



# IMPACT REPORT 2024-2025

ADIRONDACK CENTER for WRITING

This year alone we've helped over 5,000 people tell their stories, here are some of ours...

## A story from the Anne La Bastille Memorial Writer Residency

Every year, this **two-week residency** provides 6 writers (2 fiction, 2 poets, and 2 nonfiction) space and time to focus on their work and to build a community with other writers. It is a very competitive program, around 282 applicants for those 6 spots. This residency is special, we are told time and again by people who have attended others, and the biggest difference is the bond the writers form with each other. This is intentionally baked into our program and the results have been far-reaching, long-lasting, and in some cases, led to surprising places.

One such story: **Emily Weitzman** and **Kate Doyle** were fellow residents in 2020, Emily for nonfiction, and Kate for fiction. They spent hours by the fire talking about writing and their lives. The setting was perfect to share their aspirations. Emily told Kate that she had a kernel of an idea for a one-woman show and Kate talked about her hopes for her short story collection. Since then, Kate's collection, *I Meant it Once*, was published and Longlisted for the 2024 Story Prize and was a finalist for the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize. Meanwhile, Emily wrote her one-woman show and performed it this past year to much acclaim at the famous Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Her director for the show? Kate, of course. Our hearts swelled to see photos of the two of them delirious with their success (and lack of sleep) as the reviews poured in. Yes, residencies are places where magic happens.



As the years go by, we have seen multiple books published by former Anne La Bastille Memorial Writers residents. What a joy it is to watch that library grow. And now we can add a one-woman show to the canon.

This residency and our women writers weekends at great Camp Sagamore are both funded through the Estate of Anne LaBastille through the Community Foundation of Oneida and Herkimer County.

**“When Emily asked me to direct the Edinburgh production, she rescued my childhood dream of being a theater director! ”**

—Kate Doyle



## A story from the Howl Story Slam

Our **Howl Story Slam**, a program we co-present with NCPR, has become so popular that 520 people attended the Grand Slam, this was in January in Saranac Lake. We hold an open mic every month, sometimes twice a month, in every corner of the region reaching over a thousand people.

Did you know? We hold our Howls in bars very intentionally to reach the broadest possible audience. What many people don't realize is that at any given open mic about 1/3 of the storytellers come planning to tell a story, another 1/3 are cajoled by our director, Nathalie, (she is very good at making people do things that scare them) and the last 1/3 are people who initially had no idea what a Howl was but ended up on stage telling a fantastic tale. The Howl is special for a lot of reasons and one of them is it is an event where the audience participates, not just as judges but as storytellers. We are building a tradition of storytellers all over the region, and it starts in bars.



*“It’s such a great program and has helped me push myself and better my craft...this opportunity for reflection and self expression on a public stage has been really helpful.”*

—Grand Slam competitor

Some people ask why we judge the stories, why not just give space for people to tell a story and have no winners? The simple answer is a slam is more fun, people enjoy the competition. But the real reason judging is important is that it makes the entire audience pay close attention to the stories. Afterwards, every single person talks about which story was their favorite and why. They may be surprised by the winner and debate the merits of each story and decide which they would have chosen if they had been the judge. Thousands of Adirondackers are talking about stories and evaluating them critically, all while having a fantastic time and connecting with their neighbors. This wouldn't happen if the slam component wasn't part of it, and we are really proud of what we are building as a result.

## A story from our Legacy Writing Workshop

ACW's **8-week legacy writing workshop** is so popular that we've presented it several times, including twice at Adirondack Correctional Facility. We've published 2 anthologies of the work that was produced during some of those classes and held book launches both at ACW and inside the facility.

At the launch at ACW several people remarked how the workshop helped them make sense of their childhoods and therefore helped them to understand who they are as people today. The workshop leader herself told us that she was feeling unmoored but the workshop helped anchor her in a way she really needed. Most people assume writing workshops are only about writing, when in fact, they are about helping us reveal ourselves to each other and to ourselves.



## A story from our collaboration with the Calliope Brass Band

This May ACW brought the **Calliope Brass Band** up from New York City to work with the 3rd and 4th graders in Bloomingdale school. Together each class wrote a story and then Calliope, a brass quintet band, performed those stories for the whole school with puppets and to the accompaniment of an original musical score. When we arrived to perform, the principal told us the school had just learned the district planned to phase out the school and combine it with the larger one in town. She warned us the students were very depressed that day and sure enough, when they first filed in, the students and faculty were quiet and sad. By the end of the performance though, the students were laughing and singing and so proud to see their stories performed. Calliope did a fantastic job of engaging the students and illustrating the many ways you can tell a story.



