

National Poetry Month Celebration 2009

The Stevens Memorial Library's Community Room was filled with the words of poets, poetry displays, and performances in celebration of National Poetry Month on Sunday, April 5, 2009. Thirty-four guests read, rapped or performed original or favorite poems or were members of the appreciative audience. Participants ranged from a grammar school student to senior citizens.

Gayle C. Heney, Poet Laureate of North Andover, organized the event. She welcomed all who attended to read/rap/sing/dance/or perform their poems as artists willing to make others laugh, sympathize, empathize, and think. She congratulated those who had come to listen as an essential part of the poetry community because without them poetry would not be an oral art.

Ms. Heney invited poets to approach the podium and open mike. Talia Shaughnessy, a North Andover grammar school student, jumped up first. She began the program with three of her original poems, including "My Granola Shot Out of the Wrapper," which appeared in the Winter 2009 edition of the literary magazine "Apple Seed" to the appreciative audience. Two Lawrence school teachers attended, after being invited by M. Heney, who saw their obvious commitment to both their students and poetry. Lisa Stott read poems written by her Lawrence students, including rapping one. Victoria Bailey of the Bruce School, brought two of her eighth grade students to read their own poems, and read one of her own. All three provided moving, personal insights.

Two members of the Poet Laureate Selection Committee entertained attendees with their own poetry. Marina Salenikas, Children's Librarian at the Stevens Memorial Library, crafted a Haiku poem for the occasion. Blair Woodman read two of her poems, one of which appeared in "Moments Falling Open". Chris Obert, owner of Haverhill's independent publishing firm Pear Tree Publishing, and his wife Chris, both attended.

Caitlin Gleed previously represented Presentation of Mary Academy in the "Poetry Out Loud" national recitation contest. She walked to the front of the room, ignored the podium, and gave a moving rendition of Stephen Vincent Benet's "Difference". Diane Giarrusso, Director of the Boxford Library, member of the Boxford Poetry Circle, and writer of a poetry blog, read a poem.

Susan LaFortune shared three of her poems, which spoke to the "fear ignorance brings," and her son. Valbona Lavdari read poems featured in the Greater Haverhill Poets Anthology "Painted Brush," published by Pear Tree Publishing. Each poem was accompanied by her own, original artwork. Adelyn Oliver read two original poems dealing with the concepts of aging, death and war. Karen M. Kline of North Andover, read two poems; one she had just written that morning.

Kate Doughty, a North Andover Middle School (NAMS) student who read at her school during the January Poetry Reading arranged by Ms. Heney, reminded attendees of the power poetry has to raise consciousness. Her original poem reminded listeners of the fragility of the planet and our role as stewards. Daniel Zeheb, also a NAMS student, whose poetry also appears in the NAMS Poets exhibition on the main level of the town's library, gave a rendition of his original poem "Pudding and Pickles". Laughter erupted from the crowd when he said, "If you had pudding and pickles, you'd throw them right out the door."

There were over fifteen readers/performers, including Ms. Heney, who performed her original poem entitled, "Wallpaper". The surprised looks in the audience as she spoke the words and brought physical motion to her performance was what she was after. "Poetry is a growing, transforming art. It provides opportunities for each of us to share who we are, have fun and express those joys, concerns, and sorrows that make up our lives."

Ms. Heney would like to thank Mary Rose Quinn, the Executive Director of the Stevens Memorial Library, for making a welcoming place for poetry in the library, and Marina Salenikas for

reading her original Haiku poem, preparing such attractive poetry displays in the library's Community Meeting Room, and personally welcoming all who attended.