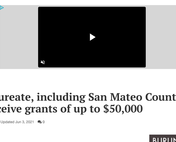

23 poets laureate, including San Mateo County woman, receive grants of up to $50,000

The Associated Press Jun 3, 2021 Updated Jun 3, 2021 0

NEW YORK — From Charleston, South Carolina, to San Mateo County, poets laureate are receiving support from a program managed by the Academy of American Poets.

On Thursday, the academy announced more $1 million in grants for 23 local and state laureates. They include the Charleston-based Marcus Amaker, Ohio poet laureate Dominique Christina and Louisiana's Angela Jackson and Aileen Cassinetto of San Mateo County. Others are from Flint, Michigan; Springfield, Massachusetts, and Elgin, Illinois.

Aileen Cassinetto

"As we begin emerging from COVID-19 restrictions, poetry, which has provided such comfort these past fifteen months, will continue to be a source of insight. We are honored and humbled to fund poets who are devoted to their own craft and also their community. Poets will most certainly help guide us forward," Jennifer Benka, president and executive director of the Academy of American Poets, said in a statement.

Fellows will receive $50,000 grants, except for Melissa Kwasny and M.L. Smoker, co-poets laureate of Montana, who will divide the money between them. The program, which also includes at least $100,000 for 14 local nonprofit organizations, was established in 2019 through a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

"These 23 Poets Laureate Fellows will lead an extraordinary range of public poetry programs," Elizabeth Alexander, president of the Mellon Foundation and also a poet, said in a statement.

"We are delighted to support them as they create their own poems, collaborate with other artists, and center poetry in their engagement with communities across our vast country — from urban to rural counties — while we collectively begin to process and reflect on the exceptional crises of the past year."

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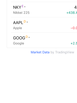

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