

Northeast Storytelling

Annual Report to the Members

August 2023

Friends:

Our bylaws require us to hold an Annual Meeting at Sharing the Fire each year, which presents a real conundrum: Sharing the Fire is our biggest event of the year, and we don't know its impact until everything clears a couple of months later. This is true not only for the financial implications, but it's also our best opportunity to hear from people in person about their dreams for and feelings about NEST!

Since Sharing the Fire is now complete, and our plans for moving forward are much clearer, we wanted to share this report with you all.

What follows is a summary of our current budget, with the complete budget attached for your review. We also have included updates from each of our committees, so that you can see how we are implementing plans for NEST going forward.

We would like to invite the membership to an open review of the full budget (and our other plans) on Wednesday, Sept. 20 at 7 pm Eastern. You can register for that meeting [here](#). We are attaching the full budget to this document, and welcome your questions, comments, and suggestions. Priority will be given to those who submit their questions, etc. in advance using [this form](#).

Thank you!

For the Board,

Jim Brulé, President

ChaChanna Simpson, Vice President

Cris Riedel, Treasurer

Barbara Aliprantis, Secretary (term ends 12/31/23)

Denise Page

Mike Isko

Mike Perry

Rona Leventhal (term ends 12/31/23)

Budget Update

Those of you who were at Sharing the Fire this year were able to get an in-person preview of this year's budget for Northeast Storytelling. As we said at the time, the biggest expense of every year is Sharing the Fire, so we didn't know how everything was going to turn out, but we were optimistic that we would be in good shape.

Our optimism was a little over-enthusiastic, but still well-placed.

In a nutshell, here's where we stand with our budget for 2023-2024, and our plans for moving forward.

Let me begin with the bottom line: we have over \$90,000 in our checking account, after running in the red this year by a little less than \$14,000. This was a bigger loss than we expected, but not one to send us into panic, or to threaten our existence. So naturally we looked at what the reasons were for this difference.

First, the big one.

In 2022-2023, Sharing the Fire turned out to be more expensive than we anticipated. There were a lot of reasons for this, and we have learned many lessons. Some of the reasons had to do with how we managed meal costs, the amount of time it took to actually plan and produce the event, and the way we managed speaker expenses. We also benefited from some incredible generosity from Simon Brooks, in a way that we all agreed should not be repeated - we should more accurately reflect the level of effort required for supporting an event technically.

Ultimately, we spent about \$13K more on Sharing the Fire than we expected, which drove us about \$14K into the red. As a Board, we have looked hard at these costs, and have decided it was well worth it - but we must do better next time.

We have therefore made some important changes to our strategy and budget for this year, all designed to deliver better value to members while cutting our deficit in half (to \$6,732). Some of these changes include *increasing* our financial commitment to our staff and presenters. But the most important thing is that we have the financial flexibility to make these changes, and so we are operating with a strong sense of purpose, not panic.

A quick view of the summary below shows the biggest change: to increase donations and grants by nearly \$15,000. The Board recognizes the magnitude of this change and is prepared to work with this challenge for everyone's benefit. Look for more updates and opportunities to assist with this fundraising over the coming months.

		22-23 (act)	23-24 (budget)
<u>Revenue</u>			
	STF	\$ 29,989	\$ 37,625
	Donations / Grants	\$ 7,800	\$ 21,200
	Membership	\$ 11,984	\$ 12,000
	Storytelling Training	\$ -	\$ 500
		\$ 49,773	\$ 71,325
<u>Expenses</u>			
	STF	\$ 36,950	\$ 39,991
	Personnel / Prof	\$ 23,027	\$ 26,914
	Operating Expenses		
	STF Scholarships		\$ 2,000
	Storytelling Training		\$ 1,600
	Technology	\$ 2,227	\$ 3,372
	Insurance	\$ 778	\$ 800
	Professional Development		\$ 1,500
	Other	\$ 536	\$ 1,880
		\$ 63,518	\$ 78,057
<u>Over / (Deficit)</u>		\$ (13,745)	\$ (6,732)

Board of Directors Annual Report

Currently, the Board of Directors is made up of a team of 8 individuals:

- Jim Brulé, President
- ChaChanna Simpson, Vice President
- Cris Riedel, Treasurer
- Barbara Aliprantis (term ends 12/31/23)
- Denise Page
- Mike Isko
- Mike Perry
- Rona Leventhal (term ends 12/31/23)

We are currently recruiting for at least two new members, but would ideally like four.

