

# SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



## Poetry Reading *by* **San Mateo County Poet Laureate** **Aileen Cassinetta** **Tuesday, December 14, 2021**

### ***About the poet:***

Aileen Cassinetta was appointed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to serve as Poet Laureate in October 2018. In January 2019, she launched her “Speak Poetry in San Mateo County” project in schools, city halls, the county jail, nursing facilities and local libraries. In April 2020, she curated the community poem, “Love in the Time of COVID-19 for Healthcare Workers and Other Frontliners,” which raised funds for the San Mateo County Health Foundation and was also featured in the Alzheimer’s Poetry Project in Minnesota, the Montgomery Independent School District in Texas, the Japanese American National Museum in Los Angeles, and the Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut. In January 2021, she released the poetry anthology, *I Have a Dream: Inaugural Poems for a New Generation* featuring poems by 115 students ages 6 to 16 from all around San Mateo County. In June 2021, Aileen was named an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow and awarded \$50,000 to work on a project that will equip youth with the language of ecopoetry as a way to broaden the search for creative solutions to climate change.

### ***About this poem:***

This poem pays tribute to the human spirit and at what connects us with the natural world and with each other. It is a reminder that we carry within us, in equal measure, a world of trauma and boundless grace. It is also a prayer that as we survived the last two years of the pandemic, may we draw on our shared humanity to help us reimagine and build a better future.

## TREE LIGHTING AT FREMONT PARK IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE PANDEMIC

May we ever constellate around each other.  
Like a blessing, a season of giving.

May we bear witness to moments that bring  
waxwing closer to mistletoe berry,

wintering sparrow to crabapple and bramble.  
More of this and each other, of giving thanks for

the evergreen oak, acorn-bearer and emblem  
of power. Of honoring the Ohlone

who relied on the oak tree, and ground acorns  
into a meal, and gifted each other

their finest flour. As we constellate, may we  
find sweetness in what we've dried and roasted,

chestnuts, figs. From my hand to yours, and yours  
to mine, these grains, like a prayer for winter.