

2020-2021

Annual Report

to the

Membership



Board of Directors:

Lynn Schweikart

Jim Brulé

Cris Riedel

Barbara Aliprantis

Linda Schuyler Ford

Rona Leventhal

ChaChanna Simpson

Northeast Storytelling
Annual Report to the Membership
June 24, 2021

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Northeast Storytelling ~ President's Report ~ 2020

It was just over a year ago, in June 2020, that I took over as President of Northeast Storytelling (NEST). This has been a year when stories were needed more than ever. And storytelling has been there, if not in the usual places.

Because, you see, you can't keep a good story down. Or good storytellers. And NEST is no exception. We first postponed Sharing the Fire 2020, hoping to hold it in the fall. Then fall came and the pandemic worsened, so we held out hope for 2021. But that was not to be either.

Instead, NEST found other ways to support storytellers and storytelling by:

- Holding our online NEST Fest in November and the Sparks, Online Zoom Staycation in May.
- Inaugurating a youth storytelling program and planning an online youth storytelling guild.
- Developing a social justice initiative that will expand awareness of social change storytelling and help social change leaders and advocates increase their storytelling skills.
- Launching the first installment of the NEST Guide to Storytelling on our website.
- Continuing the success of the Worldwide Virtual Storytelling Guild, which is helping us attract members from all over the world.

In the midst of these accomplishments, there have been difficulties. The loss of anticipated income from Sharing the Fire—\$28,339 in 2020 and \$29,377 in 2021—was a major jolt. However, through Deb Roe and Cris Riedel's careful stewardship of our budget and expenses, we actually experienced a minor gain of \$6,023 in 2020. And though we have a loss of just under \$4,000 as of 6/4 this year, our careful practices in recent years will enable us to absorb this. We are undergoing another major change as our Executive Director Deb Roe, who has been with us for 6 years, is moving on—an incalculable loss!

However, we also think this is the perfect time to evaluate who NEST is as an organization and what we want to be. Because we are a member-driven organization, the Board is looking to you to help us with this. As my predecessor, Jim Brule, put it so eloquently,

“Please look at what we're doing, what we're struggling with, and let us know what you think, what you want, where you're headed, and how we can work together to support storytelling and NEST.”

We all hope that as vaccinations become more widespread, the pandemic's chaos and devastation will be ebbing. This will bring both new challenges and opportunities for NEST, even as resources, both human and financial, may be more limited than usual. Yet, with your help, we'll strive onward, as we work to further our mission to “provide education, advocacy, opportunities, and support to storytellers, story listeners, and story lovers throughout the Northeast.”

Respectfully submitted by: Lynn Schweikart, NEST Board President, June 2021

Northeast Storytelling ~ Executive Director's Report ~ 2021

Membership

The current membership as of June 2021 is 299. The membership increased during the past year in large part due to our free 2020 membership campaign which brought in 84 new members and due to our expanded outreach efforts. With many turning to online storytelling events during the pandemic, we were able to reach a wider national (and even international) audience.

Governance

Lynn Schweikart became president in June and has overseen the continued progress of NEST including the expansion of our online programming. The Board is in the processing of seeking new members as there are open positions and others that will open at the end of December. The Board was excited to welcome its most recent member this June: ChaChanna Simpson.

Communications

The *Museletter* has been on hiatus while the organization continues to consider the future of the well-loved newsletter. Board member, Linda Schuyler Ford, and tech specialist, Chris Donald have taken on the task of boosting NEST's social media presence. ChaChanna Simpson has a background in social media and will be helping NEST to further expand such initiatives.

Programs

- Due to the pandemic, STF was cancelled for a second year in a row as the Board concluded that STF is an in-person event and could not be translated properly into an online event.
- WVSG continues to be strong with Cris Riedel leading this effort.
- In November, NEST decided to test the online program waters by serving up the NESTFest. The weekend event was a pay-what-you-can event with over 300 registrants. It included evening performances, swaps, panels, a slam, and a beginner workshop. The feedback from this event was extremely positive and helped to bring new members to NEST
- In May, NEST offered an online program in place of STF called Sparks: A Storytelling Staycation. The event was similar to the NEST Fest in some ways but included more workshops including a 3-day workshop by Sherry Norfolk. It also provided the opportunity for workshop attendees to present on the main stage. One fun addition was the 99-Second Story Challenge. Registration was lower than expected with only 114 including performers and presenters who were registered free of charge. The low attendance was likely due to competing events and Zoom-fatigue.
- The first set of articles of the *NEST Storytelling Guide* is now available online. Other sets will follow. The decision was made to not pursue a traditional publishing route due to the fact that this involved a substantial amount of work that NEST did not have the capacity to do

and the feeling that an online version made more sense in that it could evolve over time and be available to more people.

