

Costa Mesa introduces City's first Poet Laureate

The City of Costa Mesa announced that local poet and University of California Irvine instructor Danielle Hanson has been named the first Poet Laureate in the City's history.

"I am honored and excited to have been selected for this role, and I look forward to working together with a vibrant Costa Mesa community of local artists and writers to help get poetry into public spaces around the City," Hanson said.

Mayor John Stephens welcomed Hanson to Costa Mesa, and the Council plans to introduce her at the Tuesday, April 1 meeting.

"Not every City has a Poet Laureate, and I'm pleased to hear that we have one now," Mayor Stephens said. "Poetry is an important literary art form that provides a wonderful complement to the City's existing performing and visual arts."

City Manager Lori Ann Farrell Harrison also is happy to have Hanson aboard.

"As the City of the Arts, it is only fitting that we would have a Poet Laureate," Farrell Harrison said. "I look forward to her upcoming poetry events and I know the public will greatly benefit from this exposure to the arts and classic literature that is not offered in every City. Congrats to our Parks & Community Services team for making this happen."

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, a Poet Laureate is typically someone named to that position by the government, the royal family, or an organization, who is asked to write poems about important public occasions.

Hanson views her role to be, in part, a cheerleader for poetry

in the community. She is a believer in the power of poetry to build empathy, to make people feel heard, and to create a sense of connection and wonder.

“The Poet Laureate position is an ideal platform to get poetry out where people already are. In the past, I have collaborated with artists and arts organizations,” Hanson said. But there are even more things that can happen when you team up artists with local governments. Costa Mesa is a real leader in this regard.”

The Poet Laureate appointment is a two-year stint and in addition to creating new poetry, Hanson plans to hold public workshops where people can learn and experience the craft of creating poetry. These workshops will be for writers and non-writers—no previous experience is needed.

Hanson, who has been writing poetry for over 30 years, said this position is both humbling and exciting, and she relishes the idea of being able to contribute to exposing more people to poetry.

Hanson teaches poetry at UC Irvine and she is a past winner of the both the Codhill Press and Elixir Press Prizes in poetry. In addition, she is the marketing director for Sundress Publications and she has authored two books, “Ambushing Water,” which was a finalist for Georgia Author of the Year and “Fraying Edge of Sky,” winner of the Codhill Poetry Prize. A third book “The Night Is What It Eats,” is coming out this fall. Click here to read some of her poems <https://www.citricacid.ink/issue-13/two-poems>.

Hanson is a graduate of the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, where she double majored in humanities with a concentration in creative writing and mathematics. She is married to the UCI dean of engineering, Magnus Egerstedt, and they have college-aged identical twin daughters who have the goal to be circus performers, she said.