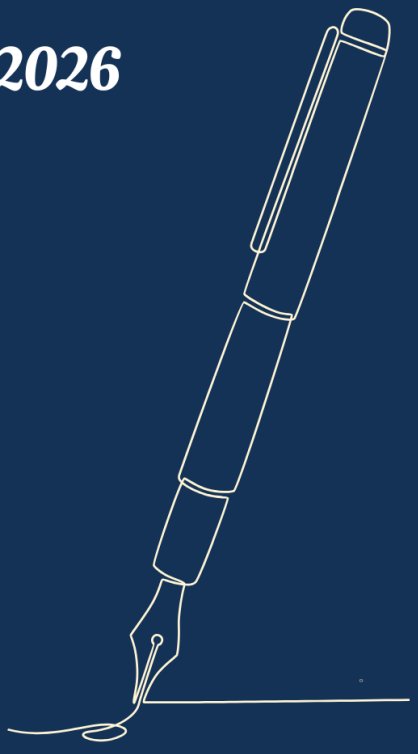
COMMUNITY POETRY SUBMISSIONS

LAKE OSWEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

2026



This April, in honor of National Poetry Month 2026, the Lake Oswego Public Library invited local poets ages 18 and older to submit 1-2 of their original poems to share with the community. We've compiled them here and invite you to explore the Library's fifth annual installment of Community Poetry Submissions.

Thank you, local poets!

The points of view that may be expressed in these poems, or by the poets, are not necessarily endorsed by the Lake Oswego Public Library or the City of Lake Oswego.

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“What world do you want?” by Sara Barrett

I want a world that

Exhales strongly against hurry

Moves strategically

Parts the seas for our calling

Ponders……Wanders……

Blooms artists within,

Celebrates:

Being

Resting

Caring

Where is that world?

I want that world.

“My Life in Reverie” by Ines Bojlesen

A constant, noisy rolling tide,
Foamy waves breaking,
Upon the sandy shoreline,
Reflecting skies that shine.

An ocean breeze,
A salty smell,
Casting a spell,
As we walk at ease.

Adventures and fun,
Imprinted in my memory.
Sailing blue waters,
Basking in the sun.

You are forever
With me in every
Wave and breeze,
My life in reverie!

“Awe in the ER” by Allyson F Brown

Blood flows slick

Becomes sticky in the heat

Snaking along a floor

Tumbled full of wrappers and towels

And clattering caps

That skitter into hallways

Where rhythmic hums and shrieking claxons

Echo from the walls

Into rooms filled with ghosts

The humanity

The inhumanity

The horror movie unreality

Then

The hush, the rise, the exultation

Rising from the corners

Glowing, streaming, bursting

It is love and laughter

A cool breeze

A lightning storm

A sunset over waves

It is miraculous birth

And peaceful death

It is awe

“Cherry Blossoms” by Allyson F Brown

Soft petals float along the breeze

Which, now warm as a lover’s breath,

Dances through the blossoms

Carrying its erstwhile pink passengers

Until they catch in gossamer strands of spider’s webs

Laced with shards of sunlight

They drape the branches in festive festoons

Springtime come at long last

“Summertime/Some Her Time” by L. Carroll

Softly cushioned and cool
Under the pads of my feet
I surrender to the earth
A respite from the heat

Reticulated rays refract
Aimlessly through the leaves
Beams flitting like gnats
Undulating in the breeze

Lackadaisical nature
Weather awash in warmth
Sensorial pleasures imbuing
Long days all too short

Stimulating, almost heady
Flit wafts of syrupy bramble
Braided with ozone and drifting
In weighty ribbons that amble

Time slows patiently
Ebullient energy on high
Cushioned upon the grass
Supine gaze to the sky

“THEN AGAIN” by Charles Francis Gould

Alone on the bench
the old woman took pleasure
in the pleasure of tots
wading wildly in the shallow pool:
splashing,
giggling,
screaming.
The newness, the rawness
of it all, possessed them.
The old woman found herself
chuckling when senile joy
revived fast-fading delights.

“LILACS” by Charles Francis Gould

A cool dense mist bedewed their listless walk.
The breath of life seemed gone from them. The pair,
Ghost-like, moved on, no gesturing, no talk,
Together, yet apart, heading nowhere
Through the park. He, hands in pockets, head low,
Consumed with shame or blame or lost respect.
And she, arms crossed, glaring ahead as though
Sorrow-stricken—from what? Rebukes? Neglect?
Not the moment for heedless thoughts to air
With two minds wavering, and two hearts sore.
The sun seeped through the fading mist to where
He stopped. To turn things right and whole once more
  He plucked a drooped lilac spray and shook it
  Dew free; offered it up, and…she took it.

