

SAN MATEO COUNTY
POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by*
San Mateo County Poet Laureate
Aileen Cassinetta
Tuesday, April 5, 2022

About the poet:

Aileen Cassinetta is an Academy of American Poets Laureate Fellow and the third Poet Laureate of San Mateo County. Between 2019 and 2022, she helped launch youth programs and youth poetry competitions in the county, as well as the Makerspace Poetry Lab project to foster critical and creative thinking. She also produced the short eco-poetry films, “Breathe” (an official selection in the Nature & Culture Poetry Film Festival in Copenhagen) and “decompose” (forthcoming, in collaboration with the Documentary Film Institute). In 2022, she partnered with Filoli Historic House & Garden to launch the Inaugural Filoli Eco-poetry Award to highlight connections between humans and the environment.

About this poem:

“Take Heart” was commissioned by the San Mateo Medical Center’s Wellness Team, with support from the County Manager, the Office of Arts & Culture, and the San Mateo County Health Foundation, to honor the families and loved ones of those we lost to Covid-19 and all those who endeavored through the pandemic. It is permanently on display at the San Mateo Medical Center in San Mateo, SMMC Gateway Clinic in Burlingame, SMMC Daly City Health Center, SMMC Daly City Youth Health Center, SMMC Coastside Clinic in Half Moon Bay, SMMC Fair Oaks Health Center and SMMC Sequoia Teen Wellness Center in Redwood City, and SMMC South San Francisco Clinic.

TAKE HEART

Take heart from a hummingbird, a handful
of earth. See how memory bears fruit,
to carry history, healing, offspring.
Listen for sounds gently rising above
the hum and din, the prayers of one so far
from home and kin. Say you remembered
to put out feeders, withhold water
from inflorescent tomcat clovers.
Say you are here in lieu of flowers.
What did you lose the year of our
sheltering. Whom do you honor with
the hope you bring. Take heart, listen, sounds
of kindness are bouncing off hard surfaces.
Praise bedside care and all its auspices.