

National Storytelling Network

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

MAY PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Delanna Reed

President & Chair of the Board of Directors
National Storytelling Network

May is a time of growth — gardens begin to bloom, and we pause to celebrate Mother's Day on May 11. While mothers should be honored every day, in the early 1900s Ann Jarvis recognized that mothers often didn't receive the respect they deserved. After her own mother's passing, she organized a commemorative event at her church — and from that heartfelt gathering, Mother's Day was born.

If I have any regrets since my grandmothers and mother passed away, it's that I didn't record more of their stories. As storytellers, we know how recounting the lives of those we love keeps their memories vivid. I encourage you to take time to record and preserve your own stories — and your family's stories — for generations to come.

This year, the National Storytelling Network (NSN) is approaching its 50th anniversary. We are thrilled to kick off a year-long celebration at the 2025 National Storytelling Conference in Kennesaw, Georgia! One highlight of this celebration will be an oral history project, documenting NSN's rich journey from its beginnings to today. I am personally committed to leading this effort and invite you to join me. Whether you were part of our founding years, contributed along the way, or have experience conducting oral histories, we welcome your stories and help.

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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

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TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE



NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
MAY 2025 NEWSLETTER

We plan to archive these stories online and present them through digital and live performances. We are currently in the idea stage, and we invite your thoughts and participation — email us at info@storynet.org to get involved.

The 2025 NSN National Storytelling Conference is fast approaching! Located near vibrant Atlanta, you'll have access to historic sites like the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and the Atlanta History Center, as well as attractions such as Stone Mountain Park, Six Flags Over Georgia, and the Georgia Aquarium. Outdoor adventures, shopping, and gardens await, too! Plan your vacation and register early — by May 31 — to save money. (Members receive discounted rates, and non-members earn a one-year membership with registration.) Comfortable and affordable lodging will be available at Kennesaw State University, along with highly rated campus dining. You can view the conference program now on our website.

We need volunteers to make the conference a success — please sign up if you can help. Don't forget to bring an item for the silent auction and leave room in your luggage to take something special home. If you would like to promote your business, consider purchasing an ad in the conference program — all proceeds directly support NSN.

NSN runs entirely on volunteer energy and member support. When you volunteer or donate, you can trust that every dollar helps maintain the vitality of our storytelling community.

Wishing you a happy Mother's Day — see you next month!

Warm regards,

Delanna Reed

President & Chair of the Board of Directors
National Storytelling Network



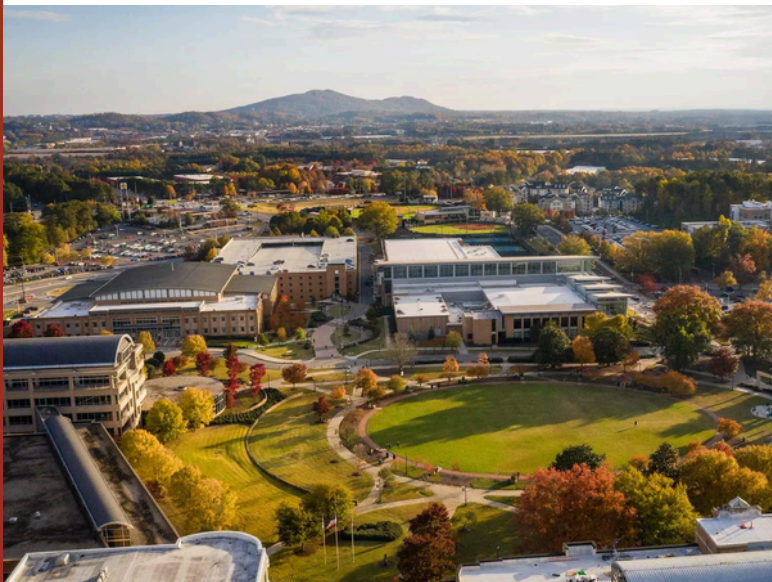
NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

JOIN US IN GEORGIA (WITH AC!)

