



AGENDA

Welcome and Call to Order

Rishi Nixon

2025-2026 Presidential Priorities

Rishi Nixon

Georgia 2025 National Storytelling Conference Review

Rishi Nixon

50th Anniversary Oral History Project

Delanna Reed

Texas 2026 National Storytelling Conference Report

Caleb Hubbard & Trudy Hanson

Volunteer Interest

Caleb Hubbard & Emily Stamets

Environmental Storytelling (ECO) Special Interest Group Report

Linda Yemoto & Claire Nolan

Producers and Organizers (PRO) Special Interest Group Report

Lisa Overholser & Barry McWilliams

Storytelling In Organizations (SIO) Special Interest Group Report

Lisa Williams

Storytelling In Organizations (SIO) Special Interest Group Report

Karin Amano & Kevin Cordi

Executive Director's Address and Financial Report

Dorothy Cleveland

National Storytelling Awards

Margaret Read MacDonald

Minnesota 2027

National Storytelling Conference

Darlene Richard & Loren Niemi

Utah 2028

National Storytelling Conference

Rishi Nixon & Caleb Hubbard

2028-2029 Presidential Election and Incoming Vice Chair-Elect

28th President's Final Remarks and Grantwriting Committee

Rishi Nixon

Passing of the Gavel

Rishi Nixon

Caleb Hubbard

29th President's Address

Caleb Hubbard

Adjournment

Caleb Hubbard



MINNESOTA
STORYTELLING
AWARDS

Statement of Financial Position

As of December 31, 2025

Assets = \$239,641

- *Checking:* **\$6,510**
- *Savings:* **\$160,128**
- *Ray Hicks Fund:* **\$6,599**
- *Accounts Receivable:* **\$750**
- *Undeposited Funds:* **\$400**
- *Prepaid Conference Expense:* **-\$25**
- *CCU CD:* **\$65,279**

Liabilities = \$10,038

- *Credit Card Charges:* **\$801**
- *Payroll Taxes Payable:* **\$2,638**
- *Ray Hicks Fund Payable:* **\$6,599**

Equity = \$229,604

Unrestricted Net Assets: **\$35,832**

Net Assets w/o Board Restrictions: **\$126,280**

Board-Restricted Net Assets **\$48,538**

- *Due to SIGs:* **\$44,744**
- *Angela Lloyd Funds:* **\$3,794**

Use-Restricted Net Assets = **\$17,396**

- *Windham Scholarship Grants:* **\$5,729**
- *Member Grants:* **\$11,667**

Current Year Earnings = **-\$35,832**

Net Income = **\$37,390**

Total Equity = \$229,604

Total Liabilities & Equity = \$239,641

Profit & Loss

January through December 2025

Income = \$171, 827

- *Donations/Contributed Support: \$11,728*
- *Earned Revenues: \$160,100*
 - *Memberships and directory dues: \$33,803*
 - *Annual conference: \$112,255*
 - *Interest on Accounts: \$5,215*
 - *Advertising revenues: \$6,450*
 - *Other program fees: \$2,377*

Expenses = \$126,945

- *Payroll: \$16,148*
- *Office supplies and software: \$10,716*
- *Conference expenses: \$75,347*
- *Website Enhancements: \$4,860*
- *Other expenses: \$15,476*
- *Credit card merchant fees: \$4,398*
- *Transfer to Restricted Funds: -\$7,493*

Net Income = \$37,390

Prior Years Net Income

2024 was \$35,832

2023 was \$21,064

2022 was \$3,231

2021 was \$2,744

2020 was \$43,071

UTAH
awaits

2028 National Storytelling Conference

Save the Dates - July 13-16, 2028

Come gather at the crossroads of stories, cultures, and communities in Ogden, Utah



WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY
College of Social Sciences & Education

STORYTELLING
FESTIVAL

INTERESTED IN
HOSTING the NATIONAL
STORYTELLING
NETWORK CONFERENCE?

EVERY
GREAT STORY
STARTS WITH
SOMEONE
SAYING,
"LET'S
GATHER!"



OR
WGO TO
PARTNER
YOUR GUILD
WITH NSN?

TALK TO SOMEONE ON THE BOARD
to see the potential!



