

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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2018  
ANNUAL REPORT

# JOIN THE CONVERSATION

United States Poet Laureate  
**Tracy K. Smith**





# JOIN THE **mhc**

*We connect...people with books,  
communities with ideas, and  
strangers with one another.*

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## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

The Maine Humanities Council seeks to expand its list of potential nominees to fill future openings on its Board of Directors. The Council looks for a wide geographic representation and range of civic and/or academic experience. To notify the Council of your interest, please send a letter and a résumé to:

### Governance Committee Chair

### Maine Humanities Council

674 Brighton Avenue

Portland, ME 04102-1012

## OUR MISSION:

The Maine Humanities Council, a statewide non-profit organization, uses the humanities—literature, history, philosophy, and culture—as a tool for positive change in Maine communities. Our programs and grants encourage critical thinking and conversations across social, economic, and cultural boundaries.

## STAFF

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Photo credit: Dan D'Ipollito

## A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

LATE LAST YEAR, THE MAINE HUMANITIES COUNCIL HAD THE HONOR OF HOSTING United States Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith for a quick visit to Maine. In addition to public programs with our library partners in Norway and Lewiston, Ms. Smith spent a morning at the Maine Women's Correctional Center in Windham.

At each stop, Mainers gathered to read poems together and share their responses, thoughts, and feelings. Conversations began with the poems but quickly became wide-ranging, personal, and deep. In sharing their responses to the poems, participants also shared their own experiences, their own unique perspectives.

On a recent episode of her daily podcast *The Slowdown*, Ms. Smith talked about her visit to the Women's Correctional Center in Windham. Reflecting on her experience there, she said, "... I believe the small things that remind us of all we don't or can't know about someone else are a kind of gift. Anything that makes us humble in the face of another person's vast humanity is a gift."

This gets right to the heart of what the Maine Humanities Council is trying to do throughout the state. In everything we do, it's our aim to give Mainers the opportunity to open up, to share their perspectives, to listen to one another, and to be humble in the face of one another's vast humanity. We invite you to join us.

Hayden Anderson  
Executive Director



Photo credit: Erik Peterson





## Veterans Book Group

“Some of the veterans ... almost never spoke about their time at war, because they did not want to taint the perception of friends and loved ones that they were good people. ... One older gentleman who had been severely injured and exposed to extreme radiation while conducting nuclear weapons tests for the Navy in the 1950s explained he had never gone to any veterans’ programs because he had never been shot at, so he never felt like ‘a real veteran.’ Within a few minutes spent discussing writings ... on the alienation that veterans experience when they return to civilian life, all of the participants ... were commiserating, and relating how much their time in the service had changed them, their relationships with their families, and their outlook on the world. In spite of the differences that separated them in age, race, gender, and their service experiences, they found they were able to relate.”

—**Sam Boss** (Bates College), facilitator, *Veterans Book Group*

*Veterans Book Group* is a facilitated reading and discussion series for former Service Members led by a scholar and a Veteran in which Veteran participants share experiences and engage with other Veterans through meaningful discussions of texts.



## Library Programming

“We live in a small rural community and very often, particularly in wintertime, we are very isolated. I once had a conversation with one of our elderly library users, and attending one of our book discussions was literally the only time she left her house that month.”

—**Holly Williams**, Director, Pittsfield Public Library

Holly describes a little of what it’s meant for a resident of her community to have *Let’s Talk About It* as a regular offering at her library. MHC library programming—*Let’s Talk About It*, the summer reading series *ReadME*, and the current affairs and local issues lecture series *World in Your Library*—provides places where members of a community can think, grow, and exchange ideas about a good read. As Holly told us, “Many of my patrons come to our programs for mental stimulation, for lifelong learning, and the programs MHC provides help them with that.”

## Literature & Medicine

“For the *L&M* series this year, we looked at our hospital for a theme—what was the driving force for angst on our staff? That factor is change—we are changing all our electronic records to a common platform at the same time that we are negotiating to become a member hospital in a larger system. We are enveloped by change and know that our colleagues in hospitals across the state are as well. We worked with the MHC to develop a curriculum for *L&M* this year that looks at change...a common curriculum that unites professionals across the state in the reading and discussion of the same materials. That is powerful stuff.”

