

**2025 - 2029**  
**Nebraska State Poet**  

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**Jewel Rodgers**

Appointed by Governor Jim Pillen, Jewel Rodgers is the **2025–2029 Nebraska State Poet**, an **interdisciplinary poet, performer, and visual artist** whose work centers on creativity, community, and connection. A **three-time OEAA nominee for Best Performance Poet**, a **2022 Union for Contemporary Art Fellow**, and a **2023 Andy Warhol Populus Fund Grantee**, Jewel has earned recognition for her ability to use poetry as a transformative tool for education and empowerment.

As a **Buffett Scholar**, she earned her **Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln**. During her time there, she competed on the **UNL slam poetry team**, contributed to the Husker Dialogues Diversity Training program, and served as a teaching artist for **All Writes Reserved** (previously known as Louder Than A Bomb). She also lent her words to numerous social engagements, including the **2018 Women's March** in Lincoln, NE, the 2017 Charlottesville Vigil, and a variety of other social and institutional interventions. These included **THINK., a traveling community conversation series**, as well as performances at festivals, conferences, and showcases.

Jewel further advanced her expertise, earning a **Master's in Real Estate Development from New York University** while serving as **Slam Poetry President of NYU**, bridging her passion for creative expression with reshaping the built environment through **PlaceMade**, a neighborhood group creating community amenities as an interim solution to blight.



Poet  
Performer  
Visual Artist  
Community Builder  
Spatial Practitioner  
Buffet Scholar  
Youth Coach  
Facilitator  
**Jewel**



## **Nominees & Friends Showcase Sept 2024**

100+ People  
25+ Poets & Artists Supported  
Collaborators: FIG Café



## **Caden's Corner July 2023**

500+ People  
1 Muralist S + 12 Youth Artists Supported  
Two Public Events & Giveaways  
Collaborators: SkateFest Omaha, One Omaha, Forgamere, Union for Contemporary Art, North Omaha Trail, Home Depot Foundation, Wurst Skateboards, Omaha Community Foundation, Cpl. Daegan Page Foundation, NE Public Skateparks Council, and 100+ community members



## **THINK. Mar 2018 - Jun 2019**

200+ People  
5+ Poets & Artists Supported  
Collaborators: Mary Lawson via Parrish Studios, The Commons, Indigo Cafe, Confluence Yoga, Nite Caps w/ Maria Corpuz

*All-Around Community  
Builder & Placemaker*



NEBRASKA ARTS COUNCIL



HUMANITIES  
NEBRASKA



# Nebraska Library Commission



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**2025 - 2026 Goal:**

**20% Funded**

## Need:

Nebraska faces a critical challenge in literacy proficiency, with **only 59% of students (grades 3–8) and 45% of high schoolers meeting English Language Arts (ELA) standards**. With a state goal of 75% proficiency by 2030, innovative and engaging literacy interventions are essential to improving student outcomes.

**Spoken word poetry has been proven to enhance literacy, reading comprehension, critical thinking, and public speaking**—bringing language to life in ways that traditional methods often fail to do. When strategically positioned, a State Poet can serve as a catalyst for measurable improvements in literacy engagement across rural and urban communities.

Beyond education, the arts foster civic engagement and economic growth. **In Nebraska, 73% of residents believe the arts help them better understand other cultures, and the sector contributes \$2.9 billion to the state's economy, yielding a nearly 50x return on investment from public and private philanthropy.**

For the past eight years, **my work in spoken word and community development has reached over 5,000 mid-westerners**, leading to transformative moments—like a student at Omaha South High School suddenly understanding consent through poetry or an audience member discovering a newfound appreciation for literature. My grassroots initiatives, including the largest poetry showcase in Omaha's recent history, the development of

two community parks and numerous urban impact projects demonstrate the power of the arts to create lasting change.

**The mission of the Nebraska State Poet is to advocate for poetry, literature, and literacy across the state.** Spoken word plays a vital role in this mission by bridging the arts with real-world skills, demonstrating its tangible impact beyond creative expression. **It is uniquely suited to develop the 'Three C's'—Critical Thinking, Communication, and Creativity—by engaging students and lifelong learners in essential, transferable skills that today's employers value.**

With your support, I will travel the state sharing poetry, while **building the capacity of young people and all people to be better communicators, think more critically, and express themselves clearly and creatively while making a tangible impact on Nebraska literacy goals** and our community's access to the arts.

**To fully realize this potential, I need the opportunity to dedicate 100% of my time and energy to expanding this impact across the state.** Your investment will allow me to bring literacy engagement, civic awareness, and artistic expression to new communities, reaching Nebraskans who have yet to experience the transformative power of the spoken word.

