

FSF 2025 Committee Member Short Bios

Dr. Gary Berg-Cross (President) a cognitive psychologist (PhD, SUNY–Stony Brook, BS from Rennselaer Polytechnic Institute) is now semi-retired from a professional life that included R&D in applied data & knowledge engineering, collaboration, and AI planning research. He has been a Board & Trustee Member of the Friends of the Library Montgomery County and serves are several professional Boards.

Ari Brooks (Friends of the Library Liaison) is an experienced fundraiser and nonprofit manager. As Executive Director of Friends of the Library (FoL), Montgomery County, she handles fundraising, marketing, membership recruitment, board engagement, and financial oversight. She is a graduate of the 2004 class of Leadership Montgomery and was the first recipient of the County Executive's Emerging Leader award in 2009.

Dr. Jackson R. Bryer (Past President) is Professor of English (Emeritus) at the University of Maryland. He is co-founder and president of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society and author, editor, or co-editor of 17 books by or about F. Scott and/or Zelda Fitzgerald, among them *The Critical Reputation of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, *New Essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald's Neglected Stories*, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Reception*, *The Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald: New Approaches in Criticism*, *Dear Scott/Dear Max: The Fitzgerald-Perkins Correspondence*, and *Dear Scott, Dearest Zelda: The Love Letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald*. He has been a member of the Committee since its inception in 1996.

Dino Caterini (Committee Member) is a retired Foreign Service Officer who served for thirty-five years with the United States Information Agency, the organization that handled educational and cultural affairs overseas, including the Fulbright Scholarship program. He helped foster American Studies and American Literature in universities in India, Ethiopia, Somalia, Pakistan, Burma, Germany and Italy. He organized exhibits on Fitzgerald and other American literary figures at American Centers overseas as well as at foreign universities. His undergraduate BA degree is in International Relations from Miami University (Ohio), and his JD graduate degree is in law and political science from New York University. He studied overseas on a Fulbright Scholarship at the University of Padua in Italy and has been associated with the Rockville Fitzgerald Festival/Conference since its beginning in 1996. He is proud to have been to every annual conference since then and has been on the Fitzgerald Fest organizing committee for the past four years.

Patrick Fromm (Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) is the Interim Assistant Director of Programming and Outreach for Montgomery County Public Libraries. He has worked in public libraries since the age of 15, and he loves supporting this vital, democratic cornerstone of the community through his work. He graduated from University of Maryland, Baltimore County with a major in English literature and a minor in creative writing. His Master's of Library and Information Science is from Clarion University. While born and raised in Baltimore, his wife called Rockville her home for many years and they were married here in 2013. He is honored to serve as the MCPL liaison.

Dr. Eleanor Heginbotham (Secretary), Professor Emerita of English at Concordia University in St. Paul, co-chaired the first F. Scott Fitzgerald Society International Conference held in the author's

birthplace in St. Paul MN. Professor Heginbotham has helped with most of the conferences/ festivals in Rockville, site of the author's grave. She has taught on five continents, most recently at American University's OLLI. She has co-chaired four major conferences; and has published two books and numerous articles, mainly on Emily Dickinson.

Susan Hoffmann (Treasurer & Committee Member), former mayor of Rockville, Biden delegate to the 2020 Democratic National Convention, political and community activist. During her tenure in office, Ms. Hoffmann established the Rockville Art in Private Development statute which requires private developers to provide art or a donation to the support of public art. Ms. Hoffmann serves on the Judicial Inquiry Board of the Maryland Commission on Judicial Disabilities, as well as Chair of the Spirit Club Foundation, and is Vice President of the Theatre Consortium of Silver Spring, is a member of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Festival Committee, and is on the Sunflower Bakery Board. She also is a former Rockville City Councilmember and a former member of the Rockville Planning Commission. During her employment with Montgomery County, MD, she headed up marketing and special events during and after the redevelopment of Downtown Silver Spring. Ms. Hoffmann is the founder of both the annual Montgomery County Thanksgiving Parade and the annual Silver Spring Jazz Festival.

Mary Hopkins (Short Story Contest Coordinator) is an English teacher at The Steward School in Richmond, Virginia. She is currently the advisor to both the Middle School newspaper and Creative Writing Club. The former Assistant Head of School at Holy Child in Potomac, Maryland, Mary has worked in the field of English education as both an administrator and a classroom teacher for more than 25 years.

Joseph Monte (Vice President) was an Einstein High School College Counselor for fifty-one years, has served on the F. Scott Fitzgerald Conference Committee for 10 years, and has been President of six different educational boards. He is also a writer for "American Teacher."

Nancy Pickard (Committee Member) is an historic preservation and community planning professional. In her current position as Executive Director at Peerless Rockville, Historic Preservation, Ltd., she works with concerned citizens, volunteers, property owners and local government agencies to identify, protect and safeguard the City's heritage. Nancy holds Master's Degrees in Community Planning and Historic Preservation from the University of Maryland, and a Bachelor's Degree from Penn State.

