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Board of County Commissioners

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MEDIA ALERT

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Lucas County Commissioners, The Arts Commission Announce new Lucas County Poet Laureate

TOLEDO, Ohio — The Board of Lucas County Commissioners in partnership with The Arts Commission is pleased to announce that Sandra Rivers-Gill has been selected to be Lucas County's next Poet Laureate.

"Poetry has a unique ability to tell our stories, connect us across differences, and help us see our community through a new lens. Sandra Rivers-Gill has devoted her talent not only to her craft but to lifting up the voices and experiences of people throughout Lucas County," **the Commissioners said in a joint statement.** "We look forward to the ways she will use poetry to inspire, strengthen, and engage our community in her new role."

Rivers-Gill is a teaching artist and award-winning poet and playwright. Her debut poetry chapbook "As We Cover Ourselves With Light" (Sheila-Na-Gig Editions, 2023) was a finalist for the 2024 Eric Hoffer Book Award and featured at the 2024 Ohioana Book Festival. She is the editor of poetry anthologies "Dopeless Hope Fiends" (Radio Room Press, 2018), written by women in recovery; "Vibrant Voices" (PP&P Press, 2025), written by creatively aging adults; and "Amplify," a poetry anthology of black and brown voices. She wrote and performed her first

one-women show at the Bowling Green State University's Black Issues Conference and was one of five Ohio poets selected to write about Toledo Metroparks for #5poets5parks2025.

Established in 2007 through a County Commissioners resolution, the Poet Laureate is an appointed two-year position that was created to recognize the place that poetry has in the county's cultural tradition and civic life.

Rivers-Gill is the fourth poet to hold this esteemed position. She will receive a \$5,000 annual honorarium (\$10,000 total for a two-year term) and will organize public workshops and programs, as well as perform public readings and attend cultural events.

Previous Lucas County Poet Laureates include: Jonie McIntire (2022–2026), Jim Ferris (2014–2020), and Joel Lipman (2008–2014).

“We remain deeply grateful to the Lucas County Commissioners for recognizing the importance of poetry in our community and civic life and for honoring these traditions by appointing a Poet Laureate for Lucas County,” **Marc Folk, President and Chief Executive Officer of The Arts Commission, said.** “We are delighted to celebrate the appointment of the esteemed Sandra Rivers-Gill as our next Poet Laureate and look forward to her continued contributions to the literary heritage of Lucas County.”

Rivers-Gill was among three finalists nominated by the Lucas County Poet Laureate Committee to the Commissioners. She also received multiple recommendations from the community supporting her application. The Committee consists of Zach Huber, representative of the Toledo Lucas County Public Library, and former Poet Laureates Jonie McIntire and Jim Ferris.

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