

Ligonier Valley Writers Calendar 2023

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

May (Date TBD).

Author Chris Rodell will give a talk
called “Ten Years, Six Books” about
his book publishing career.

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

August 15. Deadline for Flash Fiction Contest
submissions. (Contest opens April 15.)
This year's topic is jack o'lanterns.

*Please check 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**

Ligonier Valley Writers'
32nd annual

Student Poetry Awards



April 29, 2023

*“We go to poetry so we might more fully inhabit
our lives and the world in which we live them.”*
—Christian Wiman, former editor of *Poetry* magazine

Student Poetry Awards
April 29, 2023

Participating Schools 2023

Albert Gallatin Area High School
Belle Vernon Area Middle School
Carson Middle School
Chartiers Valley Middle School
Derry Area High School
Eagle View Elementary School
Greater Latrobe Junior High School
Greater Latrobe Senior High School
Hempfield Area High School
Indiana Area Junior High School
Ingomar Middle School
Keystone Oaks High School
Ligonier Valley Middle School
Maple Ridge Elementary School
North Allegheny Senior High School
Norwin High School
Penn Middle School
Penn Trafford High School
River Valley High School
Somerset Area Junior High School
Turtle Creek Elem STEAM Academy
Wendover Middle School
West Hempfield Elementary School

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

Judith Gallagher

Sponsor of the Jane Robb Gallagher 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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Michele Jones

Sponsor of the John L. Naccarato Memorial Award

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

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

A Note on the Judging

Three judges who are poets, teachers of poetry,
and/or avid readers of poetry begin by reading
each entry as a blind submission (without
knowing the author's identity). They do
several rounds of reading, narrowing the choices
in each category. Then, in a marathon session,
they meet in person to discuss and debate
the final rankings of the top-rated poems.

Ligonier Valley Writers thanks AIW Press
for its generous donation of the printing cost
of this booklet of winning poems and
for helping with the production of this booklet.



The Best of the Best in Grades 10-12

how to love a thing that stains by Kathryn Mi
North Allegheny Senior High School, Grade 12

This is a form of contrapuntal poetry where you can read each column separately as its own poem, after which you can read the whole text from left to right to create another poem.

and i want this memory forever
 i want it trapped in amber,
 in the underbelly of your faith,
 the years inside us transmuting into
 something more infinite,

and never changing.
 i want to be caught nestled
 in your bared animal smile—
 something crude, something violent,
 something more beautiful.

and i want to kiss you soft as
 your flower-frail fingers—
 look: here is the orchid sunrise,
 the rainfall and the petrichor. there,
 the orange sitting on the kitchen counter,
 half-sliced, looking almost red where it lies

the bruise on your cheek,
 my blooming watercolor mark.
 my splintered knuckles,
 the exposed flesh of
 your chest wound burgeoning,
 low-lit by the lulling lamplight—

peel it back for me. let me see:
 against my lips, you must press *in* the fruit
 if you want to love me *enough*—

darling, turn your splintered rib
 death-side down, and don't stop bleeding.
god, feed me.

so i want to dance and dream about dancing,
 seeking the blood still singing
 inside our blameless bodies
 it's october again and
 i ask, *would you still love me in another life?*
 please: tell me you know this ache.

i want to be the wolf in your woods,
 in your throat, gorged on the grotesque
 —so let this love ravage us.
 i am once more ready to harvest.
 and you say, *of course, just listen to me*, then
 yes: swallow me whole.



Categories G-I (Grades 10-12)

G. The Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award
First Prize: mirror, mirror by Kathryn Mi 16
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Third Prize: Our Cathedral's Raptor by Grace Reynolds 18

H. The Hayden Savinda Memorial Award
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Third Prize: Swan Song by Mark Harris 20

I. The Marie Martin Memorial Award
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A. Jane Robb Gallagher Poetry Award

Grades 4-6: rhymed verse, any subject

Sponsored by Judith Gallagher

First Prize

Infinity Thoughts to Think

by Bridget Hughes

Ligonier Valley Middle School

My mind is a freight train
And for that I can complain.
It never moves, going state to state
Even in the brutal rain
It rambles on
A game never won
A game you shouldn't play
I think I'm too far gone
I think of thoughts that can't be think
And these thoughts I've tirelessly fought
I think too much, and that's okay
I wouldn't have been able to sleep anyway
Am I too far gone?



The Best of the Best in Grades 7-9

The Five Stages of Grief

by Olivia Mastren-Williams

Chartiers Valley Middle School, Grade 8

- i.
I wanted to believe that it wasn't real.
I wanted to wake up from my nightmare—
Open my eyes and see you sleeping next to me.

