

---

---

## Annual Report 2021

---

---

# The Good Listening Project

“

*I am honestly in awe of **how meaningful this poem feels**,  
and how you captured my feelings without dramatizing them.*

*I am going to print this and put it at my desk so that I can  
look to it for inspiration and affirmation during the day.*

*I'm so honored **you “saw” me** in such a short period of time.*

”

Although the testimonial above typifies the response we've heard from hundreds of our poemees, this one is special: it was written by a hospital administrator for a graduate of our new Certified Listener Poet course.

Hymn for the Present (86.86)

I feel the pain; I feel the joy  
I witness death and life  
The rollercoaster of my work's  
The essence of my strife

Come in with joy or desolate  
Then exit high or low  
The sponge of me cannot soak up  
This constant overflow

Will labor cause my soul to break?  
Benev'lence weigh me down?  
Will anguish bleed out from my heart  
And drench my dressing gown?

The drum beats with a rhythm that  
Invites to hum along  
And nature's presence offers up  
Its own accomp'ning song

The light that she gives to my dark  
Star energy, distilled  
I share from my own empty cup  
And find it has refilled

Connection that I forge with them  
My gifts of empathy  
How sweet the sound--amazing grace--  
That I give back to me

*It had been a very tough week for this OB/GYN physician, following the death of a baby she delivered.*

*She reflected on the nature of her empathy. The sense of connection to her patients was what had drawn her to her specialty.*

*However, her ability to experience the ups and downs of both the most joyous and most harrowing moments of patients' lives*

*so intensely also had its drawbacks. She was working to cope in positive ways: by playing drums in her church ("meshing music and God"), spending time with her wife and family, and connecting with nature.*

*~ As told to  
Listener Poet Yvette Perry*



## Dear Friend and Supporter of The Good Listening Project,

Every week, I talk with hospital administrators who want to hire our Listener Poets to support their teams. They tell stories of impossible choices and low morale. They talk about understaffing and retention. I hear sighs. I see slumped shoulders. I hear burnout described using code words like “crispy.”

I also hear stories of gratitude from nurses, doctors, social workers, and others whose lives we’ve touched. In their responses to our post-session surveys, they express amazement. In this report, you’ll find a variety of testimonials from people who talked with our Listener Poets in 2021.

We have big plans for 2022. Brave Conversations (see page 8), which produce profound humanization and connection amongst participants, are becoming the mainstay of our work.

In addition to new cohorts for our groundbreaking Certified Listener Poet course, we’ve been talking with a major institutional partner about producing an asynchronous, self-paced “Listen Like a Poet” course that will teach the how & why of good listening to a much broader audience.

There is tremendous need for support among healthcare workers.

So, thank you for continuing to support us! Because of it, we are making a difference for healthcare workers around the country.

With gratitude,



Frankie Abralind  
Executive Director

---

---

## Testimonial

*“I was hesitant at first, but I really enjoyed the experience, and I think **anyone else would be lucky** to have the chance to participate.”*

~ C., Med Student

*“The poetry experience was very therapeutic and it made me realize **how much I had been holding onto** this entire year. It also made me confront some of my feelings and open up to other people.”*

~ G., Med Student

P.S. Got feedback, suggestions, or an offer to help? Email me at [frankie@goodlistening.org](mailto:frankie@goodlistening.org). I’d love to hear from you.

# Collections & Podcasts

A surprising, illuminating, beautiful podcast exists in the world because of the resourceful, creative spirit of our team.

When a snafu with our grant from the National Endowment for the Arts meant we couldn't distribute copies of the printed collection we'd produced, we brainstormed new ways to deliver the value we'd promised in our grant proposal.

We talked about building an online gallery of the poems.

What if we could provide audio for each?

Wouldn't it be neat to hear the Listener Poet read the poem aloud?

And tell the origin stories?

In their own voices?

Voilà. Over 15 distinctly-different episodes, the first season of *The Good Listening Podcast* featured our team of Listener Poets telling the stories of conversations they had with constituents of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) and reading the poems they wrote.

Episode titles included:

- **The Challenges of Burnout**
- **Self In Transition**
- **The Older Pandemic**
- **Healing in the Time of COVID**
- **Resilience in the Human Condition**

We also created printed collections for three clients last year, including one that was distributed to more than 300 Cleveland Clinic employees, and a three-volume hardcover "snapshot of humanity" for the constituents of the AAMC (seen at right).

For that engagement, 252 medical students, faculty, administrators and medical residents from medical schools around the country talked with and received custom poems from our Listener Poets.