—**David McDermott**, MD, Mayo Regional Hospital

Book groups for health care and service professionals—in hospitals, domestic violence resource programs, hospice, and more—provide a space for powerful discussion on issues important to work: like change. Participants leave the room with their minds refreshed, feeling better about themselves and their abilities to communicate with colleagues—and feeling like a part of new kind of community.



## Poetry Express

“There has never been a time in my life when I believed I could read poetry, out loud, in front of a group of people; especially so, with two Maine Poet Laureates and the author of the poem I selected present for the event! But staff of MHC approached me...and spoke highly of collaborative work being done in small communities throughout Maine. I learned that Maine poets were working with Maine librarians in introducing Maine people to poetry. I was at once curious and charmed. What an interesting approach, deepening our connection to the humanities while simultaneously strengthening community connections!”

—**Melody Fitch**, participant

Imagine a library on a quiet fall night, lit with the sound of neighbors’ voices reading poetry aloud with heart, enthusiasm, and passion. *Poetry Express* gathers community members to explore poetry relevant to that town. A featured poet helps participants pick selections and learn how to read poetry; then the program culminates in a community performance. In 2018, *Poetry Express* reached Lincoln, Kittery, Dover-Foxcroft, and Augusta.



Photo credit: Dan DiPoppo



Our grants support projects that encourage a deeper understanding of ourselves and others, foster wisdom in an age of information, and provide context in a time of change.

**In 2018 we awarded grants in all of Maine's 16 counties.**



**TOTAL AMOUNT  
AWARDED  
\$81,185**

## Featured Projects

**The Scoop: After School at Rowe Elementary School** — Supported by a "Democracy, Journalism, and the Informed Citizen" special grant, *The Scoop* launched a weekly after-school club at Rowe Elementary throughout the winter of 2019 to provide media literacy and multimedia production instruction to any interested fourth or fifth grader.

**Becoming American** — Selected as one of 32 sites across 24 states to host this national program, Museum L-A was awarded an Arts & Humanities Grant for "*Becoming American*," a public program exploring the American immigration experience that featured films, discussions, concerts, book groups, lectures, plays, and other events in Lewiston and Auburn.

## Dorothy Schwartz Forum: Who is WE?

"This evening has been a thoughtful exercise, a compassionate act, and an uncomfortable stretch."  
— Participant

On the third Saturday in October, people gather together to wrestle with a large philosophical question. In a setting suited to the year's task, with expert guides on hand, people get to spend longer than usual thinking, listening, moving, talking, sharing a meal — feeling their way through one big, relevant question from lots of angles. In 2018 we asked, "Who is we?"



Photo credit: Peter Greeno Photography



Dean D'Ipollito

## Winter Weekend:

### The Way We Live Now

"These wonderful events help me deepen my awareness that great books do not stand alone and a greater understanding of their context hugely enriches the experience for a reader."

— a participant

Each year, *Winter Weekend* brings readers together to explore a powerful text through scholar talks about informal discussions.

## WHAT DO YOU NOTICE?

### A visit from Tracy K. Smith

Photo credit: Rachel Eliza Griffiths

Poetry is a mirror, a window, a door. That was clear when U.S. Poet Laureate Tracy K. Smith visited Maine in November 2018.

Just before her visit, Smith had released a new poetry anthology: *American Journal: Fifty Poems for Our Time*. The anthology shares a wide range of voices from towns across America and explores growing up, hope and faith and terror, memories and love and loss. Three groups—the 21st Century Lewiston After-School Program at Lewiston High School, and the Southern Maine Women's Re-Entry Center and the Women's Correctional Center in Windham—read this volume, as well as Smith's own works, to prepare for discussions with Smith herself. When she met them, Smith began each discussion by asking, "What do you notice?". She asked the question again when she presented at Norway Memorial Library and later at the Lewiston Public Library.

