



### **What is the National Student Poets Program?**

The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers partner to present the National Student Poets Program (NSPP), the nation's highest honor for young poets (grades 9-11) presenting original work. Annually, five students are selected for one year of service as literary ambassadors, each representing a geographic region of the country. By elevating and showcasing their work for a national audience, the program strives to inspire other young people to achieve excellence in their own creative endeavors and promote the essential role of writing and the arts in academic and personal success.

The National Student Poets Program reflects the national imprimatur of the President's Committee and its Honorary Chairman, First Lady Michelle Obama, as well as the Administration's commitment to arts and humanities education. It connects the National Student Poets with audiences and resources in their communities through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' community-based network of libraries and museums and builds upon the Alliance's long-standing work with educators and creative teens through the prestigious Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

### **What are the duties of the National Student Poets?**

National Student Poets promote the reading, writing, and appreciation of poetry among youth and the general public during their year of service. By their example and words, National Student Poets encourage creative self-discovery, impart new skills, and inspire their peers to dream big and work hard to achieve those dreams through community service projects they design and regional events and workshops. They will also work with poet mentors and serve as a resource for the White House, Library of Congress and the U.S. Department of Education throughout the year.

### **How are the National Student Poets selected?**

National Student Poets are selected from a pool of National Medalists in Poetry through the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, the exclusive pathway to be considered for the program. Each year, from this pool of Gold and Silver Medal winners, 35 semi-finalists are selected based on creativity, dedication to craft and promise. Their work is then submitted to a distinguished jury for the final selection of five National Student Poets. The 2014 jurors included Esther Belin (Writer and Artist), Robert Casper (Head of the Poetry and Literature Center, Library of Congress); Martin Jude Farawell (Director, Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Program); Andrea Gibson (Poet); Terrance Hayes (Poet); Juan Felipe Herrera (Poet); Edward Hirsch (President, John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation); Alice Quinn (Executive Director, Poetry Society of America); Patricia Smith (Poet); and Roger Reeves (Poet).

Students in grades 9-11 who are interested in becoming a 2015 National Student Poet can submit their work to the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards at [www.artandwriting.org](http://www.artandwriting.org). Submissions are open throughout the fall. Deadlines vary by region.

### **How are the National Student Poets recognized?**

The Class of 2014 was appointed by First Lady Michelle Obama at the White House where the National Student Poets also participated in a poetry reading. Their first public appearance was at a reading at the Library of Congress, and the students were also invited to present their work at the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards' opening of the Art.Write.Now.DC exhibition of student work at the U.S. Department of Education. Students also receive \$5,000 academic awards thanks to the Bernstein Family Foundation.

Turn this sheet over to meet the 2014 Class of National Student Poets. Find out more at [www.artandwriting.org/NSPP](http://www.artandwriting.org/NSPP)

## THE 2014 CLASS OF NATIONAL STUDENT POETS



**Weston Clark**, Age 16, of Zionsville, IN, Sophomore at Park Tudor School in Indianapolis. He has been writing poetry since he was in first grade. He initially wrote Shel Silverstein-style poetry and has enjoyed exploring other styles, including free verse. Weston was born in Indianapolis and now lives in Zionsville attending Park Tudor School. Through his writing, Weston tries to evoke emotions in people. He strongly agrees with Maya Angelou's philosophy: "People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

**Region:** Midwest



**Julia Falkner**, Age 17, of Louisville, CO, Senior at Monarch High School

A senior at Monarch High School, most of Julia's work is about adolescence, gender, and vulnerability. She co-runs her high school's Writers Society as well as edits and produces the school literary magazine, *B-Sides*. Additionally, she absorbs as much art as possible. In the coming year she hopes to start a film project, read the collected works of Shakespeare, and complete a science-fiction novel. When she isn't writing, Julia keeps a loaded AP schedule, plays electric keyboards and guitar, and runs cross country for her high school.

**Region:** West



**Ashley Gong**, Age 15, of Sandy Hook, CT, Junior at Newtown High School

She grew up surrounded by language, as her parents, first generation immigrants, would often read Chinese poems to her when she was a toddler. Despite this early exposure to poetry, her first venture into writing came in the form of prose. It wasn't until more recently that she discovered her passion for poetry, which is currently her go-to medium for creative expression. She has learned to always keep a pen at hand, as she can often be found bursting into spontaneous spurts of poetry at any given place or moment. A junior at Newtown High School in Sandy Hook, CT, Ashley channels her love for writing, reading, reaching out, and leading into all aspects of her life, including instilling a love of Latin among middle school students.

**Region:** Northeast



**Madeleine LeCesne**, Age 18, of New Orleans, LA, Senior at Lusher Charter School

Madeleine began writing poetry when she was six years old. After her parents gave her an antique bed, each night she used the back of its headboard to scribble poetry into the wood. She lost this work in 2005, when the headboard and her home were washed away by Hurricane Katrina. New Orleans like her own identity is a blend of various cultures and bloodlines, so her work deals with unscrambling her identity and sparked an interest in genealogy as well as the city's history. Among the writers she looks to for guidance are Anne Carson, Kimiko Hahn, and Anna Moschovakis.

**Region:** Southwest



**Cameron Messinides**, Age 17, of Camden, SC, Senior at South Carolina Governor's School of the Arts & Humanities in Greenville, SC

A creative writing student at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities, Cameron was recognized with an honorary mention for the Leonard L. Milberg '53 Secondary School Poetry Prize, and his work has been published on *The Atlantic's* website. He lives in Camden, South Carolina, with his parents and five brothers and sisters, where, besides writing, he spends his time playing basketball, clumsily cooking dinner once a week, and helping raise the family goats.

**Region:** Southeast