The 15-episode podcast is available wherever you listen to podcasts. The printed collection is available for sale on our website. This project was supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.



For our initial foray into podcasting, each Listener Poet created a space to record themselves reading the poems they'd written. Above, Frankie Abralind attempts to seal out the sounds of barking dogs and backing-up trucks to record his contributions.

## Activities

### 🕒 **Certified Listener Poet Course**

We conceived, designed, and delivered this eight-week intensive course to teach people to become Listener Poets. The initial cohort of eight students included two physicians and three therapists. It sold out, as did the second cohort!

### 🕒 **Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) (National)**

Listener Poets were available for any AAMC constituent over the course of a year.

### 🕒 **The Good Listening Podcast, Season One** (Spotify, iTunes, etc.)

In 15 themed episodes, Listener Poets read and told the stories of the poems they'd written for 252 students, faculty, residents, fellows, administrators via the AAMC.

### 🕒 **Inova Schar Cancer Institute** (Fairfax, VA)

The Smith Center for Healing and the Arts has included us in their the *Artist in Residence* program at Schar since 2019. We're there in person nearly every week, sitting at a table in the hallway on the second floor.

### 🕒 **Univ. of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus**

Listener Poet (LP) sessions & Brave Conversations (BCs) for neurology department staff.

### 🕒 **University of Alabama at Birmingham Medical Center:** LP sessions, BC sessions

### 🕒 **Harvard Sprint to Accelerate Vaccination Equitably (SAVE):** LP sessions

### 🕒 **Veterans Health Affairs Youth Volunteer Program (South Carolina):** LP sessions

### 🕒 **Patient Experience Symposium (Boston, MA):** Mainstage talk, LP sessions

### 🕒 **Riffa Views International School (Bahrain):** LP sessions

### 🕒 **Physician Leadership Institute, Medical Society of Virginia**

Two hour in-person workshop for 15 physicians on *Listening for Empathy*.

### 🕒 **Stanford Medicine X Town Hall**

Executive Director Frankie Abralind opened and closed the 2021 online event.

## Testimonial

*"Thank you SO much! Your podcast was a perfect addition to our [conference] session and really made it so special – premier for those who joined and will watch the recorded session.*

*One of our attendees commented about how much he appreciated his LP session. He hangs his poem on the wall in his office!*

*~Lisa Howley, AAMC*



Team member Elizabeth Pringle produced the first season of "The Good Listening Podcast" to spotlight AAMC stories & poems.



Donations from our generous supporters enabled us to travel to the Patient Experience Symposium. In addition to hearing wonderful speakers, we also connected with two healthcare heroes, Duane Reynolds & Lindsay Swain Hunt, who have since joined our board. A third, Suzanne Kirkendall, is now on our Client Experience committee.

## Impact

Total Poemees: 409

The venue switch to Zoom has continued to be a big upgrade for Listener Poet sessions.

For the first time this year, we also had students from our Certified Listener Poets course running their own sessions.

They added **41** poemees to our total.

Ripple Effect:

One of Listener Poet Jenny Hegland's conversations, and the poem she wrote based on it, is having big impact at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Thor Ringler's poem, 'Skin,' continues to be "why" behind our push to bring more discussion about JEDI-life: Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. That's the world 'I want to see,'" wrote our client at the VA.

After our engagement, the client wrote this: "This was one of THE most beautiful projects I have ever been a part of."

Testimonials: 322

Poemees gush when we give them a chance to talk about their experiences.

Some respond directly to their Listener Poets, others write back to our survey asking for thoughts about the impact of their experience.

Some do both.

Sample testimonials appear throughout this report.

10-out-of-10 ratings: **87%**

On our post-interaction surveys, we also ask poemees how likely they are to recommend us on a scale of 1-10.

The answer: extremely. A few of them break the rules and award us a 10+, 11, or 100.

Occasionally, this sparks a sales conversation with a new client. If *you'd* like to hire us, please email [frankie@goodlistening.org](mailto:frankie@goodlistening.org).

## Testimonial

*"The experience was lovely and lightened my day; it's always stressful going to the doctor post-cancer.*

*It was a little emotional, too, but in a good, cathartic way. I was surprised how helpful it is to **just have someone listen** and ask gentle but meaningful questions."*

~ C., Inova Schar Cancer Center



The inaugural members of Clexcomm, TGLP's new "Client Experience Committee." L-R top: Suzanne Kirkendall, Duane Reynolds; bottom Lindsay Swain Hunt, Sabrina Clark. Not pictured: Frankie Abrialind.