“First Contact” by Alan Guggenheim

Give it all you got, Scotty.

I got nothin’ left to give, Captain!

Those damn Romulans!

Sold us a thistle for a cloaking device,

And you can’t change the laws of physics.

“Coming Up Roses” by Alan Guggenheim

River City welcomes you with a hard light, laughing
shadows and the whiff of roses, yellow and orange
and pink and delight.
A busy bridge town, we gasp for our breath
While steelhead school up the green Willamette
And a V of honking geese catwink o’erhead.

“Heritage Street” by J H Fenner

We live here on Heritage Street.
All around: Above, either side, and under our feet.
Ancestor here, ancestor there, distant cousins everywhere.
Some we know & do not know:
Great Aunt there, many-Greats here, too.
Slave is here, an Admiral there—Who knew?
Rebel soldier over there, Yankee right here—
We didn't know 5th cousins were Foe.

Brit or Scot; Irish–or not? Very neat.
Swede and Dane; Ashkenazi Jew;
Saxon and Franc; and an Arab or two.
They all lived here on Heritage Street.

Fisher, farmer, soldier, sailor; cleric and clerk.
Some a life of leisure, but most hard work.
Some lives really bitter, others really sweet.
All left their mark on Heritage Street.

“The Dust Bowl” by J H Fenner

Decade of extra rainfall. WWI. "*Wheat Will Win the War!*"
More wheat. More corn. More plowing.
War ends. Did Wheat win the War?
Less wheat. Less corn. Less plowing.
Less rain. A decade less rain.

Fields fallow. Winds blow. Dry Soil.
Less and less wheat. Less and less corn.
More wind. Drier soil. More Dust.
Dust in fields. Dust in barns. Dust in homes.
Dust, dust, dust.

Great Depression. Crops fail. Farms fail.
Fields fallow. Few crops. Winds wail.
Sod houses. Dust on floor. Dust in bed.
Dust in eyes. Dust in ears. Dust in food.
Dust, dust, dust. Dust Bowl.

Families fail. Families flee. Families stay.
Hold on. Five years. Ten years.
No more. Pack up. Head West.
One thousand miles. Two thousand miles. Or more.
Fenner Family. Oregon. Fertile Valley.

Fertile fields. Fertile soil. Fields thrive.
Wood homes. Families strive. Good life. Alive!

But not before the Dust Bowl took my sister's life.

“Turning” by Meg Jones

You shelter beneath a scarred oak,
waiting for the rain to take a breath
and the wind to hurry past you and
shut the sky’s doors tight behind
its flapping coattails

Leaf after leaf loses
its gnarled grip on crooked limbs,
veins still pumping life as they fall
to cling to your hair and
clutch at your pale wrists

You push your hands tight
against each other, cupping
two palms’ worth of water -
it slips cold through
the broken bowl you have made

The storm begins to quiet
slows to drops
slows to mist
slows to steaming earth
stops

Leaves see-saw down toward
your sodden body as branches
hold the fading dark

open, wide as your eyes

The heavens are unstitching
to a bright waking glow as you
step into the rain-soaked air
holding you up on all sides

You are the shape
the wind and water have made
moving over the land
and you are learning to love

the world between breaths, to take
the remains of an offering such as this -
droplets beading on your skin
and the sky's voice
inside your chest

“My Gilded Cage” by KC

My lovely house
A home for me
The biggest price
I won’t be free

Imprisoned queen
A tyrant king
And all it cost
Was everything

My gilded cage
A symbol of the work I’ve done
Each sacrifice
My freedom yet undone

I do my best
It’s not enough
Each time I try
Not up to snuff

Filled with glass
I cut my feet
No matter how careful
It’s always defeat

My lonely castle
With all of its halls
The home I deserve
I helped build these walls

When he is away
I still feel his eyes
I can’t make a move
His anger will rise

He hates all my friends
He hates my voice
He hates my hobbies
He hates my choice

But I can’t leave my home
I’ve come too far
I have lovely things
Clothes and a car

I worked just as hard
And now I’m too tired
I’ll give up the rest
The future is mired

But I have this home
My gilded cage
There is no more fight
I’m too old to change

I can exist in this space
Unhappy he’s cruel
But financially comfortable
Under tyrannical rule

I don’t think there’s better
Waiting out there
For a tired queen
With graying hair

My gilded cage
A hateful king
And all it cost
Was everything

That made me me
That made me see
My happiness
My everything

“The Forgotten Garden” by Paul Lyons

The dark rock walls, so old.
Hold many stories of another time.
Tiny white flowers shine light
Into the cracks that is their home.

