

A close-up photograph of white cherry blossoms in full bloom, set against a clear, bright blue sky. The flowers are the central focus, with some in sharp focus and others blurred in the foreground and background. The petals are delicate and layered, with visible stamens and centers. The overall mood is fresh, vibrant, and celebratory.

# **A Unique Poetry Legacy**

**STUDENT POET LAUREATES**

**Linn-Benton Community College**

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Linn-Benton Community College



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M'Liss Runyon

***A Unique Poetry Legacy  
Student Poet Laureates  
Linn-Benton Community College***

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## INTRODUCTION

That first spring, we gathered in the LBCC courtyard where my poetry class hosted the Black Poets Society from Oregon State University. Their poetry readings and performances were so pure and so honest, so consequential that LBCC students and staff lined up by the dozens for the open mic. Poetry spilled out of backpacks and notebooks and many students “took the stage” who had never before read their poetry in front of others. The courtyard was filled with students and staff drawn to the poets in the amphitheater; the afternoon was electric. When we went back inside, we were determined to create our own poetry society. It was the spring of 2006.

We met first in the NSH atrium and drew members from passers-by with our gentle melodies (one student played a guitar) and our clear joy. Even in our infancy, our poetry club was a group of people who simply longed to read and enjoy poetry together and to support each other as poet artists—in short, to create a poetry community. We were stepping into the rich literary legacy of LBCC, a tradition that had created *The Eloquent Umbrella* and the Valley Writers Series. By the spring of 2007, the Poetry Club was officially approved by the college.

By 2008, the Poetry Club was recognized across campus, having created the college’s first Black History Month celebration and having performed in LBCC’s Humanities Pop Culture Celebration with their program “What’s Pop about Poetry,” a program they performed again at Grass Roots Books in downtown Corvallis.

That spring, inspired by their poetic range, LBCC President Rita Cavin, a poet and artist herself, not only came up with the idea of a Poet Laureate, she also committed the President’s Office to supporting the Laureateship with a sustained Poet Laureate stipend. We founded and I led a Poetry Advisory Committee (including Gary Ruppert, Jane White, Jeff Davis, and Jorry Rolfe), and we made the historic decision to establish a student as our Poet Laureate. Remarkably, since the college’s Student Poet Laureateship began its long tradition, it has remained, we believe, the only student poet laureate position at a community college in this country.

Quite naturally, our first Student Poet Laureate (SPL), Kaedence Eaton, was a leading member of that first Poetry Club. Since then, in each annual search for a new Student Poet Laureate, our advisory committee seeks not only an excellent poet, but, more importantly, an artist with a clear vision and a desire to inspire poetry in others, in our students and staff and community. Over the years, I’ve marveled at our laureates making those magical and wide-ranging poetic connections. Crucially, the Poetry Club has always been at the heart of this tradition. Still laureate-led and student-driven, the club continues to welcome everyone. And

miraculously, it has continued to meet every week for the past thirteen years, providing a soul-center for our poetry. In addition, our SPLs have led these talented poets in creating and sustaining extraordinary campus and community projects, many of them highlighted visually here. Over the past year and a half, my friends and former colleagues Jane White, Victoria Fridley, M’Liss Runyon, and I have brought the brilliance of these SPLs to life in *A Unique Poetry Legacy*.

While this imagistic survey of poetic achievements gives you a glimpse of our SPLs’ efforts while at LBCC, in their reflections they look back on their tenure and consider the ways their leadership experience has enriched their lives. They write from different perspectives; they have become teachers and nurses, traveling musicians and published poets. While their paths have diverged, two universals unite them even now: their artistic compassion and their commitment to others.

In addition to reading their reflections, you’ll also have the opportunity to experience their poetry. Most featured laureates sent us three poems for the book, often choosing one from their SPL application, one from their SPL tenure, and one from the writing they’ve done since their laureateship. Their works are printed here just as the SPLs intended. Their poetry is as diverse in subject as it is in structure, ranging from conventional poetic forms to free verse, from prose poems to performative pieces, in which, as you read, you’ll quite literally hear and feel the beat of the poets’ voices. And what you’ll also recognize, whether the SPLs are welcoming our LBCC community at the beginning of a new year, writing in response to a current tragedy, or celebrating the joy of learning, is a deep concern for others and a belief in the power of poetry to connect us all.

So at LBCC, the ancient power of poetry thrives. Poetry has given us a way to say to each other in community what can’t be said in any other way—to affirm our deepest selves, to witness, and to celebrate. Our laureates know this magical power of poetry, feel it, and honor it. For more than a decade, they have helped to create safe, encouraging spaces where we could be proud of our own voices and sing together. Our laureates are talented poets; they are also big-hearted, kind spirits. And it is these qualities, this history of artistic goodness, that grace the halls and courtyards of our campus. To have been their advisor has been the great honor of my teaching career.

Robin Havenick  
*Poetry Club/Student Poet Laureate Faculty Advisor*  
2007-2018

## PREFACE TO A CREATIVE LIFE

I was one of the lucky ones. My teachers planted the seeds of my creative life by introducing me to creative self-expression. Early on I learned that no matter what life threw at me, a pen and a scrap of paper would lift my spirits and help me make sense of my feelings.

As a parent I tried to give my son and daughter, and now my grandchildren, the simple tools they could use throughout their lives to nourish their personal form of creativity – decorating their homes, cooking for others, gardening, theater, music, writing and art.

Now as a retiree, sharing my art and my poetry brings me joy. I particularly enjoy keenly observing women and children all around the world and for just a few moments plugging into their culture. I've been inspired to paint the dignity of hard work in a Korean fish market and to write a poem inspired by seeing Lucy's footprints in Tanzania's Oldupai Gorge. Pausing to sketch a weary woman sitting on a park curb and sharing her sandwich with a Havana street dog gave me time to ponder her uniqueness and to then write an accompanying poem.

Travel expands horizons. Even better, committing insights and feelings to paper and then polishing those images allow me to share my far-flung travels – and sharing is at the heart of the Poet Laureate program.

I wanted to start a program at LB that would connect students, faculty and our community through shared poetry. I had no idea at the time that LB would have the only Student Poet Laureate in the country. As I had hoped, my gift to one student each year sows seeds for many at LB. And, that the gift, it turns out, often spreads to the college's larger community.

When the Student Poet Laureate program was in its infancy, we dedicated Madrone Hall with its sparkling new science labs. Many civic leaders were at the ribbon cutting to show their support for science education, but the undisputed star of the show was our Student Poet Laureate Amy Earls when she shared her poem commemorating the building. Without exception, everyone who hugged me that afternoon couldn't stop talking about how moving her poem was. I particularly cherished compliments that began "I've never liked poetry but..." Our Student Poet Laureate had deftly planted tiny poetry-loving seeds in the hearts of our community.

Each of our Poet Laureates has planted seeds, but it will take years for us to know which seeds will grow into new generations of poets. It is fitting that LB, a college in the heart of grass seed country, is sowing seeds of poetry throughout the fertile Willamette Valley. Maybe one day our luscious farmers markets will sprout poetry stands.

Rita Cavin  
*LBCC Past President*



## EVE

After Eden,  
did Eve wander the Serengeti  
preparing a stony path for Lucy  
through the Oldupai Gorge?

Did Eve cook dinners of onions and peppers,  
build her shelter of twigs and buffalo dung,  
weave tight baskets to carry water,  
tickle her baby boys with ostrich plumes?

Did she make pets of tiny dik-diks,  
name the flowers of the savannah,  
hear hyena howls in the ebony sky?

Did she gaze at the sun glowing flamingo pink  
on the flanks of Kilimanjaro  
and study the Southern Cross  
aglow in her firmament?

How did she survive her vast loneliness  
without a mother's teachings,  
a sister for secrets,  
a friend to help her in labor,  
a daughter to cradle?

Did Eve paint her face  
with Africa's red and ochre earth,  
rub cinnamon between her breasts,  
sway to drumbeats in the moonlight,  
giggle with Adam on a soft bed of hides  
and murmur secrets in the dawn glow?

How did Eve feel about serpents  
hissing in the golden grass  
and perfumed apples  
dangling in the trees?

*Inspired by Lucy's footprints and  
the Masai women of Tanzania*

~ Rita Cavin

Be the next

# LBCC Student Poet Laureate



*"Poetry is a way of remembering  
what it would impoverish us to forget."*

~ Robert Frost

#### **A Poet Laureate helps us to "remember:"**

Laureates are practicing poets who believe in the power of reading poetry as well as writing poetry, and so are good at visioning ways to cultivate poetry reading and writing in their community. Our nation's Poet Laureateship is a tradition which began in 1937. Our state's tradition (though not continuous) dates back to 1923. On any stage, the appointment of a poet laureate recognizes and encourages the poet's work. Equally, the appointment invests in the poet's promise to encourage and promote poetry in their community's lives. Recognizing the vital importance of poetry, Linn-Benton Community College joins this hallowed tradition.

#### **BE THE NEXT STUDENT POET LAUREATE**

##### **Eligibility, Term of Award & Stipend:**

- Continuous enrollment at LBCC
- \$250 per quarter – Fall, Winter, and Spring
- Rita Cavin Student Poet Laureate Scholarship

##### **APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS:**

- Applications are available at Albany Campus Library Reference Counter or the Benton Center Registration Counter
- Applications must be completed by Monday, May 21, 2018 and returned to the LBCC Albany Campus Library Reference Counter or the Benton Center Registration Counter

For questions please contact Robin Havenick  
541-917-4574 • robin.havenick@linnbenton.edu

**Linn-Benton**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

LBCC is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

## Student Poet Laureates In Their Own Words





**Kaedence Eaton**

2008 - 2009

## **Kaedence Eaton**

Associating with poetry lovers is not for the meek among us. You never know how their winsome words may move your heart. I speak from experience. When I first attended LBCC, I had a terrible case of poetry aversion. Whatever I read lay flat on the page. Until I was taught how to read poetry, and finally heard poetry spoken aloud. What had poems become? Certainly something I needed more of.

Halfway through my time there I discovered I couldn't get enough of the stuff—I began attending poetry slams, spoken word performances, and going all out with the Poetry Club. Why, I even found some of my best friends in poets. In poetry workshops I discovered the collaborative maze-like delight in dissecting poems in progress, and found I enjoyed that collaborative process just as much as I enjoyed chancing upon the finished product. Poetry has a magic that is contagious even to those who believe themselves immune. Look out! Someone you know and love may very well be next.

Much to my surprise and delight, my time as Student Poet Laureate taught me that for me, poetry does not live on the page. It is merely planted there. Poetry lives in community. Poetry is a part of how I write and think, and when confronted with big emotions, life changing stories, or complex questions, I would be tongue-tied without its aid. Poetry is social connection in action!

As for where poetry will take me next, as a certified dream teacher, I plan to use my love of poetry, metaphor, language, play therapy and dreams to create content that helps promote well-being through encouraging the exploration of the interplay between dream imagery, waking life symbols, and the stories we tell ourselves and each other, empowering individuals to receive these experiences like living poetic missives that they can receive and/or modify for increased confidence and wellness throughout their lives. Written during my time at LBCC, the story "Abigail Dara" is an example of healing through poetic language and imagery. Read it aloud, dream on it, and see what stirs inside of you.

I absolutely loved my time of learning at LBCC and the Benton Center in Corvallis, Oregon, and think of my time there with great fondness and gratitude. I was forever changed by the kind-hearted and wise guidance provided by their excellent staff and faculty—with a special fondness for the contagiously passionate, informative and inspiring Robin Havenick, Victoria Fridley, Terrence Millet, and Jeff Davis—who so generously gifted me and my peers with the wisdom of the various ways in which poetic language shapes meaning, each moment, and the world. The confidence and joyful encouragement of the staff and faculty of LBCC, as well as my time as Student Poet Laureate, have helped shape a significant part of who I am as well, and for that, I will always be deeply grateful.

