

ADIRONDACK CENTER FOR WRITING

The people and programs



that shaped this generation



IMPACT REPORT 2022-2023 **25** YEARS





Vision

Bringing people and words together.

Mission

To inspire the love of writing, reading, and storytelling.

Goals

- 1 Build and maintain a community of writers, readers, and listeners across disciplines, traditions, ages, and geographies.
- 2 Honor the rich literary, cultural, and natural history of the Adirondacks.
- 3 Partner with diverse individuals, organizations, and schools to promote the craft of writing and the practice of reading in our communities.



Novelist Carson Sickels, 2021 resident

A Note from our Director

At ACW we believe art makes better humans. It's as simple as that. So, our mission is equally as simple: *to inspire the love of writing, reading, and storytelling.*

We do everything you'd expect: readings, workshops, festivals, public art, and retreats, giving both beginners and pros the time and space to do their best work. We design programs across the region in unexpected spaces, like hardware stores, bars, and mountaintops. We serve the Adirondack park and the micro-communities within it, including the incarcerated, senior citizens, teens, and LGBTQ+ folks. We bring acclaimed, diverse writers to the North Country, so that you don't have to travel to a big city to experience the highest caliber of contemporary crafted language. Our simple solution: we bring the art to you.

So, yeah, ACW is all about writing, but also, it isn't about writing at all. It is about creating opportunities for anyone to say what they need, in any way they need to say it.

What does this actually look like? Like giving an incarcerated man permission to write his story in his own, natural voice? Yes. Does it look like the teen processing her identity through writing, reading, and listening to peers wrestle with the same questions? Yes. What about the local attending classes and events as a way of staying sober, investigating his emotions and making art out of them? Absolutely. It also looks like the man who drives hours to our open mics to share his work with a supportive community. Because his tongue was removed and doctors told him he would never talk again, it can be challenging to make out all of his words, so we print his pieces for the audience to follow along. Simple solution, but he becomes more articulate and confident with each reading, thanks to the strength he gains from our supportive audiences. Simple human solutions are what ACW does every day.

We see people being brave and honest every day, challenging themselves to be better versions of themselves. At our annual High School Writing Retreat, one student wanted nothing more than to share her piece, but she suffered from social anxiety so debilitating that her teachers had never even heard her speak.

Simple solutions are what we do: she read her piece but from the back of the room so that she didn't have to face her audience. When she was finished 100+ Adirondack teenagers stood up, turned around, and gave her a standing ovation. Simply stated: that's humanity at its best. It's community with a capital C. And that's the Adirondack Center for Writing.

Sincerely,

**NATHALIE THILL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



The winners of the Adirondack Center for Writing / North Country Public Radio Writing Contest at the Awards Ceremony which took place in March at the Joan Weill Adirondack Library at Paul Smith's College. From left to right front row: Nathalie Thill (ACW Executive Director), Mary Case, Betsy Kepes, Second Row: Pat O'Brien, Fred Balzac, author and master of ceremonies Chris Shaw, Kevin Pentalow, David Trithart (standing in for his son, Albert) and Ellen Rocco (NCPR Station Manager). Not pictured: Mary Cuffe.

WE'RE GOING ON 25 Years OF ACW



1999

ACW is born! Under guidance of Cali Brooks, Betsy Folwell, Jim Gould, Gary Lee, Sharon Ofner, Ellen Rocco, and Isabella Worthen.

2003

The first World of Children's Literature Conference takes place. Programs for kids and teens continue to be a pillar for ACW, [watch our latest here!](#)

2006

The Adirondack Literary Awards launches to honor the works of local authors and poets in various genres.

2002

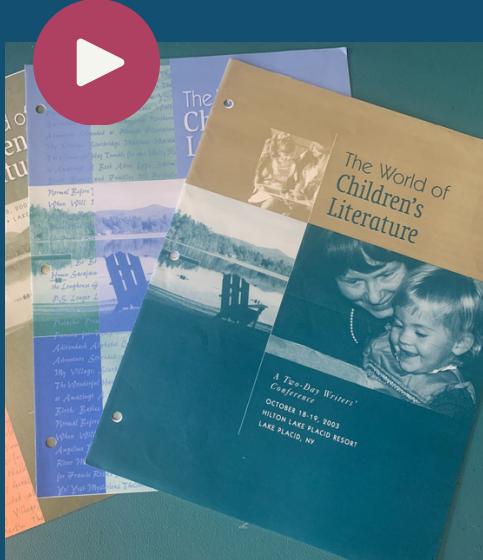
Prison Writing Program kicks off at FCI Ray Brook, which would go on to be the longest running program in the country.

