a community-spirited man. **Linda Jo Scott**, who was President of PSM from 1990-93, passed away on November 20; and **Carol Lopez**, long-time member of River Junction Poets, died on November 13.

I know I speak for many PSM members when I say that our sincere condolences go out to the families and that these poets will surely be missed by the literary world.

[Editor's note: See pages 2 and 5 for tributes to these wonderful poets.]

On a more positive note, I'm still posting writing prompts nearly every day. (I took Thanksgiving off!) It's my hope that these will help in some small way to keep us connected--through our common interests as poetry "friends."

Looking ahead, we will need some new officers by next fall. **Melanie Dunbar** is looking for some help with the Annual PSM Contests. What she needs is for someone to coordinate the solicitations and judging. Melanie is willing to do the publishing and production end of it. Please contact her if you are interested: mdunbar15@gmail.com.

If you are interested in a more powerful position, like president, I'd be happy to share what I know. Please contact me. (I'm all about power!) mme642@yahoo.com.

I wish you a safe and responsible holiday season. And I look forward to the day when we can look back at these times with humor and amazement (at how many different masks we've accumulated!). I'm hugging you from afar and wishing you good writing.

—Elizabeth Kerlikowske

In Memoriam: *James Ahearn*

Dennis White writes:

We were saddened to hear of the passing of our friend and fellow poet Jim Ahearn, who left us for a better place on Monday, November 23, 2020.

Jim had been a wonderful part of our group [Downriver Poets & Playwrights] for many years. Although he lived in Rochester, he traveled to be with us, as a poet, mentor, and friend. He was a wonderful poet with a keen sense of relating to readers and listeners through the written word. He was a wonderful encourager of poets of ALL levels, with sage advice and helpful hints.

He had a special relationship with Mono, being his right hand man in our group and in the Poetry Society of Michigan, first serving as Mono's Vice President then later becoming the President of the organization. He wore many hats in the PSM and wore them well, a tireless promoter of poetry.

While we have lost a dear friend, we have been enriched by his influence in our writing and lives and we will cherish his memory, grateful for the time he spent with us.

Mono V. D'Angelo writes:

I am deeply saddened by Jim's passing. We shared many years as fellow poets and writers at the Downriver Poets and at PSM. He gently guided my writing style to include some of his own warm and heart-felt techniques. During my time as President of the Poetry Society of Michigan, Jim served as my VP. When I gently persuaded Jim to accept the president's role, he did so (when I agreed to serve as his VP!). He was an extraordinary colleague for eight rewarding years. I doubt I shall ever again meet as nice a person as Jim.

Jim's devotion to his writing was widely known and genuinely loved by many in Michigan's poetry community. He was frequently published, would usually win any poetry contest he entered, and served as mentor for the many younger writers who had the good fortune to know him.

Although his physical body may have passed from the earth, his voice and spirit shall forever resonate with all of us who enjoyed his writing.

Good bye Jim Ahearn ...it was my honor and privilege to have called you a friend.

In Memoriam: *Linda Jo Scott*

Inge Logenburg Kyler writes:

Linda was a member of PSM for many years and hosted a number of PSM annual meetings in her gracious home in Battle Creek. She served as President of PSM from 1990-93. I remember those meetings with fondness as Linda always played her violin for us.

Linda Jo was a member of the Battle Creek Symphony for 31 years as second violin. She studied and taught literature, poetry, and writing most of her life, and dedicated her life in helping others learn. She traveled the world extensively and also loved to sing. I remember her telling me once that she traveled 40 miles one way every week to sing in a choir.

Linda was born in Chicago on December 3, 1939, and earned her bachelor's degree from Yankton College, South Dakota, and a Master's Degree and Ph.D. in literature from Emory University in Georgia. She was a very talented, warm and caring person.

Linda Jo passed on November 20, 2020.

Held

Our little lights
motes in the spruce grove.
You have to squint just right.
Take the path beside the path.
It's safer and ends up hill
in three arches of light:
our house, our open arms,
this night.