## Abigail Dara

She began the mountainous trails, a girl—no more than six and eighty—ceaselessly, she wandered, searching, long beyond the years of two and twenty. As she wandered thick black hair flowed to grey as clouds of mist ran streaming through the jungle river gorge.

Abigail Mará, they'd called her, as a girl, in the city. And her parents meant it fully. Her parents with their sharp faces and mouths full of poisonous meanings. *What of it?* Their world was behind her as she wandered, sharp-eyed, the gorge beyond the city, beyond the land of her people.

Late in the day, the river-whittled gorge wove through the worlds she dreamed in...*Somewhere here; up ahead...* She knew it through her wrinkles. Each updraft etched the lines for her to follow, each with separate meaning. Holding more than she could see, her face was her own and an image of the others. She watched her hands for meaning.

With skin dappled as stream beds and knuckles twisted as branches, she pulled back the folds of her ears to listen. But still she could not hear what she'd needed. Her quaking sighing breath rattled her sagging cheeks.

The path ahead would narrow, falling away into the river. She peered over the trail edge to the water. Slick-backed river dolphins stared back blindly, watching her in eerie silence, their pale flesh faintly glowing. Their eyes were small and smiling. They spoke to her in silence with those small dark eyes, but she couldn't hear them so she turned away. They zip-squeak-buzzed to call her back but she was too afraid.

The lone old woman-girl looked for some foothold, handhold, rootbulge...something to aid her way. Retreating stiffly down the trail, she spied it.—Roots and branches perfectly positioned for climbing. She would climb the hillside until she found another hoof- or paw-worn track above. Bracing herself against the hill, she stooped to grab a loop of root, and raised a trembling foot to slip inside it. One foothold checked and ready, her weathered hands against the hill, naked, bony shoulders pinched, she sought another pocket of safety. Once found, she stood to reach it, bearing her weight through her legs, slowly. Though her limbs were weighted against it, she made stiff progress. The dolphins buzzed and squealed below.

With bright-feathered birds singing overhead her weathered heart pulled the rope of her dry veins, and her cracked feet responded. Up, down, up, down. Curling first around some rough root, only to release, finding balance atop a pouting lip of rock. She swung her body stiffly, from one perch to another, up the hillside, her low-hung breasts scraped against the earth.

The sun was setting. Abigail Mará hadn't much light left to guide her. The skin of her eyes and ears stretched by, as she stilled her step to listen. Blurring her sight to strengthen her ears she heard each voice in tandem. The sputter zip buzz of the slick skinned dolphins from the river below, the creaking of the trees around and above. In the distance a waterfall wrestled the wind. The calls and songs of the nightjars, manakins and swallows flitted in and out, glancing off their surroundings, ricocheted and tumbled with the cacophony of noises around them. And further out, beyond the fall of water, she thought she heard the etching of rock against rock, scraping and resetting.

Her chin and cheeks quivered as if to smile. Her heart puffed out a dusty breath to suck in air, moistened by the water. She looked down at where she'd been and above at what she intended to ascend. One last step would put her on a trail. Straining with muscle ache, she puckered her lips, gripped a trail rock—testing, then pushed and pulled her way to the surface, startling a plain grey lyrebird into the bushes.—Its long, strange plumes trailed in behind it.

“Abigail Mará!” The lyrebird sang, “There are demons in your ear that whisper nonsense! Nonsense!”—A familiar tune that made her teeth set tighter. “Mará! Mará!”

She scowled against its words. She knew she must keep going. She followed the trail uphill with the voice of the lyrebird dancing behind her “Mará! Mará!” She'd leave it, too, behind. She was not “Mará.” *I am nameless.—Nameless.* And this was why she wandered.

The sound of scraping stones grew closer. Wrinkle-faced she watched the trees, where shadows swung above her. Graceful and free, they seemed to rule the jungle. She eyed the shadows for their secrets. Every time she thought they made to speak—away they'd swing away. Yet still the scraping stones grew louder. She continued up the trail, examining the shadows. If only she could join them there, perhaps she'd learn their language.

The scraping stones swelled louder. No great outcry could overpower the rattle of their thunder. Her sinewy legs worked faster. Nimble footed and knobby kneed she darted through the foliage. “Mará! Mará!” underscored the air, as three lyrebirds flushed from hiding. The jungle cupped the failing light, in a clearing just up the trail. Here, the shadows swung into its crown and there the woman-girl stood reeling.

Within the clearing dwelled an ancient athenaeum, with overgrown intricately carved pillars, walls and doorways tall and proud. A sinewy network of towering roots seemed to cascade down and through the face of the stone temple, supporting the twisting trunks of silk cotton trees and strangler figs embracing whole gopuras as massive guardian tentacles. Savoring the temple, the light here seemed to linger, humming, orange with the ebbing hour of day.

And still the scraping stones continued overhead. The woman-girl looked up into the face of the shadows. With outturned lips and smooth mournful faces they were singing the great stone scrape, resetting. The thick fur of their bodies bristled and shook at their sides and throat. Poised with humanoid hands, perched on the edge of surrounding tree branches leaning into the clearing, their rope-like tails anchored them in place.

The woman-girl's dry riverbed heart shook, swinging between fear and elation. In all her years of wandering, never before had she known *this*. Her face contorted, quivering. The skin of her eyes gathered and fell, gathered and fell, as the corners of her mouth twitched violently, and up from the dry rope veins of her heart, drew water, slowly, a trickle, less than a stream. The howling creatures looked down knowingly, renewed in the vigor with which they bellowed their deep throated slow stone-scrape.

The woman-girl looked to the lines in her feet for answers, and saw only shadows instead. She went, quivering, shaking, contorted into the back-lit gopura cave, where the humanoid hands directed her in.

Passing through light and darkness, light and darkness as openings streamed by, she read along the walls a message "tou qeou entov umwn estin" bordering each passageway overhead. Yet she did not know what it said.

And then...

A great, wide expanse within. A woman, covered in dust and cobweb, cross-legged, with her feet atop her thighs, sat perched in the lap of a giant banyan tree, whose branches and roots overwhelmed everything within—stretching out across the great stone pillars and archways, the limitless arteries of shelves—bearing down on them, some buckled with weight. The woman-girl stepped forward, her very being violently quaking.

"Sister-Woman," she warbled weakly to the woman in the tree. Her voice rose and fell, "I have come to read my story."

The sister-woman did not respond, but only stared outward, blankly, through the grey cloak of cobweb hair.

"Sister-Woman...!" the woman-girl called out again. "Sister-Woman...!" and still the sister-woman did not stir.

The woman-girl stood for a time, the dry-riverbed stream still flowed in a trickle through her veins and out her eyes, provoked by the violent quaking. Soon they would run completely dry.

Stepping forward, nearing the silent woman in the tree, the woman-girl took in the smooth dust-covered quirk of the sister-woman's mouth. *What does this mean?* She crawled under and through the limbs of the banyan tree, making her way to the shelves, in search of her unique story.

The shadows of the leaves passed overhead as she made her way deeper and deeper into the veins of the athenaeum; passing towers of books, and scrolls, and music sheets, she wandered deeper and deeper, weaving her way through each until she heard one call a familiar name "Abigail Mará, I know your tale...!" It sang above the woman-girl's long gray hair. Her body shook, and her ankles trembled. Her throat burned, and her hands danced in the air. Her voice escaped her now, and skittered about her hair, warbling, rising, and falling she had to reach it there. She jumped and snatched it from its perch, and pressed it to her weathered and sagging breast.

Knobby fingers and knobby knees eased her to the floor and as she opened its weather-worn binding, she smelled a plague of disease.—Violently shaking, sobbing, dry she turned to its pages and read. And here was her mother and here was her father and each of those between and she read and she cried and she called out and screamed, and then she read her own end that smelled of disease and knew she could not let it be. She tore out the pages one by one and chewed them each to pulp; she swallowed, and tore, and swallowed and tore. She tore the pages to pieces, ate them and smiled. Her hands went calm, her smile was wide. A spring in her stomach sprung up, and the pulp of the letters and pages were flooded inside.

"Abigail Mará?' They'd had it all wrong. I was Abigail Dara, all along!"

Her stomach distended, she carried their dreams up into the banyan leaves, scaling the branches and shelves, 'til she climbed the tree, up through the eaves of the ceiling. She continued her climb until she brushed the clouds and there she laughed out loud, at pieces. She remembered the lines she'd read of her life and remembered they weren't quite the same in living.

So she took from the tree a twig and some leaves for etching creases. Each crease she etched into the leaves held a meaning, important and sweet, though some of them were darkly shaded. And when she was done, she bound them with hair, and offered her song to the wind. "Abigail Dara! I sing along, I love the world and its meanings!" And as she sang, her stomach went slack, and her riverbed heart filled with water. The dry ropes of her veins sprung to life, sprouting leaves of their own and singing...

~ Kaedence Eaton



**Amy Earls**  
2009 - 2010

## Amy Earls

I shared a poem while they ate in the Commons, a poem while they studied in the library. I noticed a poem had been placed inside of a student's binder and another inside of an instructor's textbook. The campus rained poetry. They were called the Poem of the Week: bookmark-sized pieces of paper encouraging the stressed-out student, words speaking everyone's story. And in this way, I let the words of poets live.

As LBCC's second Student Poet Laureate, I learned the power of community. I think of Robin, Victoria, Jane, Jeff, and Terrance and their belief in what I had to say. They were concerned less with my ability to write a poem and more about my courage to deliver it; to know a poem's value and relevance; to know that my people are poems.

Their belief in me launched me forward as I grew as a person and a writer. Enabling passion and determination to lead me, I completed a Bachelor's in English with a writing minor and a Master's in Education with an emphasis in teaching writing to adult learners. I taught LBCC's Developmental Studies classes, whole-heartedly building self-confidence in my student writers, just as my community had done for me.

Today, while writing my first novel, I unintentionally see my poetic roots shoot up like flowers that I scatter here and there just like the Poem of the Week I tossed around campus. I'm finding that poetry is not merely the form we study it to be; it is a fluidity in life, puzzle pieces harmoniously placed just right, or maybe even read at just the right moment to be meant for us.

The marriage of words is a poet's identity and is the part of the poet that will live forever, as long as the poet keeps on sharing.

## If Rita Were a Poem

*A tribute to President Rita Cavin*

"I see," you said.

"I see poetry covering campus like a warm blanket,  
floating words throughout the air like tossed confetti,  
students catching them like snowflakes on their tongues,  
dancing to musical words,  
breathing in perfumed words,  
swallowing chocolate-dipped words, then asking for more."

"A poet," you laughed.

"We need a poet. A student poet."

So, your team scouted campus,  
searching for someone to bring words to people,  
to stir up the stagnant-watered words of past and future poets,  
and in finding a poet,  
you found the answer.

"The answer," you exclaimed.

"We need the answer to words."

Those words were waiting  
for your permission  
to take flight.  
They were there, but you set them free.  
You set poems free.

"I know," we say.

"I know we will forever be affected by your dream."

We think of poems floating and dancing  
in our minds. We think of catching poems,  
breathing poems, swallowing poems, then sharing more.  
Then we think of you.  
And know that you, Rita, you were the answer.

~ Amy Earls

## For My People

For my people scrounging for truth, for clarity, for freedom,  
searching in the yesterdays and todays and tomorrows, never  
ending, never knowing, never finding the answers to poverty,  
racism, school shootings, politics, death, hostility, despair,  
rejection, restriction, pain and triumph.

