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California Polytechnic State University

May 30, 2002

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cal Poly English Major, San Luis Obispo Resident Wins Academy of American Poets Award

Senior English major Jacob Cementina of San Luis Obispo has been selected the winner of this year's Cal Poly Academy of American Poets contest and will receive a \$100 prize.

Poet Kevin Patrick Sullivan served as this year's judge. He is the longtime organizer of both the annual San Luis Obispo County Poetry Festival and the Corners of Mouth reading series held at Linnaea's Café in San Luis Obispo the third Sunday of each month.

Senior English major Sara Wolf of Sonoma won an honorable mention.

Cementina's winning poem, "Turning Point," is about the moment of anxiety that occurs when two good friends initiate the first gestures of romance.

Sullivan said that the poem "leads me to think of another American artist, Norman Rockwell. Not the saccharine, just the concrete, clear images of daily life that move the poem along."

In Wolf's poem "The Farmer," the narrator expresses deep concern that her aging father might have turned to the pleasures of working on the farm as a way to avoid human intimacy.

According to Sullivan, Wolf's work "evokes for me something akin to viewing an Edward Hopper painting, somehow real and familiar, yet something unknown, only pointed at."

Many past winners of the Cal Poly Academy of American Poets contest have gone on to prestigious graduate programs in creative writing and have published poems in national journals, according to Kevin Clark, contest director and senior professor of poetry writing in Cal Poly's English Department.

"I was already impressed with both poets," Clark said. "Each student had been in at least one of my classes, and I am confident that, should they wish to, both could eventually be published in literary magazines.

"Jake Cementina is unusual for such a young man," Clark said. "He understands the idiosyncrasies of the human heart as it engages love. He's simultaneously subtle and poignant."

Clark said he was "always surprised and impressed with the refined sadness that attends Cementina's poems about relationships -- as if his is a far older voice than we should expect from an undergraduate. Beyond that, Jake's poems surprise you with their unusual details, sometimes quite comic. He notices aspects of the world that escape many of us."

Clark has also enjoyed the work of Sara Wolf, which, he said, "has been growing in enormous leaps over the last six months.

"Sara seemed to realize that she could mine the psychology of human beings under stress right about the time that she also realized she could tell good stories in verse. When you read her work, you find yourself becoming immersed in characters who have lost something important in life and may or may not be able to find it again," Clark said.

Sullivan also wanted to recognize the work of engineering major Ryan Stewart and English majors Marnie L. Parker, Cathy Shin, Kate E. Asche and David Morgan.

The Academy of American Poets is a national organization devoted to the practice and celebration of poetry as an art form. Each spring the Cal Poly English Department and the academy sponsor a poetry contest. An off-campus judge is chosen to determine the winners.

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(NOTE TO EDITORS: For an electronic image of Jacob Cementina and Sara Wolf, please contact Jo Ann Lloyd at 756-1511 or jllloyd@calpoly.edu.)

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