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Mosaic tiles to be installed in Leo Politi Garden

Installation begins this week of five large mosaic tiles featuring brightly colored birds and animals that will adorn the walkway of the [Leo Politi Garden](#) at Fresno State, just east of the Henry Madden Library.

The tiles, measuring up to 40 inches by 67 inches each and weighing as much as 900 pounds, were produced by ceramic and stained glass artist John Cook of Idyllwild, Calif. They were patterned after tiles created by Fresno-native Politi, the late children's author and illustrator, for his Los Angeles-area home.

Cook was recommended to replicate Politi's mosaic sidewalk by his son and daughter, Paul Politi and Suzanne Bischof, who said the tiles capture the lighthearted essence of their father's original work.

The Leo Politi Garden is funded by the Arne Nixon Center Advocates (ANCA), honoring the longtime friendship of Politi and Nixon, the late Fresno State educator. ANCA supports the [Arne Nixon Center for the Study of Children's Literature](#) at the Madden Library. The Arne Nixon Center houses approximately 60,000 books, periodicals, manuscripts and original art pieces — including the work of Politi.

The installation of the mosaic tiles marks the beginning of the second phase of the Politi Garden project. The first phase was completed in 2010 and included walkways, seating areas, lighting, a tiled water fountain and landscaping. Phase two, to be completed this fall, will include bronze sculptures molded from Politi's original wooden statues depicting a girl and boy reading a book and a girl with her arms outstretched to the sky.

Politi was born in Fresno in 1908 before moving to Italy with his family at age 6. He returned to Fresno and launched his literary career in 1938. In 1950, his book "Song of the Swallows" won the Caldecott Medal for the nation's most distinguished children's picture book. A public library, a park and an elementary school have also been established in his name.

For more information on photo opportunities, contact the Arne Nixon Center at 559.278.8116 or jsanford@csufresno.edu.

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