

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

INTRODUCING MENDOCINO COUNTY'S NEW YOUTH POET LAUREATE

Ukiah, CA | January 4, 2024 – California Poets in the Schools (CalPoets) announces Mendocino county's second Youth Poet Laureate – Frej Barty, a Junior at Mendocino High School. Mendocino county follows the lead of the nation, the state and sister counties (Alameda, Los Angeles, Sonoma and Ventura) in acknowledging a student who has achieved excellence in poetry, allowing them to be a leader for the county in raising the profile of poetry and developing its audience.

Frej Barty was selected from a qualified pool of applicants by a panel of judges. The judging panel included distinguished poets and teachers from throughout the county and we had a few very strong applicants. Frej is an aspiring filmmaker, cinematographer, and general multi-hyphenate storyteller who hates that neologism. Defined by finding and giving hope, he is an all around nerd with a love for anything analog—from the Mendocino High School Radio Station [KAKX](#) to pinball. He says his bio just keeps shifting, though, because he is still finding a voice and a way of living.

Current Poet Laureate of Point Arena and long-time poet teacher with CalPoets, Blake More is coordinating the YPL program for a national and statewide project with support from California Poets the Schools, Urban Word NYC, the Arts Council of Mendocino County and the Mendocino County Office of Education. When asked about the purpose of the project, More states: "As a lifelong artist and poet, I believe I, like all creators, have a social imperative to share our love of craft with the next generations. It is how we keep our art fresh as well as continue the legacy of self-expression. I am very excited to work with Frej and experience his journey as Mendocino County's second Youth Poet Laureate."

In his application, Frej wrote: *I will answer these questions the same way I found them; through poetry. The language of those who came before help me understand what it is to be human, and my language helps contextualize this to myself. 'I value naught more than this romantic readiness' (Fitzgerald) – the ability to come to these realizations. Naught more than the sight of poets – that manure is only ever flowers (Bradburry). One day, too, my art might give the gift of self-understanding to those who come after me.*

Frej's term as Mendocino County's Youth Poet Laureate begins February 1, 2024 and continues through June 2026. Within that time, Frej is committed to conduct at least five public appearances/readings/workshops – ideally one within each supervisorial district, virtual or otherwise. Frej will receive a \$500 prize and an opportunity to publish a collection of his poems or spearhead a broader, youth publication opportunity. Schools and community organizations are encouraged to contact Frej (through Blake More, at California Poets in the Schools – blake@arenatechcenter.org) if you are interested in hosting him at a public event – which we encourage you to do.

In Frej's own words:

"The heart of unknown men from the 14th century touched mine. I was reading Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and the words told me that people have always been essentially the same, that they have all lived and been one story of which we are now the keening edge but not the end. This and more needs to keep being said, and I plan on saying it."

The Mendocino County program is organized by California Poets in the Schools and supported by the Bill Graham Supporting Foundation, with additional in kind support from the Arts Council of Mendocino County and Mendocino County Office of Education.

Click here to access the 2024-26 Mendocino Youth Poet Laureate Media Kit including photos:

Stay tuned for a virtual poetry reading to celebrate Frej's appointment as the second ever Mendocino Youth Poet Laureate!

About California Poets in the Schools

California Poets in the Schools, a non-profit founded in 1964, is one of the nation's largest literary Artists-in-the-Schools programs. Over one hundred trained, professional Poet-Teachers deliver poetry sessions throughout California to students in K-12 classrooms and a variety of other venues, such as children's homes, juvenile halls and hospitals. Students are empowered to express their creativity, imagination, and intellectual curiosity through writing, performing and publishing their own poetry.

Since its founding in 1964, CalPoets has inspired over one million students in sixty thousand classrooms to create six million poems. Many of the young people reached through our programs are low-income, rural or second language learners. Student poetry is published in an annual, juried statewide anthology. High-school students from many counties are coached by our Poet-Teachers to compete in tiered Poetry Out Loud competitions from the classroom to the national level. Poet-Teachers gather at yearly symposia for ongoing professional development and community building.

For immediate information, please contact:

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