These visits from Tracy K. Smith are changing the MHC. We've integrated *American Journal* into our book groups across the state in hospitals, adult education programs, domestic violence resource centers, and hospice organizations. Our participants read poems together and ask each other: "What do you notice?". The MHC has launched a poetry reading and discussion pilot project at six jails, correctional facilities and peer-run recovery centers to date. Already the participants are noticing more, reading more poetry, asking what's next.

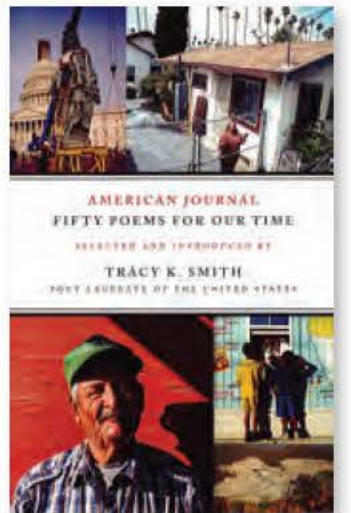






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## CIVIL RIGHTS Team Project

"You could have heard a pin drop during the presentation. The students did a great job presenting the different parts of the book. Our Statue of Liberty was a hit. A first grader said we did a great job and said, 'I did not know all that stuff about her.' Several teachers and a parent in the audience remarked on how much they had learned."

—Solon Elementary School

The *Civil Rights Team Project*, a program from the Maine Attorney General's Office (and the only program of its kind in the nation), seeks to increase the safety of elementary, middle level, and high school students by reducing bias-motivated behaviors and harassment in Maine schools through a model using students as leaders. Students engage their schools in thinking and talking about civil rights to create a safe, welcoming, and respectful school environment. In 2018, Civil Rights Teams created projects around Dave Eggers's *Her Right Foot*. Students talked about their national origins and ancestries, studied immigration patterns in the U.S., and discussed ways to be welcoming to immigrants and, indeed, everyone.

## About LITERATURE

Most students who participate in *Letters About Literature* have already found the book that moves them, the book that matters most. When they first hear about this contest from the Center for the Book in the U.S. Library of Congress, many already know what they'll write. At its core, *Letters About Literature* is an exercise for students in distilling critical and personal thoughts about a favorite book, a reading and writing program that invites students nationwide to write a letter to an author about how that author's book changed their lives.



"Your book... was the first and only book I have ever read that connected to a piece of my life. My parents have been a problem my whole life. Instead of feeling angry, I felt hope. For the first time in a long time, I felt hope."

—Jasmine Lockwood to Mary Lou Carney for *Too Tough to Hurt*



"Laying in my bed some nights just after my Dad moved out, I would think about *Dangerous*... I used to think that this time in my life was similar to when your story began to climax, where things seemed really scary, action packed and overwhelming."

—Olivia Martin to Shannon Hale for *Dangerous*



"For the first time, a novel was speaking my voice, validating my feelings, saying my thoughts, articulating the insidious facts of my experience....The way fiction brings you to get that your reality is really, truly true, is so empowering.... I could see that my experience was not an isolated case."

—Sylvette Dupé-Vété-Congolo to Angie Thomas for *The Hate U Give*

Donors to the Maine Humanities Council enable us to take powerful humanities programming throughout all 16 counties of Maine, inspiring, delighting, encouraging, and educating the people of this state. Together, we help Mainers from all backgrounds and communities understand themselves, one another, and the world beyond. We're deeply grateful for our supporters' generosity.



Photo credit: Dan D'Ippolito

## JOIN THE CONVERSATION

If what you read in this report inspires you to make a gift—  
Donate online at [mainehumanities.org](http://mainehumanities.org)

or by filling out the enclosed envelope

or contact **Diane Magras**, Director of Development,  
at (207) 773-5051 or [diane@mainehumanities.org](mailto:diane@mainehumanities.org)

**EVERY GIFT MATTERS.**

Gifts received by the Maine Humanities Council during Fiscal Year 2018 (11/1/2017 - 10/31/2018) are represented in these pages. If you donated after this time, you'll be thanked in our next Annual Report.

