

# West Virginia Humanities Council

Major Grants: **19.1.7785**

Project Title: **West Virginia Wesleyan MFA Visiting Writers Series**

Grant No. **19.1.7785**

Type **Major**

Grant Cycle \_\_\_\_\_

Funded \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted: **Sunday, September 1, 2019 at 7:16 PM**

Applicant: **West Virginia Wesleyan College**

**Project Start Date**

12/27/2019

**Project End Date**

8/1/2020

**Grant Request**

\$3,650.00

**Project Title**

West Virginia Wesleyan MFA Visiting Writers Series

**Has this project been previously funded?** Yes

**Has the project director managed a previous West Virginia Humanities Council project?** Yes

**Has the applicant organization been investigated for its financial or management practices?** No

**Does the sponsoring organization receive federal funds, and if so is the organization subject to single audit as required by 2 CFR Part 200, Subpart F?** Yes

**Did the sponsoring organization have any major program findings in its most recent audit?** No

**Project Summary**

West Virginia Wesleyan's low-residency Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing Program — founded by the late West Virginia Poet Laureate Irene McKinney — is entering its ninth year as a center for the study and generation of literature exploring the Appalachian region and beyond. The program provides graduate-level writing instruction to non-traditional students and a free, high-quality reading series to the public during two 10-day residencies — summer and winter. This project—our Visiting Writers Series—will bring 3 writers to Blackwater Falls State Park for the Winter 2020 Residency, and 2 more writers to the Wesleyan campus for our Summer 2020 Residency, to offer evening readings from their literary work to our MFA students and the public (surrounding-community adults interested in quality literature). All events are confirmed. These funded readings will be combined with readings by guest MFA faculty to create a dynamic series stretching over 4-5 evenings each residency.

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### Project Narrative

A. Explanation of what you want to accomplish and why you are doing the project

WV Wesleyan's Master of Fine Arts (MFA) is a low-residency program that operates according to an apprenticeship model, matching individual graduate students in poetry, nonfiction, and fiction with one of our core faculty writing members or visiting writing instructors, for a semester-long mentorship. Because the majority of each student's work is completed from a distance, the 10-day residencies hosted on WV Wesleyan's campus each July and December/January provide the essential literary-community experience that sustains and inspires our student writers for their semester of solitude when they must balance MFA study with jobs, family life, etc. Our founding director, former WV Poet Laureate Irene McKinney, launched the program with the vision that it would provide not only a vibrant literary center for our matriculating students, but also a source of literary events for the public in North Central West Virginia, with a special focus on writers that explore the Appalachian region in their literature. That founding vision is still at the heart of our mission.

For the last six years, with the generous help of the Humanities Council, this project—our Visiting Writers Series—has been a huge success, enabling us to bring higher-profile writers to Upshur County than we could ever afford to bring with only our program's budget, especially since our program is still establishing itself financially within the budget constraints of a small WV liberal arts institution. This past year one of our most exciting events was hosting Belle Boggs, whose fiction reading dovetailed with a fruitful craft discussion on how to incorporate field work and other research into the writing of both fiction and non-fiction.

Our Series for this coming year will bring 3 writers to Blackwater Falls State Park for the Winter 2020 Residency (our first to be hosted in Tucker County) and 2 writers for our Summer 2019 on-campus Residency to offer evening readings from their literary work to our MFA students and the public (mainly surrounding-community adults interested in literature and writing). We balance our roster of guest faculty by inviting writers with regional focus and also writers of national reputation — writers that bring a diversity of background, region, ethnicity, gender and racial identity, sexual orientation, religious background and aesthetic approach. Learning from diverse voices is central to the mission of our MFA program. Through readings and follow-up question-and-answer time with the audience, the guest writers will offer invaluable instruction and inspiration to all attendees.

Our eight-year-old program continues to grow in profile and hold steady in enrollment; the WVWC administration supports our efforts, but understandably has budget limits for any programming beyond the curriculum, which is why this grant will, once again, be invaluable as we continue to aim high in bringing the finest writers to our campus, some of the best writers from the national and regional literary scenes whom we believe the residents of West Virginia deserve to hear from. (We are aware, however, that times are possibly lean for the Council as well, in the current fiscal environment, and so we are requesting, once again, a modest amount for the coming year.) WV Wesleyan offers the only low-residency MFA program in the state (WVU offers a full-residency program, but no other WV college or university offers this terminal professional degree in creative writing); a series of prominent national visiting writers is essential for keeping our program competitive with other MFA programs across the country.