Brick and moss hold each other softly
To guide footsteps to a quiet place.
Small hedges, long overgrown
Stand in line with no place to go.

A small wooden bench waits patiently
For the company of lovers, but none are near.
Swollen bark bears the wounds of many
Who carved their young love here long ago.

Rain gently washes an old maple above.
Leaves turn and twist and fall.
Below, one past rose petal holds on
For one more day of sun.

A song bird prays a litany of this day.
A tarnished wind shine answers.
It rings on and on and I wonder
If anyone else is listening.

(Based on experiencing The Bishop’s Close at Elk Rock)

“Time is of the Essence” by Paul Lyons

Time is our life. Moment after moment.
Point in time, time and time again.
A memory of the past. Time for it again.
Time is behind every thought. What time is it?

Time never stops. A second, a minute, an hour.
A day, a week, a month, a year, a lifetime.
Is there enough time? Well get started.
Watch the clock. Hold hands for a few seconds.

Take time for life - mine, yours and others.
Be on time for everything and everyone.
Time exists for all your plans and activities.
Well, that’s enough time for now. Get busy.

“Stumptown” by Penny Mc Donald

I’m back in a historic home
I can actually tell you much of my life through a timeline of old homes

Wartstein first, the 300 year old chalet deep in the Swiss Alps, where my grossmutte tended goats like Heidi, before she “left for America”

The big white farmhouse near the Aurora Colony where my family lived during my college years

A Dupont Circle townhouse where I would wake on Saturdays thinking, what should I see today? The Constitution? The Vietnam Memorial? That new exhibit at the East Wing?

An apartment in a NW PDX home deservedly on the National Registry, where I could step out on the roof to a chaise lounge and chat with a friend

The Victorian I owned where I still see my soon-to-be adopted daughter reaching out to tenderly touch the bed in the room that would be hers

The Irvington foursquare, where my grandson first climbed stairs and my granddaughters danced in the dining room featured in a movie

The "coach house" very near here, where the Kerr Brothers lived above what would become the Elk Rock garden and home

The small renovated 1930's cottage where I sat by my window safely cocooned throughout the Pandemic

And now, one of the oldest homes in Portland where I have a huge room that reminds me of my childhood ballet studio and I found is named the Sunrise Ballroom—a story there?

Sometimes I worry that a system will fail, that I won't know what to do, that the repair cost will be huge.
Sometimes I can't get a place to feel really, truly clean, to get beyond the grime of the years.
Sometimes awful changes have been made.
Sometimes there is damage foreshadowing more damage to come.
But then I see those rooflines history in the attic leaded panes a bright red door a chandelier lighting a room at dusk floors of old growth timber streets too narrow for our cars a tiny room that cannot be explained the arch of a Palladian window
And my heart just sings.

“Rebirth” by Emmie Randall

This Earth is littered with the remnants of those who have come before, the relics of thousands of lives and lifetimes. Bodies carrying the aches and pains of untold generations. Countless histories hidden in the darkest of places, withstanding the calamities and tests of time.

The skeletal remains of the citizens of Pompeii crystalized in ash for all of eternity. The Tollund Man sleeps soundly, forever frozen in the mires of a Danish peat bog. The Ancient Queens buried deep within the pyramids of Egypt, their beauty sealed within the sands of time.

So many lives cut short, yet preserved in solemnity and sorrow, a reminder that our time on this Earth is but fleeting. As lives end, others begin. As surely as the sun sets and the moon rises, rebirth is a certainty, an undeniable fact of life. Each person born the promise of a new day, carrying the mantle of our humanity from one life to the next. A million potential journeys, new paths to be forged, and truths to be uncovered.

Maybe that is our rebirth, our reincarnation. As long as the wheels of time keep churning — to breathe new life into old bones and to strive to begin anew when the old must be cast away.

“Issues” by Eric Redetzke

Elegant women pose
in folds of the musty blanket

their skirts swoosh
as I hop on the morning bed

mom is sick
and they've piled up around her again.

I open their pages
and breathe perfume bouquets

as they glide through cafes
in creamy scarves and blouses

they glance back over pink shoulders
and smile at me with
red lips and black eyeliner.