## ANNUAL GIVING – FISCAL YEAR 2018

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Annual Fund gifts enable the MHC to maintain and also expand our statewide mission. We are grateful to the generous supporters listed below.

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on what would have been her  
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Elizabeth Whitman  
**Book Registry Gifts**  
This giving opportunity  
invites donors to fund  
replacements of specific  
books needed by Let's Talk  
About It sites statewide  
Kathleen and William Brittain,  
in honor of Jo Davenport  
Geraldine Bush  
Nancy Crowell, in memory  
of William E. Crowell  
Friends of the  
Witherle Memorial Library  
Gold Leaf Institute

Senior College-UMF  
Randi Jandreau, in honor  
of Faye Hafford  
Candace Kanes  
Kennebunk Free Library  
Richard & Sandra Lawrence  
Deborah Ludwig  
Pamela Morin  
Roberta Morin  
Ocean Park Association  
Marcela Peres  
Greta Schroeder  
Ted and Iva Lee Sussman,  
in honor of Trudy Hickey  
Marilyn Wade  
**Winter Weekend sponsorships**  
These gifts are designated for  
New Books, New Readers  
Anonymous (2)  
Anonymous, in memory of  
Mert and Harriet Henry  
Barbara Barrall  
Carol M. Beaumier  
Maureen Bien  
Rev. Catherine G. Borchert  
Jim and Sarah Bowie  
Marjorie A. Boyd, MD  
Lawrence Boyle and  
Victoria Russell  
Emily and Norman Breitner  
Mary Alice Brennan  
Charlotte Brown  
Patricia J. Brown  
Carol Moon Cardon  
Brad and Anita Coupe  
Alexis DesRoches  
Ned and Barbey Dougherty  
Deborah Downs and  
Jon Gale  
John and Beverly Emerson  
Daniel Frederick and  
Daniel Plourde  
Ilse Haag  
David and Fay Hannon  
Stephen Hayes and  
Carol McCarthy  
Alison Hildreth  
Dr. Sally C. Hoople  
David Johnson and

Rebecca Thompson  
David R. Jones and  
Angela J. Connelly  
Sheila and Philip Jordan  
Janet Kahl  
James and Beth Kilbreth  
Cornelia Kittredge  
Lincoln F. Ladd and  
Gloria Williams Ladd  
William H. Laubenstein III  
Karen Massey and Jeff Thaler  
Sarah S. Meacham  
Joanne and Earl Morse  
JF Niffka  
Wallace G. Pinfold  
Mary and Benjamin Prett  
Dr. Susan Schraft and  
Mr. Richard Berne  
Elizabeth and John Serrage  
Nancy Shor  
Judith Stein  
Nan and Bill Stone  
Carol Strasburger  
Christina S. Teale  
Suzanne Trazoff  
Miriam Kellogg Truslow  
Emily Vail  
Julia and Robert Walking  
Candace and  
Edward Walworth  
Peter and Margie Webster  
Bill and Rosie White  
Pip and Judy Wick  
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel A. Zilkha

THE STATE OF OUR STORY  
2018

During Fiscal Year 2018, the Maine Humanities Council had operating income of \$1,513,337 and operating expenses of \$1,537,246. Grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities, including highly competitive grants, made up an important component of the budget. This support was supplemented by a diverse range of other income streams: from the Library of Congress, the State of Maine, generous support from private foundations, the individual contributions highlighted in this report, and program income. Both the income and the expense figures reported in this figure below and in the Council's audited financial statements include in-kind contributions of time, mileage and materials, valued at \$347,592.

REVENUES 2017 — 2018

Base Grant and Other		
Competitive Grants from the NEH	50%	\$750,857.00
State of Maine Funding	3%	\$50,061.00
Contributions and Grants	22%	\$333,552.00
In-kind Contributions	23%	\$347,592.00
Program, Investment, and Other Income	2%	\$31,275.00

TOTAL \$1,513,337.00

EXPENSES 2017 — 2018

Programs, Re grants, and Technical Assistance	74%	\$1,145,088.00
Administration	14%	\$212,833.00
Fundraising & Marketing	12%	\$179,325.00

TOTAL \$1,537,246.00