

National Storytelling Network

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

SUPPORT THE ANGELA LLOYD SUNBRELLA SCHOLARSHIP FUNDRAISING CONCERT



Rishi Nixon
President & Chair of the Board of Directors
National Storytelling Network

This month, on September 27th, NSN's Youth-Educators-Storytellers Special Interest Group (YES SIG), in partnership with the Healing Story Alliance (HSA), will host a fundraising concert for the Angela Lloyd Sunbrella Award, a grant NSN has launched to support storytelling artists working with youth, in remembrance of the magnetic joy who was former YES chair Angela Lloyd.

Angela touched countless emerging youth storytellers across the country during her lifetime—myself included—and her legacy has continued to do so. Her work on the conference with Leslie and I last year—ongoing until the week before we lost her this January—helped us return the national youth teller showcase to the annual National Storytelling Conference, starting in Georgia this summer.

Help us build up this grant and continue to keep one more piece of her legacy alive for many more years to come.

REGISTER FOR THE YES-HSA FUNDRAISING CONCERT

IN THIS ISSUE

President's Letter

2024 Conference Numbers

2025 Conference
Announcements

Windham Scholar Essays

Story Arts Memorial

Featured Events

J.J. Renaux Grant

National Storytelling
Calendar

Story Beast

DID YOU KNOW? NSN
BOARD MEETINGS ARE
OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS

Click [here](#) to read this
month's and prior meeting
minutes.

CLICK THE RED HALF OF
THE PAGE TO TURN BACK

CLICK THE BLUE HALF TO
TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE



2025 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

GEORGIA 2025 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE FINANCIALS & SURVEY



Leslie Shelley and Rishi Nixon
2025 Conference Co-Chairs
National Storytelling Network

We are so dearly grateful to NSN administrator and distinguished national *hero*—Dot Cleveland—for all the work she has put into closing our conference books. Thanks to her careful work, we have final statistics to share—our Georgia 2025 conference was packed with extraordinary programming, tellers, and was a **sound financial success for NSN**. Conference revenue is up 27% from last year, over 200 attendees joined us—a significant portion of them pre-registered, and 20% of them became NSN members *with their conference registration*.

To make our 50th anniversary conference in 2026 just as magical as Georgia and Seattle have been these past two years, our conference survey is still open to seek your feedback and impressions from 2025. It can be completed in just 5-10 minutes at the link below.

[COMPLETE OUR GEORGIA 2025 CONFERENCE SURVEY](#)

\$110,210

Total Conference Revenue

194

Pre-Registered
Conference Attendees

55

Virtual Ticket Live
Attendees

35

Attendees Became New
NSN Members with
Registration

\$3,112

Raised for Member
Grants from Conference
Fundraisers

\$6,250

Raised from Conference
Program Advertising



2025 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM CONFERENCE SCHOLAR ESSAYS

Jennifer Armstrong

jenniferarmstrong.com

Hurricane Helene brought many firsts for me. The latest was asking for financial help to attend the NSN Storytelling Conference in Kennesaw, GA. After 40 years away, I moved back to Asheville in April of 2023. Attending a gathering of storytellers here in the South, especially after the devastation of the hurricane, felt very important. Thank you, thank you to the scholarship committee for making this possible.

All scholarship recipients were asked to give some volunteer hours. I had a moment of panic looking at the volunteer options. There was nothing in my skill set. Give directions? No, not with my proclivity for getting lost walking around the block. Help with heavy suitcases? No, not with my wobbly right hip. And so it went until I had a flash of brilliance, "What about volunteering something I know I'm good at?"

Yes! Playing fiddle tunes to welcome people to the conference was most welcome. What joy. This is the heart of what we do as storytellers. We share who we are, what we do well, what we believe and what we love.

Following an inspiring and deeply satisfying national teller concert on Friday night my friend Janel exclaimed, "What a master class in storytelling that was." Was it ever! And why did we feel that way? I think because all the tellers were completely and utterly themselves with no hesitation or pretense. This is what our storytelling art form challenges us to do. Can we delve deeply into our own hearts and share what we find there with no apology?

Heather Forest, in her brilliant music and story workshop reminded us, "You can't chew with someone else's teeth."