B. Clear statement about the humanities content of the project

Literature is the *raison d'être* for the Wesleyan MFA Program, and our Visiting Writers Series is a literature project through and through. The open question-and-answer session that follows each reading from a creative work ensures that, in addition to celebrating literature, the series also brings the serious study of literary craft to the audience. The MFA program also makes sure to have guest writers' books available for sale at a reduced rate so that attendees can continue study and engagement on their own. Each writer who visits makes literature both approachable and relatable for our students and public attendees, exposing residents of our community to an engaging literary experience not abundantly available in the immediate geographical area. Marshall University and West Virginia University both offer a series of readings each semester, but our MFA Series is unique in Upshur County and the surrounding North Central WV counties. As mentioned above, we work to ensure diversity in our reading series, inviting writers with diversity of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, aesthetic approach, and geographical location.

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## C. Information about the sponsoring organization, cooperating groups, and project staff Sponsoring Organization:

West Virginia Wesleyan is a private, residential college located in Buckhannon, WV. Founded in 1890, Wesleyan challenges its students to a life-long commitment to develop their intellectual, ethical, spiritual, and leadership potential and to set and uphold standards of excellence. Firmly rooted in the liberal arts tradition, the College is a community of learning based on fundamental principles formed at the intersection of Christian faith and liberal education: intellectual rigor, self-discovery, human dignity, mutual support, social justice, self-discipline, mental and physical wellness, the appreciation of diversity and the natural world, and the judicious use of resources. The College recognizes and affirms its interdependence with the external communities—local, regional, national, and global—and its covenant with the people of West Virginia to share its educational and cultural resources. West Virginia Wesleyan prepares its students through its curriculum of arts and sciences, pre-professional and professional and graduate studies, and its rich campus life program. As an institution of higher education, the College aspires to graduate broadly educated men and women who: think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, act responsibly, and demonstrate their local and world citizenship through service. The MFA program is one of WVWC's four graduate programs, and the College enthusiastically supports the program and this project.

Project Staff: Doug Van Gundy, MFA Director and Coordinator of the Visiting Writers Series.

Doug is MFA Director and Associate Professor of English, and author of the poetry collection “A Life above Water”, and co-editor of the anthology “Eyes Glowing at the Edge of the Woods: Contemporary Writing from West Virginia” which was a nominee for the 2018 Weatherford Award. His poems and essays have appeared in a wide variety of publications, including The Guardian, Appalachian Heritage, The Oxford American, Ecotone, Still: the Journal, and others. His poetry has also been included in the anthologies “A Literary Field Guide to Southern Appalachia”, “Eyes Glowing at the Edge of the Woods: Contemporary Writing from West Virginia”, “Wild, Sweet Notes” and others. Forthcoming articles on his docupoetics work with photographer Matt Eich will appear in Poetry and Poets & Writers. He won the 2016 Still prize in poetry, and has been runner-up in the Eve of St. Agnes and Lullwater Review competitions. He holds an MFA in poetry from Goddard College.

Van Gundy will be assisted in running the series by the MFA Core Faculty: PROFESSOR EMERITUS: Mark DeFoe; PROFESSOR: Devon McNamara; ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR: Richard Schmitt

## D. Outline of promotional plans and the intended audience

The MFA program will work with Wesleyan's Media Department on press releases to local papers and other literary-event publicity venues, and will hang posters in the local area (libraries, cafés, restaurants, schools, etc. in Buckhannon, Clarksburg, Elkins, Bridgeport, Thomas), and mail physical posters to regional libraries. Our target public audience will be mostly adults – but also young aspiring writers – in the area who are interested in literature and creative writing. We hope to attract an average of 60 audience members to each evening event, for a total reach of over 200 for the 4 readings funded. These individuals will be local residents who are eager to participate in the literary community fostered by our established MFA program. We also promote the readings at our booth at regional conferences (Appalachian College Association Conference in September, WV Book Festival in October, Appalachian Studies Association Conference in the spring), through our program's website, the program's brand-new Twitter, Instagram and Facebook feeds (always tagging WVHCs social media accounts where appropriate), and WVWC's own social media presence, along with our MFA news blog associated with program alumni's online literary magazine HeartWood. We have also compiled an extensive contact list (430+) of regional college English Department chairs, regional librarians, writing group leaders, and general literature and art supporters who all receive MailChimp email notifications and reminders of our events. We hope that the new program-specific social media presence will help boost attendance even further. Finally, we record and archive all of the readings and are in the process of making our podcast more professional and widely available.

