National Storytelling Newsletter

VOLUME 8
ISSUE 10
OCTOBER 2026

PRESIDENT's LETTER

THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU



Caleb Hubbard
President & Chair of the Board of Directors
National Storytelling Network

Last month, I wrote about the importance of listening. I talked about the conversations we started at conference and my hope that those conversations would continue beyond those few days together.

This month, I want to take that idea one step further.

Listening is important, but what we do with what we hear matters just as much.

One of the things I have been thinking about as I begin my time as president is what it means to be an active member of NSN. Sometimes we hear "get involved" and immediately picture serving on a committee, organizing a conference, taking on a leadership position, or volunteering for a major project. Those things are wonderful, but they aren't the only ways to contribute.

Maybe you have an idea for a virtual gathering. Maybe you want to help connect storytellers in your region. Maybe you have a skill you could share with other members. Maybe you have an idea for something NSN could offer that we haven't tried before. Maybe you simply want to show up, meet other storytellers, and see where the conversation takes you.

All of those things matter.

As an organization, we have an opportunity to create more ways for members to participate in the life of NSN. That means not only asking people to volunteer, but also paying attention to what our members are excited about and finding ways to make those ideas possible. And that means I want to repeat something from last month's message:

If you have an idea, tell us.

You don't have to have the entire plan figured out. You don't have to know which committee should handle it. You don't even have to know whether it is possible yet. Start with the idea. Let's have a conversation.

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DID YOU KNOW?

National Storytelling Network Board of Directors meetings are open to all members!

Read minutes and learn how to attend here.

And if you've been thinking about getting involved but haven't found your place yet, reach out. There is a place for you here.

NSN is made up of storytellers with different experiences, interests, backgrounds, skills, and ideas. That variety is one of our greatest resources. The more opportunities we create for those voices to participate, the more possibilities we create for NSN itself.

So this month, I want to encourage you to take one small step. Introduce yourself to someone you haven't met. Join a conversation. Volunteer for something. Share an idea. Ask a question. Reach out to a board member. Find another member whose work interests you and start a conversation.

You don't have to change the whole organization.

Just find one place where you can add your voice.

Then let's see where it takes us.

GET INVOLVED!

HELP NEEDED FOR OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DOT CLEVELAND

And we have a convenient opportunity available beginning this month to contribute a little time to NSN! Our executive director, Dot Cleveland, is seeking some support working on the NSN websit; here is her posting:

Seeking Volunteer for NSN Website

Requires working knowledge of WordPress to assist with event postings, organize library resources, generate SEO listings, and create new pages as needed. 3-4 hours per week. Must have own computer and internet access.

Contact:
Dot Cleveland | NSN Executive Director
dot@storynet.org | 651-703-8191

2027 NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE

MINNEAPOLIS HERE WE COME!



Loren Niemi
Chair, 2027 National Storytelling Conference



Megan Wells
NSN Board Representative to the 2027 Conference Committee

Mark your calendars! NSN and Story Arts of Minnesota invite you to the NSN Conference 2027 in Minneapolis, MN.

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Save the Dates
Pre-Conference: Wednesday, July 14
Conference: Thursday, July 15 – Sunday, July 18

The 2027 Conference Committee, chaired by Loren Niemi, is crafting an engaging event shaped by what NSN members value most: meaningful conversations, diverse storytelling, and opportunities to learn from one another.



What to Expect
This year's conference emphasizes both depth and variety in storytelling:

Master Classes: Full-day sessions offering an intensive dive into storytelling craft.

Storytelling Performances: Hear a variety of local and national voices.

Genre Diversity: The committee encourages all forms of storytelling – traditional, personal, applied, community based – celebrating both the diversity and universality of narrative art.

Poetry Showcase: Poets share story-driven work through their own genre, expanding the range of our spoken-word experiences.

Collecting Your Voice: Through the time-tested practice of Open Space Collection, attendees can propose their own topics for discussion. These sessions foster connection, idea-sharing, project initiatives, and community learning.

Midwest Cultural Tours: Explore local history, culture, and the ways communities adapt to the region's environment through both good and challenging times.

Click on the link to find the tentative Schedule Overview: storynet.org/events/conference

2026 KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM SCHOLAR ESSAY



Jodi French-Burr
2026 Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholar
Vice President, Storytelling Resource Place
Board Member, West Virginia Storytelling Guild

For me the mantra "everyone has a story to tell" always rings true, but being surrounded by such amazing and diverse tellers like those at the 2026 National Storytelling Conference really drove that concept home again. What an honor it was to attend this year's conference as a Kathryn Windham Scholar, helping me explore ways to further not only my work in storytelling but how to support this work throughout our communities.

NSN President Rishi Nixon set the tone for the entire conference from the very beginning, reflecting on what brought us together. It was for our "want to be with others who understand us, … draw on our collective gifts, support … in a safe place to be together." So we leaned into this National Storytelling NETWORK event, finding ways to put ourselves out there and explore the possibilities of storytelling in this community.

