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Poet Aaron Anstett selected as first Pikes Peak Poet Laureate
Announcement and inauguration takes place during National Poetry Month

Colorado Springs, Colo. (April 2, 2008) – The Pikes Peak region has chosen **Aaron Anstett**, a widely published poet whose work has been described as “far-reaching and memorable,” as the first Pikes Peak Poet Laureate.

The selection was announced today by the Pikes Peak Poet Laureate Project, which was initiated in January this year with the goal of supporting programs that connect poets and poetry with the community in El Paso and Teller counties. It is the first Poet Laureate program in Colorado Springs and the Pikes Peak region.

"Aaron is particularly impressive in his openness to all kinds of poetry and his deep desire for inclusively. Our community will be very well served by his tenure as Pikes Peak Poet Laureate," said selection committee member Rebecca Laroche of the UCCS English Department.

Anstett will serve a two-year term and take his work throughout the region to business gatherings, colleges campuses, K-12 schools, community centers, and more. Examples of the types of activities proposed include: "Poetry While You Wait," presenting poetry in places least expected: waiting rooms, Laundromats, banks, or restaurants; "Poetry in the Press," promoting and publishing poetry and poetry reviews in local media; "Poetry for Prisoners," presenting writing workshops to incarcerated youth; "Teaching Poetry," helping educators to engage students in the study and practice of poetry; and "Poetry for Rejuvenation," poetry workshops for military personnel, at-risk youth and underserved communities. Additional ideas from the community are welcome, and can be submitted to info@pikespeakpoetlaureate.org.

"I am deeply honored to have been selected as the inaugural Pikes Peak Poet Laureate, and I am excited about the many opportunities for community outreach that the position presents," Anstett said. "I look forward to bringing poetry in to many non-traditional venues and to inspiring and celebrating the vitality and dynamism of poetry."

The Project accepted applications and nominations for the post from January through late February. The selection committee unanimously selected Anstett from 15 nominations and applications, said program chair John Atkinson. Anstett impressed the committee with his publications, his community involvement, and his imaginative community project proposals.

Anstett has published three books, ("Sustenance", "No Accident," and "Each Place the Body's"), and his poems have appeared widely in journals and anthologies. He received his MFA from the Iowa Writer's Workshop, and was later the Halls Poetry Fellow at the UW-Madison Center for Creative Writing. He has lived in Colorado Springs for more than 10 years and has three children. He is employed full-time as a technical writer.

The selection committee has also chosen poet **Lois Hayna**, 95, as Pikes Peak Poet Laureate Emeritus. Hayna has published five books of poetry and a CD of her works, and is also an active member of Poetry West, an organization that she helped found in 1986 to promote poetry in the area.

A reception to inaugurate Anstett will be held **April 12 from 3:30-6 p.m. at East Library, 5550 N. Union Blvd.**, following Pikes Peak Library District's **Mountain of Authors** program. The Friends of the Pikes Peak Library District will also honor this year's Golden Quill Award Winner at this program.

The Project's presenting partners are Pikes Peak Library District, Colorado College, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (COPPeR) and Poetry West. The Project has raised \$13,000 to date to support the initiative.

One of the first activities of the Poet Laureate, "Poet Laureate Invitational - Poetry Readings," will be held April 21 from 7-8:30 p.m. at East Library. Colorado College will host "How to Engage Your Students in Poetry" on September 27.

For more information on the Poet Laureate Project, or to make a contribution, visit www.pikespeakpoetlaureate.org, send email to info@pikespeakpoetlaureate.org, or call COPPeR at (719) 634-2204. Anstett can also be reached at poet@pikespeakpoetlaureate.org.

Digital photos of Anstett and Hayna are available upon request: contact doller@ppld.org.

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