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Writing Through



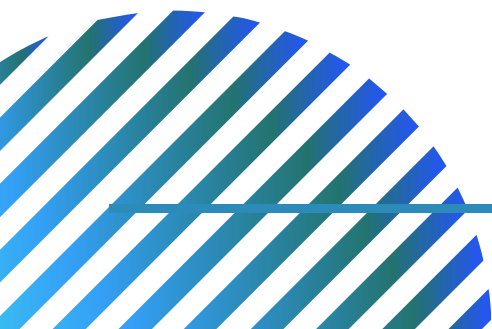
# Annual Report

## 2023



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# Letter from the Founder

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I admit to being continually surprised when, each year, I sit down to write this letter about the previous year's successes and challenges. But I am especially surprised now, knowing that as I write about 2023, I am really thinking about nearly a decade's-worth of work and an upcoming celebration of our 10th Anniversary.

After several years where Writing Through persevered to weather difficulties felt around the globe, 2023 was a year of growth and progress. As you will read in the following pages, we continued to work with our existing Partners, while adding new ones in Cambodia, the US, Vietnam and Mexico. Revised governmental regulations in Singapore have forced us to temporarily postpone our work there while we investigate how we can once again bring our programming back to those Singaporeans in need. But while that has been difficult, we had the great pleasure of reinvigorating our work in Vietnam with a new Partner eager to expand the collaboration which has already borne fruit. While Kristin turned her eyes towards Vietnam, I worked to solidify new partnerships here in the US, such as City College of New York's Poetry Outreach. I had the great pleasure of taking part in their 50th annual Poetry Festival, which resulted in a new anthology of work including poems written by both Cambodians and Mexicans during Writing Through workshops.

A great part of our efforts this year, though, was the development of our new Facilitator Training program. A great deal of strategic brainstorming has led us to believe that it is through expanded training that we can truly fulfill our goal of being an international organization with a local footprint. Our fantastic Volunteer of the Year, Patty Bierley, created a six module course which trains new facilitators in general communication skills, and the techniques and pedagogy specific to Writing Through. After running a pilot program with a group of intrepid volunteers, some experienced in our workshops, others completely new, we honed the course so that we could successfully run our first course in November. A group of new volunteers from London to Arizona took the course and are now ready to bring Writing Through to their own communities. We look forward to working with them as they begin to bring the magic of our Magic Pencils to more and more people worldwide.



Of course, Writing Through started in Cambodia, and in 2023 I was able to return for the first time in three years to that country I have grown to love. Being there, meeting with our phenomenal team of Kristin Schuster, Deputy Director, and Bee Kong-Rice, Operations Coordinator, in person was a real thrill and convinced me more and more of the importance of face-to-face conversations. Although our organization runs predominantly, and smoothly, via Zoom, there really is nothing like spending time in the same room together. I can't wait for the next trip.

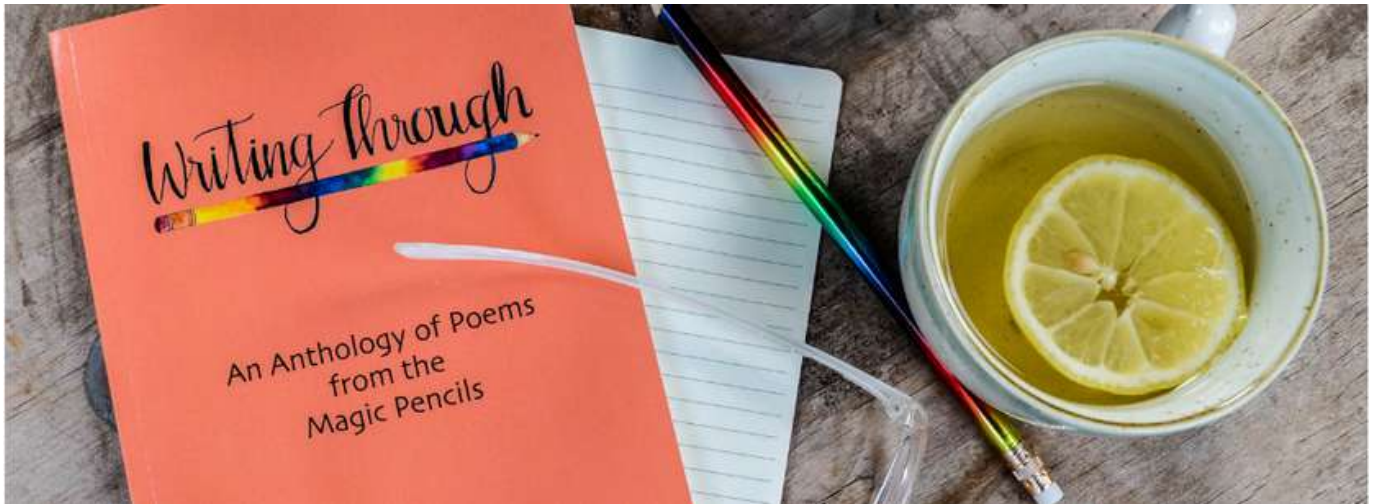
2024 will be an important year for us and we look forward to spending as much time as possible with as many of you as we can. Yet it is the work we did in 2023, and indeed beforehand, that is allowing us to look forward with such optimism and excitement.

Thank you, and as always, ever onward,

**Sue**

Sue Guiney, Founder and Executive Director, Writing Through





## Executive Summary

*Writing Through is an international educational U.S.-registered nonprofit which uses creative writing as a tool to develop thinking skills, creativity, language fluency, and self-esteem. Writing Through is nonsectarian and operates in all communities that can benefit from our work, creating spaces which aim to amplify every voice. Although we are a small non-profit, we are now heading into our tenth anniversary year. We have created a program and proven that it works across the globe, positively affecting change not only in its recipients, but also in the people who deliver it. Via structured, though flexible, workshops efficiently run over a series of ninety-minute sessions, we aim to unlock and amplify suppressed voices wherever they may be.*

Writing Through was founded by the novelist, poet and educator, Sue Guiney, in response to her experiences visiting Cambodia. There she found a people full of determination, joy, and hunger – not

only for food, but also for education. The more she learned about the inadequacies of its educational system, the more she realized that writing workshops, which she had already begun to lead in the UK and Ireland, could well be adapted to the Cambodians. Although they themselves focused on the need for English language skills as a way out of poverty, Sue understood that they also lacked the opportunity to develop their creative and critical thinking skills - skills which are needed just as much, if not more, in today's world. The Cambodian origin of the organization led to a unique model for finding its audience. Rather than trying to find individuals who could benefit the most from our workshops, Writing Through aimed its outreach towards the organizations already helping those people. Throughout Cambodia, for example, private non-profits have provided the services the government does not provide

since the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979. In this way, Writing Through has been able to reach workshop participants of all ages, including adults, and partner with a variety of already existing organizations. Our Partner organizations provide the participants. We provide a specialized, unmet aspect of the education and training of those participants. To date, we have partnered with forty organizations worldwide. Writing Through is unique in that it has developed a series of workshops which promotes creative writing not only for its own sake but as a way to unlock the thinking skills and creativity too long lying fallow. By working with local teachers, when necessary, it can work its magic with non-native English speakers, as well as native speakers. We meet our participants wherever they are in their English ability. The point is not the language, although language development is one important byproduct. The goal is to allow the creative use of language to unlock new ways of thinking, viewing the world, and navigating one's way through it. This unique blend of skills training provided within an efficient atmosphere of fun and openness caused other NGOs and nonprofits to request Sue's Cambodian workshop. This demand organically brought about the creation of Writing Through itself in 2014. As we became better known, more organizations around the world began requesting our

workshops. Our first efforts at expansion began in Singapore in 2017 and then, soon after, into Vietnam. As we grew in SE Asia, we also began to investigate how we might extend our reach even further. Despite the challenges of the COVID pandemic and various economic downturns, we have been able to persevere, creatively adapting our programming to suit new circumstances. We are now able to offer our workshops either in person or online, allowing us to expand without geographical constraints.

Over the past few years, our strategic thinking has focused on how to bring our programming to an ever increasing demand from organizations located in expanded areas around the globe. While we are eager to serve the needs of anyone worldwide seeking to develop their creative and critical thinking skills, we have understood the need to develop our expansion in a systematic and sustainable fashion. We now understand that the driving force behind expansion is our Facilitators themselves. Much of 2023 was, therefore, focused on developing a new, robust, on-line training course where anyone can learn the facilitation skills needed to successfully bring Writing Through to the most vulnerable segments of their own communities. No organization can be everywhere at once. But by training residents actually living within

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communities, we can work together, partnering with already existing community-based support groups. Writing Through can become both global and local at the same time. We now say we are an international organization with a local footprint.

