

For Immediate Release

The Newburyport Literary Festival

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2007 Festival to Feature Renowned Poet Sydney Lea

Singer of stories, lyric raconteur, Sydney Lea has evolved—through a long, rich career—into one of America's most harrowing and honest poets.

—T. R. Hummer

The 2007 Newburyport Literary Festival is pleased to feature Newbury, Vermont, poet Sydney Lea, who will appear as an honored guest of the festival to read from his work.

Lea, founder and for thirteen years editor of *New England Review*, has published a novel, *A Place in Mind*, and two collections of nonfiction, *Hunting the Whole Way Home* and *A Little Wildness*. He recently published his eighth volume of poems, *Ghost Pain*, and his second nonfiction book, *A Little Wildness: Some Notes On Rambling*. His collection of poems, *Pursuit of a Wound*, was a Pulitzer finalist, and his *To the Bone: New and Selected Poems* was co-winner of the Poets' Prize. The recipient of fellowships from the Rockefeller, Fulbright, and Guggenheim Foundations, Lea has taught at Yale, Wesleyan, the Vermont College MFA program, Eotvos Lorand University (Budapest), and Franklin College (Lugano, Switzerland). He lives in Vermont with his wife, attorney and mediator Robin Barone, and their children, and currently teaches at Dartmouth College.

In addition to Lea, the Festival will welcome 17 poets who will read and comment on their work in events throughout Saturday, April 28. In addition, Sunday will feature the fourth annual Newburyport's Favorite Poem Project at the Firehouse Center, and scholar

Ben Pickard will offer two lectures on the local poet John Greenleaf Whittier. The following poets are schedule to appear:

David Berman	Michael Cantor	Bill Coyle
Robert Crawford	Rhina Espaillat	Midge Goldberg
Karen Nelson	A.M. Juster	Len Krisak
Alfred Nicol	Jodie Reyes	Mildred Nash
Juan Matos	César Sánchez Beras	Pat Callan
Toni Treadway	Stephen Scaer	Sydney Lea

Events for poets include (times and venues are on the festival web site www.newburyportliteraryfestival.org):

Friday, April 27

Opening Night Gala

Join us for a tribute to Christopher Michael, the beloved Newburyport poet who in 1998 was named the Port City's Poet Laureate in perpetuity, and who inhabits the physical person of Michael Lee Stevens. Born in 1924, Christopher Michael has been a powerful guide and inspiration to poets in Newburyport and the surrounding towns, particularly to those eager to learn the craft. He has also served for decades as an example of creativity, optimism, the love of life and learning, and courageous independence in the face of adversity.

Saturday, April 28

Green Eggs and Ham: Breakfast with the Poets

Join us for a cup of Joe and a muffin as we kick off the 2nd annual Newburyport Literary Festival with readings from some of the area's best poets. Last year's event was standing room only, so come early and hungry for our annual wake-up poetry session.

Light Heavyweights: A Reading of Light Verse

Go a few rounds with Powow River Poets Michael Cantor, A. M. Juster, Stephen Scaer, Patricia Callan, Toni Treadway and Alfred Nicol, as they read their own poems and

others in the tradition of Edward Lear, Ogden Nash, Dr. Seuss, and Muhammad Ali—poems that "float like a butterfly / sting like a bee."

Poetry à la Carte

Life has its passions and pleasures. Sex gets the greatest publicity, but the fact is that most of us spend far more time in the kitchen and at the dining table. Powow River Poets Stephen Scaer, Toni Treadway, Alfred Nicol, Pat Callan and Michael Cantor celebrate the preparation and consumption of food—and everything in between—in all their varied forms.

Representations

Could it be that there are as many doctrines of translating poetry as there are poets who translate? Or does it just seem that way? To test that proposition, distinguished poets who toil in the vineyards of languages other than English will explain the principles they follow in moving non-English verse into English, offering examples of their own work in the process. A question-and-answer session will follow the individual presentations.