Zach Powers (Committee Member) is The Writer's Center's Communications Manager is a seasoned media specialist with 15 years of experience, including many years working with nonprofits. He's also an accomplished author of literary fiction, including an award-winning short story collection *Gravity Changes*, BOA Editions, 2017) and a novel, *First Cosmic Velocity*,

Elizabeth Redisch (Festival Coordinator) is a jack of all trades. Trained as an attorney, she has not practiced since she moved to the DC area. She currently works as a Weight Watchers coach, a substitute teacher in the Montgomery County Schools, and as the Coordinator for the Festival.

Taryn Trazkovich (MCPS liaison) .Taryn Trazkovich is the festival liaison to Montgomery County Public Schools. Currently, she teaches English and journalism at Rockville High School where she is also the staff advisor of the student newspaper, *The Rampage*.

Betty Wisda (Rockville City Liaison) has been the Arts Programs Supervisor for the City of Rockville, Maryland since 1979. She is responsible for the coordination, planning and development of citywide visual, performing and literary arts for all ages. She has received numerous awards from the National Recreation and Parks Association and Maryland Recreation and Parks Association for her innovation, creativity, and dedication to the arts.

Naomi Goldstein (Student Representative) is a high school student at ... School. She enjoys writing short stories and She was the winner of the 2023 F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Festival Short Story Contest for Students.

Jeremie.amoroso (Committee Member) is an international development strategist from Trinidad & Tobago who currently lives in Washington, DC. He was a finalist of the 2023 F. Scott Fitzgerald Literary Festival Short Story Contest for Adults. His work has been published in *The Plentitudes* and he was longlisted twice for the Commonwealth Short Story Prize. His published research focuses on education policy.

Nicolas Leininger (Committee Member) is originally from West Chester, Pennsylvania. He has been living and working in DC since the summer of 2018. Nick graduated from American University in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in Public Relations and Strategic Communications. Nick's professional background is in sales, fundraising, and account management. During his days as a student, Nick had his poem "The Sin of Omission" published in the 2017 edition of *Bleakhouse Publishing's Tacenda* magazine. Nick has his poems "Breathe" and "Enough" featured in *Burgeon Online*. His poem "Broken" is featured in the 2021 Day Eight Poetry Anthology *The Great World of Days*. His poems "Passing", "Equilibrism", "The First Time I Felt Black" and "Thanksgiving" are included within the *Diaspora Café* poetry collection. His poem "Friend Ships" was accepted by *Wingless Dreamer* and is featured within their *Sea or Seashore* anthology. His poems "Kin" and "Miles Away" are included within the *Mid Atlantic Review* 2023 magazine. Nick has been using poetry as a tool of self-reflection throughout the 2020-2023 COVID19 pandemic. He's been a huge fan of F Scott Fitzgerald ever since high school. Nick is currently finishing his 9th draft of a screenplay he began writing in 2021 called "Gatsby's Ghost", a new screen adaptation of *The Great Gatsby* emphasizing the racial reckoning of the roaring 20's. He's also working on a documentary series where he interviews millennials that were living in DC during the summer of George Floyd.

Sally Huggins Toner (Committee member) Wife, mother, writer, and teacher of high school English for over twenty years with a particular interest in fiction, poetry, and educational advocacy. Has published work in *Gargoyle Magazine*, *The Great Gatsby Anthology*, *The Delmarva Review* and other online and print collections. Has also conducted educational workshops for the state of Virginia focusing on multiple intelligences and formative assessment in the secondary classroom. Likes to foster creativity in young people (and the public at large) while developing and sharing her own creative work.

Dr. Laura Kuhlmann ((Committee member)) is a cancer biologist (PhD Heidelberg University) with fourteen years experience in basic research. In 2021 she transitioned to a medical writing career and is now working with the National Cancer Institute (NIH) in managing and reporting early-stage clinical trials. She is also a part-time fiction writer focused on promoting emerging writers and assisting their independent publication efforts. A native of Romania, she is fluent in four languages. She currently calls Rockville her home.

Jarvis Slacks (Committee Member) is a Professor at Montgomery College, Rockville, where he teaches composition and creative writing. He holds an MFA from the University of North Carolina and, in his own writing, focuses primarily on fiction. By advising students in Humanities, he hopes to give students the same opportunities that he had: "Sometimes, we only need a chance. "

Monica Mische (Committee Member) is a Professor at Montgomery College, Rockville, where she teaches composition and developmental English, coaches students with disabilities, and helps edit the *Potomac Review*. She holds a PhD in literature from the Catholic University of America. When time allows, she writes non-fiction.

Nicole Metas (Committee Member, social media) has written business plans for 5Ks, led communications on in-house "Twitters" such as Yammer & Viva Engage and some business Instagram pages, as well as authored monthly newsletters, assisted with grant writing & donor management, secured sponsorships, and most of all managed volunteers and day of operations for a variety of events in fitness and the arts. Nicole is a graduate of Point Park University and has built a career in fitness and the arts that spans 10+ years. She was featured on CBS Philly for her work in motivating kids to find the joy in being active, and spends her time with her bunny-child, when not working/volunteering/traveling/reading.