

August 8, 2016

# Pen Parentis 2015-2016

(an unofficial guide)



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## Baby Steps Forward

We made decent strides towards turning our newly established 501c3 into a working young company, welcoming three new board members to our governing Board, and really sitting down with our core documents this year. It was a year of thoughtful planning.

Our Salons were well attended, with 30+ audience members at each Salon. Having a minimum of three readers seems like a great strategy and the people at Andaz Wall Street are working together with us to make our events great. Improvements we can consider are: printed programs (possibly for advertising revenue and definitely for donor and author name-recognition) as well as hiring a listings volunteer to help Christina with the monthly listings. We have taken on a full-time volunteer, Rose Cirrincione, who has agreed to interview, hire, and manage a team of more part-time volunteers to act as "greeters" during our upcoming events. Christina Chiu reports that Fall 2016 is fully booked and Spring 2017 is filling up. We will have at least three themed Salons in addition to our usual highly regarded writers. We would like to see more media hits. Downtown Express wrote two very nice articles with photos about our Salons, but we were only mentioned in Time Out NY once and in the New Yorker once as well. Our January Poetry Salon seems to get mention there annually. We have been active on [VolunteerMatch.com](http://VolunteerMatch.com) to get help and there is a lot of interest.

Our Executive Director Milda De Voe has joined a National Executive Directors' networking group which meets monthly to discuss business issues exclusive to nonprofits. So far she has attended events on fundraising, donor retention, growth strategies, and Forces for Good among others.

Pen Parentis is now PLATINUM status on Guide Star and is accepting donations on many corporate donation platforms. Because we were early adopters of Platinum Status transparency, we were mentioned in an article in New York Nonprofit Media. This journal has a huge circulation among nonprofits: <http://nynmedia.com/news/new-ratings-systems-help-nonprofits-navigate-the-road-ahead>

Making our website mobile-friendly has made it less desktop friendly. Our volunteer Webmaster, Tomas Paplauskas is working on it when he can fit it in to his busy schedule. But it looks great on a mobile phone now!

We have been collaborating with like-minded businesses. In addition to the Andaz, our longtime partner, we have joined forces with Vital Voices, a small new voice-coaching company who have agreed to teach classes to writers to help them get over their stage fright, choose a suitable selection for readings and perform it well. Their team of professional actors will accept classes of up to 30 with five or six active participants and the rest, observers. They split profits with us, so this is an exciting new means of fundraising.

Speaking of fundraising, we did not throw a specific fundraiser this year. Instead we tried for a membership push by calling for an open Meet-up of writers who are also parents at a midtown rooftop bar,

midsummer. While 25 people signed up to attend, only 15 came – and many of those in attendance were not on our list. None of those signed up for membership but the camaraderie was terrific and all of them are interested in attending the Salons. We did get every person to fill out the Writing Parent Survey.

Denver-based volunteer, Mary Harpin, is hard at work on our data-driven book project. With many phone calls to New York, she has come up with a great survey for writing parents to collect data on best practices. Please share the link with all the writing parents you know, using your own networks! We are aiming for 40 complete surveys before summer's end. \*\* let me know if you know of any places we might post this link to get high-quality writing-parent response!

Here's the link: <http://tinyurl.com/kyzpw75>

We also just awarded the 2016-2017 Pen Parentis Writing Fellowship for New Parents! The winner is Elizabeth Page-Hogan and we can't wait to hear her winning story at our first Salon on September 13th. we had four volunteer readers to help judge the 60+ entries. (This year we had very close to the same number as last year.) Elizabeth will share the stage with Thelma Adams, Daphne Uviller and Simon Van Booy - all three are notable alumni of our Salons! – We would like to get more applications to this award. Perhaps we need new methods to spread the word.

An advisory board member (Maria Granovsky) did a ton of research on other membership organizations in the literary field and collated it all. It would be great to have a membership committee so we can discuss and debate the pros and cons of various membership fees, perks, etc.

A resource that would be great to have (perhaps as a membership perk!) is a dynamic list of parent-friendly writing colonies and residencies. Perhaps we could update it annually. Sustainable Arts grants get awarded annually to residencies, we could update our list then. A volunteer could keep this list up to date.

Speaking of volunteers, you probably know we worked with Gray Matters, a nonprofit that donates its business expertise to young nonprofits to help them in their inception. John Miller helped us work out a strategic plan and Pen Parentis now has an official Vision, Mission and a list of projects and how they connect to our Core Values. They also volunteered to help us with a development plan. For the time being, we have put out a call for the following volunteer positions: Communications Director, Fundraising and Development Director, Listings Editor for Salon Site, and Literary Salon Greeters. We have so far gotten responses only for Salon Greeters – and Rose will take care of interviews and hiring on of a team of volunteers. If you or anyone you know would be interested in picking up one of these other volunteer positions please let us know.

Lastly, we are thrilled that the Asian American Arts Alliance which last year awarded the Wai Look Award to our Curator, Christina Chiu, again did us the honor of taking notice of us and spreading the word about Pen Parentis. In the last week of June, the Asian American Arts Alliance throws a big fundraising party to kick off their gala season. They invited Pen Parentis to do a short presentation at the event—alongside NYFA (New York Foundation for the Arts)! Christina stepped up and did a terrific toast and we were able to bring Rose, our Greeter-Volunteer to the event.