I smell wine
in the coffee cup

her eyes are thick underlined
she can't walk, she says
and pulls the blankets up
looking away

they are beautiful and strange
in frozen spinning motion
they are perfect somewhere else

these issues are getting old, she says.

“The Sea” by Leif Scott

As the waves came,
I wanted to believe.
I wanted to have faith.
Faith in god,
Faith in man.
As the water raised up,
I acknowledged the water.
Yes… It is bad now,
But, it’s only temporary.
My hope kept, me afloat.

I focused on my work,
I wanted my life back.
I did everything right.
Physical Therapy,
Doctors appointment’s.
So many things.
The continents sank,
Beneath my feet.
So, I got wheels.
I pushed myself forward.

Over time, I realized,
I am not getting better.
Determined, I kept going.
If not for me, for others.
I would force myself on.
Trying medicine after medicine.
I force the monotonous movement’s,
Numb from feeling its impact.

One day I woke up.
I realized, I can’t outrun the sea.
The flooding is getting worse.
But as the world drowned,
I was left,
Out in the flooded waste.
Not even love,
Has the power over the sea.
In the end,
The sea will claim everything.
This decimation,
Haunts me.

“Thus Far” by Theresa LM Stachlowski

You could say I have been breaking—
but that would ignore the way I’ve been becoming.
I have shed skins so old they once felt like birthright,
peeled off expectations that clung like second-hand prophecy,
and stood—bare, trembling, unornamented—
in the light that refused to lie to me.
I have walked through rooms where my voice was
a whisper, a shadow, a rumor of myself,
and I have walked back out with my spine remembering
its original architecture.

I no longer bow to the versions of me
that were built to keep the peace
at the cost of my own pulse.
Healing has not been gentle
It has been a holy provocation—
a slow, sacred rebellion against the stories
that tried to shrink me.

It has been the art of refusing to disappear.
It has been the courage to stay awake
when numbness begged for one more night.

And still—
I rise softer than before.
Not fragile.
Soft like water that carved its own canyon.
Soft like truth that no longer apologizes.
Soft like a woman who knows she is free
because she finally stopped asking for permission.

Thus far, I have learned this:
I am not returning to who I was.
I am not waiting for who I will be.
I am the unfolding—
the fierce, tender, unrepeatable unfolding—
of a life that refuses to stay small.

And the story is not finished.
But the ground beneath me is steady,
and the girl I once was
is watching with wide eyes, whispering,
“Keep going. This is what we prayed for.”

“Nature is Nurture” by Strider’s Mama

Fistfull of daisies
Pocket full of rocks
Finding Frogs
Scooping up moss

Five, six, pick up sticks
Seven, eight, search for snakes
My Silly Goose
And I such a lucky duck
Nest of nasturtiums
The way you say “slug”

Dandelion kisses
turn to a thousand wishes
When I cannot
keep
holding
my breath…

A thousand times wishing “may I never forget”
These Moments

Nature and Nurture
My Sun,
Oh, how he Shines.

“Six Months” by Patty Waalkes

Six months of skies
have come,
left a deep impression
and gone on to somewhere else.
I run my fingers
over the impression.
It is smoother now,
and I know that I
can neither add to it
nor take away
what I would like.
It is over,
and I stand numb,
braced by immovable wind—
unable to even lay the flowers
close enough,
unable to forget,
let go of expectation
and go on without.
In a momentary place
going has become a final gone,
and I cannot understand
where she went
or why.
Hold onto me.
Assume a patience.
I am still in process
while all else has finished
and gone on.
I am left clutching the flowers
still asking why.
Where is “Gone”
and how long does it last?

“Henrietta VIII” by Jenae Waddell

Off with his head.

He should never have left my bed.

He forgot how disposable he is.

All of this, all of it, is mine, not his.

His only job is to serve his queen.

Now his neck must bleed.

He produced only male heirs.

It is his fault for the unsuccessful seed he shares.

How tragic that my 5th husband must go,

The people will have a laugh at his failure and enjoy the head roll show.

No one understands how hard it is to rule,

To eat well, demand power, and act like a fool.

To be a woman means that I inherently own power,

Which is why I sit on this throne, in this untouchable tower.

Off with his head!

Another useless male,

Yet again.

“Years of the Spare” by Jenae Waddell

Year one,

This is fun.

Year two,

I love you. I hate you.

Year three,

This is hurting me.

Year four,

My heart is so sore.

Year five,

Am I even alive?

Year six,

I feel sick.

Year seven,

Being free of you is earthly heaven.