—Elizabeth Kerlikowske

News from the Treasurer

Hello PSM Members,

I would like to take this moment to thank everyone who has recently joined us or has renewed their membership for 2021! We have really been getting a good response to our requests for renewals and we appreciate it! Sending renewal reminders with our last mailing [the Fall Issue of *Peninsula Poets*] seems to have been worth the effort, for our PO Box has been filling up steadily!

We are currently at 165 members! (53 of you still need to renew... Please do it soon so we can include you on the roster we send to the National Federation.) An additional big THANK YOU to the 86 members who are Green Members (accepting their Newsletters via email). We especially appreciate that as it helps us save on postage & printing! We have 1 international member in Canada & we are represented in 10 states outside of MI by 14 members! PSM is coast to coast!

Our little clue to help you know where you are at with membership is to place the expiration date of your membership after your last name on your mailing label (example: Smith 20 or Jones 21). And again, we try to highlight that & note "time to renew" as needed. You will for sure want to be on the 2021 roster that we send to National in January so that you can participate in their annual contests! We expect that many of our PSM members will be winners in 2021—as in past years!

Wishing you all a safe & Happy Holiday Season,

Your PSM Treasurer,
Susan Anderson

The First Snow

The first snow is a special thing,
like starflowers that light the Spring.
It makes the cheeks of children glow.
There's nothing like that first fresh snow.

—Inge Logenburg Kyler

And Winter Arrives With Bells On

"Has my life ever been more in flower than now..."

—Stephen Leggett, "The Ribbon"

It's minus six degrees
with a blue sky like water, the color of a jay,
while wind roars across the open fields.
The sun's out but can't fool me.
Clouds of snow rise up
and disappear into nothing. Even birds stay
put, unable to take the cold and wind.

I sit inside a warm house with more blessings
than I deserve. I pray
for the grace
to nurture this little iris
in my lucky cup.

—David James

#

Call for Submissions: *Peninsula Poets* Spring 2021 Members Issue

Opens Dec 15, 2020

Please send up to three unpublished poems with your contact information on each poem by **February 1, 2021**. Email poems (all in one file, please) to editor.psm@gmail.com. If you do not have email, please mail to PSM Spring Edition, 2272 114th Ave., Allegan, MI 49010. Include a SASE for notification. Please visit <https://poetrysocietyofmichigan.com/> for full membership details. Questions? Contact Melanie Dunbar at editor.psm@gmail.com.

[Note: The Poetry Society of Michigan is looking for a new Contest Coordinator. Please email Melanie Dunbar at mdunbar15@gmail.com with questions.]

Call for Submissions: Poetry Society of Michigan's Five-Year Anthology

The Poetry Society of Michigan (PSM) seeks poems for our five-year anthology—the theme is “all things Michigan.” If you are a current PSM member, or have been a PSM member in the past five years (from 2016 – December 31, 2020), we invite you to help us delve into this Michigan-inspired theme. We will consider a broad range of styles and topics on poems evoking this theme. Poems could be about such things as a Michigan moment/event, person, an insect, business, street, town, light houses, lakes, Black Lives Matter, the pandemic, the auto industry, and blueberries. If you are open to your work possibly being edited, please follow the below guidelines to submit by **February 25, 2021**. We look forward to reading your work!

Guidelines: Submissions may be sent by email or regular post. **For email submissions** include *in the body of the email* (no attachments, please) (1) your author contact information (name, address, phone, and email) and (2) three to five Michigan-inspired poem(s). Previously published work will be considered as long as it is accompanied by information of when and where it was first published. Use “PSM ANTHOLOGY SUBMISSION” as the subject line and send to **psmanthology@gmail.com**. **For regular post** include your contact information (name, address, phone, email) on each page and submit three to five poems in a single envelope to PSM Anthology, c/o **Jennifer Clark, 210 Grandview Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49001**.

Deadline for submissions: February 25, 2021.

Anticipated date of publication is Fall 2021. Contributors accepted will receive one copy of the anthology. Additional copies will be available for purchase at reduced rate.

Winter's Grace

With little patience for rural life,
its roof antennas and unplowed roads,
power outages and long haired dogs
whose tails wave with burdock and mouths
merrily deposit horseshit
or half-dead squirrels on the kitchen floor,
he often wishes for sidewalks and subways,
a corner bar and bartender who knows
his taste for cashews and the smoky peat of a single malt;
but then his maul rings against the wedge
splitting the oak straight and true along its grain,
the fire starts with a single match
and a new snow muffles the traffic inside his head.

