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POEMS PACK POWER

THE SPRINGFIELD AREA ARTS COUNCIL ANNOUNCES ILLINOIS STATE WINNERS

What shall I give my children? who are poor,
Who are adjudged the leastwise of the land,
Who are my sweetest lepers, who demand
No velvet and no velvety velour;
But who have begged me for a brisk contour,
Crying that they are quasi, contraband
Because unfinished, graven by a hand
Less than angelic, admirable or sure.

These lines, from “The Children of the Poor” by Gwendolyn Brooks, were among those recited by **Mariah Brooks** from **Southeast High School** (Springfield), winner of the Illinois State Contest of the *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest*. The competition was held on Friday, March 11, 2016, at the Hoogland Center for the Arts in Springfield. Brooks will advance to the national competition in Washington, D.C., in early May.

To win the competition, Brooks also recited “Negative” by Kevin Young and “Let the Light Enter” by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.

Amber Price, Maine East High School (Park Ridge), was named runner-up.

The Illinois State Contest featured recitations by two students from each of eight *Poetry Out Loud* regional contests in the state: Belleville, Carbondale, Champaign, Chicago-City, Chicago-Suburbs, Rockford, Rock Island, and Springfield.

Other students participating from around the state:

Grace Anderson, University of Chicago Laboratory Schools (Chicago)

Thérèse Beabout, Gibault Catholic High School (Waterloo)

Madelyn Foster, Edwardsville High School (Edwardsville)

Michaela Goodley, Annawan High School (Annawan)

Joshua D. Harris, Champaign Central High School (Champaign)

Morgan Harvey, Homewood-Flossmor High School (Flossmor)
Shireen Hassan, Champaign Central High School (Champaign)
Demetrius Markham, Thomas Jefferson High School (Rockford)
Ana M. Plankenhorn, Thomas Jefferson High School (Rockford)
Aleeya Reed, Eisenhower High School (Decatur)
Caroline Shaffer, Trinity Christian School (Carbondale)
Iran Torres, Metropolitan Schoolhouse (Chicago)
Claudia VanOpdorp, Annawan High School (Annawan)
Katelyn Wittenborn, Trinity Christian School (Carbondale)

Contest staff for the 2016 Illinois State Contest included
Recitation Judges:

Eugene Jones Baldwin – poet and playwright
Meagan Cass – fiction writer and assistant professor of English
Théa Chesley – poet and retired librarian

Accuracy judge: Emily Page

Prompter: Susan Dickson

Scorekeeper: Carolyn Swanson

M. C.: Aasne Vigesaa

A special guest at the contest was Willard Bunn, III, of Lake Forest, a Poetry Foundation trustee.

Poetry Out Loud in Illinois is a collaborative project of the Illinois Arts Council Agency and seven arts agencies, each of which hosts a regional contest. The *Poetry Out Loud: National Recitation Contest* is a national program that encourages high school students to learn about great poetry through analysis, memorization, performance, and competition. The National Endowment for the Arts and The Poetry Foundation, in conjunction with state arts agencies, support this nation-wide program with participants from all fifty states plus Washington, D.C., the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

In Illinois this year, 45 high schools were part of Poetry Out Loud. 110 teachers. 3,673 students.

“Among the benefits of the *Poetry Out Loud* program is that it helps young women and men find something they’re good at. These students are so talented and insightful,” said Sheila Walk, contest organizer, during the post-contest reception.

More information is available at www.poetryoutloud.org or from the Springfield Area Arts Council (programs@springfieldartsco.org).

Two photographs are attached. Mariah Brooks in the first. Amber Price in the second. [Photographer: William Richards]

The *Poetry Out Loud* logo also is attached.