3:45-4:00 PM**Small Break****4:00-5:30 PM****TEACHING STORYTELLING TO ADULTS AND TEENS***Emily Stamets | FAC 175 | YES Workshop*

Want to help others fall in love with storytelling? In this lively, hands-on workshop, we'll play with creative prompts, reflection tools, and performance techniques that help teens and adults find their voices and shape stories that shine. You'll leave with adaptable exercises, a deeper understanding of how to guide tellers safely and joyfully, and fresh inspiration for your own teaching and telling practice. Come ready to move, laugh, and tell!

**MINING THE GOLD IN THE HISTORY BOOKS:
FINDINGS CAPTIVATING SORIES IN HISTORY***Pippa White | FAC 189 | Workshop*

If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten." Rudyard Kipling said that over 100 years ago, but it's as true now as it was then. Too often we make history about historical events, when really it is about people. Come to this workshop and learn how to make history fascinating and relevant, because it's about us. HiStory.

**COLOR IT LOCAL: CELEBRATING THE REGIONAL
IN STORYTELLING***Donna Ingham | FAC 176 | YES Workshop*

If history were taught in the form of stories, it would never be forgotten." Rudyard Kipling said that over 100 years ago, but it's as true now as it was then. Too often we make history about historical events, when really it is about people. Come to this workshop and learn how to make history fascinating and relevant, because it's about us. HiStory.

THE FUTURE OF NSN: INSPIRING TOMORROW!*Jen and Nat Whitman | FAC 127 | YES Workshop*

What is your NSN origin story? What would inspire others to join NSN? Join us for a collaborative conversation adventure exploring the future of NSN! We'll use a conversation tool called "Purple Points" to have structured conversations focused on making connections. This session will be a fun way to meet new friends, hear other perspectives, and share ideas with the NSN community. Join us as we dream together about the future of NSN!

POPPY

GOOF, GEEK OUT ON FOLKTALES

Norman Brecke | ROOM 177 | YES Workshop

Join the G.O.O.F. and Geek Out on Folktales! Do you want to talk folklore? Want to know more about folktales? Short, strange, intriguing, perplexing, folktales may be shared without judgement. Then Norm Brecke will guide you through a enjoyable discussion of motifs, characterization, setting, plot, theme, tone, point of view, and variants. All that and you'll earn a discussion model you can take home and use. Warning: talking folktales may be fun for participants!



THE STORYTELLER'S LENS: CRAFT YOUR STORIES, SHAPE YOUR LIFE

Allison Downey | ROOM 129 | General Workshop

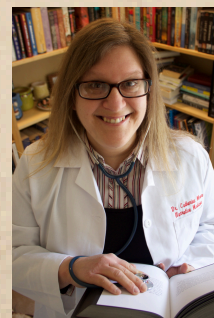
Discover how reframing your personal narrative can transform your life. In this interactive workshop, you'll become the protagonist of your own story, using storycrafting tools like structure, themes, and character to shift your perspective and breathe new life into your stories. Through reflection, journaling, and group activities, you'll gain practical techniques to analyze and reshape your life stories, empowering you to navigate challenges and find meaning through the lens of a storyteller.



THE STORY LABORATORY: NARRATIVE MEDICINE IN THE AGE OF AI

Catherine Moore | FAC Recital Hall | YES Workshop

The Story Laboratory: Narrative Medicine in the Age of AI As Generative AI reshapes how we teach, create, and connect, this presentation invites educators/artists to reimagine applied storytelling as a tool for empathy and cultural care. Learn how narrative medicine amplifies youth voices and safeguards storytelling's soul. You'll leave with fresh insight into AI literacy for storytellers and renewed inspiration to lead with humanity in a rapidly evolving digital age.



FIND AND TELL THE STORY OF YOU

Alton Chung, Lyn Ford, Jessica Piscitelli Robinson, and Miriam Nadel | Branding Iron Theatre | PRO Panel

Our heritage defines us, though in the mixing bowl that is America, it can be elusive. In this panel discussion, panelist will share stories of their heritage. Following the panel, there will be a discussion of how each storyteller uncovered their stories, including historical context, family taboo, genealogy, and interviews. The audience will be inspired to discover and craft stories of their own heritage.