2005

The first annual High School Writing Retreat brings students together from across the park. The program continues to brings 100+ students together every year to write, share, and perform original writing.

2012

ACW moves to the Paul Smith's College VIC and enters a new era of programming. Watch the move with ACW Director Nathalie Thill and staff Christian Woodard.





2013

The first annual Anne LaBastille Writers Residency welcomes six writers to the Twitchell Lake Lodge and starts a powerful tradition of communal writing and editing.

2016

PoemVillage takes over downtown Saranac Lake windows with 100+ poems from locals of all ages. Find lines by an award-winning poet alongside a 4th grader's very first haiku!

2021

ACW moves to its home at 15 Broadway in Saranac Lake and begins a new chapter of events and programs, and welcomes new staff member Tyler Barton. The teen lounge officially opens!

2015

Baylee Annis joins ACW as its newest full-time staff member.

2016

Howl Story Slam is born in collaboration with North Country Public Radio, visiting towns all over the North Country.

2022

The CRNY Visiting Writer program begins, and the first Kickass Writers Festival welcomes hundreds to Saranac Lake!

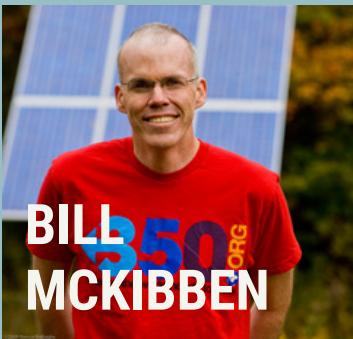
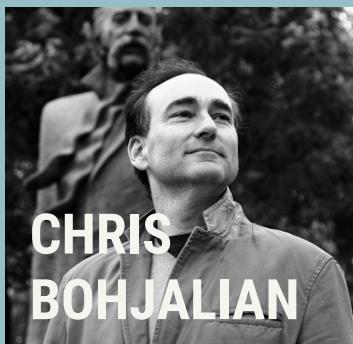
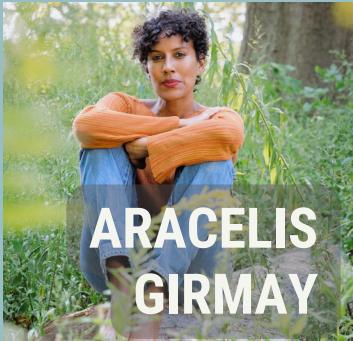
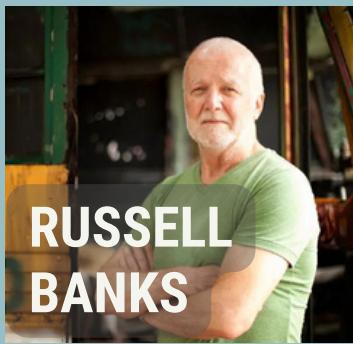
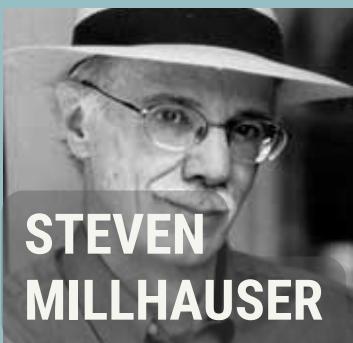
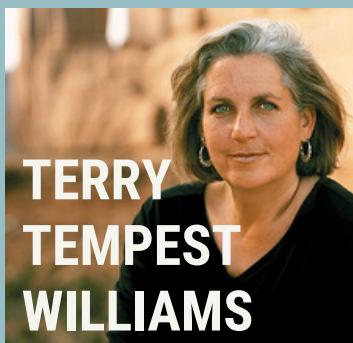
The Story CONTINUES... 2024

25th Anniversary Gala,
2nd Annual Kickass
Writers Festival & more!



Writers of ACW

AUTHORS & POETS PRESENTED SINCE '99



WE'RE GOING ON 25 Years OF EVENTS ACROSS THE MAP

47%

of the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park has hosted ACW events

10+ EVENTS

2-10 EVENTS

Blue Mt Lake Lake George Saranac Lake
Canton Lake Placid Saratoga Springs
Eagle Bay Long Lake Tupper Lake
Elizabethtown Old Forge Upper Jay
Glens Falls Paul Smiths Westport
Jay Pittsburgh
Keene Potsdam
Keene Valley

Ausable Forks Newcomb Saranac
Brant Lake North Creek Schroon Lake
Bolting Landing North River Speculator
Clayton Northville Ticonderoga
Heuvelton Oneonta Wanakena
Hogansburg Queensbury Whallonsburg
Lake Pleasant Rouses Point
Malone Ray Brook

Then —

BETSY FOLWELL ON THE HISTORY OF ACW

Q: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ACW EXPERIENCE OR MEMORY?

