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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 14, 2010

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A Call for Poems about Santa Clara County

Poets and Beginners Encouraged to Compose Poems for Public Reading

SANTA CLARA COUNTY, CALIF. – As the April National Poetry Month is approaching, the Santa Clara County's Poet Laureate is asking residents to create poems that celebrate the variety of experiences in the county. The Poet Laureate is now accepting poem submissions. Thirty poems will be selected and presented at a public reading during April 2010.

"We live in a remarkable place, but we know it only when we pay attention to it," said Nils Peterson, Santa Clara County Poet Laureate. "Last year, 500 county residents participated in the creation of the first 100-line Santa Clara County Poem. This year, I would like to encourage more of you to join us to create county poems even if you have never tried writing a poem before."

Peterson says the poems can be about anything that people have observed as they walk about this fascinating county. He also gives a few tips to beginners who would like to write a poem:

- Begin by trying to notice things and to catch the look of them, something you've seen in the world. Write a line for each thing that has called out to you and said, "Look at me." If you pay attention, the things of the world are doing that a lot. If you begin each day with the intention of writing a line of poetry, you will be in the world differently. Your eyes will be sharper, your attention deeper. Anyone can do this whether you're in middle school or a retirement community.

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- Write a line a day for two weeks, you might have an exciting poem. If you have enough lines, you can play with them and see which ones you want to have side by side. Then you can add *and's* and *but's* and *or's* to introduce them.
- Make your lines between 9 & 13 syllables. It gives uniformity to the end product, makes an approximation of a blank verse line, the major line-length of poetry in English, and gives a challenge.

Participants may submit a maximum of three poems. Each poem should be displayed in one page. A separate cover sheet should also be included to indicate the poet's name, address and email. Participants should send two copies of each entry to: Arts Council Silicon Valley, 4 North Second Street, Suite 500, San Jose, CA 95113-1305. E-mail submission is **NOT** acceptable.

"Everyone that lives, works, and studies in Santa Clara County is a member of our diverse community," said Ken Yeager, President of the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors. "This is a great opportunity for people to celebrate the variety of experiences our county offers."

Other rules for submission are as follows:

- Poems should be no more than 30 lines
- Poems may be in a formal pattern or in free verse
- Poems should be typed, single-spaced
- Poems may not have been previously published
- Santa Clara County will retain first publication rights

Participants may submit their poems now through February 28, 2010. Early submission is appreciated. For more information, go to: nilspetersonpoet.wordpress.com.

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About the Santa Clara County Poet Laureate

The Santa Clara County Poet Laureate post was advocated by Supervisor Liz Kniss and approved by the Board in November 2008. The mission of the Poet Laureate is to create a poetic identity for Santa Clara County, and showcase the spirit of the people and the special qualities of the county through poetry. Nils Peterson was appointed as the Santa Clara County Poet Laureate by the Board of Supervisors in March 2009.

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. Peterson has published poetry, science fiction, and articles on subjects as varying as golf and Shakespeare. His publications include *Here Is No Ordinary Rejoicing*, A chapbook of poems; *The Comedy of Desire*, a collection of poems; *Driving a Herd of Moose to Durango*, a collection of poems; and *For This Day*, a collection of Christmas poems. 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.

About Arts Council Silicon Valley

Arts Council Silicon Valley is an independent, nonprofit arts agency dedicated to providing funding, advocacy support, and marketing services to the region's arts organizations and artists. As the official state/local partner with the California Arts Council, the County of Santa Clara, and the National Endowment for the Arts, Arts Council Silicon Valley is the largest nonprofit arts council in the state. Since its inception in 1982, the Arts Council has provided nearly \$24 million in grants and services to local arts and cultural organizations, individual artists, schools, and community groups. For more information on Arts Council Silicon Valley go to: www.artscouncil.org