As this conference update is being created, it is a lovely 64 degrees in Georgia, the kind of morning that begs for an extra cup of coffee, outdoors, surrounded by the vivid green of spring.

But the question seems to be “GEORGIA IN JULY??? What will that be like?” Georgia is famous for summer humidity, somewhat sweltering hot pavement, and occasionally stifling heat. As the Georgia 2025 National Storytelling Network Conference approaches, let’s lay some concerns to rest.

The average high temperature in July is 88 degrees and average low will be around 67 degrees, but add a little humidity and the “feels like temperature” factors in. No need to worry, this conference will be entirely AIR CONDITIONED. Climate-controlled housing, dining, and conference sessions. Sure, you may have a few warm moments walking to and from, but that just blesses you with a daily dose of Vitamin D.



How do I get there? If flying, you will have the opportunity to experience our famous Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, currently ranked as the busiest airport in the United States. Consider this your first tourist opportunity and relish the chaos. From the airport, the most commonly used transportation is Uber. There are also many private airport shuttle groups, so do some searching on web for the best deal. The conference location, Kennesaw State University, is 32 miles north of the airport. For departures on Sunday we will have shared UBER Board so that folks can share the ride.

Why should I attend this conference? So glad that you asked. Last year kicked off the return to a “live” NSN conference and the 2024 Together Again NSN Conference was simply fantastic. The Georgia 2025 National Storytelling Conference was blessed by the momentum and success of “2024 Together Again.” This has led to a lineup of tellers, presentations, panels, and coaching of the highest caliber. Visit [the NSN Conference page](#) to see our national showcase, regional showcase and fringe tellers. You will be thrilled with the program.



Here is just a glimpse of conference offerings:

THURSDAY – Registration & sign in starts 1:00 pm. We will open the conference with our wonderful Susan O'Halloran bringing everyone together with laughter and fun. There will be workshops, presentations, and the evening Regional Teller Showcase followed by fringe and story swaps.

FRIDAY – Kick off the day with morning activities. Wake up your body with Gloria Elder, practice joy with Lyn Ford, and break your morning with song, led by Kanute Rarey and Gwen Napier. Look forward to a virtual workshop from international teller, Liz Weir, a special presentation “Callaloo” by Bobby Norfolk, the KSU Student Teller Showcase, the National Teller Showcase, and more, much much more.

SATURDAY – Leap into the day with laughter yoga from Josie Bailey and wake up and sing with Jen and Nat Whitman. A wonderful presentation by Connie Regan-Blake on the Legend in Overalls, Ray Hicks, coaching by Carmen Agra Deedy, the NSN Annual General Membership Meeting, the National Youth Teller Showcase from Georgia's own Kuumba Tattle Tales, as well as the ORACLE Awards and Concert.

SUNDAY – Celebrate Lady Liberty with Barry Stewart Mann, a Sacred Teller Swap led by Dot Cleveland, and the Sunbrella Closing Circle, time to lift up, pause, celebrate, and remember those who have meant so much to the world of story.

This is just a *glimpse* of the conference offering. **The full schedule of over 60 workshops and presentations is posted on [the NSN Conference page](#).** Early bird registration ends May 31st and the slots are filling up.

Please take the time to register now! NSN looks forward to sharing four wonderful air-conditioned days with you, learning, laughing, and simply being “Together Again” once again.





LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

VICE CHAIR-ELECT NEEDED

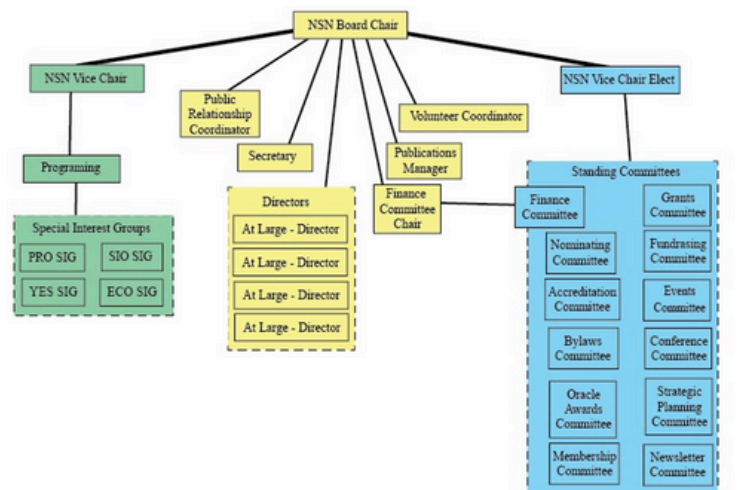


Trudy Hanson

Nominating Committee Chair & Immediate Past President
National Storytelling Network

