

THE WRITER'S CENTER

September 23, 2014

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MISSION

The Writer's Center cultivates the creation, publication, presentation, and dissemination of literary work.

Town Office
Town of Chevy Chase
4301 Willow Lane
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Dear Town Council Members,

I am writing on behalf of The Writer's Center to request a contribution of \$100,000 toward our renovations to make the Center ADA-accessible so that our programs and services can be enjoyed by individuals with limited mobility. This request is a one-time, essential contribution that will provide direct benefit to the community of the Town of Chevy Chase. The Writer's Center has already secured \$500,000 in funding, which enabled us to complete renovations to the lower level of the building, including ADA accessible bathrooms, new classrooms with improved lighting and a Writer's Studio to give aspiring and established writers a quiet place to work. We serve 6,000 individuals each year, most of whom reside in Montgomery County. **The costs of making the building fully ADA accessible total \$250,000. Our highest priority – which has been mandated by the County – is to rebuild our Walsh Street entrance to include a handicapped ramp. The grant from the Town would cover \$100,000 of these costs.**

About The Writer's Center

The Writer's Center is the oldest and one of the largest literary centers in the U.S., with a strong commitment to aspiring and emerging writers from all walks of life. We believe the craft of writing should be open to people of all backgrounds and ages. Headquartered in Bethesda, MD, the Center is located at Walsh Street and Wisconsin Avenue, adjacent to the Town of Chevy Chase, and is part of the Bethesda Arts and Entertainment District. Each year, our 350 workshops serve more 6,000 writers and readers. Our commitment to access is reflected in the fact most of the 70 author readings and other events we hold each year are free and open to the public.

The Writer's Center's events not only feature nationally-recognized authors from across the country but also focus on local writers. Our open mic series ensures that even unpublished writers can add their voices to the literary conversation. Our workshops are led by experienced instructors, most of whom are also published authors. These workshops are designed to build community among writers by encouraging them to give honest but supportive feedback to one another about their writing, and to improve the artistic quality of their work.

We also are in our third year of administering writing workshops and neurologic music therapy for Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans who are being treated for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, now located in Bethesda. Furthermore, The Writer's Center was recognized by industry leader *Poets & Writers* magazine as one of the eight most significant non-academic literary centers in the United States. All of these programs support the mission of The Writer's Center to cultivate the creation, publication, presentation and dissemination of literary work.

The Writer's Center and the Town of Chevy Chase

The Writer's Center directly benefits the Town of Chevy Chase and its residents. We believe that everyone has a story to tell. We try to inspire the community about the power of language through live readings by published authors, and by making our facilities available to local independent theater companies and performers.

The Writer's Center programs serve a wide range of writers, including Town residents. In addition to our workshops and events, The Writer's Center:

- rents space to writers in the newly constructed Writer's Studio;
- sponsors annual writing contests for students at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School, Albert Einstein High School, Gonzaga High School and the Landon School;
- hosts the Montgomery County semi-finals of the NEA-sponsored "Poetry Out Loud" poetry recitation contest for high school students;
- offers free writing workshops (with grants from the National Endowment for the Arts) to active-duty military, veterans and their families
- works in conjunction with the National Endowment for the Arts and Department of Defense to administer creative writing and music therapy sessions for combat veterans who are being treated for traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress at the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center.
- partners with the annual Bethesda Literary Festival;
- makes available our 185-seat theatre to local theatre companies, including Quotidian Theatre, Flying V Theatre, Pinky Swear Theatre, Friday Improv and Pointless Theatre, giving these companies a place to perform for Town residents; and
- presents events including the Sunday Open Door Readings, at which local and visiting authors read from their recently published work, and Open Mic Readings, at which everyone who attends is given five minutes to read their prose or poetry; and
- reaches out to inmates at a local jail via poetry contests and readings.

Our Board includes many town residents, helping shape our strategic direction as an organization. Town resident members of our Board include former mayors of the Town, Mier Wolf and Linna Barnes, as well as author and writing instructor Ann McLaughlin.

Details of Request: Capital Improvement to create ADA Access

In May 2014, The Writer's Center obtained a 15-year renewable lease from Montgomery County for its building on 4508 Walsh Street in Bethesda. This facility was built by the County in 1962 as a teen recreation center, and is in need of long-deferred upgrades to better serve the more than 6,000 individuals who pass through our doors each year. Although the Center leases the building from the County, we are responsible for all maintenance and repairs of HVAC and other systems, as well as landscaping, replacing or repairing the roof and any other structural problems that may occur.

As of September 2014, The Writer's Center raised \$500,000 in State and County grants which were used to complete Phase 1 of a three-phase project to update the facility. Phase 2 – with a total estimated cost of \$2.5 million – requires renovating the main (Walsh Street) entrance to make it ADA compliant by restructuring it to include a permanent steel ramp and guardrails (\$100,000), as well as constructing an elevator inside the building (\$150,000) to link the current main and basement levels, and a planned third level. (In Phase 3, we plan to upgrade our theatre.) These improvements will make the building easier to enter and exit for individuals who have restricted mobility, providing a direct and material benefit to those who visit the center, including the 10% of our visitors who are over the age of 65, as well as wounded veterans who will benefit from the Military and Veterans Writing Center to be located on the second level.

The Writer's Center is required to match a Montgomery County bond bill of \$300,000 in order to complete these improvements. We have already received gifts and pledges of over \$150,000 from our Board and we are currently seeking additional contributions from individuals and foundations. Your contribution to the project in the

amount of \$100,000 is important to meet the match and help complete the ADA renovations to the building, which we hope to begin in the summer of 2015.

Enclosures and Contact Information

We are grateful to have the opportunity to submit this request for funding to the Town Council. Attached, please find enclosures containing requested information from the Town's written Contribution Policy. If you have any questions or require additional information about this Capital Improvement project, please feel free to contact me at 301-654-8664, or stewart.moss@writer.org.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stewart Moss
Executive Director

THE WRITER'S CENTER

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4508 Walsh Street
Bethesda, MD 20815

www.writer.org

Phone 301.654.8664

October 14, 2014

Town Office
Town of Chevy Chase
4301 Willow Lane
Chevy Chase, MD 20815

Dear Town Council Members,

Mier Wolf, a member of our Board of Directors, has informed me that you have expressed interest in knowing use of The Writer's Center by residents of the Town of Chevy Chase in connection with our request for a **contribution of \$100,000 toward our renovations to make the Center ADA-accessible so that our programs and services can be enjoyed by individuals with limited mobility.**

In reviewing our active database, and also that of our resident theatre company, Quotidian Theatre, there are 400 Town residents who have enrolled in our workshops, attended our author readings and other events, and have attended Quotidian performances.

In addition, approximately 200 Town students have participated over the past ten years in our annual writing contest at Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School. Each year, we hold a reception at the Center for the contest winners.

There no doubt are many others from the Town who attend our events and pay cash at the door, but for whom we have not captured any contact information for our database.

Thank you for your consideration. If you need any additional information about The Writer's Center, please do not hesitate to call me at 301-654-8664 or email me at stewart.moss@writer.org.

Sincerely,



Stewart Moss
Executive Director

The Writer's Center is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. A copy of our current financial statement is available upon request by contacting The Writer's Center. Documents and information submitted to the State of Maryland under the Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the office of the Secretary of State for the cost of copying and postage.