- ii.
In my letter,
I gave you my still-beating heart.
I wanted you to know that I would keep bleeding for you.

- iii.
The flowers that had blossomed within my bones
Had begun to rot away.
Withered violets hung from my ribcage,
Killed by your pestilence.

- iv.
I wanted nothing more
Than to spit the acid that boiled in my veins
Into your eyes.

- v.
The smoldering remains of you finally cooled.
I no longer know your name.



John L. Naccarato Memorial Award
Sponsored by Michele Jones

The Best of the Best in Grades 4-6

The Music by Cole Kramer
Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6

The Music bounces through my head
And dances on my brain.
It wriggles out my left ear
And lands upon the floor.
It shimmies down the hallway
And floats up through the wall
Out into the big, wide world,
Ready to explore



Second Prize
Slumber's Door
by Sen Maochie Bustamante
Ligonier Valley Middle School

As I walk through Slumber's door
And as I start to dream,
I enter worlds of my mind.
I enter the void beyond.
First come dreams of rainbow hues
Or one of life's many clues.
Some come true,
While others are just fantasies.
Finally I wake up
To face reality, where better dreams
. . . come true

Third Prize
The Beast by Charlotte Raymond
Ligonier Valley Middle School

The great beast soars through the night,
blocking all the moon's vast light.
The beast swoops down toward the ground,
then you hear a shrill, echoing sound:
The villagers screaming, shouting, fleeing!
"The dragon's coming! The beast that's all-seeing!"
The dragon has just one goal in mind.
He'll have the most extravagant feast of all time!

B. Glenda Busch Memorial Award

Grades 4-6: unrhymed verse, any subject

Sponsored by Jim Busch

First Prize

Back to School by Noah Hopkinson

Penn Middle School

Fall, a bittersweet time, a time of laughter, but what awaits after, a time of pencils sharpened, children burdened, and a start back to grades, plaids, and pictures.

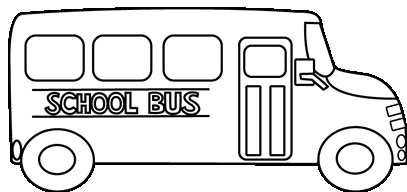
A time of sighing, yes, but of trying too and children working as well as shirking the work of the day.

All work and no play make a child sad, but the school is to pay with that glorious time called lunch, and children munch nevertheless in preparation for that time called recess.

A most exciting time this recess is, with options for kickball, or for those who saved lunch money, the penny brick wall.

Their time depleted, they rush to be first in line to be back in time for their lessons 'bout the Rhine.

Then a time 'round three the children see the clock. They grab their bags to get on the bus, and hey! Maybe they learned something that day.



Third Prize

The Prettiest of Hues by Alexis Galdo

Norwin High School

Love . . .

The hues are always described as a pink and red sunrise. . .

Everyone always defines it as marriage, as happiness, as another person . . .

But my reluctance in this answer worsens . . .

To me love just means passionate

Even if you found that thing by accident, it's Something that brings you so much

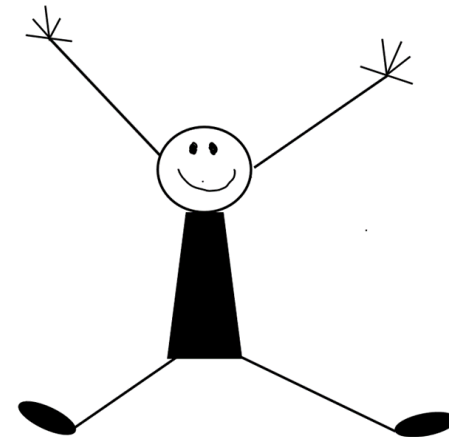
happiness doing.

Whether that's drawing, a job, even sleeping, it's anything that's special to you

The feeling that something brings you just brewing.

That happiness can't be described as a color, as a sunset,

But that happiness does have the prettiest hue . . .



