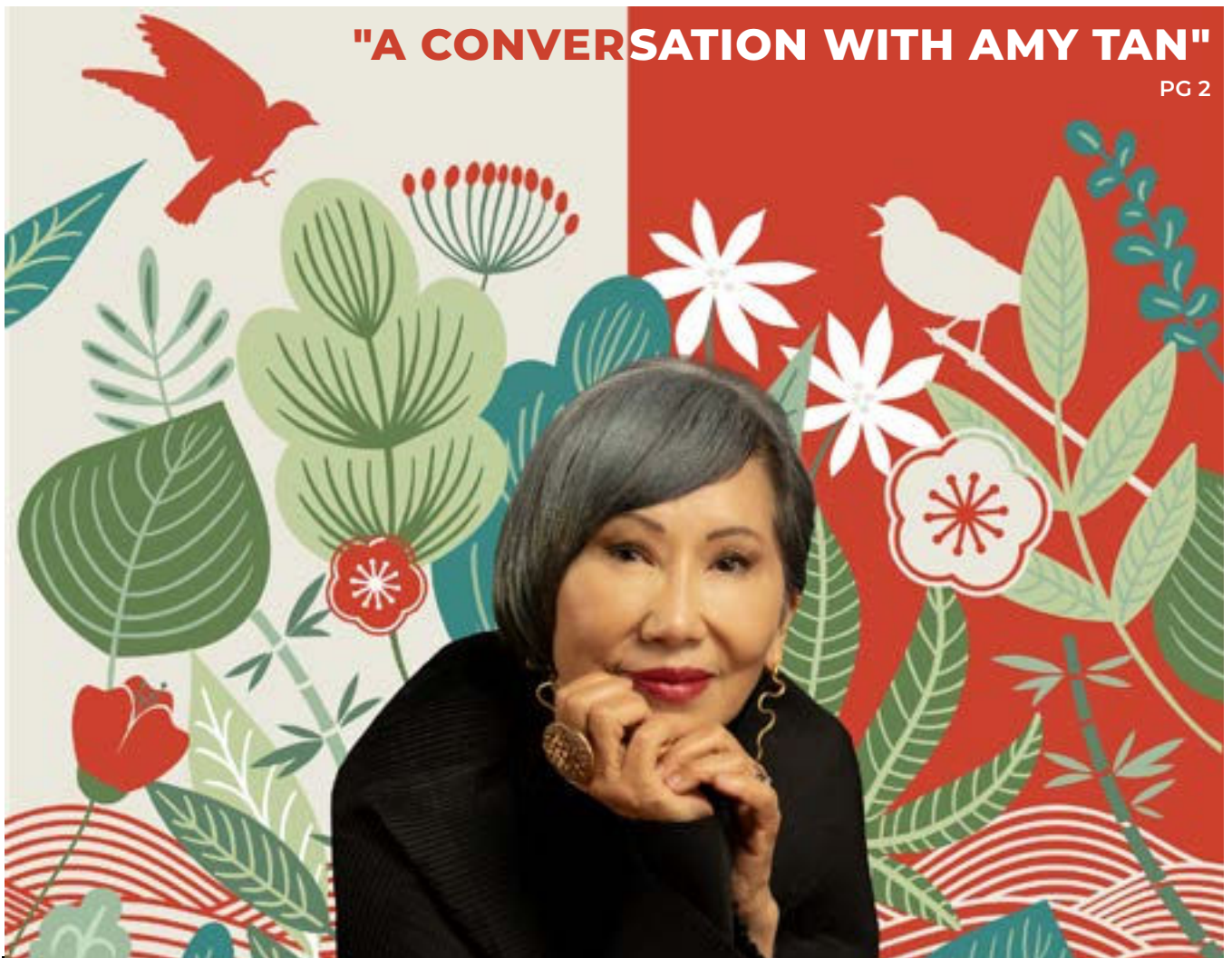




RAPPORT

HUMANITIES NEBRASKA

HELPING PEOPLE EXPLORE WHAT CONNECTS US AND MAKES US HUMAN



"WEAVING A NATION" CHAUTAUQUA PHOTOS

PG 5



SUMMER READING KITS DELIVERED!

