

## Proclamation for the First Poet Laureate of Mendocino County

Whereas, the art of poetry has a deep human cultural history for its use in celebrating and commemorating events both private and public, for exploring our deepest feelings, for understanding our connection to the natural world, to each other, and to the places we live, and for telling our collective story;

Whereas, the tradition of establishing the position of Poet Laureate has long been observed in many nations, states, counties, cities, and other governmental and non-governmental entities and has in recent years become much more prevalent, and it is surely time to bring this valuable practice to Mendocino County;

Whereas, having an official Poet Laureate will grow general appreciation of the art of poetry and the other literary arts in the County, strengthen our cultural fabric, help each of us open up to our inner poets, increase recognition of the artists of all types that are our fellow community members, and expand our understanding of how we can all use artistic expression to enrich our lives and communicate more deeply;

Whereas, Mendocino County has our own home-grown poetic tradition that has enriched our cultural and communal lives here for many years and has been embodied in such local luminaries as Mary Norbert Körte, Sharon Doubiago, Dan Roberts, ruth weiss, Bill Bradd, Gordon Black, and many more;

Whereas, the recently formed Mendocino County Poet Laureate Committee worked diligently first to solicit Poet Laureate nominations from the whole County, then studied the candidates' written applications, and finally conducted interviews to find the person best suited to be our first Mendocino County Poet Laureate;

Whereas, Devreaux Baker has distinguished herself by the quality of her poetry—which includes 5 books devoted exclusively to her poetry, and publications in many periodicals and anthologies;

Whereas, Devreaux Baker has received many prizes, writing fellowships, and prestigious awards for her poetry including: the PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Poetry Award, a Women's Global Leadership Poetry Award, the Fischer International Poetry Prize, a U.S. Poets In Mexico Award, and a Helene Wurlitzer Foundation Poetry Fellowship in Taos, New Mexico;

Whereas, Devreaux Baker has taught poetry in Mendocino County through the California Poetry in the Schools program, and she has hosted numerous poetry events, most recently the ongoing monthly Mendocino Reading Series;

Whereas, Devreaux Baker helped edit the ground-breaking anthology of Mendocino County women poets, *Wood, Water, Air and Fire* in 1999, and is currently spearheading the effort to create a second edition of this widely heralded and influential book;

Whereas, she is a revered poet that Mendocino County has been blessed to call one of our own since 1976;

Now therefore, we—The Mendocino County Board of Supervisors—are proud and excited to welcome Devreaux Baker for a two-year term as the first Poet Laureate of Mendocino County.