

# County of Santa Clara

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 24, 2009

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## **Nils Peterson Named Santa Clara County Poet Laureate**

### *Post to Help Create Poetic Identity for the County*

SAN JOSE, CALIF.—Today, the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors appointed Nils Peterson, to the honorary post of Santa Clara County Poet Laureate. Peterson was recommended to the Board following the call for applications, and a two step review process organized by the County and Arts Council Silicon Valley.

The newly created post was advocated by Supervisor Liz Kniss, President of the Board of Supervisors and approved by the Board in November, 2008. An advisory committee was established to lend support and offer ideas. Guidelines for the applicants were created and posted in January.

Applications received by the February 17, 2009 deadline were subject to peer review rating and finalists were interviewed. The applications were rated on the basis of artistic merit, demonstrated commitment to the community, their proposed public project, and communication. Peterson emerged as the recommended nominee for appointment by the Board.

“Nils Peterson has envisioned a public project that will engage residents in writing poetry about the county and their experiences living here,” said Kniss. “This will be a great opportunity to celebrate the ingenuity, spirit and talent of our neighbors and the beauty of this area, all of which make Santa Clara County a special place.”

Nils Peterson is Professor Emeritus at San Jose State University where he taught in the English and Humanities Departments. He was Coordinator of the Creative Writing Emphasis for more than 20 years, and served as Coordinator of the Creative Arts and Chair of the Humanities Department. He was chosen as Professor of the Year by the Student Honor Society.

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Peterson has published poetry, science fiction, and articles on subjects as varying as golf and Shakespeare. A chapbook of poems entitled *Here Is No Ordinary Rejoicing* was published by No Deadlines Press, a collection of poems entitled *The Comedy of Desire* with an introduction by Robert Bly was published by the Blue Sofa Press, a collection of poems entitled *Driving a Herd of Moose to Durango* appeared in 2005, and a collection of Christmas poems entitled *For This Day* appeared in 2008.

Robert Bly says of *The Comedy of Desire*, "In a time of lugubrious poems that wander in some mid-region of depression, Nils Peterson writes lively narrative comedy with a fine flair for embarrassing situations of the idealistic lover. He is not afraid to show himself as a failure in his courting, but the memories are lovingly cultivated. This is a book with humor and grace."

He has been poetry consultant for San Jose State Studies, an editor for "Discover America" (a collection of poems celebrating the bicentennial anniversary of the USA), and contributing editor to The Blue Sofa Review. Peterson was nominated for a 2005 Pushcart prize.

"This is both an honor and tremendous opportunity," Peterson acknowledged. "I am still forming ideas about how to best engage the public, but soon I'll be calling on people already writing poetry to think about the fascinating place in which we live as a possible subject for their work. I will also encourage those who have not tried poetry to look around, pick up their pens, jot what they've seen down in notebooks, and declare themselves beginning poets. Together we can begin to create a poetic identity for Santa Clara County."

Peterson's two-year appointment will begin on April 1, to coincide with National Poetry Month. The Poet Laureate will act as a resource for poetry and literary activities to the Santa Clara County Library, represent the County of Santa Clara through outreach related to poetry, presentation of appropriate works at the annual State of the County ceremony and other selected County sponsored events, as well as at activities to celebrate Poetry Month.

The Santa Clara County Poet Laureate post and program is garnering wide interest and resource support to ensure its success - from the members of the Poet Laureate Advisory Committee to community and literary organizations throughout Silicon Valley including the Santa Clara County libraries, San Jose Poetry Center, Kepler's Books and many others.

"We all congratulate Nils on his appointment as this County's first Poet Laureate and look forward to experiencing the immense literary talent, depth and intellect that he will bring to this position and share with our entire community and beyond," said Bruce W. Davis, Executive Director of Arts Council Silicon Valley.