## Impact:

With Nebraska facing critical challenges in literacy and arts accessibility, **the role of the Nebraska State Poet has never been more essential.**

Spoken word is uniquely suited to bridging the gap between creative expression and real-world skills, fostering **critical thinking, communication, and creativity—all essential for literacy proficiency and workforce development.** Beyond education, the arts drive civic engagement and economic growth, strengthening communities across the state.

During my tenure as State Poet, **I will travel across Nebraska, reaching hundreds of sites, including schools, libraries, and festivals,** to ensure that poetry is not just heard but experienced.

In addition to these statewide visits, **I will lead a coordinated initiative to expand poetry's reach, nurture emerging writers, and create meaningful connections between Nebraska and the broader literary world.** With the right support, this vision is both ambitious and achievable.

## ***A Coordinated Initiative for Connection and Accessibility***

### **Educate Through Poetry:**

host **five free and accessible community discussions and large-scale interactive poetry readings** in the state's three congressional districts — elevating emerging poets in a quasi-anthology fostering resilience, compassion, and community engagement

### **Increase Access to Diverse Communities:**

**coordinate four national trips and two international excursions** (including Rotterdam's Poetry International Festival) **with a rotating group of rural and urban Nebraska poets** whilst inviting two out-of-state poets to collaborate in Nebraska

### **Nurture Nebraska Writers:**

host **free and accessible live-streamed monthly work sessions** to co-create a supportive environment for submissions, performance skills, and community-building

## ***A Coordinated Initiative for Connection and Accessibility***

**\$32K**

**SHOWS: \$4,600  
ANTH: \$1,700**

### **Educate Through Poetry:**

host **five free and accessible community discussions and large-scale interactive poetry readings** in the state's three congressional districts — elevating emerging poets in a quasi-anthology fostering resilience, compassion, and community engagement

**\$90K**

**NATIONAL: \$7,300  
INTL: \$12,500  
VISITORS: \$20,000**

### **Increase Access to Diverse Communities:**

**coordinate four national trips and two international excursions** (including Rotterdam's Poetry International Festival) **with a rotating group of rural and urban Nebraska poets** whilst inviting two out-of-state poets to collaborate in Nebraska

**\$13K**

**NATIONAL: \$250**

### **Nurture Nebraska Writers:**

host **free and accessible live-streamed monthly work sessions** to co-create a supportive environment for submissions, performance skills, and community-building

<b>\$135K</b>	<b>: shows and travel</b>
<b>\$55K</b>	<b>: support, materials, equipment</b>
<b>\$40K</b>	<b>: year stipend</b>
<b>\$20K</b>	<b>: contingencies</b>
<hr/>	
<b>\$250K</b>	

## ***A Coordinated Initiative for Connection and Accessibility***

**25 artists  
1,000 citizens**

### **Educate Through Poetry:**

host **five free and accessible community discussions and large-scale interactive poetry readings** in the state's three congressional districts — elevating emerging poets in a quasi-anthology fostering resilience, compassion, and community engagement

**18 artists  
36 connections  
1,800 citizens**

### **Increase Access to Diverse Communities:**

**coordinate four national trips and two international excursions** (including Rotterdam's Poetry International Festival) **with a rotating group of rural and urban Nebraska poets** whilst inviting two out-of-state poets to collaborate in Nebraska

**480 artists & citizens  
24 local businesses**

### **Nurture Nebraska Writers:**

host **free and accessible live-streamed monthly work sessions** to co-create a supportive environment for submissions, performance skills, and community-building

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**3,400 from the base project reach**

*In addition to the 300+ workshops, readings, and performances I will complete over my 5-year tenure likely reaching over **5,000/annually***

**5,680 citizens and  
artists annually**

## ***Investing in the Future of Nebraska's Literary Arts***

To fully embrace the potential of my role as Nebraska State Poet, I am seeking to raise \$250,000—a transformational investment that ensures poetry reaches every corner of the state. **This funding provides the foundation needed to expand programming, enhance accessibility, and build a lasting infrastructure for Nebraska's literary community.**

Your investment will be allocated as follows:

- **60% – Foundational Support**
  - Covers essential living, travel, and event-organizing expenses
  - Enables me to lead workshops, curate events, and purchase equipment that expands my digital reach, in addition to my physical presence
- **40% – Staffing, Artist, & Contractor Support**
  - Funds dedicated support activities for outreach, scheduling, and program coordination
  - Ensures efficient execution of events, discussions, and exchange programs
  - Expands access by supporting rural and underserved communities through free and accessible workshops, festivals, and literary programs
  - Fosters emerging poets, community collaborations

## **2025 - 2026 Goal: \$250,000**

and exchange programs that strengthen Nebraska's literary network

- Provides grant-matching opportunities to increase funding for arts initiatives across the state

