

It is within this light that we form
those ideas by which we pursue
our **magic** and make it realized.
This is poetry as illumination, for it
is through poetry that we give
name to those ideas which are –
until the poem – nameless and
formless, about to be birthed, but
already felt.

AUDRE LORDE



KALAMAZOO
POETRY
FESTIVAL
2024
MAGIC

Partnerships

All great work is done in collaboration. This year, we deepened our relationships with the following partners to create truly community-based events.



Soul Artistry, LLC is a Kalamazoo-based creative firm dedicated to cultivating and curating artistic excellence. This year, Soul Artistry professionally developed the lineup for the Poet Mixer Workshop and the Community Celebration of Poets.



The Northside Association of Community Development is a beacon of prosperity to the Northside neighborhood and host of our Community Celebration of Poets!



Read & Write Kalamazoo exists to celebrate & amplify youth voices with writing workshops, summer camps, in-school programs, & after school tutoring. Together, we hosted a youth workshop on Magic!



Fire Historical & Cultural Arts Collaborative exists as a brave space - inspiring truth and freedom - where creativity nurtures youth to express, heal, and connect with self and others. They partnered with us for the Open Mic!



Black Magic Media is a Kalamazoo based creative firm. This year, they are responsible for providing facilitation at the Poet Mixer Workshop and photography at the Magic Open Mic.



Friends of Poetry has been bringing together people and poetry since 1976 throughout the greater Kalamazoo community. This year, they weaved together the community poem!

Welcome!

We are honored to welcome you to the 11th annual Kalamazoo Poetry Festival. This year, we will focus on highlighting the local poetry through our theme: **MAGIC**. Indeed, we wanted to focus on the special feeling many of us get when our words hit the world in the most moving way.

In addition, we are excited to announce a leadership transition!

After completing a year of service, Allison Kennedy will pass the executive director torch to

Casey Grooten



Staff & Board of Directors

Allison "Sonny" Kennedy
Interim 23-24 Executive Director

Nancy Nott
Board Secretary

Casey Grooten
Future Executive Director

Beth Bullmer
Board Member

Cameron Decker
Board Chair

Lauren Carney
Board Member

Adam Wagner
Board Treasurer

Kathy Jennings
Ex-Officio Board Member

The Magic Words

2024 Community Poem

Poetry floats.

It's OK to float.

Poetry can be the safest way
to get to your greatest destination.

Without poetry, where would I store my life?

It can't be kept under the bed
or conjured with a wave of a wand.

Poetry, the ace up my sleeve, hovers
halfway between Chicago and Detroit,
in the coffee shop at Park & Vine,
on the section of Sprinkle Road where I learned to drive
from the passenger seat as my mom put on her jewelry:
Kalamazoo.

The most poetic things about this place
are all the small business owners;
the symphony orchestra; the theaters;
dancing downtown, up & down
the Epic stairs; Bank Street Market;
Michigan News; the friendships that keep me here;
the people, rough and smooth who loved me
when I thought I had passed the point of being loved.
A poem can break its own heart, saw itself in half.

I'm here because when the magic's gone,
it's the space that carries me, halfway
between the big lake and the other lakes,
between Domino's and Grandma's house.
Everyone deserves a space to celebrate, to cry.
Everyone deserves to see forsythia in ice
as the sun shines through.
Everyone deserves to float.
to reach your greatest destination.

I dreamt of leaving,
but leaving wasn't ready for me yet,
so I dreamt of belonging.
I am here because I belong:
to my mama's womb; to the Universe;
to this self, reborn, charged with living fully,
blooming power, in this place.

And I choose to love, to feel what I need to feel.
I choose to pour more life,
even when I feel like mine has been taken.
So thank you Ms. B and Dr. Selmon
for lifting me up. And thank you Mr. Iceck,
for saying in front of the class that my poems made no sense,
so Paul Anderson would turn around in his desk to face me
and whisper, "Fuck him. I love that poem."
What are my words worth?
Golden nuggets of tollhouse cookies;
gooseberries not picked too soon.

I pledge allegiance:
to my words;
to teaching inconveniences;
to Pitty-Patt bustin' spades,
to the magic of poetry.
I pledge allegiance to Kalamazoo,
whirligig of rhythm and jive, defying gravity.

It's OK to float.
Poetry floats.
Floating can be the safest way

Written by 24 contributing poets:

Elizabeth Bullmer, Caitlin, Charlescurtis, Jennifer Clark, Tanisha Pyron Clay
(Pretty Fire), Dé, EGYPTTrinity, Shaquona Espinoza, Hananiah Hardin, Diana Hart,
Kathy Jennings, Allison Kennedy, Elizabeth Kerlikowske, Vidal Kidlat, Bryce
Lewis, Alexander Long, Markeva Love, Conrad McIntosh, Marsha Meyer, Roman
Robertson, Sam, Robert Walker

Woven together by Friends of Poetry