



A Place for Words in Taos

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025





## 2025 SOMOS Board of Directors & Staff

### **Susan Mihalic** | President

Susan Mihalic is the author of *Dark Horses* (Scout Press, 2021), a critically acclaimed novel about an equestrian prodigy who is trapped in an abusive relationship with her Olympian father. The book received starred reviews from Booklist, Library Journal, Kirkus, and Publishers Weekly, which also boxed its review, and made numerous must-read lists (O Magazine, Country Living, Parade, Library Journal, Goop, Bustle, and other publications). A long-time resident of Taos, Susan holds a B.A. in journalism and straight out of college was hired by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, where she was quickly promoted to associate editor. She has volunteered at SOMOS in the youth mentorship program and facilitator of National Novel Writing Month write-ins. She is working on her next novel.

### **Lisa Garza** | Vice President

Lisa's most recent position was as Head Librarian at the Taos Public Library. Before moving to Taos she served in many academic positions including Associate Dean of the College of Education and Social Sciences at West Texas A & M University, a Department Head of Sociology at Regis University and Women's Studies as well as being an associate professor at both Universities. Additionally, she has published many scholarly articles and delivered professional presentations over the course of her career from 1991 to the present.

### **Baksim Goddard** | Treasurer

Baksim's career of thirty years has been in data processing and software development for the financial industry. She participated in many leadership development programs as well as attended many training seminars on leadership style, team building, world-class service, and creative problem solving. Having moved to New Mexico eight years ago, she has completed two terms at a non-profit board in Santa Fe.

### **Courtenay Miles** | Board Member

Courtenay Miles studied English Literature at Tulane then did post-graduate work in Europe as an IBM Watson Fellow in Theater Directing. She began her career as a stage manager for professional theater and large live events until moving to Los Angeles to complete the Directors' Guild Producer Training Plan. She then worked as an Assistant Director in film and TV for 20 years. In 2017, she began writing for Netflix's series *Mindhunter* where she became Head Writer and Executive Producer for Season 2 of the series. Since then, she has written two feature films, *The Unforgivable*, *Evil Genius* and is currently developing a television series based on six historical novels. She is eager to be a part of SOMOS' work with the Taos community and hopes to bring her experience in the craft of screenwriting to enrich support of all literary arts in Taos.

### **Alan Macrae** | Ex-Officio Board Member

Alan has served on the SOMOS board since 2005; as president of the Board from 2005-2019 and as at-large member until 5/2022.

### **Chipper Thompson** | Board Member

Robert Evan Corey (Chipper) Thompson grew up surrounded by great art, music, and writing all his life, and encouraged by his artist father to draw, paint, write, and play music on his own. Although he studied journalism in college and initially aspired to be a professional novelist, he became enamored of the bass, guitar, and mandolin. Thompson moved in 1992 to the famous art colony of Taos, New Mexico.

Chipper's books include: *Homefields: The Art of Lanford Monroe*; *The Substance of Things Hoped For*; and *The Right-Reverend-Colonel's Elemental Coloring Book*.

### **Kayla Platoff** | Board Member

As a lover of all things literary, Kayla is thrilled to join the SOMOS Board. Since graduating with a BA in English in 2018, she has served in various roles in academic and public libraries. She made the big move to beautiful Taos, NM in 2022 from the St. Louis area, settling into her role as Library Information Specialist at the UNM-Taos branch library. While on the Board, Kayla hopes to support SOMOS in its quest to nurture the arts and share their love of literature with the community.

### **Staff**

**Jan Smith** | Executive Director

**Lauren Green** | Administrative Assistant

**Isobel O'Hare** | Administrative Assistant

**Danielle Freeman** | Volunteer Bookshop Manager

And gratitude to our front desk volunteers and our behind-the-scenes book dusters, sorters, and shelvees who keep our bookshop in operation!

Leslie Bishop, Miles Kimber, Michael Blevins, Sarah Stitt, Kathy Claunch, Terry Patton, Pat Smith, Sandy Tonneson, Danielle Reyes, Emily Moore, Sky Roshay, Sally Blair, Linda Naranjo-Huebl, Niko Sherman, Linda Fair, & Dami Roelse.

Dear SOMOS Members:

Thank you for your continuing patronage! Support takes many forms—financial donations, volunteering, and attending events, to name a few. SOMOS is fortunate to enjoy every type of support from our members. Many, many of you have contributed in some way to SOMOS in the past year, and we appreciate every one of you.

We count 2025 as a successful year, albeit not without some challenges. Governmental funding through the New Mexico Humanities Department was terminated since the national agency has suffered their own terminations of both funding and staff. New Mexico Arts funding through the National Endowment for the Arts is still available but at a greatly reduced amount. Executive Director Jan Smith continues to work tirelessly to research and apply for funding from private foundations and civic organizations, such as the Lions Club, which made a donation earmarked for the Young Writers Program.

Your donations not only help make up for the loss of government grants but also enable us to continue our mission by offering readings and other events that are free and open to the public. Your patronage of our bookshop, which is most capably curated by volunteer Danielle Freeman, is a steady source of income throughout the year. Additionally, we rented our spare office suite to a retail shop, which has a two-year lease.

We have conducted several fundraisers this year, most recently a private reception and a ticketed reading with noted author Hampton Sides. Among other notables who read at SOMOS this year were memoirist, playwright, and poet Nick Flynn; mystery novelist Anne Hillerman; and Irish poet Rachel Coventry. Rachel also offered a workshop on the nature of poetry, while storyteller and poet Olivia Romo led a “Tiny Poems Big Gratitude” workshop for young writers. Taos poet laureate Miguel Santistevan, who spearheaded a zine project with young writers, concludes his two-year appointment on December 31.

