



PRESS RELEASE

May 19, 2023

Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas

(<http://poetsroundtableofarkansas.org>)

Encouraging poets and poetry in Arkansas since 1931

Affiliated with National Federation of State Poetry Societies, Inc.

(www.nfmps.com)

Poets' Roundtable of Arkansas (PRA) is pleased to announce the winners of its 2023 Pat Laster Collegiate Poetry Contest. Winners read their winning poems at the Dr. Lily Peter Spring Celebration, an annual PRA event. PRA member, Lydia Cheatham served as judge. This year the contest was named in honor of PRA member, Pat Laster, and sponsored by Lydia Cheatham.

1st Place (\$500)— Gabrielle Thurman is a senior creative writing major at the University of Central Arkansas. She currently works as Editor-in-Chief at UCA's undergraduate literary magazine, *The Vortex*, and as a freelance copyeditor and proofreader. She plans to pursue a career in Entertainment Law and will begin her course of study in Fall 2023 at Belmont School of Law in Nashville, TN. Originally a fiction writer, she began experimenting with poetry in Jr. High after a friend at camp lent her a copy of Rupi Kaur's self-published poetry collection, *milk & honey*. Her poetry has appeared in *The Global Poem* and *Elephant Ladder* and is forthcoming as an exhibit in the Conway Public Poetry Contest. "In "Seedling" the contrasting images from nature and the human world draw the reader in and show us the speaker's experience, making us feel what they feel, and isn't this the goal of all poetry," says Sandy Longhorn, MFA, Professor at University of Central Arkansas.

2nd Place (\$300)— Madison "Maddie" Porter is a professional writing major and creative writing minor at UCA. She initially started college as a pre-med major, but after taking a creative writing class her sophomore year, she realized she could heal more people with her words. Because of her time working in a hospital, some of her poems are inspired by her observations of patients. After graduation, she plans to pursue a career in technical writing and grant writing for nonprofits. When she's not at work or school, Maddie can usually be found hiking, painting, or writing poetry in a coffee shop. "Maddie's work showcases her strength in being an observer of the world who can then translate what she experiences into the poetic form. No matter what her subject is, Maddie's poems are filled with strong narratives appealing to all of the reader's senses," says Longhorn who also teaches Maddie at the University of Central Arkansas.

3rd Place (\$200)— Verity Callahan was born and raised in Conway, Arkansas, to two academics with far too many books. She spent most of her childhood reading bad sci-fi from the 1980's, and always aspired to one day write stories of her own. Currently in her senior year of a degree in English-Literary studies at Hendrix College, she took a poetry class during her fall semester that gave her the opportunity to explore creative writing. Her future plans are to pursue a career in copy-editing and marketing, and to continue writing poetry whenever, and wherever, she can. "From poem to poem, revision to revision, Verity has grown more and more into the gifted poet

she always was. Her poems linger in intimacy of precise moments and at once reach for universally relatable human emotions, achieving a delicate tonal balance and wisdom well beyond her years,” says Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach PhD and Assistant Professor and Murphy Fellow in English-Creative Writing at Hendrix.

First Honorable Mention was awarded to Alyssa Toye a student at Harding University for her poem “Don’t Let the Bedbugs Bite.”

Hendrix student, Bauer Lee, took Second Honorable Mention for his poem, “Unlocked Love.”

Poets’ Roundtable of Arkansas is the oldest, non-profit poetry organization in the state, established in 1931 to encourage the art of poetry. Members are from all around the state, including past and present Arkansas Poet Laureates. Poets are encouraged to contact any PRA Branch President and visit a meeting. PRA is affiliated with the National Federation of State Poetry Societies (NFSPS). PRA and NFSPS sponsor educational poetry conferences and contests throughout the year for all ages. For more information, see the website listed above and like us on Facebook. Or contact PRA President John McPherson (mcpherson8391@gmail.com) or PRA’s Collegiate Contest Chair Karen Moulton (jkmoultons@yahoo.com).