The Writing Through staff continually challenges itself, as it does its participants, to find creative solutions to helping develop thinking skills in marginalized and at-risk segments of communities worldwide. This includes the incorporation of new elements, such as journal writing, in our workshops, as well as flexibly adapting the timing and number of our sessions in order to suit the schedules of our Partners, while always maintaining the pedagogical integrity of the workshops themselves. We now run our workshops in English for native speakers, as well as in English for non-native speakers. We also continue to teach in Spanish for some of our Partners in Mexico. This understanding of the role that languages play in our methodology will allow us to further expand into other language areas, as requested. And of course, our on-line training course will be the engine that drives us into local communities wherever we are needed.

As we write this Annual Report, we are embarking on our 10th Anniversary year.

We know that we have built a strong foundation over the past ten years, learning as we go along, developing our organization as we develop our students, no matter who they are, their age or challenges, or where they live. Writing Through is an example of all that can be accomplished with creativity and passion. We look forward to what the next ten years will bring.



# What We Accomplished in 2023

*During 2023 Writing Through conducted 24 separate workshops across Cambodia, Vietnam, Mexico and the United States. These workshops were run by five different Facilitators (some facilitating multiple workshops), and twelve shadows assisted; they were held for 21 different partner organizations. We also held a pilot training course and then our first new facilitator training course. In 2023, we added eight new partner organizations. In Cambodia, we held workshops with one partner that we hadn't worked with in years, and expanded into three separate workshops with another. We have made our triumphant return to Vietnam. We are continuing to strive for Writing Through to help even more communities globally.*



## 24 in 4

24 WORKSHOPS IN 4 COUNTRIES

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## 395

PARTICIPANTS

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## 527

POEMS, STORIES, AND JOURNAL  
ENTRIES WRITTEN

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## 79

FULLY TRAINED FACILITATORS

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## 8

NEW PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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## Return to Vietnam

One of the goals of Writing Through is to work in as many communities as possible. In 2019 we were beginning to grow our work in Vietnam with new and returning partners and facilitators. Unfortunately, with borders closing for years and volunteers returning to their home countries due to the global pandemic, we had to step back from Vietnam.

In 2023, we were able to return for the first time and work with a popular language center in Hanoi, with satellite centers throughout the country. It was a wonderful collaboration between a long-term Writing Through volunteer, Julia Tran, her wonderful daughter, Alexis, and the staff at Summit Education Center. It was a great success and we are hoping that 2024 will bring an expansion into Vietnam and allow us to work with even more motivated students across the country.



## Training Program

As Writing Through grows and expands, our need for Facilitators grows. Not only do we need experienced Facilitators to help us lead the workshops, but it also helps lead to organic growth as they connect with new partners within their own communities. Geography and schedule constraints have sometimes made training difficult, thus we have long been reimagining the best possible design. We are fortunate to have a long-term volunteer, Patty Bierley, who is a trainer by profession, who we turned to for advice. Our meeting to discuss ideas instead morphed into something that will revolutionize Writing Through as a whole. Patty volunteered to develop an entire training program that will teach not only how to facilitate Writing Through workshops, but also transferable communication, facilitation, and listening skills in general.

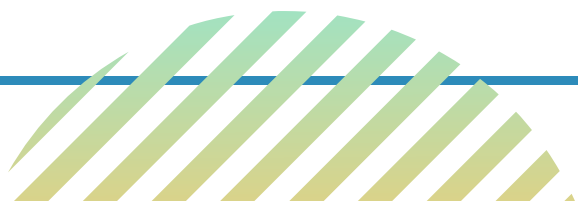
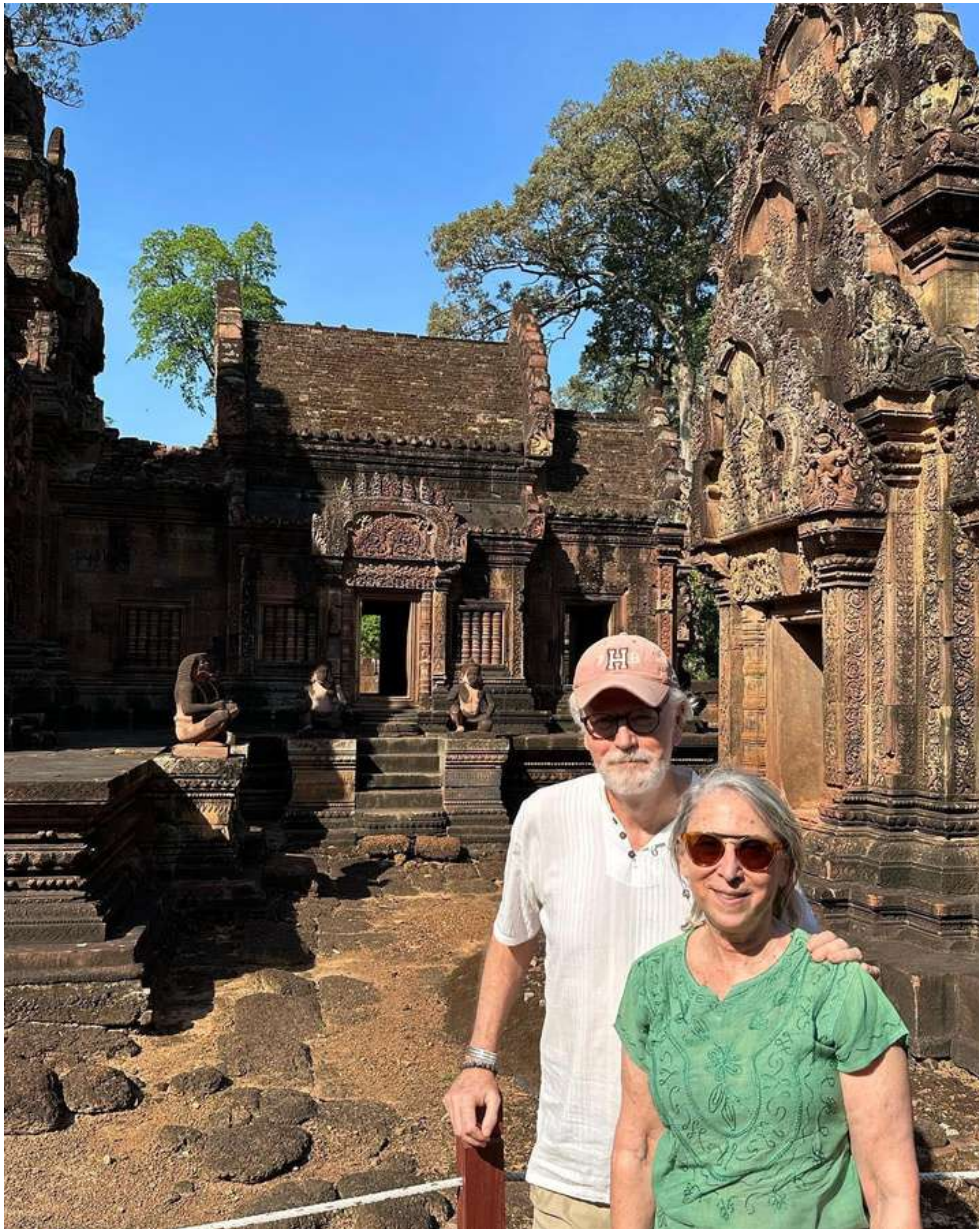
We successfully ran a pilot program in the summer of 2023 and based on feedback, ran our first training course in the autumn. It was a great success that left all eight participants feeling prepared and enthusiastic. We cannot wait to run the next one. If you are interested in more information about upcoming trainings, please contact [info@writingthrough.org](mailto:info@writingthrough.org).





## Sue's Return to Cambodia

Since the very beginning, Sue has returned to Cambodia at least once per year. Due to global disruptions and health challenges, 2023 was her first visit back in over three years. This year felt like a homecoming and a chance to reconnect. Sue was able to facilitate the Anjali House workshop with the help of Alyssa from Poetry Outreach, strategize with Kristin and Bee while in the same room, and revisit the place where it all began. While Writing Through is running as a well-oiled machine, it is still such a different experience when Sue can be here and meet partners both new and old, and continue to inspire everyone around her.



## Internships

One of our great strengths as an organization is the wonderful partnerships we have with great institutions. Wesleyan University collaborates with us to create an internship program each summer where we can work with inspiring students and help them gain valuable experience to better prepare them for their successful futures. This year we had two excellent Wesleyan interns, Grace Kuth and Emma Condon, who focussed their time helping with the training course and also preparing a manuscript for a new anthology. We also expanded our program to include a third Wesleyan student, Xiran Tan, spending the summer in Mexico helping our volunteer, Steve Scena, with some outreach and workshops. Finally, we added an intern from Yale-NUS in Singapore, Sol Duarte, who researched and reported on the current changes in the non-profit landscape in Singapore. We value these internships greatly and while we gain so much by working with these eager and highly motivated students, our true goal is to help them build on their strengths and inspire them to continue working towards their careers.