For my people stuck on hands and knees on kitchen floors  
crawling and praying and scrubbing and seeking and weeping and  
dying and picking up crumbs and finding lost money and dreaming  
of walking and children make-believing they're someone else or  
somewhere else or lost.

For my people begging for more time to laugh to cry to vent to  
talk to sleep to love to ponder to study to live to pay rent and heat  
and taxes and food and gas and clothes and debt and cable and  
Verizon and credit and movies and friends, trying not to spoil their  
children who want to feel free from abuse and insecurity and lack  
of attention and hunger and divorce and war and abandonment  
and lies.

For my people who are alone today and afraid of being alone  
tomorrow, trying to find a place in all people, all races, all  
differences, all unity in every face and every shade of skin of  
every man and woman of our America.

For my people who are holding fast to dreams and inspirations  
and chances and beauty, dancing and singing and celebrating our  
discoveries.

Let this beauty find its place in hearts, homes, schools, jobs,  
freedom. Let us prepare for change in love and community and  
hope. Let us find happiness in the individual wonders that we are  
and embrace ourselves. Let us continue to rise and take control.

~ Amy Earls

## The Feather Who Crumbled a Wall

*An excerpt from my young adult novel*

A stand of peaches stood in front of me. Their smell enticed me to pick one up and eat it along the way, but that'd reduce speed. Instead, I leapt over the entire table and landed on my feet. This was not chosen or Warrior power. This was Pero Moshe the ordinary. People in brightly colored attire gasped. A man tried to grab me, but I weaved around him. A cluster of people moved out of the way, clearing a straight path to the front gate.

As I neared the gates of the city, I saw my end. I slowed and rested my hands on my knees, panting. I looked up at the nearest guard. "Open the gate."

The guard ignored me.

"Open the gate now!"

He didn't move. More was out there, open space, and here I was at a stop, just as I'd been on my daily runs at home. I should've known that everything I chased after eventually ended. I'd gotten past the closet in my room and the forest outside of my home, and look at where they brought me. To another wall.

"Let her out," a voice said.

I turned around to find Carper. He folded his arms, and his eyes appeared humored. Marcus stood next to him with his arms folded and a scowl. I turned back around to see the guard opening the gate. Beyond the gate was the field, and beyond that was the forest, and beyond that had to be the Lesaries, waiting for the right time to come for me.

"She'll be gone, Carper," I heard Marcus say from behind.

"Will she?" Carper asked.

He knew the answer, otherwise he would've never let me go. Everything I needed was in Moon City. The necklace. Mom. But what he didn't know was that everything I wanted would always be out there. People built walls, and I couldn't trust people.

I didn't look at Carper or Marcus, only to what was ahead. As I ran through the gates and around the edge of the city—the gate guard telling the other guards that they could let me go—the tall grass whipped my legs, the sun burned my face, the breeze stung my eyes. I was wide awake to the earth, as if I wasn't stuck inside and hiding any more. It was time to be awake. Whatever the reason I was here, I never wanted to hide again.

*Pero, feather.*

The voice nearly stopped me. It was deep and very near, like words written across my mind. I ran faster than ever before. It had to be Dad's voice in my head, cheering me on. Out of the vibrant blue sky, an eagle swooped down and touched the grass. I ran toward it. With every step I took, the eagle flew farther away until it reached the edge of the forest. I stopped when it did. I put my hand against a tree.

The eagle's enormous wings shimmied and set in place behind its back. Its head twitched and stared at a focal point before moving to another. Its eyes narrowed in focus. How could the eagle not notice I was close enough to watch its green eyes blink and specks of grey on its white face? Was I so focused on getting myself out of Moon City that I hadn't been paying attention to the dangers around me? Maybe I shouldn't trust Jimmy. Maybe I shouldn't trust Mom. She'd left me. She kept something hidden from Dad. What if she was my enemy? As if I knew who she'd become.

As swiftly as it had appeared, the eagle launched through the air and into the sky. For the first time, I noticed a planet in the sky that looked a lot like earth. Maybe it was. How'd I ever go back?

I was alone, my breath the only sound apart from a breeze that whistled through the trees. I knelt and touched a blade of grass with my fingertip. Peace came in moments like this but was hard to keep. As much as I craved to move fast, I also craved rest.

I collapsed under a tree and laid my head against the trunk. I looked up to see the walls of the city not too far away. I'd run in a circle. The walls reminded me that I wasn't entirely free. I closed my eyes and reached for Mom's pendant in my pocket. When my hand grasped air, I rubbed my chest as if the necklace was still there and was a magic lamp that'd grant me three wishes.

I wished for anything or anyone larger than me to never have existed—my closet, my house, the woods, the walls, Marcus, Carper. I wished for Mom and Dad and me to be together. One more wish. What should it be?

I didn't know.

Maybe my third wish would be to always have a wish. Like never-ending life. Like hope.

~ Amy Earls



**Ruth Krueger**

2011 - 2013

## Ruth Krueger

Reflecting on my time as Student Poet Laureate stirs up memories that warm my soul. Poetry had lain dormant in my life for many years. It was in the American Literature classes taught by Robin Havenick that I experienced the resurrection of poetry in my life, poems read and pondered, and poems that flowed from inside of me, entering the world of words.

The voice of the poets called to me. One memory I cherish is reading for the first time the poetry of Langston Hughes. “The Negro Speaks of Rivers” struck a deep chord. “My soul has grown deep like the rivers” became the theme of my life then and in the years to follow.

I remember most fondly the poetry event I led for Black History Month. Poetry Club members stood together in front of our audience in the Diversity Center. Each read a favorite piece from the African-American tradition, with one reading flowing into another. We concluded with a group reading of Elizabeth Alexander’s “Praise Song for the Day,” which she read at the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama in 2009, a poem filled with a proclamation of the struggles and bravery of people of color in America. One of many powerful lines reads:

Some live by *love they neighbor as thyself*,  
others by *first do no harm or take no more*  
*than you need*. What if the mightiest word is love?

Recently, Walt Whitman has beckoned me with a whisper, inviting me back into his *Leaves of Grass*. I have picked up a ritual I used to practice during my years as a student, taking my morning coffee and my old paperback yellowed copy of Whitman to my front porch, where I bask in the light of his words once again. Whitman told his readers to visit his poetry in every season. I haven’t done so according to each season of the year, but now, in this season of my life, I am listening to his voice once again.

My favorite of his poems at the moment is “The Voice of the Rain.” On the surface it is about the water cycle, the rising of vapor from the earth and sea, the forming of clouds, and the descending of rain to feed that from which they came. Under the surface it is about life. From within the human soul rises beauty, invisible to the eye, but felt in the air. This beauty forms, shifts, and grows, and when it reaches fruition its waters fall upon us, washing us and reviving our souls from whence it came; thus our journey unfolds, and what we give comes back to us. If we are wise, and still for just a moment, we realize that this is a continual cycle, taking us closer and closer, yet further and further, inward and upward. Poetry is the voice within that says, “Love. Love yourself. Love the earth. Love humanity.” My days of poetry at LBCC were the beginning of this knowledge.

*Written for Deron Carter, who I took a year of geology courses with;  
I read this to him in his office on the last day of class, spring term 2012.*

## **For Deron**

“Don’t memorize dates,  
Don’t list the names of scientists  
From long ago,  
Or worry about reciting  
Facts without understanding.  
Just learn to see the world differently,” the teacher said.

And so, I do.  
I see my world differently,  
Or more completely.

I am humbled by the vast ocean  
Colliding with rocks  
And bursting forth with power;  
By the stone now turned to sand,  
And the cliffs carved  
With the ocean’s impact  
As if the ocean were a sculptor,  
The Michelangelo of nature;  
By its rising and its falling,  
Its coming and its going.

I still tremble at the mountains  
Rising all around,  
Forced upward by the power of the land,  
Or made tall with heat and fire,  
And graced with streams and rivers  
That dance along  
Meandering,  
Carrying their heavy cargo as if it were  
But air or light,

Depositing it as they go,  
Like money in the bank,  
An investment from the past  
Into the future of the earth.

I am perplexed by my own smallness.  
If all of humanity is but a dot on the  
Timeline of earth,  
Then what am I,  
This insignificant observer of it all?

I am earth’s keeper,  
I will protect her.  
I am her student,  
Eager to learn.  
I am earth’s friend (we whisper to each other of life and time and such).  
I am earth’s audience,  
And I applaud her.

~ Ruth Krueger

*Written at the request of President Greg Hamann for Fall Inservice.*

## **An Open Book**

Have you ever had one of those moments  
when it seemed no one would  
understand your thoughts  
if you dared speak them,  
And you felt alone,  
Silenced?

I sometimes long for it to be so-  
to stand in the empty woods with only  
Trees as companions,  
Leaves as friends.

To say what must be said with boldness,  
the rocks echoing my refrain  
and all of Nature lending an ear to hear my words.

But I know this:  
Words of value may be discovered in solitude,  
but they are proven by others.

And so I will go to the quiet recesses of my mind,  
I will dip my feet in streams of thought  
and linger long  
and breathe deeply the scent of Life,  
of Truth.

Then I will be an open book.  
My thoughts will fill pages to be seen by the  
eyes of Humanity.

I will know, and be known.

~ Ruth Krueger

*Written in response to a mass shooting.*

## **October 2, 2017**

There are times when words don't come easily,  
When words sound empty,  
And so we wait in  
Silence.

And yet our hearts stir within us, and give rise to what must be said.

Love is greater than hate.  
Light pierces darkness.

God is Love, God is Light.

But what do we do when hate wins? What do we say in the dark?

Sometimes we say we don't know,  
we don't understand,  
we have no answers.

Or we say put down your guns. Love your neighbor. Do good.

And we say you will be missed. I am sorry. You were brave.

We say listen, God, listen  
To the bells that ring across our land,  
To the sound of prayer upon prayer upon prayer.

We speak because we can,  
We speak because others can not.

We say stop!

We say Love.

We say Peace.

~ Ruth Krueger



## Kiera Eller

2013 - 2014

## Kiera Eller

I started writing because it was all I could do to stave off the insanity of the universe around me. We all need something to combat the world's looming forces, seeping their ways into our foundational floorboards; a catharsis to quell our fears. Linn-Benton Community College's Student Poet Laureate position gave a purpose to my power, like showing early man how to use his twigs and stones. Those tools transpired into so much more than just a simple fire.

We rolled out numerous projects, including the quarterly WordMOB poetry slam, the Ekphrasis project (composing poetry to art, and vice versa), and the student showcase in the library for National Poetry Month. My favorite project by far was one of my own creation - it never quite had a name other than the Poetry Wall - but we fashioned a whiteboard to a hallway in the English Department and let the students, and faculty, loose. It was amazing to see what magical ingenuity comes from the free-form ability to create without pressure or time constraints, under the safety of anonymity. Personally, I think every college should have one of these as a permanent fixture.

My time as Student Poet Laureate was brief in comparison to the rest of my life, but the words don't simply die without a title (I should know, I am terrible at titling my works). As long as you have your twigs and stones, there is always potential for an inferno. My writing always has, and is, an outlet to reconcile with the confusing accident of life around me - and this position gave that outlet meaning and purpose.

The continuation of the responsibility and capability I harnessed at Linn-Benton endowed me with much of the courage to do everything that I have in my life thus far. I find myself more outspoken, willing to take risks for the sake of innovation. In the summer of 2018 I threw all doubts to the wind to tour nationally with The Barefoot Family Caravan, a psychedelic folk/rock project. I lived out of my van, caravanning with a school bus of adventure-seeking hippie musicians, and performed in venues in Santa Cruz, Los Angeles, Austin, New Orleans, and Orlando (and so many other places in between). No longer sheltered by the umbrella of "will this be good enough," I launched my own band the same year: Leo & the Lark, comprised solely of my original material. My entire existence is a poetic endeavor, and I am continually utilizing my trade.