This funding will:

- **Expand Access**
  - Enable me to reach hundreds of schools, libraries, and community spaces
  - Provide free and inclusive poetry experiences statewide
- **Foster Statewide Literary Growth**
  - Invest in emerging poets, community collaborations, and exchange programs
  - Grow a strong and connected literary ecosystem
- **Ensure Long-Term Impact**
  - Establish a sustainable support system for Nebraska's literary and arts landscape
  - Leave a lasting imprint beyond my tenure as State Poet

With your support, we can **expand access to poetry, literacy, and creative engagement across Nebraska.**

## Your Investment in Action:

**Goal: \$250,000**

**\$100,000:**

### Statewide Arts Access Visionary

- Fully funds a year of poetry engagement across Nebraska, removing financial barriers for schools, libraries, and underserved communities.
- Supports a statewide poetry tour, major public readings, workshops, youth programs, and literary collaborations.

**\$50,000:**

### Premier Literary Champion

- Covers one year of travel expenses, ensuring poetry reaches all corners of Nebraska.
- Funds high-profile poetry events, youth storytelling programs, and collaborative arts initiatives that bring poetry into public spaces.

**\$30,000:**

### Community Engagement Partner

- Supports a program coordinator for scheduling, outreach, and logistics.
- Provides matching funds for small poetry grants to help local communities develop literary programming.

**\$25,000:**

### Creative Access Advocate

- Funds a paid part-time assistant (6–8 months) to assist with research, publicity, and event organization.
- Expands accessibility initiatives, such as ASL interpretation and travel stipends for underserved communities.

**\$15,000:**

### Regional Poetry Supporter

- Funds ten poetry workshops or community storytelling sessions across Nebraska.
- Supports high-quality digital and educational content to extend poetry's reach beyond in-person events.

**\$10,000:**

### Poetry Patron

- Funds two major literary events, such as a school or community poetry festival.
- Covers travel costs for bringing poetry to rural and historically excluded areas.

**\$5,000:**

### Literary Ally

- Supports the development of two poetry workshops or discussions.
- Helps print outreach materials and educational resources to increase accessibility.

## ***Offerings:***

Partner with me in shaping a sponsorship package that aligns with your organization's goals. Whether you're interested in **logo representation, social media features, event acknowledgments, or multi-year commitments**, we can design a partnership tailored to your priorities.

**Any and all donations, big and small, are deeply appreciated** and can be part of this collaborative effort—think of it as poetry with your name on it.

## ***How To Contribute:***

For those who wish to give privately:

- Tax-deductible donations can be made payable to my fiscal sponsor, accommodating a 2.0% fee, to the **Nebraska Writers Collective**, and mailed to: **Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center, 6001 Dodge Street, CEC 117.13, Omaha, NE 68182**

**- or -**

- Donate digitally through my fiscal sponsor via the QR Code (right) or the link (below):

***<https://newwriters.networkforgood.com/projects/251265-nwc-supports-the-nebraska-state-poet-project>***



Over the next five years, **I will be making hundreds of appearances throughout the state**, sharing poetry, and fostering conversations that inspire connection and creativity.

This work brings your brand to new audiences while demonstrating your commitment to the arts and Nebraska's communities. By aligning with this initiative, you help strengthen the cultural fabric of our state, and in return, your name becomes **associated with a shared mission of support, growth, and celebration of creativity in Nebraska.**

- Non-tax-deductible donations can be sent directly to me via:
  - Check:
    - **Jewel Rodgers**
    - **3024 Stone Ave, Omaha, NE 68111**
  - Venmo: **@Jewel-Rodgers**
  - PayPal: **rodgers.jewel@gmail.com**

## ***Contact Information:***

**website:** [jewelrodgers.com](http://jewelrodgers.com)

**email:** [jewel@nebraskastatepoet.com](mailto:jewel@nebraskastatepoet.com)

**mobile:** 402-926-6948

***For budget requests, please reach out!***

It was an honor to appoint **Jewel Rodgers** as Nebraska's State Poet. Jewel has a way of grabbing the audience and igniting imaginations when she performs her spoken word. **I know she will inspire future generations through her creativity and passion for poetry.**

- Gov. Jim Pillen, 41st Governor of Nebraska

**Jewel Rodgers** knows how to light up a room with her spoken word poetry. She crafts her work beautifully and delivers them explosively, **reaching audiences who didn't know they would love poetry as much as they do** after listening to her. In addition to her skills as a writer and performer, **she crafts well-planned events and projects which are worth supporting.**

- Matt Mason, Nebraska State Poet Emeritus (2019 - 2024)



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\* Request CV for list of civic impact projects, notable poetry performances, and programming

