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Kansas Humanities Council Poet Laureate Program Considerations

Caryn Mirriam-Goldberg

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CONSIDERATIONS

Is it KHC's role to take on the poet laureate program? While this is a decision that the KHC board and staff need to make, it's worth noting that next to state arts agencies, poet laureate programs are most found in state humanities organizations. I also have a long history as KHC Talk scholar (almost 20 years), and I've written and edited various publications for KHC over the years (TALK brochures, a publication on civility in public life, etc.), and from what I've seen, there's very similar goals and programs. Ultimately, KHC will need to decide if the poet laureate program fits its goals, mission, and resources.

Would KHC's agreement to host this program compromise the return of a functional arts commission? The diminishment of KAC affects the arts in painful and widespread ways throughout the state, especially given that KAC's downfall has eliminated much-needed NEA funding. While many communities, particularly smaller communities that have no other arts resources except state and federal dollars, are and will suffer, hundreds (if not thousands) of artists involved in KAC trainings, Arts on Tour projects, educational resources, etc. are also affected. An enormous amount of KAC programming is simply lost at this moment, and this loss will be economic, social and cultural, and from all research and projections, the loss will be monumental. There are a few KAC programs, however, that function much more as singular projects, such as Poetry Out Loud and the poet laureate program. The State Department of Education has already made plans to take on Poetry Out Loud. Whether the poet laureate program continues through KHC or ends will not have much of an impact on whether KAC is made viable again; however, history shows us how much more difficult it is to start programs over again (which often entails re-making all the program's resources) than it is to enhance or transfer existing programs.

What is the impact on KHC staff? There would be minimal staff hours needed to assist the poet laureate. At the onset, staff time would be needed to publish poet laureate webpages (which are available in a much-more concise format than what is currently on <http://carynmirriamgoldberg.wordpress.com>). If fundraising efforts were done in part under the auspices of KHC, KHC bookkeeping services would be needed, but there would be minimal work here (setting up the books for the program, then recording contributions, sending contributors acknowledgement, and processing invoices from the poet laureate, no more than two or three over the year, for expenses and stipend as per the amount raised). In April, there would be more web support needed for National Poetry Month activities. Throughout the year, it would be ideal to have KHC send out several press releases (one announcing the poet laureate program, another calling for applications for the next poet laureate, another announcing poetry month activities). KHC staff could also contact Llewellyn Crain, former executive director of KAC, for details on staff time involved in the past.

Who would be responsible for fundraising? At present, I am responsible for my own fundraising, given the confusing and difficult year behind KAC, which made organizational support impossible. I would anticipate that I would remain responsible for fundraising for this year, and that KHC staff, directors and I would meet as needed to develop a plan for the next poet laureate, including KHC's and the new poet laureate's responsibilities as per fundraising. It would be up to KHC what its responsibility would be.

If KHC is interested, would it make sense for KHC to be a temporary or permanent home for the poet laureate program? There are several ways KHC could engage with the poet laureate program: 1) As a temporary home for the program until such time a state arts agency is properly funded and staffed; 2) As a permanent home for the program; or 3) As a home for the poet laureate program until a

partnership arrangement can be worked out with such groups as a viable arts agency and/or non-profit organizations. It is up to KHC to determine the best path for moving forward in concert with KHC's mission.

What happens if KHC declines to take on this program? Sadly, the poet laureate would likely end after my term unless there is another organization or agency I haven't thought of that expressed interest. Poet laureate programs need organizational support to exist.

Would hosting the poet laureate program have a negative impact on KHC state funding? It's hard to imagine that hosting this program would have any negative impact, given that the poet laureate program is extremely respected, even lauded, by legislators and governors over the years. There is no controversy surrounding the poet laureate program, and I'm even moderating a session at Mary Brownback's literary festival and later going to a reception at the governor's mansion. Many in the arts community have told me how much people in both political parties support the poet laureate program, which brings the state prestige at a low cost overall.