My greatest gratitude goes out to Linn-Benton Community College and the mentors responsible for my growth along the way. Without them, I would not be the human being I am today. They were the time travelers who supplied this humble cavewoman with her twigs and stones. The universe is still perplexing, but the fire continues to burn.

## Learning

*Permanent Installation*

*White Oak Hall*

this is how it starts:

you are young, vulnerable,  
homogenous metamorphic rock  
tabula rasa  
“blank slate”

and the earth with her  
Infinite tendrils  
must impress upon you  
her chalky-white lessons,  
once-were oceans  
and the foraminifera.

and so this is how you change:  
weather erodes and chips away,  
sediments crumble  
and conglomerate  
and suddenly, pieces of you  
everywhere  
strewn about this Lady.

you may try to compensate:

take fractures of fish,  
bone and flesh,  
press them into yourself  
attempt to redress  
the metamorphosis-

but you are sand now,  
symbol of time.  
the Knowledge comes  
with Time.

this is how it ends:

it never really does.  
your pebbles press  
under heat and pressure  
you become measured,  
something of your former self,  
before melting completely.  
insidious magma,  
your reflection not a glow,  
but a slow burn.

but the earth still turns.

it turns,  
and you topple,  
and finally relinquish yourself  
to the eventual frost  
that comes with a new identity.

this is how it starts:

you are older, volcanic tuff  
igneous stuff,  
and the earth in her  
Infinite familiarity  
holds to you  
turning you over, again  
and again  
and again

because the rock cycle  
never stops.

~ Kiera Eller

## The Hippie and the Worker Bees

I will never be  
straight-laced  
caked face  
fast pace  
administrator  
caffeine-headache  
rubbing the backs of my heels  
and  
cutting  
my sentences  
short.

I will never be  
my father's anguish,  
his stoic language  
inner rage  
waiting to be paid for  
endless trepidation  
women  
children  
silent nation  
what patience  
what patience?  
finding solace in cycles.

I will never be  
a black lung  
wheezing  
killjoy,  
employed and  
broke, broken  
smokin' away the days  
how may I help you  
phlegm  
the town  
in the palm of my hand.

Never will I  
fill my chambers  
with doubt and sweat,  
nor will I be  
my mother's quiet worry  
hypochondriac  
heart attack  
brace yourselves,  
my nerves are fraying at the ends.

I will never simply  
forgive and forget  
let  
bygones be bygones  
let  
burned bridges mend,  
pretend,  
defend unhappiness,  
what is the greater good but an opinion?

this world is a time capsule,  
my heart is in rapture,  
capturing moments to hold  
fold  
into paper origami swans  
release them to the multitudes,  
the masses!

I'm not done yet,  
what you give  
is not  
what you get.

I will never  
chip away the paint  
from the fresco of a soul;  
who among us is whole?  
we are crumbling,  
stumbling  
falling,  
flailing  
failing, we are failing.  
I will never fail.  
I see through the bliss  
and accept it,  
ignorance's redemption

pay attention,  
knowledge is prevention.

~ Kiera Eller





**Coco Shanks**

*2014 - 2015*

## **Coco Shanks**

Becoming Student Poet Laureate meant becoming an ambassador of sorts between LBCC, its multiple campuses, the towns they live in, and the students they serve. It was an experience that completely reshaped the way I saw responsibility, campus, and myself.

I worked with the Student Leadership Council and the Gender & Sexuality Alliance, and read and recited poetry in classes from the humanities to nursing and math. The most memorable review of my poetry was “Wait, you can say that in a poem?”

As Student Poet Laureate, I was invited to a poetry share at Oregon State Penitentiary where I performed with and for a group of inmates of color. And as moving as the poetry was that day, I walked away with more on my mind. For one, a cell block is like the Grand Canyon: you have no idea how big one is until you’ve seen it in real life. Secondly, getting to leave prison is a seriously haunting experience. I cried in my car on the way home as my perspective began to twist.

And since then, I’ve turned myself upside down. I became a delegate, came out as a trans woman, and curated a chosen family of people who accept and love each other for who they are.

The biggest takeaway I can give you is be yourself, even if nobody wants you to.

## Engagement.

Occupy yourself  
Organize your mind  
Participate, play role, partake  
Perform, evolve - transform -  
Kill conform, be electric - Storm  
Guns and Germs,  
Sell the farm  
Forget luke-warm exists  
You are hot

The hottest,  
Hot-hot, Ruby Rod  
Leeloo Dallas Multi-pass  
Shining brass, senior class glass -  
Shatterproof  
Wisdom tooth in a youth fountain,  
You -

Are focused, murderer,  
Plague of locusts,  
Interpreter of everything,  
Ending settling, forgetting perishing,  
Accelerating, leveling  
Up.

Reveling higher, heart under fire,  
Charging right through -  
You were born in the briar  
Wearing anti-anti tank missile attire

Your desire  
is yours, and you know it.

Hearth-heart aglow, it  
Melts hail and snow, tipping  
To and fro into  
A Vincent van Gogh tidal flow neon tableau

Blood type: "Oh, baby"  
Heart type: Mercedes  
Style type: embroidered silk jacket, Pink Ladies  
Just "yeses", no "maybes"  
And no "maybe nots"  
No *counterfeit philosophies polluting your thoughts*  
Don't walk the line,  
Chew it, waxed mint dental floss,  
Popping and unlocking gates  
Blocking your way to spotless, high-gloss yachts

Namaste, Peaceful Eagle,  
Vegan bird of prey  
Make way  
For you  
We'll salute and step aside  
You're applied  
And no one can stop you  
From doing your do  
In this age or the next generation  
Engage, Young Crusher,  
You're my inspiration.

My heart is in tune to your radio station  
And I hear you're killing the videostar  
So to all those who said you couldn't reset the bar?  
A pat on the back, and a short  
"Au Revoir"

~ Coco Shanks

## I-84 Eastbound

In 2009, my left lung collapsed twice. The doctors asked me, “Do you smoke? Do you drink? Any chest trauma?” The answer was no to all three at the time. “Well then,” they said, “it’s just not fair.”

Spontaneous pneumothorax. A collapsed lung is common in young men who are tall, thin, and in their twenties. I was all four of those things. When I brought my x-rays to the emergency room, the receptionist laughed and said, “Oh, you’re just the exact person we expect this to happen to.” My response was, of course, “Then how come nobody told me this was coming?”

Five years passed. Five years of scar tissue in my chest burning me alive, and every doctor I saw told me the same thing. “You’re just going to be in pain.” And I got a new doctor. A pulmonologist named Dr. Dexter. She was...smart. Like, more than just “doctor smart.” She asked me if I was depressed, and truth be told, I was. I just had no idea why. I looked at the X-ray up on the wall, and thought, “Wow. Is my heart really that big?”

“Chronic pain tends to cause depression,” she told me. She suggested yoga as a way to manage my stress, and by extension, my pain.

In yoga class, there’s no judgement. We all work at our own pace, and nobody’s shamed for having a different ability than anyone else. And since laughing is less sad than pouting, I tend to make myself the bony butt of my own jokes when I can’t get a pose just right.

When my instructor says, “This is called Half Lord of the Fishes Pose. No, you don’t look like a fish,” I might say, “Are you kidding? Have you seen my spine? I’m definitely Lord of the Half-Sturgeons.”

When she says, “Roll up one vertebra at a time,” I might say, “All I am is vertebrae.”

When she says, “Stretch all the way to Missouri,” I don’t know what to say. Missouri is two thousand miles away. That’s just unrealistic. And no matter how great my wingspan, I seriously doubt I can stretch all that way. But I could take a car. I have a two-thousand-and-two Subaru Impreza Hatchback with a roof rack, so not only could I throw down the back seats and bring my own bed, I could load my giant heart up onto the roof, secure it with a bungee cord, and drive for thirty hours straight, and yes, I’ve done the research.

Me and my car, Disco Subaru, pushin’ through Rocky Mountains, and stale molehills, and chronic depressions, but I’m sure we’ll stop and take our breaks, because I don’t think it’s weird to pull over for a funeral procession. Boom, a thousand miles down, a thousand miles to go, driving through sand storms, and snow storms, and whatever other storms there might be, heart of a giant beating down on the roof of my car in syncopation with the song on the radio

*“We can’t go on pretending day by day that someone, somehow, will soon make a change.”*

God DAMN, Michael, have you ever been more right? And my giant heart gets bigger, weighs down my aluminum rib cage, but I can’t find a damn to give, because my gas meter is broken anyway, so as far as I can tell, I’ve still got a million miles left in the tank.

And before too long, I see a big green sign with swirling letters, “Welcome to Missouri.”

Welcome to Missouri.

It’s quiet here, and I don’t know where I’m supposed to park. I’m here, but I’m lost, and all I can think about is that song. “*We are the world...*” Good point, Michael. *We are* the world. And I know that’s a fact, because the world can be a bitch, but the planet’s just a planet, and the planet didn’t decide where the borderlines of Missouri are—some stupid *dude* put them there, and threw off my whole operation!

Now I get to thinking, “What *isn’t* man made?”

My mind is three parts public education and one part poetry.  
My body is two parts a Tim Burton cartoon, and one part Marfan’s Syndrome.

My soul is five parts leftover kindergarten watercolor paints, one part experience, and three parts platinum.

My eyes are two spoons full of vision and a pinch of chocolate.  
My heart is one part mother, one part father, and one part for every girl who’s cracked it.

My bane is one heaping pile of Missouri.

My prescription is the sweetest 98 pounds of sugar in the Louisiana Purchase, and I have no idea where she is.

But I can wait. Of course I can wait, I have a Subaru. I can camp out for weeks, months, years, I can grow some Ho Chi Minh approximation of a beard, manage my pain, and practice my stretches on top of my car, using my roof rack heart as a yoga mat, so that one day, when the girl I dream about is ready, I can stretch us all the way back to Oregon, all two thousand miles.

I'm not stupid. I know it sounds impossible. But I never thought it was possible for an imaginary Missourian to flip me head over heels, so I'm willing to take my chances.

Romances are delicate. They're endangered, and it's our duty to preserve nature, and not because Sarah McLachlan is trying to guilt us into it. And not because PETA throws a fit, and not because our heart outdoes our mind, but because we're human, and we're all about taking chances.

And that's what love is. Falling in love, anyway.

I'm ready and waiting. But Babe, don't worry about rushing into things. Just go the speed limit, don't drink and drive, and watch for the signs so you know when the hard curves are coming. If you get sleepy, find a safe place to pull over for a while. And remember: sometimes the road is gonna get dark.

Just take it easy. One day you'll come over the hill and find me on my yoga mat, saluting the sun, and I won't say a word until I've kissed you. And when we wake up in each other's arms, on the little mattress in the hatchback, we'll pull back just enough to touch the tips of our noses together. I'll look into your eyes and say to you,

"Darlin', you're right on time."

~ Coco Shanks

## shanks #1

You wear short skirts in the winter to show off your extra long socks  
It's fashionable, non-practical  
Like a kiss goodbye when I'll see you soon  
And a beach where the sand is still rocks.

And I imagine a thousand adventures we haven't had yet. Me and you at the coast with our shoes in the cold ocean water. And we play and we wander, and watch the thing out there and say, "is that a seal or just some driftwood?" like a thousand times. You hold my hand as we march in the sand 'cause I'm blind from the ocean salt stuck in my eye. Osu.

I'm found inside your eyes and feel like I'm at home beside you. All the shapes and sounds that make you up are my favorite shapes and sounds and they make me love, and they make me love.

