



Window Keeper Community Workshops

As the nation approaches the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, PA Humanities is engaging Pennsylvanians in meaningful conversations about history, democracy, and civic life through Window Keeper: Community Workshops.

Inspired by *The Window Keeper*, a commissioned poem by Philadelphia Poet Laureate Yolanda Wisher, the project invites residents to reflect on the nation's founding ideals, examine their relevance today, and imagine the future of American democracy.

Through community-based writing workshops, facilitated discussions, and creative expression, participants explore themes such as freedom, justice, representation, belonging, and civic responsibility. Grounded in the humanities, the workshops combine historical reflection with personal storytelling, helping participants connect their own experiences to broader questions about our shared past and future.

Workshops will be held this summer and fall at community spaces in York, Pittsburgh and the surrounding counties, Philadelphia, and the Bellefonte/State College region and are organized by our anchor partners: Pennsylvania State University, York College of Pennsylvania, Drexel University (The Writers' Room) and the University of Pittsburgh (Western PA Writing Project).

If you live near a workshop site and would like to attend, reach out to us at programs@pahumanities.org.

Program Goals

- Foster civic reflection through community dialogue, reading and creative expression
- Create space for community voices and unique perspectives
- Highlight community spaces as a welcoming place for civic reflection and learning
- Celebrate Pennsylvania stories during the nation's 250th anniversary

Program Highlights

- Community-based workshops in four Pennsylvania regions (SW, SE, SC, NC)
- Discussions exploring the promises and contradictions of American democracy
- A statewide digital zine featuring participant-generated writings
- Statewide convening honoring the selected Window Keepers to take place on November 10, 2026 in Harrisburg.

2026 Window Keeper: Community Workshop Schedule (as of 7/21/26)

Region: York

Lead Partners: York College of Pennsylvania, with Cultural Alliance of York County

Host Sites: Crispus Attucks Community Center, York County History Center (YCHC)

Dates:

- August 1 from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m. at Crispus Attucks Community Center
- August 5 from 3:00 - 5:00 p.m. at Crispus Attucks Community Center

Location of Workshops: Crispus Attucks History and Culture Center, 45 E. Boundary Ave, York, PA 17401

Program focus: York College is interested in engaging seniors, students, and families. Their program engages a local historical society focusing on Black history and the YCHC which has an exhibit opening July 3 called Revolutionary York, which connects to the 250th. Workshops will be planned and facilitated by three local poets: Vito Grippi, Lizz Dawson and Travis Kurowski.

Region: Philadelphia

Lead Partners: Drexel University's Writer's Room

Host Sites: Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships

Dates:

- July 14 from 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. at the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships
- September 15, 2026 from 4:30 - 6:00 p.m. at the Dornsife Center for Neighborhood Partnerships

Location: Drexel's Dornsife Center, 3509 Spring Garden Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Program focus: The Writer's Room will host two workshops at the Dornsife Center in West Philadelphia. The workshop in July will focus on "Freedom in the Echo of July" for existing participants and the Drexel community. The second workshop "New Voices / New Arrivals" is for newer residents and Drexel students. In addition, the group is exploring special readings of produced poems in historical locations around the city.

Region: State College/Bellefonte (Centre County)

Lead Partners: Julia Spicher-Kasdorf, Penn State University Creative Writing Department

Host Sites: Bellefonte Art Museum for Centre County and The Print Factory Independent Bookstore

Dates:

- September 17, 2026 from 6:00 - 8:00 p.m. at Bellefonte Art Museum for Centre County
- September 19, 2026 from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. at The Print Factory Independent Bookstore

Program focus: Julia Spicher-Kasdorf, director of the Creative Writing Program at Penn State, will lead two workshops in Bellefonte - one at the Art Museum and the other at an independent bookstore called the Print Factory.

Region: Pittsburgh (Beaver, Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties)

Lead Partners: University of Pittsburgh's Western PA Writing Project (WPWP)

Host Sites: August Wilson Cultural Center, Heinz History Center, Westmoreland Museum of Art, and more

Dates:

- August 15 from 8:30 - 5:00 p.m. Writing Marathon at the August Wilson House, Freedom Corner, and additional sites throughout Pittsburgh.
- August 22 from 8:30 - 5:00 p.m. Westmoreland County Writing Marathon at the Westmoreland Museum of Art and West Overton Village.
- September 12, 2026, 10:00 - 3:00 p.m. University of Pittsburgh Gathering at the Center for Urban Education, University of Pittsburgh

Program focus: Through a series of place-based writing experiences in Pittsburgh, Westmoreland County, and at the University of Pittsburgh, participants will explore historically, culturally, and civically significant sites through writing, reflection, conversation, and community. Drawing on the National Writing Project tradition of the writing marathon, we will move through public spaces together, pausing to observe, write, and share in a spirit of generosity and curiosity. Together, we will consider: Whose stories help us understand who we have been, who we are, and who we hope to become?

Participants do not need to consider themselves writers to join. The Window Keeper is open to adult educators, writers, artists, students, community leaders, historians, cultural workers, and anyone curious about the stories that shape our communities.

Whether you write every day or have not written in years, you are welcome.

Transportation and workshop materials will be provided at no cost for participants.

The Window Keeper: Community Workshops is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pennsylvania state legislators, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, and individual donor Randall Miller. "The Window Keeper" by Yolanda Wisher was commissioned by PA Humanities and ArtPhilly for America250PA's National Convening of State Partners Closing Dinner on September 21, 2024.