Pre-nursing senior wins annual DeClercq poetry contest

“Food is Love,” a poem by Celeste McCarty, a Cal State East Bay senior majoring in pre-nursing, has taken first prize in the 2010 Helen “Jackie” DeClercq Poetry Contest. The San Francisco resident will receive $250 for her poem.

“Running,” by Britanie Strei, a senior in English living in San Leandro, took second place, and “On Tour,” by Janel Pleskac, an English graduate student living in San Lorenzo, was third. “Our Liberation of 1945,” by Justin Melville, a senior in English living in San Leandro, and “Waking Up” by Michelle Touhey, a Hayward junior majoring in English, took honorable mentions in the contest open to all CSUEB students.

Awards will be presented at the Distinguished Writers Series event featuring poet Kim Addonizio at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 13 in the Biella Room of the University Library, 25800 Carlos Bee Blvd., Hayward. McCarty, Strei and Pleskac have been invited to read their poems at the start of that gathering.

“In its fifth year, the DeClercq award continues to remind us that poetry is alive and well on our campus. The judges found many worthy entries among the over 150 poems that were submitted and judged anonymously. A winning poem usually distinguishes itself from the others, ultimately, by evoking a distinct voice, creating a real dialogue between writer and reader, and, of course, by its sure command of form and technique,” said Susan Gubernat, associate professor of English and contest supervisor.

Judges were Kathy and John DeClercq, family members of the late, long-time CSUEB employee Jackie DeClercq, whose bequest has funded the award; Mary D’Alleva, a lecturer in English and Human Development; Aline Soules, a university librarian, and Gubernat. D’Alleva, Soules and Gubernat are all published poets.

The winning poems will be published in “Occam’s Razor,” the English Department’s literary magazine, which is due out in late-spring.

While poems of any subject were eligible, the emphasis was on those celebrating aspects of family life.