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PRESS RELEASE

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Poet/Police Officer to Headline Smith Library's Poetry Festival
Poet Laureate Readings, Workshops Planned

Wylie, TX, March 23, 2015 – Wylie's Smith Public Library hosts its second annual poetry event, ROAR@SPL Poetry Festival, April 11 and 18.

April 11, from 10 am to noon, Will Richey, an award-winning spoken-word artist, will present an interactive poetry workshop at the library, 300 Country Club Rd., Building 300, Wylie. For youngsters in grades four – 12, participants may bring two poems for publication in the library's ROAR booklet. Lunch is provided, and there will be an open mic opportunity. It is free, but registration is appreciated; call 972-516-6250, option 3.

April 18, from 2 to 4 pm, will be a poetry workshop and reading by poet and police officer Sarah Cortez. Alan Birkelbach, Texas Poet Laureate 2005, and Ann Howells, Pushcart Prize nominee, will also present readings of their work. The workshop is for ages 16 and up and will be held at Barnes & Noble Firewheel, 190 Cedar Sage Dr., Garland. It is also free, but registration is appreciated; call 972-516-6250, option 3.

Cortez, a council member of the Texas Institute of Letters, has published numerous poems, essays and short stories in U.S. anthologies as well as in Europe. Her debut poetry collection, "How to Undress a Cop," won the PEN Texas Literary Award in poetry. Her second book, "Cold Blue Steel," reveals the life of an urban street cop. Her memoir, "Walking Home: Growing Up Hispanic in Houston," was published in 2012, and her latest anthology, "Goodbye Mexico: Poems of Remembrance," celebrates the Mexico of the late 20th century. Cortez is a commissioned police officer with a Harris County law enforcement agency and said her decision 20 years ago to enter the field was the best decision she's ever made.

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Native Texan Birkelbach's work has appeared in journals and anthologies such as "Grasslands Review," "Borderlands," "The Langdon Review" and "Concho River Review." His 10th book, "Mereditenne Verte," is scheduled for release this summer. Howells' poetry has also appeared in numerous anthologies, and her work has been read on National Public Radio. She's appeared on television in Maryland, her native state, and has been nominated four times for a Pushcart award.

For more information, visit www.wylietexas.gov/library.

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About Smith Library – Founded in 1970 by Rita and Truett Smith, the library serves the informational, cultural and recreational needs of the over 44,938 Wylie residents. In 2014, the library checked out over 500,000 items and hosted almost 190,000 visitors. More than 35,000 citizens have library cards, and the library offers 459 programs, attended last year by over 25,000 participants. Wylie was incorporated in 1887 and is home to an outstanding school district, a low crime rate, and an ISO-1 fire rating. One of the fastest-growing communities in the state, Wylie has had a 197-percent increase since 2000.