INTRODUCTION

Healing Story Alliance (HSA) is a Special Interest Group of the National Storytelling Network (NSN), with a membership of close to 200 individuals.

HSA’s mission is to explore and promote the use of storytelling in the healing arts and professions. HSA develops resources to share and increase knowledge of stories and how best to use them to heal individuals, organizations, or the entire planet. HSA strives to reach beyond the storytelling community to engage those in other professions or on personal paths who can see the benefit of story as a vehicle for healing.

In 2021, HSA maintained its services to both members and the broader community. HSA continued to provide opportunities for gathering on Zoom in order to foster community and offer healing story experiences. HSA also maintained its Listserv and reconstructed its website.

Program Offerings

OARS in the WATER

Initiated at the height of the COVID 19 lockdown in April of 2020, we named our bi-monthly program with this metaphor in mind: When a small boat meets turbulent water, the best way to maintain balance and stay upright is to keep your oar in the water. It will become your stabilizing rudder, enabling you to maintain course and steer your vulnerable craft towards safety. We are each like that small boat. HSA hopes that sharing our experiences, stories and ideas might be another stabilizing oar in the water for each of us.

During 2021, Oars in the Water met twice a month on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month from 7:00-8:30 pm and provided a place to listen and to be heard. These gatherings attracted thirty to sixty participants. Our participants joined us from across the United States as well as a number of countries outside of the United States, including India, Korea, Canada, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Mexico and Australia. Each evening opened with an initial sharing by the co-hosts. This was followed by opportunities for all to be heard
in small and large group settings. The emphasis has been on creating a safe and welcoming community where all can find inspiration and resilience.

During 2021, approximately 25 Oars programs were conducted. We refined our basic program to maximize audience participation and community building. During this time, hundreds of participants benefited. We met our goal of expanding the number of individuals hosting Oars, inviting members of our OARS community to host for the first time, each teamed with an experienced facilitator. More than twenty people served as facilitators or hosts for these evenings. Heather Forest, Program Committee Chair, also trained a number of Board Members to master the needed skills to be the “behind the scenes” technical support needed for these Zoom sessions to run smoothly.

OARS Themes 2021

OARS hosts designed each gathering around a theme for reflection and conversation. The following themes were explored in 2021

Jan. 13  Place and Memory based on the book Your own Best Secret Place  
Bob Kanegis and Liz Mangual

Jan. 27 Mending Brokenness: Where do we go from here? Kintsugi has some answers.  
Sara deBeer & Kristin Pedemonti

Feb. 10 Durga - Durga’s story has relevance to our times and can strengthen our response, raise the Life Force. Energy to enable us to collectively “slay the demon at our door”.  
Sangita Sehgall & Poonam S. Joshy

Feb. 24 Exploring Sankofa: Looking back…Moving Forward  
Heather Forest & Onawumi Jean Moss

March 10 Hope. Spring. Eternal.  
Katie Hereld & Joe Doolittle

March 24 The Practice of the Pause  
Laura Simms and Lani Peterson

April 14 Anniversary Gathering for Oars – From the Boat: A Year of Pulling Together  
Lani Petterson & Heather Forest

April 28 Held By Nature: Honoring how our Connections with the Natural World Helps to us Keep our Oars in the Water  
Elisa Pearmain & Diane Edgecomb

May 12 Memorial for Sangitaa Sehgall  
Laura Simms Poonam Joshy

May 26 Small Steps  
Sara deBeer & Wally Scott

June 9 Resilience  
Karianna Rosenberg & Mike Seliger
June 23 Solstice: Celebrating Summer's Heat and Light
Regina Ress & Bruce Markow

July 14 Joyful Emergence
Laura Simms & Heather Forest

July 28 The Moon's Light: Awe & Comfort
Joe Doolittle & Galen Brandt

Aug. 11 Refuge: Place, Memory, and Imagination
Bob Kanegis & Liz Mangual

Aug. 25 Crossroads and Perspective
Elisa Pearmain & Ai-Lin Chuah

Sept. 8 - No Oars -

Sept. 22 Renewal
Heather Forest & Lani Peterson

Oct. 13 An Evening of Seasoning: Reflecting on life's Sweet and Savory Moments
Sara DeBeer & Jean Hale

Oct. 27 Memory & Rememberance
Joe Doolittle & Mike Seliger

Nov. 10 Coming Alive
Laura Simms & Elisa Pearmain

Nov. 24 Gratitude
Heather Forest & Karianna Rosenberg

Dec. 8 Healing Power of Song
Wally Scott & Carol McCormick

Dec. 22 Solstice: Darkness and Light
Kristin Pedemonti & Galen Brandt
OARS Themes 2021

Oars in the Water
Feb. 24, 2021-7:00 PM EST
Exploring Sankofa
Looking Back . . . Moving Forward
Co-Hosts
Heather Forest & Onawumi Jean Moss

OARS in the Water
April 14th
7:00pm-8:30pm EDT
Stories from the Boat:
A Year of Pulling Together
Hosts:
Lani Peterson & Heather Forest