For me, I found myself walking two strongly connected paths. One goal was to find more ways to support storytelling in my region, the behind the scenes work of sharing teller resources, events production, community building, and the like. My second goal leaned more personal, exploring ways to express my interest in heritage storytelling.

My volunteer time at this conference met these goals in more ways than one. Being assigned as a "greeter" at several sessions helped me connect with others and see the great and unique forms of telling and related projects throughout our community. My first Fringe began with Ric Vice, who brought tall tales to life with their connections to history. Using music and learning into full character interpretation, Ric's storytelling sample leaned right towards the work I'm starting to build in my own way, blurring the lines between factual history stories and their enhanced folklore.

Heather Forest continued this conversation from a different perspective, exploring family "treasure" tales. She showed us endless possibilities of ways to find our own stories using prompts to spur memories. Plus there were tips on working with others to "mine" their history stories, then how to rehash those tales to improve their composition and performance elements.

Loren Niemi's session took this idea to another level, how to use similar story elements to raise awareness and bring about change in our communities. This struck the cords of universal concepts that people can relate to, and how to weave these ideas into stories for growth and social change.

Another perspective came from Paul Strickland's amazing session on re-upholstering folktales. He walked us through how to make old stories comfortable for people to sit in. A master in the use of metaphor and relatability, Paul's steps in story building create connective tissue with listeners. S.I.T. (Situate/Intrigue/Transport) is one concept that can be applied in big and small ways in stories, helping an audience better understand the tales. Pippa White's session swings back towards the power and challenges of telling true stories of history.

Then there were the amazing and varied samples of storytellers in action throughout this event, with so many inspiring stories and techniques. The connection to our storytelling community was ever present, from S.I.G. sessions, hallway and meals chats, member meetings, to hearing about the work of ORACLE awards winners, all of these elements brought ideas and inspiration to the forefront.

For me, this 2026 NSN conference was everything I hoped it would be. Creativity, skills, and ideas all took center stage, leaning into my goals for this adventure. I'm already putting some of these ideas into action. Thank you for the honor of receiving this Kathryn Windham scholarship, helping me along my road in our storytelling community.

Youth, Educators & Storytellers presents

Angela Lloyd
Sunbrella Award
Fundraising Concert











Co-emcee: Karen Golden & Kevin Cordi

Tellers : Gwendolyn J. Napier, Megan Wells, Milbre Burch, Laura Simms, Adam Mellema, The Whitman Tellers

Saturday October 17 2026

5pm PT 6pm MT 7pm CT 8pm ET

REGISTER

HSA
HEALING STORY ALLIANCE

Presents

SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

OCTOBER 18th

7:00 pm–8:30 pm EDT

FREE!

A Concert & Community Conversation

On Zoom

on Zoom!

Donations Welcome.

Registration Required



Heather Forest



Carrie Sue Ayvar



Howard Lieberman

COMMUNITY TELLERS



Ruth Berson



LaSonya Cromartie

EMCEE
Laura Preiser



Join the Healing Story Alliance for a special gathering to share and explore stories of social justice in action in its many faces and forms. Through folk tales and personal stories, we will dive deeply into multiple experiences of justice in action. The Storytelling concert is followed by a community conversation. A recording of the concert will be made available to all registrants.

REGISTER

NATIONAL STORYTELLING CALENDAR

OCTOBER–NOVEMBER 2026 STORYTELLING EVENTS

Roopa Mohan presents Kasturba Gandhi
October 3, 2026 | 1–2 pm Pacific
Menlo Park Library | 800 Alma St, Menlo Park, California

True Tales Live Storytelling Workshop Series
October 6, 2026 | 7–8:30 pm Eastern
November 10, 2026 | 7–8:30 pm Eastern
truetaleslivenh.org / info@truetaleslivenh.org
VIRTUAL

Storytelling Arts of Indiana Spooky Stories
October 9, 2026 | 7:30–9:30 pm Central
Phoenix Theatre | 705 N Illinois St, Indianapolis, Indiana
HYBRID

Myths retold: The drowned city of Ys
Laura Packer
October 17, 2026 | 7:30–9:30 pm Central
VIRTUAL

Voices in the Glen Story Swap
October 17, 2026 | 7:30–8:30 pm Eastern
VIRTUAL

Hana Baba: Folktales from Sudan
October 18, 2026 | 11–11:45 am Pacific
Menlo Park Library | 800 Alma St, Menlo Park, California

NEW! Southbay Storytellers and Listeners Storytelling Meetup
October 27, 2026 | 6–7:30pm Pacific
Menlo Park Library | 800 Alma St, Menlo Park, California

Laura Packer *Trick or Treat*: An evening of live, online Halloween stories
October 29, 2026 | 7–8:30 pm Central
VIRTUAL

Storyteller John Weaver: Pumpkin Tales
November 5, 2026 | 2:30–3:15 pm Pacific
Menlo Park Library | 800 Alma St, Menlo Park, California

Tellebration: Michigan Bright Water Storytelling Festival
November 7, 2026 | 10:30 am – 10 pm Eastern
Howell Opera House | 123 W Grand River Ave, Howell, Michigan

