



Voices from the Prairie

A publication of Humanities Iowa • Winter 2024



Homemade Samosas

by Tanya Rastogi, Iowa Student Poet Ambassador

Voices from the Prairie

Winter 2024

About Voices from the Prairie

Voices from the Prairie is published annually by Humanities Iowa and distributed to its friends and interested Iowans.

Voices from the Prairie Contents

- A Letter from the President... 3
- 2023-2024 Board Involvement... 4
- Jan Warren Interview... 5
- Evolution of Langauge Poem... 6
- Iowa Student Poet Ambassador... 7
- Prime Time Reading... 7
- CultureALL... 8-9
- Timeless Journeys... 10-11
- What Humanities Iowa Leaders Say... 12
- Statement of Activity... 12
- Grants Awarded... 13
- Donors 2023-24... 14

Cover: Homemade Samosas by Tanya Rastogi; Iowa Student Poet Ambassador. An imitation of restaurant photography, 'Homemade Samosas' depicts a comforting South Asian dish in a nostalgic light.

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Find news and information on speakers, grants, and ways to get involved with Humanities Iowa on our website:

www.humanitiesiowa.org



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Humanities Iowa Mission Statement

The mission of Humanities Iowa is to promote understanding and appreciation of the people, communities, cultures, and stories of importance to Iowa and the nation.

Join other Iowans and support Humanities Iowa. Donations are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law. Humanities Iowa also accepts gifts of stock or securities. To make a donation or receive more information, please contact our office at 319-335-4149 or info@humanitiesiowa.org or visit our website: www.humanitiesiowa.org.

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Letter from the President

Dear Friends and Supporters of Humanities Iowa,

As President of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to introduce this issue of Voices from the Prairie. Humanities Iowa (HI) has produced this publication annually for over 20 years, and this issue celebrates youth!

In the upcoming pages (and on the cover), you will find poems and artwork by the current Iowa Student Poet Ambassador Tanya Rastogi, an interview with one of the co-founders of the Iowa Student Poet Ambassador program Jan Warren, as well as updates on the growth on both our multi-generational storytelling project Timeless Journeys and our interactive, family-oriented storytelling program Prime Time. We are particularly excited that this issue shares the amazing work that so many youth are doing and inspiring.

These programs are just part of the vibrant programming Humanities Iowa has supported across the state—programming that includes new additions to our Speakers Series. Alongside opportunities such as “Women of Warmth, Wisdom and War: Images of Native American Women in Westerns” and “Ukraine 101,” community groups across Iowa had the chance to request such new topics as “AI and the Human Future” and a series of unique story-sharing experiences through a program called “Open Book.” In “Open Book, produced by the Iowa-based group CultureALL, Iowans from a variety of faiths, countries, sexualities, disabilities, and many other identities describe their defining moments and then encourage attendees to share their stories. Interested in exploring the range of topics in our Speakers Series? Please visit the list here <https://loom.ly/RzfyBHQ>.

In 2024, Humanities Iowa continues to evolve and reach across the state. HI funded over 140 public programs and partnerships to reach 250,000 Iowans and engaged more than 350 community volunteers. HI grants supported everything from public conversations around democracy to an Umoⁿhoⁿ language preservation project to a literacy project in Tabor. In addition, we welcome many new board members who come from a range of backgrounds and leadership positions, including professors from small liberal arts colleges and the state's Regent Universities; leaders in statewide museum and historical society networks; coordinators of youth programs; and local cultural organizations dedicated to diversity. I encourage you to look at the bios of these exciting and dedicated individuals who bring incredible leadership, creativity, and heart to HI's work.

Lastly, I leave you with what Humanities Iowa envisions as the work of the humanities: the lifting up of CULTURES, CONNECTIONS, and COMMUNITY. I hope the articles in this issue—and ideally also the HI programming you experienced this year—opened doors to new cultures, connections, and community for you.

