

**Ligonier Valley Writers'**  
*31st annual*

# **Student Poetry Awards**



**April 30, 2022**

# Ligonier Valley Writers Calendar 2022

**May 1.** *Loyalhanna Review* submission deadline.  
(Reading period is February 1-May 1.) Check  
LVWonline.org for guidelines.

**April 15.** Flash Fiction Contest opens. This year's topic:  
mermaids, selkies, and other water dwellers. Three cash  
prizes plus three Honorable Mentions, no entry fee,  
readings, and publication at LVW's website.

**July (Date TBD), 7:00-9:00 p.m.**  
*Loyalhanna Review* publication party.

**August 15.** Deadline for Flash Fiction Contest  
submissions. This year's topic: mermaids,  
selkies, and other water dwellers.

*We hope to schedule more in-person events later  
this year. Please check [www.LVWonline.org](http://www.LVWonline.org) or  
the LVW Facebook page for the latest information  
about events, contests, and publications.*

**Ligonier Valley Writers  
PO Box B, Ligonier, PA 15658  
LVWonline.org**

**Student Poetry Awards**  
**April 30, 2022**

**Participating Schools 2022**

Albert Gallatin High School  
Belle Vernon Area Middle School  
Chartiers Valley Middle School  
Derry Area Middle School  
Derry Area High School  
Grandview Elementary School  
Greater Latrobe High School  
Hempfield Area High School  
Indiana Area Junior High School  
Keystone Oaks High School  
Ligonier Valley Middle School  
Marshall Middle School  
Masontown Elementary School  
North Allegheny High School  
Norwin High School  
River Valley High School  
Southmoreland Area High School  
Southmoreland Area Middle School  
Valley School of Ligonier  
Wendover Middle School

Ligonier Valley Writers thanks the following sponsors for their generous contributions to the Student Poetry Contest.

Paul S. Brittain

*Sponsor of the Kathleen Brittain and Paul Spencer Poetry Award*

Jim Busch

*Sponsor of the Glenda Busch Memorial Award*

Candace Green

*Sponsor of the Henry Clay and Gladys Maas Pruitt Award*

Sally Shirey

*Sponsor of the Highview Farm Award  
and the Shirey Poetry Award*

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Ronald J. Shafer

*Sponsor of the Hayden Savinda Memorial Award*

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Michele Jones



*The Best of the Best in Grades 10-12*

**the prelude begins inside the mouth** by Kathryn Mi  
*North Allegheny High School, Grade 11*

this is how our language cultivates the dream: by  
    swallowing every god-forsaken thing at once.  
tonight i open my mouth and crescendo the silence,  
    let your presence be the presence that fires  
every neuron in my body, let you teach me how to breathe again  
    until the distance between us becomes cyclical—  
tonight two girls mar themselves with their self-hatred and  
    i want my voice back, want to wash up on your shoreline  
in the midst of all this white noise  
    and scrub all my sins away.  
between the window and the archive of my body,  
    i have whispered a dozen *i love yous* into the dark.  
tonight I have wound myself up like a ticking clock,  
    have asserted the theory of sound in this unholy space  
and *god*, I want to sing until the six feet between us  
    turn to music—  
tonight two girls martyr themselves on the altar and  
    i want to kiss you until we both forget, never knowing that  
ghosts only forget in the way that god forgives,  
    which is to say that they do not.

**Categories G-I (Grades 10-12)**

*G. The Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award*  
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**A. Kathleen Brittain and Paul Spencer  
Poetry Award**

*Grades 4-6: rhymed verse, any subject*

**Sponsored by Paul S. Brittain**

**First Prize**

**A Day in the Snow** by Anthony Barbera  
*Valley School of Ligonier*

When I woke up, I rose from my bed.  
I put on my slippers and silently said,  
“Did it snow?”

From the window comes a glow.  
To my delight, there is snow.  
So I go outside.

Swirling around,  
Down to the ground,  
The snow is here.

Caressing my hair,  
Flakes too pretty to spare,  
Covering the green grass.

Fallen angels on the ground,  
As arms and legs wave around,  
Making heavenly prints.

Cold projectiles soar through the air,  
Taking my sisters unaware,  
Victims of chilly mischief.