# A story about how ACW's programs have economic impact in our communities

**ACW as Rural Economic Driver:** We don't talk about this often but since we are a regional organization, and because our programs are so unique and meaningful, it is very common for people to drive hours to attend our events. When people drive hours, that means they are spending money in the communities ACW presents events.



## JANUARY

The Howl Grand Slam brought 520 to the Harrietstown Town Hall in Saranac Lake. People drove from as far south as Albany, as far west as Syracuse, as far East as Westport, and as far north as Plattsburgh and wherever Morristown is (we are joking, we know it is on the St Lawrence River). Many of those people spent the night, and almost all of them ate dinner and shopped locally.



## MARCH

Two Howl Story Slams, one in Plattsburgh and one in Morristown, we know people drove at least an hour to get to Plattsburgh and some people almost that distance to get to Morristown. Both Howls took place in bars so those businesses had a crowd in March, a traditionally very slow time of the year.



## MAY

Wild Words Teen Writing Anthology book launch brings around 200 people from all over the North Country to Saranac Lake to celebrate their teen writers, many of whom have never been before. They stay for the afternoon, tour around, and often get lunch before the program. Also we host packed Howls in Lake Placid and Upper Jay.



## JULY and AUGUST

The Adirondacks don't need our help during these months but we give it anyway. Howls in Keeseville, Wanakena, Westport means all of those venues had crowds and ACW hosted weekly, sometimes several times a week, readings and workshops and events, with people driving hours to attend and some deciding to spend the night.



## OCTOBER

Our HS Writing Retreat brings 220 students from all over the region 2 days in a row to Paul Smith's College—not only does that affect the local economy in the short term, the college benefits from these students who may be considering college being on their campus. Our Poetry on Broadway draws people from all over including a bus of students from Canton to hear our outstanding poets perform.



## DECEMBER

A quieter time for us, only a Howl and a workshop or two while we manage our annual giving campaign and plan our next year's outstanding programs.



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## FEBRUARY

Fact or Fiction brought 176 attendees to the Waterhole in Saranac Lake. Many of the attendees were from town but at least a dozen, that we know of, came from out of town and again either spent the night or had dinner or a combination of the two. This also means that a local bar had 176 people buying drinks in the middle of February!



## APRIL

PoemVillage in Saranac Lake, Malone, Plattsburgh, and all of St Lawrence County brings people to each of those communities, many people making a weekend trip out of finding their poem. Also, schools arrange field trips to Saranac Lake for their students to walk around and find their poems, getting pizza at the local pizzeria and coffee drinks at coffee shops.



## JUNE

Every other year we host the Kickass Writers Festival in Saranac Lake that brings hundreds of people to town. We've had hotels, restaurants, lodges, all thank us for bringing them so much business in a shoulder season month. This year we held a teen event in Glens Falls where people drove from communities as far away as Croghan and St Regis Falls.



## SEPTEMBER

Our residency program brings 6 writers from all over the country and region to Twitchell Lake for 2 weeks. ACW shops at local stores and markets to supply them with meals for their entire stay and the residents often shop in Old Forge and Inlet.



## NOVEMBER

Howls, workshops, November is a busy time for us. We are in Saratoga Springs, Tupper Lake, and offer workshops in Lake Placid.



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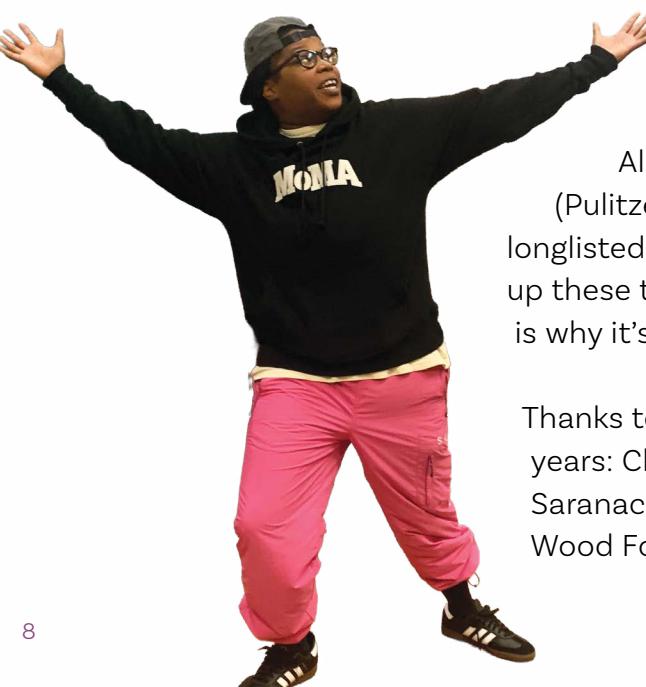
## A story from our High School Writing Retreat

We don't like to pick favorites, but if we had to, our **High School Writing Retreat** would definitely rank in our top 3. Why? It isn't every day you see 220 high school students from districts all over the region gather together for 2 days with some of the most exciting writers working and teaching today, all the while supporting each other and developing their own voices. At a time when teen anxiety and depression is at a national high, when teens are losing their ability to interact person-to-person instead of only online, this program offers a place where teens meet and support each other's words and stories. They cheer each other on when they see someone standing in front, hands shaking, while they read their writing; they walk up to each other afterwards and compliment them on their poem, or their outfit, or on the sticker they have on their water bottle; they exchange contact info, all interactions that only 8 years ago would have seemed normal but are now alarmingly rare.

