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Winners Announced In SCCC/ATS Poetry Contest

Winners of two area-wide poetry contests were announced and read their poems Thursday evening at the Poetry Coffeehouse, hosted by Seward County Community College/Area Technical School.

In the scholarship category for area high school juniors and seniors, first place went to Kristina Simpson of Elkhart for her poem "Peaceful." Simpson also received an honorable mention for "The Journey." She was awarded a $100 SCCC/ATS scholarship, $25 cash, Pizza Hut and Spencer Browne's Coffee House coupons, a Magnetic Poetry set, and other prizes.

Second prize went to Brendan Giesick of Sublette for "LS1." Giesick received a $100 SCCC/ATS scholarship, $15 cash, Pizza Hut and Spencer Browne's coupons, a Magnetic Poetry set, and other prizes.

Winning third place for his poem "Hymn of a Broken Man, Part I," was Stetson Elam of Hardesty, Okla. He won $15 cash, Pizza Hut and Spencer Browne's coupons, a Magnetic Poetry set, and other prizes.

Honorable mention certificates and SCCC/ATS merchandise went to Randi Cooley, Sublette, for "The Vent"; Mariah Davis, Sublette, for "The Angel in My Piano"; Rebecca Helton, Sublette, for "Cold September Day"; Enrique Morales, Sublette, for "So we went to a water park"; Liz Ontiveros, Liberal, for "Teen Mother"; and Alyssa Tatro, Liberal, for "Who Am I?"

The scholarship category received 38 entries this year, a record number.

This year's Coffee House also featured an open category contest for the first time, which drew 52 entries. This category was open to all area residents ages 14-adult.

Taking first place in the open category was Liberal resident Rachel Coleman for her poem, "My husband buys a knife." Coleman also received two honorable mention awards for "I seek refuge in the library" and "I take another spin in the truck." Coleman won $25 cash, Pizza Hut and Spencer Browne's Coffee House coupons, a Magnetic poetry set, a writing journal, and SCCC/ATS merchandise.

Second place went to Barbara Damron of Liberal for "4 Sons: A Limerick." Damron also garnered an honorable mention for "You Were There." She was awarded $15 cash, Pizza Hut and Spencer Browne's coupons, a Magnetic poetry set, a writing journal, and SCCC/ATS merchandise.

Third prize went to Lavern Thomas of Liberal for "The Button Box." She received $10 cash, Pizza Hut and Spencer Browne's coupons, a Magnetic poetry set, a writing journal, and SCCC/ATS merchandise.

In the open category, honorable mention certificates and SCCC/ATS merchandise went to Amira Coleman, Liberal, for "Red"; Nathan Dowell, Liberal, for "Eclipsed Glory"; and Kyle Moree, Liberal, for "Filth" and "I Like Honey."

Serving as judge for both contests was Michael Shewmaker of Lubbock, Texas, who is associate editor of 32 poems and a PhD student and part-time instructor at Texas Tech University.

Shewmaker noted that narrowing down his picks to the top 10 in each category was not an easy task.

"It is so difficult to say why one poem is more effective than another," he said. "But I suppose the poems I picked as the best seem to pay closer attention to the awareness of a reader; that is, they offer a rounder experience through their imagery and, of course, their music."

Shewmaker added that he enjoyed judging the contests.

The contests drew a total of 90 entries from Liberal, Hugoton, Sublette, Elkhart, Hardesty, Okla., Tyrone, Okla., and Guymon, Okla.

The Coffee House also showcased several SCCC/ATS students reading poetry, along with SCCC/ATS student Juan Carlos Contreras, of Liberal, who entertained the crowd as he sang and played the keyboard. English instructors Bill McGlothing and Janice Northerns also read their poetry for the audience.

Readers from SCCC/ATS included Azucena Juarez, Octavio Rodriguez, and Alex Mages, all of Liberal.

The Coffee House is now in its fourth year, and organizers Bill McGlothing and Janice Northerns said they will continue the tradition.

"April is National Poetry Month, and hosting a Coffee House is a great way to celebrate that," Northerns said. "We also definitely want to continue with the two contests since we had such a large number of entries. I'd like to encourage those who entered and didn't win to try again next year. And, of course, new contestants will be welcome. Start working on your poems now."

To see more pictures of the Coffeehouse, folks can "like" the English Department Seward County Community College/Area Technical School page on Facebook, Northerns said.

“We have just created a Facebook page for the English Department, and we will also be posting videos in a few days of some of the poets reading,” Northerns said. “We hope everyone will ‘like’ the page. It’s going to be great way for us to get information out about upcoming events and share photos.”

SCCC/ATS Press Release