A: Twenty-five years is a long time! It has been positively packed with great experiences and wonderful memories in so many communities. Adirondack Center for Writing has offered surprising, thoughtful and fun events every single year. I have lots of favorites from Poem Village and the poetry vending machine to the little bookshop on wheels. But it's been contact with some of the best writers in the country that rises to the top for me. Over the years ACW has brought in outstanding authors for readings and workshops, including Barry Lopez, Terry Tempest Williams, Andrea Barrett and Mark Kurlansky, plus our home talent Russell Banks and Bill McKibben. It's amazing to me how all these programs remain accessible in every way, for kids and adults, village dwellers and rural folks.

Q: WHAT ABOUT ACW ARE YOU CURRENTLY MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

A: The new downtown space—a long time coming—means “center” is real in the ACW name. I’m excited to see how the space becomes a magnet for talent, a learning lab for budding writers and a place for people who love words to gather. It seems that ACW, under the boundless talents of Nathalie Thill, is growing into an organization with a terrific staff who can carry out big projects and make big plans for the future.

Q: WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST FOR ACW IN THE FUTURE?

A: More stories from North Country residents at the Howl! And to heart them on the Howl Podcast!

“It’s amazing to me how all these programs remain accessible in every way, for kids and adults, village dwellers and rural folks.”

Cofounders Betsy Folwell and Tom Warrington with Chef Darrell



Now

SOPHIE MORELLI SHARES THE POWER OF ACW TODAY

Q: WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE ACW EXPERIENCE OR MEMORY?

A: The incredible experience of being selected for the Anne LaBastille Writers Residency this year. I had such an amazing time and wanted to thank you both for doing SO MUCH for all of us throughout the two weeks.

I can't even explain how valuable this time was. I was definitely feeling some imposter syndrome at first as a fairly unpublished writer but the community there was so welcome and amazing. Just an incredible time and I feel so honored to have been picked for such a thing.



Q: WHAT ABOUT ACW ARE YOU CURRENTLY MOST EXCITED ABOUT?

A: I am currently excited to hear about the postcard poem series that ACW is putting on - I've seen promo for it in a few different places and I think it's a great idea.

Q: WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FORWARD TO MOST FOR ACW IN THE FUTURE?

A: I am always excited to hear about the High School Writing Retreat at Paul Smith's. As a past attendee, I just love seeing the young writers so excited about poems. But I am also excited to attend the Story Slam in Saratoga!! I'm glad that I'll be able to attend events even though I've moved out of the area.

"I just love seeing the young writers so excited about poems."

Sophie Morelli, 2023 Anne LaBastille Memorial Writing resident

When we need connection...

ANNE LABASTILLE WRITERS RESIDENCY

287

Applicants to
this year's
residency

A record number of applicants submitted to the annual Anne LaBastille Writers Residency in 2023, showcasing the nationwide interest in the program. What makes this residency stand out from any others in the region is that it purposefully brings together 3 writers from the North Country with 3 writers from anywhere in the world. That's how we bolster the writing community that lives here while also introducing new voices and perspectives to the Adirondacks region, its writers, and its readers.



2022 residents saying goodbye

Laughter echoes at Trans Poetics

IN-HOUSE PROGRAMS AT ACW!

This year 409 attendees enjoyed free and low-cost open mics, workshops, classes, talks, and meet-ups at ACW's home in Saranac Lake. Since our move to this space in 2021, it's been our mission to provide engaging, in-person programs for the local community, for all ages, and for all experience-levels.



Holiday lights shine during an event at ACW

409

People
attended free
or low-cost
programs At
ACW this year

When we need inspiration...

KICKASS WRITERS FESTIVAL

This newly minted marquee event welcomed over 700 attendees to 13 festival events over two days. We welcomed keynote speaker Silvia Vasquez-Lavado, who took attendees on an early morning hike up Baker Mountain, and New York State poet laureate, Willie Perdomo, who gave a mic-drop performance and led a generative workshop for attendees. We're excited to bring this event back in June 2024!