In July, the Taos Writers Conference was well attended, with a keynote speech by Nick Flynn held at the Harwood Museum’s Auditorium to accommodate attendance. Both the keynote address and faculty readings as well as lunchtime craft talks were free and open to the public. The Harwood is not the only nonprofit entity that SOMOS has partnered with in the past year; we extend our thanks to Taos Center for the Arts, the Lions Club, the Taos Community Foundation, the Santa Fe Community Foundation, and the Talpa Community Center, which hosted our successful 2025 Storytelling Festival.

In all, 2025 was a busy and productive year for SOMOS. For a sneak peek at 2026, visit [somostaos.org](http://somostaos.org).

Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,  
Susan Mihalic, President, Board of Directors

## SOMOS 2025 13<sup>th</sup> Annual April Poetry Month

The 2025 SOMOS Poetry month featured twenty local and regional poets (eight of which were youth poets from the Young Writers Program); a visiting poet, Rachel Coventry, from Galway, Ireland; a poetry craft workshop taught by Coventry, and several poets who had never read their work at SOMOS, including Trier Ward from Albuquerque, and Eleanor Kedney from Arizona and Connecticut.



*Rachel Coventry, poet from Galway, Ireland*

The Young Writers night on 4/24/25 presented eight young poets (ages 11-15) reading from poems they have been writing since September '24 with the support of the Young Writers Program curator, Susan Mihalic. Other readings were presented by Bill Nevins (*Light Bending*), spoken word poet, Trier Ward, Alan Macrae, (*Hermit's Kingdom*), Beth Enson (*A Bee in the Sheets*), Jean Nordhaus (*Music of Being* -her 9th collection of poetry), Leslie Ullman (*Unruly Tree* – her 7th collection of poetry, and book of craft essays), Sawnie Morris (New Issues Poetry Prize winner of *Her, Infinite*, and a chapbook, *The Sound a Raven Makes*), Andrea Watson (*Blood Secrets: Glimpses into the Hidden Lives of the Conversos*), and Veronica Golos (*Girl, Rootwork, Vocabulary of Silence* and *A Bell Buried Deep*).



*Young Writers Night at  
SOMOS, 2025*

Submitted by Curator, Jan Smith



## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Taos Writers Conference, 7/25-7/27/2025



Nick Flynn

From Friday, July 25th through Sunday, July 27th, 2025, SOMOS presented the 9th Annual Writers Conference with over twenty workshops in every genre (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, memoir, short stories & playwriting). Our featured keynote speaker/reader and instructor was Nick Flynn, (writer, playwright, poet) who has published twelve books, most recently *This Is the Night Our House Will Catch Fire* (2020), a hybrid memoir; and *Stay: threads, collaborations, and conversations* (2020), which documents twenty-five years of his collaborations with artists, filmmakers, and composers. He is also the author of five collections of poetry, including *I Will Destroy You* (2019). He has been awarded fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the Library of Congress and is on the creative writing faculty at the University of Houston. His acclaimed memoir, *Another Bullshit Night in Suck City* (2004), was made into a film starring Robert

DeNiro, and has been translated into fifteen languages. Flynn delivered the keynote speech and reading at SOMOS on Friday, July 25th, at 5:30PM. Conference students attended free as part of their tuition. He taught a three-hour workshop on Saturday morning from 9AM – Noon on “Poetry as Bewilderment.”

Other faculty included Jamie Figueroa, Susan Mihalic, Connie Josefs, Veronica Golos, Aaron Abeyta, EJ Levy, Helen Rynaski, Sharon Oard Warner, Sheila Carter-Jones, Naomi Wax, Jean-Marie Saporito, Linda Michel-Cassidy, Radha Marcum, Allegra Huston, David Perez, Sallie Bingham, and Chelsea Jackson. Some of the titles of their workshops include Writing Western Fiction, The Art of the Poetry manuscript, The Persona Poem, and Revision for Prose Writers. There were options to attend live workshops or online via Zoom. Five hour Friday intensive workshops, weekend (Saturday and Sunday) workshops three-hour block of time offered three live workshops and two on Zoom to accommodate instructors and students from outside New Mexico.

New in 2025 was the inclusion of a buffet lunch available for \$10 which many students appreciated so that there was more time for the lunch break from 12-2PM, and the chance to attend the lunch round table discussions on Self-Publishing and Publishing an anthology of Short Stories.

Attendance at the annual writers' conference remained consistent with previous years, a total of seventy-six attendees over the course of three days.

Submitted by Jan Smith

## 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Storytelling Festival, October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Humans are programmed to respond to, create, and enjoy stories. Stories have always been part of our culture and continue to thrive – especially oral storytelling. Whether stories are mostly true or exaggerated for dramatic effect they connect us to universal themes of joy, sorrow, humor, loss, and love. An annual fall tradition, SOMOS' Taos Storytelling Festival, was presented over the entire day, Saturday, October 11th, 2025, with three distinct events.

The morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> began with a two-hour storytelling workshop facilitated by our featured teller, Eldrena Douma. Storytelling was a way of life in Eldrena's upbringing. She grew up in New Mexico and Arizona among the Pueblo tribes of the Laguna, Tewa & Hopi. Activities with family and friends included listening to songs and stories. Eldrena pursued and obtained her master's degree in Elementary and Early Childhood education to impact the lives that surrounded her. Her experiences as a public-school teacher and her unique Native upbringing benefited her tremendously as she began her next journey as a professional storyteller, author, and workshop presenter. In 1993, she was encouraged to teach through storytelling about her life experiences, sharing the history of the Pueblos and their contributions to our country. Eldrena travels the country offering captivating stories, a variety of recorded music, and historical accounts from Native American tribes. For example, a story presentation, "Bison, Bison," gives insight into the history of the bison. A workshop, "Creative Spirit," focuses on imagination, listening, and story crafting using creative thinking. A lecture, "Nampeyo, Her Legacy," showcases her revival of Hopi pottery. In 2014, the Tejas Storytelling Association awarded Eldrena with the state's prestigious John Henry Faulk Award for her significant contribution to the art of storytelling in the Southwest.



In her workshop titled; "Creating Stories Quickly," participants constructed a story, first in a group then individually that has never been told, written, or read. Simple techniques and inexpensive tools/props were provided.

Using one's imagination for quick creative thinking helps develop a written story. The goal of this training was to challenge the participants to think quickly and creatively in a brief period to write a basic story.

In the afternoon from 2-3:30PM a free Community StorySwap was held at Hacienda Martinez on 708 Hacienda Way, Taos, NM, in the courtyard. The session was facilitated by Celinda Reynolds Kaelin, who is a Cherokee grandmother and has dedicated her life to the healing of the Sacred Hoop and follows the Lakota spiritual traditions as Pipe Carrier and a Sun Dancer.



Later that evening at 6PM the main storytelling event happened at the Talpa Community Center (our fourth year at TCC), 4 Archuleta Road, Ranchos de Taos, NM with featured tellers Eldrena Douma, Celinda Reynolds Kaelin, Sage Vogel and musician, Chuy Martinez. A traditional Northern New Mexican dinner of posole, chile, tortillas, salsa, guacamole, and an assortment of beverages and desserts were offered to all attendees.

### Celinda Reynolds Kaelin



Celinda Reynolds Kaelin is a poet, author, lecturer, and ethnohistorian who is privileged to work and study with Indigenous Elders and spiritual leaders from over seventy First Nations. She is a member of the World Council of Elders, and has traveled extensively with these traditional spiritual Elders, performing Earth healing ceremonies in North and South America. Kaelin is adjunct professor at Colorado College, and is the author of six books, including, *Journey Song: A Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian* (Four

Directions, 1998), *Pikes Peak Backcountry* (Caxton, 1999), *American Indians of the Pikes Peak Region* (Arcadia, 2008), and *Ute Legends* (Caxton, 2017).

Celinda is a Cherokee grandmother who has dedicated her life to the healing of the Sacred Hoop and follows the Lakota spiritual traditions as a Pipe Carrier and a Sun Dancer. She has completed fifteen Sun Dances with the Lakota. She is proud to be an adopted member of both the Lakota Nation and the Ute Nation.

### Sage Vogel



Sage Vogel is a lifelong storyteller and bilingual wordsmith. He is the author of the short story collection *Dichos en Nichos* published by UNM Press, and the underground magical realism epic *El Ocio*.

He is based in northern New Mexico and resides in a compound of melting adobe ruins called Babilonia, which is under perpetual reconstruction. His debut story collection invites readers into the heart of a “proverbial” 1950s Northern New Mexico village, where the fruit orchards, arroyo roads, adobe homes, and even pigsties hold tales of wit, romance, woe, and wisdom.

*Dichos en Nichos* contains ten interconnected stories inspired by original dichos—pithy folk sayings and proverbs. Vogel’s *dichos*—presented in Spanish and English—are shared among a colorful cast of characters. The *dichos* offer guidance, caution, and comfort as the townsfolk navigate themes of identity, community, loss, and love. From tales of sacrifice and survival to those of intimacy and independence, each story is a testament to the strength and resilience of the human spirit.

## Chuy Martinez



Chuy Martinez is a skilled musician and natural storyteller who has performed all over New Mexico. He grew up all over the United States as a migrant farm worker and became part of the United Farm Workers Union. Chuy was inspired by the work Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta - Mexican American civil rights activists who struggled for change - were doing in the 1960s and 70s. The Chicano Movement called itself La Causa (The Cause) and was most active in New Mexico, Colorado, Texas, and California. Chuy Martinez brings the music and history alive in the stirring songs learned in migrant camps and meetings.

The event was emceed by local storyteller, Cisco Guevara, who started off the evening with a story.



*Cisco Guevara*

Submitted by Jan Smith



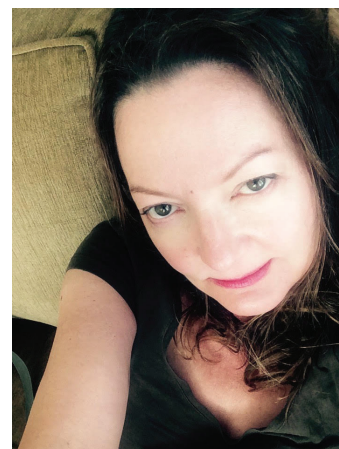
## Heritage Reading Series – LGBTQ+ Month, June 2025

SOMOS hosted its fourth year of LGBTQ+ Heritage readings during the nationally celebrated LGBTQ+ month in June. Readers included poet, Tori Cárdenas, (*Portraits as Animal: poems by Victoriano Cárdenas*), novelist Amy Boaz, *Because You Are Mine, A Richer Dust, Beat*, and essayist Dani Loumena on Sunday, 6/8/25.



