

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[date]

For more information, contact:
[your name], [phone number with area code]
[e-mail address if you wish]
Deborah P Kolodji, SFPA President
dkolodji@aol.com

Local Writer Nominated for International Poetry Award

A local [writer/poet/etc. – describe yourself very briefly here; you can add more if applicable, such as “A local college professor and poet” or “A local restaurant owner and part-time writer of science-fiction stories”] has been nominated for the Rhysling Award, the annual prize awarded by the Science Fiction Poetry Association to honor the best science fiction, fantasy or horror poems from the previous year.

[Your name] has been writing [here, include a bit of your writing background, such as, “...science fiction and fantasy short stories for more than two decades”]. [His/her] poem [“Title,”] published in [date] by [title of original market], was nominated in the Rhysling’s [short/long] poem category. The Rhysling Award honors poetry in two categories: short poems of 1 to 49 lines and long poems of 50 lines or longer.

Only dues-paying members of the Science Fiction Poetry Association can nominate a poem for the Rhysling Award, which was established in 1978. All of the nominated poems are published in a printed anthology, which is distributed to the membership for use as a voting tool. SFPA members vote on their favorites in each category, and the winners are announced in the summer. The Rhysling Anthology also is sold by the SFPA to offset the cost of printing and raise funds for association programs.

The winning works are regularly reprinted in the Nebula Awards Anthology from the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, Inc., and are considered in the speculative fiction field to be the equivalent in poetry of the awards given for “prose” work: achievement awards given to poets by the writing peers of their own field of literature. Past winners have included such science fiction and fantasy notables as Ursula K. Le Guin, Bruce Boston, Joe Haldeman and Jane Yolen.

[Your name] was born and raised in [your hometown if applicable to the publication you’re submitting this to]. [Include a brief bio statement here – you may want to include high school and college attended, especially if they are local, where you work if you have a “day job,” and any civic or community volunteer activities. You could also include previous awards and honors for your writing and/or a brief list of publications.]

The Science Fiction Poetry Association was founded in 1978 to bring together poets and readers interested in science fiction poetry. In addition to the Rhysling Anthology, the SFPA publishes *Star*Line*, its bimonthly official newsletter featuring market news, interviews, articles, reviews, member news and letters, association business, and poetry by members and nonmembers. For more information, visit the association’s website at <http://www.sfpoetry.com>.

Customizing and Submitting Your Own Rhysling Press Release

Some people are uncomfortable with the idea of writing a press release or working with the media. Now that you have been nominated for the prestigious Rhysling Award, it's time to overcome any hesitation and get the word out about your accomplishment! Submitting news to the local media really isn't difficult; the key is to give the media information they will find interesting in a format they can use.

This sample press release is merely a template; you can fill in the minimum of personal information, or you can go a little farther in customizing it. That's up to you, but remember there are certain elements that make a newsworthy story.

The foremost of these is *proximity*: a local story takes precedence over a national or global one. So include anything you can in your release that is important to the media outlet's local readers/viewers/listeners – for example, if you are living in your hometown and submitting to that newspaper, make sure to include that you are a native, what high school you went to, what college (if applicable), where you work currently (if you have a day job in this same community), volunteer work you do in the community, local organizations you belong to, etc.

Another important element is *novelty*: something so unusual that it is newsworthy in and of itself. I think the idea of a science fiction poetry award comes with novelty built in.

Note: Feel free to contact Robin Mayhall at robin@hieran.com with any questions; public relations is my “day job,” and I'm happy to help however I can.

Formatting tips:

You can print your release on personal letterhead or on plain white paper – just be sure to include your contact information. At the top, include the words “News Release,” the date, your name, your phone number and e-mail if you wish. The attached template shows the most standard way to format all this.

If you plan to e-mail the release, you should include the same information, but don't do too much fancy formatting – it may be lost in the translation to different reporters' e-mail programs or even come across too garbled for them to deal with.

In the past, editors required headlines in all caps and text double-spaced. This is no longer necessary, as long as the release is legible and professional.

If you are mailing a printed release, try to keep it to one page. The standard margin is one inch on all four sides, but you can fiddle with that to get the release down to one page. If your press release goes to two pages, do not print it front-and-back. Print two pages and staple them together.

At the bottom of the first page, put the following (centered):

-more-

At the top of the second page, flush left, repeat your release's headline, then add “p. 2”:

Local Writer Nominated for Poetry Award, p. 2

And at the very end of your release, skip a line and center the following:

-30-

(This is one of two universal journalistic signals for the end of a story or press release – you can also choose to use three number signs instead - ###)

Note: If you are e-mailing the release, you should put the text directly in the body of your e-mail message, so you won't need to worry about margins or putting "more" at the bottom of the first page. However, you should always put "-30-" or "###" at the end of any press release, mailed or e-mailed.

Tips on submitting to the media:

First, identify what media outlets you would like to notify. You should consider sending your release to, at minimum, your hometown newspaper and any major local TV stations – the four network affiliates and the public television channel at least. The same release should work fine for TV, radio and print. TV and radio reporters will rewrite the information in their own format if they use it.

Radio is a hit-or-miss proposition. If your community has a radio station(s) that regularly features local writers, or announcements on local people's good news and accomplishments, send them your release. The public radio station may use the info, as may a local DJ morning-show team.

This is where your own knowledge of your community will need to kick in. Basically, think about where you have seen announcements like this one in the past, and submit your announcement to the same outlets. Additional possibilities include:

- Your high-school alumni newsletter
- Your college alumni publication
- Campus radio, TV or newspaper
- A local arts and entertainment weekly
- A social/charitable publication (my medium-size city has THREE!)
- Church or neighborhood newsletters/newspapers
- Any publication produced by a local writing group

Be creative! Once you have a list of publications, find out how each one prefers to receive press releases. Most newspapers and TV stations have areas on their websites with contact information for submitting news, or you can simply call and ask the receptionist to whom you would submit a press release. At a TV station, you would usually submit a release to the assignments editor, news director, or directly to a reporter you've seen talking about this sort of news.

At a small-town newspaper, weekly publication or other smaller outlet, there may be a single press-release contact: the editor, an assignments editor, or even a "press release editor." This person's contact information should be included on the website or within the publication itself.

At a larger newspaper, press releases are usually directed to the editor of the appropriate section. In this case you would likely send your release to the People, Arts, Entertainment, or City section editor. When in doubt, though, you can simply send it to the editor-in-chief. You may also identify a reporter who often writes about community news, or about the arts, and send the release directly to him or her. It's okay to send a release to more than one contact at a newspaper as long as you tell the contacts you've done so.

With any media outlet, pay attention to how the appropriate contact prefers to receive a release (by fax, mail, or e-mail). In most cases, if e-mailing a release, you should paste the text directly into the body of your message, since many media organizations have virus protection that deletes or bounces attachments.

Once you have identified your target media and the right contact at each outlet, proofread your release carefully one more time and send it along! There is no need for a cover letter. If e-mailing, make your subject line the same as your headline with RELEASE or PRESS RELEASE in front. Be prepared to answer media questions. And you might want to have a recent photograph of yourself handy in a digital format in case your local newspaper wants to run the story with a photo.

Again, feel free to e-mail me at Robin@hieran.com if you need any further help.