PG 10

RAPPORT

ISSUE 35 | SUMMER 2024

UPCOMING EVENTS

- DUE
SEP 3
MINI GRANTS
 September 3 & November 1
(Details on our website)
- SEP
20
HN FALL BOARD MEETING
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- SEP
24
GOVERNOR'S LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES
(See adjacent story)
- OCT
12
THE CELEBRATION OF NEBRASKA BOOKS
(Details on our website)
- OCT
18
BOARD NOMINATIONS DUE
(Details on our website)
- NOV
13-17
NATIONAL HUMANITIES CONFERENCE
Providence, Rhode Island
- JAN
18
HN WINTER BOARD MEETING
Lincoln

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A CONVERSATION WITH AMY TAN

By Dana Gioia

Former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts

Excerpted from the Volume 02, No. 5 issue of *The American Interest* magazine.

In anticipation of the 29th annual Governor's Lecture in the Humanities, we offer Amy Tan's past interview with writer Dana Gioia. Her program on September 24 will be a wide-ranging conversation covering the span of her writing career, from 1989's "Joy Luck Club" to her beautiful new book, "The Backyard Bird Chronicles."



In 1989, Amy Tan published her first novel, "The Joy Luck Club," to international acclaim. Although the author worried that the largely

autobiographical work might be received as "weird stories about a weird family," the richly textured book soon became a bestseller that has never lacked for readers. A novel composed of interlocking short stories, it explores, in Tan's words, "faith, fate, luck, curses, destiny, self-determination, and accidents."

A classic of Asian-American literature, "The Joy Luck Club" reminds us of our nation's rich ethnic diversity. As an arresting contemporary novel, it also reminds us that we often define ourselves as individuals and communities through story.

DANA GIOIA: What books do you remember reading early in your childhood?

AMY TAN: I read every fairy tale I could lay my hands on at the public library. It was a wonderful world to escape to. I say "escape" deliberately, because I look back and I feel that my childhood was filled with a lot of tensions in

the house, and I was able to go to another place. These stories were also filled with their own kinds of dangers and tensions, but they weren't mine. And they were usually solved in the end...I think that every lonely kid loves to escape through stories. And what kids never thought that they were lonely at some point in their life?

DG: "The Joy Luck Club" contains an enormous amount of modern Chinese history. Does that come entirely from your family history, or is it fictionalized?

AT: When I was growing up, I didn't even know World War II took place in China. My parents didn't talk about it, because these were the McCarthy days when being part of China raised questions about whether you were a communist. The story about the young woman going to China for the first time to meet her sisters: that was a story that I wrote right after going to China to meet my sisters for the first time. I would say the emotional parts of this story, even some of the details, do derive from my family's past.

DG: "The Joy Luck Club" of your novel's title is both a gambling and an investment club. Were clubs like this part of your childhood or your adolescence?

AT: I grew up with the real Joy Luck Club. My parents used to meet with a group of [Chinese] friends. They all were hoping that they would find a version of the American dream. The fact



that they were there was already the American dream. One of the American dreams is that you could, through luck and hard work, find great success, and that equaled joy...I don't think joy and luck are specific to Chinese culture. Everybody wants joy and luck, and we all have our different notions about where that luck comes from.

DG: Your mother—to put it mildly—did not approve of your ambition to be a writer.

AT: My mother and father were immigrants, and they were practical people. They wanted us to do well in the new country. They didn't want us to be starving artists. Going into the arts was considered a luxury.

DG: What did your mother think of "The Joy Luck Club"?