St. Louis Storytelling Festival
November 8–15, 2026
St. Louis Library District | 1640 S Lindbergh Blvd, St. Louis, Missouri

Menlo Park StoryFest Online!
November 12, 2026 | 8–9:30 pm Central
VIRTUAL

Storytelling Workshop: The Enchanting World of "Once Upon a Time"
November 15, 2026 | 1–3 pm Pacific
Menlo Park Library | 800 Alma St, Menlo Park, California

Jeff Gere: True Supernatural Tales of Hawaii
November 16, 2026 | 6:30–7:30 pm Pacific
Menlo Park Library | 800 Alma St, Menlo Park, California

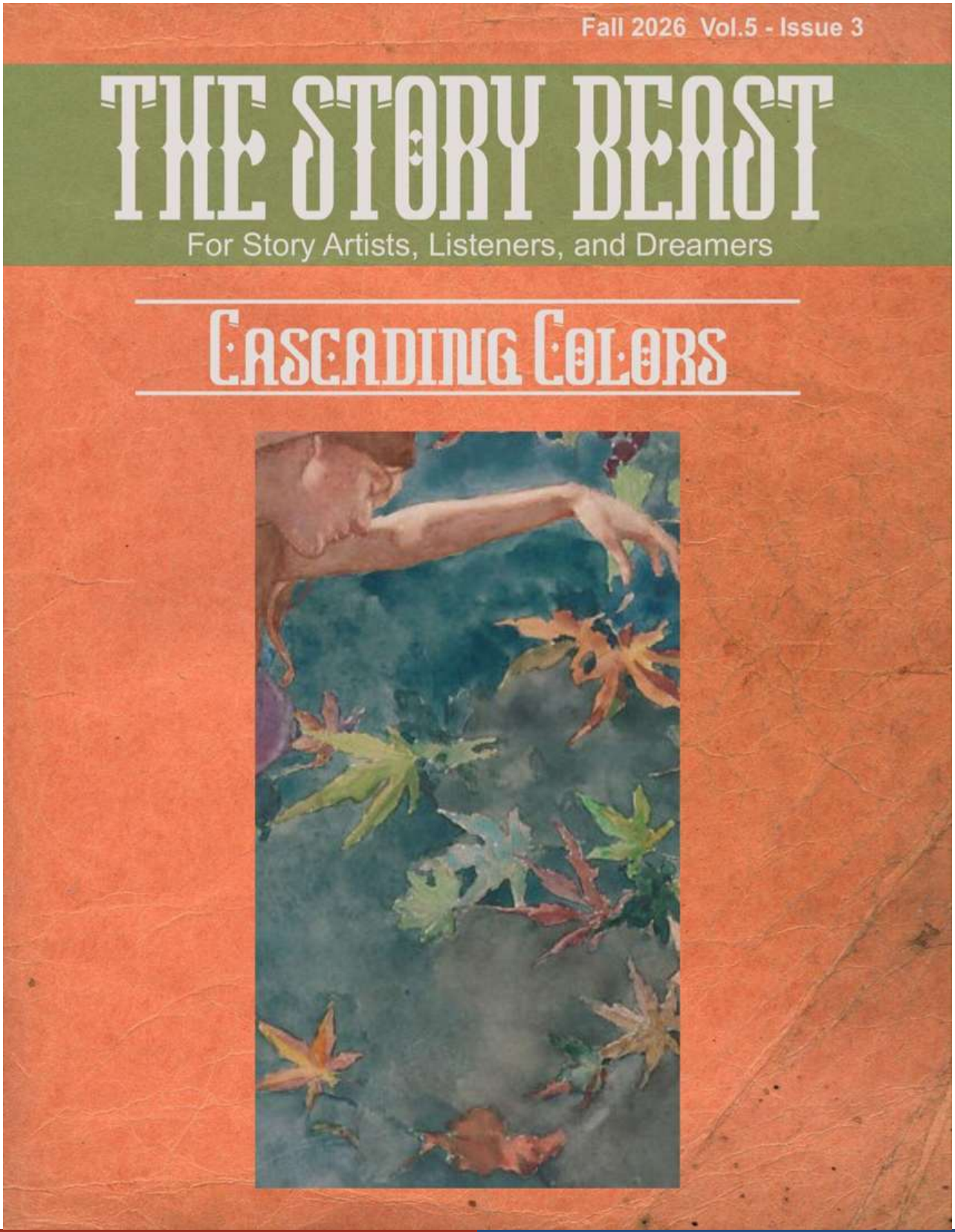
Tellabration: Menlo Park Storytelling Festival
November 21, 2026 | 1–3 pm Pacific
Menlo Park Library | 800 Alma St, Menlo Park, California

True Tales Live Storytelling Show "Regrets"
November 24, 2026 7–8:15 pm Eastern
To perform, email info@truetaleslivenh.org
VIRTUAL

THE STORY BEAST

Click the cover below to read the Summer 2026 Story Beast issue: *Cerulean Sighs*.

Visit storybeast.org for submission information.



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HOW TO CONTRIBUTE CONTENT:

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.