

Ligonier Valley Writers'
twenty-ninth annual
Student Poetry Awards
April 2020

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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: Butterflies Fly by Jessica Tittle (Conemaugh Township Middle School)

As I sit in heaven and watch you every day,
I try to let you know with signs,
I never went away.

I hear you when you're laughing,
And I watch you as you sleep.
I even place my arms around you
To calm you as you weep.

I see you wish the days away,
Begging to have me home.
So I try to send you signs
So you know you're not alone.

Don't feel guilty you have life,
Life that was denied to me.
Heaven is truly beautiful.
Just you wait and see!

So live your life, laugh again,
Enjoy yourself, be free.
Then I'll know that with every breath you take,
You will be taking one for me.

Second Prize: Halloween by Keira Neiderhiser (Ligonier Valley Middle School)

Ghosts and ghouls roam the streets,
Scouring for candy, howling, "Trick or treat!"
Creepy creatures rule the night,
Filling the humans with fear and fright.

Jack-o-lanterns carved, their twisted faces glow.
You hear a cackle, a caw of a crow.
Only today, the monsters are set free,
causing mischief, evil as can be.

Fires lit, glowing ablaze.

Thick air, sky in a haze.
Zombies rise, being reborn.
We watch in awe, chowing down on candy corn.

Ghosts and ghouls return to their homes,
Leaving you and your pals alone.
You return to your house and hit the hay.
Boy, what a great Halloween day!

Third Prize: War by Jack Walker Petrof (Ligonier Valley Middle School)

Different opinions lead to war,
Never-ending bloody gore.
"It's gonna end," people say.
It's a scary, ceaseless, painful day,
A raging, burning, painful storm,
A truly sad human norm.

Some men do it for a story.
Others do it for the glory.

Now the war is at its height.
Children say,
It's just not right!"
Days, weeks, months, and years,
An endless stream of civil tears.

Silence falls in the midst of battle.
Tanks and guns no longer rattle.
A white flag emerges high.
Honorable soldiers start to sigh.
Finally the war is done.
An era of peace has begun.

B. Chestnut Ridge Literary Poetry Award

Grades 4-6: unrhymed verse, any subject | Sponsored by Lou and Barbara Steiner

First Prize: You're Not Here by Anna Marie Stephenson (Ligonier Valley Middle School)

I miss you.
The few years we had together
I will never forget.
You're not here.

The one I thought would never leave
is no longer here with me.
You're not here.

No more father-daughter tea parties.
No more dress-up.
I wish I'd told you "I love you" more.
You're not here.

Second Prize: A Moment of Solitude by Alana Poponick (Valley School of Ligonier)

Lying on the lush, green hillside
In the Valley,
Gazing at the purple haze of the evening sky,
Imagining the taste of newly picked grapes,
Listening to the wind
Whistling through the treetops,
Waiting patiently for the night sky, so I can
Look at the stars dancing around me.

Third Prize: Home Is Near the Heart by Jana Smith (Valley School of Ligonier)

In northern Australia
The moon lights up the sky.
The stars shine down like spotlights
On a newborn joey.
Her eyes twinkle as they
Adjust to the magnificent world.
Her yawn breaks the silence.
She whimpers as the wind stings her nose.
She nestles safely into her mother's pouch.

She loves its smell; she loves its feel.
She hears the soft sound of a heartbeat,
The sound of home sweet home.

C. Hayden Savinda Memorial Award

Grades 4-6: haiku, any subject | Sponsored by Ronald J. Shafer

First Prize: Fishing by Julian Thorne (Conemaugh Township Middle School)

Knowledge of fishing:
Completely useless unless
a line is cast out.

Second Prize: Storm by Anna Stauffer (Ligonier Valley Middle School)

Boom! Crack! Rumble, roar!
Dark sky, sudden bright flash, rain.
No picnic today

Third Prize: The Chase by Robert Heimerle (Ligonier Valley Middle School)

He runs with a sword.
You can never escape him
Until the word CUT!

D. Highview Farm Award

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

First Prize: Loving on the Edge by *Isabella Godzak* (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

The edge
of your heart.
The wedge.
Sometimes bitter, like a tart.

That one person
makes your heart flutter
Like a butterfly.
And sometimes you wonder
Why.

Sometimes you hate them,
Love them,
Adore them,
Ignore them.

And sometimes you are on the ledge
With that one person.
But that one wedge
In your heart
Is for them
And always will be.
Like living, you are loving on the edge.