7:00-9:00 PM



O rganization / Originality
R eliability
A chievements
C reativity
L eadership
E xcellence
in the Storytelling Community

TIMOTHY LIVENGOOD

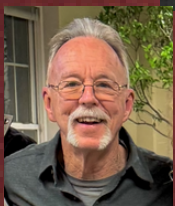
Service and Leadership



Tim Livengood is a planetary scientist and storyteller. When a storytelling club started at work, Tim's wife said, "go do that thing you do, to other people", and so he did. Somehow this transformed into longtime service on the Boards of Voices in the Glen, and the Folklore Society of Greater Washington, which further led to the creation of the Grapevine Storytelling Series in the Takoma Park area of Washington, DC, with longtime partners Renée Brachfeld and Noa Baum, as well as programming storytelling for the Washington Folk Festival. For five years, Tim worked for the Challenger Center for Space Science Education on a team developing education modules for K-12 schools, leading teacher workshops, and presenting Family Science Night programming for audiences as small as three and as large as 1700. Storytelling skills have come in very handy when projectors broke and while cooking up model comets. Tim also teaches astronomy classes at University of Maryland, and led storytelling for several years at the Maryland Sheep & Wool Festival.

STEVE TATE

Service and Leadership



The Rev. Dr. Steve Tate grew up on land once at the heart of the world's largest Tall Grass Prairie, rooted in a family of Illinois farmers — and "Big Talkers." His Daddy's stories planted a seed that never stopped growing. Steve left the farm for higher education, was ordained, and earned his

Doctor of Ministry. For twenty years he practiced pastoral counseling, becoming Executive Director of the Samaritan Center in Minneapolis. In 1995, he and wife Lee followed a wild dream to an abandoned North Carolina tobacco farm and built the beloved Goat Lady Dairy. Now retired, Steve serves as Past President of the NC Storytellers Guild and current Membership Coordinator & Treasurer. In 2020, he co-founded the Monday STORY ZOOM — now in its sixth year with 100 storytellers nationwide meeting weekly for story-sharing and feedback. He has performed five times at Connie Regan Blake's "A Slice of Life" in Black Mountain, and studied with Donald Davis, Megan Wells, and others.

His warm, intimate stories of farm life, animals, and the universal human experience entertain, educate, and inspire.

NC
ORACLE
AWARDS

CHESTER WEEMS

Service and Leadership

Chester Weems is a retired educator and Oklahoma storyteller. A member of Oklahoma's Territory Tellers for over 30 years, he has a fondness for family stories, his own and others. An award-winning photographer of fine arts and people, he likes to photograph storytellers in action and has provided headshots and action photos for many storytellers. He has served on the Territory Tellers Board and as Treasurer, Vice-President and President. Chester has also been a Tejas member for many years, serving a term on the Board, on the Zoom Tech Team and as a Masterclass presenter. He has been a member of NSN and PRO-Sig for many years and served as the NSN regional representative. He also holds memberships in Missouri's RAPS and Mo-Tel and Colorado's RMS. Chester is an advocate for encouraging the collecting of family stories and has assisted others in recording their family stories. He also likes to tell stories, though he has said his stories got better when unencumbered by the need for truth.



LESLIE R. SHELLEY

Service and Leadership

Born in the foothills of North Georgia in a very rural agricultural community, Leslie grew up surrounded by stories. Stories of life all stitched together with a liberal sprinkling of tightly held superstitions passed down from Appalachian ancestors. It wasn't until college that she realized everyone didn't share life through story, but that everyone sure needed story. Leslie performs throughout Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Alabama. Her story mission is one of hope and healing through sharing stories of life. Leslie currently serves on the board of GSN and NSN. She served as co-chair of the 2025 National Storytelling Network Conference held in Georgia. Leslie retired in 2022 after 20 years with the local school district and serves on the board of the local retired educators association. Her greatest critics and most genuine inspirations come from seven grand little men who keep life filled with questions, adventures, and fun.



