



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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MURFREESBORO LAUREATES FORTIFYING LOCAL ARTS COMMUNITY

MURFREESBORO, Tenn. - Cultural Arts launched Murfreesboro's first Laureate program last year to honor three of our local arts professionals and give them the opportunity to educate others about their craft. In June 2017 Murfreesboro's first laureates were appointed in three categories: Painting, Poetry, and Photography. They are now over half-way through their first term and are doing some amazing things to contribute to our thriving and growing arts scene.

Painter Laureate, **Ginny Togrye**, began a Facebook group called the Creative Connector, so that local creatives would have a way to network, stay up to date on local arts events, and offer support to one another. She has also partnered with Ready Set Rutherford to begin compiling an artist directory. Artists from all over Rutherford County are invited to submit their information to the directory to be listed free of charge to gain a better idea of how many working artists we have in our area. The directory can also be used as a resource for planning future arts events and keeping everyone connected. She has been doing a number of Demonstration and Art Making events for the Boro Art Crawl, Special Kids, the Boys and Girls Club, Discovery Center, and has more in the works for the future. She has been working closely with the Discovery Center to organize the upcoming We Are Tennessee mural, a collaborative art piece featuring submissions from local artists, as well as the upcoming Laureate Day at Discovery Center. In addition to all of this she is working on big ideas for an arts organization that would provide a physical space to serve local artists and quarterly rotating exhibits to be installed in public spaces around town.

Poet Laureate, **Kory Wells**, had already began her Poetry in the Boro group before her term as the laureate began, but her work since then has allowed the event to flourish. The monthly event features poetry readings at various spaces around town with established local poets as well as an open mic time for others to share their poetry. She has taught workshops and organized a number of poetry readings at other locations and events, including several events of her fellow laureates, and has more of these planned for the remainder of her term. To bring poetry to under-served audiences, Kory has been reading and writing poetry with workhouse inmates and former inmates through the therapeutic community Doors of Hope. You can learn more about Kory and local poetry by checking out her monthly poetry column in the Murfreesboro Pulse.

Photography Laureate, **Jessica Nelson**, has also began a Facebook group to serve local creatives, but hers is specifically for Photographers. This very active group, entitled Photography Connect Murfreesboro, gives monthly Shoot Off photography challenges to its members and is frequently sharing photo news, instructional articles and videos, as well as local resources and events. Jessica has also organized a number of photography exhibitions, workshops, and networking events for aspiring and professional photographers. She organized the Cameras for Kids drive which asked people to donate their old cameras to be used in classes for under-served

audiences and other community members. She is also organizing a community photography show which will be on display at the City Hall Rotunda in May and June.

All three laureates have done phenomenal work separately and collaboratively. Both Jessica Nelson and Kory Wells are contributing to the We Are Tennessee mural organized by Ginny Togrye and the Discovery Center. You can see the unveiling of the mural and meet all three of them to learn about the work they do at the Discovery Center's free Laureate Day on April 28th. They will also be concluding their terms with a collaborative exhibit on display at the City Hall Rotunda June 26th through August 3rd. Be sure to look up Creative Connector and Photography Connect Murfreesboro on Facebook and keep an eye out for monthly Poetry in the Boro events.

For more information please contact Pam Williams at pwilliams@murfreesborotn.gov.