

## Kathryn Kysar

### Biographical Information

**Kathryn Kysar** is a professor at Anoka-Ramsey Community College in Minneapolis, where she curates the Two Rivers Reading Series. She earned a B.A. in English and anthropology from Hamline University and an M.F.A. in poetry from Wichita State University. Kysar's poems have been heard on Garrison Keillor's *A Writer's Almanac* and published in many literary magazines including the *A.I.D. Review*, *Great River Review*, *Midland Review*, *Mizna*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Permafrost*, *Piedmont Literary Review*, *Pinyon*, and *The Talking Stick*. Her work has been anthologized in *To Sing Along the Way: Minnesota Women Poets from Pre-Territorial Days to the Present*, and her essays have appeared in *China Insight* and *Speakeasy*. A winner of the Lake Superior Writers and SASE Poetry Contests, Kysar has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, Norcroft, The Anderson Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, and Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts. Her book of poetry, *Dark Lake*, was published by Loonfeather Press in 2002 and will be going into a second printing in late 2006.

### Campaign Statement

"I have been an individual member of AWP since the early 1990s when, as the only writer at a suburban community college, I sought out collegial support at the AWP conferences. AWP connected me to the larger writing world through workshops, discussions, pedagogy presentations, readings, and the book fair. I was soon organizing panels and found camaraderie in the Two Year College Caucus where I served as vice president from 2002-2004 and president from 2004-2006. During this time, the caucus instituted a listserve for regular email communication, created hallmarks for the two year college, wrote bylaws, examined the joys of creating AFA programs, and held readings to share our work. Through the caucus, we built a community for creative writing faculty at two-year colleges from across the country.

"As a board member, I would take this experience and expand its scope to encompass all individual members. As AWP grows, we need to find ways to create smaller communities within the conference. Developing the website as a tool for communication, creating caucuses, and initiating forums to share and exchange ideas will help individual members connect meaningfully with other writers, editors, and arts administrators.

"With the expansion of AFA certificates and programs, more students are coming into BFA and MFA programs from two year colleges, and many MFA graduates are seeking jobs at two year colleges. If elected, I could bring a voice from the two year colleges to the board to improve communication and deepen understanding between these different levels of programs.

"I have extensive experience in non-profit arts organizations building innovative new programs. I teach regularly at the Loft Literary Center, the largest non-academic literary center in the country. I was the first writer-in-residence at Banfill-Locke Center for the Arts, where I started a successful reading series, residency program, and community writing group. I have curated several reading series at coffeeshops and bookstores and co-

organized the first Minnesota State Colleges and Universities creative writing conference. Through these activities, I have gained insight into the unique experiences of individual writers, some unaffiliated with academic institutions. I have also gained an understanding of the challenges and rewards curators and arts administrators face.

"My experience as a writer, teacher, and curator uniquely qualifies me to represent the individual member on the AWP board of directors. Thank you for considering my candidacy."

## Campaign Statement

"I was into my thirties before I conceived of the idea of entering an MFA program, and that decision changed not just my livelihood but my life. Despite the flaws that critics seem all too happy to find in the academic workshop experience, I believe that creative writing belongs in a college setting and that writing in the academy is a win-win situation for all of us – teacher, student, writer, and editor. Nothing is perfect, of course, but that shouldn't stop our best effort. For that reason, my main interest as a member of the AWP Board would be to insure the health of the organization and the various programs we serve so that others will have the opportunity to discover the path that I have found so rewarding. I honestly believe the adage that 'art saves lives,' because it saved mine.

"At the same time, the world of college creative writing is facing formidable pressures, from the ubiquitous 'bottom line' business model, from continued funding cutbacks, and from an increasing emphasis on online course delivery systems. Insuring the health of literary pursuits in and out of academia is not as simple as keeping a healthy status quo – there are challenges to be met, innovations to be launched, fights to be waged, and in all of this, the AWP is positioned as our strongest advocate.

"In addition to my interest in preserving the health and vitality of creative writing courses and programs in the university, I am heartened by the recent expansion of the AWP into non-academic writing communities. The world of literary writing and publishing is also undergoing rapid transformations – ask any publisher, literary magazine editor, reading series coordinator, or individual writer. The AWP can continue to work here as well, to keep the literary novel on the shelves, to promote small poetry presses, and to help nurture continuing venues for emerging writers to publish and present.

"My goal as a member of the Board of AWP, in other words, will be to advocate for individual members in both academic and non-academic circles and to help foster avenues to bring these two circles into closer and more fruitful working relationships. The success of one enterprise, I believe, is essential to the success of the other. The community of those who value serious literature is not large, but we are strong, committed, and resourceful.

"Finally, let me speak to a few specifics. The important work of the AWP that I would like to see continue and expand includes *The Writer's Chronicle* and the AWP Award Series for books, the Intro Awards, advocacy activities for writing programs and individual writers, advocacy for adjunct faculty, the Annual Conference and Pedagogy Forum, the Job List. Okay, maybe that's everything. But I believe the AWP is doing important work, and I would like to see that important work continue and grow."