—Jane Wheeler

One Cold Winter's Night

The radiant heat of your body
spreads up my thighs.

My husband absent,
I invite you into my bed.

You curl into me,
stretch your neck backward,
gaze full of love, then
kiss me in the moonlight.

I stroke your ears,
sensuous, black velvet.

—Jill Marcuse

News from River Junction Poets

Carol Lopez, long-time member and past president of RPJ, died on November 13. She will be missed.

As it happened that very morning, **Betty Van Ochten** had gotten an email soliciting poems relating to Theodore Roethke from several RPJ members—including Carol—for William Barillas, who is editing a book about Roethke.

Betty talked to Carol's son, who said Carol was hospitalized, not doing well, but that he could send Betty the poem. Carol died later that day.

Carol, who had lived across the street from Roethke's home on Gratiot Avenue, had submitted her poem entitled "A Ghost on Gratiot Avenue."

A Ghost on Gratiot Avenue

A ghost on Gratiot lingers nigh;
It seems a poet lives nearby.

I gaze across the busy street,
And fancy there a force to meet.

His rampant talents wonders wrought;
His furies forged disciples taught.

And Saginaw, so late with praise—
Now hails the marvel of his days.

He dared to do what he loved most;
This poet-teacher, Gratiot ghost.

—Carol Lopez

Considerable Cloudiness

The remaining residents of the mid-western city, those that can't travel south out of the lake-induced cloud cover, are kept hopeful by the weather prophets who promise sun, not today or tomorrow but three days away. The sun will return and the sky will clear to a forgotten blue. By late morning the furnace will stop it's constant cycle of on, on, on, and outside, the cars parked within reach of the sun will warm and people will sit in their cars, surprised by the relief, they will sit in their vehicles, sunbathing. When the third day arrives, the sun doesn't and the prophets pretend there had never been such a promise. But wait, they say, it's coming. In two more days the snow will light up. It will hurt your eyes but you will unclench your muscles and you will pause, forgetting to continue your stride. You will pause and watch the winter birds hunt.

In the shops, tiers of
sunglasses hang neatly,
ten rows waiting.

—Deborah Gang

Winter, Go Ahead

Winter begins it all —
not spring that rips through frost,
but winter, where last night's snow
leaves a lawn of stars

No stops & starts of bees.
No naïve leaves untouched by grief
No fear of fire or counterfeit friends. Snow,
white bodied bird, painter of silence,
dancer who loves the air,
reveal the details:
let the branches be layers and layers of tree.

Tonight I will wake to hear the sound of an owl
(hope its call is answered by another —
that her answer fills the cavity he lives in)

see the moon lay its Templar light
over everything

even the swing-set in its cold metal.

And like the half-frozen stems of reed-grass
that struggle through, let us realize
snow as defense.

Tomorrow the sun will glaze the willow
that grows by the river.

We can never know what keeps it alive,
or what will come next to change ours.

Winter, go ahead.

Quiet the crickets. The mowers.
Lay your weight on the water,
crystallize the edges.

—Joy Gaines-Friedler

December Night

Stars cling to branches
of tall pines that surround us.
Twinkle Christmas joy.

—Betty Van Ochten

The Winter Sidewalks of Former Lovers

Like winter itself,
slick and sudden as an ice patch,
barren as a field of broken stalks,

a moment arrives,
as familiar and forgotten
as the solstice,
bearing with it
the wind-chill factor
on the year's coldest day.

In the face of this front,
occasioned by flurries
and frostbit shrugs,

hands clench eloquently in pockets
and words break like icicles.

We hold our ground
as if working to steady
two diverging floes of ice,

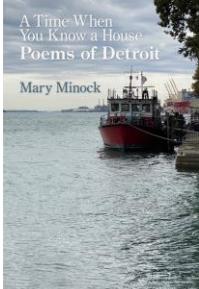
trying one boot for balance
and then the other,
until finally, in the thaw of silence
we see our own breath
and realize we are dancing alone.

