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N E W S R E L E A S E

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Nebraska Book Festival to feature Kooser, Kloefkorn, Welch

The 2009 Nebraska Book Festival in downtown Lincoln will feature a conversation between two-time U.S. Poet Laureate Ted Kooser, Nebraska State Poet William Kloefkorn, and award-winning Nebraska poet Don Welch.

The conversation, free and open to the public, will be held at 2 p.m. Nov. 14 at the Nebraska State Historical Society's Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln. Kooser, Kloefkorn and Welch will discuss among themselves and with the audience insights on reading and writing poetry.

"I am interested in their opinion on the state of contemporary poetry, responses they are getting, and their views on how poetry has changed over the years," Kloefkorn said of Kooser and Welch. "But I am also interested in what the audience sees as the pertinent questions about poetry, what they think about poetry on the Internet and their discussions with others about how online poetry influences them."

Kooser, Kloefkorn and Welch will also talk about how they have supported each other's work as a writing community through publication, reading, teaching and friendship.

"By being from small-town Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska, we supported each other over the years with our interest in the local and how very ordinary things can have an extraordinary significance," Welch said. "Along with its other expressions, poetry can get at the heart of that."

"All three of us were born in the same decade and share a lot of experience about what it was like to be a child of parents born very early in the new century, and to have been raised in the heart of rural America," Kooser said. "The world has changed immensely since we were children and we have all remarked upon that in our work, which we have shared over the years."

Ted Kooser, U.S. poet laureate from 2004 to 2006, has authored 12 collections of poetry and essays, including "Delights & Shadows" which won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for poetry. His "Lights on a Ground of Darkness," collected stories of his mother's Iowa family, will be released in paperback by Bison Books (University of Nebraska Press) Sept. 1. He teaches as presidential professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

William Kloefkorn, emeritus professor of English at Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, was named Nebraska state poet by the Nebraska Legislature in 1982. His publications include many collections of poetry, four memoirs and two collections of short fiction. "Restoring the Burnt Child," his second memoir, was the 2008 One Book One Nebraska selection. His fourth memoir, "Breathing in the Fullness of Time," was published by the University of Nebraska Press in April 2009.

Don Welch, Reynolds professor of poetry emeritus at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, is the author of more than 20 collections of poetry and over 300 poems published in magazines, journals and anthologies. He has won several national and regional awards, including the Mildred Bennet Award from the Nebraska Center for the Book and Sower Award in the Humanities from the Nebraska Humanities Council, both in 2004. His latest collection is "When Memory Gives Dust a Face," published by Sandhills Press in April 2008.

The Nebraska Book Festival will include readings from Nebraska authors whose books were published in 2009, including poets Hilda Raz, JV Brummels and Allison Hedge Coke. For more information visit www.nebraskabookfestival.org.

The festival is presented by the Nebraska Center for the Book, Nebraska Humanities Council, Nebraska Library Commission and the Nebraska State Historical Society, with support from the Duncan Family Trust, Lee Booksellers, University of Nebraska Press and Nebraska Cultural Endowment.