

17th Annual San Diego Book Awards Presented

The 17th Annual San Diego Book and Writing Awards ceremony was held on June 11 at AMN Healthcare. It is open to all writers living in San Diego County.

“This year’s ceremony was especially exciting,” said president, Kate Gurney. “In addition to it being our biggest event in seventeen years--over 200 guests attended the ceremony--we had a record number of entries--230--in all categories and even had to create new categories to accommodate the increasing range of genres and topics of books we received.”

From all the entries, the judges chose 33 finalists to receive the awards. Categories included unpublished novels and short stories as well as published fiction and non-fiction books with fiction genres such as Political/Legal Thriller, SciFi/Fantasy, and children’s picture books. Non-fiction areas included Cookbooks, Self-help/Inspirational, and Travel. New categories this year included Military/Politics, Science, Contemporary Fiction, and Action/Suspense.

Local TV personality and author, Phoebe Chongchua, as host, set a lively pace as the writers and guests in the audience applauded and cheered for the winners--who each received a trophy engraved with their name and the title of their book or manuscript.

Grant Barrett, co-host of the popular KPBS radio show *A Way with Words*, and well-known language authority, delivered a keynote address that delighted the audience of writers and wordsmiths.

A highlight of the event was the announcement of the Geisel Award. Named after San Diego’s own beloved “Dr. Seuss,” the award goes to “the best of the best” of published books submitted each year. This year’s winner, Drusilla Campbell for *The Good Sister*, laughed through the acceptance speech, as one requirement for accepting the award is to wear the two-foot tall, red-and-white striped “Cat in the Hat” hat. Campbell, a best-selling local author, is the president on San Diego Writer’s, Ink. Publisher’s Weekly said that *The Good Sister* “should be on everyone’s book club list.”

Local published authors were also given space to display and sell their books during the social hours and buffets before and after the ceremony.

"The San Diego Book Awards are increasingly important for local writers," said Cathy Lubenski Phillips, who won the award for best unpublished novel, *Trashy Chic*, in 2009. "It's invaluable to be able to say on your query letter that you've won. It helped me get a book deal for *Trashy Chic*, which is due out in December, and I've just signed a contract for a second book."