## Our Story

We were honored to be invited as partners in the annual PEPY Empowering Youth Event, *Our Story*. It is a yearly celebration of Cambodian art, music, and poetry. It took place in Siem Reap's beautiful Chocolate Gardens where they created a walkway with poems written by Cambodian participants in Writing Through workshops throughout the years. One of the best moments was when a former student, who is now a staff member at PEPY, showed us his poem that had been printed and mounted on the wall. He was incredibly proud, as he should have been. In 2024, *Our Story* will be transported to Rhode Island and we are very excited to connect with a new community of people in the US.



## The Guineys Run a Marathon

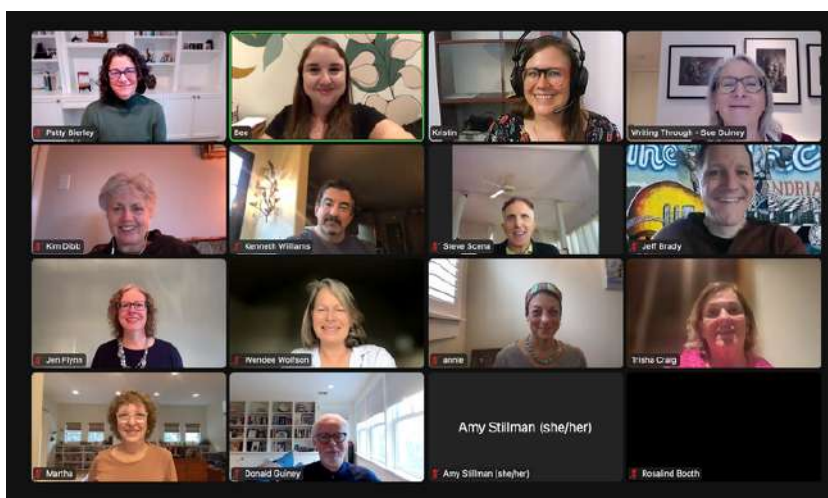
Yes, you read that right, though Sue was cheering from the sidelines rather than running herself! Don and Alex Guiney, Sue's husband and son respectively, ran the Marine Corps Marathon in Washington DC together to raise money for Writing Through. We are so thankful for their efforts! They had a wonderful bonding experience, finished with great times, and were able to raise over \$3,100, far more than their initial goal. We are so proud of them and grateful for their determination. If you would like to participate in an event to raise funds for Writing Through, please be in touch at [info@writingthrough.org](mailto:info@writingthrough.org) and we can help.



## Very Big Event 2023

The Very Big Event is our annual celebration of all that we have been able to accomplish that year; it is our chance to catch up face-to-face with our volunteers and friends. We went over the achievements of 2023 and discussed what we have in store for 2024, including our new Training course, and our plans for a 10th anniversary celebration. We also announced our Volunteer of the Year, Patty Bierley, and heard about her experience developing and running our new training program. We had volunteers, board members

and supporters joining from Mexico, the United States, Canada, England and Cambodia. We always have so much to share with our Writing Through community worldwide. Our "Very Big Event" is always one of the highlights of our year.



## Poetry Outreach

### Woodstock of the Written Word

In May, Sue traveled to New York City to take part in the annual poetry festival sponsored by Poetry Outreach and CCNY (the City College of New York). Sue read poems by participants of workshops held in both Siem Reap and Oaxaca, as well as one of her own. Over the course of the day she was able to meet many like-minded people and continue the process of collaborating with Poetry Outreach, with an eye towards expanding the Writing Through programming into New York City Schools. Sue is also working with the team at Poetry Outreach, Pam Laskin and Alyssa Yankwitt, to develop a new program using the resources of both organizations. Alyssa traveled to Siem Reap in February to shadow Sue's annual facilitation of the Anjali House workshop. It was exciting to have her with the team in Siem Reap, and start brainstorming how our two organizations can work together.



## Candid Seal of Transparency

We are very proud to share that we have been awarded the Candid Platinum Seal of Transparency. This honor was bestowed by Guidestar, one of the world's largest indexes of nonprofits, with 1.7 million organizations listed. We pride ourselves on our transparency and this designation reflects our standards.





## New Volunteers

We had great success recruiting new volunteers around the world. With only Kristin and Bee on the ground in Cambodia plus a growing network of partners, volunteers are a cornerstone of our continued commitment to workshops in that country. We are so fortunate to have Steve Scena spend a few months in Cambodia each year and take on as many workshops as he can, and we certainly keep him busy! We recruited five new volunteers for the PEPY Empowering Youth workshop as they had 60 students. They had their first experience as shadows and we are very excited to see them grow their confidence and begin facilitating their own workshops. In the U.S., Sue did a call for volunteers via a network of non-profits in her Massachusetts home community. That led to an additional few volunteers, some of whom are eager to facilitate, while others aim to help with marketing and publicizing our activities. Thank you again to all the volunteers who helped out this year worldwide: Steve, Sydney, Tarra, Alyssa, Samantha, Maricla, Maria, Alison, Lani and Christine! If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact us at [info@writingthrough.org](mailto:info@writingthrough.org)



# Our Programs

*It should be noted that not all of our Partners hold workshops every year due to their individual funding or scheduling challenges. Below is a list of our most recently active partnerships.*

## Cambodia

### Anjali House

is the place where the Writing Through workshops started and developed. Our workshops now hold a prominent place in the center's annual schedule. We also provide teacher development programs and oversight as needed. Sue was able to run these workshops for the first time since 2020 and everyone was very excited to have her back!



### Cambodian Education Development Organization (CEDO)

has the vision of restoring hope and dignity to Cambodians by breaking the poverty cycle in rural communities. Their mission is to equip and empower these rural communities through training and resource development. Sadly, this organization has lost its funding, so this will be the last year we will be able to work with them.



### Asian Outreach Cambodia

works to establish projects and programs to empower the communities they serve. Their goal is to engage the community to provide them with the necessary tools and foundation for a better future. AOC was the last workshop of 2023; Kristin worked with the students from Kru Yeng School in Stung Treng. She was so impressed with their English skills and the way that they pushed themselves in creativity and presentation.





## Chumkriel Language School

is an NGO based in Siem Reap, Cambodia and works in collaboration with Opportunity Cambodia. The organization provides university scholarships along with housing and meals to students with disadvantaged backgrounds. The students study a wide-range of subjects at various universities in Siem Reap. Bee was thrilled to return in April to work with their wonderful team again, writing around the theme of 'Change.'



## Children of the Mekong /Enfants du Mekong

is a French organization, based all over SE Asia. They have six centers across Cambodia, and was one of our first partners. In 2014 they asked Writing Through to run one workshop at each of their centers across the country, each year. Now, nearly ten years later, we continue to run workshops at all six of their Cambodian centers.



## Empowering Youth in Cambodia (EYC)

runs four learning centers, operating as combined schools and community centers in Phnom Penh's poorest communities. Unfortunately, we were not able to schedule a workshop for 2023, however we are pleased to already have a workshop scheduled for Summer 2024. We can't wait to go back and work with these remarkable students again.



## HUSK Cambodia

works with with the communities in Treak & Kompheim villages, Siem Reap and focuses on providing access to safe water, livelihood opportunities, health, education & environment. Steve Scena ran a workshop with the incredible teaching team at HUSK in the spring.



## PEPY Empowering Youth

works with young adults and students to develop youth leadership, learning opportunities and access to education for underprivileged Cambodians. This year saw our return with workshops for sixty of their students. It was inspiring as always.



## Heartprint

Heartprint is an Australian Charity as well as a locally registered Cambodian NGO working in Cambodia, funding community projects to support families living in need. We worked with their Youth Group, comprised of motivated teenagers learning new skills and being given a chance to explore new experiences. It was a small group but the impact was anything but!





## Caring For Cambodia

strives to make it possible for every Cambodian child to attend school from preschool to 12th grade and to graduate with the skills required for higher education or for obtaining meaningful employment. They train teachers, provide tools, and remove barriers to learning. We were thrilled to restart this partnership and were privileged to work with the English teachers and staff of CFC at the end of 2023.



## A Place to Be Yourself

is a drop-in & resource center for Khmer LGBTIQ+ individuals, where they feel included, comfortable, accepted and celebrated. Over 5 Sunday evenings, Bee ran a workshop with some of their beneficiaries. We chose the fitting theme of 'Being Yourself'. Many interesting brainstorms and work were produced while we considered this idea.



## Stepping Stones

provides free high quality education and improves access to healthcare facilities to the people of Kok Thnot village. Bee ran a workshop with their teachers and team in June. It was a week full of laughter and fun.



## Mexico

### Oaxaca Learning Center

Established in 2005, The Oaxaca Learning Center (TOLC) is a Mexican non-profit which addresses the great deficiency in education of students from low income households in Oaxaca. It helps them to succeed academically and, crucially, to gain confidence in developing and meeting their own goals. Since 2005 it's helped over 3,000 young people from Oaxaca transform their lives.