Warm regards,

Linda Shenk
Board President, Humanities Iowa

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Iowa State University



Christine Shea
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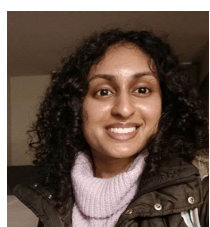
Bill Friedrichs
Professor Emeritus of History, former director of
the Iowa History Center, Simpson College



Jan Warren
Community Engagement Manager,
University of Iowa



Gaye Shannon Burnett
Co-founder,
Azubuike African American Council
for the Arts



Tanya Rastogi
Iowa Student Poet Ambassador

‘Humanities Iowa has conducted programming and made efforts to reach out to diverse populations and has been especially sensitive to making sure that residents of small and rural communities, which make up so much of the state, enjoy the benefits of quality humanities programming.’ ‘No other organization in the state can boast the long history, demonstrated success, and range of participants and supporters—as presenters, participants, and leaders—in the humanities than Humanities Iowa.’ - Thomas Dean, PhD (member of Humanities Iowa Speakers Bureau)

Jan Warren

Humanities Iowa Board Member

You are tasked with doing community engagement at the University of Iowa. Can you share examples of how the arts and humanities have influenced your work?

The arts and humanities have been central to my career since I first moved to Iowa to teach music in public schools. Over the years, I’ve collaborated with local arts organizations, established art and writing residencies for talented high school students nationwide, and developed the Iowa Student Poet Ambassador program. Now, in my role at the Office of Community Engagement, I’m fortunate to offer community-engaged workshops for graduate students in the arts and humanities.



PHOTO: PUBLIC SPACE ONE

THIS IS FROM MY FIRST YEAR SEMINAR “BEYOND VOLUNTEERING: CHANGING YOUR WORLD THROUGH COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT”. AS PART OF THE SEMINAR, WE VISIT NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS WHO SERVE AS COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR MANY UNIVERSITY OF IOWA FACULTY AND STUDENTS. THIS PICTURE IS AT PUBLIC SPACE ONE IN IOWA CITY.

What do you find most rewarding about your work?

Community engagement is a collaborative



PHOTO: ISPA

THE ISPA PARTNERS WITH THE CURRENT (VINCE GOTERA) AND PREVIOUS (DEB MARQUART) IOWA POET LAUREATES ALONG WITH THE CURRENT (TANYA RASTOGI) AND PREVIOUS (LOLA NAKASHIMA-BROOKE) IOWA STUDENT POET AMBASSADORS.

process that brings people together to address issues impacting their quality of life. It can take many forms—from tackling social and environmental challenges to building partnerships in the arts and humanities. At its heart, community engagement is about building meaningful relationships and empowering communities to create lasting change together.

What inspired the creation of the Iowa Student Poet Ambassadors program?

In January 2021, we were all swept up in the excitement that echoed across the country after Amanda Gorman’s reading of “The Hill We Climb” at President Biden’s inauguration. That poem, that moment, and that poet became the inspiration behind the Iowa Student Poet Ambassador program.

Could you tell us about Tanya’s role and young students’ involvement in this program?

All Iowa Student Poet Ambassadors are dedicated to a year of service, validating and supporting the voices of young people in Iowa, and raising awareness of the literary arts. With support from the State Library of Iowa, Tanya joined the All Iowa Reads program, interviewing award-winning authors online for summer reading programs across the state. She was also a featured poet at Poetry on the

Prairie in Perry, hosted by the Iowa Poetry Association, and shared her work at the UNESCO City of Literature’s Poetry in Public during the Iowa City Book Festival. In November, Tanya was again a featured poet at Mic Check Poetry Fest, hosted by Iowa City Poetry. Needless to say, she is having an exciting year in her role as ISPA!

You are a music aficionado, who is your favorite musician, and what’s a go-to playlist you enjoy listening to?

While I wouldn’t call myself an aficionado, I genuinely love a wide range of music. Just looking at my recent playlist, there’s Brandi Carlile, Chaka Khan (who I recently saw in concert!), a few Chopin nocturnes, and some Italian opera. I’d say that’s about as wide a mix as you can get!

Visit for more information:
<https://engagement.uiowa.edu/ispa>

CULTURE ALL

VALUING THE CULTURES OF OUR COMMUNITY

CultureALL's Open Book project is a story-sharing experience in which "Books" are people. They come from a variety of experiences, faiths, countries, sexualities, and ability statuses to share a chapter from their lives. Open Book brings together people who might not normally talk with one another in a safe space to explore topics that might not normally be talked about. The small-group setting is a space where people can listen, join in a welcoming conversation, and build community.

