



JOINT LIBRARY AND CIVIC ARTS AGENDA REPORT

May 1, 2023
Item 2

TITLE: APPROVE THE RECOMMENDATION OF ISHMEET DILLON AS THE PLEASANTON TEEN POET LAUREATE FOR THE 2023/24 SCHOOL YEAR

SUMMARY

The Teen Poet Laureate provides poetry at civic events and aims to raise awareness of the importance of poetry toward the development and enhancement of the lives of Pleasanton community members. In March 2023, the Library and Civic Arts Teen Poet Laureate subcommittee began the recruitment for the Teen Poet Laureate for the coming 2023/24 school year. Candidates participated in interviews with City commissioners, the current Teen Poet Laureate, and City staff. The Teen Poet Laureate subcommittee is requesting that the Library Commission and the Civic Arts Commission recommend Council approval of Ishmeet Dillon from Amador Valley High School as the Teen Poet Laureate for the school year term of 2023/24.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the recommendation of Ishmeet Dillon as the Pleasanton Teen Poet Laureate for school year 2022/23.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

The City Teen Poet Laureate is a volunteer appointment and receives no remuneration. Any expenses related to the Teen Poet Laureate program such as supplies for workshops, poetry readings, and teen events are allocated in the Civic Arts budget #00150407-433154, in an amount not to exceed \$1,000.

BACKGROUND

On November 17, 1998, the City Council approved the Civic Arts Commission's recommendation to create the position of a Pleasanton Poet Laureate, to provide poetry at civic events and promote the appreciation of the literary arts in the community. These Poet Laureates established a tradition of poetry readings and community programs, such as television broadcasts and the Poetry, Prose, and Arts Festival.

With the success of the adult Poet Laureate, the City started the formal process to recruit and appoint a Teen Poet Laureate in August 2012. The Teen Poet Laureate Program was established to raise awareness of the importance of poetry toward the development and enhancement of the lives of Pleasanton teens. The Teen Poet Laureate would conduct community writing workshops, poetry readings and events, and share poetry and literary pieces at public events and dedications.

In January 2013, the first two students from Amador Valley High School and Foothill High School were appointed to serve as the City's Teen Poet Laureates for the 2012/13 school year. Since the appointment of the first two students, there have been 15 total Teen Poet Laureates. Their collective projects and initiatives have included readings on school campuses and at civic events, open mic nights, afterschool library pop-up poetry sessions and creative poems set to music in collaboration with the Firehouse Art Center's High School Music Collaborative.

City of Pleasanton's Past Teen Poet Laureates include:

- Arany Uthayakumar (2012-2013)
- Diana Fu (2012-2013) & (2013-2014)
- Nive Raghavan (2013-2014)
- Nicole Tsuno (2014-2015)
- Maya Lyubomirsky (2014-2015)
- Frances Tang (2015-2016)
- Kyler Juarez (2015-2016 and 2016-2017)
- Kyle Mular (2016-2017)
- Irene Sha (2016-2017 and 2017-2018)
- Nithya Swaminathan (2016-2017 and 2017-2018)
- Yasmin Ghaemmaghani (2017-2018)
- Varsha Vaidyanath (2017-2018)
- Sandra Chen (2018-2019)
- Kanchan Naik (2019-2020)
- Nikita Jayaprakash (2021-2022)

- Tho Nguyen (2022-2023)

In 2022/23 school year, Teen Poet Laureate Tho Nguyen engaged in the following activities to provide original poetry: the Hometown Holiday Celebration, the Paws to Read 20th Anniversary Celebration, the Firehouse Arts Center's Fresh Works Gallery Reception, and the Epiphany Poetry Contest hosted at the Firehouse. Tho shared with staff the following experiences from her role: "Working with Pleasanton's community as the Teen Poet Laureate was an incredible experience. Not only was I able to work with an amazing support system through Ms. Delang and the library team, I met people of all ages and backgrounds, from professional writers to elementary school students. Organizing events like open mics and poetry workshops allowed me to engage with the community and form meaningful relationships. Those moments of connection and inspiration through writing have transformed how I write and interact with others."

In March 2023, Library and Recreation staff began the formal recruitment process for the Teen Poet Laureate position for the 2023/24 school year. Incoming high school juniors and seniors who enjoy writing and inspiring others and are interested in contributing to their community were encouraged to apply. Applications were accepted through April 5, 2023.

City commissioners representing the Library Commission and Civic Arts Commission, along with the 2022/23 Teen Poet Laureate and City staff, participated in an interview panel on April 19, 2023. The City's next Teen Poet Laureate was selected from a pool of four candidates. The successful candidate was chosen based on their knowledge of literary trends and the poetry scene, enthusiasm and preparedness, and their great ideas that include cross-generational and family programs.

DISCUSSION

The Teen Poet Laureate subcommittee is requesting that the Library Commission and the Civic Arts Commission recommend Council approval of Ishmeet Dillon from Amador Valley High School as the Teen Poet Laureate for the school year term of 2023/24. Ishmeet is a Pleasanton teen, attending Amador Valley High School. She is actively involved in her community and school, through many different activities. She serves as President of Amador Valley Model UN, a member of the Stanford REACH Lab Youth Action Board, School Site Council Chair/Junior Class Representative, Permanent Volunteer for the American Cancer Society, and will be joining the Library Commission in June 2023 as the new Youth Member. Ishmeet is also the founder of The Writers' Spotlight, a writing column on the Pleasanton Patch, and a P-Town Life Newsletter journalist. She has performed her poetry pieces at open mic events and festivals and has been featured twice in the annual City of Dublin Poetry Walk, The Lighthouse Magazine, and other literary publications. In her free time, she enjoys reading books, running, singing, and playing several musical instruments.

With the recommendation of the Library Commission and the Civic Arts Commission, the Teen Poet Laureate will read an inaugural poem at the June 6 City Council meeting and upon Council approval, will serve from August 2023 through May 2024.

The Library Commission and the Civic Arts Commission are encouraged to support the incoming Teen Poet Laureate through their community connections, advocacy, marketing ideas, and attendance at programs.

Submitted by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lia Bushong". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lia Bushong
Assistant Director of Library and Recreation