

NEWS RELEASE

October 2025

From the Utah Department of Cultural & Community Engagement

To schedule interviews with competition director or competition winners, please contact: Ellen Weist, text: 503-490-4806

Twenty writers have been selected as winners in seven categories of the 66th annual Utah Original Writing Competition, by the Utah Division of Arts & Museums and the Salt Lake Community College Community Writing Center. Winners were selected from 317 entries submitted by Utah-based writers.

Manuscripts were reviewed in an anonymous process by judges who reside outside of Utah. First- and second-place winners are awarded prize money ranging from \$250 to \$1,500, depending on the category.

A private event celebrating Utah writers and the Original Writing Competition will be held on November 12, 2025, from 6 p.m.- 8 p.m. There will be an awards ceremony and readings by previous competition winners.

Past winners of the Utah Original Writing Competition include four past Utah Poets Laureate, including David Lee, Ken Brewer, Katharine Coles, and Lance Larsen.

2025 UOWC Winners

Category A: Novel, judged by Meg Elison

- First Place: "Recipient," by Anna Bessesen, Murray
- Second Place: "To the Right of the Moon," by BJ Eardley, Moab
- Honorable Mention: "The Secret Guest Book of the Inn-Between," by Robert Vicens, Salt Lake City

Category B: Creative Nonfiction Book, judged by A. Kendra Greene

- First Place: "Reverence Is Resistance: Stories & Spells from a Lake-led Movement," by Savannah Pearson, Salt Lake City

- Second Place: "Pretend It Never Happened," by Carolyn Campbell, Salt Lake City
- Honorable Mention: "History of an IED Hunter," by Melissa Hansen, Woods Cross

Category C: Poetry Collection, judged by Ina Cariño

- First Place: "Somewhere Horses," by Jasmine Khaliq, Salt Lake City
- Second Place: "We Are Milkweed," by Kim Welliver, Salt Lake City
- Honorable Mention: "Hand-drawn Maps from Memory," by Lesley Hart Gunn, Provo

Category D: Children's Book, judged by Claire Taylor

- First Place: "The Summer of Grandma's Dolls," by Louise Hurd, North Ogden
- Second Place: "One Way or Another," by Sharlee Glenn, Pleasant Grove
- Honorable Mention: "Merit & Lu: The Case of the Sticky Wicket," by Libby Ludlow, Park City

Category E: Poetry, judged by Heather Lang-Cassera

- First Place: "Trying on New Gods," by Erica Plummer, South Jordan
- Second Place: "Brimming," by Katherine January, Bountiful
- Honorable Mention: "Dearly Beloved, Orion Caught in a Dead Spruce, Willow, Rural Cemetery, Santa Monica Pier, Biomass 1-4," by Joe Roberts, Salt Lake City

Category F: Short Story, judged by A.C. Wise

- First Place: "The Trial," by Abigail Rose-Marie, Spanish Fork
- Second Place: "The Fishhusband of Stinking Water," by Christian Loftus, Kaysville
- Honorable Mention: "Faith in a .44," by C.K. Turner, Sandy



Category G: Creative Nonfiction Essay, judged by Tyler Orion Glauz-Todrank

- First Place: “Skylab and Feather,” by Cheyenne Nimes, Salt Lake City
- Second Place: “Manners,” by Abigail Rose-Marie, Spanish Fork
- Honorable Mention: “Children of the Birds,” by Chloe Scheve, West Valley City

About the Utah Original Writing Competition

Since 1958, the Utah Original Writing Competition has awarded Utah writers for works of fiction, nonfiction, and poetry in a variety of forms. The competition’s mission is to aid Utah writers on their path to publication and broader recognition. Submissions must be original works and, with some exceptions, cannot be published or accepted for publication at the time of entry. Manuscripts are reviewed in an anonymous process by judges selected from outside of Utah. There is no entry fee, and it is open to all Utah residents age 18 and over.

About Utah Arts & Museums

Utah Arts & Museums (UA&M) seeks to advance Utahns’ quality of life through arts and museum experiences and cultural opportunities. We are a service organization offering a variety of professional development opportunities and grants to serve our constituents. We serve schools, local arts agencies, organizations, community centers, performing groups, museums, and individuals across Utah.

About the SLCC Community Writing Center

The SLCC Community Writing Center (CWC) supports, motivates and educates people of all abilities and educational backgrounds who want to use writing for practical needs, civic engagement and personal expression. In addition to an open space available for writing, it provides opportunities to enhance writing abilities through programs such as Writing Coaching, Writing Workshops, the Community Writing Series, Writing Partners, and Community Publications. These services are open to all Salt Lake area residents.

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