AT: Well, by the time I wrote "The Joy Luck Club," she had changed her opinion, in part, because I was a business writer. I was making a very good living, enough to buy a house for her to live in. When you can do that for your parents they think you're doing fairly well. That was the goal, to become a doctor and be able to make enough money to take care of my mother in her old age. Because I was able to do that as a business writer, she thought it was great.

When I decided to write fiction and I said I needed to interview her for stories from her past, she thought that was even better. Then when I got published, and it became a success, she said, "I always knew she was going to be a writer, because she had a wild imagination."

DG: "The Joy Luck Club" is a book of enormous historical importance in American literature, because it brought the complex history of immigration between China and the United States into the mainstream of American literature. Did you have any sense that you were opening up a whole new territory?

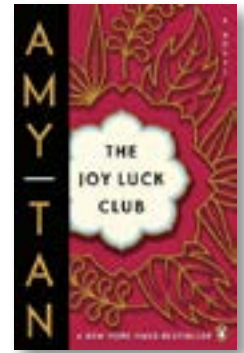
AT: No, I had no idea this was

going to be anything but weird stories about a weird family that was unique to us. To think that they would apply to other people who would find similarities to their own families or conflicts was beyond my imagination, and I have a very good imagination.

DG: This is one of the great books about the American immigrant experience. Was that something that you were conscious of while writing it?

AT: If I thought at all that it was going to be a story about the immigrant experience, it was the immigrant experience according to my mother and father...

The basic notion of this country is that with self-determination, you can create who you are. You have that freedom. It's not a complete freedom, because we have certain limitations that have to do with the economy or prejudice. That, in turn, then allows an amazing freedom to a writer, because freedom is also creativity. You are creating your identity. As a writer, you can create anything you want.



SEE AMY TAN AT THE 29TH ANNUAL GOVERNOR'S LECTURE IN THE HUMANITIES ON SEPTEMBER 24.

HN, with co-sponsors E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues and Union Pacific, invite you to **"A Conversation with Amy Tan"** at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 24, at the Lied Center for Performing Arts in Lincoln. This free public event will also be live-streamed.

Please check the HN website for the most current information:
HumanitiesNebraska.org/Governors-Lecture

For dinner tickets and sponsorship opportunities, please contact Hannah Rentsch at **Hannah@HumanitiesNebraska.org**.

BOARD NOMINATIONS DUE

OCT
18

Humanities Nebraska (HN) is seeking nominations for its Council board by Friday, October 18. Board members are selected statewide from those who show a passion for the humanities and the cultural life of Nebraska. HN makes every effort to find community members who reflect the geographic, occupational, and ethnic diversity of Nebraska, and also seek balance between involvement in the humanities and other pursuits.

Nominations for the Council board must be postmarked or submitted online on or before October 18. You can find nomination forms and a complete list of basic responsibilities on our website or by making your request via email to info@humanitiesnebraska.org. For more details, visit the "About Us" page at **HumanitiesNebraska.org** and select "Board."

2024 SOWER AWARD RECIPIENT: ANNE M. HUBBARD

Humanities Nebraska has selected Anne M. Hubbard to receive the 2024 Sower Award in the Humanities in recognition of her significant contribution to public understanding of the humanities in Nebraska.

Hubbard will be honored for her philanthropic support for many Native American projects, the National Willa Cather Center, Omaha Public Library, KANEKO, Joslyn Art Museum, and other humanities-related entities. Her contributions have made a great impact on cultural and educational life in Nebraska.

Through the Claire M. Hubbard Foundation, Hubbard has enriched personal and public life in Nebraska through her legacy of support in many different programs and organizations, especially those that protect and celebrate Indigenous history and culture.

“Like our Native communities, which emphasize the importance of braiding strands to build strength and resilience, Anne

crafts and weaves together seemingly disparate, unrelated groups toward a shared, human outcome—a stronger ‘braided sweetgrass,’” said nominator Jessica Pate. She described Hubbard as “a thoughtful, strategic philanthropist whose forging of interdisciplinary connections embodies the spirit of the humanities.”

