

ANNOUNCER: You've tuned in to another
edition of The Break Room, a

weekly conversation about how
the City of St Augustine

works from those who do the
work everyday. Hosted by the

City of St Augustine's
Communications Director, Melissa

Wissel. The Break Room offers a
closer look at the different

City departments and provides
updates on current and upcoming

projects and events. And now
your host, Melissa Wissel.

MELISSA: Welcome to The Break Room.

Thanks for tuning in. I'm

Melissa Wissel, Communications
Director for the City of St

Augustine. April is National
Poetry Month, and just this past

year at the request of Vice
Mayor Roxanne Horvath, the City

Commission named its first ever
Poet Laureate. Our Poet

Laureate is a writer and a
storyteller. She's a local

business owner, but deep down
her passion is poetry. So,

joining me this week to talk
about poetry and being the

City's very first Poet
Laureate, allow me to welcome

Miss Norma Sherry. NORMA: Hi, I'm so
excited to be here. MELISSA: And we're

thrilled to have you. It's been
such a pleasure getting to know

you. NORMA: I feel the same way.

Thank you. MELISSA: You, you're, I want to

talk about your roles and the

things that you're going to be

doing as Poet Laureate and some
of the things you have done. But

this whole idea of Poet
Laureate was brand spanking

new. We did have some
applicants, that was a pool of

folks. The City Commission
selected you. So,

congratulations on that. NORMA: It was
very exciting. MELISSA: Tell us a little

bit about Norma Sherry, your
history. How did you come to be

a writer and a poet? NORMA: Before
that, I want to say, I'm so

excited, because not only am I
your first Poet Laureate, but

I'll go down in our history
books. Absolutely. That was the

first so that makes us double
exciting. MELISSA: And

we're big on history here. NORMA: Yes.
I had been writing my whole

life. People that know me are
probably tired of hearing this

story, but my mother tells me
and my brother tells me that

the only way I wouldn't cry in
the playpen was if they gave me

the yellow pages and a pencil.
So I think I came out of the

womb ready to write. MELISSA: Okay. And
did you enter contests as a

child? Did you pursue that
growing up? Was it something

that just was always there? NORMA: It
was always there. I wrote about

everything. If my brother gave
me a gift, I wrote a poem about

it. If I lost it, I wrote a
poem about it. I always

wrote and I would write for
everyone that had a birthday or

an anniversary. I always would
write them a special. MELISSA: And you

did say, I'm, this was kind of
cute when we were getting ready

to walk over here. You said you
even wrote a poem about

freckles. NORMA: I did. I'll have to
look for it. MELISSA: Okay. Before we

leave today though, I've, I am
going to ask you to pick

something and read for us.
We can't spoil the surprise

of what you will have, what
you're will have read at the

Commission Meeting, for the day

that we do the proclamation for

poetry, for poetry month

you'll be, you will have

accepted that. So, talking about

your writing, in addition to

poetry, your career has been in

writing. Tell me a little bit

about that. You have a really

interesting writing history. NORMA: Oh

well I've written for

television. I've won an Emmy and

five Telly awards. I've entered

a number of poetry contests and

have lots of awards for that.

I write about the human

condition. Most people think of

poetry. They think of the

poetry we grew up with. The

vowel and these.. MELISSA: Onomatopoeia NORMA: Yes and they

can't understand it and they
say they're not interested. And

it's interesting because I
publish my poetry on Facebook.

I have about 2,000 poems there.
And on the business section of

Facebook. They give you all
these analytics. And I learned

that 58% of my readers are men.

MELISSA: Wow. NORMA: Isn't that fascinating?