***The Best of the Best in Grades 7-9***

**Not a Morning Person** by Becca Codner  
*Marshall Middle School, Grade 8*

*A golden shovel poem based on “Calling Dreams” by Georgia Douglas Johnson. Read the words in boldface at the end of each line to discover two sentences from Johnson’s poem.*

At night I feel I should have **the right**  
to sleep, **to make**  
the wonders and fantasies of **my dreams**  
in a realm where they can flourish and **come true**.  
To stay a while and watch them grow is really all **I ask**,  
and yet the voice says **nay**.  
It simply refuses to meet what **I demand**.  
Is it really too much to ask this **of life**?  
This argument has never changed, looking back at then **and now**.  
The voice refuses to cooperate or meet me where **I am**.  
This heartbreak repeats over and over, **at length**.  
I fight and protest, but against my will **I rise**.  
And, even though it’s the last thing I want, **I wake**.  
I so desperately wish to stay in this land where I can fly, and play,  
**and stride!**  
Yet the voice keeps pushing me, and it’s the real world I’m forced  
back **into**.  
I’m risen from my paradise with the sun rising in **the morning**.  
And, as always, my delicate illusion will fracture and **break**.

**John L. Naccarato Memorial Award**

*Sponsored by Michele Jones*

*The Best of the Best in Grades 4-6*

**All about Earth!** by *Ryan Mohney*  
*Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6*

With the grass so green  
The trees so colorful  
The ocean and seas  
So beautiful all around.  
Look up at the sky,  
Such an amazing blue.  
The delicate birds sing all day  
Inside huge forests.  
Deer sit and graze.  
Let's go past sky heights,  
Whole way to space.  
Different planets spin  
Their way around sun.  
Glorious white stars  
Wait to be wished upon.  
It's an unbelievable sight.  
I can't believe  
How lucky we are  
To be on Earth today.

**Second Prize**

**Battle through Life** by *Jessica Mack*  
*Ligonier Valley Middle School*

The moon and the stars  
You can see Mars,  
All of my scars  
Played through guitars.



**Third Prize**

**The Quivering River** by *Emma Cruz*  
*Ligonier Valley Middle School*

The slow river  
has a nice glimmer,  
but when it's fast  
it starts to dash.  
Soon it will quiver.

## B. Glenda Busch Memorial Award

*Grades 4-6: unrhymed verse, any subject*  
**Sponsored by Jim Busch**

### *First Prize*

**Monday** by Carter Gunn  
*Ligonier Valley Middle School*

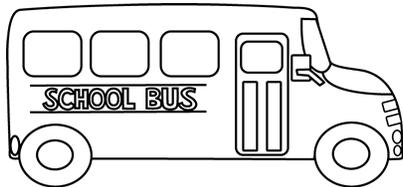
“Ring, ring!” The alarm  
Went off  
Early in the morning.

Slow as a turtle,  
Tired like  
I got no sleep.

Dark as space outside.  
Hungry, waiting  
For myself to get dressed

Brushing my teeth,  
Waiting for the  
Bus to get to the stop.

Rushing on the bus,  
On the cold  
Morning arriving at my school.



### *Third Prize*

**Shattered** by Alcameana Kennedy  
*Albert Gallatin High School*

When Death visits  
He takes the ones I love.  
I never feel sorrow or pain—  
And I quite enjoy the rain.

I let them go  
Without thought or care.  
Time must go on  
and Life is often unfair.

But I met this Angel,  
Her smile so warm,  
A reincarnation of the sun.  
Vary unique, unlike anyone.

She compares me to a machine  
Because my feelings are stone.  
I can't help that I have no sympathy.  
I embrace being alone.

But Death once again visited  
And over Her He leered.  
For the first time in forever  
I let my eye shed a tear.



**Second Prize**

**Syringa x Laciniata\*** by Olivia Belcher  
North Allegheny High School

Don't tell me about flowers or crayon hearts. Don't tell me about soft kisses or sweet morning dew. Don't lie to me and call me yours, sugar or sweetheart or the all-too-feared sugarplum.

Don't pretend I don't already know how falling in love is a tragedy. In the same way a star birth is a star death, all beginnings predict an end, & I feel I am empty except for the thick ball of ice that rattles inside and bruises my skin from the wet inside to the dry seasalt out. For, you see, a home is a massacre, and darling-dear, I don't want to see you dead. Though, perhaps then, we would finally live in twin cold tandem fantasy— a rigor mortis, which feels nothing like the snowy saccharine sweetness, living in my body and calling locusts to my heart. But it's close enough, close enough for you to feel my skin become goose-feathered in its feeble attempts to run. It is an endless chase, my love, though I am forever the sharp beast and never the hunter, jackdaws calling mockery through the maples as I snap liminal limelight lilacs beneath my soul, soothsaying the bitter, acrid end. Every time, inevitably, your sword will pierce my heart; how I hope my ribs make warm enough shelter once you filet me like a drowned tilefish found floating in freshwater, & when you rest, tell me that story this time. Lull my candied corpse to sleep with tales of the rotten truth instead of all these sucrose lies.