Hot Off the Press: New Books by Powow River Poets

Come listen to poetry "hot off the press," new books by five Powow River Poets. Bill Coyle, Robert W. Crawford, Rhina Espaillat, Midge Goldberg, and Len Krisak will all read from their new books, and will answer any and all questions about the process of getting poetry from manuscript to book.

Talking Blues: Sydney Lea Reads

Poet Sydney Lea has been described as a "singer of stories, lyric raconteur,...one of America's most harrowing and honest poets." Of Lea's work, critic T. R. Hummer goes on to write that "This poetry implodes categories. If we must give it a label, let's call it talking blues. If we must describe it with a single word, let's call it heartbreaking." Sydney Lea will read from some of his eight volumes of poems, including the acclaimed *Ghost Pain*, published in 2005.

Whittier as a Local Poet

A Whittier biographer once noted that his poetry was written first of all for his

neighbors. And certainly Whittier's best poetry seems firmly rooted in his family birthplace, his second home in Amesbury, and in general the natural beauty, legends, and history that abounded in Essex County and all New England. Whittier biographer Ben Pickard will examine a group of these "local," often unknown poems, like "The Countess," "The Double Headed Snake of Newbury," and "To My Old Schoolmaster." These poems will illustrate the tenacious and artistically satisfying hold that Whittier had on certain local realities such as the native scenery, the region's past history and legends, family values, and a belief in principles of freedom and equality.

Sunday, April 29

Whittier and the Two Elizabeths

Friends Meeting House, Amesbury

One of Whittier's lesser poems is entitled "The Two Elizabeths," and, though it deals with St. Elizabeth of Hungary and the Quakeress reformer, Elizabeth Fry, its theme is the overriding power of a woman's compassion and love in affecting mankind. So the poem serves as an apt metaphor for the two Elizabeths who were central in his life: his sister Elizabeth Hussey Whittier and his niece, another Elizabeth Hussey Whittier. Both these women devoted most of their mature life in caring for Whittier, subordinating their own personal desires to free him from the practical burdens of life, to provide him with the needed time for writing poetry, and to shield him from the incessant demands of his fame. Their lives of service personify the domestic ideal of womanhood that was so prevalent during the 19th century and one strongly reinforced by the Christian religion. By contrast, Whittier's only mature love relation, the third Elizabeth (Elizabeth Lloyd Howell), suggests another, more emancipated approach that a woman might pursue and one that greatly attracted the poet. This talk will focus on some of the main roles that the three women named Elizabeth played in Whittier's life.

Fourth Greater Newburyport Favorite Poem Project

Robert Pinsky, the 39th Poet Laureate of the United States, founded the Favorite Poem Project shortly after the Library of Congress appointed him to the post in 1997. Since its

launch, the Favorite Poem Project has been dedicated to celebrating, documenting, and promoting poetry's role in Americans' lives. The project has inspired more than one thousand Favorite Poem readings in cities and towns across the country. These readings gather individuals from different corners of a single community to share their favorite poems with each other, revealing personal ties to specific poems. Join for a reading of some of Newburyport's favorite poems as read by friends and neighbors.

About the festival

The 2007 Newburyport Literary Festival (NLF) runs from Friday, April 27, through Sunday, April 29. A three-day celebration of reading, writing, and the love of books, this year's festival features more than 70 writers of distinguished fiction and non-fiction—including short story writers, children's authors, biographers, nature writers, critics, screenwriters, poets, novelists, and journalists—who will read and discuss their work in venues throughout Newburyport's historic downtown.

The vision of the Newburyport Literary Festival is shared by many individuals and organizations. The NLF is especially grateful for the generous support of our founding sponsors, the Newburyport Five Cents Savings Bank Charitable Foundation and the Institution for Savings, who have made it possible for the festival to take root and flourish. This program is supported in part by a grant from the Newburyport Cultural Council, a local agency that is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency.

All festival events are wheelchair accessible and open to the public. All events are free, except for the opening night party. For complete information about the festival, including event times and venues, please visit: www.newburyportliteraryfestival.org.