



Contact: Kate Cochran
COO and Program Director,
Leadership Development
kate@ci-sv.org
408.283.8507

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 7, 2002

Former Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky Engages Silicon Valley Leaders in Discussion of Poetry and Community Building

San José, CA – Robert Pinsky, three-time Poet Laureate (1997-2000) and contributor to the Lehrer News Hour, riveted a group of 25 invited business and community leaders yesterday at a luncheon at the Capital Club as part of the da Vinci Forum Speaker Series. This is the second of a quarterly series featuring thought-provoking artists, authors, and opinion-leaders speaking on culture and community, sponsored by Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley, Community Foundation Silicon Valley and the Tech Museum.

Dr. Pinsky centered his discussion around the Favorite Poems Project (favoritepoem.org), his initiative while Poet Laureate to demonstrate poetry's accessibility and broad popularity by recording typical Americans reading and discussing their favorite poems. With no advertising, the project attracted 18,000 submissions and has produced 50 videos of Americans from all walks of life from manual laborers to suburban housewives to high school students, all telling their stories and explaining why their poems are relevant—painting a picture of America through poetry.

Luncheon guest and former Mercury News Editor Rob Elder asked Dr. Pinsky if he thought that poetry could play a role in teaching literacy in our schools. "Absolutely! But it's more than literacy," Pinsky responded. "Poetry is a physical art form that can teach sentence rhythms and structure and sound and word choice in a way that you feel it in your stomach not just memorize it in your head. I firmly believe that teaching the arts makes people smart."

In addition to co-sponsors, Peter Hero, President of Community Foundation Silicon Valley and Peter Giles, President/CEO of the Tech Museum of Innovation, guests represented regional leaders from the business, civic and philanthropic community and included, among others, Dan Maydan, President of Applied Materials; Roberta Katz, CEO of Article III, Inc. and former President of TechNet; Jay Harris, former publisher of the Mercury News; Ann Gralnek, Senior Advisor to the George Frederick Jewett Foundation; and Harry Saal, Cultural Initiatives Board President.

The event was hosted by Mark Ritchie, President of Ritchie Commercial, and Tom Bondi, Principal with Berger/Lewis Accountancy.

Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley is a public benefit organization formed in response to the research and planning efforts of over 1,000 committed community leaders, and dedicated to the development of a comprehensive plan for the cultural transformation of Silicon Valley

###