## E. Plan for evaluation of the project

The MFA Program will hand out the Council's evaluation forms to broader-community attendees, but will also distribute an anonymous Residency Survey via Survey Monkey to all MFA students at each residency, and will dedicate one section of this survey to the reading

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series. Additionally, at the debriefing faculty meeting that closes each residency, the core faculty and I will dedicate a portion of the meeting to the evaluation of the series. We will evaluate our selection process and our planning and promotional methods, as well as the degree of rapport between the visiting writers and our audiences, which will be made up of both MFA students and members of our local community. Reviews and comments garnered from these evaluation methods will be shared in Council reports and used in the planning of the Visiting Writers Series for future residencies. Our planning takes place at the midterm faculty meetings held during the semester that precedes each residency.

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## Estimated Audience

In Person 240

Media

Web 500

## Target Audience

Community College, College/University, Adults, Seniors

## Humanities Disciplines

Literature

## Schedule of Events and Activities

Activity	Date	Location
A Reading and Conversation with Marc Harshman & Ann Pancake	December 27, 2019	Blackwater Falls State Park, Davis, WV
A Reading and Conversation with Sarah Einstein	December 29, 2019	Blackwater Falls State Park, Davis, WV
A Reading and Conversation with Jesse Graves	July 6, 2020	Loar Auditorium, West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, WV.
A Reading and Conversation with Jacki Lyden	July 8, 2020	Loar Auditorium, West Virginia Wesleyan College, Buckhannon, WV.

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## Humanities Scholars

### Marc Harshman

43 Romney Rd  
Wheeling, WV 26003-5662

(304) 243-9711  
marcharshman@hotmail.com

Humanities Disciplines: Literature

Current Employment: Writer, Poet Laureate of West Virginia

Academic Degrees: Bethany College, B.A. (Religious Studies), Yale University, M.A.R. (Religion and the Arts), University of Pittsburgh, M. A. (English Writing)

Major Publications: Harshman's collection of poems, WOMAN IN RED ANORAK, won the 2017 Blue Lynx Prize and was just published by Lynx House/University of Washington Press. His fourteenth children's book, FALLINGWATER, co-written with Anna Smucker, was published by Roaring Brook/Macmillan in 2017. His poetry collection, BELIEVE WHAT YOU CAN, was published in 2016 by West Virginia University Press and won the Weatherford Award from the Appalachian Studies Association. Periodical publications include The Chariton Review, Salamander, Gargoyle, Shenandoah, and Poetry Salzburg Review. Poems have been anthologized by Kent State University, the University of Iowa, University of Georgia, and the University of Arizona. He has just been named co-winner of the 2019 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award and been chosen as an Honorable Mention for the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Poetry Prize by Brenda Hillman. Appointed in 2012, he is the seventh poet laureate of West Virginia.

Role in Project: Lecturer. Mr. Harshman will read from his recent creative work and field questions from the audience.

### Ann Pancake

WVU  
1549 University Ave  
PO Box 6705  
Morgantown, WV 26505-5523

(304) 293-2514  
ann.pancake@mail.wvu.edu

Humanities Disciplines: Literature, Religion/CompReligion

Current Employment: Dr. Pancake serves as Writer-in-Residence in the Humanities Center at West Virginia University.

Academic Degrees: Ph.D., English Literature, University of Washington

Major Publications: Two short story collections: "Given Ground" and "Me and My Daddy Listen to Bob Marley", a novel, "Strange As This Weather Has Been" (which was one of Kirkus Review's Top Ten Fiction Books of the year, and won the 2007 Weatherford Prize for best Appalachian fiction book of the year).