The students of our inaugural Certified Listener Poet (CLP) cohort on their first day of class, September 14th, 2021.

# Program Innovation

## The Certified Listener Poet Course

It's hard to overstate what an incredible thing we did in 2021 with our Certified Listener Poet (CLP) course.

In response to requests from multiple clients and participants, our team conceived, designed, and delivered an eight-week intensive course on the skills and techniques of a Listener Poet.

Eight tuition-paying students signed up, committing to follow through with the 32 hours of live class time, via Zoom, and 15 hours of independent practicum.

The medical humanities department at Wilson College offered to certify it for graduate-level course credit.

To top it all off, two of those students have now officially joined our team.

We've also produced our own 145-page textbook for the course. It's called *The Listener Poet's Handbook for Working*. Chapters titles include:

- "What Makes You a Good Listener?"
- "You Can Help by STFU," and
- "Boundaries."

## Brave Conversations

Last year also brought the introduction of the Brave Conversation. This new program has become the basis for all new client engagements.

The impetus was something we've been hearing loud and clear since we started: *connection and humanization* are crucial for resilience and wellbeing.

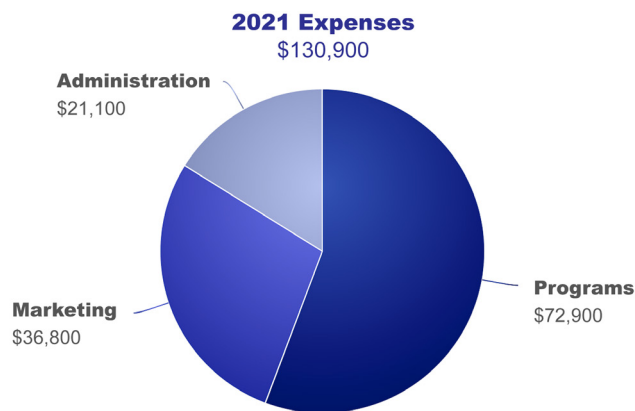
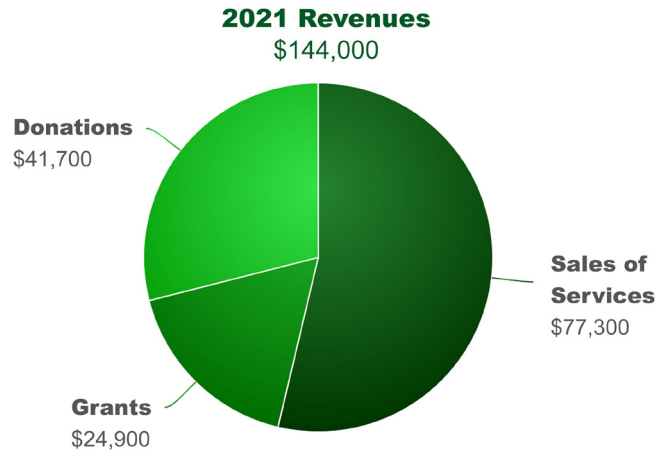
Brave Conversations are hour-long small group conversations for four or five healthcare workers from the same organization. They take place a week or two after each participant has a one-on-one Listener Poet session.

The low-lift Listener Poet sessions clear the path for powerful Brave Conversation bonding. Facilitated by TGLP, participants talk about their experiences being heard and seen, as well as what came up with their Listener Poets. Many share the poems that were written for them.

The feedback we get from these sessions and from these healthcare workers is consistent and inspired. Incredibly, these harried and time-scarce individuals report that they wish the sessions had been longer.



# Financials



---

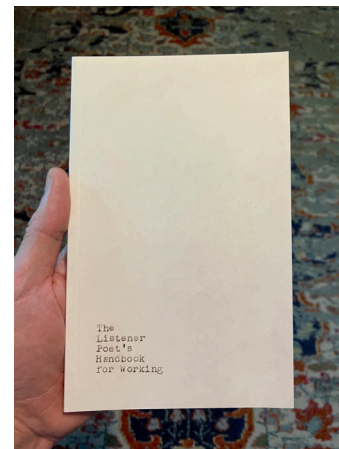
---

## Course Alumni Testimonials

*“This is the **best educational experience I’ve ever had...**and I’ve had a **LOT** of educational experiences.”*

*“It felt like **magic.**”*

*“People ask me, ‘What’s the Good Listening Project?’ and I say, ‘It’s the **best thing I’ve ever done in my life.**”*



The Listener Poet’s Handbook for Working, now in its ninth edition, is the official textbook for the students in our new eight-week intensive Certified Listener Poets (CLP) course.