And your kiss hits me like a surprise pepper seed.

That's pretty good.

My mouth sweats and I dare myself with more.

~ Coco Shanks



**Dari Lawrie**

2015 - 2016

## Dari Lawrie

I'm honored to write a few words about my poetry journey and how LBCC supported, celebrated, and joined me in a deeply rewarding leg of my journey. My poetry used to be very personal, written for an audience of one, about me and for me. That is how I once read poetry as well, in private, celebratory moments.

When I became a student at LBCC under the mentorship of gifted, socially-engaged poets on the faculty, in the administration, and in the alumni community, poetry came to mean something else. Now, a poem isn't a product: words on a page, a journal entry, or even a beautiful piece of art.

I consider a poem a place where we meet. It is at once a place of revelation, which renders it sacred, and also a very earthly place, a place where we revel (you and I) in the essence of a moment, an event, a state of being, a hope, a protest, a pledge, sometimes a grief: finding, in common, who we are, who we wish that we weren't, and who we long to be.

In the lines of a poem I meet the world and am moved by it, and I never walk away from a poem unsatisfied, because reading or writing a poem is an exercise in belonging. Poems bring me in, welcoming me as they change me. Precisely because of this—the human communion which poetry creates—the Poetry Club is an ideal home for poets to gather, to encourage each other to write more and more authentically, convincingly, honestly, urging each other to come closer to saying, clearly, what needs saying and which can't be said in a better way than through a poem.

I learned more about poetry from my fellow student-poets than I have from any writing class, or over the long nights and early mornings scribbling alone. I've also learned about the transformation and transference that happens when poetry is shared.

I feel so lucky to have experienced this in weekly Poetry Club meetings, and with the communities the Poetry Club engaged while I was Student Poet Laureate, creating and directing Life in Art programs for our local elders and the young women at Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility. Lines of their poems come back to me at unexpected moments. Those real-life, generous poets-of-the-people have made me a better poet, teacher, and a much better human being.

## Praise Song for My People

*in praise of my son, Sage, who opened my eyes*

To my children who are looking in this clean college town for missing family:  
Father! Uncle! Grandfather!  
And to myself, still looking for my own,  
I see you.

To single mothers raising their sons on food stamps,  
And to the bored and stifled women at the day-spa,  
To foster-children stuck in the great grating system of charity,  
I see you.  
This is where you are standing.

To many of us maddened and depressed by the tidy pattern of streets:  
Presidents run North! Numbers run West!  
To the 'stinkies' camped on the Willamette River, who don't pay taxes,  
I see you.  
You belong here in this place.

To aliens in that border neighborhood behind Trader Joe's,  
'Illegal' or otherwise!  
To mothers and fathers who both work but can't afford health care,  
I see you.  
The soil has shifted to accept your feet.

To the elders in Stoneybrook who are leaving in pieces,  
And to those who are leaving too soon,  
I'm still here!  
To the girls who stay hungry when the cupboards are full,  
I see you.  
If you were to abdicate to the Moon,  
The whole Earth would mourn your passing.

To 'the family' of misfits who meet in Central Park,  
To ADHD kids who twitch and struggle in overheated rooms,  
IPads lighting up faces!  
To young people raising their siblings and attending Community  
College at night,  
I see you.  
Your thread is woven with my thread.

To members of the New Hope w/o Dope Fellowship who know how  
it feels when the sun shines,  
But not for them!  
To the runaway children in McDonald Forest and their shoulder  
cats,  
I see you.  
Your fathers are my fathers, and my fathers are your  
fathers.

To the Chepenefa Kalapuya who lived in Corvallis where the rivers  
meet,  
Long, long, long before we rolled in,  
Know this:  
I see you

~ Dari Lawrie

## Black Mattering

*inspired by the work of abolitionist teacher and revolutionary scholar Dr. Bettina Love*

The hallways of my school are like veins.  
Students stream into my classroom  
and pool:  
blood pumps in, blood pumps out.  
I strive for a rhythm that my body can match,  
yet my heart tells me that  
each of you is somebody's baby.

Each of you is shining,  
bright and ready for success:  
books open, faces forward,  
waiting for me to speak,  
believing that I am your teacher for a reason.  
I am humbled.  
How wonderful it is to be a teacher.

I know that I was made for this.  
I tell fond stories about my students:  
how they sometimes call me Mom.  
And we all laugh...  
until I realize, those are my white kids,  
that black and brown kids  
stopped hanging on my words.

I stumble because,  
*How does a white teacher support black joy?*

The Mom in me says,  
"I have to love you,"  
but you are not my baby.  
So, before I love you,  
I have to know you.  
I have to talk with you about reality,  
because to be black or brown here

is to live in a state of contradiction:  
to walk into a white lady's classroom  
and try to decide how to speak, to look,  
how to position yourself  
as less intimidating, more honest.  
And that's exhausting. But, you don't have to blame yourself  
for the failures of institutions.

I am that white lady  
and, because you matter and live,  
I have to go further than skin-deep teaching  
to find full-body learning,  
I have to tap into your cultural DNA.  
I have to teach loudly  
and give you the language to be loud,

so we can drown out measures of success  
standardized to exclude you.  
That's not going to happen through me  
teaching you white rules.  
You already know about white rules  
and what they do to  
black joy.

*I have to find the beat of your cultural memory:*

the dreams, resistance, and trauma you carry,  
the grit that is black and brown genius,  
your bone-deep creativity.  
I have to let you help me  
understand the nature of the soil:  
the cultural context you're given to grow your dreams in.  
We have to talk about racism, discrimination, bigotry and hate

even though it hurts me.  
When I say I want to give you:  
Critical thinking and problem solving,  
Social-emotional intelligence,  
Integrity,  
Self-advocacy,  
Social Responsibility,

I need to be reminded that you already have it  
and that I'm here to celebrate it,  
to champion it,  
to beat the drum for you while you march  
to the podium of power and proclaim  
loudly and full-bodied,

*your belonging*

~ Dari Lawrie

## The Story Never Ends

*in tribute to our Umpqua Nine and  
the one who lost his way on October 1, 2015*

Their stories are in our mouths.  
What can we say that's true?  
All the evil and all the innocence,  
They are ours.  
And every  
Last  
One  
Of those ten drops  
Are in our veins,  
Carried by our children,  
And their children,  
From the light to the darkness to the light,  
Beautiful, terrible, and  
Without interruption.  
Not nearby,  
Not too close for comfort,  
Not too close to home.  
Here  
In the soft vessel of my body,  
In my warm blood,  
Through the chambers and ventricles  
Of my tireless heart  
-That same heart that beats in your chest-  
Live poems  
Too deep for tears.

~ Dari Lawrie





**Christopher Mikkelson**

2016 - 2017

## Christopher Mikkelson

Poetry is a useful art. We poets have tasked ourselves with saying in words what cannot be said using only words, and translating a moment into expressions that reach from one soul to another, filling a room with what once filled only our hearts.

That, at least, is what made me fall in love with both the open and welcoming community at LBCC and the performance poetry scenes in Corvallis, Eugene, and throughout the Willamette Valley. Some of the proudest moments from my year as Student Poet Laureate happened at Eugene Poetry Slam finals, where a good portion of those performing were those who had grown together at LBCC, practicing their voices through countless workshops in our little corner of the Diversity Achievement Center.

We had a lot to say that year. Without honoring, celebrating, and protecting diversity, poetry is reduced to a sterile recitation. In 2016 the Poetry Club was faced with a slew of messages that tried to marginalize the beautiful spectrum of our personhood, both as individuals and as a community. Nevertheless, we persisted.

I learned a great deal about my own privilege that year, and about how to use that privilege to amplify under-heard voices. I also was continually amazed by the act of celebration as resistance, as we celebrated each others' vulnerability in club meetings, artistry on the page, and bravery on the stage.

As a celebration of the art that came out of that year, and all of the artists who contributed to my development as a poet, I self-published a collection of my poems in May 2018 called *Chatbook 1*.

Poetry is as necessary to me as exercise and I have continued to perform in the Willamette Valley in the years since, even as I've pursued a career as a middle school science teacher. I have taken every opportunity to remind my cohort and my students that there is beauty in between every molecule, and a poem between every breath.

As a teacher, I hope to continue meeting people where they are, helping them become all they can be, and making this world a more equitable place, one student at a time.

## Stretching

Breathe: one, two.  
These are my lungs I fill with air.  
Deeper now. Bring purpose, care.

Breathe: back, forth.  
These are my ribs reaching for room.  
Further now. Rise into place.

Breathe: in, out.  
These are my feet, firm in the floor.  
Deeper now. Grasp earthen core.

Breathe: up, down.  
These are my fingertips brushing the clouds.  
Further now. Crane what was bowed.

Breathe: out, in.  
These are my ears resonating with wind.  
Deeper now. Hear all that's been.

Breathe: forth, back.  
This is my self I step into at last.  
Further now. Explore and hold fast.

Breathe: two, one.  
These are my lungs I fill with sun.  
Deeper now. The stretch has just begun.

~ Christopher Mikkelson

## The Star-Strangled Banner

Oh say have you seen  
This foundational blight:  
Soldiers loudly regaled  
Over young black men screaming,  
While oil pipes gouge wide scars  
Through the mass burial sites  
Empty promises carved -  
And are between bared teeth still streaming.

Can we desperately dare  
To turn inward, declare  
From Stono fields to Stonewall Inn  
The start of US was Soaked in Blood  
From Fort Pillow to Fort Pitt  
The start of US was Soaked in Blood  
Oriskany to Nagasaki  
The start of US was Soaked in Blood,  
Repatriation to Reservations  
The start of US was Soaked in Blood  
From D-day Waves to Detroit Flames  
Each part of US is stained by Blood  
From Zoot Suit Strips to Pox Blankets  
Each part of US is stained by Blood  
Michael Brown to Matthew Shepard  
The heart of US still feeds on Blood  
Charleston Church to Parkland School  
The heart of US still feeds on Blood...

...Will we stop?  
Will we care?

Oh say, can we face the wounds  
long enough to heal –  
Are we really so brave?  
To truly make these nations free  
While there's hope still to save?

US Code, Title 36, Chapter 10, section 176 (k):  
The flag,  
when no longer  
a fitting emblem  
to display,  
should be burned.

~ Christopher Mikkelson

## Oncoming Storm

*Listen.*

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind.

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind,  
for delights you've never seen –  
for a shrine where no one's been.

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind  
to build bridges  
and steeples –  
to make even the streets sacred,  
so long as they hold people.

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind  
carrying ponderous ponderances  
as if autumn swirled a sunburst  
of squirrel's carpet into a cyclone,  
whipping the lofty higher,  
then gliding it  
down to earth.

*Listen.*

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind,  
spat out of sputtering silence  
from mouths a miasma of malady  
has made mute.  
Until this. Until Now.

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind,  
Flowing from founts of flowery fantasies,  
Silver tongues with syllables for  
every flitting fancy.  
Until now. Until this.

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind  
That will rinse your skin  
Like the lover you never had nor imagined.  
And it will feel like a new soul again.  
It will feel like a springtime morning.

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind  
that will take your heart in their teeth,  
and gnaw and gnash and rip and  
gash  
until you're acquainted with the agony  
that another spells R-O-U-T-I-N-E.

*Listen.*

*Listen.*

There are words upon the wind  
Of degradation, desolation,  
capture, rapture, revelation,  
Emancipation. Creation.

*Listen.*

For there will be a community without a voice  
Only so long as there are communities  
without ears.  
A storm nears. A gale hastens.  
There are words upon the wind.