A graduate of Omaha’s University of Nebraska Medical Center and a retired pediatric radiologist, Hubbard leads the Claire M. Hubbard Foundation, which was established by the estates of her late parents, Claire Watson Hubbard and Theodore Hubbard. The foundation primarily focuses on the environment, environment related to human health, STEM education, and Indigenous issues.

Hubbard will be honored on September 24, 2024 at a benefit reception and dinner preceding the 29th Annual Governor’s Lecture in the Humanities in Lincoln. Following the Sower



Award presentation at Embassy Suites, Humanities Nebraska and co-sponsor E.N. Thompson Forum on World Issues will present “A Conversation with Amy Tan” at the Lied Center for Performing Arts. Amy Tan’s appearance will begin at 7:30 p.m. and is free and open to the public. A live-stream viewing option will also be available.

Please visit the HN website and select “Governor’s Lecture” to stay up to date on details on the Governor’s Lecture and the Sower Award presentation.

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY: NEBRASKA WINNERS!

More than 250 middle and high school students from across the state competed in the 44th annual National History Day: Nebraska contest at Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) April 20. Students showcased their research projects based on the 2024 theme “Turning Points in History.”

Out of that group, 56 youth received first and second place, qualifying for the national competition in College Park, Maryland, June 9-13.

From Loup City High School, national first place winners were **Grace Augustyn** and **Kaily Kurtzhals**, **Jaymeson Gappa** and **Raegan Skibinski**. Second place winners were **Taylor Obermiller** and **Morgan Rademacher**. Their teachers are Kim Henry and Janet Kuszak.

From Hastings High School, second place winners were **Yadriel Colindres Fonseca**, **Ashlin George**, and **Tom Tran**. Their instructor is Ann Mays.

“Nebraska History Day is a dynamic forum where students from diverse facets of life can come together to explore the past and envision a shared future,” said Rachel Stallworth, community engagement and resource coordinator at NWU and History Day Coordinator.

The state contest and statewide program are funded in part by Humanities Nebraska, the D.F. Dillon Foundation and NWU. Steve Wills, professor of history and chair of the history department at NWU, serves as the National History Day: Nebraska state coordinator.

"WEAVING A NATION" CHAUTAUQUA DEBUTS IN NORFOLK

Humanities Nebraska introduced a new Chautauqua August 2-3 in Norfolk. Hundreds of people attended "Weaving a Nation" to learn lesser-known stories of the development of our nation. It will run 2024-26 to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

The Norfolk planning committee built a pre-Chautauqua schedule featuring different activities such as book talks, children's reading groups, and opportunities to learn salsa dancing and drumming.

On Friday evening after performances by the bucket drum class and local Hispanic dancers, Angel Vigil portrayed El Vaquero, the Spanish colonial cowboy, on stage at Northeast Community College's Cox Activity Center.

Saturday, various scholars led workshops at Norfolk Public Library. Audience members learned history from Hispanic, Japanese, African-American, and Native American perspectives, as well as fresh takes on the Lewis & Clark expedition, Native American territories, and the Nebraska Hall of Fame.

Saturday evening, Abigail Adams, as presented by Jessica Downing-Ford, provided a unique look at the framing of the U.S. Then, Omaha Chief Big Elk, presented by his fifth-great-grandson Taylor Keen, reflected on First Peoples' relationship with the ever-growing United States. A hoop dance performance closed the evening.

"Weaving a Nation" Chautauqua was made possible by many sponsors and partners, including the Johnny Carson Fund at the Nebraska Cultural Endowment, Norfolk Public Library, Northeast Community College, Visit Norfolk Area Nebraska, Elkhorn Valley Museum, and Norfolk Arts Center.



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

Join these generous contributors and help people explore what connects us and makes us human.

