



“In our own lives, here in the world, we all have an opportunity to do ‘good things’ on a daily basis for others and to do them in an unselfish manner... For me, managing the stewardship of charitable giving is a moment-to-moment dignified responsibility of a truly high calling in human affairs and human relations”

VIRGINIA G. PIPER

## #PiperTrustMoments

Celebrating 20 Years of Moments

MARCH 20, 2020

#PiperTrustMoments, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition

We know it is an unsettling time right now. But we take some comfort in knowing that our founder, Virginia Piper, also experienced tremendous hardships—she lived through two world wars and the Great Depression. And she kept going. That’s what we need to remember. We all need to support each other, focus on human kindness—and keep going. We hope this story about the meaningful purpose of the Piper Center for Creative Writing brings a little joy to your day.

A lifelong lover of the arts, Virginia Piper had a passion for excellent writing. In fact, as a very young girl, she created her own theatrical stories. Accordingly, in 2003, our Trustees believed that a fitting way to honor Virginia and support significant advances at Arizona State University was to provide a \$10 million grant to establish the [Virginia G. Piper Center for Creative Writing](#) at Arizona State University (ASU).

This charming two-story brick cottage, built in 1907 is one of the oldest buildings on ASU’s Tempe campus—a short distance from the Old Main building near Tyler Mall. Award-winning authors are a significant part of what makes the Piper Center so special, from current Center director Alberto Álvaro Ríos to [Dr. Jewell Parker Rhodes](#), the founding artistic director of the Center, to [Melissa Pritchard](#) (who authored Virginia Piper’s biography, [Devotedly, Virginia](#)).

Today, the Piper Center has become a destination for creative writers from around the world and provides a creative outlet for ASU students. Piper Trust’s endowment of both the Piper Center and its Creative Writing Chair in Residence has helped create an intimate space where writers of all backgrounds, genres, and stages of development can connect and grow.



The Piper Center for Creative Writing, located in the heart of ASU’s Tempe, AZ campus, is a warm, inviting destination for writers, readers, poets, and the literary community.

We think Virginia would be proud to have her name associated with this special place that fosters a creative community of readers and writers brought together by the celebration and study of literature.

Warmly,

Mary Jane Rynd  
President and CEO

### GRANTMAKING SPOTLIGHT

## THE VIRGINIA G. PIPER CENTER FOR CREATIVE WRITING:



The Piper Center was originally designed by territorial architect James Creighton, who designed the original Arizona State University Normal School.

A portrait of Virginia Piper hangs over the fireplace at the Piper Center for Creative Writing, serving as a reminder of Virginia’s life, values, and impact of giving. “She is very much part of the spirit of this place,” said ASU professor and Arizona inaugural poet laureate [Alberto Álvaro Ríos](#), who was appointed the Piper Center’s director in 2017. “Piper Trust was responsible for letting loose the larger ambitions and talents of what was already happening at ASU. You would teach your courses and write books, but it wasn’t affecting the community. This gift allowed us to open our doors in a very different way and embrace what was waiting for us,” he said.

(continued)

A nonacademic wing of ASU's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the Piper Center is both a writer's sanctuary and a creative mecca, offering talks, readings, classes, workshops, and other literary events and programs for the broader community. All of its classes and workshops are not for credit and open to the public.

"Piper Trust's grant established a foundation for outreach in a way that few places in the country have made available to their communities," Ríos said. "Our mandate is, in essence, go out and do good in the context of writers articulating what they do, sharing it, and making clear to the community that the arts and the humanities have value."



Alberto Álvaro Ríos is a Regents' Professor at Arizona State University, where he has taught for more than 35 years.

In addition to classes and readings, the Piper Center holds the popular "Desert Nights, Rising Stars" writing conference each year. It also offers opportunities for writers to hone their craft and connect with the community. "We have an outreach program at Dunbar Elementary School, helping young students there create the 'Superhero of South Phoenix,'" Ríos said. After helping students identify issues of concern and ways to address them, the Piper Center will bring in a professional artist to collectively create a superhero for the students.

Poesía del Sol is a program that serves another demographic: people who have fewer than six months to live. "We send a student in with a laptop, good paper, a printer, and a frame, and they have a conversation with the person," Ríos said. "They find stories that families don't know, the things that will go when that person passes away." After the conversation, the student goes into the lobby and writes, prints, frames, and presents the person with a personal piece. "It is often what is read at their funeral," Ríos said.

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—Alberto Álvaro Ríos,  
ASU Professor  
Arizona Inaugural Poet Laureate

Such meaningful work is in keeping with the Piper Center's mandate. "Everything we do needs to mean something. It needs to matter," Ríos said. "I want the Piper Center to be the right set of words, the right set of programs, and the right set of efforts, so that we can effectively meet what the community of aspiring writers and—more than that—aspiring thinkers and readers are looking for."

## A SPECIAL VIRGINIA PIPER MOMENT



Although they were children of the Depression, Virginia (left) and Carol Critchfield (right) enjoyed a childhood that was rich in the arts.

As an adult, Virginia spent hours each day at her desk, either preparing correspondence or in thoughtful phone conversations. She was passionate about the written word, and her dream was to be an author—perhaps this stemmed from her early days as a "playwright." She developed stories with her little sister Carol (a budding artist who used the inside of cereal boxes for her drawings). Let us all reflect on the future beyond the hardship.

THERE ARE ALL KINDS OF  
MOMENTS IN GIVING

SHARE YOURS

#PiperTrustMoments

### ABOUT

Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust supports organizations that enrich health, well-being, and opportunity for the people of Maricopa County, Arizona.

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