- The pilot of the FLY! (Folktales, Lifetales, Youth) program happened June 30 to August 6 of 2020 with 11 children, ages 10-15, from Lawrence, MA and Schenectady, NY attending. Group and one-on-one storytelling mentoring was provided by 4 mentors and the program was coordinated by Paula Weiss. The project culminated with an online performance. A video about the program may be seen on the NEST website. NEST is hoping to expand the program in 2021.

Finances

The cancellation of STF 2021 due to the pandemic was a setback for NEST but the organization received its \$3000 deposit back from the venue. The two online events, the NEST Fest and Sparks, though they brought in new members and strengthened awareness in the storytelling community of NEST as an organization, were not moneymakers for the organization. Both brought in enough to pay for presenters but not to fully cover administrative costs. Fortunately, NEST has been the recipient of over \$5000 in Benevity funds during the fiscal year. This greatly helped to offset the organization's losses during that time. NEST is planning the expansion of the FLY! program and the initiation of social justice programs. The organization will need a strong showing at STF and financial support from its members in order to have a successful FY21-22.

A Personal Note:

It has been an absolute pleasure (a gift really) to be able to work with the NEST community over the past six years. I leave the organization knowing that we have come a long way—building membership, adding programs, expanding the reach of NEST storytelling not only nationally but internationally. NEST will only continue to grow and flourish. Thank you to all of you who made this journey such a wonderful adventure. ~ Deb

Submitted by: Deborah Roe, Executive Director

Date: June 2021

Northeast Storytelling ~ Finance Committee Report ~ 2020

NEST remains on solid financial footing. While our income did not increase this year, our bank balances are steady. For specific figures, please refer to Deb Roe's reports.

The SPARKS! and NEST Fest on-line conferences showed lower attendance than we hoped; both events broke even in financial terms. With the 2022 Sharing the Fire conference returning to in-person, attendance (and therefore, income) is expected to rise to pre-pandemic numbers. The Board is considering ways to allow the conference to have on-line sessions. This will allow us to keep contact with attendees across the U.S. and internationally.

Membership has risen from 231 to 299. We offered free first-year membership last year; the 84 who took advantage of that will receive reminders to renew their memberships. Membership fees have not increased.

NEST's new programs, FLY! (Folktales. Life Tales. Youth) and the Social Justice Committee, will be seeking grants for their on-going activities. We did apply for a Massachusetts Humanities Grant for the FLY program but were not successful.

Donations have increased this year. The Benevity donation account continues to contribute, with \$5298.00 this fiscal year. We thank our member who began that activity for us.

Respectfully submitted June 2021

Cri Riedel, Treasurer

Northeast Storytelling ~ Governance Committee Report ~ 2021

According to NEST Bylaws, the Governance Committee is tasked with the management of Board issues, recruitment of Director Candidates, nominations, elections, continuing education, and orientation of new Directors.

From a Governance Committee perspective, 2020/2021 has been a momentous year. Two new members, Linda Schuyler Ford and Rona Leventhal, joined the NEST Board last August and immediately set to work: Linda guiding NESTFest and Sparks, and Rona taking on STF 2022. In December, we thanked Mike Lockett for his three-year service as a Board member and were cheered when Barbara Aliprantis agreed to stay on for another term. Then in early June, ChaChanna Simpson became our newest member.

We are a strong, active board where each member jumps in wherever and whenever necessary. However, two of our members Jim Brule and Cris Riedel are scheduled to cycle off this year. While we hope they won't, it could be that there will be anywhere from one to three Board positions open.

There is so much going on with the NEST community. So many new and valuable initiatives. Each year at this time, we ask for people who feel they could help to let us know. This year, more than ever, we need to hear from you. Help us bring the plans we are creating to fruition. If you can't join the BOD, help us by agreeing to run one of the committees or serve on a task force. Reach out to me or to any of our Board members and see what you can do to help.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynn Schweikart,

NEST President

June 2021

Northeast Storytelling ~ Program Committee Report ~ 2021

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- Programs that ended in 2020 include the NEST Educators and the Storytelling Repository. • The StoryTrail continues to be on hold as more support is needed to carry it through.

Scholarship Update

In the wake of STF 2021 being cancelled, scholarship recipients were offered the choice of a scholarship for Sparks or a scholarship to STF 2022. All but one chose the scholarship for 2022.

Northeast Storytelling~Outreach Committee Report~2021

BLOG

Blog contributions contributed by members and non-members by request. Unsolicited contributions will be happily considered. While we are open to storytelling-related topics, we are actively seeking pieces about humor, education, social justice, healing. Our goal is to be able to offer two per month.