A sweet moment was shared at the end of Liz Weir's zoomed in from Ireland workshop when I asked her, "Would you like to hear an Irish jig?" "Oh yes," she said. So I fiddled and Ed Stivender danced an impromptu jig and everyone was smiling. It was a foretaste of the huge musical gathering at the end of the conference with all of us singing in a circle with sunbrellas and saxophone and sharing remembrances of those beloveds who were joining us in spirit. Oh how we breathed and sang abundant life into our National Storytelling Network.

The photo above is the only picture I took at the conference. It says it all. We are a colorful, dynamic patchwork of tellers holding space for the next voice and the next voice and yes, your voice too, to step out onto the stage and speak our truth.



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Mary Jo Huff

maryjo@storytelling.com



Thank you, Atlanta, GA, for an excellent conference 2025. I was able to drive and listen to storytelling podcasts all the way down from Indiana. Everyone had a warm, inviting smile when I arrived and checked in. Everything was conveniently walkable, and the food court offered an excellent variety of choices. Seeing old friends from the other conferences I attended was a blessing. Meeting two beautiful librarians from Louisiana, sharing time with them, and taking their precious, genuine hugs with me was a special treat. My day was filled with STORYTELLING from tellers from the past and so many new and exciting tellers. The conference was organized, but most of all, it was friendly. As a member for over 30 years and having been involved in all the transitions, I find it particularly positive to see the forward progress and the enthusiasm of the attendees. Thank you to everyone who dedicated their volunteer time to making this a conference to remember.

Cynthia Orr

Attending the NSN conference in Atlanta was a rich experience and a door way to the world of storytelling—past and present. Back in the 80's, after ten years of fulltime storytelling, I stopped telling stories professionally. I lost all connection to the storytelling world. The conference gave the chance to reconnect with people I knew “back then” and to marvel at how much has changed! Storytelling groups and organizations and festivals have proliferated and Zoom has made the inaccessible thoroughly convenient. Of course, stories and the love of listening and telling has remained a constant.

The conference provided a huge variety of tellers and stories in a gracious environment. Organizers outdid themselves in managing logistics—comfy dorms, good food, and even a shuttle that ran from dorm to dining and telling venues. The bookstores not only had a large selection of books and CSs, we were plied with tea and snacks. Many sessions were taped and are now available for our enjoyment. And, they kept to the schedule!

As a scholarship recipient, I am very grateful for the help in easing my re-entry into the storytelling world. I look forward to building on the social connections the conference facilitated and I've already learned and told two stories I found at the conference.

Thank you so much.



Bobby Norfolk

This conference was a grand homecoming for me! Sherry and I had a wonderful time seeing friends and making new ones. The sessions were superb. NSN had a Renaissance in Kennesaw. So many concurrent sessions made for hard choices but whatever we decided was right on time. The food was plentiful and tasty, the rooms were comfortable, the shuttle van was omnipresent. No complaints from me or Sherry.

Denise Page

A Feast of a Festival — In February 1996 I walked the red carpet at the ESPY Awards when they were held in New York at Radio City Music Hall. (And yes, there is a story there.) Almost everyone at the event was a celebrity or one in the making. I looked into the faces of Tony Danza, Michale Jordan, Loretta Claiborn (look her up,) Rebecca Lobo, and be still my heart, Denzel, no last name needed. I remember wondering what had I done in my life to be here with them up close and personal. I was overcome not because they were stars. These were people I admired for how they committed to their craft. Honored their craft. Studied their craft.

This past July I had the privilege of attending the National Storytelling Network conference as a Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholar. I sat in a theater in Kennesaw, Georgia and I see in the flesh, story artists whose work I have admired since I entered this community. Everywhere! Oracle winners! Circle of Excellence winners. What had I done in my life to deserve this? To be here. With them. My heroes and sheroes in the flesh. Like the ESPYS. But better. Here I could sit at the feet of the Masters. They were here to continue to hone their craft, but also to share elements of what made them successful. From the crafting of story to performance, to the business of storytelling. These veterans shared in workshops they facilitated, workshops they attended and in informal settings like mealtime and in between time.

Now Kennesaw was hot. I was hot! And tired. I had driven from Connecticut, solo. I was not only hot and exhausted, but the combination made me more than I like to admit, a bit confused, Where was what when? Don't think that dampened my spirit, the thrill of being at this conference, or my gratitude. Without the scholarship I would not have been able to attend. I'll spare the details, let's just say the medical community has much more of my money than I do.