Gifts received between March 1, 2024 & June 30, 2024.

Many donors make multiple gifts throughout the year. Cumulative giving for the year is listed in our annual report.

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*Deceased

Contact Hannah Rentsch at hannah@HumanitiesNebraska.org to learn more.



THANKS
FOR
13
YEARS

BEST WISHES TO HEATHER THOMAS

At the end of May, Humanities Nebraska said farewell to longtime director of development Heather Thomas after 13 years of service to HN.

Heather accepted a similar position at Eagle Mount, a nonprofit in Bozeman, Montana, that offers outdoor adventure for people with disabilities.

Heather expressed that working alongside the dedicated HN staff and board for more than 13 years had singularly been a professional highpoint for her. We wish her the best of luck in Montana with an organization that has a special place in her and her family's hearts.



MAKE AN IMPACT

GIVE NEBRASKA

is a coalition of 75 diverse nonprofits working to build a vibrant, creative, and healthy community by connecting donors to causes they care about.

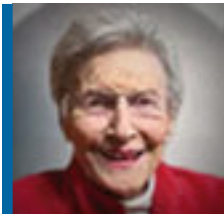


Give Nebraska celebrates the arts and humanities, protects our environment and creates green spaces, provides health care to those who cannot afford it, provides education and advocacy, and more.

Humanities Nebraska greatly appreciates those who designate gifts to us through Give Nebraska workplace giving campaigns.

For more information, please visit givenebraska.org

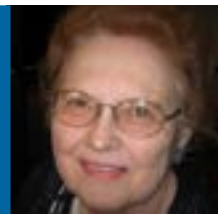
IN MEMORY



JOANNE BERKSHIRE | 1928-2023 Joanne N. Berkshire passed away December 11, 2023. Born in Omaha, Joanne attended the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and became a teacher. She and her husband Bob had four children and loved to travel. Joanne was a career community volunteer and philanthropist, active in Camp Fire Girls, Junior League, Omaha Community Playhouse, the Willa Cather Foundation, and others. She served on the Nebraska Foundation for the Humanities 2007-2013.



EDGAR HICKS | 1947-2024 Edgar J. Hicks died on June 29. He was born in Louisiana and graduated from Pace University (New York) with degrees in finance and real estate. His love and passion for agriculture led him to working at the Chicago Board of Trade and eventually managing the Co-op in Clarks, Nebraska. Edgar's career and philanthropic affiliations were vast and impacted many. His work with the Nebraska State Grange and other groups was truly inspirational. He was an HN board member from 2020 until his death.



DOROTHY RIEKE | 1930-2024 Dorothy Marie Rieke died May 3. She was born on a farm near Julian. At 16, she graduated from Nebraska City High School and started teaching in a rural schoolhouse. Later, she received her bachelor's and master's degrees in secondary education from Peru State College. After 44 years teaching in Auburn, Stella, Humboldt, Johnson, and Table Rock, Dorothy joined the HN Speakers Bureau, educating more than 4,000 people on "Nebraska During the Great Depression" and other topics.



DENISE SCALES | 1956-2024 Denise Scales died on Juneteenth, befitting her lifelong commitment to celebrating African American history. Born and raised in Omaha, she graduated from Creighton University. Though she worked at the United States Post Office for 23 years, Denise's most profound career was as CEO of the Descendants of DeWitty. As part of the HN Speakers Bureau, Denise shared DeWitty's historical significance as the largest Black settlement in the state with countless people of all ages.

GRANT SPOTLIGHT: EDUCATOR GRANTS

As part of HN's 50th anniversary celebration in 2023, \$1,000 grants were offered to K-12 educators to support humanities learning in the classroom. Now, final reports for these grants are telling stories of the funding's impact, including projects at Bridgeport Public School in the Panhandle and St. Teresa Catholic School in Lincoln. Both featured lessons culminating in students giving educational presentations for their schools, parents, and communities.