700
Attendees at
the Kickass
Writers
Festival



Silvia Vasquez-Lavado signing books



Some of our amazing volunteers!



1,475
free poems
distributed by the
Poetry Machine

POETRY MACHINE

Pay attention the next time you're in the grocery store, diner, restroom, or your local gas station... you might encounter one of ACW's Poetry Machines! In collaboration with Visiting Writer Erin Dorney, we're repurposed two "capsule" machines to distribute poems and other writing throughout the Adirondack region.

ACW's Poetry Machine has travelled to the far reaches of the North Country, including Wanakena, Rouses Point, Croghan, Indian Lake, and elsewhere. It'll continue to move around the Adirondacks in 2024.

When we need joy...

STORYTELLING PROGRAMS

500

Attendees at
the Howl
Grand Slam

Two programs that capture the heart of our Adirondack communities are the Howl Story Slam and Fact or Fiction. The Howl Story Slam travelled to 12 towns across the park, giving 120+ people the chance to tell a true story live on stage. At Fact or Fiction (new in 2023), we put our spin on storytelling by giving performers the option to lie. Then, the audience gets to ask questions to determine whether what they just heard was true ... or a work of fiction.



The audience enjoying the Grand Slam



A poet with his poem

POEMVILLAGE

Each year, we invite anyone living in the North Country to send us a poem for our sprawling public art project: PoemVillage! We print the poems on beautiful broadside posters and hang them in nearly every shop window in Saranac Lake. In 2023, we brought 4th graders from Petrova to ACW to read their poems on the mic.

An elementary class visits their poems in Saranac Lake



170

Poets
published in
shop
windows in
Saranac Lake

When we need creativity...

PRISON WRITING PROGRAM

The prison writing program at Ray Brook Federal Correctional Institute was one of our longest running programs. In 2022 we hosted 16 weeks of workshops at Adirondack Correctional Facility. That program led to the prison writing anthology, *I'm Telling You Now, Wherever You Are*, which was covered by NCPR, WAMC, and elsewhere. We'll return for workshops at Adirondack Correctional in 2024!

70
Students published in our teen anthology



Published authors pose with their book



Poet Jon Sands at Lake Placid Elementary

488

Students reached through ACW school visits

SCHOOL VISITS

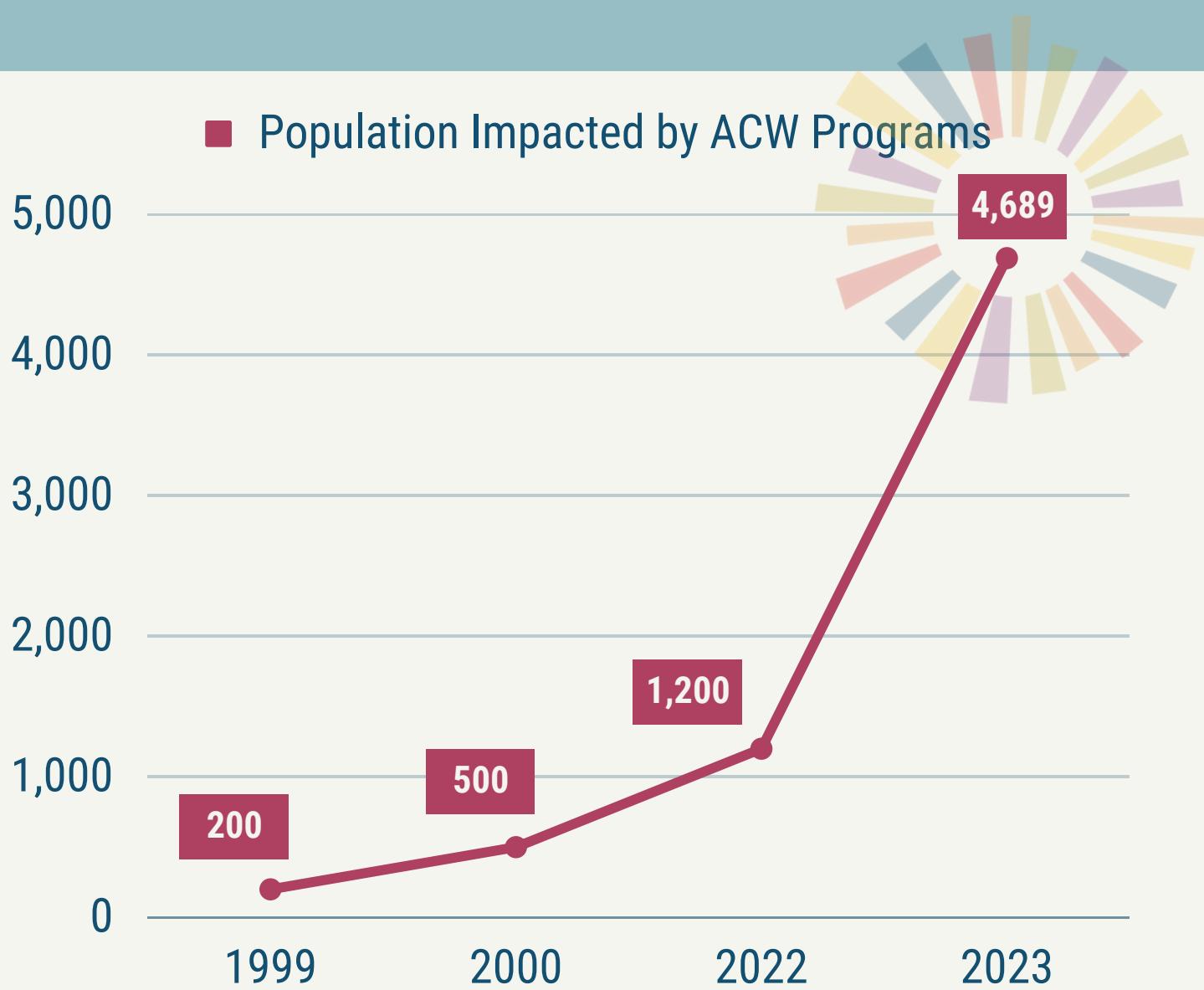
Programs with local elementary, middle, and high schools have reached a record high number of attendees this year. We were able to visit schools, but we also welcomed many school groups to our space in Saranac Lake.

