HEIGHTS ARTS

# THE OFFICE OF HEIGHTS 13TH POET LAUREATE

*Revised 9.2026*

## PURPOSE AND HISTORY OF THE LAUREATESHIP

With the endorsement of the City of Cleveland Heights, Heights Arts established the Office of Cleveland Heights Poet Laureate in 2000 to celebrate and elevate poetry as an art form for the benefit of the community's residents. The role was expanded with a title change to Heights Poet Laureate (HPL) to include University Heights in 2023. Every two years Heights Arts' Heights Writes Community Team (HWCT) conducts a process to solicit applications and select a local poet to serve in this post. The HWCT is comprised of volunteers with expertise in the literary arts, supported by Heights Arts staff. Specifically, the objectives of the laureateship are to:

- Enhance the literary arts presence in Cleveland Heights and University Heights (Heights)
- Create a focal point for the expression of Heights culture through the literary arts
- Contribute to the continued growth of the individual HPL and open opportunities for additional recognition and support through organizations that support poet laureates
- Raise awareness of the power of poetry and the spoken word
- Create a unique program that will become a model for other cities
- Provide a forum for cross pollination of art forms – especially those supported by HA in the musical and visual arts
- Celebrate the spirit of the people and the special qualities of the Heights

## TERM OF SERVICE

The HPL serves for two years and one month, beginning in April of odd-numbered years and concluding at the end of April of the second year, with a "hand-off" event to introduce the new HPL in April.

## HONORARIUM

Heights Arts will provide a $3,000 honorarium per year to compensate for services as specified below (a total of $6,000 by the end of the term). This honorarium will be paid for in two installments each year: September and March, upon successful completion of HPL duties for each period.

## GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

### The Heights Poet Laureate:

- Must commit to the full term and maintain a significant relationship to the Heights communities throughout the full term of service.

- Must be a champion for the literary arts and share enthusiasm for the Heights communities through their work as laureate.

- Must have a demonstrated history of reliability and responsibility in their commitments and be responsive to inquiries and communication from the HWCT and Heights governments.

- Should be able to write or offer occasional poems to celebrate or commemorate key events in the life of the city, when arranged by either Heights government.

- Will serve on the HWCT during the term and attend monthly virtual meetings to provide feedback about the program and HPL's experience. The HPL is strongly encouraged to continue their involvement with the HWCT after the term.

**SPECIFIC ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
The HPL must acknowledge their role as the Heights Poet Laureate through Heights Arts and other sponsorships, if any, of their position at all public or private events, whether or not part of their laureateship duties, during their term.

**Heights Arts Programming:** The HPL will assist in the management of Heights Arts signature Ekphrastacy – Artists Talk and Poets Respond events. Responsibilities include:

- **Curate:** With support from staff and the HWCT, the HPL curates and produces four Ekphrastacy events at Heights Arts each year in tandem with Heights Arts' exhibition schedule. Responsibilities include:
    - Timely poet communications with participating poets
    - Selecting final poems and program order while ensuring every artist is represented by at least one poem. In doing so, it may be necessary for the HPL to compose additional poems to ensure all artists are represented at the event.
    - Ensuring all deadlines are met both personally and by participating poets.

- **Participate:** The HPL hosts each of the four live Ekphrastacy events each year. This includes introducing each poet and artist and composing and reading at least two ekphrastic poems inspired by works in each exhibition. The HPL may also perform this function for up to two additional partnership events per year for a total of four for the term when opportunities arise for a partnership with Heights Arts.*

- **Create:** The HPL will compose a maximum of two poetry works each year (a total of four per term) for Heights Arts related to proposed subject matter which could include its history, an upcoming event or celebration, or other events designated by Heights Arts.

**Community Engagement and Off-site Programming:** As part of the Office's mandate to expand community engagement with the art form, the HPL will accomplish the following during the term:

- **Engage:** Read a ceremonial or occasional poem at a minimum of 4 events per year for the cities of Cleveland Heights and/or University Heights. These events can be selected/chosen by the HPL according to their interests and at their discretion. Some examples include: new park openings, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, or other events as designated by each city. #

- **Produce:** The HPL will propose and implement a community-based poetry project to complete during their term. The project must meaningfully engage the Heights communities and must be reviewed and accepted by the HWCT within the first six months of their term. Heights Arts will provide staff support and additional funds up to $1,000 to support project expenses.

- **Celebrate:** As a celebration of their tenure, the HPL may be the focus of a featured reading at the end of their term of service (March/April timeframe). The new HPL will be introduced at the event and read a poem, and former laureates may be invited to each read a poem as well. Each year, usually in April, the HPL will attend and be recognized for their service at Cleveland Heights and University Heights council meetings. This will include a brief reading of the HPL's choice.

** Ekphrastacy is a signature program of Heights Arts in association with our curated group exhibitions. The HPL works with the HWCT to invite and select participating poets, encourage poets' engagement with a diversity of artworks represented in each exhibition and in organizing and hosting the events. There may be opportunities to partner with other arts organizations on Ekphrastacy events outside of Heights Arts. These will be booked and paid with additional funding outside of the HPL honorarium.*

*# Each government will be asked to identify a minimum of five potential events from which the HPL can choose to participate by April 30th of each year for the following 12 months. HPL events will be confirmed with each government by May 30th. In the case that events are not identified by the government, the HPL, and the HWCT will propose events for consideration.*

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*** The HWCT will help develop contacts for external events, and the HPL will create the focus and content of each.*

## SELECTION PROCESS

### Eligibility
The HPL must be a resident of Cleveland or University Heights and/or have a history of involvement with Cleveland Heights and/or University Heights. Candidates must be comfortable with and have demonstrated history of public speaking, community organization, and promoting poetry.

### Candidates
Any poet who meets the eligibility criteria and can commit to the term of service, may submit an application for consideration. Applications may be submitted anytime between November 1 and the deadline of December 31. In the absence of sufficient quality applications, the Heights Writes Community Team may reach out to local poets to solicit applications.

### Information Session:
Heights Arts will hold an information session on November 12th, 2026.

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**Application Information**
The application deadline is December 31 of even-numbered years. Interested candidates must apply online. For the application link, FAQ's and other information, visit **https://www.heightsarts.org/heights-writes/heights-arts-seeks-applications-for-13th-heights-poet-laureate/**

**Finalists**
Following the application deadline, the HWCT will review all applications to determine no more than three poets for final consideration. Those not being considered will be notified by mid-February. Finalists will meet with members of HWCT in separate interviews in early February with a decision on the chosen applicant by mid-March. Term of service commences April 1.