



**MARCH 2026 NEWSLETTER**

# A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hello friends,

We have early signs of spring here in the Midwest, but winter is not done with us. Cold winds will blow and we will wish for those warm, out of season, temperatures of February. I am afraid my daffodils' tender shoots will freeze but lo and behold, we have no control over Mother Nature. I will be grateful for whatever remains.

The MO-TELL auction has ended. Yay!!! Soon you will receive whatever bid you won.

Coming up in March for MO-TELL is a concert, Celtic Knots. For all of you who are Irish or at least claim to be full of Blarney, you will see and hear Irish tales from a newcomer, Maureen Korte from Iowa, familiar voices, Rosemary Cutrer from Kansas and Mike Micham from Missouri and another new voice, our newest board member, Sue Godsey from Missouri. Come check that out.

We will again be preparing for storytelling in the Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites and the Liars Contest. Watch for emails regarding these events and how to get involved. I am so excited about working with the Department of Natural Resources again.

We are working hard to bring you our best in storytelling. The stories connect us and we need that now and always.

Tell your family stories while your family is still around.

Joyce Slater  
President, MO-TELL



“The dreamer awakes,  
The shadow goes by,  
When I tell you a tale,  
The tale is a lie.

But ponder it well,  
Fair maiden, good youth,  
The tale is a lie,  
What it tells is the truth.”

Alice Kane,  
The Dreamer Awakes

# PRAIRIE VOICES

HONORING HERITAGE, INSPIRING TOMORROW

National Storytelling Conference  
West Texas A&M University

JULY 23-26  
CANYON, TX



NATIONAL  
STORYTELLING  
NETWORK

## ATTENTION, TELLERS!

Hello, Missouri Folklore Society and friends, we have started planning our 2026 conference in the Queen City of the Ozarks... **Springfield, Missouri.**

We will be returning to the **Mansion at Elfindale, Nov. 5-7** with the plan for programming from afternoon Thursday to Saturday evening.

Our conference theme: **"What are y'all doing?"**

We are sending out this email as a "save-the-date" and rollout of our 2026 Call for Participation.

Submit your proposal [online](#).

We will have a flyer / mailer with Call for Participation information later this spring.

Thanks! Reach out if you have any questions!

-MFS 2026 Planners Chris & Jahni

<http://missourifolkloresociety.org>



**Raise Funds for Member Awards!**

**Winter 2026 Online**

**AUCTION**

**Feb. 23 – Mar. 6**



Auction [32auctions.com/nsn26](https://32auctions.com/nsn26)

Info [storynet.org/online-auction](https://storynet.org/online-auction)

**Ready! Set! Bid!**



presents

# celtic knots



Tuesday, March 10, 2026  
7:00 PM Central on Zoom



featuring

Sue Godsey

Maureen Korte



Rosie Cutrer



Mike Micham

The zoom registration link is:

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/4yZiLOmUTTOvRgPLn27j9Q>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

**MO-TELL First Tuesday  
Quarterly Concerts on Zoom**



**March 10, 7 pm  
Theme: Celtic Knots**

**June 9, 7 pm  
Theme: Summer Surprises**

**Live & in person  
Liars Contest,  
July 10 & 11, Joplin, MO**

**September 8, 7 pm  
Theme: School Yarns**

**December 8, 7 pm  
Theme: Peace and Joy**

**Tellabration!  
Tuesday, November 17,  
on Zoom**

**Live & in person  
Tellabration!  
in St. Louis, Nov. 20th**





Hey, Everybody,

MO-TELL will once again partner with the Department of Natural Resources. We join forces to schedule storytellers in the Missouri State Parks and Historic Sites.

It is a great partnership that has existed since the 1980s. The opportunity is offered to all storytellers who want to be a part of the program.

What I need from you is a biography of 200 words or less, contact information, programming description, any travel restrictions and a picture that can be emailed to the parks.

I am preparing to send a list to the parks by the end of March so that means I need the information from you by March 16, 2026. Payment for each performance is \$408.33 in total. That needs to cover your performance and all expenses.

Let me know if you have any questions. Be sure to read the attachment for all the details. Spread the word to other storytellers.

Thank you.

Joyce.

MAGNET  
HERE

# FOR YOUR FRIDGE

MAGNET  
HERE

STORIES, GATHERINGS, AND STORY GATHERINGS  
AROUND OUR FAIR STATE.