—Tim Hawkins

Originally published in *Synchronized Swimmers*
(KYSO Flash Press, 2019)

The Printed Word

PSM member **Mary Minock**'s new book of poetry, *A Time When You Know a House: Poems of Detroit*, is just out from Kelsay Books. The new book, containing both narrative and lyric poems of past and present Detroit, supplements Minock's prose memoir, *The Way-Back Room: A Memoir of a Detroit Childhood*.



Of *A Time When You Know a House*, **Jim Daniels** writes: "Minock's poems—at times celebratory, at times elegiac, at times both—capture the essence of a particular era in Detroit, and in America. They offer a sensory cornucopia spiced with grit and heart. She captures the distinctiveness of Detroit in a way that will bring readers everywhere into her world." Order direct from Kelsay Books (kelsaybooks.com) or Amazon. \$18.50.

from This Winter Tale

This winter tale smokes a peace pipe,
skips ghosts that wrestle my days,
reaches for a market
where I gather smudge,
burnt pleadings to the sky.

Living water flows into the great lake
by this city, whispers
that winter is not a foreign land,
but a place of grace
where my tongue might
kiss a lodestar.

This winter tale is not an immigrant's story
but a Zen Koan,
where everything is drawn by the mind,
where a frozen lake thaws behind my eyes,
where the sound of silence crafts winter psalms.

—Nadia Ibrashi

& Other News

From UP North:

Congratulations to Marquette Poets Circle member **Lisa Fosmo**. Her poem and 3 photographs will appear in the next issue of the Walloon Writers Review. Congratulations to **Martin Achatz**, Marquette Poets Circle member and Poet Laureate of the Upper Peninsula. Marty is the new Adult Programming Coordinator at Peter White Public Library.

From Southeast:

Kelly Fordon's poetry collection, *Goodbye Toothless House* (Kattywompus Press 2019) has been selected as a finalist for the Eyelands International Prize (Greece); it was also a finalist for The Eric Hoffer Award in poetry. **Sophia Rivkin** received an honorable mention in a poetry competition sponsored by *The Comstock Review* (Syracuse, New York), which also accepted a love poem for an earlier issue of the journal. Her Honorable Mention is titled "U.S. Covid Deaths Near 100,000" and was based on a cover story of *N.Y. Times*, May 24, 2020. Rivkin and artist **Jan Mordenski** also collaborated on an art calendar of original work, featuring a poem and illustration for each month.

At My Window

deep snow

and two deer (I thought they were deer)
standing near the pine tree,

a Munch painting

black iron deer,
nose to nose

in deep white snow
they seem to be shivering.

And in the morning, crumbled prints
under the old pine.

Last night I was a woman at the shoreline
an infinite shore, an infinite sky.

Today snow flakes are falling
hiding everything.

—Sophia Rivkin

Crazy Wisdom Poetry Series

Crazy Wisdom Book Store & Tea Room, 114 S. Main St., Ann Arbor, hosted by **Ed Morin, David Jibson, and Rainey Lamey**.

Until further notice, all sessions are virtual and accessible through Zoom. Email cwpoetrycircle@gmail.com for link.

Second Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m.: Poetry Workshop. All writers welcome to share and discuss their poetry and short fiction. Sign-up for new participants begins 6:45 p.m.

Fourth Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m.: Featured Reader(s) for 50 minutes. Open Mic reading for up to 1 hour. All writers welcome to share their own or other favorite poetry.

Upcoming Featured Readers:

January 27 - Hedy Habra is a polyglot essayist and artist whose third book of poems, *The Taste of the Earth*, won the Silver Nautilus Award. *Tea in Heliopolis* won the USA Best Book Award and *Under Brushstrokes* was finalist for the International Book Award. Her website is hedyhabra.com.

February 24 - Patricia Hooper & Dannyne Romine Powell. **Hooper** is the author of *Separate Flights* and *Wild Persistence*—the most recent of her five books of poetry. Her poems have appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly*, *Poetry*, and *Kenyon Review*, and have won six major awards. **Powell**, a newspaper editor and author of *In the Sunroom with Raymond Carver* and four other poetry collections, often depicts troubles with close relatives. She has published in *Ploughshares*, *Paris Review*, and *Poetry*.