FACEBOOK

781 Followers on **NEST Storytelling**. It has been used primarily to share visual promotion of member and NEST shows and events. There has not been much engagement. it is visited by members and non-members.

We also maintained **NEST Storytelling Group**, a private group. Occasionally members would promote here, but has been inactive for several weeks and **has been deleted**.

Storytelling Activities for the Home and the Classroom was started after NESTFEST, when we welcomed a few new non-storytelling members. The purpose here is to provide family members and educators with ideas on how to share storytelling with children. We have sought videos, articles, book reviews, and conversation starters, but there have been few contributions. Within the last week Karen Chace, Lona Bartlett, Simon Brooks, and Gwendolyn Napier have agreed to regularly post content. It is hoped that NEST will become known as a resource for educators and family members, and our contributing members will become more widely known as storytellers who offer programs for children. To see all contributions to the page, toggle to Community.

INSTAGRAM

New, since NESTFEST. Occasional content uploaded.

PINTEREST

Our Pinterest page was intended to be rather static, and to simply bring up our organization when storytelling searches are conducted. Within our page, there are pins for Storytelling in Education, Storytelling Technique, Scary Stories. Storytellers/Spoken Word Artists, and Applied Storytelling.

STORY TRAIL

This is on hold until STF 2022.

TWITTER

We have 457 followers, and are following 413 others. Most tweets continue to be from listserv. Also retweeting posts related to storytelling in business, education and social justice. We've make connections with people and organizations that focus on those areas. There is minimal engagement. Once FLY and Social Justice initiatives

have programs in place, or new activities, we can build on those relationships.

OTHER

Members whose workshops were accepted for **STF 2020** are being given the option of presenting them online as part of a proposed **Muse Hour Storytelling Education** series. While many of us are wrestling with Zoom burnout, NEST would like to accommodate presenters who are interested in this option. For those presenters who prefer working in person, their original proposals *will be considered* for inclusion in **STF 2022**.

SUMMARY

Other storytelling organizations report the same findings-little success with social media. A social media presence might serve is more in the future, but right now, I think we're overwhelmed by electronic communication.

My observation is, we mostly want to connect with one another, and listserv is the vehicle of choice. For event promotion, storytellers are turning to our calendar, NSN's calendar, and ASST's FB page.

While we need to maintain a presence with each social media platform, I would like to be more intentional about Outreach, connection. My sense is that the most meaningful Outreach would be membership development and promotion of members' events through the cultivation of new Story listeners.

It would be tremendously helpful to know what members' needs and interests could be met through Outreach. I would love to hear everyone's top three priorities!

Respectfully submitted by:

Linda-Schuyler Ford, NEST Outreach

Chair 06-13-2021

Worldwide Virtual Storytelling Guild Annual Meeting 2021 Update

We continue with three meetings a month; due to low attendance, Jim Brule's Collaborative Storytelling has been discontinued.

WVSG contributed its own Olio to the NEST Fest; more than 50 people attended.

Roger Jenkins, from Singapore and a FEAST member there, has suggested that we dedicate a program to Asian storytellers. WVSG is planning to offer that program in October; arrangements are still in the planning stages.

Our Facebook membership is up to 549 with new requests coming in weekly. Posts there are announcements of members' events.

Jo Radner has donated our listserv through American University. We are overwhelmed with her generosity and thank her.

The average meeting sees nine-fifteen people, a few of whom attend on a regular basis. When we began two and a half years ago, attendance was closer to twenty. Perhaps this is due to multiple events, perhaps to Zoom burnout. I continue to receive emails of appreciation, and we continue to add new tellers in the US and internationally.

When WVSG began, publicity was wider and more frequent than I am accomplishing now. In the future, I will invite other members to contribute to publicity efforts.

Respectfully submitted,

Cris Riedel

June 2021

8:07 AM
06/21/21
Accrual Basis

Northeast Storytelling Profit & Loss

July 1, 2020 through June 21, 2021

	<u>Jul 1, '20 - Jun 21, 21</u>
Website	
new website changes	55.05
Security	86.86
Storage of Backup Data (Updraft Vault - cloud storage - 5GB)	35.00
Plugins	12.00
Site Hosting	262.80
Total Website	<u>401.71</u>
Total Expense	<u>31,502.17</u>
Net Income	<u>-4,723.63</u>

8:01 AM
06/21/21
Accrual Basis

Northeast Storytelling Summary Balance Sheet

As of June 21, 2021

	<u>Jun 21, 21</u>
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	93,287.45
Accounts Receivable	-142.87
Other Current Assets	3,045.00
Total Current Assets	<u>96,190.58</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>96,190.58</u>
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	50.00
Total Current Liabilities	<u>50.00</u>
Total Liabilities	50.00
Equity	96,140.58
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	<u>96,190.58</u>