### Oaxaca Lending Library

The Oaxaca Lending Library is a library and community center for English-speaking foreigners with outreach to the Mexican population, providing social and educational opportunities for both communities. It houses a large collection of books and audio-visual materials in English and Spanish. It is also a hub for language learning, offering interchanges for residents and tourists learning Spanish and local Mexicans learning English.



### Multiversidad Mundo sin Fronteras

is a university in Oaxaca founded to provide a quality education at a low cost, with a goal of breaking down borders between people and different kinds of education. Its programs encompass the many kinds of learning needed for personal and professional development. "Freedom to think" is its slogan.

Steve ran a workshop in July 2023. He found the participants to be very engaged in writing their poems and showed real creativity and a sense of humor in their short stories. They were much more relaxed at the end, practicing and then presenting their work to an audience.



## Teachers from the Technical Secondary Schools of the state of Oaxaca

These public school teachers prepare students aged 12-15 for technical high school and vocational careers. English is an important part of the curriculum. They work together in groups to improve their teaching skills and develop materials in schools with limited resources.

The July workshop Steve ran served a dual purpose: to help participants improve their creative thinking and English skills and also learn new approaches to teaching. The workshop was a demonstration of Writing Through's methodology and how it might be applied in their classes. In each session, in addition to writing, they discussed problems that surface with students and classes and how they might be solved.



## United States

### Up-Island Council on Aging

is a branch of municipal government of the Towns of Aquinnah, Chilmark, and West Tisbury on Martha's Vineyard, MA. It is responsible for the administration, development and coordination of older adult programs and is committed to meeting the ever-changing interests, needs and well-being of people who are 55 years of age and older. During our workshop Sue met with a group of older writers eager to recharge their skills and find new ways to approach their thinking. It was a fascinating workshop for all of us.





## Misty Meadows Equine Learning Center

is based on Martha's Vineyard, MA, and aspires to be a leading resource that connects individuals of all ages and abilities to horses and the natural environment through unique, innovative and inclusive programming that is affordable for all. They are dedicated to providing programs that stimulate an interest in horses and empower individuals through connection with them, helping students better understand their own emotional and physical needs and how horses can enhance and improve their health and wellness. In this workshop, Sue worked with a group of middle-school aged boys who had immigrated from South America. Their English language skills were at an intermediate level, but more importantly, they lacked the confidence to express themselves. We look forward to continuing this relationship with this vulnerable segment of the Martha's Vineyard year-round population.



## Vietnam

### Summit Education

is a leader in Academic English training and study abroad consultancy services in Vietnam. Each year, Summit helps thousands of students prepare for successful application to top colleges and universities in America, Canada, and other English speaking countries through high-quality standardized test prep courses conducted in English, including SAT, ACT, SSAT, TOEFL, IELTS, GMAT, and GRE.

Since its founding in Hanoi in 2010, Summit has become the number one choice for students from leading public high schools and international schools country-wide in test prep courses and admission strategy.





# Endorsements and Feedback

We have had wonderful experiences working with Writing Through and I am also proud of the Writing Through team for your professionalism, dedication and kindness to support EYC students and many other Cambodian students. I have witnessed the changes and improvement of our students after attending the Writing Through Workshop. On top of the writing skills, they gain more confidence, increase their engagement by expressing more and continue to write.

- *Synoeun Nov, Empowering Youth in Cambodia*



We have not had any experiences this good to improve ourselves as teachers or as human beings. This kind of training is like that. Thank you so much to the Writing Through program to make training like this possible.

- *Abraham Torres Fregoso, Oaxaca Lending Library*



Students felt happy with this workshop. Some of them had small difficulties to find the good words in English for their poems but they didn't mind, and were proud to create a poem in English.

- *Flore Fabritius, Enfants du Mékong Battambang*



I learned so much working with Writing Through! I gained professional skills, such as podcast editing and pitching marketing strategies. Most importantly, I learned valuable life lessons through collaborating with Writing Through's dedicated and enthusiastic team.

Thank you for a great summer!

- *Grace Kuth, our Summer intern from Wesleyan University*



I was so pleased to be given the opportunity to volunteer at the recent Writing Through workshops with the wonderful students at PEPY Empowering Youth in Siem Reap. To hear the students read their poems and see their support for each other at the Big Event was a humbling experience. They all enjoyed the creative and collaborative process of poetry and story writing which was evident in their final pieces. I will definitely volunteer at a future workshop if the opportunity arises!

- Alison Harper - Volunteer

"We love hearing all the voices and laughter coming from the room!"

*Bethany Hammond, Assistant Director, Up-Island Council on Aging*

"Writing Through was a fantastic experience, where the students and teachers connected with the English Language, creating poems, short stories and memories together."

*- Alejandra Navarro Arevalo, Multiversidad Mundo sin Fronteras (Multiversity World without Borders)*

"This program was simply the BEST and I cannot wait for us to do it again!"

"Thank you all for everything you did to make it possible."

"Thanks again for a transformative experience!"

- The Misty Meadows team



## Who We Are

*2023 was another year of growth. We continued working together as a small team and expanded our responsibilities to match job titles and talents.*

Some of our key personnel are:

### Sue Guiney, Founder and Executive Director

Writing Through began in 2010 when the writer and teacher, Sue Guiney, presented the first creative writing workshop at Anjali House in Siem Reap, Cambodia. The program grew out of her experiences, positive and negative, from a volunteer trip she took to Cambodia with her family

in 2006. That trip led to her writing the first in her collection of novels set in modern day Cambodia, *A Clash of Innocents*. After several years, other NGOs in the area began to hear about the program and request it for their own students, leading her to found the nonprofit, Writing Through, in December of 2014.

Ever since the first workshop was run in Siem Reap, Sue has devoted her writing and much of her teaching to Cambodia and the needs of global education. From 2011-2013, she was Writer-in-Residence in the SE Asia Department of The University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), the world's leading institution for the study of Asia, Africa and the Middle East. She has traveled around the globe discussing her experiences in Cambodia and drawing attention to that country's needs. Her Cambodian novels are among the only literary fiction written for an English-speaking audience about modern day, post Khmer Rouge Cambodia. The second in the collection, *Out of the Ruins*, was published in 2014. The final novel in the trilogy is forthcoming.

Sue is also an internationally recognized poet. Besides her own poetry collections, her work has been widely published in literary journals and anthologized in collections devoted to global human rights issues.

Sue holds a B.A. from Wesleyan University, and a Master's Degree in Classics from The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.





## Kristin Schuster, Deputy Director

Kristin is from Montreal, Canada but has spent the last thirteen years living, working and travelling across three continents. After completing her university studies in Psychology with a special focus on both developmental psychology and behavioural neurobiology she decided to take a break to see a bit more of the world. This led to a new career as a tour guide and tour leader, making history come alive for thousands of guests. After volunteering as an English Teaching Assistant in a college in Hanoi, she fell in love with South East Asia, relocating there permanently in 2013. She has lived in Siem Reap, Cambodia since 2016 working in fundraising and communications and as a science teacher. She is thrilled to pass on her love of public speaking and to help students explore their creativity. She has also been made Honorary Consul for Canada in Siem Reap and worked with the Canadian government to assist with the Canadian Prime Minister's historic visit to Cambodia. She has recently completed her Masters in Psychology and Neuroscience of Mental Health and has been using the skills acquired in her courses to further quantify the impact of Writing Through.



## Bryony Kong-Rice (Bee) – Operations Coordinator

Bee is from a small village in Devon, England. She has been living and working in Cambodia since 2008. She has held many different positions over the years from the personal assistant to a Thai businessman, to a sales manager in a small shop, volunteer coordinator and up until recently a full-time English teacher. Her love affair with Cambodia began before she'd even set foot there and continues to this day. She comes from a family of writers and loves to write in her free time. She now lives in Siem Reap with her wife. She has greatly admired the work of Writing Through for years and is thrilled to be part of the team.



## Kim Dibb - Accounts Manager

Kim Dibb is from Vancouver Island, Canada. She is the Chief Financial Officer for Mustimuhw Information Solutions, Inc., a company providing health record software and virtual outreach solutions to First Nations across Canada. Prior to this role, she worked for over a decade with the Cowichan Tribes First Nation as the Comptroller and, in her early career, she served as a Logistics Officer in the Canadian Forces and in total spent twelve years with the Department of National Defense.

In 2015, she went on her first pro bono assignment to Siem Reap, Cambodia through the organization Accounting for International Development. She would return there in 2016 and 2017 to assist NGOs in developing financial management competency. She has been the Accounts Manager for Writing Through since 2019.

Kim is a Chartered Professional Accountant with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Guelph.



## Wendee Wolfson, Chair, Board of Directors

Wendee Wolfson is a Leadership Coach to both experienced and emerging leaders in corporations, non-profit organizations, family businesses, and startup enterprises. She has also worked with non-profit boards to develop strategic initiatives and implement leadership transitions as a consultant and as a board member. Wendee has a particular interest in working with social entrepreneurs, both as a coach to Fellows and Staff in the Halcyon Incubator for Social Entrepreneurs, in Washington, DC, and in her role as a lead advisor to the Next Wave Impact Fund, which invested in early stage, high growth social enterprises.