Held by Nature:
Connections with the Natural World
Hosts:
Elisa Pearmain & Diane Edgecomb

In Honor of Sangita Segall
We Are in the Same Boat
OARS in the Water
May 12th
7pm-8:30pm EDT
Hosts:
Laura Simms & Poonam Joshy

Small Steps
May 26th
7pm-8:30pm EDT
Hosts:
Sara deBeer & Wally Scott

Resilience
June 9th
7pm-8:30pm EDT
Hosts:
Michael Seliger & Karianna Rosenback

OARS in the Water
June 23rd
7pm-8:30pm EDT
SOLSTICE
Celebrating Summer’s Light & Heat
Hosts
Regina Ress & Bruce Markow

Joyful Emergence
July 14th
7-8:30pm EDT
Hosted by
Laura Simms & Heather Forest

OARS in the Water
July 28th
7-8:30pm EDT
The Moon’s Light:
Awe & Comfort
Hosted by
Joe Doolittle & Galen Brandt

OARS in the Water
August 11th
7-8:30pm EDT
REFUGE
Place, Memory and Imagination
Hosted by
Bob Kanegis & Liz Mangual

CROSSROADS
August 25th
7-8:30 EDT
Hosted by
Elisa Pearmain & Ai-Lin Chuah

OARS in the Water
Sept. 22nd
7-8:30pm EDT
RENEWAL
Hosted by
Heather Forest & Lani Peterson
OARS in the Water
Oct. 13th
7-8:30pm EDT

An Evening of Seasonings: Reflecting on Life’s Sweet and Savory Moments
Hosted by Sara deBeer & Jean Hale

OARS in the Water
Oct. 27th
7-8:30pm EDT

MEMORY & REMEMBRANCE
Hosted by Joe Doolittle & Mike Seliger

OARS in the Water
Nov 10th
7-8:30pm EDT

COMING ALIVE
Hosted by Laura Simms & Elisa Pearmain

OARS in the Water
Nov 24th
7-8:30pm EDT

GRATITUDE
Hosted by Heather Forest & Karianne Rosenberg

OARS in the Water
Dec 8th
7-8:30pm EST

THE POWER of SONG: Singing as Healing
Hosted by Carol McCormick & Wally Scott

OARS in the Water
Dec 22th
7-8:30pm EST

SOLSTICE: Darkness & Light
Hosted by Kristin Pedemonti & Galen Brandt
‘Kindness is having the ability to speak with love, listen with patience, and act with compassion.’
-Random Acts of Kindness Foundation

During 2021, four Kind Stories in Concert programs and one Kind Stories Workshop were conducted. All programs were free to members. We had between 60-150 people sign-up for each concert. We were able to raise money from contributions made by non-members and by additional memberships from those who wished to attend each event for free. All performers volunteered their time and talent with our gratitude.

Through folk tales and personal stories, we dove deeply into multiple experiences of kindness. What is it? How does it impact us and our relationships to ourselves, to each other, to the world? Each story program opened with a concert of seasoned tellers and community tellers sharing stories with themes of kindness. During the second half of the gathering, audience members were invited to share a story, moment, or reflection about kindness that emerged for them as listeners.

**Purpose:** We all need a little more kindness in our lives. Perhaps a story can take us there.
The Healing Story Alliance sponsored four Kind Stories Concerts this past Winter/Spring. We have heard a wealth of moving stories from our featured tellers and from our listeners. These sharing experiences inspired and uplifted us during this difficult time. They have also deepened our understanding of the need for kindness in its many guises and have clarified the complexities that kind urges and actions can bring.

As a culminating activity, we offered the HSA community an opportunity to work with several prompts to explore the personal and family stories of kindness in their lives at more depth, with the assurance that every story will be heard, whether in a small breakout group, or in the large group as time allowed. Approximately 60 attended.

Be kind whenever possible. Fortunately it is always possible!

-Dalai Lama
For the 2021 NSN Conference HSA offered the storytelling community an opportunity to hear Kind Stories in Concert from stellar storytelling artists and offered a Kind Stories Workshop conducted by Lani Peterson and Elisa Pearmain where participants could work with several prompts to explore the personal and family stories of kindness in their lives at more depth.

HSA ANNUAL Meeting 2021

NSN hosted HSA’s Annual Membership Meeting at their Virtual Conference as we have done for many years during the NSN conference. Lani Peterson and Heather Forest gave the Annual report, and invited members to join our Board and to help with our many projects and tasks. The formal meeting was followed by a “Social Hour” in which participants and HSA Board members broke into small groups by area of interest, including a generic social time, OARS interest, Kind Stories interest, Healing Story Website Resources Development, Applied Healing Story, and Social Justice.
The HSA Website
https://storynet.org/groups/hsa/healing-story-alliance-hsa/

During 2021 the HSA website, which is currently a segment of the NSN website, was revitalized with reorganization and new graphic images. The site offers a wide array of resources, guidance and practical applications for storytelling. Users can locate specific stories that address a variety of issues. In addition, the website contains a video archive of all the Kind Stories in Concert programs that HSA has presented. HSA’s journal, Diving in the Moon: Honoring Story, Facilitating Healing, is available from 2013-2017 as an e-journal.

