

## Rhyme and reason Witch City Poetry Series kicks off Sunday

By Larry Claflin Jr.  
Staff writer

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A North Shore writer and the owners of a Salem restaurant will acknowledge National Poetry Month with the Witch City Poetry Series throughout April at the Gulu-Gulu Cafe on Washington Street.

Chris Keefe, 23, of Beverly, a poet and the co-owner of Witch City Rickshaws, said he approached Steve Feldman and his wife, Marie Feldmannova, in late February about holding a poetry series at Gulu-Gulu. Keefe said he held successful open mikes at a club in Manchester, N.H., prior to moving here in May and wanted to do the same in Salem, a city he said needs more outlets for writers.

"They say they're trying to make (Salem) the Cambridge of the North Shore," Keefe said. "If that's the case, you need more arts and entertainment."

Until Gulu-Gulu opened in Salem in July 2007, Keefe said he couldn't find a big enough room with the right feel.

"I come here to think. I come here to be creative. That's the vibe I get here," Keefe said while sipping a glass of water between breakfast and lunch services at Gulu-Gulu, which has a sister cafe in Lynn's Central Square.

The Witch City Poetry Series will take place every Sunday in April, from 5 to 8 p.m. at Gulu-Gulu, 247 Essex St. The format will allow amateur writers to share the stage with published poets such as Diana Saenz, the cofounder and organizer of the Boston Poetry Festival, and J.D. Scrimgeor of Salem and Kevin Carey of Beverly, English professors from Salem State College. During intermissions, Keefe plans to have two- and three-piece bands play.

If the first series is a success, Keefe said he would like to see them held regularly. He predicted poetry aficionados from Boston and Cambridge will make the trek.

"If you give them something that's worth their time and money, they'll come out here," he said, adding that comedy and improv components could be added over time.

On April 27, Scrimgeor, the coordinator of the creative writing program at Salem State, said he will read from his 2005 book, "The Last Miles," and from a working manuscript of poems.

Scrimgeor and Carey both belong to the Salem Writer's Group, which meets the first and third Tuesday of the month at the Salem Atheneum. The group, Scrimgeor said, serves to draw connections between the city's writing community and the college.

"There's a lot of writing going on in Salem. I don't think we all know each other yet," he said, adding that the poetry series may fill that gap.

Carey will also appear on April 27, and, like Scrimgeor, he said his poetry is accessible and about

"people and places." Carey added that he'll read "Shredding Me," which was nominated for the Pushcard Prize. "Shredding Me" is about a man who puts all his possessions in the shredder, even himself.

Keefe, who will read on April 13, said he performs in a spoken-word style and writes poems about issues that people don't think about until it affects them — like war, disease and homelessness. And, of course, the opposite sex.

"I talk a lot about girls, too; that's a big part of my poetry."

He said the poetry series will serve as a creative outlet.

"A lot of people write, but there's no place to express how they feel. That's why I organized this."

Each night will have 20 open mike slots, and Keefe wants people of all ages and skill levels to read, not just traditional poets.

"Tell a funny story, rant about your neighbor, get things off your chest," he said.

### **If you go**

**What:** Witch City Poetry Series

**Where:** Gulu-Gulu Cafe, 247 Essex St., Salem

**When:** April 6, 13, 20 and 27, from 5 to 8 p.m.

**Info:** Go to [www.gulu-gulu.com](http://www.gulu-gulu.com) or e-mail Keefe at [poetchrisk@yahoo.com](mailto:poetchrisk@yahoo.com)

BOX

"Salem Willows"

What is the meaning of life? Which popcorn —

wintergreen, caramel, or buttered —

Is the best? Miniature golf squeezed

between the tired arcades, teens

driving and skiing and killing

wildly dying over and over.

For a dime, the aged monkeys

dance in their glass cage, their necks

worn through, fur half gone

clothes untucked. For a nickel

the drinking test; worming a metal circle

around a curved, electrified bar. Are you

punch drunk? Pickled?

– *J.D. Scrimgeor*

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## Photos



Poets Kevin Carey, left, and J.D. Scrimgeour at Gulu Gulu Cafe, 247 Essex St. Both will read at the Witch City Poetry series in April. Staff photo



Chris Keefe of Beverly has been writing poetry for about four years, and tends to focus his writing on current events and his interactions with the people in his life. Keefe is starting the Witch City Poetry Series at the Gulu-Gulu Cafe in Salem. Staff photo