Second Prize

Pieces of Me by Jocelyn Kuhns
Albert Gallatin Area High School

When I tell people that
you are the one who
made me want to live again,
they laugh

you made me want to live,
he made me want to succeed,
she made me want to love

when I list the names
with these three things,
people laugh
and they look at me
as though I've lost my mind

but I didn't lose my mind

I lost myself,
but then I found you

and then I found pieces of me
in your eyes
in your smile
in your laugh
and in the way you look at me

Second Prize

My Little Angel by Brooklynne Bowser
Ligonier Valley Middle School

I know an angel,
a real one, it's true
she is perfect
with her thick curly hair
and her cute little face
the way she gets up with me
every single day
we met in December 2014
and we grew up so much
all because she was there with me
her entire life
my little angel is my whole world,
yet some call her just a dog



Third Prize

The Illusionists

by Charlotte Raymond
Ligonier Valley Middle School

They deceive you into joining their gang,
They bribe you with loyalty and affection,
But secretly, surely, it's all phony stunts.
They will stab you in the back, lie, and cheat you;
First a missed call,
Being left out of a party,
You think maybe they're just busy?
But ask them anyway.
When they see you coming, the masks go on,
"Oh! We're so sorry! We totally forgot!"
You act a fool and trust thin, bogus smiles.
I'm sorry, friend, but it's too late.
You've been sucked into their trap.

C. Henry Clay and Gladys Maas Pruitt Award

Grades 4-6: haiku, any subject

Sponsored by Candace Green

First Prize

Night Howls by Aila Langston
Turtle Creek Elementary
STEAM Academy

Sun sets while night howls,
Birds retreat before the owls,
Chirps change to bear growls.



Second Prize

Sun Shine by Levi Foust
Ligonier Valley Middle School

Huge ball of fire
Millions of miles away
Fills the sky with life

Third Prize **Liquid Life**

by Sen Maochie Bustamante
Ligonier Valley Middle School

As hours and days pass
Life itself is pouring out
Seeping through my hands



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

I'm so tired of love by Paige Tokay
Norwin High School

i'm so tired of love,
but i can't help it with you.

i'm no good at that sappy stuff,
but it seeps in anyways,
sweet honey pouring down and down and
down my throat. sticky and raw—

i never even liked honey all that much,
but now i hear bees buzzing
when i see your glasses slip down
the slopes of your nose, eyes glancing overtop rims just so,

and i smell thick air flowers
when you give me that open-mouthed grin,
in the middle of some conversation on the grapes of wrath,

and a part of me would fall over myself to gulp it all down,
sucking the shimmer from my fingers just for the pleasure of tasting
it.

my grandfather's a beekeeper; i know about
loving. he brings us honey by the jar and puts
his heart into his hive.
the bees are his like a lung is.

sometimes i wonder if he ever gets sick of breathing, like
i do. sometimes i wonder how he can bear it, so quietly.

Second Prize

The Silence Screams by Audrey Starck
North Allegheny Senior High School

And from the sea emerges you—the Silent.

As soon as you fall to your knees on the shore,
Your screams join the cacophony.

“Lay your heart on this stone here.

Smear its contents over the crevices—put your back into it!”

Force it into the rough surface

Until it's been ground into the apathetic Earth.

“Amuse the man on the hill over there,
the man bound to his boulder—

Allow him the cathartic release of pitying someone else.”

For he must not scream his throat raw every day

just to tickle the ears of the men lounging in the sky
with albatrosses hanging from their necks.

“Raise your voice!”

The heavens are listening.

“Raise your voice!”

The sons and daughters of Adam are not.

“Raise your voice!”

They tell you, but they stopped listening

The second you began to scream.

Third Prize

Swan Song by Mark Harris
Penn-Trafford High School

your ghost froze last night amid the new hampshire
air. remnants of winter cried themselves to sleep
this morning as the sunrise crept over campus—
and mourning doves sang once more.

D. Highview Farm Award

Grades 7-9: traditional verse, any subject

Sponsored by Sally Shirey

First Prize

Heartbeat by Bella Flores
Indiana Junior High School

Every day I pray to little orange bottles that my heart will continue
to beat

I pray that the little blue pills will give me strength to see another
day.

That I can continue to live, and not just survive

So that I don't have to sleep on the bed with white sheets, connected
to a machine, seeing the pretty lady in paper scrubs who brings
me little blue pills.

I pray that the little blue pills will give me strength to see another
day.

Every moment checking to see if I can feel my heartbeat.

So that I don't have to sleep on the bed with white sheets, connected
to a machine, seeing the pretty lady in paper scrubs who brings
me little blue pills.

So that all the worry is gone.

Every moment checking to see if I can feel my heartbeat

Thump-Thump-Thump

So that all the worry is gone.

So that I can see my family every day

Thump-Thump-Thump (onomatopoeia)

Making sure my heartbeat is as steady as a drum

So that I can see my family every day.

So even though I will always worry, pray, and cry about my
heartbeat, I can have some peace.

