

WESTWOOD

# Viti has big plans as town's first poet laureate

By **Johanna Seltz** Globe Correspondent, Updated February 28, 2023, 9:58 p.m.



Lynne Viti, Westwood's first poet laureate, whose latest poetry collection called "The Walk to Cefalu" came out in September. RICHARD HOWARD

The town of Westwood has its first poet laureate: Lynne Viti, whose latest poetry collection — "The Walk to Cefalu" — came out in September.

The Select Board voted Feb. 27 to name Viti to the post through June 2025, with the goal of encouraging the reading and writing of poetry, mentoring a teen poet, and writing several poems for local events and holidays. The position pays \$500 annually.

Viti plans include holding community poetry slams and a poetry contest, continuing to run poetry workshops at the Westwood Public Library, bringing more poets into the Westwood public schools, and holding poetry workshops at the town's senior center.

She also intends to write a poem to celebrate the April 2 foundation of the town, when Westwood became independent of Dedham in 1896.

“I have a passion for poetry,” she said in an interview after her appointment. “It’s comforting, allows us to express our innermost feelings and questions, and to take notice of the world around us. It’s a way to process deep emotion — to make sense of the world through words. It’s good therapy.”

The daughter of a Baltimore tavern owner and schoolteacher, Viti started writing poetry as a child and was a “closet poet” who didn’t share her work for many years while teaching English and practicing law in Boston.

It wasn’t until her children were grown that she began writing more seriously. She has since had four collections of poetry published. “I’ve been at it about 15 years in a wholehearted way,” she said.

Other communities with poet laureates include Amesbury, Andover, Arlington, Boston, Brookline, Dedham, Gloucester, New Bedford, Newburyport, North Andover, Plymouth, Somerville, and Worcester.

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