

Q4 2024 Newsletter

Richmond's writing
and communication
non-profit for youth



FALL RECAP: GROWTH, CREATIVITY, AND CONNECTION + LOOKING AHEAD AT WINTER PROGRAMS

BY MEYA MCMURRAY, PROGRAMS DIRECTOR

As the leaves turned, so did the pages of Podium's story, marking a fall session filled with creativity, connection, and community impact. This season, we expanded our footprint in the Tri-Cities and strengthened our bonds with youth across Richmond and Henrico. With programs spanning 11 sites—including The Oak Avenue Complex, The Well Community Center, and schools like Boushall MS, Henderson MS, Dogwood MS, Armstrong HS, and Huguenot HS—our reach grew deeper and more meaningful.



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A true highlight? Our Teen Night Open Mic. Picture this: a room alive with 30 young voices, each one brimming with talent and expression. Students from Richmond High School for the Arts took center stage, their performances reminding us why we do what we do—nurturing creativity and amplifying student voices. The 2024 Fall Session was a clear reminder that when we invest in our youth, the returns are boundless.



As we enter into the New Year, Podium steps into a winter season brimming with creativity and connection. We're thrilled to establish consistent weekly workshops with the Petersburg Boys & Girls Club, creating a space for students to explore their writing and voices. At Boushall, Henderson, and Dogwood, we'll support Higher Achievement students in their Love Out Loud poetry program, helping them craft and share meaningful, personal works.



This season also paves the way for more family events that make literature and self-expression both fun and accessible. We're equally excited to continue our Youth Open Mic Series, a vibrant platform where young talents are inspired and valued!



CENTRAL VA LITERACY COLLABORATIVE LIT KITS

BY VICKI YEROIAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Podium is part of the Central VA Literary Collaborative. This quarterly gathering hosts 30 literacy and language based programs across Central VA, including Chesterfield, Colonial Heights, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, Hopewell, Petersburg, Powhatan, and Richmond.

In 2023, Podium's Executive Director (that's me!) was elected as its Chair. For the December meeting, collaborative members wanted to engage in a supportive community action.

At the Podium office, 17 members assembled Lit Kits, or bags of books with toys and helpful literature and resources. Organizations brought brochures, upcoming event flyers, and whatever made sense for the families the kits served. Together, we created 105 kits for Henrico County Public Libraries, the St. James Children's Center, and for ReEstablish Richmond! Kits ranged for youth ages 0 - 12 years-old and were created with books in English, Spanish, Urdu, Farsi, Dari, and Pashto. Thank you to the following people and organizations for donating books for our kits: Barbara Ferrara, Read to Them, Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond, and the Children's Museum of Richmond!



Check out our amazing assembly crew, and reach out to [Vicki](#) if you're interested in joining the CVLC's Q1 Meeting in March!

THE MURDER MYSTERY DINNER THEATER SHOW 3000

BY VICKI YEROIAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Picture it - Christmas is on its way, and the Regent Hotel is full of festive cheer. In the hotel lobby, Santa is in his grotto, packing up for the night, and everything seems right with the world. But, the peace and silence of the hotel is broken abruptly when one of the staff returns screaming loudly to all that **SANTA IS DEAD!** The question is: Who is the murderer?

On Fri, Nov. 15th at the VA Museum of History & Culture, Podium debuted its first murder mystery show - Murder in the Grotto! With the investigation led by Inspector I.B. Clueless, guests reviewed and narrowed down a list of suspects. Teams determined the murderer and their motives over dinner, drinks, and dessert. With over 75 guests in attendance, the night raised over \$11,000 for Podium's programs and operations. Thank you to our Mystery Machine Mainstay Event Sponsor, [The Feel Better Lounge](#), and to our media sponsor, [WRIR 97.3 FM!](#)



Special shout outs to Jeff Yeroian, Jill Olson, and Kate Rivara for winning Caribbean luxury vacation auction packages! Did you know? All the actors in the show are long time Podium supporters, and some are even members of our staff! Check out the cast list below:

- **Jess Ellett** as Prudence Dillon, a long-term resident
- **Peter Larsen** as Peter Jones the Waiter Major
- **Charmeya McMurray** as Major Neville Devizes, a long-term resident
- **Vicki Yeroian** as Ian Buchanan Clueless, the Detective Inspector
- **Kayleigh Crandell** as Cathy Hunt, the Waitress
- **Kate Rivara** as Phyllis Dove, the Hotel Manageress
- **Jimmy Comer** as John Dove, the Hotel Manager



The next question is, will you join us in October 2025 to once again uncover "Who Done It?"

PODIUM'S SWEET 16 BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

BY KAVIN JACKSON, COMMUNICATIONS & EVENTS DIRECTOR

In December, Podium turned 16-years-old! To celebrate this momentous occasion, the organization developed 16 Ways to Celebrate Podium's Sweet 16! First, we invited members of our Board of Directors, Young Professional Board, staff, and community to help Podium prepare for our upcoming winter programs. We kicked off with a successful Giving Tuesday campaign before heading into The Battle of the Boards, a competition between the Board of Directors, Young Professional Board, and staff. While a fierce competition between the teams, the YP Board and Staff Team D, made up of Kayleigh, Tristan, Lorin, Sofia, and Meya, ultimately won!

Congratulations to Team D, and thank you to all for celebrating Podium's birthday and for making the past 16 years brighter for youth writers in our community! Check out our 16 Ways to Celebrate Podium's Sweet 16 below:

Podium

16 Ways to Celebrate PT. 1

- Place your bid in our Sweet Sailing Get-Away Vacation Auction
- Tell your Friends about Podium
- Sign up to be a monthly or quarterly donor or recruit one
- Recruit someone to Podium's Young Professionals Board, ages 21 - 40, or Board of Directors!
- Purchase your ticket for our 4th annual Flash Fiction Zoom Competition
- Sign up for our Wed emails or get a friend to sign up for them
- Donate Supplies for our winter programs
- Watch and like 8 videos on our YouTube channel

16 Ways to Celebrate PT. 2

- Read our 2024 newsletters
- Join us on Fri, Dec 13, 6-8pm at New Market for our End of Year Youth Open Mic
- Sponsor or find a sponsor for a 1-month zine project in all programs: \$1,000
- Introduce Podium to a local giving circle, rotary club, corporate giving officer, or grant-making foundation
- Feature Podium in a friend's or in your blog, podcast, radio show, magazine, or site!
- Check out our annual publications: youth literary journals and zines - Journal 15 just dropped!
- Follow our SM channels - FB, LI, & Insta @PodiumRVA - and like 4 posts in each!
- Sponsor or find a sponsor for our Journal 16 printing: \$5,000

Check us out online at
www.podiumrva.org



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