

## ***Kathleen O'Toole — poet, organizer, teacher***

Kathleen O'Toole has navigated the currents of creativity and public life for more than four decades. The author of two published books of poetry, she continues to use her creativity, community organizing and leadership development skills to make a difference in the world.

On the heels of *Meanwhile* (David Robert Books, 2011) and *Practice* (Finishing Line Press, 2005), Kathleen is working toward the publication of her new book *Reliquary*, and a chapbook, *Oblation*. This spring, *In the Margins* will be released, a collection co-authored with three other women poets — the fruit of a twenty-five year journey of writing together.

Kathleen's creativity was nurtured in a family of actors in Wilmington, DE, where her parents founded and ran a dinner theatre, and her mother introduced young people to theatre. She studied theatre at the Catholic University of America, but received her degree in French, began studying theology but discovered a vocation in community organizing. However, writing and poetry were always in the wings.

In 1991 she received her MA from the Writing Seminars at Johns Hopkins University, and subsequently taught writing at Hopkins and at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Since 1993 her poems have appeared in national and regional magazines and journals, including: *America*, *Atlanta Review*, *Christian Century*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Northern Virginia Review*, *Poetry*, *Poetry East*, *Potomac Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *Smartish Pace*. Anthologies in which her work has appeared include: *DC Poets Against the War* (2004), *Adrienne Rich: A Tribute Anthology* (2012) and *Inspired Results: Poets and Artists of Takoma Park, MD*. Introduced to haiku poetry by her friend Nick Virgilio, Kathleen writes and publishes haiku, co-edited the Towpath Poets anthology, *a few stars away* (2010), and wrote the afterward to *Nick Virgilio: A Life in Haiku* (Turtle Light Press, 2012).

In recent years, a number of Kathleen's poems have been singled out in competitions, winning the Northern Virginia Review Prize and placing among winners and finalists for the Beulah Rose and Ruth Stone Poetry Prizes. Her poem "At the Mariner's Chapel, Auvillar" was selected by Christian Wiman as the 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner in the *Image/New York Encounter* Competition in late 2016.

Kathleen is grateful to have had the opportunity to participate in residencies at Anam Cara Writers' and Artists Retreat, Blue Mountain Center, Martha's Vineyard Center for the Literary Arts, and Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, both in Amherst VA and in Auvillar, France. All have given her the time and space to write and to gather poems for publication. Her participation (five times!) in the Community of Writers at Squaw Valley, has brought reliable inspiration.

She continues to delight — and write — sailing the Chesapeake Bay and its many tributaries on the sloop Riff Raff, with her husband John Ruthrauff. Her current "day job" is at Catholic Relief Services, where she works with colleagues in the US to build support for the critical relief and development work of CRS around the world.