KEVIN CORDI

Talking Leaves

Dr. Kevin Cordi is a storyteller who doesn't just tell stories—he tosses them into the room and invites everyone to play. A writer, educator, and champion of the oral tradition, Cordi explores how stories shape who we are and how we listen to one another. He holds a Ph.D. in Storytelling and Education from The Ohio State University and teaches storytelling, literacy, and education at Ohio University Lancaster. Kevin is the author of *Playing with Stories: Story Crafting for Storytellers, Writers, Teachers and Other Imaginative Thinkers* and *You Don't Know Jack: A Storyteller Goes to School*, and co-author (with Judy Sima) of *Raising Voices: Creating Youth Storytelling Groups and Troupes*. His books celebrate the power of story in learning and life. Much of his work focuses on youth, helping young people discover their voices and the courage to tell their own tales. Wherever there's a curious mind and a circle forming, Kevin is likely nearby—asking the next great story question..



JUDY SIMA

Talking Leaves



Judy Sima has spent more than 50 years bringing stories to life with passion, creativity, and heart. She began her career as a public school teacher, where she discovered the power of storytelling as a tool to inspire learning, spark imagination, and connect with students. She has also mentored others, teaching people how to effectively share stories of their own. Over the decades, Judy has shared stories in many forms, including folk, traditional, and contemporary tales, each delivered with her signature colorful style and vibrant presence. She has told deeply personal stories as well, including her mother's journey to the United States. Her performances captivate audiences of all ages, blending wisdom, humor, and humanity. She previously received Oracle Awards in 2005 and 2013, further recognizing her lasting impact. Through her work, she has not only entertained but also preserved traditions and inspired others to find their voices through storytelling.

JOSEPH SOBOL

Talking Leaves



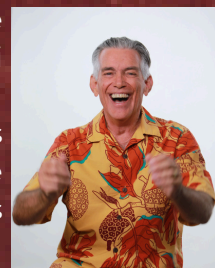
Joseph Sobol's doctoral dissertation on the American storytelling revival was published in 1999 by the University of Illinois Press as the award-winning book *The Storytellers' Journey: An American Revival*. He is a co-founder of the Storytelling in Higher Education Special Interest Group of the National Storytelling Network, and a co-founder and co-editor from 2004-2022 of the interdisciplinary journal *Storytelling, Self, Society*. His 2005 book *The House Between Earth and Sky: Harvesting New American Folktales*, from Libraries Unlimited/Teacher Ideas Press, is a step-by-step guide to doing Folklore and Storytelling residencies for secondary school ESL classes, along with a selection of international folktales collected in the Chicago City Schools. From 2000 to 2017, Sobol coordinated the Storytelling Graduate Program at East Tennessee State University. After that, he directed the George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling at the University of South Wales from 2017 to 2022. In 2020 he published *Liars, Damn Liars, and Storytellers: Essays on Traditional and Contemporary Storytelling*. He is now happily retired from academe, and lives in Amenia, New York with his wife, Mitzi.

NEW ORACLE AWARDS

JEFF GERE

International Story Bridge

JEFF GERE blends talents as painter, puppeteer, and mime into performances which have electrified audiences in Hawaii for 30 years. Jeff's physical energy, morphing elastic face and voice characterizations make his shows events. Jeff becomes his stories! Born on Halloween, Jeff performs constantly. He produced/hosted/ told in the Talk Story Festival, Hawaii's biggest storytelling celebration (2 years), Story TV (23 years monthly), Talk Story Radio (2 years weekly, Hawaii Public Radio.) He produced statewide tours, story camps & conferences. He's performed at the National Storytelling Festival (2010, Residency 2013.) He told in Spain, Hong Kong, Turkey, Vancouver & the Yukon before retiring from Oahu's Parks Department (end '14.) Then international tours began (Thailand, China, India, Japan, Australia, Taiwan, Java, Romania & Kenya.) During covid and after, he created local, national & international virtual events as performer and producer. He produced Story Retreats on Kauai, (2023, '24.) He's on YouTube. He does shadow puppets too. www.jeffgere.com jeffgere1031@gmail.com

**MARGARET READ MACDONALD**

International Story Bridge

Margaret Read MacDonald has shared tales and offered her "Playing with Story" workshops in over 55 countries. She was a Fulbright Scholar in Mahasarakham, Thailand, 1995-1996. Margaret solicited storyteller authors and edited collections from Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Thailand. As a festival producer, Margaret was able to feature tellers from Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Saudi Arabia, Quebec, the UK, and Thailand. Her many folktale collections bring folktales from around the globe to English speaking audiences.