As we anticipate our summer storytelling conference in July, it is time for NSN members to consider how they can make a difference in the National Storytelling Network. One of those ways is choosing to serve as an NSN Board member, specifically serving as the Vice Chair-Elect. This position entails overseeing the work of NSN committees during the first year of board service. During the second year, this individual moves to the position of Vice Chair and serves as the planner for the summer conference. In the final year of the 3-year term, this individual becomes the Chair of the NSN Board, overseeing the monthly Zoom Board meetings and helping set priorities for the year.

This organizational chart (prepared by Vice Chair-Elect Caleb Hubbard), shows the overall organization of the NSN Board:



In accordance with NSN Bylaws, the membership elects the Vice Chair-Elect at the membership meeting held at our annual conference. The Nominating Committee is currently seeking nominations for the position of Vice Chair-Elect. A willingness to serve, to attend monthly board meetings, and to coordinate the work of NSN committees are qualities the Nominating Committee are seeking in nominees.

To nominate someone or to self-nominate, complete the Board Member Directors Candidate form found at form.jotform.com/220065232354041. If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to me (hansontrudy@outlook.com). Make a difference! Become an NSN Board Member.



SIG MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

STORYTELLING IN ORGANIZATIONS' MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Lisa Williams

Director of Storytelling In Organizations Special Interest Group (SIO SIG)
National Storytelling Network

As the Director of Storytelling In Organizations, I am spotlighting Lisa, Drea, Darlene, and Brian for graciously giving their time to serve on the SIO Proposal team for the 2025 National Storytelling Network (NSN) conference. Thank you, Jim Brulé, for leading the team!



Lisa Hope Tilstra learned the transformative power of storytelling firsthand through sharing pieces of her journey after losing her husband to a brain tumor in 2005. Storytelling was a pivotal part of her path to healing and growth. Many years later, she realized storytelling was missing from her life, so she began to intentionally incorporate storytelling again. This time it helped her overcome depression and a deep stagnation in life. Ever since, story has been a foundational part of her work as a coach and trainer. Lisa has lived in 6 countries, traveled for work and pleasure to over 80 countries, and hopes to continue the trend! Lisa is an avid nature enthusiast, loves to be in the mountains, is a paragliding pilot, and actively seeks out opportunities to test her limits physically and emotionally -- the most recent of which was running 49 miles to celebrate her 49th birthday!

Email: lisatilstra@gmail.com • Web: makelifellessdifficult.com.



Drea Douglas has thrown off the shackles of law firms and now works at the North Bend Public Library on the beautiful southern Oregon Coast (200 miles southwest of Bend). She does not tell as often as she would like but she is getting a name for herself, mostly for storytelling. She is also working on directing community conversations and speaking to other librarians on memory cafes and supporting humane responses to addiction behaviours. Drea typically presents to adult audiences; however, last summer she shared a story about cannibals with children, which elicited excitement from the kids but concern from the camp counselors. Due to this incident, she may not be invited back, thus leaving room in her schedule for potential engagements should you wish to hire her.