The HSA Listserv

The HSA listserv is a valuable resource for communicating to other HSA community members, asking for resources, including story ideas and sources, and finding out about HSA programs. It is open to members and non-members alike. People frequently request ideas for stories on specific themes or to meet healing story related program needs, and always receive responses from other generous members. There is a page on the HSA website with instructions for joining our Listserv graciously hosted by HAS member Jo Radner. To learn how to subscribe see: https://storynet.org/groups/hsa/hsa-listserv/

Financial Summary Report


HSA is currently in the black: .................. $16,174
Previous end of year 2020 ...................... $9,567

Where is income coming from?
Membership Dues .................................... $5,875 (Current members: 233)
Donations ................................................. $2,638 (From Kind Stories)
Program Fees ........................................... $1,884 (From ticket sales at NSN Conference)

Major Outflow:
NSN service fees .................................... $2,539 (30% of Membership & Program Fees and 8% of contributions)
Presenter fees at NSN conference: ............ $1,000

New Upcoming Expenses ....................... $2,000.00 (Performer and Workshop Leader fees for Fall of 2022)
The **Executive Committee** meets once a month to oversee the work and mission of the organization and to review and develop plans for the future. Committees share reports of ongoing work.

**Outreach and Publicity Committee** creates and disseminates information about HSA programs, maintains correspondence with members and other interested parties. It is also responsible for HSA’s Facebook page.

**The Program Committee** is responsible for developing new programs, managing existing programs such as **OARS in the WATER, Kind Stories in Concert**, and creating a way for assuring that new programs address existing community needs and are consistent with HSA’s mission.

**The Kind Stories Committee**, a sub-committee of the Programming Committee, books professional tellers, emcees, and Community Tellers for each Kind Stories Concert. The members of that sub-committee rotate who is the teller liaison for each month with the responsibility for sending bios and photos to the graphic designer(s) for publicity.

**Graphic Design** In 2021, Heather Forest designed graphics for each of our OARS gatherings to help publicize the theme for the evening. She also produced the graphics for the Kind Stories in Concert series. We are hoping that she will have an intern helping her in the fall of 2022.

**HSA liaisons to NSN**, meet monthly with other SIGS and members of NSN administration to coordinate our needs and solve problems.

**HSA Financial person**, receives and reads financial statements from NSN, is responsible for sending invoices for performers and workshop leaders, and administrative support.

**Website** – In 2021 Heather Forest and Lani Peterson began work to resurrect the website previously developed under HSA. Under NSN management, the extensive information and resources that had been available through HSA’s website became unavailable. This process should be completed in the coming year.

**Scope and Sequencing** Heather and Lani have been writing up these descriptions for each of our major areas of operation so that it will be easier for Board members and Administrators to take over specific roles and program management.

**Publicity assistant**; Chris Donald helped with publicity for our OARS and Kind Stories Concerts by getting our announcements onto Storytelling listservs throughout New England.
PROBLEM AREAS

Ticketing – One of our major technical problems has been ticketing through the NSN website for *Kind Stories in Concert*. The NSN website continued to prove challenging for would-be audience members trying to register or make a contribution to HSA. We will continue to explore simplifying the ticketing process for future concerts and workshops.

Need for more active Committee members to better share the tasks of the HSA. We have invited interested members to attend one of our Executive Board meetings on the first Wednesday of each month.

Need for an Administrator as we had in the past. This is under discussion in 2022.
We need a committee to come up with a list of duties, interview candidates, and one person to train and oversee this person once they are hired.

Need for a few more tech hosts for OARS sessions.

Communications via newsletter, blog, podcasts and/or journal are being reviewed and will result in improved communication with members and with the public in the coming year.

LOOKING FORWARD

Our intention is to continue offering OARS in the WATER on the second and fourth Wednesday evenings of each month. KIND STORIES in CONCERT which takes place the first Sunday of the Month except for during the summer months, will resume in October of 2022. We will also be adding ticketed events to our offerings.

We were planning for participation in the 2022 NSN Pre-conference when we learned, in early 2022, that the conference had been canceled. We decided to hold our planned events in the fall of 2022 either under the NSN umbrella or independently on our own. First, we will hold a performance of a powerful musical/storytelling program by Reggie Lewis and Greg Greenway called, *Deeper Than the Skin*, on Sunday November 20th from 7:00–8:30 p.m. Then on Saturday December 10th, 2022, we will hold a keynote address and workshop called, *Two-Eyed Seeing in Relation to Life Stories* with Storyteller, and Award-Winning Author Lewis Mehl-Madrona, and (possibly) his wife Barbara Mainguy. This event will run from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.

CONCLUSIONS

While it has been a challenging time with the ongoing pandemic, HSA has been able to stay true to its mission, delivering needed program services, building its organizational structures, and emerging stronger to make 2022 a “very good year.”

Submitted by HSA Executive Committee- July 2022