March 24 - Ken Meisel & Jeff Vande Zande. **Meisel**, a psychotherapist, is the author of eight books of poetry. With tender, grave empathy, *Our Common Souls: New & Selected Poems of Detroit* traces the conflicted searches for hope, sense of connection to place, and material and social problems embedded in the landscape of his deindustrialized city. **Vande Zande** has published four novels including *American Poet*, which won a Michigan Notable Book Award from the Library of Michigan. His story collections are *Emergency Stopping*, *Threatened Species*, and *The Neighborhood Division*. He is also a film maker, teaches at Delta College, and has a blog at www.authorjeffvandezande.blogspot.com

April 28 - Celebrate Poetry Month with The Poetry Circle's workshop. See blog for details: <https://cwcircle.poetry.blog/>

Prize at the Bottom of My Life

You couldn't special order this:
winter windows
of frosted swirls
etched on glass
in patterns shifting daily

or snowy lace doilies
decorating the patio door.

At Lake Michigan more rewards:
diamond dunes
quartz caverns
the pier's tiara—

all investments in time
with interest.

Along the Grand River
ice melts
but abandons
its top layers
so they cling
in tulle tutus
wrapped around girths
of aging tree trunks

like lunch counters
waiting to feed
my hungry soul.

It doesn't get much better
than this, this thing I won:
another free year.

—Judi Rypma

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Poetry, Literature are Portals to Wisdom

by Ron Weber

Maybe it's because 2020 has been filled with pandemic and political madness and mayhem, but I find myself at the end of this year seeming to spend more time reflecting on the dynamics of literature and poetry in terms of how they contribute to defining, if not creating, human wisdom. What used to be thought of as a given, reinforced through education, is no longer the case in an age of ubiquitous gadgets, devices, and social media that we seem unable to turn off.

It is extremely unfortunate, if not heartbreaking, that way too many people today fail to realize that literature is not exchanging tweets on why television still has not brought back "Here Comes Honey Boo-boo." Nor is it carrying on ad nauseam through email over which of the Barbie Doll contestants will be picked by "The Bachelor." Nor is it inane postings on Facebook urging the offing of the judges and the boycotting of sponsors because your favorite couple was eliminated from "Dancing with the Stars." These may be a form of writing but they're no more literature than a lobotomy is brain surgery.

Mankind has something far above any other species in the animal kingdom, and that's empathy—the ability to care and feel about our fellow creatures, human or otherwise. We learn empathy through literature, through the telling of stories and the singing of songs that we pass on from one to another.

Be it the riddles or nursery rhymes of our earliest memories, be it stories our mothers told us or books our brothers and sisters read to us, be it holy books or text books or what legends we memorized as children and students—for the most part, we learned to live our lives through narrative, thereby broadening the scope of meaningful perspective. By these means we developed a moral nature. We discovered both who we are and who we are not. We learned through these stories and songs how to live fully, knowledgeably.

Literature and poetry are two of the critical ways the human family has helped turn knowledge into wisdom. It is a historical fact and self-evident truth. I have yet to read of a past culture that did not develop both knowledge and wisdom.

So what's the difference, you ask, between knowledge and wisdom? The simplest analogy I can give would be the tomato. Technically, the tomato is classified as a fruit, although we all consider it a vegetable. Knowledge is knowing the tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing you don't put a tomato in a fruit basket.

Science provides us knowledge; literature provides us wisdom.

We owe a historical debt of gratitude to poetry. It served us long before the first marks were put on papyrus or the first symbols were placed on parchment and the dawn of written communication began. Through memory and word of mouth, the poet, the minstrel, and the storyteller preserved in verse man's history, culture, and heroes.

Writing them down upped the ante. Unlike passively watching television or surfing the net, reading is actually a pretty active enterprise. It requires sustained, focused attention, along with the use of memory and imagination. Literary reading enhances and expands our humility by way of its wisdom, through helping us imagine and understand lives much different from our own. In both content and process, we learn to read so we can read to learn.