She has worked with entrepreneurs starting high growth organizations for twenty years, advising them on business models, financing, and a variety of management challenges.

Wendee was a co-founder of both Women's Growth Capital Fund, a venture capital fund that invested exclusively in women entrepreneurs, and WomenAngels.net, a professionally managed fund of active women angel investors.

Wendee began her career and spent several years in the financial services industry. She has an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a Certificate in Leadership Coaching from Georgetown University.

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## Trisha Craig, Member, Board of Directors

Trisha Craig is Dean of International and Professional Experience at Yale NUS, Yale's new liberal arts college in Singapore. Previously she was director of Wheelock College Singapore. Prior to moving to Southeast Asia, Trisha spent a decade as director of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University. Trisha is a political sociologist with a focus on institution building and has worked as a policy advisor and taught in many countries including El Salvador, Spain, the United Kingdom, Qatar, China, India, Thailand and South Africa. She is co-author of the book, *The Quality of Life in Rural Asia*, published by Oxford University Press, the author of many articles and a frequent contributor to the *Straits Times*, *TODAY* and *Times Higher Education* on issues of education and makes regular media appearances discussing global politics and elections. Trisha holds a PhD from Yale University and has served on the boards of a number of nonprofit organizations and government commissions.



## Jen Flynn, Member, Board of Directors

Jen Flynn is the Senior Director for Global Outreach at Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Prior to Harvard, she was the Director of Educational Programs and Partnerships at EF Education, developing digital content and new media initiatives, designing academic programs, and building strategic relationships between EF and other educational organizations, including Apple, PBS, and Advanced Placement of the College Board. For more than six years, she worked at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University in a number of positions, most recently as Director of Advancement Outreach and Alumnae Affairs.

She has advised universities in Brazil, Poland, China, England, Scotland, the Middle East, Australia, and around the US in alumni engagement strategy and organizational capacity-building, and has served as a presenter at many professional conferences. She received her Master's degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, with a dual concentration in Administration, Planning, and Social Policy, and in Technology, Innovation, and Education; and received her Bachelor's degree with a double major in English Literature and Performing Arts from Colby College.



## Don Guiney, Member, Board of Directors

Don Guiney is a US lawyer who practiced in London for twenty-six years, representing issuers and underwriting banks in a wide range of complex cross-border capital raising transactions. He currently serves as a consultant to Impact Shares, a non-profit social impact investment fund platform. He is an advisor to Dyme Earth, an eco-friendly gift card platform that uses its profits to fund direct investment in solar and reforestation projects in the US. Prior to returning to the US, Don served as Senior Counsel at Baker & McKenzie, the global law firm. Prior to joining Baker & McKenzie, Don was a partner for sixteen years at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, a major international law firm based in London. Don has been involved in volunteer and pro bono work throughout his career. He has been the leader of the largest youth baseball and softball organization in the UK for over twenty years. For his service to the cause of youth sports in the UK, Don was named a torchbearer in the 2012 Summer Olympic Games in London. He has served as the President of the Harvard Club of the United Kingdom, the largest Harvard alumni organization outside the US. He is a board member of ClassACT HR78, a social impact accelerator focused on the Harvard alumni community. Don is a member of the Board of Directors of Anjali House, an educational shelter based in Cambodia. He is a board member of Amity Island Running Club, Inc. a nonprofit running club on Martha's Vineyard in the US. Don received his AB degree from Harvard College and his JD degree from Columbia Law School.





## Kenneth Williams, Member, Board of Directors

Since March 2012, Williams has been the Executive Director and CEO of the Entertainment Technology Center at USC, a technology think tank which brings together the top entertainment, technology and consumer electronics companies to better understand and collaborate on the impact of new technology on all aspects of the entertainment industry.

A media-industry veteran, Williams spent 18 years with Sony Pictures Entertainment including Treasurer of Columbia Pictures Entertainment and Executive Vice President of Sony Pictures Entertainment, culminating as President of Sony's Digital Studios Division.

He was president and CEO of Ascent Media Group which, at that time, was the world's largest independent provider of media content services to film studios, broadcast and cable networks, advertising agencies and other media creators and distributors, and has also previously held positions as President of Technicolor Digital Cinema and Vice President of Chase Manhattan Corporate Banking Division for filmed entertainment lending.

Most recently Williams has been an investor and President/CEO of Health Club Media Network, the largest operator of media in over 4,000 health club facilities nationwide. Williams currently serves on the Boards of several companies, including World Health Networks, Inc. and Digital Fusion.

Williams is a graduate of Harvard College and holds an MS in Business Policy from Columbia University. He is a voting member of both the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. He has served on the Boards of the Music Center Foundation, the LA Master Chorale, UC Riverside, the Buckley School, the Los Angeles Conservancy, the Harvard Alumni Association and currently serves on the Board of the Music Center Foundation, LA Channel 36 Public Access Channel and the Harvard Club of Southern California.



## Votey Cheav, Member, Board of Directors

Votey Cheav is a US-licensed corporate and commercial lawyer, specializing in international dispute resolution. She is a Cambodian-American daughter of refugees who survived the Khmer Rouge and was born in the Khao I Dang refugee camp, immigrating to the United States as a child. She has practiced law in the US and Cambodia.

Votey is based in Paris and is currently pursuing her Executive MBA at HEC Paris with a specialization in startups and entrepreneurship. She received her Juris Doctor degree from DePaul University and both her Master of Education in Secondary English Education and Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the Ohio State University.

Votey is passionate about creative writing and how language reflects our collective consciousness. She is an avid writer and reader of poetry and has been published in various international journals and anthologies of poetry and prose.



## Amy Stillman - Special Adviser

Amy Stillman has been a Communications and Marketing Director at not-for-profit organizations for more than two decades. Most recently she was the Senior Director of Strategic Communications of Grads of Life, building awareness of the skills first talent management movement. Previously, she was the Chief Communications Officer of the Global Impact Investing Network (GIIN), where she led the development and execution of the GIIN's communications strategy to advance impact investing practices around the world.



Prior to joining the GIIN, she was Director of Communications of the Impetus Trust, the pioneer of venture philanthropy in the UK. Previously she was Head of Communications and Public Engagement at Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), the world's leading independent international development organization that uses volunteers to fight poverty and reduce inequality. Her background includes senior marketing and communications roles at commercial organizations, including Merrill Lynch and WATG, as well as marketing consulting at the Commonwealth Group. Her first role in the not-for-profit sector was as Marketing Director of global leadership development organization Common Purpose. Amy was based in the United Kingdom for 25 years before returning to the United States in 2014.



## Linda Rappaport - Special Adviser

Linda Rappaport is an internationally respected U.S. attorney. She is presently Of Counsel at Shearman and Sterling LLP, where she was a partner for over thirty years, and a former member of the Executive Committee. Her legal and business background is global, with substantial transactional and advisory experience in the U.S., Europe and Asia.

Linda also has extensive experience with corporate and Not-For-Profit Boards of Directors, serving as a member or advisor to numerous Boards of Directors.

She is presently Chair of the Board of Trustees of The New School, and a member of the Board of Governors of Mannes College of Music. She has also served as a Board member or Advisor of the Legal Aid Society of New York City, the New York Women's Foundation, and served as Trustee of Wesleyan University from 2011-2016.

Linda has a J.D. from New York University and a B.A., magna cum laude from Wesleyan University. She is also an accomplished flutist and performs with orchestras throughout the New York City area.



# Our Thanks

*Writing Through would like to publicly thank all of our Facilitators for their hard work and expertise in running our workshops, our Volunteers for their efforts to support the administration of our organization, and our Donors for their generosity and belief in our mission. We at Writing Through will always regard all these individuals as part of the Writing Through family.*

## Our Volunteers

Harvard ClassAct members from the Harvard College class of 1978

Liz Adams	Ally Dishong	Tida Ou
Selin Ahipasaoglu	Kerry Driver	Maricla Pannocchia
Shahnaz Ali	Sol Maria Gonzalez Duarte	Sam Ra
Jess Blackledge	Lisa Edmondson	Dhooleka Raj
Patty Bierley	Malaika Fernandes	Linda Rappaport
Camille Britton	Nicole Friets	Barbara Rittner
Wesley Broomsgrove	Maria Lucia Garces	Martha Scarborough
Jennifer Buno	Alison Harper	Steve Scena
Raelee Chapman	Jeffrey Harris	Bronwyn Sharman
Karen Christiansen	Eden Ho	Matthew Slater
Angelene Chong	Kitty Johnson	Amy Stillman
Christine Clements	Amy Kean	Katarzyna Sumislawska
Helena Cochrane	Freeda Kinkelin	Lam Uyen
Annie Colangeli	Grace Kuth	Xiran Tan
Emma Condon	Venezia Lim	Julia Tran
Kelley Connors	Anna Marti	Tamsin Tran
Tarra Corcoran	Wayne McCallum	Tesheia Vanderhorst
Lani Cox	Charlotte McEleny	Sydney VanVleet
Bob Craig	Sally McHale	Ming Xia Ho
Robin Craig	Jeanne McKay	David Xiang
Kimbra Cutlip	Andrea McKenna	Alisha Yi
Lucia Damacela	Myrtis Mixon	Sybille Young
Sunni Dawson	Clara Mok	Anupama Zain
Kim Dibb	Anna Nguyen	
Donna DiFillippo	Katy Oglethorpe	

## Volunteer of the Year Award

A big congratulations to the winner of our Volunteer of the Year Award 2023,

*Patty Bierley*

We are so lucky to have such talented volunteers - Patty is a professional and highly accomplished trainer, so when we decided to create an online facilitator training course, we knew who to ask. She went so far above and beyond; using her considerable talent and experience to help us create an incredibly valuable and game-changing resource. We have now successfully run the course twice. Thank you so much, Patty!