Open Book conversations are more than just a presentation; they're an invitation to step out of our familiar circles and explore new realities with real people, free of judgment, and without any agenda.

Open Book JJ Kapur underscores the importance of getting to know those who may not be like us. "Curiosity can feel uncomfortable because before we can exercise curiosity, we must exercise another muscle that is painful to stretch: vulnerability. My experiences growing up as a Sikh in Iowa have taught me that there is an essential link between curiosity and openness."

Humanities Iowa funding has made it possible for Open Book conversations to be held around the state, from Elk Horn to Knoxville, Lisbon

to Waterloo. In the first year of funding, Humanities Iowa provided 10 Open Book programs to statewide nonprofits. In the second year of funding, Humanities Iowa is offering 38 programs to Iowans.

While Open Book makes it possible to know "the other," the conversations that arise help participants look inward at their own lives, too. This is a necessary step before building bridges. By becoming "story listeners," participants see and hear others, and in doing so, connect to the broader human experience.

Des Moines resident Katie Overby-Gibson gifted four registrations to local nonprofits, including two schools. "Open Book is a beautiful way to celebrate the essence of what it means to be human—we all have stories to share. At a time when listening outside our own bubbles is increasingly rare, Open Book brings powerful and personal stories that connect, bridge and inspire. Open Book is precisely the kind of programming the world needs."

While many of the Books live in the Des Moines area, CultureALL is expanding the catalog for state-wide representation. Doing so will provide Iowans with more tools to navigate the ever-increasing diversity of our state by amplifying a range of voices.

Andrew Hoppman, Lied Public Library Director, hosted an Open Book program at the library. Afterwards CultureALL staff trained Clarinda residents to become Books. Hoppman then hosted a program for the community featuring the newly trained Clarinda Books.

"It's crucial for communities to collaborate with organizations like CultureALL to introduce and bring in diverse speakers and programs. More importantly, initiatives like Open Book empower communities and individuals to discover and share their own voices both locally and statewide." Hoppman said.

Scan the QR Code or Visit <https://www.cultureall.org/open-book> to learn more



Photo: CultureALL

Experience storytelling, dialogue, and authentic personal connection.

Bring Open Book to your community with the help of Humanities Iowa.

True to the mission of CultureALL and Humanities Iowa, Open Book programs promote understanding and appreciation of the people, communities, cultures, and stories of importance to Iowa and the nation. Interested in learning more? Contact karen@cultureall.org. Each Humanities Iowa Open Book program consists of two Books and one CultureALL staff member. Each program costs \$100. Host organizations can have up to two Open Book programs per fiscal year (Nov. 1 - Oct. 31). There are more than 50 Books in the [Open Book Catalog](#) from which to select.

Timeless Journeys

Humanities Iowa in partnership with TheatreUNI, Western Home Communities and Fortepan Iowa presented Timeless Journeys devised by TheatreUNI students through their work with the Western Home residents.


Using historical images of Iowa life drawn from UNI's Fortepan Iowa photographic portal, students from the Department of Theatre at UNI applied "Creative Care" practices with older adults at the Western Home community, including adults aging typically and those aging with dementia or cognitive decline, to create stories based on inspired by the pictorial images.

Creative Care is an innovative method for interacting with older loved ones, especially those experiencing dementia, that encourages imagination and collaborative storytelling using visual prompts. Students were trained in Creative Care methods and worked together with older adults to craft an original theatrical production that grew from those experiences. Designed to highlight the creative life of older adults; this project shows how intergenerational collaboration can result in stories that are funny, sad, poignant and powerful.

A public performance showcasing the magic that happens when people, funding, story, inspiration, empathy, compassion, and social interaction work in combination to enlarge the human experience was held on the UNI campus, the Windhaven Assisted Living Center and the Diamond Event Center at the Western Home in Cedar Falls.



Photo: TheatreUNI students create documentary "Timeless Journeys."

