



• *Enriching the lives of our community through the arts* •

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ARTS COUNCIL FOR MONTEREY COUNTY ANNOUNCES MONTEREY COUNTY'S INAUGURAL YOUTH POET LAUREATE

(Monterey, CA - April 4, 2023) Mahi Shah of Salinas, a junior at Notre Dame High School, was selected as the Inaugural Monterey County Youth Poet Laureate. She will serve a one-year term, participate in several engagements throughout the year, and receive a \$1,000 honorarium.

Emily Amador of Stevenson School is runner-up Youth Poet Laureate. Honorable mention was given to Ileen Li of Salinas, a sophomore at Salinas High School; Melissa Macias of Castroville a junior at North Monterey County High School; and Brianna Sciuto of Carmel, a sophomore at Carmel High School.

"I am so pleased that the Arts Council created this program to honor youth poets in our community. Mahi is an excellent choice as our first Youth Poet Laureate. She has participated in Poetry Out Loud over the past two years, coming in first place in 2022," shared Jacquie Atchison, Arts4MC Executive Director.

The Monterey County Youth Poet Laureate is a program of the Arts Council for Monterey County (Arts4MC) in partnership with Urban Word, the producer of the National Youth Poet Laureate program and movement. This program celebrates youth voices that are committed to artistic excellence, civic engagement and social impact. The Youth Poet Laureate position is recognized by the Monterey County Board of Supervisors with a county resolution made in honor of this role. In our inaugural year of the Monterey County Youth Poet Laureate, we received an overwhelming response of 28 applicants from students across the county. Student applicants represent the communities of Carmel, Carmel Valley, Castroville, Gonzales, King City, Marina, Monterey, Pacific Grove, Pebble Beach, Salinas, Seaside, and Soledad.

Monterey County Poet Laureate, Daniel Summerhill served as a judge along with fellow community members and champions for poetry; Dr. Chrissy Hernandez, Poet and Professor; Tamara Hovhannisyan, gallery owner, published author, and poet; Ernesto Lizaola, Community Education Manager for Salinas Public Library; and Jesus Valenzuela, Community Engagement Manager for the City of Soledad.

Applicants for the Youth Poet Laureate program submitted a resume, statement of civic engagement, statement of social justice and five original poems. These writings were then put before a panel of judges and critiqued on content, theme, voice, and structure. Community, civic, and social impact and engagement were also considered in determining the young person that will represent our communities as Youth Poet Laureate.

Please join the Arts Council for Monterey County in celebrating the Inaugural Youth Poet Laureate during our commencement event at the Marina Library Community Room on Saturday, April 22, 2023 at 12:00pm. You will hear original poems from the finalists and meet the newly selected Youth Poet Laureate.

To learn more, visit arts4mc.org/youth-poet-laureate.