Her fiction and essays have appeared in journals and anthologies like Orion, The Georgia Review, Poets and Writers, and New Stories

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from the South, the Year's Best. She has a PHD in English literature from the University of Washington and serves as Writer-in-Residence in the Humanities Center at WVU.

Role in Project: Lecturer. Dr. Pancake will read from her recent creative work and field questions from the audience.

## Jacki Lyden

National Public Radio  
10014 Brunett Ave  
Silver Spring, MD 20901-2204

(917) 202-5408  
jacki.lyden@gmail.com

Humanities Disciplines: Literature

Current Employment: Writer, Freelance Radio Producer, Writing teacher

Academic Degrees: B.A. Humanities, Christ College for Scholars, Valparaiso University. William Benton Fellowship, University of Chicago. Rosylyn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism

Major Publications: Two memoirs, "Daughter of the Queen of Sheba" (1997) and "Tell Me Something Good" (forthcoming).

Innumerable radio stories for NPR

Articles have appeared in Granta, Atlantic Monthly, National Geographic, The New York Times and The Washington Post

Role in Project: Lecturer. Ms. Lyden will read from her recent creative work and field questions from the audience.

## Jesse Graves

East Tennessee State University  
711 E Unaka Ave  
Johnson City, TN 37601-4107

(865) 206-4453  
gravesj@mail.etsu.edu

Humanities Disciplines: Literature

Current Employment: Associate Professor and Poet-in-Residence at East Tennessee State University

Academic Degrees: Ph.D. in English, University of Tennessee

Major Publications: Dr. Graves is the author of three poetry collections, "Tennessee Landscape with Blighted Pine" (2011), "Basin Ghosts" (2014), and "Specter Mountain" (2018), co-authored with poet William Wright.

Dr. Graves has co-edited several volumes of poetry and scholarship, including three volumes of "The Southern Poetry Anthology" (Contemporary Appalachia, Tennessee, and North Carolina, (Texas Review Press), "Jeff Daniel Marion: Poet on the Holston" (2016), and "The Complete Poems of James Agee" (2018).

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Role in Project: Lecturer. Dr. Graves will read from his recent creative work and field questions from the audience.

## **Sarah Einstein**

5873 Lake Resort Ter Apt C312  
Chattanooga, TN 37415-2786

(304) 906-9075  
sarahemc2@gmail.com

Humanities Disciplines: Literature

Current Employment: University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Academic Degrees: Ph.D. English

Major Publications: Sarah Einstein is the author of *Mot: A Memoir* (University of Georgia Press 2015), *Remnants of Passion* (Shebooks 2014). Her essays and short stories have appeared in *The Sun*, *Ninth Letter*, *PANK* and other journals. Her work has been awarded a Pushcart Prize, a Best of the Net, and the AWP Prize in Creative Nonfiction. She is also the prose editor for *Stirring: A Literary Collective* and the special projects editor for *Brevity Magazine*.

Role in Project: Lecturer. Dr. Einstein will read from her recent creative work and field questions from the audience.



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## Budget Summary

	Request	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Total Match	Total
Honoraria	\$3,600.00	\$200.00		\$200.00	<b>\$3,800.00</b>
Salaries			\$1,863.00	\$1,863.00	<b>\$1,863.00</b>
Travel	\$50.00	\$1,133.00	\$285.00	\$1,418.00	<b>\$1,468.00</b>
Supplies					
Promotion/Printing					
Postage/Telephone					
Equipment/Facilities			\$200.00	\$200.00	<b>\$200.00</b>
Other					
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,650.00</b>	<b>\$1,333.00</b>	<b>\$2,348.00</b>	<b>\$3,681.00</b>	<b>\$7,331.00</b>

## Budget Detail

	Request	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Total Match	Total
<b>Honoraria</b>	<b>\$3,600.00</b>	\$200.00		<b>\$200.00</b>	<b>\$3,800.00</b>
Honoraria for five visiting scholars	\$3,600.00	\$200.00		\$200.00	\$3,800.00
<b>Salaries</b>			\$1,863.00	<b>\$1,863.00</b>	<b>\$1,863.00</b>
MFA Director grant administration			\$1,863.00	\$1,863.00	\$1,863.00
<b>Travel</b>	<b>\$50.00</b>	\$1,133.00	\$285.00	<b>\$1,418.00</b>	<b>\$1,468.00</b>
Travel and lodging for visiting scholars	\$50.00	\$1,133.00	\$285.00	\$1,418.00	\$1,468.00
<b>Supplies</b>					
N/A					
<b>Promotion/Printing</b>					
N/A					
<b>Postage/Telephone</b>					
N/A					