**KATIE KNUTSON**

Distinguished National Service

Katie Knutson has spent her adult life serving the storytelling community. This includes 5 years as Executive Director of Northeast Storytelling (NEST) and extensive Board service: 3 years for NSN (one year as Chair), 7 years for YES (4 years as President), 6 years for Northlands, and 7 years for Story Arts of Minnesota. She also Chaired the 2020 NSN Conference Committee – in initial plans for Atlanta, and then forging a new virtual conference after COVID shut everything down. The resulting NSN Connected Conference was the largest, most diverse storytelling conference in US history, featuring 262 storytellers from around the world, spanning every US region and every continent (except Antarctica). In her 25 years as a storyteller and 18 years as teaching artist, Katie has delivered residencies, performances, and classes to around 40,000 children and adults on four continents. Katie wrote/curated the New Voices column in Storytelling Magazine for 9 years and contributed to 3 storytelling books. Find out more about Katie and her performing/teaching work at www.ripplingstories.com



JESSICA PISCITELLI ROBINSON

Distinguished National Service



Jessica Robinson is the Founding Executive Director of Better Said Than Done, the organization behind the Women's Storytelling Festival. In addition to producing storytelling shows since 2011, Jessica has performed at Exchange Place at the National Storytelling Festival, on WGBH's "Stories from the Stage," and for Artists Standing Strong Together, Six Feet Apart Productions, 3 National Storytelling Network (NSN) Conferences, and 4 Good Liars Club Festivals. Jessica was featured at the Stone Soup, the Washington Folk, the Allegheny Highlands, the Florida, and the Hampton Storytelling Festivals and is a 2023 ORACLE Award recipient. Jessica's stories can be heard on radio and podcasts, including Risk! She is a teaching artist, leading workshops for Story Crossroads, The Story Center at the MCPL, Libraries and Community Centers, and through Better Said Than Done online. Jessica's "Guide to Personal Storytelling" (published October 2024) is available through Story Crossroads. Jessica is the author of the urban fantasy novel *Caged* (p. 2019), as well as the memoir-in-stories, *Stages: My Life in Stories* (p. 2024). More at: Jessicapiscitellirobinson.com

CONGRATULATIONS



2026

2026 ORACLE Committee

Mary Hamilton (Chair)

Toni Simmons

Cora Newcomb

Drea Douglas

Ray Christian

Nancy Tolson

Emily Stamets

NSN ORACLE AWARDS

**Fringe: Ought Not Remember, Mustn't Forget:
Hasidic stories from the Baal Shem Tov, to Chelm,
the Shoah and beyond**

LES SCHAFFER | FAC 127

Hasidic stories, from the Baal Shem Tov, Chelm fools, shtetl Tzadiks, the darkness and flame of the Holocaust to today. Stories of survival, terror, bravery, unimaginable loss, intense joy..

*Adult | Family (older children) | Some Violence | Solo
Partial Improvisational | Adult Subject Matter*



**Fringe: The Story of Doc Susie,
Colorado's Mountain Doctor**

LINDA BATLIN | FAC 129

Hear about Colorado's first woman doctor in Fraser, Colorado. Learn about her challenges and triumphs in treating lumberjacks, ranchers and railroaders of the area over many years and about a way of life that is gone.

Family | Solo



**Fringe: The Kenning Place: A Well of
Wisdom from The Collective Memory**

DENISE McCORMACK | FAC 177

Old stories have a way of rising up when we need them most. Shared in a relaxed and engaging style, Denise McCormack shakes out a few dust-covered tales from our collective memory—tales meant to linger with us as new companions, each offering well-meaning pages from life's little instruction booklet that we might keep and revisit again and again.

Adult | Solo



SUNDAY, JULY 26 continued

8:00-8:30 AM

WAKE UP AND SING!



Jen and Nat Whitman | FAC 177

Let's rise up singing together each day! Join us for music and movement in the mornings! Bring your voices, your instruments, and your enthusiasm! Each morning we'll sing a mix of favorite rounds and movement songs. All selections will be tunes you could easily adapt for programs with family audiences. Start your day with community and song!