High School Writing Retreat attendees



ACW Program Impact

POPULATION SERVED 1999 - 2023



3.5%
of Adirondack residents were
part of ACW events this year

A teenager posing with her book review in
the Adirondack Daily Enterprise

Next

THE STORY CONTINUES

What's on the horizon for the Adirondack Center for Writing?

1

Celebrating at our 25th Anniversary Gala which will take place in Saranac Lake on May 3rd, 2024 ... and looking ahead to our 50th!

2

Expanding our impact with the 2024 Kickass Writers Festival, June 7 + 8, 2024... and to grow again in 2026!

3

Making ACW an indispensable resource for **all** school districts, private schools, and homeschoolers across the North Country.

An essay contest winner reading at ACW



ADIRONDACK
CENTER for
WRITING

Bringing

ACW Staff & Board

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TYLER BARTON
KAET MOONBERRY
ERIN DORNEY

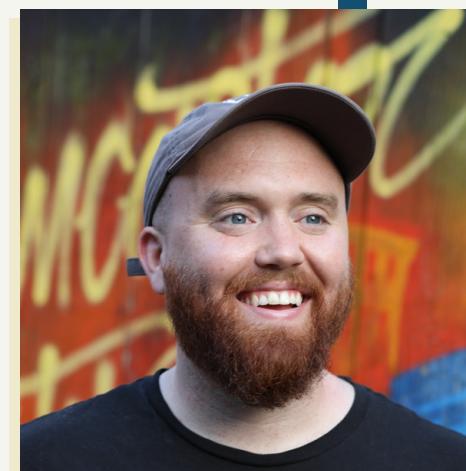
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NATHALIE THILL

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Annual Budget

July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023

INCOME

EARNED INCOME \$64,545

CONTRIBUTIONS

GOVERNMENT: \$79,000

FOUNDATION: \$127,095

INDIVIDUAL: \$60,843

TOTAL \$267,538

EXPENSES

PROGRAMMING

WRITERS HONORARIA: \$26,852

OTHER PROGRAM COSTS: \$73,438

OPERATING EXPENSES

\$138,183

CRNY VISITING WRITER PROGRAM

\$80,000

TOTAL INCOME

\$338,068

TOTAL EXPENSES

\$318,473

*Unaudited results

**Apparent surplus is due to annual funding received for calendar year midway through fiscal year



ANDREA L. ROGERS READING IN ONCHIOTA



Thanks to all

MAJOR FUNDERS

Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, (Estate of Anne LaBastille)
Creatives Rebuild New York
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Faces of ACW —

THEN, NOW, NEXT: 25 YEARS OF COMMUNITY

