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## **Santa Cruz County Poet Laureate Selected**

*Farnaz Fatemi Named Poet Laureate for 2023-2024 Term*

January 31, 2023 —SANTA CRUZ, CA—The Santa Cruz Public Libraries (SCPL) in collaboration with the County of Santa Cruz Department of Parks, Open Spaces, and Cultural Services, Arts Council Santa Cruz County, and Poetry Santa Cruz are pleased to announce that Farnaz Fatemi has been named the 2023-2024 Santa Cruz County Poet Laureate.

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors, at the recommendation of the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission, voted to establish an official County Poet Laureate honorary position at the October 18, 2022 Board meeting. The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors officially appointed Farnaz Fatemi as the new Santa Cruz County Poet Laureate at their Board meeting on Tuesday January 31, 2023.

Selection of the Poet Laureate was made through a competitive application process in which the panel considered artistic achievement in poetry; community engagement experience and ability to communicate well across a diverse range of communities; demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and alignment of the proposed project with the Poet Laureate mission and role.

Farnaz Fatemi, an Iranian American poet and writer, is a founding member of The Hive Poetry Collective, a member of Writers of Color – Santa Cruz County, and a former Lecturer in Writing at UCSC. In summers she teaches new transfer students in UCSC's Transfer Edge program. Her book, *Sister Tongue* زبان خواهر, was published in September 2022. It won the 2021 Stan and Tom Wick Poetry Prize, selected by Tracy K. Smith, and received a Starred Review from *Publisher's Weekly*. Some of her poems and lyric essays appear in *Poem-a-Day (Poets.org)*, *Tab Journal*, *Pedestal Review*, *Nowruz Journal*, *Grist Journal* and *Tupelo Quarterly* and the anthologies *Essential Voices: Poetry of Iran and its Diaspora* and *Halal If You Hear Me*. More at [farnazfatemi.com](http://farnazfatemi.com).

Fatemi states, "For all my years in Santa Cruz County, I've been struck by the range of poets, organizations and poetic impulses in our communities. As County Poet Laureate, I hope to help strengthen and amplify these cross-county relationships. Building on the efforts of so many others, including previous poet laureates, teachers and writers, I am particularly excited to find ways to bring poetry to more young people."

During their two-year term, the Poet Laureate will provide poetry readings at community events and engage in a project using poetry to strengthen our community. The Poet

Laureate's duties are supported by a \$2000 grant funded by Arts Council Santa Cruz County.

The Poet Laureate program aligns with the Strategic Plans of both the County and the Library System. The County's Strategic Plan element pertaining to a Dynamic Economy: Community Vitality, asserts that the arts are essential to a community's vitality and economic development. This project aligns with the Library's Inclusionary goals to create opportunities for diverse groups to connect, have fun, and gain understanding through art, history, and humanities programs that celebrate diverse cultures and identities.

**ABOUT THE SANTA CRUZ PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM:**

The Santa Cruz Public Libraries (SCPL) delivers information, education, enrichment and inspiration through a network of 10 neighborhood library branches, a web-based digital library, a Bookmobile and community-based programs. SCPL serves children, teens and adults with innovative programming, professional services and community facilities that spark imagination and support discovery. Residents can explore a wide range of interests from academic research, book clubs and literacy programs to digital photography, locally-produced music and local history. Branch locations include Aptos, Boulder Creek, Branciforte, Capitola, Downtown Santa Cruz, Felton, Garfield Park, La Selva Beach, Live Oak and Scotts Valley. Learn more about SCPL at [SantaCruzPL.org](http://SantaCruzPL.org) or via Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter and YouTube.