Victoriano Cárdenas is a trans poet and native of Taos. He graduated with an MFA in 2020 from the University of New Mexico where he served as editor in chief of Blue Mesa Review and executive editor of *Skull + Wind Press*. His literary work has appeared in *Witchcraft Magazine*, *Terraform by VICE*, *[PANK]*, and *Quarterly West*. Cárdenas co-wrote and appeared in the Audible Original *Eminent Domain* and currently writes for Lime Salt Productions and Meow Wolf. He currently lives in Albuquerque, NM.

Amy Boaz is the author of three novels, writes the book reviews column for Taos News, and is a former board member of SOMOS. Amy read from her new novel *Because You Are Mine* told in the voice of a transgender young person who has come to live with their mother in New Mexico and finds that both must face turmoil and change.



Dani Loumena read an essay that she wrote soon after college when she participated in an improv theater group in Chicago, IL.

Submitted by Jan Smith

## 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Prose Month, November 2025

For the ninth consecutive year SOMOS, “The Place for Words in Taos,” celebrated prose writers in all genres: fiction, nonfiction, memoir, mystery, historical novels, young adult, screenplays, essays, etc. “Our goal is to offer a wide variety of author readings from local and regional areas in New Mexico and Southern Colorado.”

The month began with a reading by Deborah Jackson Taffa, a Native American writer and a member of the Quechan and Laguna Pueblo tribes. She is best known for her 2024 memoir *Whiskey Tender* which details her life from the age of three to eighteen, growing up with a Native American father and a Catholic Latin-American mother. *Whiskey Tender* was a finalist for the 2024 National Book Award for Nonfiction. She earned a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in nonfiction writing from the University of Iowa. She is the director of the MFA creative writing program at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

On Sunday, November 2, at 4PM at the SOMOS Salon authors **Anita Amstutz** and **Lou McCall** presented excerpts from their recently published books, *The Bee Priestess*, and *Meditation for Everyone: Your Secular Guide to Spiritual Growth*, respectively.

**Hampton Sides**, award-winning historian and author, was at SOMOS on Saturday, 11/8, from 4-5:30 PM for a reception of beverages and hors d’oeuvres and spoke about his writing and research strategies for his nonfiction books. He read from 6-7:30 PM at the Encore Gallery at the Taos Center for the Arts auditorium. The two separate events were a fundraiser for SOMOS; the funds will be used to support our Young Writer’s Program and provide stipends for featured writers and poets.

Hampton Sides is best-known for his gripping, deeply researched non-fiction works that focus on classic episodes from American history, stories often set in war or depicting epic adventures of survival, exploration, or first contact between disparate worlds. He’s the author of the acclaimed bestselling narrative histories *Ghost Soldiers*, *Blood and Thunder*, *Hellhound On His Trail*, *In the Kingdom of Ice*, *On Desperate Ground*, and, most recently, *The Wide Wide Sea: Imperial Ambition*, *First Contact*, and *the Fateful Final Voyage of Captain James Cook*.



The New York Times named *The Wide Wide Sea* one of 2024’s Ten Best Books of the Year and Barack Obama featured it on his coveted Summer Reading List. Writing in *The Observer*, Stephen Fry called *The Wide Wide Sea* “extraordinarily compulsive and fascinating on every page.” The book has been optioned for the screen.

Hampton has been a contributor to *Outside*, *National Geographic*, *Smithsonian*, *The New Yorker*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and many other publications. His journalistic work, collected in numerous published anthologies, has been twice nominated for a National Magazine Award for feature writing.

A native of Memphis and a Yale graduate, Hampton is a board member of the Society of American Historians and the Author’s Guild, and he was a Miller Distinguished Scholar at the Santa Fe Institute. He has been a resident fellow at Yaddo, the MacDowell Colony, the Aspen Institute, the Ucross Foundation, and



Stanford University. He has an honorary doctorate in humane letters from Colorado College.

Sunday, 11/9, at 5PM, acclaimed author of fiction and nonfiction, **Kate Christensen** read from her recently published book, *The Sacred and the Divine* (Penguin Random House, 10/25), a novel set in the 19th century where history, romance, and the occult come together in a mesmerizing tale of sisterhood, fate, and the darkness lurking in our world.

Kate Christensen won the 2008 PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction for her fourth novel, *The Great Man*, about a painter and the three women in his life. Her eleventh novel, *Good Company* from HarperCollins will be published in 2026. She is also the author of two food-related memoirs, *Blue Plate Special* (Doubleday, 2013) and *How to Cook a Moose* (Islandport Press, 2015), the latter of which won the 2016 Maine Literary Award for memoir.

### **11/14, Friday, 5:30PM, Marcelo Sousa, Shelly Catterson, and Bob Romero**

**Marcelo Sosa** lives, writes, and creates in the shadow of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Northern New Mexico. A writer of novels, poetry, essays, memoir and children's stories, he likes to design and publish small works of art and intimate conversation for the now, while working to connect with the otherwise "real world" publishing establishment. He read from his novel *The Last Sandoval* which is set in New Mexico and is currently being pitched to publishers. The book celebrates and argues for the importance of storytelling for the survival and sanity of our human family, at a time when the human family needs to hear its stories most.

**Shelly Catterson** was born and lived along the spine of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado. She grew up sunburned, climbing rocks, and tasting dirt and grass. Her parents took her camping in their 1963 RoadRunner trailer, and she started backpacking as a child. For many years, she committed herself to being an independent bookseller at work, and a book giver elsewhere. She strives to listen and dance and earn insights from getting lost. Her stories were published by "The Normal School," posted by "Sunday Salon" and "High Desert Journal" and performed by Stories on Stage. She now lives in Talpa, between mountains and desert near the Rio Grande.