Second Prize: The Painting by *Reyna Borrello* (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

My brush flows across the white canvas,
Sailing smoothly over the large board,
Painting a new picture that I can only
Hope will win me an amazing award.

I dip into the dark red and bright orange
And make a short stroke that leaves a trail,
Resembling the cozy glow of a small fire,
With flames that constantly blaze and flail.

I then use the obsidian black and midnight blue,

Which I carefully blend to make the dark sea
That reflects the light of the brilliant full moon.
And the shadow of the lonely, ancient oak tree.

Finally I choose the fresh and pearly white paint
To add bright, shining stars to the peaceful night sky
And to accentuate the shining of the round moon.
I stare and marvel at the painting that has yet to dry.

Third Prize: Broken by *Kataira Rhodes* (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

Wind whistles through the trees.
The leaves sway.
It sounds like piano keys,
The beautiful ocean,
And red leaves.

People don't see
How they break the environment.
Cutting down a tree,
Littering into the sea,
They don't notice what they are causing.

The tigers are dying,
The land is colliding,
Fires are spreading,
The icebergs are melting,
The temperature is rising.

Can we change what we are hurting?
Can we reverse the damage that is done?
Or has the destruction already won?

E. Shirey Poetry Award

Grades 7-9: free verse, any subject | Sponsored by Sally Shirey

First Prize: My Pain Inside by *Krishna Visanakarrala* (Chartiers Valley Middle School)

I wonder about many things, but mostly about you.
I follow all of your rules, yet I wonder, why do you dislike me?
I'm so tired of pretending.
The tears behind the closed doors, the thoughts inside my head.
I pretend I'm all right, but I'm not.
What's life if the people who matter the most seem like they hate you?
I want one thing in my life—only one.
And that is to make you proud someday.
I try to build myself up, but I can't if you bring me down.
I want to lead a happy life.
So please, I beg, understand my point.
Understand how I feel with my life, how I'm not content.
Peace is a very important thing.
And I hope that we can earn it, soon.
I love you.
Please love me back.

Second Prize: Starved by *Joshua Plarchak* (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

How starved are we
That we seek to eat the meat
Off each other's bones.

No blood from the blade could satiate
A thirst that brews
In solitude
And ends in high-step marches
Over cliffs into rocky ocean below.

When will we swallow a simple truth?
We could never conquer our hunger
Feeding on hollow ideas seasoned with malice.

Well, I've never seen a butterfly too fearful
To emerge from a cocoon.
So it will be when humanity shouts in valor,
Child, you shall live! Today and tomorrow, you shall live.

Third Prize: The Green Dragon by *Madeline Booth* (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

A young dragon, with scales shiny and green,
Flew down to the bountiful forest below.
He found a large, sun-baked rock
And lay down to rest his wings.
After a while, he stood again.
Stretching his beautiful wings once more,
He took off into the vast blue sky
to look for his way home.
He searched for a day and a night
Until he finally saw the large treehouse
Outlined on the colorful horizon.
He fluttered to the entrance of his home,
Relief flooding his thoughts as he stood
On the maple wood floors.
He collapsed into his bed of moss and leaves,
Where he slept for two days, dreaming of
Being human and living a different life.

F. Ogden Nash Award

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

First Prize: Hidden Collection by Samuel Bialon (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

A hidden collection waits to be discovered, until destroyed or found.
The collection can contain anything, from money to the one sock that you lost.
That is why I hide what I buy.
To make sure that none of my items get stolen.
Make sure I have a good hiding place so it won't be found easily.
One time a certain someone found my hidden collection.
They decided it was their collection.
Since then, I have found a better, more secure hiding spot.
So, roommate, that's why you are reading this instead of stealing more of my Oreos.

Second Prize: Groovy Grammar by Joshua Wieland (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

I don't understand it.
It steals my grade like a bandit.
I could get an A
But trying to understand
is like finding a needle in hay.
I don't know what to study.
It makes me go nutty.
The tests make no sense.
I don't know what tense.
All the nouns and verbs
And different words.
I just hope my message is heard.

Third Prize: Pie by Braden Laux (Belle Vernon Area Middle School)

Anna almost died.
Olaf just got fried.
Hans was bad.
That made me sad.
Frozen is dead.
So am I.
So let it go and
Eat some pie.

G. Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award

Grades 10-12: traditional verse, any subject | Sponsored by Ruth McDonald

First Prize: Unmask by *Hannah Shin* (North Allegheny Intermediate High School)

"Who am I?" we all ask.
Now it is time to unmask
our true potential in which
each and every one of us is rich.

Every day you wear a smile.
But is life really worth the while?
"I'm fine," you say,
but you're really struggling today.

I want to know
the parts you do not show,
and I want to see
all you were meant to be.

Why is it that
we have a designated format?
Just always be you.
It's the best you can do.

You're perfect just as you are,
a bright, shining star
that illuminates the night
and overcomes all might.

I wish with all of my heart
that from your mask you will depart.
I hope to meet a version of you
that is perfect and utterly true.

Second Prize: The Cold Bench by *Matthew McKay* (Keystone Oaks High School)

The sun rolls over a dark city sky.
A man wakes from the cold steel on his face.
His stomach rumbles as he asks God why,
Wonders how his life got to this low place.

His job let him go, so his wife did too.
He wanders the streets in search of a home,
Walking with feet that have only one shoe.
What else does the man have to do but roam?

The man, dirty and tired, sits to rest.
He thinks about where he can get some food.
He has five dollars and feels he is blessed.
The man eats a sandwich and feels renewed.

Night dwells and he retires to his place.
It's hard to sleep with cold steel on your face.

Third Prize: Fickle Youth by *Isaac Fullard* (Keystone Oaks High School)

I'm in this house, though it feels not like home.
Trapped in these walls, I feel I don't belong.
I cannot leave this place I've always known.
Need for freedom fills me; it must be wrong.

I've devised my plan: Flee during the night.
Pack my bag with supplies and face the world.
Exit the door swiftly to evade sight.
Finally I brave the cold, my toes curled.

My mind is swirling, I'm thinking too fast,
Can't bear the thought of ever going back.
Feet dragging on the ground, I see the cars pass.
Maybe I'll return like a maniac.

Tears well in my eyes. I rush home with power.
Mother tells me it was only an hour.

H. Henry Clay and Gladys Maas Pruitt Award

Grades 10-12: free verse, any subject | Sponsored by Candace Green

First Prize: Yet He Smiles by *Hannah Shin* (North Allegheny Intermediate High School)

Amidst the fierce winds, I spy with my little eye
a soul with so much life in his eyes.
His smile lights up the darkest of nights.

Shivering against the battered pavement,
stranded on the city streets.
Snow covers his bare skin,
yet he smiles.

His smile alone warms him, giving him
strength for the next stormy day.

Someone just threw a cigarette in his money jar.
Others mock him or act like he's invisible.
No one shows him love,
yet he loves.

He is stranded but steadfast;
though he is abandoned, he abundantly loves.
He is forgotten but has forgiven.

He has skipped too many meals to
count on one hand.
He can't even remember the last time
he felt safe and sound.

Yet he smiles a smile
that can be seen for miles.

Second Prize: Green Growth by *Angelina Brennsteiner* (Albert Gallatin High School)

The sky shines green,
The grass glows blue.
I look around the earth but all I see is you.
And you look
Straight back at me.

The water flies,
The air swims fast.
The future races toward the Past.

I sit and grow.
I'll one day know
Just what it takes to see
the growth
From my mistakes.

Third Prize: Diamonds by Natalia Sturges (Derry Area High School)

They say that diamonds are a girl's best friend.
I beg to differ.
Diamonds do not have emotions.
Diamonds don't have feelings.
Diamonds do not provide support.
A girl's best friend is all of those and more.
True best friends stick with you.
You fall, they pick you back up.
You cry, they support you.
They have many titles:
Strangers, Lovers, or what my best friend is,
Family. She is my family, no matter what.
I will always cherish that forever and ever.
Because, in the end, best friends are not based on looks.
Yes, diamonds are beautiful. But I would pick my
Best friend over all the diamonds in the world.

I. Marie Martin Memorial Award

Grades 10-12, Romantic Poetry, any subject | Sponsored by Phil & Mary Lou Fleming

First Prize: Eleven Years by Molly Sisitki (Blairsville High School)

What is love? Eleven years, six to seventeen.
Running around with pigtails and bruised knees,
Me with my friends and you with yours.
The wind in my face, the mulch flying backward from speed.
I fell and you caught me without realizing it.

Fifth Grade, the next time we were together,
So different yet so alike, with glasses and stutters.
I'd sneak glances and meet your eyes: startling ice-blue stones.
Your eyes in the light were the color in my dreams.