'I've been at the university for nearly 30 years and, as the director of community engagement, have witnessed many programs and events that impact students while advancing their learning, and enhances the community, however after attending the performance, Timeless Journeys, I shared with many I think it was the most impactful hour in my teaching career at UNI.' 
– Julianne Gassman (University of Northern Iowa)



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Statement of Activity

for the year ended October 31, 2024

REVENUES	UNRESTRICTED	TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	TOTAL
Grant income	54,736	0	54,376
Gifts & membership	11,406	7,000	18,406
Dividends & interest	0	0	0
Fees	21,397	0	21,397
Net Assets released	0	0	0
Total Revenues	92,056	7,000	99,056
Unrealized gain on investments	24,358		24,358
Functional Expenses			
Program Services	380,545	0	380,545
Management & general	54,675	0	54,675
Fundraising, newsletter	6,416	0	6,416
Total Expenses	441,636		441,636
Increase in Net Assets for the year	(325,222)		(325,222)
Net Assets—Beginning of Year	692,702	250,000	942,702
Net Assets—End of Year	367,480	257,000	624,480

What Humanities Iowa Leaders Say...

‘Since its inception in 1971, Humanities Iowa has played an indispensable role within the state of Iowa through its support of programming that endeavors to raise up unheard voices; shine a light on our rich, diverse and sometimes silenced histories; create occasions for frank, open, and civil dialogue about our past and future; and elevate our rhetoric by introducing new ideas, scholarly complexity, and nuance into our statewide conversations.’

-Debra Marquart (Iowa Poet Laureate)

‘Humanities Iowa has remained a valued partner in our funding efforts over the years, always available to meet with us to guide us through the annual grant application process. The process remains simple to navigate, and the Humanities Iowa digital portal offers helpful information at each step.’

– Sue Woody (Des Moines Public Library)

‘Having worked closely with Humanities Iowa, I have witnessed firsthand their dedication and their ability to leverage resources effectively to maximize impact.’

– Lindsay Buehler (Hawkeye Community College)

Grants Awarded

2023-2024

CEDAR FALLS

- University of Northern Iowa

DAVENPORT

- Great Sounds Promotions

DES MOINES

- Iowa Poetry Association

- Drake University

DUBUQUE

- Clarke University

INDIANOLA

Simpson College

IOWA CITY

- CARTHA

- University of Iowa

SIoux CITY

- Art Center Association of Sioux City

TABOR

- Tabor Public Library

Council Conducted Partnerships

2023-2024

POMEROY

Pomeroy Historical Society

DAVENPORT

Azubuike African American Council for the Arts

SIoux CITY

Siouxland Public Media

Project

Historical Society Restoration

Umo ho Living Language Program

River of Resilience

TOTAL

Partnership

\$3,000

\$5,000

\$2,500

\$10,500

Award

Iowa Corridor Sangeet

\$5,000

Out of The Archive Film Series: Envisioning Blackness

\$5,000

2024 PoetryPalooza!

\$10,000

Tim Olson Exhibit

\$5,000

We've Come a Long Way, Ladies

\$2,700

Transhumanism, Immortality, and Religion

\$3,000

Lunch & Learn

\$2,000

Redlined Waterloo: A Legacy of Trees

\$2,525

Religion and Science Weekend Lecture 2024

\$1,441

Black History Month Celebration 2024

\$3,000

TOTAL

\$39,666

Gaye Shannon Burnett

Azubuike African American Council for the Arts

‘Humanities Iowa’s funding helped make this project possible and ensured that our voices were included in broader conversations about environmental conservation and historical recognition. Their commitment to accessibility and inclusivity means that marginalized communities like ours can contribute to shaping a more equitable and sustainable future.’

Donors 2023-2024

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 Kelly Baum
 Marilyn Baszczynski
 Violet Banker
 Susan Berger
 Gretta Berghammer
 Constance Berman
 Sheila Borg
 Williard Boyd (III) (†)
 Suanna & Chett Breed
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 Eldon & Mary Snyder
 David Spencer
 Marjorie Stone
 Larry Stone
 Claudia Streeter
 Cynthia Sweet
 Mauel & Elizabeth Villafana
 Charlene & Mark Vukovich
 Michael Welsh
 Gail Zlatnik

Grants Received
 Prairie Meadows
 State Historical Society, Inc.
 Variety - the Children’s Charity



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Photo: Laura Schultz accepting the 2024 Variety grant for our Prime Time Family Reading Program

Donate today!
www.humanitiesiowa.org

‘Humanities Iowa is making it possible for libraries and other institutions across the state to bring this high-quality programming to their communities.’
 – Elizabeth Hoover de Galvez (Lisbon Public Library)

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