# Our Supporters

Our Partners are able to pay only a fraction of the real cost of our workshops. This year we received more than the previous two years but it remains less than pre-pandemic amounts because we have continued to subsidize those that need it. The rest of our budget must then, of course, fall onto the shoulders of our individual and institutional donors. We are endlessly grateful to them all.

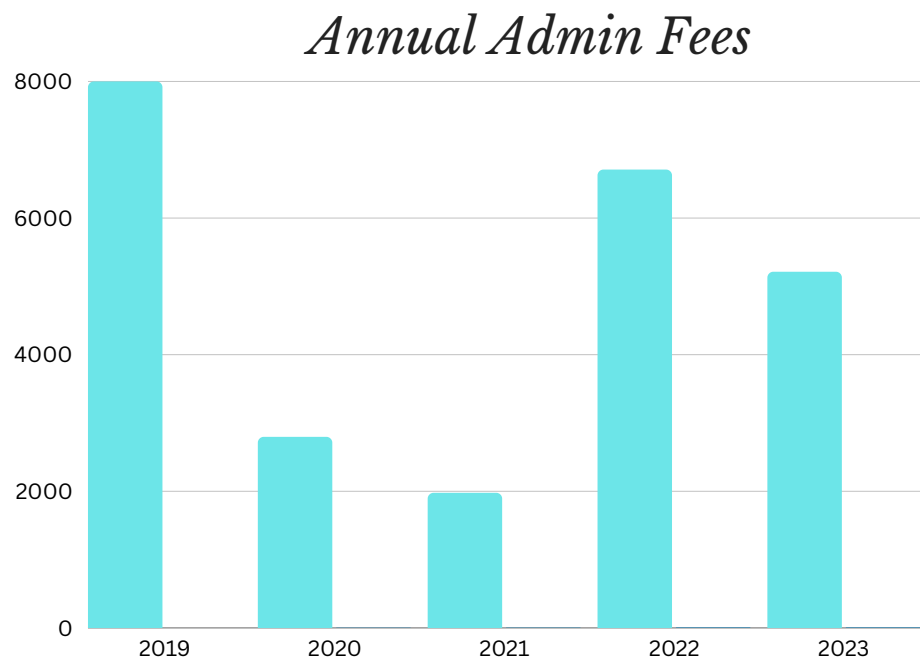


Chart 1 - 2023 administrative fees compared to 2022, 2021, 2020 and 2019 fees received

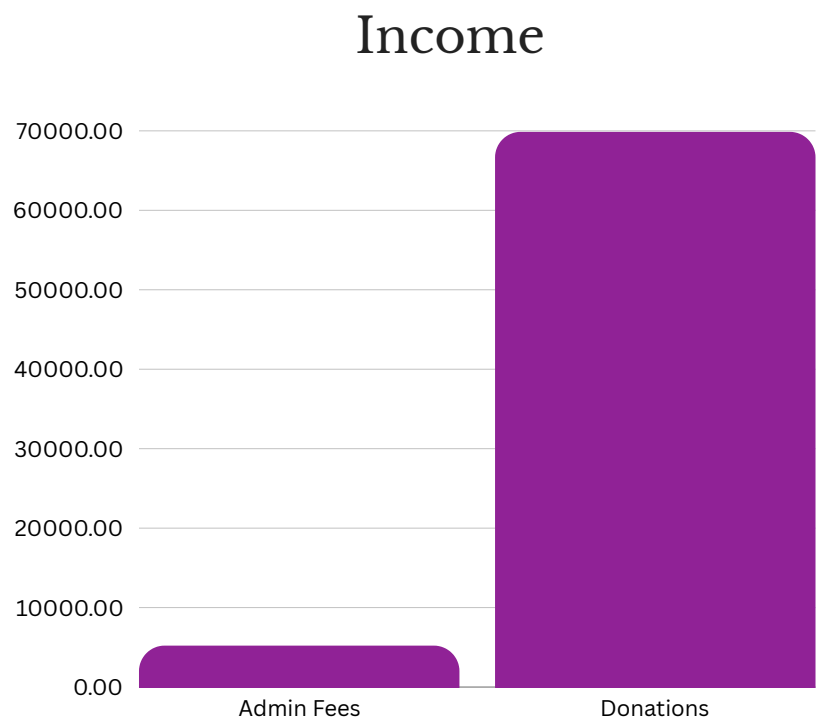
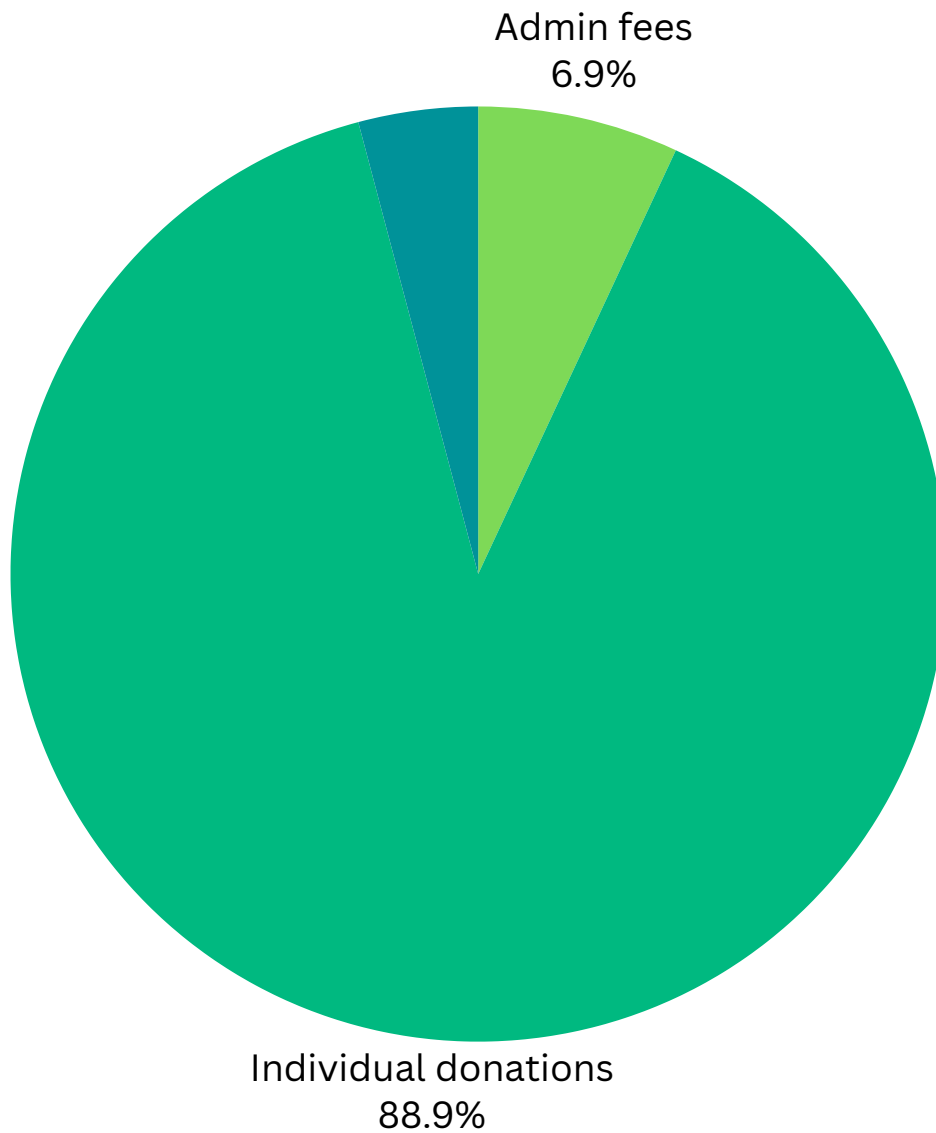


Chart 2 - admin fees compared to donations in 2023

The majority of our donations come from individual donors but we are beginning to see more institutional donations and are looking forward to more corporate sponsors and grants.



