



About the Selection Process

The Pikes Peak Poet Laureate Project was announced on January 20, 2008 with the initiation of fundraising and the solicitation of nominations and applications for the position of Pikes Peak Poet Laureate. The Project's Organizing Committee includes representatives from five area organizations including: Pikes Peak Library District, Colorado College, University of Colorado at Colorado Springs, COPPeR (Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region), and Poetry West. The project also had the help of an Advisory Board that included a number of interested citizens. The public was invited to submit nominations for this position by February 15. Twelve nominations were received and all were contacted and informed about the project. Those nominated were asked to apply by February 29, and a selection committee evaluated the applications. The committee included a representative from Colorado College (Jane Hilberry - English Department), University of Colorado at Colorado Springs (Rebecca Laroche - English Department), Poetry West (Jim Ciletti), and two regional poets (Chris Ransick - Denver's Poet Laureate, and Juan Morales - CSU Pueblo English Department).

Applicants were asked to include a description of their two-year vision for promoting poetry in the Pikes Peak region. The selection committee used the following criteria in making its selection: 1) the poet's record of involvement in community-based poetry projects; 2) the poet's publications and profile as a writer, with an emphasis on national recognition; 3) the strengths of the proposed poetry project and the applicant's ability to execute it; and 4) the poet's ability to make public presentations.

The formal guidelines for selection of the Pikes Peak Poet Laureate included the following:

1. Applicants will be expected to serve a two-year term commencing in April 2008 and ending in May 2010.
2. Applicants should be experienced poets with a body of work that the award will honor.
3. Applicants must be willing to appear at and support between six and 10 events per year and also provide support for a community-wide poetry project.
4. Applicants must be comfortable making public presentations and be willing to assist in celebrating and inspiring poetry in our community.
5. Applicants must currently be residing in or working full time in El Paso or Teller counties.

The selection committee met in early March and unanimously selected Aaron Anstett as the first Pikes Peak Poet Laureate. Aaron impressed the committee with his long list of poetry publications (including three books by national publishers and dozens of poems published in juried journals and anthologies), his role in the community as an organizer and facilitator of poetry events, and his imaginative community project proposals.