

National Writers Series' Partnership with the Writers Studio

By: Lola Russell, April 27, 2025

TRAVERSE CITY - Since its inception in 2016, the Writers Studio at Northwest Ed's Career Tech has had a connection to the National Writers Series (NWS), a local organization started by Ann and Doug Stanton that brings authors from around the world to the Opera House on Front Street.

As a partner of NWS, the Writers Studio has welcomed guests visiting Northern Michigan on their book tours including Nita Prose and Leif Enger.* Therefore, as authors grace northern Michigan with their presence and wisdom, it is not uncommon for them to have an additional stop: the Writers Studio classroom. Along with Ann and/or Doug Stanton, a photographer, and education manager Audrey Fierberg, the authors are welcomed into the classroom the same way that all guests are: with an overview of the class, a question about whether they are on the record, and an offer of tea. The authors then delight the class with recountments of how they became interested in writing, what motivates them to keep going, and more while the students ask questions until class is over.

Each April, Fierberg also reaches out to Writers Studio students, offering them a spot in the National Writers Series Literary Journals and an opportunity to publish their work. Students submit their piece with a professional photo of themselves and a bio. The lit. journal is annually released at the NWS launch party in May, where students receive a free copy and a moment to read their work aloud in front of an audience.

Also included in this publication are the pieces written by the junior and senior recipients of the National Writers Series Scholarships through the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation. All Writers Studio students are requested to submit a piece from one of four categories: poetry, creative nonfiction, fiction, and journalism. Winning students are honored at the Opera House before esteemed guests who may or may not have been present in the classroom. From there, the community Foundation transfers the scholarship directly to the college, school, or educational program of the recipients' choice (should said student be a junior or not attending such an institution in the next year, the scholarship can be deferred). Two students from Writers Studio won in their categories in both 2024 and 2025.

In 2024, Lucas McSwain, a senior from Central High School, was a recipient of the NWS Leslie Lee Nonfiction Scholarship, winning with his piece *My Truth of Tuna Casserole*. In the same year, the NWS Robert and Marcy Branski Poetry Scholarship was awarded to Lola Russell, a junior from the Greenspire High School who submitted a poem titled "Apologies to Each Eraser." Both students appeared onstage before Kevin Kwan, author of the novel, *Lies and Weddings*.

Appearing at the Opera House before Alua Arthur, author of *briefly perfectly human*, in 2025, Russell, now a senior, received the same scholarship after applying with their poem "Anti-Ode to Starbucks Drive-Thrus." Sam Milks, a senior from West Senior High School, appeared onstage at the same time to receive the Montgomery Fiction Scholarship for his story, *Rabbit Trap*.

*See List of Notable Guest Speakers in Newsletter

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