

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## ERIE COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY



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## Erie County seeks 2021-2022 Poet Laureate

Erie, PA — Erie County Poetry Committee chair Douglas Smith announces the 2021-2022 Erie County Poet Laureate search. The Erie County Poet Laureate is an initiative of Erie County Council.

Erie County government, in cooperation with Edinboro University of Pennsylvania, Gannon University, Mercyhurst University and Penn State Behrend, started the Poet Laureate Initiative in 2009. Its impact on the arts in our region has received national recognition by the Pennsylvania County Commissioners Association County Arts Award in 2011 and the National Association of Counties National Arts Award in 2012. The Erie County Poetry Committee brings to light literacy, culture, and development of the community landscape through artistic expression.

A public event will take place at the Hirt Auditorium of Blasco Library at 160 E. Front St. on Tuesday, June 15, at 9 a.m. and will be attended by members of the Erie County Poetry Committee and library staff.

“The Poet Laureate initiative is something quite unique to our region: Only a limited number of Poet Laureate positions exist across the state,” says Douglas Smith, chair of the Erie County Poetry Committee. “Locally, we see the value in this position as the Poet Laureate is able to orchestrate projects that have an immediate impact on our residents. There is no shortage of poetry aficionados in the area, and the initiative helps make poetry accessible to everyone through the Poet Laureate’s proposed term projects.”

The current Erie County Poet Laureate, Chuck Joy, will read one of his original works titled “Coming Out of Covid,” at the event and talk about his experience as poet laureate over the past two years.

“During my time as Erie County Poet Laureate, it’s been my privilege to pilot many initiatives that advance the poetry community in Erie,” said Erie County Poet Laureate Chuck Joy. “Partnering with Erie County Public Library during my project really accelerated these initiatives and broadened our audience. This collaboration launched two staged events related to Spoon River Anthology and a weekly Poetry Live! community meeting that sustained our group virtually during the pandemic. We added local poets to the library’s catalog and increased the poetry collection—making this genre even more accessible to those who want to explore poetry.”

An additional project that was conceptualized with the Poetry Committee, Chuck Joy, and Erie County Public Library is a forthcoming Erie County Poetry Anthology. Additional details regarding this project will be announced at the event.

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