**F.R. Bob Romero** is a ninth-generation New Mexican and native-born Taoseño. He served as president of the Taos County Historical Society. He taught history courses at Mesa College in Colorado and taught at several colleges and universities in New Mexico, including at the University of New Mexico-Taos. Romero is co-author of *A Brief History of Taos*, a contributing author of *Taos: A Topical History*, and author of *History of Taos*, *Roots of Enchantment* and *Back to Walden*.

### **11/16 Tribute to Sallie Bingham**

**Sallie Bingham**, noted author, playwright, memoirist, poet, feminist activist, and philanthropist died suddenly on August 6th, at the age of eighty-eight, just a little over a week after she taught at the SOMOS Taos Writers Conference on July 27th. She participated in a writing group in Taos for many years, driving from Santa Fe weekly and then, during COVID and beyond, meeting on Zoom. Several of her cohorts paid tribute to Sallie's prodigious legacy of books, memoirs, & plays by reading from their favorite excerpts, as well as sharing personal anecdotes. The writers included Lucy Herrman, Steve Fox and Eileen Wiard.

**Eileen (Kalinowski) Wiard** came to Taos, New Mexico from Boston on a Wurlitzer Foundation writing residency for six months in the summer of 2002. She fell in love with the high desert and never went back, leaving behind a teaching career that she loved for a life of writing plays, essays, poems,

and songs. She currently serves on the lay ministry team of the Taos United Community Church and lives with her husband, Steve, in Ranchos de Taos, where they honor each other's souls.

**Steve Fox** is a writer and photographer born in Washington, D.C., who has lived in Taos for 21 years. He has a PhD in American Studies from UNM where he was awarded a two-year Fulbright Visiting Professorship in Germany. He last taught at UNM-Taos for eight years. He is the author of *Toxic Work: Women Workers at GTE-Lenkurt* and the memoir *Odyssey: Love and Terror in Greece, 1969*. He wrote and edited for the *Horse Fly* in Taos and wrote for NM News Service, which syndicated 125 of his columns statewide. He is married to the architectural designer Donna LeFurgey. They live in El Prado.

**Lucy Herrman** lives and works in Taos, New Mexico. She studied literature, creative writing, and art at the University of Illinois where she earned her degree. Her recent memoir, *Take Another Piece of My Heart*, from Nighthawk Press, chronicles her husband's harrowing medical journey and her campaign of strength and hope at his side. She currently writes the cooking column for the *Taos News*.

#### 11/21 **Jenn Shapland**

Jenn Shapland is a writer living in New Mexico. *My Autobiography of Carson McCullers*, her genre-bending first book, was a finalist for the National Book Award in Nonfiction and won the Lambda Literary Award, among other honors. Her most recent book, *Thin Skin*, was *Time*, *Publishers Weekly*, and New York Public Library best book of 2023. Shapland's essays have appeared in *New England Review*, the *New York Times*, *Guernica*, and *Tin House*, and have been awarded a Pushcart Prize and the Rabkin Foundation Award. She works as an archivist for a visual artist. She is the 2025 Mabel Dodge Luhan House/SOMOS writer-in-residence.

#### 11/22 **Rick Colligon & Rick Klein**

**Rick Klein** was the founder of the New Buffalo Commune in Arroyo Hondo. Over the years he has played music all over the Southwest (jazz, country, rock and roll) most recently playing the traditional music of Northern New Mexico with the Jenny Vincent trio. He has Sundanced for over thirty years in South Dakota, Texas, and South America. He read from his book, *Dancing the Four Directions: Sundance Journals and Peyote Tales*.

"In *Dancing the Four Directions* I have tried to evoke a particular time and place (namely, Northern New Mexico in the last decades of the twentieth century) where an unlikely meeting took place between traditional Indigenous elders and the then emerging counterculture."

Rick Collignon's first book, *"The Journal of Antonio Montoya,"* has a following in twelve different countries and has been translated into several foreign languages. It takes place in the small New Mexico town of Guadalupe, which bears resemblance to Questa, where Collignon lived for 25 years; he has lived in the area for fifty years. Other publications include *Perdido*, *A Santo in the Image of Cristobel Garcia*, and *Madewell Brown*. His sixth novel, *Lost in a Place so Small*, was published in January 2021. He owned a roofing business for over twenty years and raised three children in Taos, while writing.

#### 11/23 **SD Youngwolf, Susan Mihalic, and Zoe Dominique Rankin-Villalobos**



**Zoé Dominique Rankin-Villalobos** has gravitated toward storytelling in all its forms—books, theater, film, illustration, and oral formats—from an early age. A passionate and voracious reader, she moved to Taos in 2020 and now attends the Taos Integrated School of the Arts. Since then, she has performed in eight productions with the Taos Children’s Theatre and is currently a member of the Taos Youth Ensemble. Her creative work also extends into the visual arts, with exhibitions including the Kids for Kids show at Taos Fall Arts (2023) and the Sticker Jam Exhibit at Art Walk Santa Fe (2024). She received first-place recognition in the Taos Youth Heartline T-shirt Design Contest (2023), as well as in the Taos Public Library Easter Writing Contests in both 2022 and 2023. In film and digital media, she participates with True Kids 1 in its animation program and co-hosts the podcasts Cut to the Chase and Shinigami Theories. Dominique is twelve years old, a seventh grader, with aspirations to study visual arts and creative writing at the New Mexico School of the Arts, a high school in Santa Fe.

