

SAN MATEO COUNTY POET LAUREATE



Poetry Reading *by*

San Mateo County Poet Laureate Aileen Cassinetta

Tuesday, September 15, 2020

About our Poet Laureate:

Aileen Cassinetta began her two-year term as Poet Laureate of San Mateo County on January 1, 2019. In her first year, she visited 14 communities in the county, launched her “Speak Poetry” campaign, gave over 50 readings around the Bay Area, and promoted her events on tv, radio and print media. In April 2020, she curated the poem, “Love in the Time of COVID-19: A Community Poem for Healthcare Workers and Other Frontliners,” which gathered lines of hope and healing from San Mateo County residents and raised money for the San Mateo County Health Foundation’s COVID-19 fund. The poem was shared widely on social media, and was recited in Mystic, Connecticut on Memorial Day. As her final project for the county, she is organizing a virtual book festival that will feature over 50 authors, in collaboration with local libraries.

About our Poet Laureate’s poem:

This poem was written as an homage to Half Moon Bay, one of the 10 most beautiful cities in Northern California. I have not visited Half Moon Bay since the start of the pandemic, and I look forward to the day when I will be able to see it again. I decided to read this poem, which is about kindness and hope, as a reminder that we will get through this crisis if we worked together as a community.

About youth poet Sheridan Stewart:

Only 12 years old, Sheridan Stewart has created a literary magazine called **vyris** (vivid--young--reflections--inside--souls) to, in her words, “help people cope and express themselves through poetry and art during these stressful times.” The magazine is published online and is 94-pages long, featuring other San Mateo County residents.

In Half Moon Bay

there are all these halves
at the edge of the sea,
like half a heart of shore
briefly cradling a sea star
that has bravely lost its arms.
When its stone coral mouth
is already drained of sea water,
its spine of honeycombed lime
would be the last to go.
At low tide, the feisty and starry
flounder leaves tracks in pursuit
of ghost shrimp;
while the shy and snowy plover
wades in and out of waves,
not playing but foraging
for sand hoppers,
its fortune tied with the tides
like sand and moonshine.
But count on the bread to still
rise on century-old bricks
six days a week, like goodwill,
or good fortune inside a wave.

Together at Heart

By Sheridan Stewart, 12 | El Granada, California

The Coronavirus has no mercy,
There is no controversy.
Staying home is the new normal,
Sleeping all day is not abnormal.

It's one bad thing to the next,
When will this hit its apex?
No going outside all day,
The world seems to have gone gray.

Time with family is the new big thing,
People saying this could last until next spring!
School, work, trips, life!
Cancelled, leaving us all in strife.

Covid comes in all shapes and styles,
Cough, sneeze, runny nose, spreading for miles.
The main goal being to duplicate successfully,
And make you squirm restlessly.

Too many people have died,
But some still survive.
Equipment is lacking,
Tests are slacking.

Everyday people are now our heroes,
Essential workers, from the crumbles they rose,
Risking their own lives to benefit us,
And not even putting up any fuss.

This virus is slick;
You will easily become sick.
This is a criminal,
So don't think yourself subliminal.

He'll slip into your body,
And there is no antibody,
You won't know,
So he will just grow.

Most people are masked,
Some must be asked.
Standing six feet apart,
Defeating him by being smart.

For the pandemic to end,
So we can play with a friend,
We must stay far apart,
But together at heart.