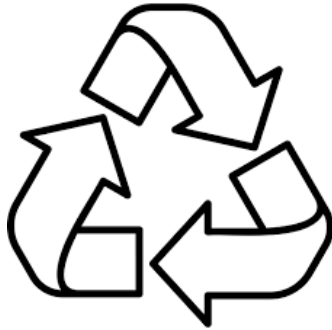
Every day I pray to little orange bottles that my heart will continue
to beat.

Second Prize

Sweet, Sweet Hypocrisy by Cricket Baunoch
Indiana Area Senior High School

Though you may deny and digress
I know, you know, that you possess
Objects of ornament that do inspire
but you don't technically, really require
for a hobby or yearn you likely lack.
An army of arbitrary knickknacks!

Piles of plastic on hills and hobs,
Fields and fields of bits and bobs.
Souvenirs a-dear, jangles for keys
An entire thrift store's worth of tchotchkes
Just think it. Your trinkets, do they serve you true?
When you really need that shelf, what will you do?



H. Hayden Savinda Memorial Award

Grades 10-12: free verse, any subject
Sponsored by Ronald J. Shafer

First Prize

Hunger by Ella Simpson
Norwin High School

I warn,
Warn you of your fuel level,
Warn you of your energy level,
Warn you of the emptiness inside you
I cry out when you won't listen,
When you ignore me,
Or do you try to ignore me?
Do you try to forget
The emptiness I am?
The emptiness,
Hopelessness
Of me?
I am
The reminder,
The alarm,
The cry
Of need
I start in one being and spread like a disease
Through families,
Then communities,
countries,
Then continents.
But I don't forbid.
If only I could forbid,
Forbid you from helping one another,
Forbid you from reaching out to one another.

For only then,
When
You strive to understand one another,
Only then can I be overcome.

Third Prize

Our Cathedral's Raptor by Grace Reynolds
North Allegheny Senior High School

Oh! You nasty little avian!
Only to me—no, to us, to all of these people, you are just a speck
above.
But I know to you this whole city is insignificant, my bald head is
your pebble.

Oh! Why do you cry like that, you terrible creature!
How can you let me fear something I cannot name?
Who are you but your royal wailing, and you laugh? You laugh!

Oh! Why do you stay here, up there?
You're not to live here, of all places. Go out to the west, to the
mountains, I beg!
Shoo, you! And your whining! And your little family in your nest!

Oh, but if I could confide in you with my own cries.
Next time you swoop down faster than light,
Maybe scoop me up in your talons.

Oh, hear me, I could be a good one of you.
I would paint yellow on my eyes and my mouth and my feet.
The people below us wouldn't notice a thing.



Third Prize

Stage Fright by Alexa Campbell
Ingomar Middle School

He strides onstage, bold, never faltering,
A rock star's smile, glowing and flattering,
A proud posture, yet at ease,
A comic wind, a mild breeze,
Tosses his hair when he looks up and sees . . .

The crowd is waiting, anticipating,
The confidence he'd been demonstrating
Fades away. He faces the crowd,
Cheering, shrieking ever so loud.
Stage fright overtakes him like thick white clouds . . .

His hands start to quake, his lips start to quiver,
Shortly, he knows, his whole body will shiver,
'Cause the crowd wants something exciting.
Failing them is rather frightening,
But it's too late. The stage lights are brightening . . .

He takes a nervous breath and raises his hand,
The strings vibrate; they sound so lovely and grand,
And as he plays for that shrieking thrall,
The huge crowd that made him feel so small,
He finds performing isn't scary at all.



E. Shirey Poetry Award

Grades 7-9: free verse, any subject

Sponsored by Sally Shirey

First Prize

Day Lilies by Audrey Wagner

Wendover Middle School

Day lily
Seen for its beauty,
Only
through the waking hours.

Day lily
Closes up when
day turns to dusk
And the moon rises from
Its horizon.

Day lily
No one sees its sorrow
Throughout the night.
Nor would they care.
It's natural, right?

Day lily
Just like me,
Forgotten
When the roses of the world
Take everyone's breath away.
We are forgotten.

So we curl up
In the silence of the night,
Alone.

We are day lilies.



Second Prize

Sisyphus's Circus by Audrey Starck

North Allegheny Senior High School

My friends, your tiresome search has found its bed.
Lay down your lonesome heart and fickle head.
Let not your woesome worries weigh you down,
For Sisyphus's circus needs a clown.

We boast a wide display of unique acts:
From Plato's shadow-shows to wings of wax.
The men over there run races against clocks,
While rabbits leap from poor Pandora's box.