**SD Youngwolf** is an award-winning artist, storyteller, and writer. His work in various media is inspired and influenced by his Native heritage and Indigenous culture. He has visited and spent time with many tribal Indigenous peoples of the world and believes a return to Indigenous values is needed and necessary at this time for the preservation of life on this planet. He teaches art and creativity as pathways to truth, and to wholeness and balance.

**Susan Mihalic** is the author of *Dark Horses* (Scout Press, 2021), a critically acclaimed novel about an equestrian prodigy who is trapped in an abusive relationship with her Olympian father. The book received starred reviews from *Booklist*, *Library Journal*, *Kirkus*, and *Publishers Weekly*, which also boxed its review, and made numerous must-read lists (*O Magazine*, *Country Living*, *Parade*, *Library Journal*, *Goop*, *Bustle*, and other publications). A long-time resident of Taos, Susan holds a B.A. in journalism and straight out of college was hired by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, where she was quickly promoted to associate editor. She has volunteered at SOMOS in the youth mentorship program and facilitator of National Novel Writing Month write-ins. She is currently the President of the SOMOS Board and the Curator for the Young Writers Program.

Submitted by Jan Smith

## 2025 Community Readings & Workshops

(numbers in parantheses indicate # of attendees)

**Writers Showcase:** Rachel Coventry, Nick Flynn, Victoriano Cardenas, & Eldrena Douma (225)

**Taos Writers Conference,** 7/25-7/27/25, twenty workshops (76)

**Hispanic Heritage Month:** Eldrena Douma (85), Sage Vogel, Celinda Reynolds Kaelin, Chuy Martinez, Cisco Guevara

**Storytelling Festival** (140)

**LGTBQ+ Month:** Victoriano Cárdenas, Amy Boaz, Dani Loumena (32)

**Open Mic:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday/month, hosted by Mike Murphy and changed to Carrie Nassif (116)

**Prompt Night:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday/month, hosted by Carrie Nassif & Christine Reed (25 – the event started in the month of October '25)

**Community Readings:** (28) average of 10-35/event

**Rental spaces:** UU Book Club, Noetic Science Group – each once/month; starting in August Collapse Prevention group, twice/month hosted by Julian Spalding

**Literary Tribute to Sallie Bingham** (12)

**Workshops** (14) (46 participants)– Craft & Critique, David Carlson, Carrie Nassif, Mike Blevins, and workshops from the Taos Writers Conference

**Young Writers Night** (34) hosted by YWP Curator, Susan Mihalic, with a group of students from TISA.

**Collaborative Events** – monthly attendance at SFCF Taos Cohort for Executive Directors of nonprofit Arts Organizations in Taos (Couse-Sharpe, Dreamtree, Paseo, TCA, Twirl, Bridges, Taos Library)

**Total served** (not included Young Writers in the YWP program and bookshop patrons – 1400)

**Fundraisers:** Raffle Drawing, (66) August '25

**Hampton Sides Reception & Reading** (130)



## 2025 SOMOS Young Writers Program

### TISA (Taos Integrated School for the Arts)

When I began working with sixth graders at TISA, a public charter school with an arts-centered curriculum, at the start of the 2024 academic year, every single student was working on their own projects. They weren't interested in prompts, writing exercises, or character questionnaires. They used AI to flesh out characters and settings. I asked them what they were working on, talked to them about the connection between characters and plot, and read paragraphs of AI-generated writing.

Then came Spring 2025. The students were still sixth graders, but I detected subtle signs of growth in their writing. Some of them were less reliant on AI. They began to understand that revising and rewriting are part of writing itself. More students joined the Young Writers Program. At some sessions, I had as many as 18 to 20 students, but the core group usually averaged between 12 and 14 students of different ethnicities and gender identities. For Young Writers Night in April, we had just five readers—but afterward, several students wished they had participated. I predict we'll have many more readers for Young Writers Night 2026.

Spring semester's sixth graders are this semester's seventh graders, and their growth as writers has been phenomenal. One student even read from her work in progress on the final night of Prose Month in November 2025; she was paired with two adult writers and more than held her own. It's a privilege to work with these students.

### Taos High School

Also in Spring 2025, we offered Young Writers sessions at Taos High School. Only one student attended, but we wrote together using prompts—and this child can *write*. Despite working with the THS principal, I was unable to persuade other students to attend, and the single student who attended a few sessions gradually stopped coming. I learned that THS has a well-developed writing curriculum, so I decided to focus my attention on schools and programs that lacked access to writing instruction.



### Taos Academy and Vista Grande High School

I'm in the process of having criminal background checks conducted for Taos Academy and Vista Grande High School; our previous background checks through the New Mexico Department of Public Safety are no longer adequate. By law, volunteers (as well as teachers and other employees) must now have a comprehensive fingerprint-based check. Each school requires its own check (i.e., the Taos Academy background check cannot be used for Vista Grande High School).

### Mentors

For the mentors of individual students, so long as they meet outside of school property and hours, there's no need for the more extensive background check, but we do require the NMDPS check for all

mentors. I have not yet paired mentors with students because TISA students don't have the flexibility of having their own transportation; high school students—at least, a significant number of high school students—will be able to meet with mentors more easily.

### **Guest Writers**

I plan to bring in several guest writers to work with students once we're established at the high schools. I've met with Rick Romancito regarding presenting a program on media literacy (an ever-important topic); I have at least two prospects for poetry presentations; I've contacted a graphic novelist from Santa Fe; fellow board member Chipper Thompson is willing to present a session on songwriting. I hope new board member Courtenay Miles will present a session on screen writing.