## Our thanks go out once again to:

Takeda Pharmaceutical Company

### *Donations of \$1,000 and over*

Ed Annunziato  
Black Baud Giving Fund  
Patty and Jay Bierley  
Sarah Boothby Kendall  
Karen and David Brush  
Votey Cheav  
Trisha Craig and Tom Brenner  
Robin and Robert Craig  
Ann and Bill Dobbs  
Jennifer Flynn and Richard Yieh  
Susie Goldman  
Sue and Don Guiney  
Jamie and Jeffrey Harris  
Linda and David Lakhdhir  
Jose and Malvina Longoria  
Alan R. Miller Foundation  
Paul and Adrienne Mulligan  
Cassie Murray and Bill Plapinger  
Linda Rappaport and Len Chazen  
Vickie Riccardo and the Spencer family  
Cris Russel  
Eric Seiler and Darcy Bradbury  
Mary and Jerome Vascellero  
Ken Williams  
Wendee Wolfson

### *Donations of \$500 and over*

Kathy Goldman  
Ellen Muglia  
Carol Ostrow and Mike Graff  
Amy Rugel  
Martha and William Scarborough  
Peter Slone  
J.D Smith  
Sally Williams-Allen

### *Other Donations*

Sivakami Ananthasingam  
Nancy Bard  
Carl Barnes and Barbara Heffner  
David Buland  
Brandon Bradkin  
Jeff Brady  
Peter and Diane K. Braun  
Karen and John Burgess  
Raelee Chapman  
Helena Cochrane  
Nedine Cunningham  
Quentin Dancer  
Christopher Dowd  
Luis Duarte  
Deb Durkin and Arend Dijkers  
Robert Fallon  
Deborah Flaschen  
Marie Fraser  
Ron Freeman  
Marty Gagliano

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# Our thanks go out once again to:

## *Other Donations continued*

Martha Gershun  
Megan Gillett  
Karen Green  
Ellen and Tim Guiney  
Noah and Rosario Guiney  
Betsy Hecker  
Doug Henderson  
Lynn Kenney  
Danielle Klimashousky  
Philip Koch  
Sylvia Komatsu  
Mark Lowey  
James M and Susan Cole Charitable Trust  
Don McCarthy  
John and Abby Moore  
Michael Murphy  
Judith Obermayer  
Scott Phillips  
Dick Rossman  
Lauren Shirk  
Kurt Shreiner  
Matthew D. Slater and Faith Roessel  
Kimberly Swartz  
Carl and Martha Tack  
Ann Woodward  
Phyllis Yale and Tucker Taft  
Warren Zola



# Financials

**Writing Through**  
**Statement of Financial Position (Unaudited)**  
**As at and for the Year Ended**  
**December 31, 2023**

**Writing Through**  
*Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Assets --*  
*Unaudited December 31, 2023 and 2022*

Assets		2023	2022
Cash and Cash Equivalents - unrestricted	\$	30,517	33,758
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>30,517</b>	<b>33,758</b>
<b>Liabilities and Net Assets</b>			
Current Liabilities			
Accounts Payable		-	-
Current Portion of Long-Term Debt		546	532
Total Current Liabilities		546	532
Long-Term Loan*		19,110	19,656
Net Assets	\$	10,861	13,570
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>30,517</b>	<b>33,758</b>

\*On June 5, 2020, Writing Through received a long term Covid-19 Disaster Relief Loan from the US Small Business Administration in the principal amount of \$21,000, which will be amortized over 30 years and bears interest at an annual rate of 2.75%.

**Writing Through**  
***Statements of Support, Revenue, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets --***  
***Unaudited Years Ended December 31, 2023 and 2022***

**Changes in Net Assets**

<b>Support and Revenue</b>		<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Administrative fees	\$	5,077	6,710
Donations from individuals, unrestricted		68,485	52,783
Donations from Foundations & Institutions, unrestricted			5,308
Merchandise		24	
<b>Total Support and Revenue</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>73,585</b>	<b>64,801</b>

**Expenses****Program Services**

Staff Salaries	\$	50,242	50,800
Facilitator/Shadow Stipends		685	
Travel and per diem expenses		4,607	5,214
Workshop supplies and printing		153	377
Other expenses		100	625
<b>Total Program Services</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>55,786</b>	<b>57,016</b>



**Writing Through**  
**Statements of Support, Revenue, Expenses, and Changes in Net Assets --**  
**Unaudited (continued)**  
**Years Ended December 31, 2023 and 2022**

<b>Support Services</b>		<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
Bank fees	\$	2,123	2,044
Business licenses and fees		217	100
Consulting		380	7,567
Employee benefits		2,278	1,943
Loan interest		549	563
Online services		2,484	2,091
Staff Salaries		11,929	17,550
Travel and per diem expenses		78	44
Other expenses		470	1,103
<b>Total Support Services</b>	\$	<b>20,508</b>	<b>33,005</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$	<b>76,294</b>	<b>90,021</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>		<b>(2,709)</b>	<b>(25,220)</b>
Net assets, beginning of year	\$	13,570	38,790
<b>Net Assets, End of Year</b>	\$	<b>10,861</b>	<b>13,570</b>

# Work From Our Participants

## Cambodia

### Magic Words

*By Lav Pov, Caring For Cambodia*

When I was young, I learned walking.  
I could not make it.  
I fell over and cried.  
My parents held my little hands, walked with me  
and cheered me up.

Day by day, I could walk straight with confidence.  
My heroes started releasing my hands, allowing  
me to walk by myself.

It's hard to walk without them.  
I looked back and wanted to ask for help.  
My mom said, 'keep trying, you can do it!'  
Also, my dad raised his thumb up and told me,  
'you're the best!'  
I smiled and told myself to keep walking forward.

The bridge of life is long and difficult to go cross  
But I still need to walk along it until I reach  
success.

'Keep walking daughter! You can do it!' is playing  
in my mind.

My parents' magic words are my power.



## Recalling the Past. Embracing the Future.

*a group journal entry by the writers of A Place To Be Yourself*

I remember I had a problem with my auntie, then I met Jason at the Old APTBY inside Purple Mango. I knew about him from Kate. He made me feel better by offering possible solutions and telling me not to worry too much. He understood and I trusted him. I felt curious, but nervous and worried about how to explain how I felt to my best friend and family.

I remember I came here for yoga. I remember realizing that others thought it was weird for me to have long hair and wear dresses. I remember when I was a kid I felt like I was different. People told me boys shouldn't play with dolls and cooking stuff. I wanted to be as pretty as a woman. I remember I had a crush on a girl when I was 14, I felt jealous when she played with others. I told her, 'I have been in love with you for a long time.' She said if I was telling the truth she wouldn't talk to me again, so I told her it was a prank. I still have feelings for her, but now I have a boyfriend and I'm happy.

I saw myself as different from when I was a child, my mum loves to watch movies and she always brought me along. At home, I always acted as an actress from the movies I saw and always sang songs from the female singers. I wore a towel on my head, as long hair. No one saw me.

I never felt comfortable with my school uniform; I didn't want to wear a skirt, I wanted to wear trousers like the boys. I started to feel like I loved only girls. I felt the same about loving girls and boys. With a boyfriend I felt only 40%, but with girls it was 90%.

I wanted my parents to treat me the same way they'd treat a boy; I wanted to stay out late. They thought that the girls are more vulnerable and weak. The girls have to stay home to study and then later, they can get married. The virginity of the girl is the highest value. They compare the boys to gold, it can never lose its value, but the girls are fermented fish, once you open the cover it smells bad to the whole village. Boys can do drugs, drink and go to clubs and the family don't mind, but if they act girly there will be judgment for everything they do. Boys and girls experience pressure in different ways.

Sometimes I feel like a boy, sometimes like a girl, sometimes both, sometimes neither. I don't want to change; I love myself. Society still puts me into a role. My family still values their reputation over their kids' happiness. What the neighbors think and say is most important.

This place makes me feel safer than my home. I remember the first time I came here, I felt a bit scared, because it was quiet, but now it's so much fun.

Sometimes I want to be a handsome boy. Before I was scared about how to tell everyone I want to be both: the boy and the girl. I gave a clue to my mum, but she didn't say anything; she thought it was a joke. I told my family I liked girls and my mum said wait until you're older to think about this. I want to tell her it's real, not a joke. I felt uncomfortable in my family, before I told them, but my father doesn't know yet, because they are divorced. I don't want people to look at me differently.

I hope the future society will be open and accepting to everyone. I want more and more people to come out, so you can be the best version of yourself. I want to see all the people be confident and be themselves: be who they are. No matter who they are.



## Last Halloween

*By Dawin, Rachana, Thyna, Elijah, and Soty, AOC*

This story starts on Halloween day, the only time when all the kids dress up and go trick or treating. There was this one kid named Lake. Lake was an adventurous kid, he liked to explore new places. Aside from that, he also liked making friends.