*Listen.*

~ Christopher Mikkelson



**Waldo French**

2018 - 2019

## Waldo French

Serving as LBCC's tenth SPL was an exceptional experience. At first, I felt a little pressure because there were nine Student Poets Laureate who preceded me and who made excellent contributions to the poetry community in and around LBCC. Their legacies and impact inspired me to make the most of the opportunity I was given. I didn't know what to do, but I had ideas; I didn't know how to do it, but I had support. I was given the advice from my poetry advisors to be my genuine self and be creative. However, I was shy, quiet, and not very confident in my writing or my ability to inspire people.

That changed when I spoke to hundreds of incoming freshmen on Welcome Day as I gave a speech about the importance of poetry in our lives and how it connects us, empowers us, and changes us. Then I read a poem I wrote about not walking through life (especially school) alone, and not being afraid to ask for someone to walk through it with you. After my reading, a young woman came up to me crying because of how much my words had meant to her. I knew from then on that I could make a difference as the SPL by encouraging and engaging people with poetry.

I decided that the most important thing that I could do was to connect the poetic spirit in each person I met to make a united and holistic community of empowered poets who could create changes (in their own lives and others' lives) with their poetry.

The most wonderful way that I got to do that was as leader of the Poetry Club. Poetry Club was a safe space on campus where people of all ages and identifications could share their hearts and minds and express their emotions openly through the power of poetry; a place where there was no judgement or fear of being oneself. What I and the other poets accomplished together was so awesome and rewarding, and I will always cherish the friends and memories that I made, and the positive impact we had on each other and our poetry.

Being the SPL laid the foundation of a lifelong journey that I walk with gratitude and joy, and I definitely don't walk it alone. Every time I write a poem I remember how much my experience meant to me because it's where my life as a poet truly began.

I look at the path ahead of me with extraordinary excitement, and wonder where it will take me as I continue to read, write, and explore poetry on my own and with other passionate poets. Poetry is still alive and thriving in my life. I am minoring in Creative Writing at the University of Oregon where I have had the opportunity to meet phenomenal poets and have my poems rigorously (but kindly and appreciatively) workshopped and valued. My writing gets stronger and my passion grows every single day for poetry.

## ***If Anywhere But Nowhere***

Looking ahead  
at miles meandering  
no longer standing  
where I once stood  
where miles behind  
are lost

Finding my way forward  
by crooked walk  
with awkward smile  
inch for foot  
feeling like a fool  
stumbling

Longing for the company  
of people, of passersby  
I suppose myself a trespasser  
amongst them

I am hardly here  
feeling forgettable  
maybe memorable  
like the most familiar stranger

I cannot do this alone  
together is all it takes  
to make a difference  
to turn steps into strides

I can go everywhere  
if anywhere  
but nowhere without a friend  
by my side

So here I am  
and there you are  
nearly far  
almost gone  
but right now  
we sit close in silence

Waiting until the words  
settle on my tongue  
the words that will change  
my direction  
the words that will guide  
my aimless wandering

I part my lips  
and lick them wet  
preparing to speak

Taking a shallow breath  
calming the quiver in my voice  
and swallowing the lump in my throat

I turn to you and quietly I query  
“walk with me  
won’t you?”

~ Waldo French

## ***Somewhere in a city***

a street stretches with tents  
(the coordinates variable,) and a sweet stench  
of filthy flesh lingers; where the mobile  
and meek gather, and languid

wanderers trek wet skies of cement: their  
feet soggy, bodies tender, and skin  
chapped by whipping winds—  
how *wounds* lament; where

travelers traverse (unpredictably, unknown)  
the uncharted edges, forging fleeting  
boundaries: places called their own  
temporarily—transient like time,

like the last second in the demanding pass  
of each moment—lost—only a memory  
as fast as it was found, no longer  
what they used to be: *the Once Were*,

now, by *disgrace*, weighed down: a burden  
incomparable—the heaviest on the heart—  
there is no reprieve from the hurt,  
no perfect place to rest; anywhere

on the exacting streets could be a bed  
for guilt-beaten bones, laid down  
by those who pray to an ancient god  
that measures worth

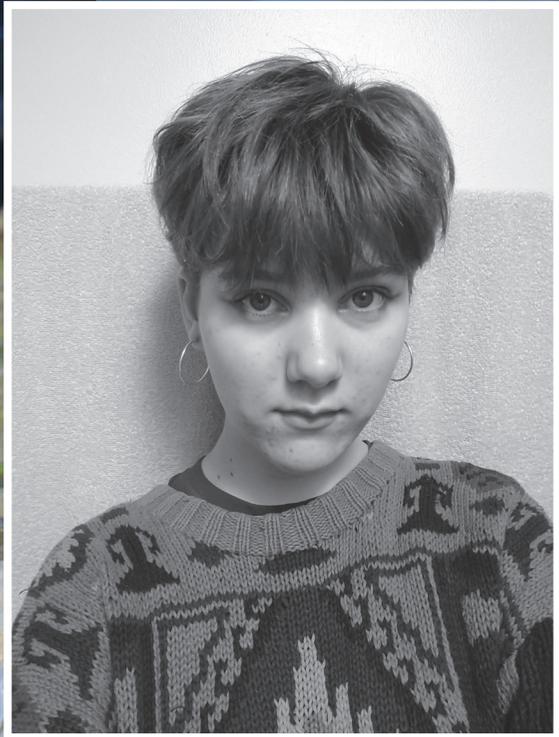
by tallying accounts, that exiles  
(as if to the land of nod) the forsaken  
who wish this life *only a dream*  
from which one could awaken.

~ Waldo French

## ***Sonnet of Summer Sunshine***

The sun ablaze above the marble earth  
(with golden light that crowns my lazy head)  
enlivens me and fills me full with mirth.  
While watching summer from my daisy bed,  
I bask in beams of light upon this hill  
observing butterflies and bumblebees.  
I sit relaxed and quiet, calm and still.  
I'm hypnotized—in awe of how the trees  
all shimmer like a grove of chandeliers  
as rays of light reflect on leafy glass;  
in awe of how the gentle wind appears  
to set in motion ocean waves of grass.  
As dusk begins to turn to night I pray  
tomorrow brings another sunny day.

~ Waldo French



**Kel O'Callaghan**  
2019 - 2020

## **Kel O'Callaghan** *(he/him, they/them)*

A common memory I have, which never fails to invite pride in me, is of a typical Poetry Club meeting. A group of recurring poets intermingled with a spattering of casual comers as people filtered in and out. We would be crowded around a round table in a classroom all to ourselves, or draped over plush couches in the more bustling Diversity Achievement Center, or simply be excited smiles popping in on a screen. First there would be the natural warm welcomings of fond friends, soon slipping into avid rounds of poetry sharing; diverse original poems, and occasionally, a poem from a favoured book.

After each enthralling reading, many would offer generous and insightful comments that never failed to offer comfort and pride to the poets, and often morphed into a philosophical discussion, half the time centering on the great mysteries or technicalities of poetry. And at last we would write, to an array of prompts, letting our momentum take the lead. It was in these normal and precious days where I was grateful to witness such truly safe and impassioned enthusiasm for poetry. I recall this most fondly as a treasured achievement of our collective nature.

At the core I was a member of Poetry Club, in which I was granted an opportunity of creative exploration, and exposed to inspiring poems of every style and mood. Beyond this I was given the honor of serving as Student Poet Laureate, a position which developed and solidified my poetic spirit.

Through this honor my understanding of the value of a poetic community was grown. I gained a sense of humility and awe through the responsibility of cultivating an engagement of poetry on campus, and expanding the passions of our poets. I felt compelled to bring this miraculous tool of art into people's lives, and help ideas come to fruition, encouraging people to use poetry to connect to themselves, their world, and find their voices.

Poetry yet lives in me, it invigorates me every morn. I recall the poems of my peers to see the world in a different lens. I am randomly and suddenly gripped by poetry until my heart is burst and pouring on the page, oozing words I cannot help but further drown in as I compose. I find myself drawn to write with the same freedom and vigour as if I were sitting amongst my dear friends in club. With no sign of ever slowing I gently hold poetry to my chest and let it consume me until I myself am no longer being eaten away by the words in my brain.

## Yearning

Yearning and so constantly learning  
To be happy.  
Such pure straight emotion,  
that emanates  
And spreads so infectious and precious.  
That I can't help but love evermore.

To be content is my own intent,  
But its roots go down deep, such sturdy and strong.  
Connection.  
As I glide all through life, and my strife  
Fades to oblivion.  
Lost and forgotten, no room for else or other  
But brother,  
Celebration, jubilation, and elation  
Are all I know, now I know myself.  
And love myself, all hate lost, forgotten.

See my own self reflected, in bright shining eyes,  
Ne'er darkened  
By past sins and transgressions.

As my branches grasp yours and my silvering leaves  
Wash 'way tears, in soft understanding.  
And the sound, of our laughter,  
Makes all cruelty fade  
In the face of happiness pure.  
And the lashing of stresses  
No longer bite at my heels,  
So we bear all harsh winds now as one.  
Our canopies covering the spaces between.

And I've seen your ugliness, such unscrupulous faults  
And embraced them—my own are the same.  
Not insane, to know only love.

And our laughter combined, makes the clouds all align.  
Wash 'way tears and tears of the past.  
Memories hold no pain, for the future is bright  
As the sun bearing down on our backs.

Now my struggles are faint, midst the rustling leaves,  
And I leave by the wayside my pain,  
Now I take up your burdens, so much lighter for me.  
And all words are poison no more.

~ Kel O'Callaghan

## Shadow

A shadow of myself is what I'm reduced to,  
Falling away and fading at the edges.  
A piece is torn each time, each direction I'm pulled and tugged.  
As I dissolve, so does my resolve, withering out of existence—  
All my resistance is futile, if I resisted at all.  
I must have forgotten how.  
Facade shimmering away, as I sway on weak limbs.  
Face scrunching in pain, in exhaustion,  
Tears choked out by pure desperation.  
All death held back from screaming,  
Pure pride's firm grip.

I am starting to Fade, I've done this before,  
This feeling is familiar, is clear as night to me.  
Old bars begin to crush again, still haven't learned,  
Still haven't found, that key, that escape, I so crave.

Round voices clamoring, among the din my screams subdued,  
Soft whispers in compare, smothered by my own voice.  
My existence dissipates, falling into shadow,

No impact, no effect or  
Way to fight.

~ Kel O'Callaghan

## Inspired

Light dawns ahead,  
Roads rising fast, converging to perfection.  
Recollection, of past that made you, eyes that see you.  
These peers beside you, lives merging with yours,  
To new shores, you all stride.

Be alive, and falter not on unknown grounds.  
These hands will catch you now,  
Let your hands do the same.

This place, that is safe, new, and ready for you.  
If you let it, if you make it so,  
Not alone!

Finding self, inspiration...  
Eyes awaken, to a future.  
Let these brave uncertainties  
Embrace you, hold you strong in your faltering,  
In your finding, as true.

Hold fast, to your dreams of the future,  
Let them crystalize in your grasp.  
At last.

From a forest of confusion, uncertainties vast,  
Twine your branches, in support,  
Of the seeking we all pursue.

Let your roots, grow deep here,  
Standing tall and firm, fed by  
Grand and subtle experiences,  
Watered by knowledge, you shall gain.

Let your leaves fill with light,  
Shape streams of sun, filtered through our canopies.  
While your troubles may not abate, let them fade  
Into a memory.

Let your goals come forth and realized,  
All our service, tempered to your needs.  
Meeting you with open arms, and  
Hearts of caring warmth.

Let you achieve yourself, with our help.  
Welcoming each of your uniqueness,  
And guiding to success.