### **Beyond the School System**

I've reached out to DreamTree regarding working with their program participants and had a discussion with their executive director, who mentioned the need for a Young Writers-style program for adults through Taos NEST, which DreamTree oversees as part of its collaboration with CAV (Community Against Violence), Youth Heartline, St. James Church, and other service providers. While I would welcome the opportunity to pursue this as well as collaborate with the military veterans' organization Not Forgotten Outreach, these programs fall outside the scope of the Young Writers Program.

### **Summary**

After a year of working as the Young Writers Program curator, I'm happy to say that the program is expanding. It continues to be both a work in progress and a learning experience for me but working with the students is extremely rewarding. I'm looking forward to more pieces fitting into place in the spring semester.

Sincerely,  
Susan Mihalic  
Curator, Young Writers Program  
President, Board of Directors



## 2025 Taos Poet Laureate Report

Miguel Santistevan completed his term as 4<sup>th</sup> Taos Poet Laureate (TPL) on December 31, 2025. The year passed with the completion of the TPL Zine project and several presentations and readings.

At the beginning of the second year of the 4<sup>th</sup> TPL, the layout of poems and artwork was completed, and seventy-five copies of the Zine were printed locally with a grant from the TCA. The Zine ended up containing fifty poems in thirty-six pages with six pieces of youth art for the covers and some interior pages.

After the initial printing and distribution of the Zine, a second version was made to include two more youth poems and to expand the explanation about the details of the project and seventy-five more copies of the Zine were printed. Every effort was made to give the students who contributed poems and artwork a free copy of the Zine. Copies of the Zine were provided to the teachers who hosted writing workshops given by the TPL.

The Zine was showcased at a Writers' Workshop and Zine read at the Taos Public Library on March 13, 2025. This event was attended by fifteen people including two community members, three students reading their poems, and their family members. An effort was made to recruit student readers with a \$10 cash incentive from the TPL a stipend that was increased to \$20 for the students who showed up to read.



*Miguel Santistevan in front of his class.*

After the Zine was completed and printed, it was made available for sale at various readings and presentations. Many copies of the Zine were given out for free to students and teachers. The main presentations are described below:

On March 24, TPL Miguel Santistevan hosted a Writers' Workshop for the Junior class of Vista Grande High School.

On the evening of March 26, 2025, TPL Miguel Santistevan was invited to share the stage with Jimmy Santiago Baca at the Taos Community Auditorium for a "Poetry in Conversation" event.

On April 22, Miguel was invited to sit on a panel for students of Vista Grande High School about Careers in the Outdoors at the Taos Land Trust. Much of Miguel's livelihood revolves around agriculture and sustainability, and much of this livelihood is expressed in the writing and publication of articles and chapters from books. He was able to articulate how important writing and poetry can be for livelihood of students, regardless of the line of work they get into.

On May 22, 2025, Miguel was again invited to keynote the annual meeting of the Jardineros Garden Club at the Taos Country Club. This presentation included live music and storytelling that was augmented by poetry that was thematic to the stories being told.

On September 24, 2025, Miguel was invited to read poetry at a “Hispanic/Latino Poetry Night” event at UNM-Taos with Michelle Otero and Victoriano Cardenas. Victoriano could not make it, but many positive responses were received for Miguel and Michelle’s presentations.

On October 13, 2025, Miguel gave presentations to the Art, Media Arts, and Culinary Arts students of the Peñasco Schools about building hornos, using film and video for activism, and food traditions in Northern New Mexico. In the film and video classes, Miguel was able to present on the importance of writing and poetry for the articulation of the issues and the creation of enthusiasm for activism.

Finally, on November 18, Miguel was invited to teach about acequia culture to approximately 150 third graders from Mora, Las Vegas, Wagon Mound, and Pecos schools at Highlands University. An introduction with live music and a conclusion with a poem made this event a success.

As the term of the 4<sup>th</sup> Taos Poet Laureate has ended, Miguel is filled with gratitude in this opportunity to rediscover his identity as a poet and hopefully inspire others, especially youth, into writing for expression, healing, and inspiration. Many positive interactions with people in many venues and of all ages made this term a memorable one for the 4<sup>th</sup> TPL and hopefully for those who participated in the workshops and presentations as well. Miguel looks forward to further developing his poetry and other forms of literary and artistic expression into the future.

Submitted by Miguel Santistevan, 2024-25 Taos Poet Laureate

## 2024 SOMOS Bookshop Report

I'm beginning my SOMOS Bookshop report about 2025 with high praise for the volunteers\* who are the backbone of our operation. The morning volunteers collaborate with me behind the scenes to integrate the books into the inventory by stocking the cases, cleaning the donated books, moving books/boxes for displays, maintaining order in assigned sections, and generally doing whatever I ask. The afternoon volunteers not only sell the books but also manage other SOMOS business for our customers. Jan is responsible for vetting all volunteers, scheduling all volunteers, and training the afternoon group while I make sure the afternoon volunteers are kept up on all matters books. I salute you all!

Sales for 2025 have been erratic. A few days topped all-time totals while some days were lower than ever. For months, the disruptive road construction made access to the Shop difficult. The tourism reliant economy was weak (our Bookshop is especially popular with out-of-towners). The aging population is reading less; the younger population tends to scroll only. Amazon etc. remains popular as do eBooks. The 2025 sales total was \$25,140.00.

The Booknotes section in the Weeklies is often updated although sometimes only tweaked. Deals and special sales highlighted in the Weekly Booknotes are rarely reflected in sales, as used to be the case until recently. This year I simplified Booknotes so that only the most important information is presented. Now there is a link to the website for further information.