Listener Poet Elle Klassen talks with an attendee at the 2021 Patient Experience Symposium in Boston, MA. Although we have transitioned from in-person to Zoom for our Listener Poet sessions, we sometimes bring out the ol' typewriters for events and special occasions.

## Donors & Supporters

These particularly awesome people donated their time, money, and expertise. We wouldn't be having anywhere near as much impact without their support.

- |                                |                               |                         |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 👉 Kent Wosepka                 | 👉 Jennifer O'Dell             | 👉 William Pfleger       |
| 👉 Robert Yin                   | 👉 Bob London                  | 👉 Madhukar Kocchar      |
| 👉 Michael Snow, Hogan Lovells  | 👉 Emily Cohen                 | 👉 Katherine Sleboda     |
| 👉 Geoffrey Hall                | 👉 Rishi Rattan                | 👉 Sailaja Devaguptapu   |
| 👉 Kay McKean                   | 👉 Carina L Dacer              | 👉 Jax Baker             |
| 👉 Elle Klassen                 | 👉 Anita Makkenchery           | 👉 Kakoli Mahanta        |
| 👉 Jenny Hegland                | 👉 Kitty Williams & Robin Lind | 👉 Debra Bruce           |
| 👉 Katherine Gekker             | 👉 Amy Alanes                  | 👉 Andrew Yin            |
| 👉 Yvette Perry                 | 👉 Barbara M Cox               | 👉 Holly Yang            |
| 👉 Ravenna Raven                | 👉 Tilman Ehrbeck              | 👉 Mary Page Jones       |
| 👉 Elizabeth Pringle            | 👉 Morghen Jael                | 👉 Michael Kelleher      |
| 👉 Penelope de Bordenave Saffer | 👉 Hayden Epp                  | 👉 Anne Abramavicius     |
| 👉 Matt Brown                   | 👉 Karin Gregg                 | 👉 Nora Lieberman        |
| 👉 Nancy Eddy                   | 👉 Alan Becker                 | 👉 Chris Tousimis        |
| 👉 Joy Friesen                  | 👉 Pamela Minkler              | 👉 Amy Morse             |
| 👉 Andrew Yin                   | 👉 Rachelle Bernacki           | 👉 Mandy Townsend        |
| 👉 Liz Marsh                    | 👉 Barbie Demman               | 👉 Charles Hickox        |
| 👉 James Hudspeth               | 👉 Deborah Raven               | 👉 Tory Petersen Wimbish |
| 👉 Sarah Kimball                | 👉 Chelsy Gentry               | 👉 Megan McElroy         |
| 👉 Allison Hart                 | 👉 Megan Sheils                | 👉 Rianna Matthews-Brown |
| 👉 Kelly Williams McCaskill     | 👉 Liz Marsh                   | 👉 Olivia Heldmann       |
| 👉 Betsy Pfleger                | 👉 Amos Cruz                   | 👉 Carlos Zigel          |
| 👉 Shannon McDermott            | 👉 Lisa Simms Booth            | 👉 Howard Weber          |
| 👉 Marie Caroline van Herpen    | 👉 Deborah Hickox              | 👉 Debi Smith            |
| 👉 Rebecca Fowkes               | 👉 Justin Verge                | 👉 Shannon Avery         |
| 👉 Sarah Wineland               | 👉 Kristen Pruski              | 👉 Bill Doherty          |
| 👉 Ben Willman                  | 👉 Saori Nystrom               | 👉 Anonymous             |

### IN MEMORIAM: Kent Wosepka, 1970-2021.



TGLP's first board member and treasurer, Kent Wosepka, died on October 30th, 2021. He and his fiancée, Betsy, were in Texas on a cross-country bicycle trip when they were hit by a car. Kent suffered a traumatic brain injury and did not recover.

Kent was one of The Good Listening Project's earliest supporters. He's a huge reason

we exist today.

Much of the innovation and experimentation we've done since we started has been enabled by Kent's generosity.

A wiz with numbers, Kent also loved skiing, dancing, and a good toast (*More toast!*). He was an immensely loving, enthusiastic, and wise human being, and we miss him dearly.

Collaboration.

Appreciation.

Experimentation.

*We use a "shared leadership" model on our operations team. These three pillars undergird our daily work. If you're exploring shared leadership at your workplace, we're happy to talk with you about how a non-heirarchical model might be a good fit.*

**[www.goodlistening.org](http://www.goodlistening.org)**