## RAPS MARCH 2026

Join us for our monthly meeting on  
March 5. Our theme for the month is  
"Marching Off to War," but you can  
share on other topics, too.

Trailside Center , 9901 Holmes, Kansas  
City MO 64131

Join Zoom Meeting  
[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87505310168?  
pwd=MmhrM2NHSE1VaHZaVG1MMTZj  
NlVKQT09](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87505310168?pwd=MmhrM2NHSE1VaHZaVG1MMTZjNlVKQT09)

[i  
Meeting ID: 875 0531 0168  
Passcode: 301275

### RAPS Meeting - Story Center

Saturday, March 21, 2026

10:30am-12:00pm

Woodneath Library Center 8900 NE  
Flintlock Road Liberty, MO 64157

### Deb Wallen Story Slam

Saturday, March 21, 2026

7:00pm-9:00pm

## MO-TELL

### MO-TELL Calendar 2025/2026

Board meetings – First Monday of the  
month, 2 pm Central time, Zoom  
December 9, 2025 – Online concert (see  
flier)

The Annual Membership Meeting –  
January 13, 2026, 7:00 pm, Central time

Quarterly online concerts for 2026  
March 10, June 9, September 8,  
December 8, 7:00 pm, Central time

The 12 th Annual Liars Contest in  
Joplin, MO, 2026  
July 10/11

## RIVERWINDS

## GATEWAY



**TEXAS** **STORYTELLING**  
**FESTIVAL** MARCH 12-15 • 2026

DENTON CIVIC CENTER • DENTON, TEXAS

FOR MORE INFO VISIT [FESTIVAL.TEJASSTORYTELLING.COM](http://FESTIVAL.TEJASSTORYTELLING.COM)

**Registration for the  
Texas Storytelling Festival is here!  
March 12 - 15**

**Unplug and connect to yourself and others  
with some good old-fashioned storytelling.**

**About the Festival**

Hear personal stories, ghost stories, a liars contest, sacred tales, youth activities, a story slam, poetry slam, music, and so much more. In addition, participants can attend workshops to hone their own storytelling skills.

A weekend pass includes:

21 storytelling events including: Ghost Tales, Liars Contest, Fringe...

11 workshops

1 poetry slam

1 story slam

4 youth activities

and over 60 storytellers

**Early bird deadline is March 6.**

Individual event tickets are \$15 paid at the door.

See our website for a list of free events.

<https://festival.tejasstorytelling.com/>

PRESENTED BY RIVER AND PRAIRIE STORYWEAVERS

SATURDAY MARCH 21, 2026 AT 7:00 PM

(CDT)

**DEB WALLEN**

**STORY SLAM**



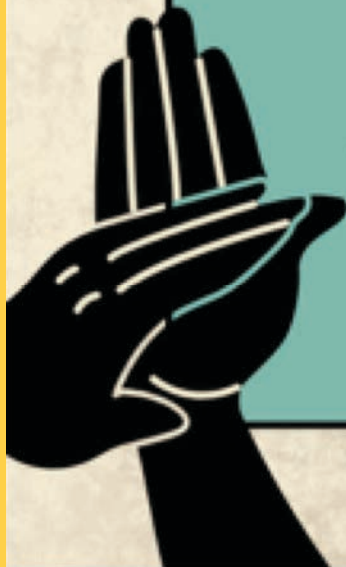
IN-PERSON & ON  
ZOOM

**TRAILSIDE CENTER**  
**9901 HOLMES KCMO 64131**

\$150 - \$100 - \$50 CASH PRIZES

First 10 tellers to sign up at  
[RAPS.event@gmail.com](mailto:RAPS.event@gmail.com)  
and pay the \$10 fee get up to  
8 minutes to tell their story

STORY THEME: YOUR BEST  
STORY



# Lives end, Legends begin

## STEVE OTTO

May 27, 1936 - February 5, 2026



Steve Otto was a mighty, mighty storyteller and great friend to us all.

We will miss him greatly.

Thank you for sharing your best with all of us!

Steve Otto, 89, of Lee's Summit, MO., died on Feb. 5, 2026, at John Knox Village Care Center in Lee's Summit, MO. He had lived with Alzheimer's disease in recent years.

Steve was born on May 27, 1936, to Louis Y. and Merle I. Otto in Columbia, MO. He attended the University Laboratory School, graduating from University High School in 1954. Steve married Virginia Durrett in April, 1958. He graduated from the University of Missouri in June, 1958 with a BA in Speech and Drama (TV production). After a tour with the US Army, he worked for KOMU-TV in Columbia, WPTA-TV in Ft. Wayne, IN, and KETC in St. Louis.