We continue to offer gift certificates, but their sales have always been rare.

The relationship with Brodsky Bookshop remains strong. I take books of high value that are in good condition to Rick; he sells them online or in his shop and we split the proceeds.

Donations continue to be received, and we are duly grateful for them. We are strict about the two boxes per week per person rule to not be too overwhelmed. Some donors continue to ignore our criteria about cleanliness, unacceptable types of books, etc. Oh well.....

Thanks so much to Jan and the Board for their support of the Bookshop.

Special appreciation goes to Lauren Green, Jan's administrative assistant, for her help with office and social media jobs. Thanks to Chipper for increasing the ceiling lights so all may see better.

Respectfully submitted,  
Danielle Freeman  
SOMOS Bookshop Mgr.



# 2025

## **SOMOS Financial Reports**

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In times of economic uncertainty with tariffs, inflation and unemployment, SOMOS feels extraordinarily grateful to our sponsors, donors, and members for their continual generous and trusting support of our organization in fulfilling our mission statement. Our FY25 budget ended with a robust balance sheet.

Fiscal 2025 was not without challenges as we lost federal grants from New Mexico Humanities, New Mexico Arts, and an organizational grant from LANL for young writers in the total amount of approximately \$25,000. This would have been devastating to our final fiscal result if not for the generosity of two major donations from Janet Webb's legacy bequest and Natalie Goldberg. Their gifts were more than enough to compensate for the grant deficit.

While we are always conscious of our expenses, the board understands the need for capital expenditures in our building. The list of maintenance and improvements included the fresh paint of the front portal, new lights, new signage, replaced and stained railroad ties, replaced chipped tiles in the Southwest room, and a new water pump was installed in the front. These enhancements to the premises reap monetary benefits. In March '25 the office suite at 108A Civic Plaza Drive was rented out to Crone & Crow with a two-year lease.

Moving forward to FY26, our Executive Director and the board will search for new grant possibilities. Literary Arts Fund, LOR Foundation, and private donors will be our targets. Additionally, we will continue to generate fund-raising ideas.

This is my final financial report as treasurer because my term limit is up in February. It has been a pleasure to serve on the board of SOMOS. In an era of Artificial Intelligence where AI can generate a "sonnet" in seconds, it is so comforting to know that there is within our community a "literary heart of Taos." SOMOS will always give space and forum for creativity to young writers, writers, poets, and imaginative minds.

Submitted by Baksim Goddard, Board Treasurer

## SOMOS OPERATIONAL BUDGET FY 2025

<b>REVENUE</b>	
<b>PROGRAM INCOME</b>	
Membership Dues Income	\$8,000
Gate Income	\$200
Workshop Income	\$6,000
TWC	\$24,000
Rental Income/Office	\$400
Bones Admin Fee	\$350
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$38,950</b>
<b>FUNDRAISING INCOME</b>	
Grants	\$60,000
McCune Discretionary Fund for DEI training	\$2,500
Donation Income	\$4,200
Sponship	\$2,000
Appeal Letter	\$10,000
Fundraising Event	\$3,000
Book Sales	\$25,000
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$106,700</b>
<b>RENTAL PROPERTY INCOME</b>	
Rental Unit Income	\$8,000
Dividends	\$4,000
Interest Income	\$25
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$12,025</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$157,675</b>

<b>EXPENSES</b>	
<b>PROGRAM EXPENSES</b>	
Curator Fees	\$3,000
Honorarium	\$9,000
Workshop Instructors	\$3,200
TWC Instructors	\$5,500
Storytelling Presenters	\$2,200
Supplies	\$1,000
Facility Rental Expenses	\$900
Travel and Lodging Expenses	\$4,500
Refreshments	\$650
Advertising Expenses	\$9,000
Video Program Expenses	\$500
Cost of Author Books and Art Sold	\$1,300
Volunteer Appreciation	\$350
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$41,100</b>
<b>ADMIN EXPENSES</b>	
990-T tax	\$1,500
Administrative Services	\$13,000
Accounting	\$3,800
Dues	\$600
Printing and Reproduction	\$300
Gas/Electric	\$3,200
Trash Collection	\$350
Water	\$1,420
Telephone	\$1,300
Office Repairs	\$1,500
Office Supplies	\$7,500
Postage/Delivery	\$750
Liability Insurance	\$4,500
Business Meals	\$250
Bank and Credit Card Fees	\$1,000
Paypal Fees	\$800
Investment Fees	\$750
Education	\$100
DEI Consultation and Training	\$2,500
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$45,120</b>
<b>PAYROLL EXPENSES</b>	
Executive Director Wages	\$54,590
Employee Benefits (for ED)	\$3,000
Payroll Taxes	\$4,300
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$61,890</b>
<b>Misc EXPENSES</b>	
Leasehold Improvement budgeted	\$7,565
Rental Building Repairs	\$2,000
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$9,565</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$157,675</b>



## **SOMOS**

**Thanks to all our donors and funders for supporting our literary programming and bookshop during 2025. Funding organizations include: Taos Community Foundation, New Mexico Humanities Council, McCune Foundation, Nusenda Foundation, J3 Advised Fund, TCLT, New Mexico Tourism Department, New Mexico Arts, Virginia Wellington Cabot Foundation, Smith's Inspiring Donations, and Libro.FM audiobooks. We are also extremely grateful for the loyal support of our members, event attendees, and bookshop patrons.**

**We could not thrive without your generosity!**



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