



MEDIA RELEASE

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Winners chosen for the Morro Bay Estuary Poetry Contest will read at Coalesce on June 19

The **Morro Bay Estuary Poetry Contest—A National Treasure in Words** asks kids and adults to celebrate the Morro Bay National Estuary by writing haikus and free verse poems about it.

This year, **we received almost 100 entries, and all of the poems captured the spirit of the estuary.** The high quality of the work made it hard to choose winning poems. However, our judges, Yousef Alaoui, Rob Seitz, Kevin Patrick Sullivan, and Rachel Pass, were up to the task. They have read and scored each of the entries, and **the results are in!**

The Free Flowing category asked adults and kids to write free verse poems using the estuary as a theme. **Marnie L. Parker of San Luis Obispo has won the Adult Free Flowing category, with her poem “Blue Sanctuary.”** Marnie is an avid reader and writer of poetry. She has had a variety of her fiction, nonfiction, and poetry published locally. **K. Rowe Morris of Morro Bay has earned the Adult Free Flowing runner-up spot for her poem, “Listen.”** K. is currently writing a fractured fairytale based on the story of “The Three Billy Goats Gruff.”

The winner of the Youth Free Flowing category is 14-year-old Lauren Tarica, with her poem “Tidal Song.” Lauren goes to Atascadero High School, and has kept a travel journal, in which she writes and draws, since she was young. **The runner-up for the Youth Free Flowing category is 12-year-old Eva Moylan with her poem, “The Great Egret.”** Eva goes to Los Osos Middle School. In her mother’s words, she “is a budding scientist and artist. She has been fascinated by and studied birds since she was quite young. She is an avid birder and raises and shows chickens (large and bantam) with 4H.”

Haikus—three-line poems consisting of 17 syllables in a 5/7/5 pattern—traditionally focus on nature. **This year's Adult Haiku winner is George Asdel with his poem, "The Morro Bay Estuary."** George Asdel is an award winning poet and artist. He is a member of the Atascadero Writer's Group, and shows his art and poems at the Gallery at Marina Square in Morro Bay. Much of his writing and art is whimsical, dealing with nature and human folly. He writes a haiku daily in addition to his other work. **Lila Bhuta of Los Osos has earned the Adult Haiku runner-up spot with her poem, "Estuary Life."**

The Youth Haiku winner is 14-year-old Nick Murphy of Los Osos. Nick enjoys writing and feels that it comes naturally to him. He likes living in Los Osos because it's a good community with easy access to nature, including the estuary. **The Youth Haiku runner-up is 13-year-old Michael Blanchard of Los Osos.** Michael and his mom have fond memories of visiting the Museum of Natural History in Morro Bay when he was young.

A celebratory reading featuring many of the winners and runners-up will be held at Coalesce bookstore (845 Main St, Morro Bay, CA 93442) at 7 p.m. on Friday, June 19. The reading is open to the public.

The judging panel includes Youssef Alaoui, Rob Seitz, Kevin Patrick Sullivan, and Rachel Pass. Life by the ocean inspired Youssef to publish a collection of dark romantic poems called *Death At Sea* and a nineteenth century adventure novel called *The Blue Demon*. Rob began writing poetry while working aboard his grandfather's commercial salmon fishing boat on The Cook Inlet in Alaska; he has published one book of poetry, *2.5 gpf*. Kevin is a past Poet Laureate for the City of San Luis Obispo and the Co-Founder and Curator for the Annual San Luis Obispo Poetry Festival and Corners of the Mouth. Rachel is the Communications & Outreach Coordinator for the Estuary Program and has edited several collections of poetry.

Morro Bay National Estuary Program is a non-regulatory, non-profit organization that brings together citizens, local government, non-profits, agencies, and landowners to protect and restore the Morro Bay Estuary for people and wildlife. The Estuary Program has been conducting monitoring and research, restoring natural habitats, and educating residents and visitors on how to keep Morro Bay clean and healthy since 1995. You can find out more about the Morro Bay National Estuary Program and our 20th anniversary events at www.mbnep.org. If you have questions, please contact Rachel Pass, Communications & Outreach Coordinator, at rpass@mbnep.org or 805-772-3834.