WORCESTER, TENACIOUS SOUL

Perhaps, deep in its inner being, the joyful black-capped chickadee can feel the long, mournful, saddening winter season. Persistent, loyal to its garden, this bird does not fly away. It stays, as if it knows about all these pandemic days, or as if it had heard Gertrude Halstead’s reflective verse: *I paint the dead ash gray.*

Perennial mayflowers--fragrant, patient--wait, as if they knew the glorious journey of laborers, who decade after decade domesticate textiles, machinery... They are vibrant, progressive men and women who flourish, revitalize, pioneer inventions, the heart of Massachusetts, despite all odds. Resilient hearts, beating, marching on like the hands of Worcester’s old historic clocks, illuminate the future, defy death.

Worcester souls, with their tenacious will, compose new chapters past the Seven Hills: the District Channel flows, river of hope; gifted gardeners brighten up the corners with vivid colorful grafts portraying dreams; the young embrace the arts, craft poems and songs.

And yet, challenges lie ahead; wide gaps between us desperately insist that we commit to build bridges of acceptance, understanding, and turn the page for good, to reach success.

*Gertrude Halstead*
Perhaps, deep in its inner being,
the joyful black-capped chickadee can feel
desires of spring that thrill abundant hearts
over the bridges of Elm Park, where Worcester
souls, embracing one another, sing
Gertrude Halstead’s reflective verses:
*I paint the dead ash gray*
*and the light always light.*

Juan Matos
Worcester Poet Laureate
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