The workshops and informal conversations provided so much information that I can put into practice immediately. During the showcases I got to study the pros. See them in action before their peers. I saw how much I have to learn, and I learned how many from this community are willing, even eager to help me in my journey.

In addition to the luminaries I knew of in our field, I got to meet many other tellers who in their respective regions are doing the work brilliantly. The conference afforded the opportunity to connect with and learn from them as well. I met wonderful people that I know will remain in my life post conference. Every moment was rewarding, fun and memorable. One event moved me to tears. My own.



I was lucky enough to have been selected by lottery to present in a Fringe. I am developing a family trilogy and I need feedback, coaching, and confirmation that it's worth telling. I was of course nervous about presenting to my peers. My son who just recently moved to Atlanta came to support me with my bestie Gloria who had come down from Charlotte to attend. Their presence put me at ease - until they came. People I had just met came to hear me, and the stars, my heroes and sheroes, I couldn't believe as I watched them come in. There were other great options on the program in the same time slot. What a community this is. I was thinking, "oh my God please make this worth their while!" I told, they listened, and they generously shared their appreciation. AND more importantly gave me invaluable feedback. I could not have had the benefit of all that collective wisdom from all perspectives of demographic, story style and experience, if I had not been a Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholar.

This was a full circle moment for me. I was introduced to storytelling as an art form more than twenty years ago. I attended a weeklong retreat facilitated by Donald Davis. I was there only because it was sponsored by a program to which I was a consultant. Donald opened the retreat with a video of Kathryn. I had never heard of her, nor really had I heard of Donald. I was totally ignorant of anyone in the storytelling world, but I witnessed the heart of Ms. Windham and Donald's admiration of her happen. I left enthralled by the world of storytelling, and I wanted in!

But I couldn't find a way in. I searched statewide for a place where people were practicing story. I was familiar with Connecticut Storytelling Center and even began to attend the festivals, mostly in pursuit of finding someone with whom I could study, practice and test the waters of a storytelling life. It wasn't until almost twenty years later that I found my way into storytelling.

Yes, full circle and still journeying. My appetite for storytelling began with that documentary of Kathryn Tucker Windham. It is with thanks to the National Storytelling Network and the Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholarship that I have dined sumptuously, and I feel fully, on the path to becoming a better storyteller. Thank you.

**SUPPORT THE 2026 CLASS OF KATHRYN
TUCKER WINDHAM SCHOLARS**

Help support NSN in producing another enriching conference for the 2026 class of Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholars!

Visit [this link](#) to explore making a donation to NSN. Donations of small and large are both sincerely appreciated.

If you have the capacity, a \$500+ gift designates **NSN Diamond Donor status**, which includes a special dinner with the NSN board of directors, president, and president-elect the evening before the passing-of-the-gavel at the conference.



NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Join us to celebrate NSN's 50th year
with stories as vast as the Texas sky,
where the buffalo roam and the spirit
of the frontier ignites our imaginations.

2026 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

JULY 23 – 26, 2026

WEST TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY



FEATURE

HONORING STORYTELLERS ACROSS GENERATIONS: THE STORY CROSSROADS MEMORIAL NOW ON NSN'S WEBSITE



Rachel Hedman
Executive Director
Story Crossroads

The National Storytelling Network (NSN) website now features a clickable button leading to the Story Crossroads Story Artists Memorial—a digital garden dedicated to storytellers who have passed on. This memorial ensures that those who shaped our art form, whether they were known nationally or cherished in their local communities, are remembered and celebrated.

Every month, Story Crossroads publishes a tribute blog post, highlighting one storyteller's life and impact. Sometimes the honoree is already listed on the Memorial page, and other times their name emerges from a social media post, conversation, or obituary. These digital traces may be all we have left, but together they form a legacy that future generations can learn from and honor.

As an organization in the middle of storytelling generations, we feel a responsibility to connect the elders who came before with the youth rising today. Some storytellers lived long lives; others, heartbreakingly, left us far too soon. What matters is that they are not forgotten—and that younger tellers know whose shoulders they stand on.

