

Georgia Poet Laureate inducted into the Georgia Writer's Hall of Fame

ATLANTA, November 12, 2013 – Judson Mitcham, Georgia's tenth Poet Laureate, was inducted into the Georgia Writer's Hall of Fame on November 11, 2013. The ceremony took place at the University of Georgia's Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

"Judson's work resonates deeply with the humanity, humor, respect and grace that living through our past and into our future requires, said Karen Paty, Director of the Georgia Council for the Arts. "We are lucky to have him serve as the Poet Laureate of Georgia and champion for the literary arts in our state."

Mitcham, a poet and novelist -- the only two-time winner of the Townsend Prize for Fiction -- was not formally trained as a writer; he earned his doctorate in psychology at the University of Georgia and spent his career as a psychology professor at Fort Valley State University where he taught for 30 years. His debut novel, *The Sweet Everlasting* (1996) and his second, *Sabbath Creek* (2004), were both published by the UGA Press. He also twice has been given the Georgia Author of the Year Award, for his first novel and *Somewhere in Ecclesiastes* (1991) a sequence of poems called both poignant and powerful. In May 2012, he was sworn in as Georgia's current Poet Laureate by Gov. Nathan Deal.

As part of the induction celebration, Mitcham along with the Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) announced a new series of statewide initiatives to foster appreciation for and awareness of the art of poetry, and the work of Georgia writers.

The first to be implemented will be the Georgia Poet Laureate's Prize, awarded annually for an original poem written by a Georgia high school student. A winner and four finalists will be selected by the poet laureate. The competition is open to all Georgia high school students including public, private, and home-schooled. It is intended to complement the existing Poetry Out Loud recitation project sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and coordinated locally by GCA and the Atlanta History Center. Students are invited to submit one original poem, no more than 30 lines long for consideration. Results of the competition will be announced this Spring. Selected poets will have the opportunity to meet Governor Deal and will be honored at the Georgia State Capitol. Guidelines for submission will be made available by January 1, 2014 on www.gaarts.org.

Other initiatives announced include a series of readings and conversations with Georgia poets throughout the state. In addition, a volume of poems and photographs will be published by the University of Georgia Press, featuring work by award-winning Georgia photographer Diane Kirkland and Georgia poets.

For more information on Judson Mitcham and his poetry initiatives as Poet Laureate, visit www.gaarts.org.

About GCA

The Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) is a division of the Georgia Department of Economic Development and its mission is to cultivate the growth of vibrant, thriving Georgia communities through the arts. GCA provides grant funding, programs and services statewide that support the vital arts industry, preserve the state's cultural heritage, increase tourism and nurture strong communities. Funding for GCA is provided by appropriations from the Georgia General Assembly and the National Endowment for the Arts. Visit www.gaarts.org.