Email: drea.douglas@gmail.com



Darlene Richard, known on stage as **Nelda Toñe**, is a captivating storyteller and improviser whose performances leave audiences laughing, crying, and inspired. As a board member of the Texas Storytelling Association (Tejas), she leverages her strong partnership with the Dallas Comedy Club to bring a diverse perspective and a balanced viewpoint to the organization. In 2024, at the Tejas Conference, she conducted the well-attended workshop *Unleashing Creativity: The Power of Improv in Storytelling*. This workshop taught participants how to incorporate spontaneity and authenticity into their narratives. At the 2025 Tejas Storytelling Festival, Darlene served as the emcee for the engaging Storytelling Swap and impressed the audience with her participation in the Liar's Competition, demonstrating her exceptional wit and talent for crafting memorable stories. As an Artist Standing Strong Together (ASST, "assist") mentor she has worked with youth to find their storytelling voice. Nelda Toñe is committed to fostering and sustaining the storytelling community. Having her in your corner means having a storyteller who brings warmth, humor, and authenticity to every moment. She embodies storytelling's magic—one unforgettable story at a time.

Phone: 945-305-0558 • Email: neldatone@gmail.com • Web: neldatone.com



Brian Kokensparger has been involved in the art of storytelling for more than four decades, utilizing various mediums; He is an award-winning playwright, published poet, actor, and director. More recently he shares his stories with Radio Theatre Omaha, a performance group dedicated to telling stories like they did in the golden age of radio but now before a live audience. His day job is serving Creighton University as an associate professor of computer science and a senior associate in Creighton's Center for Faculty Excellence, where he teams up with his organization's human resources division to produce "Better Late Than Ever," a podcast curating the stories told by late-career faculty members as they transition from the "publish or perish" world into the much less stressful "What's next for me?" world. In addition to his bachelor's degree in English, he holds a master's degree in Computer Science and a Ph.D. in Instructional Technology and an M.F.A. in Creative Writing.



REMEMBERING

CYNTHIA CHANGARIS



Cynthia Changaris passed away on Tuesday, February 18th at the age of 76. Cynthia's storytelling, singing, guitar playing, and love of people spread joy to many of us for a long time.

Cynthia was a founding member of the Kentucky Storytelling Association, helping write bylaws and our 501c3 application, organize our first conference and serving on the board from 2004 – 2007. In 2009, she served as the featured teller at the Kentucky Storytelling Conference presenting storytelling concerts and a workshop on telling for preschoolers.

For several years, Cynthia co-produced Tellabration events in Louisville, Kentucky and volunteered at the Corn Island Storytelling Festival, especially in the Yarn Shop where storytellers had the opportunity to tell in an open-mic setting. Many tellers who told at the Yarn Shop were then invited to be featured at the festival based on recommendations from Cynthia and other Yarn Shop committee members who believed in the importance of calling attention to the excellent work of other storytellers.

When she owned a bed and breakfast in Bethlehem, Indiana, she generously made her property available to advance storytelling. She co-created WOW weekends where tellers from all around the country came to work on their work in a group coaching, retreat-style setting. She worked with other storytellers to bring their dream of creating an event devoted to long-form stories into being by hosting Going Deep storytelling weekends. She hosted a national retreat of NSN's Producers and Organizers Special Interest Group. She helped bring numerous storytellers to Kentucky and southern Indiana making it possible for tellers in our area to learn from such storytellers as Donald Davis, Laura Simms, Chuck Larkin, Jim May, Loren Neimi, Doug Lipman and Pam McGrath. Her positive impact on storytelling is immeasurable.

Her service within the world of storytelling did not go unclaimed. The International Order of EARS, producers of the Corn Island Storytelling Festival, presented her with a Volunteer of the Year Award. The National Storytelling Network presented her with a Regional Service and Leadership ORACLE Award.



In addition to supporting the art of storytelling, her own storytelling will long be remembered by all who heard it. From Storytelling Arts of Indiana she won a commission that enabled her to research and tell the story of Dr. Alice Hamilton, a public health reformer who was responsible for many of the OSHA guidelines that today protect the health and safety of workers throughout our country. Her well-received Fringe offering at a National Storytelling Conference used story to look at how we deal with the end of life. Cynthia's background included advanced degrees in nursing so those performances combined her interests in storytelling and health. Cynthia set preschoolers on solid paths to literacy with her storytelling and singing and engaged senior citizens with respect and joy. No age group was beyond the reach of her storytelling and teaching abilities.