Presidential terms last two years; our succession plan requires a Vice President to be identified no later than the beginning of the second year to assume the role of President. Jim's role as President will expire on 12/31/23, at which time ChaChanna will assume the role of President.

Our major board initiatives are to support Sharing the Fire and our new Development efforts. We also envision a review of our Bylaws to update the date of the Annual Report, to refresh the relevant required committees, and otherwise revisit the language to make certain it is clear and relevant to current circumstances.

Executive Director Annual Report

Membership

The current membership as of Aug 29 is 222. In June of 2021, we had 299 members. As we continue to adjust to having active lives with COVID, we could use your help. Share your love of NEST and Sharing the Fire with others, and invite them to join you. We would love to see this community continue to grow.

Governance

The Board is solid right now with eight members, two of whom will come to the end of their terms in December. We have already accepted a new Board member to join in January, and will continue to seek qualified candidates to round out the leadership. We happily welcomed "the Mikes" this year - Michael Isko and Michael Perry.

Communications

The NEST-L Listserv continues to be a great way for members to connect with one another. If you are not on the listserv but want to be, please email me at nestorytelling@gmail.com to be added right away. We are looking at ways to streamline the process of being added to the listserv.

We have not seen much engagement on social media through our NEST accounts, so we have not prioritized that method of communication on a regular basis. We will be posting regularly about Sharing the Fire and would appreciate your help getting the word out. Please make sure to like/friend/follow @nestorytelling on Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and LinkedIn, and share posts that you are excited about. If you are interested in helping with any of the social media accounts, please let me know.

Programs

Sharing the Fire

It was wonderful to be back in person again after three years of COVID-related cancellations/online programming. 144 total people registered for STF 2023, including 25 people who joined us virtually from their homes. Thanks to the generosity of our members during our Giving Tuesday Campaign and an appropriation from the Board, we were able to offer scholarship assistance to everyone who requested it. 23 people were given full or partial scholarships to attend. We received substantially positive feedback on the quality of the programming, hotel space, and community.

As detailed in the Budget report, Sharing the Fire generated a larger-than-expected loss this year. We will be striving to increase attendance next year while continuing to deliver excellent programming so that our financial position for both STF and the overall organization are improved.

We will be returning to the Sheraton Portsmouth Harborside Hotel for STF 2024 (March 22-24) and are currently looking for our 2025 venue.

NESTFest

On Sept 10, 2022, we hosted NESTFest, a free online event with performances, a social time, an update from the Board, and a story swap. It was designed as a community-building event. Due to a lack of interest, the Board has decided not to produce a NESTFest 2023.

Worldwide Virtual Storytelling Guild

As detailed in the WVSG report below, WVSG continues to be going strong, offering a free opportunity for people to share, hear, and give/receive feedback on stories. WVSG meets three times a month on the first Thursday night at 8:30pm Eastern, the second Saturday at 6:00pm Eastern, and the third Sunday at Noon Eastern. All are welcome to come listen or tell. More info is on [our website](#).

Storytelling Training Basics Program

As summarized in the Membership report below, the Board launched this new initiative based on member feedback that you wanted more opportunities for storytelling training. In this pilot program, we plan to offer 8 training videos for beginning storytellers on important skills. The committee is evaluating proposals for these first videos. If this program is successful, we hope to offer intermediate and advanced content in the coming years. Our hope is that learners will watch the videos, do the work, and then bring their stories to WVSG to get practice and feedback.