One day, Lake saw a girl sitting alone, all by herself, when he left the house to go trick or treating. He wanted to be her friend and she agreed. They went trick or treating together but every time they arrived at all the neighbor's houses, the girl never received any treats or candies but the boy got a lot. Lake found it weird, so he decided to share some candy with her and then Lake went back home along with the girl to find his parents talking with the doctor. The doctor diagnosed Lake with a mental disorder called "Imaginary Friend".



Of course, Lake found it weird because his friend, the girl, was standing next to him, but only Lake could see the girl. His parents didn't believe him and Lake got upset. Then, the girl gestured to Lake as a sign for him to follow her so Lake did what he was told. He followed the girl into a forest, but it was not an ordinary forest, it was one filled with dangerous traps. Lake still insisted on following her and soon they arrived at a big tree. They both sat under the tree and talked until they fell asleep.

Lake's parents realized that Lake had been gone for a long time so they got worried and called the police. They got the police to investigate the forest and found Lake sleeping peacefully, but the girl didn't look right. It was the corpse of the girl. The police were familiar with her and remembered that this was the girl who went missing last Halloween.



## Vietnam

### Confessions of a Lost Wanderer

*By Thanh Mai, age 14, Summit Education*

Black hair, black eyes  
“That one Asian nerd”  
book reader, piano player  
always expected to be perfect  
to sit still, look pretty.

Follow the rules, be obedient  
My mind trapped and conflicted  
wandering, lost in this labyrinth of chaos  
To be a doctor or a painter?  
Follow my dreams or what they want?  
Like there’s an angel and the devil  
Whispering, calling to me  
yet I cannot decide who I am

Do I want to be good or bad?  
A reflection of the past or something new?  
Just simply a human passing time?  
Or an explorer of my path to define?  
People say to “just be yourself”  
but who are we, really?

Are we the pawns of a larger game?  
Or better yet, prisoner in a maze?  
Remaining unhidden yet unseen  
Not knowing what is our “meant to be”  
the question looms inside my mind  
like a fear, a show or a lie.  
But as I close my eyes good night,  
the stars smile at me from the sky  
the rain singing its lullaby  
and long since forever, the answer I pine.

Is deep within me, myself and I.



## Taking Flight

*a group journal by the writers of Summit Education Center*

I remember, it was 4am, it was still dark outside. I felt a bit cold at that time. I scrambled in the dark, I searched for my jacket. Shivering from the cold, I tripped on the messy clothes on the floor. Digging through my wardrobe, I tried to find the clothes I wanted to pack. I rummaged through the closet to find my shirts. I made sure I knew exactly what time I was flying. I felt very chill. I felt terrified as it was my first flight ever. I panicked when I couldn't find my passport. Though I felt confident and prepared for the trip, there was still a sense of nervousness. I decided to go to sleep to be energized the next day. When I woke up, I realized I missed the flight to Thailand but I didn't care.

When I left for the airport, everyone was still asleep. We loaded our bags into the taxi and got in, the taxi driver asked me in a deep voice, "Where to boss?". Each second that passed, I felt a little bit closer to death. The sky was dreary and it was slightly raining. The worst feeling was being sick in the taxi, with the pineapple scent making it worse. I felt very hungry. The taxi fare was twice the normal fare, I felt ripped off. I argued with the taxi driver, but eventually, I relented and paid his price. I was too sleepy to stand. The airport was packed. I immediately went out to get some coffee. I had already checked-in online so I didn't need to stand in line. I went for a bowl of pho. I saw desperation in the faces of the airport staff, it is a very dull job. I felt bored standing in customs.

I was flying to Singapore to see my grandparents. I was nervous because I had never been there before and didn't know what Singapore would be like. I was going to Nha Trang with my family after I finished school. I was a bit excited but a month is a long time.

The plane was huge. I was greeted by a really jacked flight attendant. They were very nice. They told us to get in line to board the plane. I felt very cool because there was a lot of air-conditioning. There is always a temptation to jump off the plane. I wondered how the emergency exit door worked. The seats were smaller than I thought. I hoped the plane would begin moving soon. I felt nervous when I sat down. I read the instruction manual. I sat down and prayed. I felt indifferent about it.



When the engine started, the plane was shaking a lot and when it started moving I felt pushed back into my seat by the thrust. I started feeling butterflies in my stomach and anxiety with the fear that the plane might explode as it was shaking, but the moment it took off, those feelings were wiped out in an instant. I felt adrenaline when we experienced turbulence, I felt terrified.

There were a few sudden drops and I felt butterflies. My heart was beating fast when I knew I was in a different country. I was amazed looking out of the window. The plots of land were becoming bigger. I almost miss the sky but I also felt relieved to be touching the ground. I felt fascinated by the airport, it was much bigger and more modern than the one at home. I couldn't wait to get out of the plane. The pilot announced that we had to wait on the plane, and we stayed for an extra hour. I was relieved that the ear pain was over. Although I was nervous, the flight felt shorter than I expected and I knew I wouldn't be as nervous the next time.

## United States

### **The Clear Way Was Obscured**

*a group poem by the Howes House Writers*

Let us take a leap of faith  
Remarkable texture  
By holding hands alone  
Will I be the one to fall?  
Let us take a leap of faith

Let us be persistent in our goal  
Fearless, not following the herd  
Take the road less traveled  
failed ashamed lost and desperate found and saved  
Let us be persistent in our goal

Let us take another leap of faith  
One fell, was it me?  
One person dropped out  
We are not alone  
Crazy unity  
Did I save you? Did you save me?



## The Horses and Me

*a group journal entry by participants from the Edgartown School at Misty Meadows*

I felt connected with the horse. I felt proud of myself. I think I did great. It felt like I was in Brazil, the horses, the grass, the smell was good. The atmosphere felt calm and relaxed but I was nervous that I might do something to hurt the horse. I felt sleepy. I felt excited. I felt nervous because I thought it would be hard. Then when I met the horse, I felt more confident. The horse was friendly. I felt guilty because I thought the horse didn't want to do what we were asking her to do. I thought she would not like it. I felt comfortable with the horse. The horse smelled like a horse. It was a good smell.

When I have to do something new that I don't know how to do, I feel worried that I might do it wrong. I feel scared. I feel nervous. I feel aware. I feel sleepy.



I felt proud because we did good work, working together as a group. I felt happy because it reminded me of the farm in Brazil that I went to. I felt happy because it was a fun day. I felt proud because I was getting along with the horses. I felt curious because I wanted to learn more about the horses. At first I was nervous, worried and scared because it was something new, but after I felt confident and happy because it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be. Maybe the horse felt scared too, but then she felt calm and serene.

## Mexico

### Still Be Me

*By Jacqueline Mayli Porras Matuz - Multiversidad Mundo sin Fronteras*

Today I have no idea  
how I feel but...,  
in my past, present and future,  
still be me.  
All my faults, good decisions,  
are the way I got there.  
Like a rollercoaster my emotions  
bring me a special feeling when I see the sky.  
Just now I'm happy,  
but a little bit nervous about the future.  
I want to be the best version of me.  
So... How can I find the best version of me?  
There is a way?  
I hope to find it soon.



### The Picture Inside the Book

*By Marey Mendoza Salazar and Concepción Aguilar Carrasco - teachers from the Technical Secondary Schools of the state of Oaxaca*

She has almost 20 years teaching, and has always been very enthusiastic and full of energy to plan her classes. All students have good memories of her, but after the pandemic, she felt a big change in their behavior. They were maybe a little listless, disrespectful, and egocentric; they thought that they could get things magically, quickly, and without any effort. She tried to do the best for them, but they didn't have the interest to learn; she still worked and motivated some students, but little by little, she felt blue and frustrated. She got angry, and stopped doing many good things in her classes.

One day she received a box at the door... a mysterious box. She shook it, and she looked for around for the sender; but there was no one. She wondered who the sender was. She opened the box and unwrapped the present. It was a book, an interesting book of poems. She browsed through the book quickly and a picture fell out. She looked at it for a long time. The face was familiar but she didn't recognize the man. She flipped the picture over and read a note:

"Dear teacher, I hope when you receive this small gift, you are fine and feel great. I wanted to give this present because it is my first book; very soon it will be in libraries. You are one of the teachers that inspired me to write it. I am very grateful to you. I hope that you continue with your lovely work. I know that like me there are many students who need you. With love... Manuel."

She cried deeply, and realized that she must continue with her mission. She dried her tears and she felt full of energy again.

## **We're Not Alone**

*By Javier Aragón Martínez - teachers from the Technical Secondary Schools of the state of Oaxaca*

We're not alone,  
There's a force,  
deep inside.

No more fear,  
No more tears,  
to be worried in  
our life.

Look for that force  
in your heart.  
That's the place,  
Where it resides.

When in trouble  
or in peace,  
feel joys  
that never cease.