Steve worked in the health claims administration field, first with St. Louis Blue Shield, then as claims administrator of the MO Medicaid Program for the State of Missouri. In 1972 he moved to Kansas City to work for Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), the Federal side of the Medicaid Program, where he stayed until retirement from the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) in 1994.

After performing over 30 roles in community theater with Northland Civic Theatre, Northgate Theatre, Bell Road Barn, and NAE Theatre, Steve discovered the joy of telling stories. He began to tell to everyone who would listen. When offered early retirement from the government, he became a full time professional storyteller. He was one of the early organizers of "River and Prairie Story Weavers" and has told stories all over the country. He was the Missouri liaison for the National Storytelling Network, active in promoting storytelling as a teaching tool in schools and organizations. He also served the Gladstone Area Chamber of Commerce.

He was a member of Fairview Christian Church where he served as an Elder. Most recently, Steve was a member of Lee's Summit Christian Church. He was a youth friend for North Kansas City Schools, a Scout leader in Troop 389, and a regular blood donor with Community Blood Center where he donated over 34 gallons.

He is survived by his wife of 67 years, Virginia; two sons, Kirk (Jean-Marie) and Craig (Rebecca); four grandchildren, Hannah Kramer (Tre) of Oklahoma City, OK, Grace Filer (Adam) of Dunstable, MA, Emma Auger (Christopher) of Kansas City, MO, and Vincent (Dana) Otto of Bismarck, ND; four great-grandchildren, a niece, and four nephews.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a sister, Marilyn Otto Burk.

A memorial service will be held on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at Langsford Funeral Home in Lee's Summit, Missouri. Visitation will begin at 10:00 a.m. followed by the service at 11:00 a.m. Memorial contributions may be made in Steve's memory to Lee's Summit Christian Church or to the River and Prairie Story Weavers of Kansas City.



[Introduction to Storytelling Varieties \(Zoom\)](#)

Wed, Mar 11 2026 6:30pm - 8:00pm Central Story Center Event **MCPL Online**

Learn from nationally known storyteller and Grammy-nominated recording artist Milbre Burch about storytelling varieties.

**REGISTER NOW**

[Jumpstart Your Creativity](#)

Thu, Mar 12 2026 6:30pm - 8:00pm Story Center Programming Room Story Center Event Registration Required

Join Simaran Singh, BFA graduate in Sculpture at Kansas City Art Institute, to overcome the barriers of creative expression.

**REGISTER NOW**

[Story Swap \(Hybrid\)](#)

Thu, Mar 19 2026 6:30pm - 8:00pm Central Story Center Programming Room and Online Story Center Event **MCPL Online**

This open-mic storytelling event is open to anyone!

**REGISTER NOW**

[Performance Options and Opportunities \(Zoom\)](#)

Thu, Mar 26 2026 6:30pm - 8:00pm Central Story Center Event **MCPL Online**

Learn how to match venues, gigs, and audiences to your storytelling content and style from Lisa Overholser.

**REGISTER NOW**

# TIPS FOR TELLERS

PRISCILLA HOWE, STORYTELLER  
CONNECT. REFLECT. ENJOY.

415 Elm St., Lawrence KS 66044-1540 • 785-331-6181 • priscilla@priscillahowe.com •  
www.priscillahowe.com

## Storytelling Tips

**THE BIG RULE:** Tell stories you love, or feel deeply compelled to tell. If you don't like your story, or it doesn't matter to you, the listeners won't be engaged.

**Relax!** Before you tell a story, take a deep breath. Set your intention to have a good time. Know your story (unless you happen to be making it up on the spot). The good news is that you don't have to memorize the words, just know the events, sequence, character and setting. It's as if you are watching a film in your head and are telling the audience this film. You may want to memorize beginning and ending phrases, or a set phrase in the middle of the tale, if the language of the phrase is essential to the story.

Imagine the people, places, objects and actions fully. Experience the story clearly in your own mind so the listeners will experience it as well. Use all your senses to imagine the story. Remember, though, that you don't have to tell all you know—too much detail can bore the listeners. You're painting a picture with your words and gestures.

**Practice.** Some tellers find it useful to record their stories in practice or performance. Be gentle to yourself. Look especially for the parts you did well.

**Look at your audience.** Storytelling is about connection, so you want to connect with the listeners. Good eye contact helps the listeners know you want to connect.