Elisa Rodak, a 6th grade teacher in Bridgeport, led her students in studying the novel "Iqbal," about a boy who made a difference in the lives of other children. Each student then chose an individual to study who overcame barriers and had a positive impact on the world, and developed a five-minute presentation for a living history museum. Museum subjects included Walt Disney, Bruce Lee, Anne Frank, Steve Irwin, and Queen Elizabeth II.

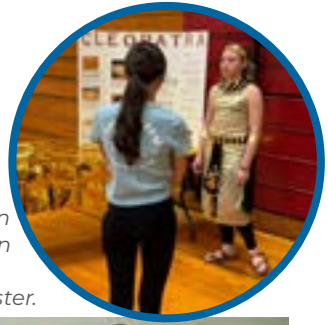
On presentation day, 486 people came to visit: elementary and high school students, parents, and other community members.

At St. Teresa, Vocal Music and Strings teacher Terri Schilmoeller coordinated a "Music of Asia" program for her school. Students in grades K-8 spent a semester reading books and studying the cultural elements of Japan, China, and Vietnam, including language, traditions, geography, dance, folk songs, traditional attire, and music. Some parents or relatives were invited into the classroom to lead cultural discussions from personal experience.

The semester culminated with a "Year of the Dragon" concert for the school and parents. When asked to reflect on the lessons of the program, one student stated, "It is important to study other cultures because you will not judge other people."

Adult audience members were asked their opinion as well. One

Right: Bridgeport 6th-graders held a living history museum. Below: St. Teresa School in Lincoln focused on Asian culture and music for a semester.



person reacted, "I loved seeing different cultures showcased for myself and for my children especially in a somewhat 'vanilla', middle class Midwestern area."

Another said, "I thought about how proud I would feel if I was from an Asian country...and how meaningful it would be to see your culture celebrated in a place where it does not belong to the majority of members."

RECENTLY AWARDED GRANTS

Digg Site Productions, Fremont, \$1,270 supporting a summer Film Camp for students ages 10-18 • **Flatwater Shakespeare Company**, Lincoln, \$1,500 for the annual "Little But Fierce" summer day camps • **Genoa U.S. Indian School Foundation**, Genoa, \$2,000 for programming during the 2024 Recognition and Remembrance Day • **History Nebraska**, Lincoln, \$2,000 to help fund the program "Buffalo Soldiers at Fort Robinson" • **Intertribal Medicine Collective**, Lincoln, \$1,800 to help fund the Indigenous Medicine Traditions on the Plains educational series • **Joslyn Castle & Gardens**, Omaha, \$750 for Architecture on Tap • **Larksong Writers Place**, Lincoln, \$500 supporting the First Friday reading and book talk series • **Nebraska Poetry Society**, Omaha, \$800 supporting educational events during autumn 2024 • **Nebraska StoryArts**, Omaha, \$2,000 to help fund the annual Moonshell Storytelling Festival • **Operation Christmas Card Inc.**, North Platte, \$2,000 for educational programming at the North Platte Pow Wow • **Phelps County Historical Society**, Holdrege, \$2,000 for Project Soddy • **Together We Achieve Miracles, Inc.**, Omaha, \$1,000 for planning the "Walk Through Memory Lane with Ernie Chambers" exhibit.

12
GRANTS
\$17,620
TOTAL

400 SUMMER READING KITS DISTRIBUTED

Humanities Nebraska provided 400 summer reading kits to families across the state. Filled with books, toys, and more, the kits are designed to help preschool and elementary school kids maintain literacy skills for a better start to the fall semester.

This is the fourth summer HN has been able to provide these kits. Plans are to increase the number of kits for summer 2025. HN thanks the **Sherwood Foundation** and the following Give to Lincoln donors who made these kits possible:

- | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
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NEW
INTERN

MEET MACY!

In June, Humanities Nebraska welcomed Macy Sabo as a summer special projects intern.