\**Syringa x Laciniata* is a cut-leaf lilac shrub.

**Second Prize**

**Comfort Zone** by Katrina Bennett  
Ligonier Valley Middle School

Cats are the  
Most snuggly and cuddly  
Fuzzballs ever

Just ready to save  
The day and come  
Cuddle and snuggle

When you're sad,  
Have no fright.  
The cat is here to share comfort.



**Third Prize**

**Baseball Fright** by Evan Penrose  
Ligonier Valley Middle School

When I found out  
I was  
Up to bat,  
In the batter's box,  
I felt  
Very nervous

But very determined  
To hit  
The big baseball.



**C. Henry Clay and Gladys Maas Pruitt Award**

*Grades 4-6: haiku, any subject*

*Sponsored by Candace Green*

**First Prize**

**Dreaming** by Emma Package  
Ligonier Valley Middle School

Falling fast asleep  
Through a shimmering whirlpool  
Of dreams yet to come



**Second Prize**

**Shadow Catcher** by Jarett Krupper  
Ligonier Valley Middle School

Darkness is crawling,  
Trying to catch my shadow,  
Hiding. It's here now. Bye!



**Third Prize**

**Beyond the Darkness**  
by Scout Hinton  
Ligonier Valley Middle School

The precious planets

**Categories G-I (Grades 10-12)**

**I. Marie Martin Memorial Award**

*Grades 10-12, Romantic Poetry, any subject*

*Sponsored by Phil and Mary Lou Fleming*

**First Prize**

**Our Perfect** by Audrey Starck  
North Allegheny High School



Our fingers don't mesh together cleanly  
When we hold hands.  
My fingers don't slot into yours  
Like puzzle pieces that finally found their match.

In fact, sometimes I miss your hand completely,  
Or two fingers awkwardly squeeze into one slot.  
Then you laugh,  
And suddenly we've unlocked something perfect.

Our dates aren't bathed in candlelight  
Or adorned with nicely folded napkins and velvet tablecloths.  
We've never been to a nice restaurant downtown,  
Dressed in beautiful clothes and sparkling gems.

In fact, we've had more videogame date nights in oversized  
pajamas  
than God ever intended for teenagers in love.  
Then you hug me goodbye,  
And suddenly we've unlocked something perfect.

We'll never grace the cover of a romance novel  
Or scroll across the credits of a romantic drama.  
But we'll be here,

**Third Prize**

**She Won't Be There** by Abigail Wolfgang  
Greater Latrobe Senior High School

Whenever I see a great tumbleweed  
Rolling in the wind,

It is Rapid City, South Dakota,  
November of 2013.

My sister and I watched in awe  
Of it rolling in the wind  
While sitting in a minuscule airport.

The family all gathered together  
From all corners of the globe.  
On this rare occasion we reminisce.  
We remember the years we've lost.

We stare at stone faces,  
Tour all the great places,  
Making new memories to go with the old.

But that is only part of my story.

The not-so-veiled secret  
Hidden behind the joy:  
There is someone missing.

We're here because of tragedy.  
We bond over grief.  
We cry through the pain,  
Wishing for someone who won't be there.

For once she won't be there.  
For once our memories she won't share.

The woman who made us,  
The woman who changed us,  
For once she won't be there.

We will all go join her,

**D. Highview Farm Award**

*Grades 7-9: traditional verse, any subject*  
**Sponsored by Sally Shirey**

**First Prize**

**Covid Birthdays** by Jack Edwards  
Belle Vernon Area Middle School

You only become a teenager once.  
Lots of wishes and lots of wants.  
Blew out the candles to a much smaller crowd.  
Wanted more family and friends but they weren't allowed.  
Usually family and friends fill the room,  
But this year it was all on Zoom.  
All the plans and festivities we had to put off.  
People were getting nervous over one little cough.  
A family tradition is choosing the dinner.  
Chicken-stuffed shells was the winner.  
Covid taught us to be grateful for what we got.  
Hopefully by next year everyone will get the shot.

**Second Prize**

**I Know Your True Fear** by Mackenzie Birchak  
Wendover Middle School

When people ask you what your fears are,  
Do you say, "I'm scared of heights"?  
Or do you say the dark?  
Maybe being in fights?  
Do you say compact spaces,  
Or being high up in the sky?  
Do you say flying insects,  
Or just barely getting by?  
I know you confine your true fears  
In the back of your mind,  
On imaginary shelves,  
Because I know your true fear

***Third Prize***

**Nature's Goodbye** by Taylor Beech  
Belle Vernon Area Middle School

The wind helps the leaf  
Wave hello.