**Vary your voice and your body language** as the story demands. Pay attention to your movements so that your gestures add to the story, not detract. Some stories and some audiences demand more subtle gestures than others. Consider practicing in front of a mirror. Don't worry if the listeners don't get the same meaning from the story that you do. As storyteller Donald Davis says, "Meaning is the property of the listener, not the teller."

**Know that the listeners have never heard this story told this way.** Every storyteller is different, every story is different, every telling is different. Even if you think you have made a mistake, most listeners won't realize it. You can usually backtrack if you've left something out. Don't worry about being perfect. Know that the audience just wants to hear a good story. As the storyteller, you're the bearer of this good story.

**Give credit:** if you didn't make the story up or it isn't from your life, tell the audience the source. If it's a folktale, learn as much as you can about the story's culture. By respecting the author and the culture of the story, you also respect the story and the audience.

**Have fun!**

# MO-TELL HISTORY CORNER

From the gracious memory of Alice Stifel

## **What is your earliest memory of MO-TELL?**

My earliest memory of MO-TELL was as early as it could possibly be. I remember when David Schlamb and Perrin attended a workshop-weekend of storytelling in the mid-1980s at Pennyriple State Resort Park in Kentucky, led by Lee and Joy Pennington. Perrin came back so excited with the idea of starting a Missouri organization of storytellers who would tell in Missouri's state parks and historic sites.

The initial meeting was in our living room in our home at 636 Elmwood, Webster Groves, MO. The people who attended from the St. Louis area immediately saw the possibilities of this idea. Gateway Storytellers already had an organization in St. Louis, focusing on telling and sharing stories and supporting the St. Louis Storytelling Festival. However, Gateway did not wish to expand into the state. Thus, MO-TELL was born.

## **Which workshop weekends do you remember best?**

The state parks workshop weekends were magical. People came from far and wide to Cuivre River and Lake of the Ozarks state parks. And Carol Potter and Violet Beaver from Troy, MO were the best cooks for each weekend. What fun! The weekends were also a family time. I remember that Perrin's parents and sisters often attended these events.

## **Who were some of your favorite tellers?**

My favorite tellers include Jackie Torrence. "Jackie's facial expressions would light up her face and her animated telling captured everyone's heart. Everyone loved Jackie! Pleasant De Spain was so easy to follow and to understand. His presence was comforting and professional. Chuck Larkin made me laugh!"

## **Which Liars Contest and Missouri River Storytelling Festival do you remember best?**

My favorite Liars Contest was in Columbia, MO at the public library. "I loved the library itself and really enjoyed the liars! And the staff was so accommodating, led by Sarah Howard. Also, I enjoyed the dinners, music and especially the telling on the Goldenrod Showboat. One of my most vivid memories was Kevin Locke doing the hoop dance. Wow!"

## **Why is storytelling important to you?**

Stories are important as a way to see and learn about other cultures and to view the world with a different perspective. Storytelling teaches without being teachy. What do we remember from a sermon at church? . . . the story.

## **Is there a Tellabration that was especially meaningful to you?**

Tellabration at our church brought hundreds of people together for a shared experience of hearing special stories told by those such as Lynn Rubright, Annette Harrison, Sue Hinkel, and Bobby Norfolk.

MO-TELL has given me people to love and cherish such as Joyce Slater, Jim "Two Crows" Wallen, Larry Brown, Dan Kedings, Ruhilde Kronberg, Nora Gilman, and many, many more.



# STORY OF THE MONTH

Perrin was going to a doctor appointment the other day. He had to walk past a delicious smell of coffee and warm pastries on his way to the elevator. He was reminded of a story. After the appointment, Perrin went up to the counter and ordered a hot coffee and a pastry. While the coffee was being prepared and the pastry warmed, Perrin told the proprietor and his assistant the following tale. They giggled at the end of the tale and Perrin enjoyed the telling of it.

## The Theft of a Smell

A Peruvian Tale

From Pleasant De Spain's wonderful book, Twenty-Two Splendid Tales to Tell from Around the World. Volume Two.

Once upon a time, there lived a stingy baker in the city of Lima, Peru. Early each morning he mixed flour, milk, eggs, and raisins and baked his bread, rolls, and cookies. Then he placed the delicious goods in the open window of his shop and sold them to his customers.

The baker was so stingy that he never gave as much as a crumb of his baked goods away. The baker's neighbor, however, was very different. He enjoyed a leisurely life. One of his greatest pleasures was smelling the aromas of the baked goods in the baker's open window.