Social Justice Committee

This committee has been largely inactive this fiscal year, but is picking back up again. The next meeting is scheduled for Sept 19.

Finances

Substantial financial information is contained in other sections of this report, particularly the Budget Report, the Financial Committee report, and the attached full budget and the Statement of Financial Position. As an organization, we spent \$13,745 more than we took in. See the attached budget for more specific details. Thankfully, NEST has consistently held more than \$90K in the bank. This one-time loss was easily absorbed, and we made thoughtful adjustments to both the STF and NEST budgets to lead us into a more profitable direction. Looking ahead, we are working to adjust to the new reality after a global pandemic, using this first year back as a barometer for the future. One of the big changes we are making is the formation of the Development Committee.

Development Committee

We are forming a Development Committee which will be tasked with the financial development of the organization. They will help research and write grants, find sponsors, and much more. They are tasked with raising at least \$15,000 this fiscal year (\$10K toward STF, and \$5K toward the general operation of NEST). If you are interested in being a part of this exciting new effort, please get in touch.

I have had the honor of being your Executive Director for one year. It is a pleasure to work for such a long-respected institution. I hope to continue to learn and grow along with you as we continue to move NEST forward. If you need anything or have any questions, please feel free to reach out. Know that this is a part-time position, and as such, I may not respond immediately to emails, but strive to do so within a few business days. Respectfully Submitted,

Katie Knutson, Executive Director

Aug 2023

NEST Finance Committee Annual Report 2022-23

NEST remains on solid financial footing.

Sharing the Fire was a hybrid event this year, happening both at the Hotel in New Hampshire and having a track of on-line sessions.

While StF did not turn a profit this year, our account balances are sufficient to maintain our footing and allow us to proceed with new plans for the conference.

NEST's overall membership stands at 220, up from 174 last year. We conducted several outreach efforts to reach lapsed members and encourage renewal. Membership dues have not increased.

Donations: These continue to form an important part of our funding. The Benevity Fund, a Google-employee match program initiated by one of our members, has continued to contribute. (We thank her for her support). Benevity donations this year were \$3,300; member donations were \$4,720.00

Programs: NEST is beginning a series of training videos which, while a loss will show the first year, is expected to generate a revenue stream.

For financial statements, please see the documents at the end of this report.

Respectfully submitted August 2023,

Cris Riedel, Treasurer

Outreach Committee Annual Report

2022-2023

This year, the committee focused on:

1. Building a diverse storytelling community of all ages and backgrounds where everyone feels welcomed and included.
2. Providing storytelling educational content for members

Mentorship Program

The mentorship program is gaining traction, with a few members stepping up to get mentored. Going forward, the committee is focused on promoting this program to gain more traction.

Social Media

The committee is looking for volunteers who can run our social media platforms.

Facebook

Northeast Storytelling: 926 Followers

Instagram

@northeaststorytelling: 341 Followers

NEST Storytelling Training Task Force

Based on last year's membership survey, there was an interest in having more training available for storytelling. The task force was formed to develop opportunities to fulfill this need, such as creating a storytelling video instruction series.

Submitted by

Barbara Aliprantis & ChaChanna Simpson

Worldwide Virtual Storytelling Guild

Annual Report 2022-23

We continue with three meetings a month, first Thursdays, second Saturdays, and third Sundays. [Our page](#) at the NEST site contains the Zoom link information as well as the upcoming monthly suggested themes.

Jo Radner has donated our listserv through American University and continues to add members as they request. We are overwhelmed with her generosity and thank her. We have 170 members currently there.

Our Facebook account continues to grow; currently has 651 members, up 80 from last year. There are still multiple daily postings announcing performances and workshops internationally.

Attendance at meetings is down, with an average of seven people, consisting of a few regulars and a variety of others. Meetings are recorded and made available to only members of the listserv; we thank Jim Brulé for his time and expertise.

We elected to take August off, and will resume regular meetings in September.

Respectfully submitted August 2023,

Cris Riedel