

# Marc Harshman and Lunch With Books Present: the LAUNCH OF the NEW WHEELING POETRY SERIES!



An exciting new poetry event is coming to the Lunch With Books program at the Ohio County Public Library. The “Wheeling Poetry Series” will feature three annual readings by some of the finest poets from our Appalachian region and beyond. When he is available, Marc Harshman, the poet laureate of West Virginia, will serve as host.

The series came about as a result of an ongoing conversation with Harshman, who felt that there was a need for a dependable venue in which to present major American poets reading and talking about their work here in West Virginia and more specifically here in Wheeling. Harshman had long lamented the loss of the James Wright Festival which had been held for many years in Wright’s home town of Martins Ferry, Ohio. “That annual event was a towering success, lauded by poets across the U.S., and I see no reason why such a success cannot be replicated here in Wheeling. And some will remember that frequently some of the programming for the Wright festival was, in fact, held at various locations in Wheeling.”

“I have a great faith in poetry to refocus in us what it means to be human, and with every passing year I feel an ever greater need to be reminded about what it is that we hold in common as men and women who value beauty and the kind of meaning revealed in artistic expression. I am not embarrassed to continue to quote as immensely relevant William Carlos Williams’ adage that ‘It is difficult / to get the news from poems / yet men die miserably every day / for lack / of what is found there.’ In a political season that seems more sad and pathetic than ever before, perhaps the news that may be found in poetry will hold a brightness, a freshness more useful than the sound-bites from talking heads reporting on the doings of the millionaires and corporate figure heads dominating what currently passes for news here in America.”



The Wheeling Poetry Series opener will feature the current poet laureate of Kentucky, George Ella Lyon.

She is the author of four books of poetry, a novel, a memoir, and a short story collection as well as thirty-seven books for young readers. Her first book, *Mountain* (a poetry chapbook), came out in 1983.

Of her novel *With a Hammer for My Heart* (DK 1997, Univ. Press of Ky, 2007), a starred review in *Booklist* said, “Lyon gives readers a story rich in precise, gorgeous language that glows like a sword on the forge and cuts as deep. . . . Tragedies old and new weave a tiny Kentucky town into the center of the universe.” *Hammer* was chosen for Borders’ “Original Voices” series, adapted as a play, and optioned by filmmakers.

Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets, Naomi Shihab Nye wrote of *Many-Storied House*, Lyon’s most recent poetry collection, “We all live in this house. These stories belong to everyone. George Ella Lyon writes the most transporting, intuitive, inviting poems; their doors feel wide open. Her balancing touch is generous enough (it’s magical how she does this) to include us all. I love, love, love this book.”

Of Lyon’s memoir, *Don’t You Remember?* (MotesBooks, 2007) novelist Lee Smith said, “Enthralling . . . a mystery story of the highest order,” and Bobbie Ann Mason called it “an irresistible story, filled with suspense and wonder.”

Lyon’s honors include an Al Smith Fellowship, fellowships to the Hambidge Center for the Arts, numerous grants from The Kentucky Foundation for Women, a Pushcart Prize nomination, and a feature in the PBS series, *The United States of Poetry*. Her books have been chosen for the Appalachian Book of the Year award, the Aesop Prize, ALA’s Schneider Family Book Award, the Jane Addams Honor Book, the Golden Kite Award, the New York Public Library’s Best Book for Teens list, and the Parents’ Choice Silver Medal. *Voices from the March on Washington*, co-written with J. Patrick Lewis, won the Cybils Award for Poetry in 2014.

In April 2015 Lyon was appointed as Kentucky’s Poet Laureate. She attended Centre College, the University of Arkansas, and Indiana University, where she studied with poet Ruth Stone. A native of Harlan County, Kentucky, Lyon is the daughter of Gladys and Robert Hoskins. She works as a freelance writer and teacher based in Lexington. With her husband, musician /writer Steve Lyon, she has raised two sons. More information, is available at [www.georgeellalyon.com](http://www.georgeellalyon.com).

George Ella Lyon’s appearance at the Wheeling Poetry Series at Lunch with Books will occur on Tuesday, September 29<sup>th</sup>, at noon in the Ohio County Public Library. “I plan to read from my collection *Many-Storied House*,” she said, “It is all set in the house where I grew up, a house my grandfather built. I’ll also share with the audience the writing exercise that started the book.”

It is also planned that Lyon will be visiting the campus of West Liberty University that same day, as well as conducting a poetry reading at The Blue Church at 7 p.m. that evening.

Lunch With Books programs are free and open to the public. Patrons are invited to bring a bag lunch and complimentary snacks and beverages are served. For more details, visit [www.ohiocountylibrary.org](http://www.ohiocountylibrary.org) or call the Ohio County Public Library at 304-232-0244.