

THE HEIGHTS ARTS OFFICE OF POET LAUREATE DESCRIPTION AND EXPECTATIONS

PURPOSE OF THE LAUREATESHIP

Heights Arts, with the endorsement of the City of Cleveland Heights, established the Office of Poet Laureate in 2000 to celebrate and elevate poetry as an art form for the benefit of the community's residents. In 2023, the role was expanded to include University Heights. 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 composed 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
- Create a focal point for the expression of Heights culture through the literary arts
- Contribute to the continued growth of the individual HPL
- 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 AND ELIGIBILITY

The Heights Poet Laureate (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. The HPL must commit to the full term and maintain a significant relationship to the Cleveland Heights and University Heights community throughout the full two-years of service. The HPL must be a resident of Cleveland or University Heights or/ and have a history of involvement with Cleveland Heights and/or University Heights. The HPL must be comfortable with public speaking, community organization, and promoting poetry.

HONORARIUM

Heights Arts will provide the HPL a \$3,000 honorarium per year in compensation for services as specified below (a total of \$6,000 by the end of the term). The first honorarium payment will be made after the first six months of the term in September of 2025 and paid in two installments each year, divided into two installments each year for a total of four installments.

GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

The Heights Poet Laureate:

- 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 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 each government.

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- Will serve on the HWCT during the term to provide monthly 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 and Heights Arts' and other sponsorships, if any, at all public or private events, whether or not part of their laureateship duties, during their two-year term.

Height Arts Programming

- **Curate:** With support from staff and the HWCT, the HPL curates and produces four *Ekphrastacy – Artists Talk and Poets Respond* events at Heights Arts each year in tandem with Heights Arts' exhibition schedule
- **Participate:** The HPL also writes and reads at least two ekphrastic poems inspired by the work in each exhibition as part of every Ekphrastacy program and ensures that 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 representation.

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:

- **Engage:** Read a ceremonial or occasional poem at a minimum of 2 events per year for each city (a total of 4 events during their term).. 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.[#]
- **Create:** The HPL will propose and implement a community-based poetry project to complete during their term. The project must meaningfully engage the Cleveland Heights and University 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.

*** The HWCT will help develop contacts for external events, and the HPL will create the focus and content of each community engagement event. While the expectations indicate readings and workshops, there may be flexibility.*

SELECTION PROCESS

Heights Arts – connecting arts and community since 2000

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Eligibility have a significant relationship to the Cleveland Heights or University Heights community, and commit to serve the full 24-month term of service if selected. Please see the “HPL Description and Expectations” for more detailed information.

Identification of 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.

Application Information

The application deadline is *December 31* of even-numbered years. Interested candidates must apply online. The application form can be found at <https://heightsarts.wufoo.com/forms/mkaqse20jc15u5/>

The application will ask for important demographic and contact information. Applicants will be asked to submit their credentials and resume, a sample of no fewer than six recent poems. A short essay that helps the selection committee understand what the applicant appreciates about the City of Cleveland Heights and/or University Heights, and why they are seeking this position, will also be required.

Applicant information session:

Following the deadline, the Heights Writes Community Team will review all applications and determine no more than three poets for final consideration. Those not being considered will be notified by the end of January.

Finalists will meet with members of Heights Writes Community Team in separate interviews in early February with a decision on the winning applicant by mid-March. Term of service commences April 1.