MELISSA: That yeah, you would I wouldn't
necessarily guess that. MELISSA: I would

not. And they write to me, most
of these men write to me and

they tell me that they never
liked poetry before they read

me. And I think it's because I
write simple. I write for every

man and woman and child. You
can understand it. You don't

need a thesaurus to find out the
words I used and you don't have

to scratch your head saying
what does that mean? I try and

write simply. MELISSA: So you've written
for us part of, one of your

roles for us is to come to some
of our events. You've written

for, you wrote a poem for your
own. NORMA: I did. MELISSA: When you, when we

inducted you. You wrote for the
swearing in of our

Commissioners and our Mayor. And
you also wrote for Arbor Day. NORMA: I

did. MELISSA: I really enjoyed that one I
didn't bring any of them with

us today here in studio to read,
so folks will have to go back

and watch some of that online

if they want to. Or maybe we'll

find a place to maybe we can

find a place to print your

poems on our website. NORMA: Oh that

would be fun. MELISSA: Maybe we should do

that. NORMA: I'm I actually, I just had

my logo made. I had a a little

girl a ten year old little girl

walk into my place of business

and I had given her a gift at

Christmas time for her

grandmother. And in in return of

that, she drew me this wonderful,

wonderful drawing. And when I

saw it I said, oh my goodness,

that's my logo. So I, with the,

long story is that I want to

start a page that is Norma

Sherry Poet Laureate. And

post all of those poems and
more. MELISSA: We'll have to talk about

that. But we'll definitely find
a place to put it. We gotta make sure we
can do that. But

regardless, we will put them on
the City's website. I'm not

sure that we've thought about
that before. NORMA: I think that's a great idea. MELISSA:

Good, good brainstorming session
here. Thank you all for listening

to us brainstorm about that.
So you represent the City

and the art of poetry through
outreach. We've had you coming

to some of our events. You also
are a part of the Ancient City

Poets or you've been involved
in their activities. NORMA: I'm not

part of their organization, but

I have been invited to host one

of their recent events.

Which was kind of fun and

listening and introducing other
poets. We have such a plethora

of talent in this little town
of ours. It's really quite

amazing. And in fact because of
that, I was shocked when I was

chosen, because we have so much
talent here. MELISSA: Well the good news

for that means that we'll have
a great pool of folks for

the next one. Because this will
this is a 2 year position. It's

a volunteer position, and you
get to represent the City, but

there there will be opportunity
in 2024 for a new

Poet Laureate. NORMA: Yes and I tell
poets every time I'm out that

they need to enter, because you
need to hear the best of the

best. MELISSA: Right. If you're just now
tuning in, you're listening to

The Break Room. I'm Melissa
Wissel, Communications

Director for the City. And I
have Norma Sherry with me in

studio. She is the City's very
first Poet Laureate. We talk

about outreach programs. We've
been a little bit quiet but

you've got an idea. We're
going to pitch this here, so

that folks can hear about it.
We haven't quite put all the

finishing touches. We don't
have a date yet, but let's talk

about your idea of bringing
some of this art and poetry

together, to the public. NORMA: I want to do
something big. I want to

introduce people that are not
familiar with poetry to hear

poetry from all ages, children
to senior, seniors of all ages.

I want to include dance and
music and art. I want to make

it an interactive event. I
want to do it, you know

hopefully, maybe Flagler. MELISSA: We'll
see. NORMA: Yes. I want to do it with

the stage and wonderful
seating and I want to make it

something really special. MELISSA: So
when we talk about doing

something like that. Part of

your job as the Poet Laureate,

like we've said, is to bring in
building this literary

community. And poetry and
expression isn't always just

the written word. So, that's a
fun exciting way to do that. Is

it a, you think it might be a
one day thing? NORMA: It would be a

one day. MELISSA: A one day couple of
hours. Yeah. Like a program?

Yes. Okay. Performance. NORMA: Maybe
if we get enough tickets sold,

we we do it a weekend. But it
for sure, we would start with a

one day event. MELISSA: Start it with a
one day event. And outside of

what we're doing here, are you
busy writing poetry for other

things? NORMA: I'm always writing. And
I write for everything. And

anyone that invites me or asks
me, I never turn them down. So.