Within literature, poetry matters the way lovemaking matters beyond procreation. Poetry matters the way tears and deep human empathy matter beyond the sympathy card. Poetry matters the way cuisine matters beyond nutrition and the way wisdom matters beyond knowledge. Literature and poetry are part of man's intelligent endeavor to live life and not merely survive.

Prose tells us how to bake a pie, how to wash long underwear so it doesn't shrink, how to reseal the limburger cheese so it stays fresh, and how to use odor eaters in our shoes so we don't alienate our fellow man. Poetry, however, helps us appreciate, helps us express, and helps us grieve. Prose may be knowledge, but it is the creative art of literature and poetry that is wisdom.

Especially in times of "virtual reality," we must not lose touch with that which helps define our humanity. We must all make time in our lives to read as if our very culture—values, compassion, personal freedoms, tolerance, and human wisdom—depend on it. Because they do. How do we know? Books!

If you only read one story in your life, make it "Yertle the Turtle" by Dr. Seuss, and then read it again. (I'm as serious as a heart attack here.) Dr. Seuss tells you all you need to know about human power, arrogance, selfishness, cruelty, and suffering.

As we wrap up a troubling and "unprecedented" 2020, I extend my deepest heartfelt wish to each of you that the New Year brings everything this past year may have lacked: those you love close to you, long hugs. . . Literature. Wisdom. Empathy.

Cheers!

POETRY SOCIETY OF MICHIGAN

Business Address:

PSM Treasurer
PO Box 1035
Cadillac, MI 49601

Email: Treasurer.PSM@gmail.com

Website:
poetrysocietyofmichigan.com
& FACEBOOK

an affiliate of

The National Federation of
State Poetry Societies
www.nfspa.com



Literary Locals: Writers Welcome

Coronavirus Alert! Confirm with Organization before Attending!

The Lansing Poetry Club

generally meets at 3 p.m. of the 3rd Sunday of the month at Dublin Square Irish Pub & Restaurant (327 Abbot Rd., **East Lansing, MI 48823**). For more info or to confirm a meeting, visit Facebook or email LPC President Ruelaine Stokes (ruestokes@gmail.com).

Downriver Poets & Playwrights

meets regularly on the first Tuesday of the month at Bacon Memorial Library in **Wyandotte** from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Contact **Dennis White** at 734-755-5988 or denniswhite@mail.com for more information.

Rochester Poets' Society

meets at the Rochester Hills Public Library, in **Rochester**, from 1-3 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month. For more info Contact **Nancy Stevens** 248-217-4034 or email writings80@yahoo.com.

Marquette Poets Circle

meets on first Monday of the month in the Peter White Library Conference Room at 5:30 for workshop, 6:30 for Open Mic. For more info contact **Janeen Rastall** at janeenrastall@yahoo.com or 906-451-4473

River Junction Poets of Saginaw meet regularly throughout the year. For dates and times and other info, visit their Facebook page or call RJP President **Jim Fobear** at 989-714-5124.

Crazy Wisdom Poetry Circle

meets on second Wednesdays of each month, 7-9 p.m., for workshop and on fourth Wednesdays, 7-9 p.m. with a featured reader and open mic. Crazy Wisdom Book Store & Tea Room, 114 S. Main St., **Ann Arbor, MI**. See blog for details: <https://cwcircle.poetry.blog/>

Friends of Poetry – Kalamazoo.

For information about the many activities and gatherings of this group that has served the literary arts of the greater Kalamazoo area for nearly 40 years, contact **Elizabeth Kerlikowske** (mme642@yahoo.com) or visit their Facebook page.

Bards of Bird Creek *will suspend meetings until further notice.* Typically *May through October* at 7:00 p.m. in the **Port Austin** Welcome Center. Call (989)738-7641 to confirm dates or for more information.

3rd Thursday Poetry meets the 3rd Thursday of each month at Horizon Books in **Cadillac** (with breaks in Dec. & June-Aug.). For info contact **Susan Anderson** at (231) 429-2443 (treasurer.psm@gmail.com) or Horizon Books Cadillac at (231) 775-9979.

The Southeast Michigan Poetry Meet-up meets from 7-9 p.m. the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at Panera Bread, 27651 Southfield Road in **Lathrup Village, MI**. For more information, call **Carla Dodd** at 248-861-3636.