In the last couple of years we've had new schools reach out to participate, 2 of which reached out because their new young English teachers were once students who attended the retreat themselves and they wanted to share that experience with their own students. You know you have something special when that happens.

**“The problem we are facing is a great problem to have: your conference is too good. As a result, we have too many kids who have been knocking on our door since the first day of school to attend.”**

—Lake Placid teacher



All this and we get to work with writers like Patricia Smith (Pulitzer Prize finalist), Mahogany Browne and Jose Oliveraz (both longlisted for the National Book Award), and so many others that light up these teens' brains in a way they've never experienced before? This is why it's one of our favorite programs, it is the highlight of our year.

Thanks to our sponsors who have supported this special program for years: Cloudsplitter Foundation, Adirondack Community Foundation, Saranac Lake Public School Education Fund, and the Charles R Wood Foundation.



## Highlights from a Very Programmatically Diverse Year

Where can you find bankrobbers, harpists, cartoonists, filmmakers, poets, scriptwriters, naturalists, storytellers and liars? Stop by ACW, you'll find the most interesting people here!

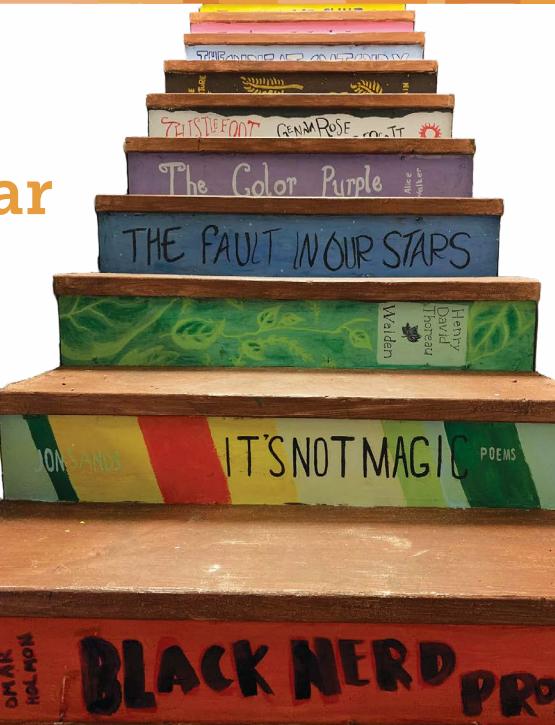
A particularly great event was Fact or Fiction, this year held at the Waterhole, where 176 people attended to listen to stories. Some of them were true and some were lies and the audience had to decide which were which. It's a super fun event that allows us to weave fiction writing into a storytelling format. Note: not a single person guessed correctly whether the stories were true or made up, our liars are just that good.

Sophie Morielli's reading from her poetry collection was particularly meaningful to us, not only is she one of our former Anne LaBastille residents, Sophie attended our High School Writing Retreats back in the day and continues to work with the poets she met there all these years later. I'm not crying, you are.



The middle schoolers at our Story Publishing Camp continue to light up ACW every summer with their laughter, smiles, and creativity.

The heroes of the Saranac Lake Rotary Club refinished our teen basement writing lounge and it looks amazing. "ACW kids" Jenna Audlin and Heaven LeFever even painted the stairs to look like book spines. Among the books they chose were some of the titles from the writers they met at the HS Retreat. I'm still not crying, you're still crying.



## ACW Staff



**Nathalie Thill**  
Executive Director



**Kaet O'Brien**  
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Hello ADK Center for Writing!

I live in Plattsburgh and wanted to tell you of the joy I had from encountering Poem Village as I walked through town yesterday. I had the privilege of standing in front of each poster where I read, contemplated and felt each poem at my leisure. What a great and very human experience! So happy to have met through poetry the people who contributed

## Annual Budget

Preliminary unaudited results  
JULY 1, 2024-JUNE 30, 2025

### Income

**Earned:** \$79,626

#### Contributed:

Government: \$64,500  
Foundation: \$21,679  
Individual: \$110,181  
Investment: \$9,789

**Total Income:** **\$285,776**

### Expenses

#### Programming:

Writer honoraria: \$24,854  
Other program costs: \$28,950

#### Operating:

**Total Expenses:** **\$272,966**

# With Thanks

## MAJOR FUNDERS

Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties (Estate of Anne LaBastille)  
New York State Council on the Arts  
National Endowment for the Arts

## ORGANIZATION, BUSINESS, AND FOUNDATION SUPPORT

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## Vision

Sharing our stories is what makes us human, it's how we know others and how we are known, even to ourselves.