The Story Artists Memorial is more than a list—it is a participatory space. Right now, we have 144 storytellers listed, with 68 of them having their own dedicated webpage. This number grows every month as we celebrate more legacies. Anyone can submit the name of a storyteller who has passed, along with memories, photos, or even a link to an obituary. Even if you only have a name to share, that still allows us to acknowledge and honor them. Each storyteller receives a dedicated webpage, or comments are added to an existing one. If a name appears without a link, it means we are aware but still awaiting stories, images, or files to bring that page to life. Storytellers from any country are welcome in this sacred space.

Do you know a Story Artist who has passed on and wants others to remember them? You can share your memories and files through a simple online form—one per storyteller, with the option to return and submit more later. If you have questions or need assistance, contact info@storycrossroads.org or go to <http://storycrossroads.org/memorial>.





NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Some of the storytellers already listed include Adella Adella the Storyteller (Adella Gautier), Brother Blue, Angela Lloyd, Ashley Bryan, Ella Jenkins, Jackie Torrence, Jim Luter, Melva Gifford, Ray Hicks, Syd Lieberman, and Nothando Zulu—alongside many others. And there is always room to honor more.

While this work looks back, it also inspires the future. Story Crossroads continues to nurture youth storytelling, recently connecting with 183 families who have participated in our festivals over the past decade. One youth teller who began with our inaugural festival in 2016 just graduated high school in 2025. This intergenerational cycle—youth stepping up as we honor those who came before—reminds us that storytelling is timeless.

We are deeply grateful that NSN has made space for this Memorial on its home page. May it serve as both remembrance and inspiration: honoring those who have gone before while nurturing those yet to come.

[SUBMIT TO THE STORY CROSSROADS MEMORIAL PAGE](#)





NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

[CLICK TO REGISTER FOR EACH EVENT](#)



HSA HEALING STORY ALLIANCE
ECO
THIRD ACT

Sun Day
Virtual Worldwide
Storytelling
Concert
September 21, 2025
7:00pm-11:00pm EDT
FREE
Live on Zoom

Healing Story Alliance & NSN's Eco-Tellers are joining together with Third Act! to celebrate Sun Day-- An International Day of Arts & Action for Renewable Energy.

Featuring Stories by:
Fran Stallings, Diane Edgecomb, Bowen Lee, Jackson Gillman, Elisa Pearmain, Judith Black, Heather Forest, Valentina Ortiz, Laura Simms, Jenny Cargill Strong, Perry Ground, Margaret Read MacDonald and many more....



Webinar Series

Building your story constellation: four stories we need to know and share about ourselves.

Goal:

You will discover, craft and master 4 core stories that help people learn who you really are: mission, values, beliefs and vision.

When: Every 1st Tuesday of the month:

September 2, 2025
October 7, 2025
November 4, 2025
December 2, 2025

Time:

11:00 a.m. -12:15 p.m. Eastern Time



Facilitator:

Artem Mushin-Makedonskiy



Free to SIO members and Non-members



Storytelling In Organizations

The Transformative Power of Storytelling:
Personal Healing and Policy Change

When: Saturday, October 18, 2025

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. EST

Where: Zoom



Host: Lauryn Williams

Journalist, Researcher, Producer and Storyteller



Guest: Eva Grayzel

Survivor, Public Health Advocate, Storyteller and Motivational Speaker



Free to SIO members and Non-members



NOTIFICATION OF OPEN GRANTING CYCLE

2026 J.J. RENAUX EMERGING ARTIST AWARD ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

Applications for the 2026 J.J. Reneaux Emerging Artist Award are currently being accepted, now through September 29, 2025.

The Emerging Artist Award honors a storyteller of major and unique talent who has yet to be recognized on a national scale. By providing a one-time grant of \$2,000, the J.J. Reneaux Committee seeks to advance the award winner as a storyteller by funding activities designed to increase storytelling skill. The J.J. Reneaux Emerging Artist Award both supports the field of storytelling and celebrates its namesake.

J.J. Reneaux was a galvanizing performer whose stories and songs of her native Cajun culture captivated audiences everywhere until her death from cancer at the age of 44. Known for her authenticity and joie de vivre, J.J. wished to elevate up-and-coming artists to perpetuate the storytelling art she loved.



