

**Poetry** from 1A

The April 4 concert will feature a unique pairing of music and poetry performed by Chris Lee and Colleen O'Brien entitled PoetryMusic.

The duo describes their performance as "Poetry set to music, music composed to poetry and poetry as a catalyst for free improvisation."

The two musicians have been performing together for decades and have developed a unique approach to presenting their combination of music and speech. Lee plays the vibes and O'Brien plays the cello, a combination that produces a mix of musical progressions and aural soundscapes. The music is then mixed with the recitation of poems and writings during the song.

Lee said the process of creating the pieces PoetryMusic performs has been going on for a long while — since 1980 — and continues to this day.

"We were originally inspired by the great musician Steve Swallow, who did an album set to the poems of Robert Creeley. We really enjoyed that work and started composing poetry

with music," Lee said. "Over the years we collected these pieces and in 2014 we decided we would set up a tour, primarily performing in libraries. We found there was a great response to the work and we ended up touring and staying on the road for 14 months."

Spencer said that the Portland-based group "mixes great music with the spoken word."

"PoetryMusic has performed at the Siuslaw Public Library before and they are very much back by popular demand," she said. "I love the mix of the improvisational feel of jazz with the very focused and precise language of poetry."

Wikipedia describes poetry as an art form that predates literacy. The earliest forms of poetry were likely sung or chanted and utilized as a way to share oral histories, genealogy and law.

Some of the earliest surviving examples of poetry exist in the form of tablets carved in stone, which would have been recited or performed as hymns or songs as early as the second millennium B.C.

Many ancient written works such as the Vedas (1700-1200

B.C.) and the Odyssey (800-675 B.C.) were originally written in a poetic form to assist individuals in ancient civilizations in memorization and oral transmission.

China also has a long history of embracing and promoting poetry by producing and distributing the "Classic of Poetry," which included 305 entries dating from the 11th to seventh centuries B.C.

While poetry has many fans, some readers have trouble finding a poet whose work resonates with them. Spencer also has advice to address that problem.

"If you think you don't like poetry, I think former Poet Laureate Billy Collins is the perfect place to start; anyone who wrote a poem called 'The trouble with Poetry' is probably going to be fun to read," she said. "And, if you want to read a great Oregon poet, William Stafford is definitely worth a



MARK BRENNAN/SIUSLAW NEWS

**The National Audubon Society considers the Siuslaw River Estuary as an "Important Bird Area." It also declared 2018 "the year of the bird."**

read."

Another avenue for people interested in expanding their poetic experience can be found at the monthly poetry readings at Florence Regional Arts Alliance (FRAA) Art Center, 120 Maple St. in Historic Old Town Florence.

Florence Big Wave Poetry is hosting the First Tuesday Open Mic Night on April 3 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The event draws performers from the community and from FRAA members.

Caroline Mesman, FRAA board member, has been involved in the creation and presentation of FRAA's poetic

offerings. She invites anyone interested in the genre to stop in on the first Tuesday of each month.

"Everyone is welcome — poets, writers and performers will be sharing their work," Mesman said. "We support all the arts and that includes the literary arts. We also support the efforts of all types of written word authors, so this is a great opportunity to share your work and get to know other authors and poets."

Paul Klippel coordinates poetry events for FRAA and he sees the current high level of interest in poetry as a way to

share ideas and concerns.

"Our biggest desire as a poetry group is to connect with young people. It's always a challenge to reach across the generations and interest the younger people and get them to participate," he said. "Our Tuesday open mic has been very popular and continues to draw a younger crowd that is interested in writing and performing their original work."

Klippel also wants people to know there are ongoing poetry groups that meet in the area on a regular basis.

"There is a group meeting weekly at Shorewood, on Wednesdays from 3 to 5 p.m., and a bi-monthly workshop at the Coast village Clubhouse, on the second Tuesday of the month," he said.

The growing popularity and interest in the spoken word is encouraging to Klippel.

"Poetry is a way to look back and to look ahead in a way that is more temporal and more thoughtful. It puts people in touch with their inner self and what really matters to them."

For more information on National Poetry Month events, visit [siuslawlibrary.info](http://siuslawlibrary.info).

**Special series** from 1A

The amendment was attached to a spending bill for the Center for Disease Control (CDC) that forbade the organization from using funds to "advocate or promote gun control."

An often-cited claim is that the Dickey Amendment bans all research regarding gun violence, but this is not true, according to a February 2018 article by The Atlantic.

But at the same time, the spending bill stripped any CDC funding for such research.

The NRA had pushed for the amendment, stating it was politically motivated, and the agency may have had cause to believe this.

The NRA focused on a statement by CDC National Center for Injury Prevention and Control then-

spokesman Mark Rosenberg who stated, "We need to revolutionize the way we look at guns, like what we did with cigarettes. ... It used to be that smoking was a glamour symbol — cool, sexy, macho. Now it is dirty, deadly and banned."

To have a governmental scientist enter the gun debate with a preconceived bias would be considered unethical by many in the scientific community and goes to show why gun rights advocates would be wary of this, particularly in light of Rosenberg's statements.

Since then, multiple organizations such as the American Public Health Association and American Medical Association have been calling gun violence a public health problem, and many more have petitioned for a lifting of the Dickey Amendment, including Dickey himself. In 2012,

he coauthored a Washington Post op-ed with Rosenberg, calling for more governmental research.

"I wish I had not been so reactionary," Dickey told reporters.

The reason scientists want more robust and regulated research on the issue of guns involves the role of the CDC. The agency studies a multitude of issues surrounding unnatural death, including drownings, accidental falls, car crashes and suicides. Thus far, the CDC has not made regulations to ban automobiles, swimming pools and steep stairs.

This is not to say that the CDC would act as a final word on the subject of gun violence, and that it would always provide correct information. Science is an ongoing conversation, with studies building on one another until a majority of peer-reviewed research comes to a consensus.

But to reach a consensus, multiple studies have to be done. For that to happen, all hands need to be on deck.

It would be a misconception to believe that banning research would lead to gun control. Many of the independent studies thus far point to the opposite in certain circumstances. To understand that research, it is important to look at what guns actually are.

**"Assault weapons"**

Before the Florence March for Our Lives began, one demonstrator spoke about what types of guns they wanted to ban.

"I don't want to take away the gun of a hunter, but I don't think anybody needs a semi-automatic machine gun," she said. "I don't think that's necessary. Those guns are used for warfare. They're made to kill. They're

not made to aim accurately. They're just made to kill as many people as possible, and I don't think that's something that should be owned by the average person."

The demonstrator was speaking off the cuff and stated there would be others better suited to speak on the issue. However, the same phrasing they used to describe the guns was echoed by many others at the protest — "machine guns," "assault weapons" and "semi-automatic" were terms that were used interchangeably.

By misusing terms, gun reform advocates can find themselves inadvertently calling for either unnecessary action, when some types of guns are already prohibited, or advocating a ban on the majority of weapons in the United States.

See **SPECIAL SERIES 10A**