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PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Media Contact:
Melissa Howard
414-286-3032
mhowar@milwaukee.gov

Milwaukee Public Library Announces 2025-2026 Milwaukee Poet Laureate

MILWAUKEE – Milwaukee Public Library Director Joan Johnson has announced the appointment of Shelly Conley to serve as the library’s Poet Laureate from 2025 to 2026.

“Poetry has the power to connect us, inspire self-reflection and enlighten its readers,” said City Librarian Joan Johnson. “The Milwaukee Poet Laureate program has a proud legacy of celebrating this art form and uplifting local poetry in the City of Milwaukee. We’re honored to recognize Shelly Conley as Milwaukee’s Poet Laureate and continue this tradition of inspiration and building bridges through words.”

Milwaukee native Shelly Conley has always had a Love for words. As a skilled writer, poet and all around creative, her listeners call her “gifted”, “inspirational”, “illustrator” and “amazing”, to quote a few words. Her writing is reflective, forgiving and creates a call to action for the listeners. Shelly is a 7-time member of Milwaukee’s National Poetry Slam Team. Her talent has led her to numerous poetry venues, community panels, artistic documentaries and musical collaborations with local and national talent. She recently released *REWIND-A CATHARTIC AUTOBIOGRAPHY*, a magical blend of childhood journal pages, poetry, an amazing soundtrack and more, available at shellyconley.com.

With more than 20 years of experience working with youth and young adults in various capacities, Shelly encourages individuals to be honest and introspective in their writing, to forgive themselves and others, and to operate from a space of Love– especially when it’s difficult. Since 2014, Shelly has served as Program Director and Co-facilitator for My Sista’s KeepHer (MSK).

Visit www.mpl.org/poetlaureate for more information about the program.

About the Milwaukee Poet Laureate Project

The Milwaukee Poet Laureate project was initiated in February 2000, and is sponsored by the Milwaukee Public Library and supported by the Friends of the Milwaukee Public Library. The Milwaukee Poet Laureate project committee selects a local poet who serves as a leading example locally of the poetic voice of their genre to serve a two-year term.

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About Milwaukee Public Library

Milwaukee Public Library is an anchor institution that helps build healthy families and vibrant neighborhoods – the foundation of a strong Milwaukee. Since 1878, Milwaukee Public Library has been a free provider of education and information for residents of Milwaukee and beyond. With 13 locations, and more than three million items in circulation, MPL offers free access to a rich collection of materials both physical and digital, access to technology, classes, exhibitions, programming and more. From toddlers to scholars, MPL serves more than one million patrons who come through its doors annually and many more around the globe who use its resources at www.mpl.org. To offer this wide array of free programming, MPL relies on both public and private funding. Learn more about how to support Milwaukee Public Library at mpl.org/support.

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