The selfish baker knew his neighbor was benefiting from his hard work, and he felt that the lazy fellow shouldn't be allowed to have such enjoyment for free. The baker said, "You may no longer steal the smell of my baked goods. You must pay me ten gold coins for such a privilege, or I will take you to court."

A neighbor laughed and said, "That was a good joke." And he told the other neighbors about the smelling fee and made him the laughingstock of the city. The baker was angry enough to speak to a judge.

The judge had a good sense of humor, and he ordered the baker and the neighbor to appear before him the following day. He also ordered the neighbor to bring ten pieces of gold.

The next day the courtroom was packed with curious citizens. The judge asked the baker and his neighbor to approach the bench and tell their stories. The judge listened patiently to the baker, and then asked the neighbor if he enjoyed the smells without paying for them, and the neighbor said, "Yes, your honor, it is true."

The judge spoke to the neighbor, "Take the ten gold pieces from your pocket and shakethem in your hand." The judge then asked the baker, "Did you hear the coins clinking in your neighbor's hand?"

"Yes, your honor," said the baker. The judge said, "Does the sound of the gold coins please your ears?"

"Yes!" said the baker.

"This, then, is my decision," said the judge. "The neighbor has enjoyed the smell of the baked goods. In return, the baker has enjoyed the sound of the gold coins. Case dismissed."

# THE STORY BEAST

For Story Artists, Listeners, and Dreamers

Sink your teeth and claws into our monthly publication now



A new free E-Publication the 15th of each month

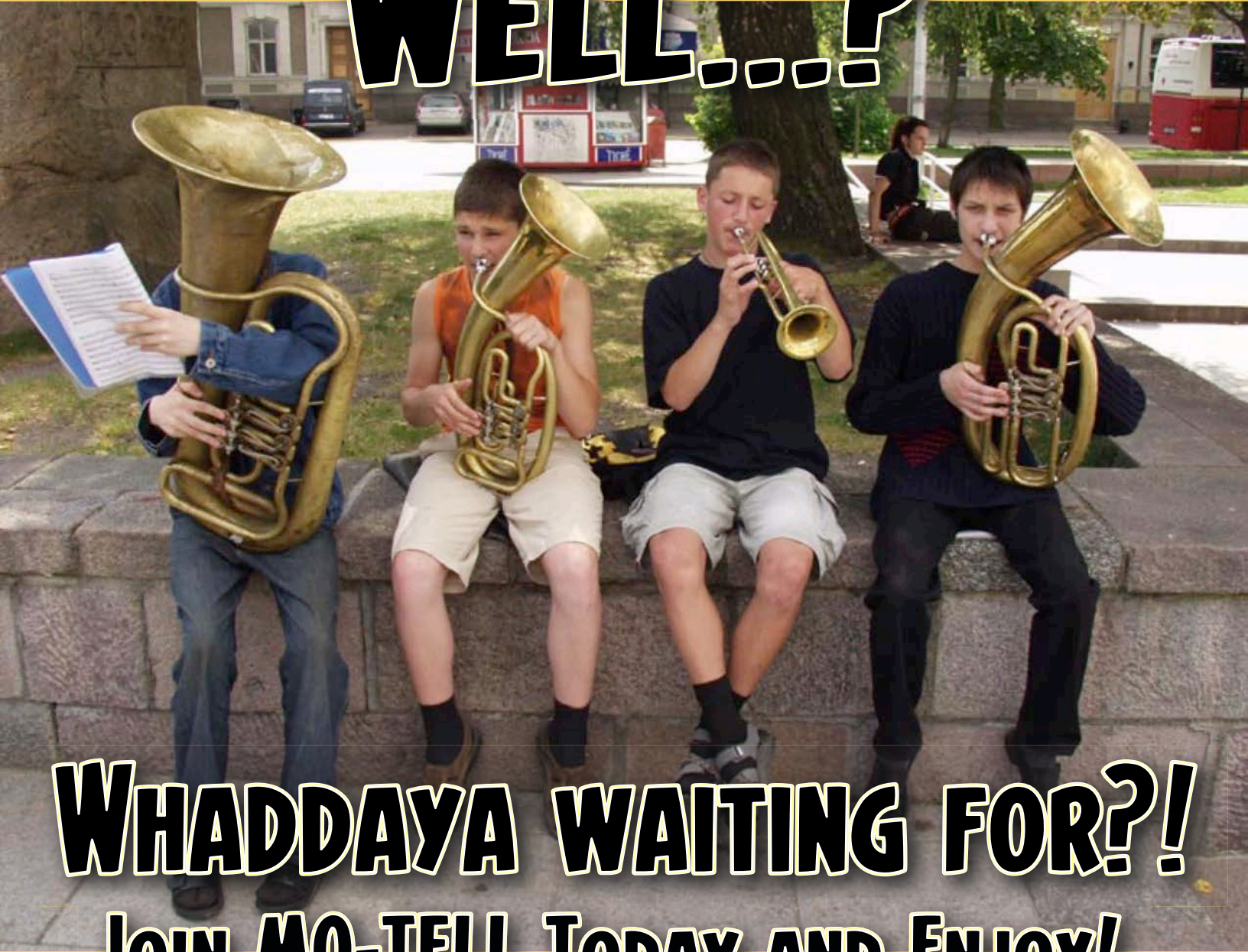
While you explore, consider submitting stories, articles, poems, and art.



