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10 Students Earn Recognition, Cash for Poetry

Poetry contest a prelude to month-long celebration of poetry at Highline College

DES MOINES, Wash. — “Imaginative” earned Elizabeth Abramchuk first place in Highline College’s 2017 Student Poetry Contest. Abramchuk was one of 54 writers who submitted 101 poems during the contest, which is a prelude to Highline’s fifth annual celebration of National Poetry Month in April.

“I’ve only been writing poetry for a quarter. It’s still very new to me. I took Susan Rich’s creative writing class and instantly fell in love with poetry,” said Abramchuk.

“I wanted to enter the contest to see where I stand, literature-wise. I wanted to get a sense of how readers felt about my poem. Did they like it? Hate it?” said the 18-year-old, who earned \$125 for winning the contest.

A resident of Federal Way, Abramchuk is on track to graduate in June 2017, simultaneously earning her associate degree and high school diploma as a Running Start student. She plans on pursuing art at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle in the fall.

“I don’t know what art has in store for me but I would really like to do children’s book illustrations or become an animator,” she said.

“The judges admired ‘Imaginative’ for the authenticity of its images and the fact that every line offers readers a sensory pleasure,” said Susan Rich, one of the contest judges. “The surprise of cups as ‘swimming pools’ and old women as ‘potato nuns’ not only delighted us, but made it clear that this is a poet we are sure to hear more from.”

Rich teaches creative writing and film studies at Highline. She is the author of four books of poetry, including “Cloud Pharmacy” (White Pine Press, 2014).

Second place, with a prize of \$100, went to Mickayla Olson of Burien for her poem “Calling.” She is working on her associate of arts transfer degree in nursing.

Third place and \$75 went to first-year student Jordan McPherson of Auburn for “The Belly.”

Honorable mention, along with a cash prize of \$50, went to seven students (listed in alphabetical order):

- Carrie Costello, Renton: “Too Young”
- Erica Cvitkovic, SeaTac: “Sirens’ Lament”
- Allison DeBoer, Auburn: “World of Wonderland”
- Christianna Hopson, Federal Way: “High Contrast”
- Alexander Longmire, Kent: “Laptop”
- Harmony Nuccitelli, Kent: “The House on 5th Street”
- Anastasia Olesik: “Sneakers and Streets”

The contest required students to submit poems that were no more than 20 lines and could fit onto an 8 1/2-by-11-inch piece of paper. The winning poems will be displayed as broadsides during the months of April and May in the Highline Library Exhibits and Art Gallery.

Loosely defined as single sheets of paper printed on one side, broadsides were the most diverse form of brief, single-occasion publishing before the Civil War. Although broadsides were first introduced in England, they became a prime means of communication in the United States, often posted in the town square. Later, Harlem Renaissance, Concrete and Beat writers claimed the broadside as a below-the-radar way to get their words out onto the streets.

Highline will honor contest winners and finalists with a reception and poetry reading April 11, 1:30 p.m., in the Library Exhibits and Art Gallery. The students’ poems will be on display alongside those of published poets Jeanine Hall Gailey and Terrance Hayes, both of whom will give readings during the month-long celebration. All events are free and open to the public:

event: Poetry Exhibit
date/time: April 1–May 31
location: Highline Library Exhibits and Art Gallery: Building 25, 4th floor

event: Art Display: “Poetic Visions: Artwork Inspired by Poetry”
dates/times: April 3–June 14: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, 12–3 p.m.
location: Highline Student Art Gallery: Building 16, Room 115

event: Poetry Reading and Reception for Student Contest Winners and Finalists
date/time: April 11, 1:30–3 p.m.
location: Library Exhibits and Art Gallery: Building 25, 4th floor

event: Jeanine Hall Gailey: Poetry Reading and Writing Workshop
date/time: April 12, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
location: Building 7

event: Opening Reception of “Poetic Visions: Artwork Inspired by Poetry”
date/time: April 13, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.
location: Highline Student Art Gallery: Building 16, Room 115

event: Terrance Hayes: Poetry Reading and Writing Workshop
date/time: April 19, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.

- location:** Highline Student Union: Building 8, Mt. Constance room
- event:** **Angel Gardener, Seattle Youth Poet Laureate: Poetry Reading**
date/time: April 20, 12–1 p.m.
location: Highline Student Union: Building 8, Room 204 (Inter-Cultural Center)
- event:** **Highline Student Workshop: “Poetry Across Cultures”**
date/time: April 21, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
location: Writing Center: Building 26, room 319i
- event:** **Eddie Martinez: Spoken Word Workshop**
date/time: April 25, 11 a.m.–1 p.m.
location: Building 2

Highline’s main campus is located midway between Seattle and Tacoma at South 240th Street and Pacific Highway South (Highway 99). The Library Exhibits and Art Gallery (Building 25, 4th floor) is open Monday–Friday, 7 a.m.–9 p.m.; Saturday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.; and Sunday, 2–9 p.m.

The college’s annual celebration of Poetry Month is sponsored by the Highline Humanities department, Highline Communications and Marketing department, Highline Library, Highline Print Services, the Vice President’s Office, Center for Leadership and Service, and AANAPISI.

For more information, visit <https://npm.blogs.highline.edu/>.

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Attachment: Photo of Elizabeth Abramchuk

Winning Poem:

Imaginative

by Elizabeth Abramchuk

I see things that are not there,
Cups are swimming pools,
Laundry bins are prisons,
Scissors are swords battling,
Beds are coffins for the living,
Umbrellas are bats,
Blueberries are mini pomegranates,
Ropes are mamas to thread,
Doors are bars of chocolate,
Socks are sleeping bags for feet,
Mushrooms are swamp flowers,
The world is just a marble,
The wind is God sneezing,
And old women are potato nuns.

About Highline College:

Celebrating its 55th anniversary, Highline College was founded in 1961 as the first community college in King County. With nearly 17,000 annual students and 350,000 alumni, it is one of the state's largest institutions of higher education. The college offers a wide range of academic transfer, professional-technical education and applied bachelor's degree programs. Alumni include former Seattle Mayor Norm Rice, entrepreneur Junki Yoshida and former Washington state poet laureate Sam Green.