In recent years, Cynthia's health declined leaving her unable to continue making the strong impact she had once made, so many of our newer KSA and NSN members are likely unaware of what she gave to this art form we love. She will be greatly missed by her three sons, her three grandchildren, her sisters, her brother, her many nieces, nephews and extended family, her huge number of friends, and the many, many people whose lives she touched. May she rest in peace.

Submitted by **Mary Hamilton**



The GOOD Liars Club XV



Tuesday, May 6, 2024

4:00 AKST / 5:00 PST / 6:00 MST / 7:00 CST / 8:00 EST

February's falsifiers are Alton Chung, Ingrid Nixon, Eva Abram, Roopa Mohan, Anne Rutherford, MC Norm Brecke & perhaps one more.

Register & Support the Storytellers at: anne-norm.com/

Donations are split among the storytellers.

All donors receive a link to watch a recording of the show on demand for up to a month afterwards.

**ADVERTISE IN THIS
NEWSLETTER FOR
FREE!**

Just send your ad to
newsletter@storynet.org
by the 25th of the month.

And also go onto our
website and enter your
even data into our
calendar...which is
reproduced in the monthly
newsletter.

THE HEALING STORY ALLIANCE PRESENTS

KIND STORIES IN CONCERT

LISTEN, SHARE, AND REFLECT ON STORIES
OF KINDNESS GIVEN, KINDNESS RECEIVED

Emcee



DENISE PAGE

**SUNDAY
MAY 4TH**

7-8:30PM EDT

Community Teller



NAZIA JAMAL



SUFIAN ZHEMUKHOV



JASMIN CARDENAS



CHERYL HAMILTON



**Free: Registration Required
Donations Welcome!**

CLICK EVENTS FOR LINKS TO REGISTER



NATIONAL STORYTELLING CALENDAR (CLICK LINKS IN TITLES)

MAY 2025 EVENTS

Storytelling Beyond Words

Emerson College | Forest Row, East Sussex, England RH185JX
Until May 23, 2025

Granite State Story Swap 2025

New Hampshire Storytelling Alliance
May 3, 2025 from 8:00am – 5:00pm EDT
Doris L. Benz Community Center | 18 Heard Road • Sandwich, New Hampshire

The Good Liars Club XV

May 6, 2025 at 4:00 pm ADT/5 PDT/6 MDT/7 CDT/8 EDT
Virtual
Ingrid Nixon, Eva Abrams, Alton Chung, Roopa Mohan & Anne Rutherford stretch the truth. With MC Norm Brecke haiku'ing up the fun. Free Registration & Pay the Tellers at anne-norm.com. Donors receive a link to watch a video of the show on demand afterwards.

Varta: Storytelling Festival

Peerbagh
May 10, 2025 from 10:30 am – 3:00 pm CDT
Austin Public Library | 5125 Convict Hill • Austin, Texas
Award-winning children's writers, Jyoti Rajan Gopal, Reem Faruqi, Meera Sriram will be signing books and talking about them in our creative panel. Poet Neha Rayamajhi and illustrator/writer Natasha Badhiar will have a workshop style event on poetry and art.

The Lusty Month of May

Storytelling.org
May 18, 2025 from 7:00 – 8:30 pm CDT
Virtual
Featuring: Margaret Burk, Kelly Campos, Janice Del Negro, Jane Ogburn Dorfman, Rachel Ann Harding, and Megan Wells. Tickets \$15 or pay what you can, donations welcome!

Voices In The Glen Monthly Story Swap

May 31, 2025 from 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm EDT
Gaithersburg, Maryland
Storytellers and listeners are invited to join Voices in the Glen storytellers for an evening of shared stories. Anyone is welcome to tell a tale; no one ever has to. FREE! Please RSVP to ebnineteen@hotmail.com.