[STORYBEAST.ORG/ARCHIVE](http://STORYBEAST.ORG/ARCHIVE)



**YOU SAID YOU'D RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP  
WHEN THERE WAS FANFARE.  
WELL...?**



**WHADDDAYA WAITING FOR?!**

**JOIN MO-TELL TODAY AND ENJOY!  
OR RE-UP AND LET US SERENADE YA!**

**DETAILS BELOW. CHECK 'EM OUT!**

CURIOUS ABOUT THE EVENT ABOVE?  
USE THE LINK TO SEE IT (OR ONE LIKE IT).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VHf05dXzdEQ>

# THE MO-TELL BILL OF FARE

OFTEN IMITATED, NEVER DUPLICATED

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

FISCAL YEAR, FEBRUARY 1-JANUARY 31

**RENEW TODAY!**

MEMBERSHIP	ANNUAL DUES	COMES WITH
SINGLE MEMBERSHIP 1 YEAR	\$25	MO-TELL PRESTIGE
SINGLE MEMBERSHIP 2 YEARS	\$40	MO-TELL PRESTIGE
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP 1 YEAR	\$35	FAMILY-WIDE MO-TELL PRESTIGE
FAMILY MEMBERSHIP 2 YEARS	\$50	TWICE AS MUCH OF THE SAME!!
LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP -60	\$250	
LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP 60+	\$200	

### SEND CHECK PAYABLE TO:

Missouri Storytelling, Inc.  
9621 Olive Blvd. #28994  
St. Louis, MO 63132-9998



**A BARGAIN AT TWICE THE PRICE!**

### THE BENEFITS YOU RECEIVE FOR YOUR ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP:

1. MISSOURI STATE PARKS STORYTELLING OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE FUTURE
2. MISSOURI LIAR'S CONTEST
3. WEB SITE PRESENCE FOR STORYTELLERS
4. MONTHLY STORYTELLING PROGRAMS
5. LOADS OF MERCH (HATS, CAPS, CLIPS, MUGS, BAGS, AND WHATNOT!)
6. NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK AFFILIATION
7. A WORLD CLASS NEWSLETTER (HUZZAH!)
8. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (AND A VOICE THEREIN!)
9. CONNECTION TO THE OTHER STORYTELLING ORGANIZATIONS IN THE REGION

**RENEW TODAY!**

# WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Missouri Storytelling, Inc (MO-TELL) is an organization of storytellers and other interested persons dedicated to spreading the joy and art of storytelling throughout Missouri.

## MISSION STATEMENT

We envision that every Missourian will hear and share stories and keep the oral tradition alive.

## VISION STATEMENT

President: Joyce Slater, joyceslater20@gmail.com

Vice-President: Sue Hinkel, suehinkel1@gmail.com

Treasurer: Jackie Wright, jpapawright@sbcglobal.net

Secretary: Sue Godsey, sgodsey2@gmail.com

At Large: Gary Kuntz, galirahi@aol.com  
Nancee Walker Micham, walkermicham@gmail.com  
Glen "Papa" Wright, jpapawright@sbcglobal.net  
Linda Kuntz, iharilag@gmail.com (membership)

Emeritus: Perrin Stifel, pstifelstl@earthlink.net

[www.mo-tell.org](http://www.mo-tell.org)

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Our mailing address: 7338 Belleview Ave, Kansas City, MO 64114



## THE MO-TELL BOARD