Our ringleader is always searching here
To find more tragic fools that make *them* cheer.
And when I say *them*, crowds should come to mind,
For Sisyphus's freaks attract a line.

Oh, watch *them* gather under tents of tears—
Applaud humanity, applaud your fear!
Oh, watch *them* start to realize with dread:
The spotlights hang above *their* tainted heads.

So join our broken circus, broken friends,
For everyone will join before it ends.
The doors are open; take your prideful spot
In Sisyphus's show of man's "do not's."



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

First Prize

mirror, mirror by Kathryn Mi
North Allegheny Senior High School

storyteller, luminous face,
 soul-stained sliver of water's grace—
first, your lake, wreathed
 in water lilies and feathered reeds,
flat facet flickering in truth:
 varnished vessel lucid as our youth
looking in, an imprint freed—
 looking in, so narcissus sees.

sacred possession, portrait of glass,
 maker of myths amassed
in the vanity of men, beauty pulled thin
and gilded as you—the way beasts gaze in
and feel like gods, and your story-stained spirit shown
 our tragedy: narcissus drowned alone.

so let us be known: push past our hunger and our flaws,
 the history of our hollowed laws.
so let us be less alone: love us true and love our waking,
 anchor the atlas of our aching—
mirror, mirror, dark eclipse:
 ripple in, and kiss our lambent lips.



Second Prize

Sometimes by Alina Swinger
Somerset Area Junior High School

Sometimes I wish time could freeze.
Sometimes I remember what it's like to hear an old friend's voice.
 Sometimes I feel like I can count the stars.
 Sometimes I believe magic can happen.
Sometimes I think of the moments that didn't last long enough.
 Sometimes I can't wish, remember, believe, or think.
 But that's okay
 Because it only happens sometimes.

Third Prize

Broken by Izabella Harrison
Carson Middle School

Empty but never broken,
Lost but "always found,"
Quiet nights but never sleep.
"You're not broken" they would tell me,
"Simply lost" but one day you will be found.
Yet what if that day doesn't come,
The emptiness never goes away,
 You are never found,
 You never sleep again?
And they never even noticed that
 I was,
 Indeed,
 Broken
 Until it was too late,
And the brokenness enveloped me whole,
So neither of us had to deal with how broken I truly was,
 Ever again.

F. Ogden Nash Award

Grades 7-9: light humorous verse, any subject

Sponsored by Anita Staub

First Prize

Friends by Kaylin Luster

Belle Vernon Area Middle School

I think the stars see us as their friends.
Maybe they were lonely before we came to be.
There are other stars to become friends with,
But even they are far away from each other.
Surely they could have just become friends with the aliens.
The other life that lives on far away planets.
I wonder if the stars have families.
If I have a family, surely the stars have one too,
And of course the aliens have families too.
I'm sure they both have loving families.
They probably both go home and eat dinner with their families.
The aliens might eat brussels sprouts and drink kale smoothies.
That is how they keep their green color.
And stars might eat glow sticks and drink hot sauce,
This is how they stay glowing and super hot.
I want to be friends with stars,
I want to be friends with aliens too.
I could be friends with both.
Then I could try all the wacky things they have for dinner.

Second Prize

Ruling the World by Alina Swinger

Somerset Area Junior High School

You should let me rule the world
For I would make all chicken grilled.

You should vote me president
For I would ban all pink cement.

You should let me command the army
For I would at last get rid of Barney.

You should make me the next Abe Lincoln
For I would get the hippos thinkin'.

I could get the finest steaks;
What do personal chefs bake?

I could dress in fancy clothes;
I could try to walk in heels, who knows?

I could own piles of money;
But what would I get with it? Honey?

I could drive in the sleekest car;
But how high should I set the bar?

There's still so many questions to be spilled;
Maybe I shouldn't rule the world.

Third Prize

The Breakfast Dilemma by Brian Nguyen

Belle Vernon Area Middle School

On the table are cereal and milk.
Two quarrelers dressed in ridiculous attire quarrel.
Over what important choice should be made,
To the most important meal of the day.

One quarreller, the Cereal Crusader, proposes:
Cereal must come first!
To put milk over cereal is such a moral wrong.
Eating soggy cereal is a heinous and diabolical crime.

The other quarreler, the Milk Magistrate, proclaims:
No! Milk shall come first!
It will nurture the cereal with a crunch.
Creating the perfect delicate brunch!

A wise elderly gentleman joins the conversation.
He gifts his wisdom to the boys:
How can one eat and drink
If there is nothing to hold a meal together?
The true answer is that the bowl must come first!