Spirit of Oklahoma Storytelling Festival

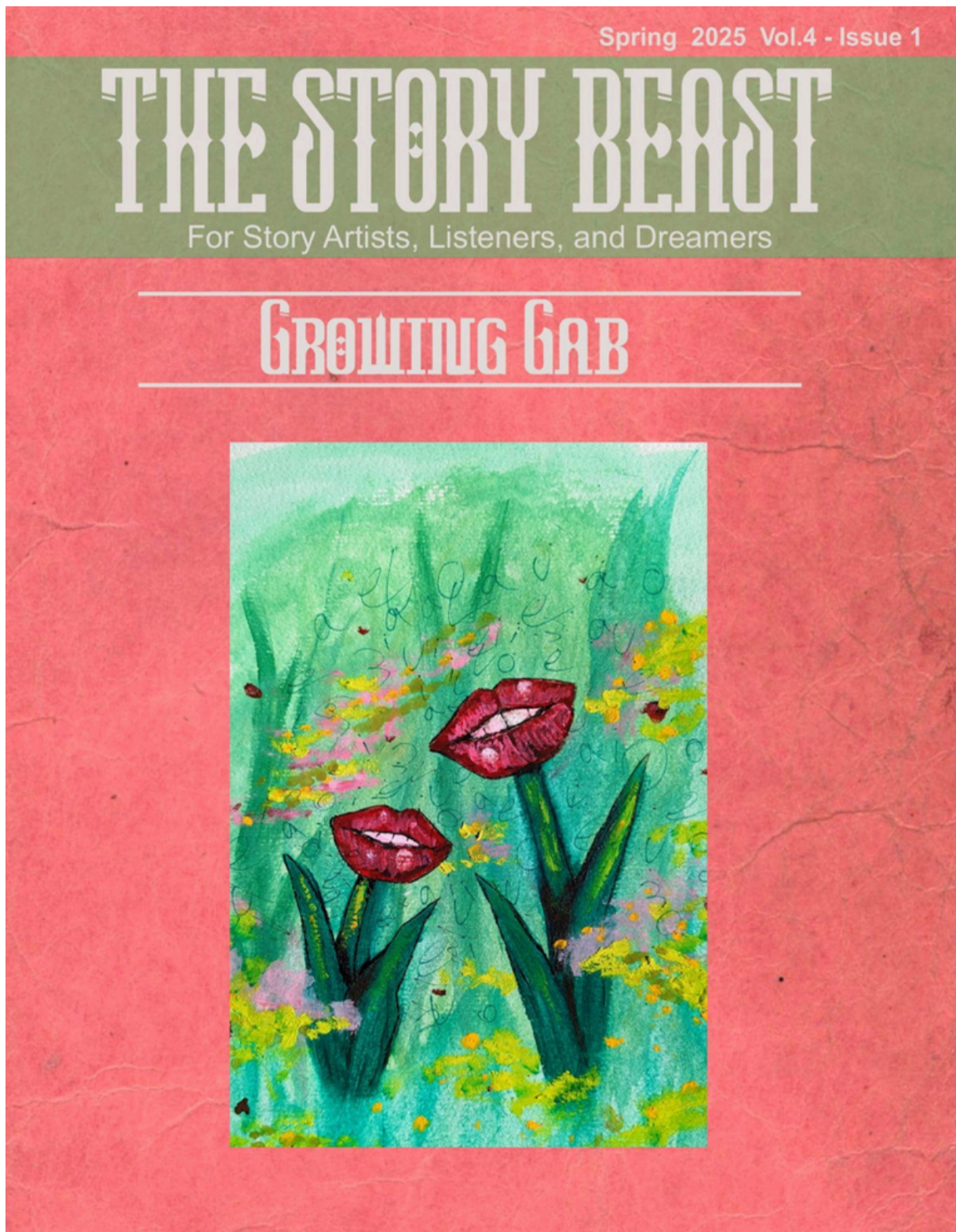
June 13 – 14, 2025
Midwest City, Oklahoma



NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
MAY 2025 NEWSLETTER

Click below to read the **March 2025 Story Beast Issue (Growing Gab)** this month!
Story Beast June 2025 Issue (Sizzling Splendor): Articles and Stories due May 15, 2025

Visit storybeast.org for more.





NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
MAY 2025 NEWSLETTER

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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.