## Bringing People & Words Together

The mission of the Adirondack Center for Writing (ACW) is to inspire the love of writing, reading, and storytelling. We are a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization based in the 6-million-acre Adirondack Park in New York State.



## A Letter from our Director

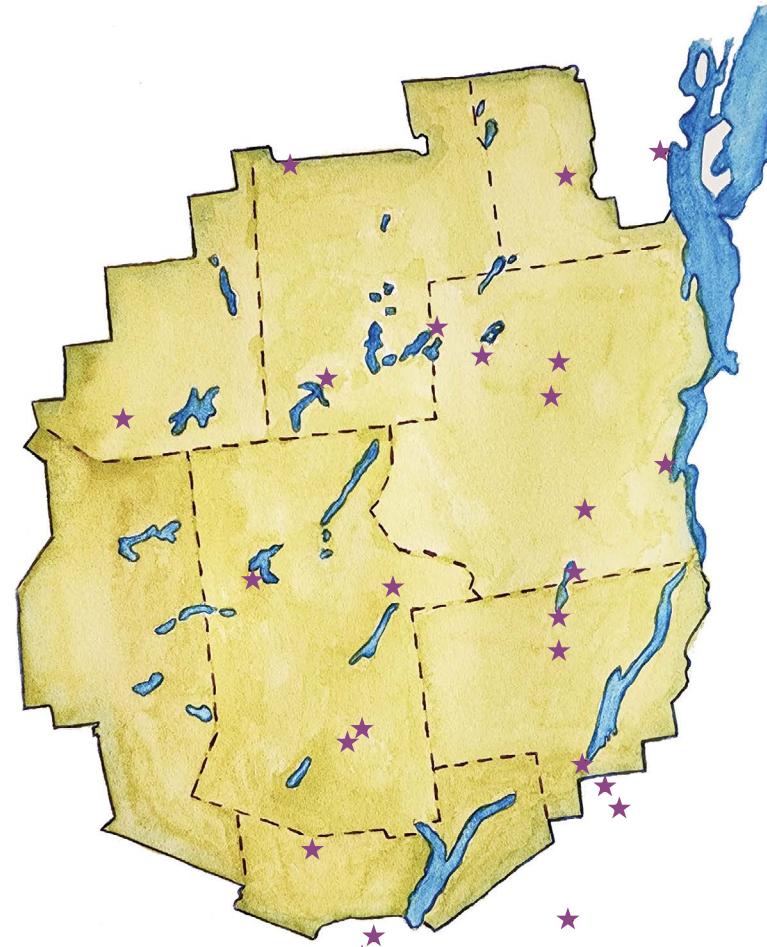
Have you ever read a book to a child at bedtime? Or listened to a grandparent recount stories from their early years? Or written to yourself in a journal to help you understand your own feelings? These activities are cornerstones for the way we see the world, and our place in it. This is ACW's work and why we believe so strongly in it. But, ACW is about so much more than reading and writing. We offer a safe space for everyone, from kids in grade school to isolated seniors, to find and build community. At ACW, we believe that reading, writing and storytelling make humans better, and we see that happen every day through the work we do. ACW is here for the people who need us. In times of stress and anxiety and loneliness and disconnection, ACW is here, solidly here, every day. Community, connection, freedom of expression and thought, this is ACW.

**Nathalie Thill**

Executive Director

## Our 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.



## 2024–2025 Events Across the North Country

Albany  
AuSable Valley  
Big Moose  
Bloomingdale  
Blue Mountain Lake  
Bolton Landing  
Canton  
Glens Falls  
Indian Lake  
Keene  
Keeseeville  
Lake Placid  
Long Lake  
Malone  
Morristown  
Norfolk  
Old Forge  
Onchiota  
Paul Smiths  
Plattsburgh  
Potsdam  
Raquette Lake  
Rouses Point  
Saranac Lake  
Tupper Lake  
Upper Jay  
Wanakena  
Warrensburg  
Whitehall  
Woodgate

## ACW by the Numbers

**71**  
events

Over  
**5,000**  
people attended

**30**  
communities

**19**  
programs for youth,  
**1,134**  
students reached

**129**  
storytellers



Supporting  
ACW helps us  
help thousands of  
Adirondackers tell  
their story. Please  
**donate today!**



[www.adirondackcenterforwriting.org](http://www.adirondackcenterforwriting.org)