MELISSA: Do you have a special poem you
would like to read for us

today? NORMA: I can find one for
you. MELISSA: I think last

month was National Women's
History Month. That was March. NORMA: I have something

that I wrote that I had saved
that I thought I was going to

read for the April 10th event,
but I wrote something instead

for April 10th. Excuse
me. If like Shakespeare, I

could write sonnets to live
through the ages, my pen would

never be at rest. If like
Aristotle, I could articulate

all things literate, I would
teach. If like Einstein, I

could make sense of the
senseless, I'd write volumes

explaining the intricacies of
life. If like Leonardo Da

Vinci, I could paint, I'd fill
every chapel with the stroke of

my brush. If like Maya Angelo,
I could write the words to

still hearts and sing the words
that could change the world,

I'd travel far wide and never
be idle. If I had the courage

of Rosa Parks, I'd use my voice
to enlighten. If I were like

Sojourner Truth, I would ignite
passion and speak loudly for

all to hear. If I were like

Marie Curie, I'd discover

elements to cure the world but

at last, I am none of these. I

write for me and in the hope

that I share some joy and a

tidbit of wisdom. I'm not a

scientist or a physicist or an

activist. I'm not a

mathematician or even a

provocateur. I'm just me, and

that will have to do.

MELISSA: Excellent. NORMA: Thank you. MELISSA: That's

very inspiring. I will say, too.

I am one of those people who

thinks of poetry as, you know,

rhyming everything, on every

other line has to rhyme. I had

an English teacher who wrote

the words to a dire straight

song on the chalkboard. This is
back in 80 something, 87. And I

walked in and we were talking
poetry and it was a Dire

Straight song. I don't remember
which one. Might have been

Money for Nothing, if that's the
Dire Straights. And his point

was, this is poetry. So when you
think of music, and the, and

if you take the the song out of
what the written word is as

poetry, I could relate to that.
And I do enjoy reading and

listening to your poems. You say,
'I'll get that right back to you',

you really do get it back to me
in about an hour. And it's not

anything I would have expected.
Not something expected, but

inspirational and meaningful. NORMA: Oh
thank you for that. Thank you. MELISSA: So we will..

We will look forward to many
more of your appearances. NORMA: I

look forward to it. I love it. MELISSA:
We'll look forward to whatever

this idea is that we come up
with together, to bring to bring

poetry and art to our, to
our residents and visitors.

NORMA: Well, on that, if there's
anyone listening that fashions

themselves, a poet, a writer, a
storyteller, an artist, a

musician, find me on Facebook
and reach out to me. Because I

want to hear you and get to know you
and and perhaps include you.

MELISSA: And we can find you on Facebook

Norma Sherry. NORMA: You can find me

on Facebook Norma Sherry.

And my poetry site

on Facebook is Musings and

Mutterings by Norma Sherry.

MELISSA: Musings and Mutterings. By

Norma Sherry. By Norma Sherry.

And that's on Facebook. NORMA:

There's about 2000 poems there.

MELISSA: Well I look, I hope our

listeners will will check that

out and bring your 58% of male

readership up to more, and that

you have a great following and

we really do enjoy having you. NORMA: Oh

thank you. I'm so honored. MELISSA: It's

fun to have you as our first.

NORMA: Thank you. MELISSA: Big shoes to

fill, but I'm looking forward to

our next year together. NORMA: That means a lot to me. Thank you.

MELISSA: And we'll have you come back.

NORMA: Good. I will love doing that.

MELISSA: Excellent. If you've missed part of this broadcast and

want to go back and listen from the beginning, you can now find

us on your favorite podcasting app. You'll find us on Spotify,

Apple Podcast, Spreaker and More. You can find that

complete listing of the podcasting platforms at CityStAuRadio.com, along with links to our past episodes,

including this one. We want to keep you informed about what's

happening in and around the City and most importantly that

you hear it here from the

people doing the work and

making it happen every day.

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platforms. You'll see us on

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Instagram @CityStAug.

Until next time, thanks for

tuning in. ANNOUNCER: You've been

listening to The Break Room, a

weekly program addressing

projects and programs offered

by the City of St Augustine.

Join us each week as the City's Communications

Director Melissa Wissel has

in-depth conversations with the

people who make our town work

to meet the needs of our

community. The Break Room is

produced by Communication

Specialist for the City of St.

Augustine, Cindy Walker. See you

at this time next week for

another edition of The

Break Room.