

For Immediate Release

Contact: Nanibaa Beck
602/257-0335 X28
nbeck@azhumanities.org

Arizona Humanities Council Announces 2008 Arizona Literary Treasure Awards

WHAT: The Arizona Humanities Council began awarding the annual Arizona Literary Treasure Awards in 2006 to honor and promote those who have made a significant contribution to the literary heritage of Arizona. This year the committee expanded the awards to two, one for an individual and one for an organization.

WHERE/WHEN: The awards will be given as part of an event called “Reading the Best: Arizona Celebrates Books and Writers,” on Saturday, April 12, 2008 from 7:00-9:00 PM in the Lakeside Room at the Tempe Center for the Arts. The event is free to the public, but advanced registration is required. Call 602/257-0335.

WHO: **Nancy Mairs**, winner of the 2008 Arizona Literary Treasure Award (Individual), and the **University of Arizona Poetry Center**, winner of the 2008 Arizona Literary Treasure Award (Organization).

2008 Arizona Literary Treasure Award Winner (Individual): NANCY MAIRS

Nancy Mairs, a poet and essayist, was awarded the 1984 Western States Book Award in poetry for *In All the Rooms of the Yellow House* (Confluence Press, 1984) and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship in 1991. The University of Arizona Press published her first work of nonfiction, a collection of essays entitled *Plaintext: Deciphering a Woman's Life*, in 1986. Since then, she has written a memoir, *Remembering the Bone House*, a spiritual autobiography, *Ordinary Time: Cycles in Marriage, Faith, and Renewal*, and three more books of essays, *Carnal Acts*, *Voice Lessons: On Becoming a (Woman) Writer*, and *Waist-High in the World: A Life Among the Nondisabled*, all available from Beacon Press. The work on her latest book from Beacon, *A Troubled Guest: Life and Death Stories*, was funded by a fellowship from the Soros Foundation's Project on Death in America.

Mairs is a wonderful writer—her craft crackles with energy and wit. She is also an important writer. Her essays unflinchingly explore topics of disability, contemporary faith, peace and justice, marriage, foster parenting, chronic illness and the beauty of the world. She looks at the world with a clear-eyed vision and thoughtfully considers what it means to be alive. Her books remain in print—testimony that she is telling stories and ideas that the world needs to read. We are lucky to have Nancy Mairs here in Arizona.

2008 Arizona Literary Treasure Award Winner (Organization): University of Arizona Poetry Center

“AHC was proud to make an additional award this year to acknowledge the enduring literary impact that the Poetry Center has had in Arizona, through bringing renowned poets to Arizona to share their work, and by providing workshops and encouragement to new generations of young poets,” said Juliana Yoder, executive director of the Arizona

Humanities Council. “The time is right to honor the **University of Arizona Poetry Center**, a true Arizona treasure, as it has just opened its new facility, the breathtaking Helen S. Schaefer Building. The Poetry Center’s new home embodies almost five decades of work for and inspired by poetry, and heralds a new era of renewed commitment to literature in our state, and beyond.”

The Poetry Center was founded in 1960 and has been bringing poetry to the people of Arizona for almost fifty years. Robert Frost joined Ruth Stephan, the founder, at the dedication of the original library. Her vision was to “create a welcoming place and a distinguished collection that would encourage students, faculty and community members ‘to encounter poetry without intermediaries.’” The resulting collection has expanded to its present state as a world-class, one-of-a-kind archive of 60,000 items, including 30,000 volumes of poetry and 24,000 issues of journals and periodicals (320 current subscriptions), 300 broadsides, 3,000 photographs and 1,500 recordings.

Since its inception in 1962, The Poetry Center’s Reading Series has brought hundreds of the world’s most vibrant poets to the Sonoran Desert. All readings are open to the public, and the aesthetic and cultural range of work offered is exceptionally far-reaching and diverse. The Poetry Center is also home to a variety of classes on literature, creative writing and the arts for adults and children.

EVENT DETAILS: “Reading the Best: Arizona Celebrates Books and Writers” is co-presented by the Arizona Humanities Council and the Arizona State Library, Archives & Public Records. The event will feature the presentation of the nine student winners of the Letters About Literature contest; introduction of the 2008 ONEBOOKAZ author, Nancy Turner (*These is My Words*) and the 2008 ONEBOOKAZ for KIDS author, Terri Fields (*Danger in the Desert*); and will culminate in the presentation of the 2008 Arizona Literary Treasure Awards. Following the event will be a dessert reception and book signing with book sales by Changing Hands Bookstore.

To learn more about the event, or to register, call 602/257-0335 or visit www.azhumanities.org.

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