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	Request	Cash Match	In-Kind Match	Total Match	Total
<b>Equipment/Facilities</b>			\$200.00	<b>\$200.00</b>	<b>\$200.00</b>
Rental of Loar Hall at WVWC for Readings			\$200.00	\$200.00	\$200.00
<b>Other</b>	<b>Request</b>	<b>Cash Match</b>	<b>In-Kind Match</b>	<b>Total Match</b>	<b>Total</b>
	N/A				
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$3,650.00</b>	<b>\$1,333.00</b>	<b>\$2,348.00</b>	<b>\$3,681.00</b>	<b>\$7,331.00</b>

### Additional Funding Sources

Source	Requested	Approved
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		

### Detailed Budget Narrative

Honoraria:

Sarah Einstein will receive a main-speaker fee of \$1000 for her one-night reading and morning seminar & publishing workshop during W20 Residency = \$1000 requested Council funds + \$200 cash cost share from MFA Operating Budget

Ann Pancake will receive a speaker fee of \$300 for her one-day reading of WV Writers kicking off W20 Residency = \$300 requested Council funds

Marc Harshman will receive a speaker fee of \$300 for his one-day reading of WV Writers kicking off W20 Residency = \$300 requested Council funds

Jacki Lyden will receive a main-speaker fee of \$1200 for her one-night reading and morning seminar SU20 Residency = \$1000 requested Council funds

Jesse Graves will receive a main-speaker fee of \$1000 for his one-night reading and morning seminar SU20 Residency = \$1000 requested Council funds

Salaries:

MFA Director salary figured at 15% of \$9555 for director duties to oversee project:  $9,555 \times .15 = \$1,433$  is the base salary for this project. WVWC has a fringe benefit rate of 30% for full time employees. 30% of \$1433=\$430, making the total in-kind Salary & Fringes \$1863, in kind.

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#### Travel:

Driving reimbursement to Sarah Einstein for roundtrip to Davis, WV from (within about 370 miles in one direction): \$.405 (WVWC rate) x about 740 mi roundtrip = \$300 cash cost from MFA Operating Budget

Driving reimbursement to Jacki Lyden for roundtrip to Buckhannon, WV from (within about 370 miles in one direction): \$.405 (WVWC rate) x about 740 mi roundtrip = \$300 cash cost from MFA Operating Budget

Driving reimbursement to Jesse Graves for roundtrip to Buckhannon, WV from (within about 370 miles in one direction): \$.405 (WVWC rate) x about 740 mi roundtrip = \$300 cash cost from MFA Operating Budget

Two-night stay for Sarah Einstein in Deluxe Cabin at Blackwater Falls, \$67.31 per room in 4BR per night = \$135 cash cost share from MFA Operating Budget

One-night stay for Marc Harshman in Deluxe Cabin at Blackwater Falls, \$67.31 per room in 4BR per night = \$67 cash cost share from MFA Operating Budget

No travel costs listed above can be considered overhead/indirect cost.

Per diem for Su20: Food: Breakfast \$7, Lunch \$8.50, Dinner \$10 = Avg of \$8.50 per meal; Avg of 5 meals per guest x 2 guests = \$85 to nearest dollar, in-kind

W20 Blackwater lunches: 15.54 per lunch x 2 lunches for Sarah Einstein = \$31 cash cost share from MFA Operating Budget

W20 Blackwater opening dinner: \$25 per person x 2 for Ann Pancake and Marc Harshman = \$50 requested Council funds

Guest House Accommodations: \$100 per night at Edna Jenkins Guest House for summer20 guests (Jacki Lyden and Jesse Graves, 1 night at least per guest, so: 2 nights) = \$200 (in-kind)

#### Equipment/Facilities:

2 readings in Loar Auditorium or Meditation Chapel for Su20 (or comparable campus space), 100/day = \$200 (in-kind)