Inaugural event looks to honor pivotal faculty member with live readings and live music

USU’s English Department held the inaugural Ken Brewer Celebration of Writing on September 16th at the USU amphitheater. Brewer was a former USU professor from 1968 to 2000.

“Brewer was an amazing poet, an inspiring teacher, and a life-changing mentor. He was the force behind the institution of a Creative Writing emphasis in the English Department, and was for many years its beating heart,” said Phebe Jensen, the English Department’s head.

The event, which memorialized Brewer’s life through poetry and music, was attended by students, faculty, and community members. Brewer advocated for vocal readings of poetry; he was named Utah’s poet laureate in 2003. The English Department hopes to hold more celebrations and events to further honor his legacy of poetry and poetry readings.

“We want people to leave these events with a sense of Brewer, and also of the way that poetry enriches all our lives,” said Jensen.

The event had several speakers. It included a live jazz ensemble, live poetry readings, and an open mic. The main speaker was Chris Cokinos, a close friend of Brewer’s and former USU professor who currently teaches at the University of Arizona. Cokinos read from his nonfiction manuscript, Still as Bright. Brewer and Cokinos had a close relationship, and Chris shared experiences he had with Brewer up until the end of his life.

Other featured writers included Logan’s previous poet laureate Star Coulbrooke and several English students. Star performed a poem that she had written for Brewer and read some of his published poems. With students and friends of Brewer reading poetry while the jazz ensemble played, the whole event was an artistic experience worthy of Brewer’s long legacy.