The J.J. Reneaux Awards also encompass a second granting program: the J.J. Reneaux Mentorship Award, presented to a mentor-mentee pair to support a year-long mentoring relationship. These two awards are given in alternate years; the next Mentorship Award will be presented in 2027.

Since the inception of the J.J. Reneaux Awards in 2005, thirteen emerging storytellers and twelve mentor pairings have received this esteemed honor. The nonprofit artist support organization Artists Standing Strong Together (ASST, “assist”) administers the fund.

Details about the application process as well as the application itself can be found on the ASST website at asst.art/jjreneaux.

Questions may be directed to Sue Kessler, ASST Executive Director at execd@asst.art.



NATIONAL STORYTELLING CALENDAR
LINKS IN TITLES IF AVAILABLE

SEPTEMBER 2025 EVENTS

Storytelling In Organizations (SIO) Building Your Story Constellations: Four Stories We Need to Know and Share About Ourselves by Artem Mushin-Makedonskiy

September 2, 2025 | 11:00 – 12:15 pm Eastern | Online

This is Part 1 of a 4-workshop series on the first Tuesday of each month from September to December 2025. Each story we tell shapes how we see ourselves and how others see us. And yet there are some stories that have more potential in showing who we are and what we stand for. Stories in that sense are like stars in the night sky: every constellation has a couple of the brightest stars that play the key role in defining the shape of the constellation. In this series of webinars you will discover 4 core stories that can help you show yourself and others around you who you are, what you stand for, and why you do the things you do. Apart from theory on these stories there will be practice in break out sessions so get your microphone and headphones ready!

Traditions & Truth: A Virtual Open Mic Featuring Heather Forest

September 6, 2025 | 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Central | Online

Email jdelnegro@dom.edu for the zoom link or to tell in the open mic. Stories 7-10 minutes.

Voices in the Glen Story Swap

September 14, 2025 | 2:30 pm – 3:30 pm Eastern | Online

Storytellers and listeners are invited to join Voices in the Glen storytellers for an afternoon of shared stories. Anyone is welcome to tell a tale; no one ever has to. This month's swap is in Silver Spring, Maryland; RSVP to 301-588-5516.

Inland Valley Storytellers Monthly Story Swaps

September 15, 2025 | 7:00 pm Pacific | Hybrid

Garner House | 840 North Indian Hill Boulevard, Claremont, California

The in-person part of this meeting is at the Garner House-Ginger Elliott Exhibition and Conference Center. You can also join in via Zoom, either to tell or to listen. For the Zoom link or to be added to the email announcement list, email john@inlandstorytellers.org.

Storytelling Association of California 3rd Wednesday Genre Storytelling: September Folktales

September 17, 2025 | 7:00 pm Pacific | \$5 or free for SAC members | Online



Story Weaver: Reviving the Art of Nature-Focused Storytelling by Amy Campagna of Pottawattamie Conservation

September 18, 2025 | 6:00 - 7:30 pm Central | Free with park entry or membership | Online
Hitchcock Nature Center | 27792 Ski Hill Loop, Honey Creek, Iowa

Set in the beautiful Loess Hills of Western Iowa, “Story Weaver” is for people who want to tell and/or listen to stories told in and about the natural world. It is also for musicians, poets, and thinkers. Participants are welcome to tell or read stories, share a poem, or perform a song related to the natural world. Attendance is welcome whether you wish to partake or just listen.

NSN-Youth-Educators-Storytellers (YES SIG) & Healing Story Alliance Angela Lloyd Sunbrella Award Fundraising Concert