Macy is a senior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Originally from Kansas, she is majoring in Criminal Justice and minoring in National Security and Political Science. Macy enjoys reading, spending time outdoors, and traveling with friends.



Interning with Humanities Nebraska has allowed Macy to learn more about Nebraska and the history surrounding what she calls "this beautiful state."

In addition to helping pack HN's summer reading kits, one highlight of Macy's summer with HN was being able to experience and help out with Chautauqua 2024.

"I loved meeting the scholars and hearing their stories, both in and out of character!" she said.

INTRODUCING HN'S NEW DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT

Erin Moran joined the staff August 12

Humanities Nebraska welcomes Erin Moran as the new Director of Development!

Most recently Erin served as the Director of Corporate Campaign Management at the United Way of the Midlands. In this role Erin managed and led a portfolio of Omaha-area corporations in their employee giving campaigns. She also led the Community Ambassador program, planned and executed Campaign Manager Workshops and Open Houses, obtained sponsorships, and conducted individual donor outreach and prospecting for additional corporations.

Born and raised in Cordova, Nebraska, she received her BA in Theatre Performance from the



Erin Moran

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Erin continued with her studies to receive her MPA with a concentration in Public Policy and her MA in Theatre Administration from the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

In her spare time, Erin enjoys traveling, acting and singing, and spending time with her family, husband Mike and dogs Louie and Paul. She is thrilled to be a part of the Humanities Nebraska team and looks forward to sharing and connecting with HN donors and other citizens of our great state of Nebraska!

To become an HN donor, please visit:
HumanitiesNebraska.org/ways-to-give/donate



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TO UPDATE ADDRESS OR CANCEL SUBSCRIPTIONS,
402.474.2131 or INFO@HUMANITIESNEBRASKA.ORG

NEBRASKA WARRIOR WRITERS PARTICIPANT HONORED AT VETERANS CREATIVE ARTS AWARDS

Humanities Nebraska has provided Nebraska Warrior Writers (NWW) as a program and resource to help veterans and active-duty personnel express their thoughts and feelings in words since 2014. Professional writing instructors, guest speakers, and opportunities to publish have helped many Nebraskans grow as writers.

The group is currently working on its second anthology, and a number of NWW participants have had work published or otherwise honored.

Cynthia Douglas-Ybarra, a NWW attendee, recently received an award for her writing in a personal essay category. She believes the support and creative space held by the other Veterans in NWW were defining factors in her success and acknowledgment.

Douglas-Ybarra had always been aware of the Veterans Creative Arts competition, but she had not previously participated. After writing a piece inspired by her time as a nurse, she decided it was time to submit her work to the competition. She never expected the outcome.

"I had worked on this piece for quite some time and thought it was time to share it." Douglas-Ybarra's work, along with two other finalists', advanced to the National Creative Arts Festival, where her essay was awarded first place in Denver, Colorado. She said this win motivates her to continue writing and to hopefully share more of her work publicly in



(Above) Cynthia Douglas-Ybarra, sharing one of her stories from NWW's first anthology in 2021 and (left) with the medal she received at the Veterans Creative Arts awards in May 2024.

the future.

Douglas-Ybarra said that NWW workshops have helped her gain confidence in her writing and have challenged her to be vulnerable with the other Veterans. She believes it is a safe and supportive environment where she felt she could express herself and share her work from both inside and outside the workshops. She suggests to those who have participated in NWW workshops to send their work out for publication and for creative arts awards.

"The world needs to hear the voice and experiences of the Veteran. Writing is one way to convey this," she states. Douglas says she truly cannot say enough positive things about Nebraska Warrior Writers and will take the skills and confidence she gained in the workshops and continue to write and share her story.

Veterans, active duty military, and their support persons are all invited to join Nebraska Warrior Writers. NWW is offered in person and online each fall and spring. Please visit www.NEWarriorWriters.org to learn more.