9:00-10:30 AM

THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF NSN

Branding Iron Theatre | NSN PANEL

Hosted by: Caleb George Hubbard

Featuring SIG Directors and Leaders



As the conference draws to a close, join new NSN President and representatives from the NSN's SIGs for a forward-looking conversation about the future of storytelling. Panelists will reflect on the evolving role of their SIGs, emerging opportunities within the organization, and the hopes they carry for the broader storytelling community.

10:30-10:45 AM

SMALL BREAK

10:45-11:30 AM

SUNBRELLA CLOSING CIRCLE

Outside Residents Halls (or FAC 175 based on weather)

Gather with fellow attendees for one final moment of reflection, connection, and celebration as we close the conference together. The Closing Circle offers space to share gratitude, final thoughts, and the stories that will travel home with us as this year's gathering comes to an end.

CLOSING SONG PROVIDED LAST PAGE OF THE PROGRAM.

11:30 AM -12:00 PM

CHECK OUT

NSN

PROFESSOR

NSN Kathryn Windham Conference Scholarship 2026 Recipients

Jodi French-Burr

Helping people find connections through stories is the focus of Jodi French-Burr's work in the arts, including storytelling. French-Burr strives to raise awareness of the importance of heritage storytelling, be that on stage or behind the scenes, through her work with the National Park Service, the Storytelling Resource Place, the West



Virginia Storytelling Guild, and regional community groups like the Heritage Alliance and New River Gorge Historical Society. From telling tales trailside to conducting find-your-stories workshops, Jodi knows everyone has a story to tell. Her work champions these efforts, encouraging others to tell their stories too, be these around a kitchen table or in a public performance venue.

Mary Louise Hughes

In 2018, Mary Louise stumbled upon a workshop offered by Story Crossroads in Salt Lake City, Utah, and fell in love with storytelling. In 2020 she started voiceover work and recording audiobooks. But it never compared with telling stories to a live audience, so storytelling remains as her main focus. She tells in schools, private events, and



regional Storytelling Festivals throughout Utah and Idaho. Her initial interest was in personal and family stories, to share her own family history. When someone tells her of a significant life experience, she encourages them to, "Write it down and tell it to your kids!" She's expanded her repertoire, taking 3rd place in the Timpanogos Hauntings, competing as a finalist in Utah's Biggest Liar Contest, and learning world folktales. Recently returned from serving a church mission with her husband, she resumes telling stories of a variety of genres.

★ CONGRATS ★

Dada Maheshvarananda



A yogic monk, activist, and author of six books, Dada blends spiritual wisdom with a passion for social change. He has traveled the world, leading workshops and seminars on activism and transformation. Now based in Asheville, North Carolina, USA, he serves as the director of the Prout Research Institute and is the president of The Asheville Storytelling Circle. His stories are invitations to reflect, grow, and awaken to a greater purpose.

Nicholas Pawlowski



Nicholas Pawlowski M. Ed. is a storyteller & educator who founded the Story Table Foundation, a non-profit organization that promotes mental and emotional wellbeing through interactive storytelling & makes space for great storytellers from around the world. Through improvisation, drawing & music, his facilitated events spark joy, connect generations and explore values like compassion and gratitude. He lives in Minneapolis and is the current President of Story Arts of Minnesota.

Helen Yang



Helen Yang is an artist, educator, and cultural storyteller based in Silicon Valley, and the founder of Visionary Arts and Visionary Friends, platforms that position art as a bridge between science, culture, and community impact. Raised in a family of artists and educators, Helen began working on cultural heritage sites alongside her parents, both art professors, at the age of twelve. This early immersion shaped her lifelong commitment to using art as a vehicle for storytelling, preservation, and public engagement. With over eight years of experience as a museum docent at the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Helen is also a newly appointed storyteller at the Asian Art Museum, where she brings history and culture to life through engaging, human-centered narratives. Her work transforms complex ideas into accessible, emotionally resonant experiences that inspire connection and action. Helen has led more than 70 community exhibitions and initiatives, engaging hundreds of thousands of participants through programs that integrate art, environmental conservation, and youth leadership. She collaborates with organizations including the United Nations and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to translate global challenges into meaningful, community-driven storytelling experiences. As a speaker, Helen explores how storytelling, especially when combined with visual art, can build empathy, strengthen cultural understanding, and cultivate the next generation of leaders. In the age of AI, she advocates for art as a uniquely human force that shapes values, fosters responsibility, and creates lasting social impact.