They have been friends  
Since springtime, from  
The moment the buds on  
The tree began to bloom.

But now the time has  
Come for the leaf to let go of  
The tree and fall.

The wind carries its  
Friends to where others  
Have found their final  
Place of rest, below the  
Tree on a bed of grass.

“There you go, old friend.  
Your time has come.  
Until we meet again.”

The leaf lies staring past  
The others still on the vine.

And as time passes and the leaf withers,  
His joy does not depart.

For now he knows  
The answer he'd waited to know from the start.

Only after it was time for the leaf to die  
Did he finally see himself the color of the sky.

It's the wind's turn to wave,  
This time goodbye.



***Second Prize***

**Wings of Lead** by Audrey Starck  
North Allegheny High School

Please don't praise me for working hard.  
Don't look upon my academic accomplishments,  
My graded validations,  
My test scores and my college classes,  
With admiration.

Don't applaud my insistence to aim for the stars  
When my wings can only carry me to the clouds.  
Because I have been taught there is no use for Daedalus's  
wings  
If I don't fly them to the sun.

And as the wax melts,  
As I plummet to the Earth,  
I wonder if you will then praise my hard work.

So please, don't praise me for the wings that have grounded me  
My entire life.  
Don't praise me for the mind that has tormented me  
With blistering chains of expectation.

Praise me for the hands that hold my pencil,  
For the heart that beats in my chest,  
And for the eyes that watch the world with enough wonder  
To open every morning.

## H. Hayden Savinda Memorial Award

*Grades 10-12: free verse, any subject*

*Sponsored by Ronald J. Shafer*

### *First Prize*

**all the courses of our family values are written between the lines  
of my suicide notes and my father's will** by Kathryn Mi

*North Allegheny High School*

and december has passed in 60-degree weather and a gray ash sky,  
and the year is nothing like a transformation.  
so here's to the mirror that isn't really a mirror,  
and i am draining the lake of what it's worth  
*(meaning: i spill and i spill  
until i bleed out the water into something beautiful).*  
and out of every killing act he committed, the most human thing  
he did was love me,  
and i can't tell him i don't want to live because i will never  
be good enough  
to turn this life into poetry.  
and always his warmth, an antithesis to himself, always arriving  
late,  
always lost somewhere between his tongue  
*(clipped)*  
and mine  
*(flooded),*  
and the distance, yawning wide as the chasm that separates  
his language and mine—  
so i forge him the pen and he hands me the knife,  
and i open my mouth to speak and he says,  
*you are not young enough  
to know everything.*

## E. Shirey Poetry Award

*Grades 7-9: free verse, any subject*

*Sponsored by Sally Shirey*

### *First Prize*

**Smile** by Mallory Wasicek

*Belle Vernon Area Middle School*

Smile.  
I smile,  
So no one asks me  
“What’s wrong?”  
When you look happy,  
People think you’re okay.  
Smile.  
Smile so people leave me alone.  
No one suspects a happy person is sad.  
*Do they?  
Do people notice?  
That it’s fake?*  
No.  
Smile.  
I smile so people don’t start suspecting,  
Suspecting that I’m actually hurting.  
Smiling hides the truth.  
Truth is . . .  
I’m actually not okay.  
Smiling hides that.  
That smile is **my mask**.

***Second Prize***

**Home Is . . .** by Grace Gardner  
*Wendover Middle School*

Home is  
like rock music.  
Chaotic, yet calming.  
The loud guitars blasting in your ears,  
Along with the crashing drums  
and the melodic bass.  
It sounds crazy, but  
the lyrics say otherwise.  
It's too much for some people,  
But it's perfect for me.

***Third Prize***

**Kindness Speaks** by Daniel Kissell  
*Wendover Middle School*

Kindness is more than an action.  
It is like a change of clothes.  
It makes a difference  
to that person in the day  
and one day they may look  
back on it.  
Kindness speaks.

Kindness races like a river  
into  
a little  
creek.  
It passes forward.  
Kindness helps more than  
just  
one person.

***Third Prize***

**Familiar Scene** by Jacob Orlofske  
*Keystone Oaks High School*

A scene so iconic yet beautiful,  
A small quiet town in which nature spills  
A bright night's sky with stars so plentiful,  
All surrounded by striking dark-blue hills.  
A hazy night sky that's shockingly bright,  
A valley in eternal night-time breeze,  
A sky lit with many yellow stars' light,  
All behind the figure of shadow trees.  
The unbounded waviness of a cloud  
So high above, the sky is looking down  
At the town below, not being too loud.  
This familiar space is so renowned,  
All illuminated by the moon's light.  
Some would call it a very starry night.



