



PRESS RELEASE

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ERIE COUNTY POET LAUREATE INITIATIVE BRINGS POETRY TO PUBLIC SPACES

ERIE, PA - Erie County Poet Laureate Sean Thomas Dougherty is announcing the unveiling of a number of projects commissioned through the Erie Poet Laureate Initiative. This year's projects are focusing on Poetry in Public spaces around the entire county. Beginning in June and through the summer Erie County will be covered with poetry in places you don't normally find it. Dougherty has awarded grants to four other local poets to bring their own talented vision to shape: Poets include Thasia Ann Lunger, Niecey Nicole, Mabel Howard and Andrew Kerstetter.

Starting on Monday June 27th, Dougherty will be traveling the county and live streaming and posting events to his twitter @SeanLemonhead and the Erie County Facebook accounts. Follow him to see all the action. In addition permanent projects produced by the other poets, Dougherty has invested in a series of temporary poetry installations and performances. As he says, "I love surprise and play. Poetry is too often viewed as this super serious thing. And poetry can be a profound language for grief and sorrow, but also for joy and light. Keeping that in mind I've had produced a series of poems on YARD SIGNS that will be distributed and installed in yards and on street corners. In addition I will be handing out Poetry scrolls for children tied to Balloons at various county events. Finally there will be guerilla types of installations on trees for people to find: poems tied by ribbons, and floating mailboxes full of secrets. Look up, look everywhere, this summer and you just might find a poem."

The project will kick off on Juneteenth with the unveiling of Niecey Nicole's collaborative installation Niecey used her grant to work and commission artists Antonio and Sarah Howard and Anthony Evan Carson to produce two works, one of which will be permanently displayed. "I have an interactive poetry board to be displayed in City Gallery as well as a display of local Prominent Women of Color with pictures. Come down to City Gallery on the Juneteenth celebration to see these. I also composed an original poem to be displayed in plexiglass at the Erie Center for Art and Technology. "

Also the week of June 27th Andrew Kerstetter will be installing a traditional wooden poetry box that will display a different poem in it on a rotating basis (a mixture of poems by other/famous poets, myself, and other local/regional poets). He tells us, "I plan to incorporate a tear-off notepad and attached pen for passers-by to jot down their own poems (or offer suggestions for a poem they'd like to see posted sometime) and put it in the box. It will be installed at the trailhead for the

Corry Junction Greenway Trail that starts in Corry and ends in Clymer, NY. It's a beautiful trail and a very contemplative spot that I use a lot myself.”

On July 2nd, Thasia Anne is honored that her poem cast in copper “**God’s Cathedral**” will be displayed in the Craft Barn on the Albion Fairgrounds. This poem was written during a visit to Raccoon Park. Thasia Anne sat on a tipped-over weather-washed tree and marveled at the fall-colored leaves against a vivid blue sky. Having lived in the Erie area her entire life, Thasia Anne has performed her poetry since 1990. When Erie County Poet Laureate Sean Thomas Dougherty honored Thasia with an invite to participate in the Erie County Poet Laureates project, she contacted Adam Stempka at Metalheads. They worked on the design together. Thasia was in love with that idea when he suggested of putting it on copper. She says, “Metalheads is a great company to work with on ideas.” The unveiling and first viewing of “**God’s Cathedral**” will be July 2 and 3rd in the Craft Barn as part of the Albion 4th of July weekend festivities on the Fair Grounds. The time is to be announced later.

And if you live in the Academy neighborhood of Erie, keep your eyes open to find a new Poetry Installation created from the vision of business entrepreneur, activist and poet, Mabel Howard. Known as “Mabeline The Artist,” she will continue the poetic celebration in July 2022 with a ribbon cutting ceremony for a newly built mini house named: House Of Poets. The H.O.P. will be located at 114 West 33rd, a few steps away from ERIE St.. Mabel believes that poetry can be used to bring awareness, increase hope, and to unite people from all walks of life, making it inclusive by nature. She has teamed up with the Autism Society of NWPA to help raise awareness about the resources available for families in our city. Be sure to grab a hand out while visiting the mini house. Mabel also invites the community to stop by to grab a copy of her original poems, to take a moment to write and leave a short note of kindness, then take a photo and share on social media using hash tags #ExpressYourself #HouseOfPoets Don’t be surprised if you hear about an open mic being hosted at this location as well. After all, it is the House Of Poets, H.O.P.

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