September 27, 2025 | 7:00 pm Central | \$18 suggested donation | Online

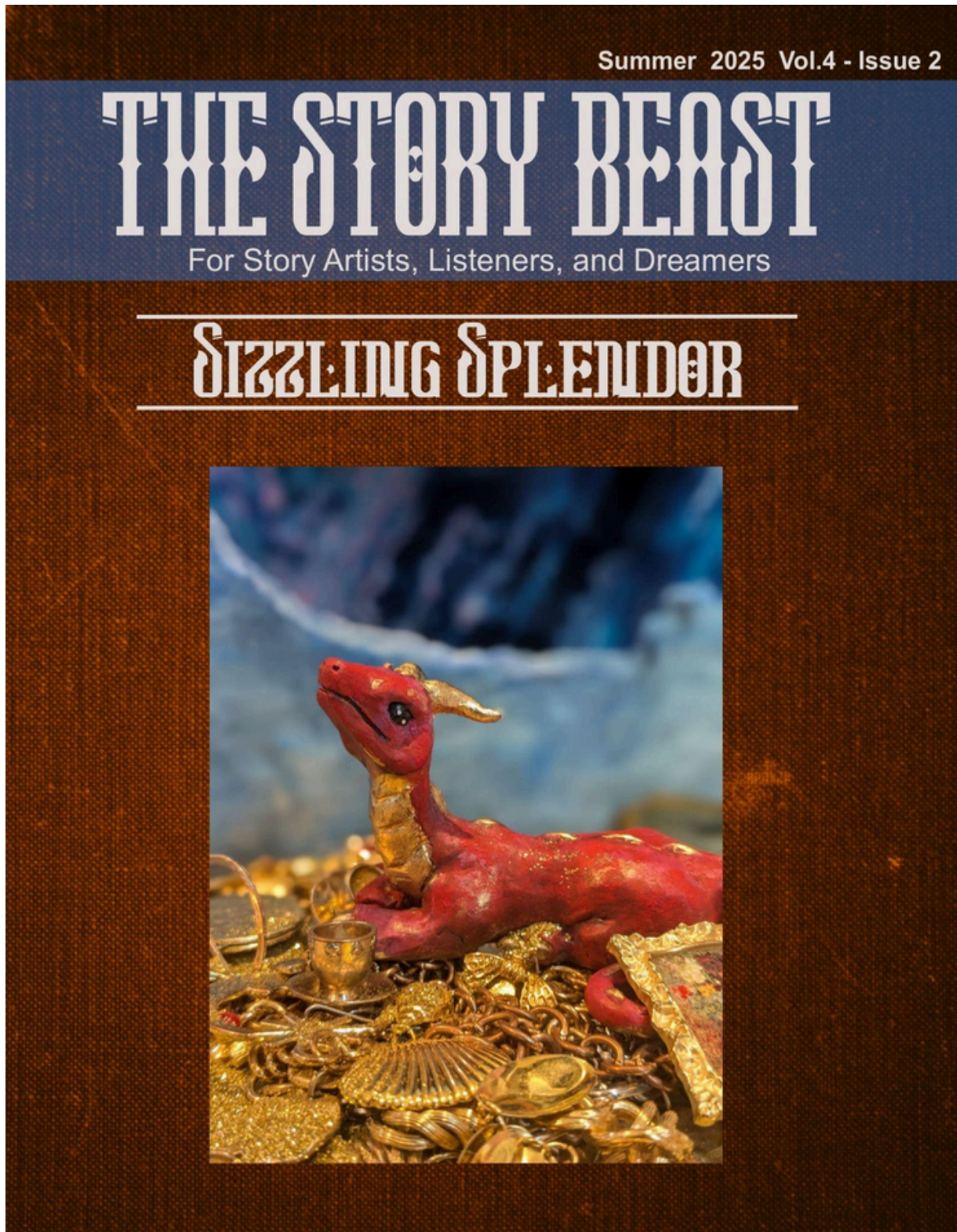
The NSN-YES Special Interest Group and Healing Story Alliance are presenting a fundraising concert with multiple storytellers to raise funds to be awarded annually to storytellers who work creatively with youth. The concert will be online on Zoom and the recording will be available for ticketholders. The suggested admission donation is \$18.



NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

Click the cover below to read the June 2025 Story Beast Issue *Sizzling Splendor*.
September 2025 Story Beast Issue *Quirky Quandaries* will be released this month!

Visit storybeast.org for more.





NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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Nick Smith	Editor
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HOW TO SUBMIT TO THE NEWSLETTER

Send us your events, articles, opportunities, storytelling or storyteller news, and more in an email to newsletter@storynet.org to go out to the national storytelling community!

1. Contributions due on the 25th of the month.
2. Membership in the National Storytelling Network *not* required.
3. Content subject to editing and inclusion in final issue not guaranteed.
4. If you are the author of your contribution, please also attach a headshot photo of yourself to go next to your byline.