Endless is our mystery here,  
Many sides, all aligned,  
And adjusting, all for you.  
Do not wait, holding back,  
Who you are, let us see.  
Connection forming fast,  
Not hesitant, or untrusting.

For we'll greet you, with a smile,  
And a care, so much care

As a forest, reaching for the skies,  
And meeting it.

Though our time may be brief,  
'Tis no less exceptional.  
Peel away uncertainties, uniting under countless banners.  
Roots woven and branches expanding.  
To see what we'll become.

Not a doubt, as to the greatness  
to come.  
Such elating so profound.

How our eyes are filled with gladness,  
At possibilities unbound.

~ Kel O'Callaghan

**Poetry in Pictures**  
*Events through Time*



# THE Poetry Club

The Poetry Club is a vibrant, welcoming community dedicated to providing students, staff, and community members with a safe space to learn about, listen to, read, write, and workshop poetry.

The Poetry Club was officially recognized by the college in the spring of 2007. Since its beginnings, it has met weekly to share, encourage, and celebrate poetry.

The poets' first organized event was the 2008 Black History Month celebration. Early that spring, the poets made their first community-wide appearance as part of the college's Humanities Festival with their highly orchestrated "What's Pop about Poetry," a program which they later performed at Grass Roots Books in Corvallis. And in the late spring, they celebrated their first Student Poet Laureate.



Recognized for their leadership as ambassadors of poetry on campus, Poetry Club members have been invited to represent poetry, both in performance and in exhibitions, at many major campus events. Their first poetry installation was in honor of National Poetry Month 2009 in the library, where their poems were enlarged, framed, and displayed.

In the spring of 2010, their Poet-Tree was installed in the library foyer; a live tree bloomed poetry as visitors penned short poems and hung them on the tree. Our US Poet Laureate Kay Ryan admired our Poet-Tree when she visited the college.

In the spring of 2011, the college's choir director invited poets to compose poems with specific choral themes. Five poets were selected and performed their poems during the Spring Choir Concert.



A Poetry Wall, begun in the library, became a permanent installation of engagement throughout the 2012–2013 academic year: an 8-foot-long whiteboard with a weekly prompt invited all to add their poetry.

For the Spring Inservice program of 2014, five poets were selected and invited to compose and perform. Since that all-campus debut, the Student Poet Laureate has composed a poem to open every Fall Inservice program.

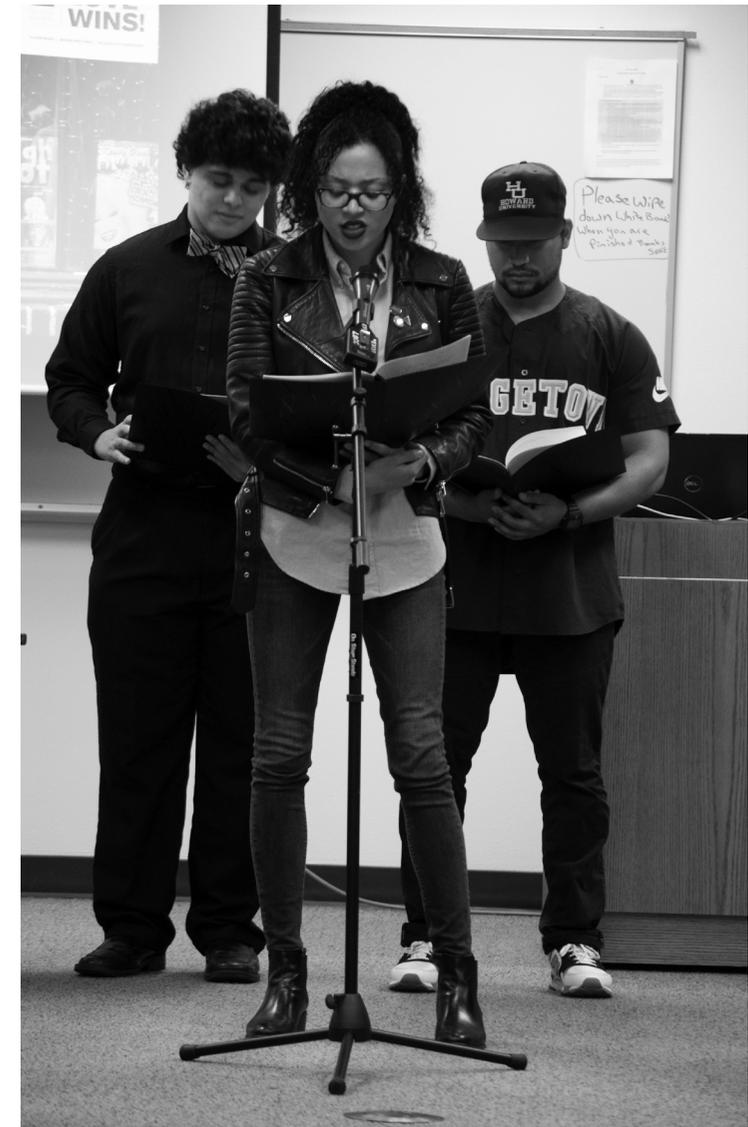
Over the years, the Poetry Club has hosted a US Poet Laureate; several Oregon Poet Laureates, including Kim Stafford (pictured above); poet and former LBCC President Rita Cavin; as well as many other renowned poets.

The club continues to perform poetry at many campus-wide celebrations: Women's History, Earth Day, and Diversity Day. Laureate-led and student-driven, the Poetry Club continues to meet weekly and welcome everyone.



# Black History Month/ Unity Celebration

The Poetry Club created the college's first Black History Month celebration in 2008 by inviting the campus community to gather in the choir room for a celebration in poetry and song honoring Black artists.



The next year, the Poetry Club collaborated with faculty members Gary Westford and Dana Emerson to transform the Black History Month celebration into the Unity Celebration, a month-long series of events dedicated to Black History and culminating with an evening of poetry readings, live jazz, and a keynote speaker. The celebration was feted by the LBCC Culinary Arts Program with authentic soul food.

Since its inauguration, the Unity Celebration has brought together people dedicated to Black History, diversity, and social justice. And over the years, the Poetry Club has been central to the event by helping to organize it and by performing orchestrated “spoken word in harmony” renditions of poetry, often accompanied by piano and guitar, in honor of Black poets.

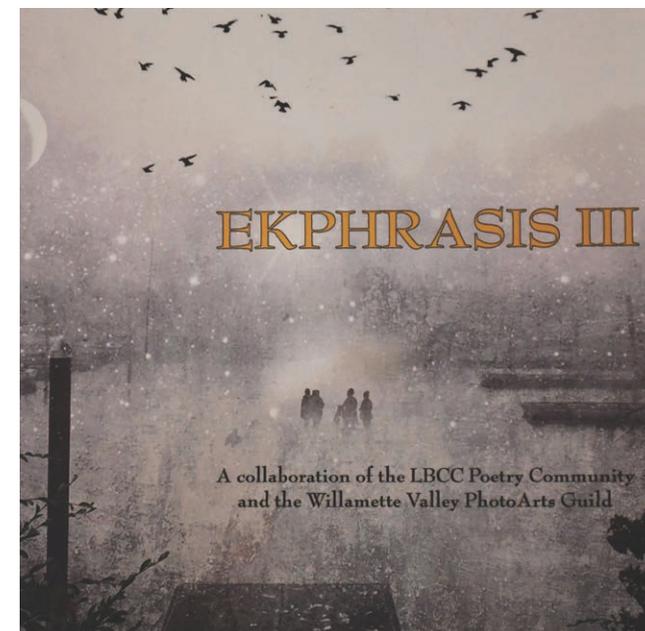
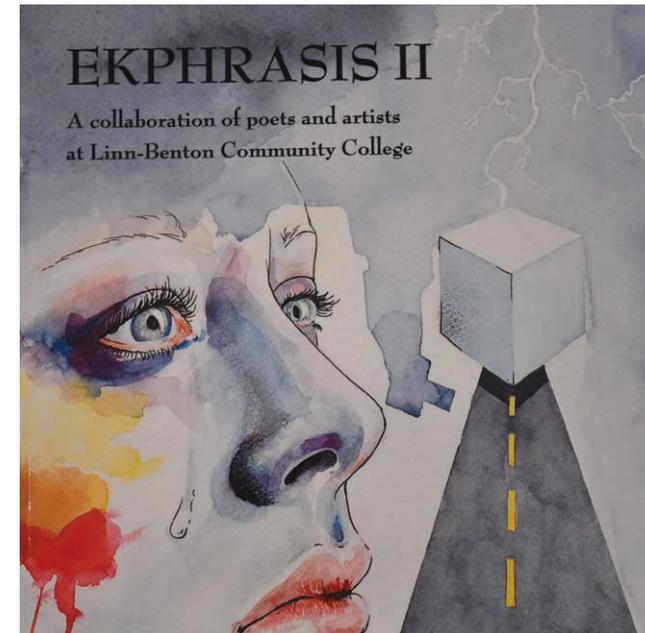
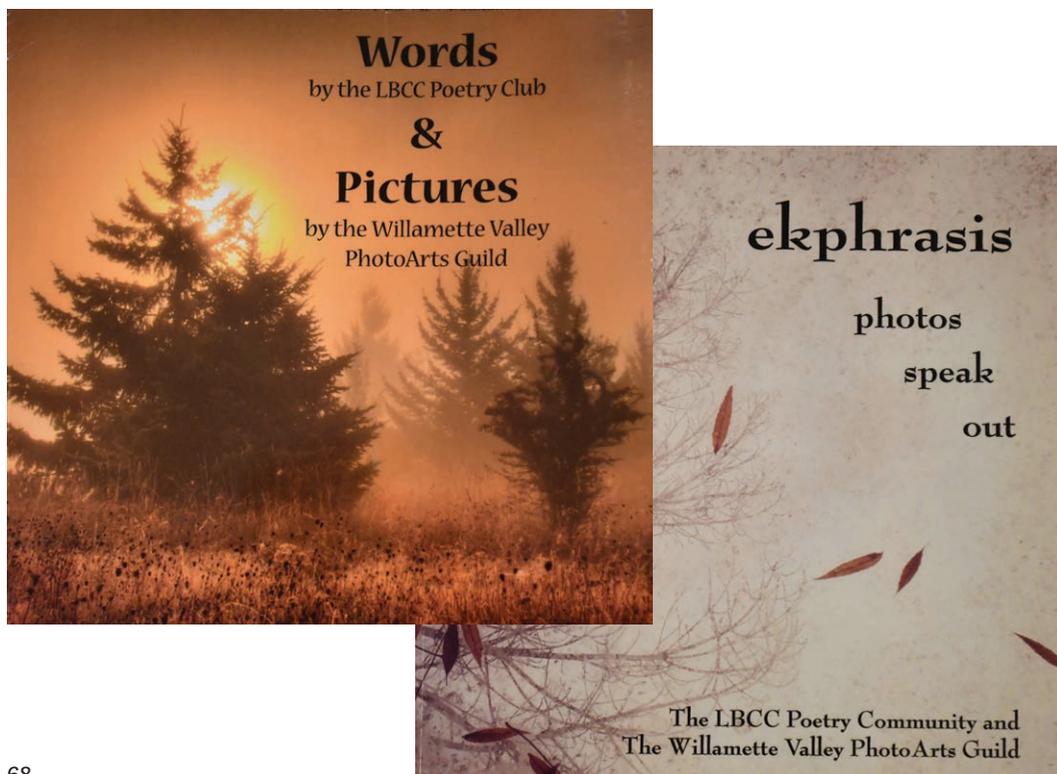
# EKPHRASIS

Ekphrasis is the collaboration of written poetry and visual art. The word comes from the ancient Greek for describing or explaining. An ekphrastic poem is one that is inspired by or “talks back” to a visual work of art.