Sixth Grade, the dog days.
Puberty and bullying. Your smile lit up the world,
Or maybe just my world.
We never really talked, but somehow you knew. You always did.

Summer before sophomore year,
Baseball games and golf practices.
Text messages were exchanged,
just normal pleasantries like ships in the night.
To me it felt like things were falling into place.
It was just too good to be true.

Junior year, the present day.
The sight of you still takes my breath away.
Football games and study sessions.
We sneak glances at each other, and I want to tell you.
Eleven years. Six to seventeen. This is love.

Second Prize: Love by Natalia Sturges (Derry Area High School)

Love is binding.
You fall for someone.
You grow together.
You age together.
You're in each other's hearts.
Love is amazing.
The joy that comes from it,

The never-ending affection,
The laughs and smiles.
Love is hurtful.
You cry.
You lose.
You wished it was forever.
Love is unpredictable.
Love is in your future.
You just need to accept it.

Walter McGough Memorial Award

Sponsored by the family of Walter McGough and Ligonier Valley Writers

The Best of the Best in Grades 4-6

The Aztec Animal by *Sonya Verbina* (Valley School of Ligonier)

In one world in the galaxy
On one continent in the world
In one state in the country
In one lake in the state
Lives one small animal . . .
Axolotl.
Axolotl eats, sleeps, and plays
Here and only here,
In the Milky Way
On Planet Earth
In North America
In Mexico
In Mexico City, Mexico State
In Lake Xochimilco
One small animal . . .
Axolotl eats, sleeps, and plays
Here and only here.
A rare salamander, critically endangered,
Axolotl could become
One animal
That lives nowhere.

Walter McGough Memorial Award

Sponsored by the family of Walter McGough and Ligonier Valley Writers

The Best of the Best in Grades 7-9

Empty Shell by *Amber Brooks* (Wendover Middle School)

I have this infection.

Some may say it's a virus.

Whatever you call it,

it chills me to the bone.

It inflames my pain

and leaves me with no will to live.

It's hard to escape

but it's easy to hide.

I may give small clues

that I'm in pain.

But no one sees

for what I have can go

unseen

and can slowly swallow me whole

and leave nothing but an

empty shell.

Walter McGough Memorial Award

Sponsored by the family of Walter McGough and Ligonier Valley Writers

The Best of the Best in Grades 10-12

To Whom It Doesn't Concern *by Heavenke Lowman* (Blairsville High School)

Please notice how I still wear your hoodie—with years of tearstains on the sleeves
It's a pretty color, I tell them, and that's why I can't get rid of it.

Notice how I still want to cuddle with the blanket I stole from you
But don't for fear of losing your smell or the threat of all the tears that will be shed.
So I built it a house in the closet with a window.
From that window I look at all the rips that each tell a different story,
All of which I do not want to tell but cannot bring myself to sew shut.
My excuse for keeping it: It was Grandma's at one point and I cannot give it up.

Please realize that I still watch our show--old, predictable, as if I'd seen it a thousand times
Almost as if I watch it every spare moment I get,
Almost like that's one of the few things I remember doing with you, probably because it is.

See that I wear your hat, which smells of cologne and sweat.
I never wear hats, for they give me hat head and I don't like that North Carolina football team.
But you did, so I wear that hat everywhere.

Look at my photo album with my life's worth of pictures. But the only picture that doesn't quite
fit is in the very back—the day you always said your life ended.

Please notice how I cannot pack these things away and I cannot give these things up.
Please notice that I cannot get rid of you the way you did me just three years ago.
Because a daughter loves her father apparently more than this father loves his daughter.
But a father should love his daughter. Shouldn't he?

***Congratulations to all the winners of LVW's
Student Poetry Contest!***

Ligonier Valley Writers thanks all the students who submitted poems
to this year's Student Poetry Awards.

Participating Schools:

Albert Gallatin High School
Belle Vernon Area Middle School
Blairsville High School
Chartiers Valley Middle School
Conemaugh Township Middle School
Derry Area High School
Edgeworth Elementary School
Greater Latrobe Senior High School
Greensburg Salem Middle School
Hahntown Elementary School
Indiana Area Junior High School
Keystone Oaks High School
Ligonier Valley Middle School
North Allegheny Intermediate High School
Penn-Trafford High School
Rostraver Middle School
Wendover Middle School
Valley School of Ligonier