**Second Prize**

**Weathered** by Ashley Cumpston  
Norwin High School

I took a walk on a train that I ventured with people  
Who I thought would be by my side till the end.  
I would always sow and never reap, stuck on my own steeple,  
Till I no longer called them my friends.

I took a while for me to let go  
And be all okay on my own.  
So I sat on the hill by my home to let the stars give me a show.  
When I got up, wiped the dirt from my elbows and knees,  
I decided I would act grown.

Come snow and sun and sleet and rain,  
I'd pull myself together with the eastern climate.  
Come pollen and petals and pumpkins and pain,  
Wide woods and horizons never fixed things too late.

Pine needles and cones were comforting.  
As much as they stung, they were the only promised living.  
Dandelions and clovers kept the innocent wondering  
Because they relied on wishes and luck for the ones that stopped  
giving.

I pounded the pavement, seeking improvement and value.  
The clouds kept me company. In return I let them rain on me.  
I let the storms wane and rage, for there would always be another  
day I'd rue.  
Though that mentality left because there was always a rainbow  
as far as I could see.

**F. Ogden Nash Award**

Grades 7-9: light humorous verse, any subject  
**Sponsored by Anita Staub**

**First Prize**

**The Mustard and the Ketchup** by Zach Plymire  
Belle Vernon Area Middle School

The mustard was walking  
Down the street  
When he heard  
The ketchup say,  
“Wait for me to ketchup.”

The mustard started to laugh.  
The ketchup didn't understand.  
Then the mustard said,  
“I relish the fact  
That you've mustard to ketchup.”

They both had a laugh

**Second Prize**

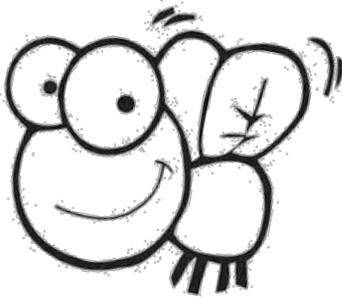
**Jealous Jelly** by Spencer Anderson  
Belle Vernon Area Middle School

I don't really like the taste of jelly.  
It doesn't feel good inside my belly.  
I think the better taste is peanut butter,  
Having that in my stomach makes my heart flutter.  
But the peanut butter made the jelly jealous.  
The thought of proving he's better than peanut butter made him  
zealous.  
The jelly tried to prove he was better on bread.  
The idea, however, went bad instead.  
He then tried to prove he was good on a cracker,  
Better than that peanut butter slacker.  
However, trying that left him with nothing but dread.  
The event went the same way as the bread.  
The jelly started feeling sad.  
Always losing started to make him feel bad.  
He decided to talk to the peanut butter.  
Talking got his mood out of the gutter.

**Third Prize**

**Chasing Flies** by Mona Brooks  
Belle Vernon Area Middle School

Once I saw a fly.  
Who knew they could fly so high?  
Turns out the fly is shy.  
That's why it flies so high.  
I tried to reach its height  
Without having any fright.  
I climbed up so high  
I was at the end of the sky.  
But when I got to the top,  
The fly immediately dropped!  
I was so shocked I almost fell.  
That's when I rang a bell.  
There's no air up here!  
Everybody, stand clear!  
I'm starting to feel dizzy . . .  
I think my name is Izzy?  
Down, down I go.  
Hope the traffic is low.



**G. Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award**  
*Grades 10-12: traditional verse, any subject*  
**Sponsored by Ruth McDonald**

**First Prize**

**Heart over Matter** by Audrey Starck  
North Allegheny High School

The unsettling malleability of the mind  
Becomes apparent from time to time.  
How easily the heart trumps that silly mass in my skull  
When the mountains crumble and the rivers run dry.

This silly little mind of mine lacks that lustrous refine  
That science brags about through names like Newton and Einstein.  
Oh, the world loves to praise the captain of the hull,  
But it's the ocean that decides the captain's success or demise.

The mind can think all the silly thoughts it desires;  
It can observe the world around it with a greedy fire.  
But as soon as the truth begins to dull  
The heart paints over it with a pleasing, fictitious shine.

A heart of gold designs the most beautiful pyrite,  
And even as my mind screams the truth it worked to find,  
My eyes obey my heart's stringent ritual  
Of believing the fantasy my dreams synthesized.

So move out of the way, silly little mind of mine.  
My heart runs the show, and it doesn't like your attitude.  
Say goodbye to your silver spotlight  
Because your silly little reality is so easy to misconstrue.