Every April during National Poetry Month, 2010-2016, SPLs and the Poetry Club joined with other college or community artists—calligraphers, photographers, graphic artists, and painters—to create exciting ekphrasis pairings. With additional support from faculty member Rich Bergeman, the Poetry Club invited poets from the community and the college—faculty, staff, and students—to participate as well.

Each spring, Ekphrasis celebrated these collaborations at a gallery exhibition and reception where the poets read and the artists described their work. For four years, these artistic partnerships were published in the series of stunning *Ekphrasis* books pictured here.

Whether the poets inspired the artists or their art inspired the poets, the collaborations themselves were magical and fostered a feeling among the poets and artists of having created a shared work of art.



# WordMOB

At WordMOB, the Poetry Club presents poetic art at its finest, an annual evening of heartfelt slam and spoken word. Emceed by the Student Poet Laureate and supported by Student Life and Leadership, the program line-up features members of the Poetry Club and includes an open mic.

In 2015, WordMOB received the college's Event of the Year Award. As musician and poet Mark Weiss wrote: "In any given WordMOB, there are moments in which we see written art at its finest, moments with great humor, and moments when personal experience is revealed with such depth that the entire audience is moved. WordMOB has had an inspirational effect on our college and community."



# A Warm Red Autumn

Every year, A Warm Red Autumn features community members and college staff and students invited to celebrate the season by sharing their favorite poems. In 2018, the gathering commemorated a decade of Student Poet Laureates and was the inspiration for the book you're now reading.

Both WordMOB and A Warm Red Autumn, hosted at the Benton Center by poet and director Jeff Davis and his staff, are held in the center's welcoming atrium and are free and open to the public.

**A Warm Red Autumn**

**FEATURED PRESENTERS:**

- Kaedence Eaton (2008 - 2009)
- Amy Earls (2009 - 2010)
- Whitney Smith (2010 - 2011)
- Ruth Krueger (2011 - 2012)
- Kiera Eller (2013 - 2014)
- Coco Shanks (2014)
- Dari Lawrie (2015 - 2016)
- Christopher Mikkelsen (2016 - 2017)
- Shane Stanhope (2017 - 2018)
- Waldo French (current)

**A Reading of Poetry and Prose  
Celebrating a Decade  
of LBCC Student Poet Laureates**

**Thursday November 15 at 7:00 P.M.**

Request for Special Needs or Accommodations: Direct questions about Oregon 87321, Phone 541-917-4788 or via Oregon Telecommunications in advance. Make all other requests at least 72 hours prior to the event. LBCC Comprehensive Statement of Nondiscrimination: LBCC prohibits gender, gender identity, marital status, disability, veteran status, age, or Board Policies and Administrative Rules, Title IX, & Section 504. See lbcc.edu/tyranny.com/tyacc\_report

**A Warm, Red Autumn**

**Friday, November 8, 12:00 P.M. - 1:00 P.M.**  
**Benton Center Atrium**

A seasonal reading of poetry and prose in celebration of the changing of the season. Scheduled readers include international students, community leaders, LBCC staff, and a surprise guest.

**Linn-Benton  
Community College**





# POETRY BIRDHOUSES

## *Building Community*

In 2014, inspired by the popularity of poetry at the college, the Arts & Aesthetics Resource Team (AART), led by Victoria Fridley and M'Liss Runyon, created the multi-faceted project Poetry Birdhouses, Building Community. First a call went out to artists in Linn and Benton counties, and five birdhouse designs were chosen from several striking submissions. Students in the Welding Department created poles for the birdhouses and Facilities staff installed them strategically around the central courtyard of the main campus.



A second call then went out to local poets, asking them to submit up to three poems responding to either a specific birdhouse or the theme "building community." Each of the five inspiring poems chosen was permanently affixed inside its partner birdhouse. Small journals and pens were also placed inside the birdhouses to encourage viewers to write comments or even their own poems.

To celebrate the completed installation, AART collaborated with the Theater Department's 40th anniversary celebration of the annual children's play. Local elementary school students and teachers were invited to attend the play, bring brown bag lunches to eat in the courtyard, and tour the birdhouses. Stationed at each birdhouse, a member of Student Life and Leadership or a retired faculty member talked about the construction and artistry of the birdhouse, read the poem aloud, and answered questions. Later, some of the children wrote or drew in the notebooks.

Over a thousand children from four counties took these tours over the run of the play. Many teachers participating in Poetry Birdhouses, Building Community adopted the project's follow-up curriculum exploring poetry, public art, and the natural world.



## Then There Is You

*A tribute to Poet Laureate Kay Ryan*

There is a deep “softness over people.”  
As I walk on campus, I see  
face after face  
asking, begging  
for a single poem that would sum up  
feelings,  
happiness,  
lives.

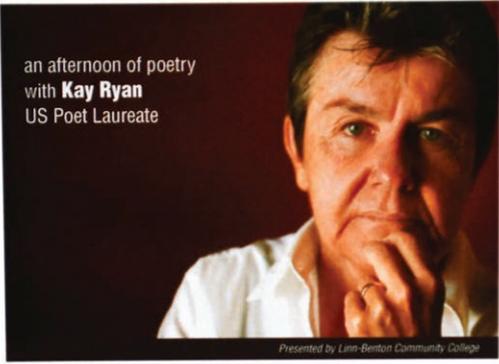
Then there are those.  
They keep their heads down as they walk  
class to class.  
Afraid. Afraid of learning that a poem  
describes feelings.  
what is poetry? they ask.  
where is my poem? they ponder.  
who is my poet? they wonder.

Then there is you.  
I see you standing in front of us, your audience.  
You are speaking of our poems,  
you have answered our wonderings.  
Kay Ryan,  
a people’s poet.  
a community poet.  
our poet.

~ Amy Earls

## US POET LAUREATE Kay Ryan Visits LBCC

In celebration of the newly appointed US Poet Laureate Kay Ryan, former College of Marin faculty member and ardent community college advocate, the Poetry Advisory Committee invited students to submit poems for the national competition “Poetry for the Mind’s Joy.” From a wide and diverse collection of submissions, one poem was selected and submitted for the competition. The top ten entries were exhibited in the LBCC Library in celebration of National Poetry Month.



an afternoon of poetry  
with **Kay Ryan**  
US Poet Laureate

Presented by Linn-Benton Community College

**Wednesday  
May 12, 2010**

4 p.m.  
LBCC Russell Tripp  
Performance Center  
Takena Hall  
6500 Pacific Blvd. SW.  
Albany, OR

Free & Open to the Public  
Q & A / Book Signing

**Sonnet to Spring**

The brown, unpleasant,  
aggressively ribbed and  
unpleasant leaves of the locust  
shaped like bark canoes that  
something squashed flat,  
litter the spring cement.  
A fat-checked whum of air —  
a French veer or some similar affair —  
with enough choices in the front yard  
for a blossomy puff worthy of Fragonard,  
instead expends its single breath  
beneath one leathery leaf of locust  
which flops over and again lies flat.  
Spring is frivolous like that.

—Kay Ryan

Please bring questions about or requests for special needs and accommodations directly to the Disability Coordinator at Linn-Benton Community College, 6500 Pacific Blvd., SW, Albany, Oregon 97312. Phone: (503) 325-4444 or via email: [disability@linnbenton.edu](mailto:disability@linnbenton.edu). TDD at 503-325-2000 or a 711-711-1111. Contact should be made 10 business days in advance of the event. LBCC is an equal opportunity educator and employer.

**Linn-Benton  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

After making this connection with Kay Ryan and reading her work, the Poetry Advisory Committee and Student Poet Laureate Amy Earls worked for several months to arrange funding and support to stage a national event: bringing Kay Ryan to campus. Members of the Poetry Club also played a part in organizing this prestigious visit.

On a sunny spring afternoon, Poet Laureate Kay Ryan gave a thrilling, standing-room-only poetry

reading in the Russell Tripp Theater. The next day, both LBCC and OSU students packed her reading and Q&A in the Library Reading Room, excited to meet and interact with her, the sixteenth US Poet Laureate.

## Acknowledgements



**The editors and designer wish to thank the people and groups whose dedication, talents, and generosity have made this book possible:**

**The Nine Featured Student Poet Laureates** for sharing their reflections, writing, and passionate creativity

**Student Poet Laureates Whitney Smith (2010-2011) and Shane Stanhope (2017-2018)**, though unable to participate in this project, for their contributions during their tenures

**Poetry Club Members** for meeting week after week, year after year to create and share their poetry, and for helping the Student Poet Laureates achieve their visions

**Former President Rita Cavin** for believing in poetry at LBCC by conceiving the idea of a college poet laureate, by committing college financial support, by establishing the Rita Cavin Student Poet Laureate Endowment Fund, and by dedicating her artistry and enthusiastic support to this project

**The Poetry Advisory Committee** for strengthening the poets, poetry, and projects  
**Current Members**

Jeff Davis, Victoria Fridley, Robin Havenick, Tristan Striker, Mark Weiss, and Jane White

**Past Members**

Bryan Miyagishima, Chris Riseley, Jorry Rolfe, Alison Ruch, Gary Ruppert, Dan Simmons, and Carolyn Sparling

**Alison Ruch**, former Benton Center Poetry Club advisor, for her innovation and commitment to student poets and poetry

**Rich Bergeman**, photographer and retired LBCC faculty, for his vision, commitment, and artistic talents in co-founding Ekphrasis, designing the annual gallery exhibitions, creating the *Ekphrasis* book series, and for advising the editors on this project

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**The Commuter** for featuring student poetry in the weekly Poet's Corner, for photographing and covering the Student Poet Laureates, poetry events and projects, and for archiving this rich literary history

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Kay Ryan, Kim Stafford, Paulann Peterson, and Anis Mojgani

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Ann Staley, Walidah Imarisha, Sam Roxas-Chua, and Joaquin Zihuatanejo

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**Everyone in the LBCC Community** who has met with the Poetry Club, attended a literary event, worked on a poetry project, or written a poem

# A Unique Poetry Legacy

## STUDENT POET LAUREATES

Linn-Benton Community College

After visiting Linn-Benton Community College in 2019, and meeting Student Poet Laureate Waldo French, I wanted everyone to know about the tradition there of empowering a student to seed poetry in all directions. He told me something I see reflected throughout this book: "I don't write poems to become a better poet; I write poems to become a better person." I repeated that idea at every subsequent event of my own as Oregon Poet Laureate, for he had told the true mission of poetry in the world: to kindle connection and raise the human spirit. *A Unique Poetry Legacy* will do that for you, and I hope this book will invite other schools to take up this brilliant custom.

~ **Kim Stafford**

*Oregon Poet Laureate 2018-2020*

LBCC established the Student Poet Laureateship in 2008 and is the only community college in the nation to boast such an esteemed student role. I believe *A Unique Poetry Legacy/Student Poet Laureates/Linn-Benton Community College* has the power to bring so much light to our communities at a time we need it most.

~ **Lisa Avery, Ph.D.**

*LBCC President*

Blessings to these younger poets, the Student Poet Laureates featured in this anthology. Their words have helped them look inside, to better see themselves, where each one comes from, where he/she hopes to go. May their poems also change our world.

~ **Ann Staley**

*Celebrated Oregon writer and teacher*

The impact of having Student Poet Laureates is everywhere on our campus: important meetings often include a poem; poems appear on scraps of paper on public bulletin boards and in our newspaper; and writing poetry as a personal creative outlet is made normal and accessible to students who otherwise would likely never even think to write a poem. This book captures the history of poetry and our Student Poet Laureates at LBCC.

~ **Katie Winder, Ph.D.**

*LBCC Dean of Instruction*

