

## Ligonier Valley Writers Calendar 2026

**July (Date TBD), 7:00-9:00 p.m.**  
*Loyalhanna Review* publication party.

**August 15.** Deadline for  
Flash Fiction Contest submissions.

**August 30. afternoon.** Annual LVW picnic.  
John and Sukey Jamison have generously  
invited LVW to hold our annual potluck picnic  
and readings at their farm near Crabtree.

**October (dates TBD).** Readings of the winning  
Flash Fiction stories at local venues.

**December 6, 3:00-5:00 p.m.** Annual LVW holiday  
party. St. Michael's of the Valley Church, Rector.

*Please check [www.LVWonline.org](http://www.LVWonline.org)  
or the LVW Facebook page  
for the latest information about  
events, contests, and publications.*

**Ligonier Valley Writers  
PO Box B, Ligonier, PA 15658  
LVWonline.org**

**Ligonier Valley Writers'**  
*36th annual*

## Student Poetry Awards



**April 25, 2026**

*“Each child is born a poet and every poet is a child.”*  
—Piri Thomas

**Student Poetry Awards  
April 25, 2026**

**Participating Schools 2026**

Albert Gallatin High School  
Bryn Mawr School  
Chartiers Valley Middle School  
Derry Area Middle School  
Derry Area High School  
Eagle View Elementary School  
Greater Latrobe Senior High School  
Jeannette Junior High School  
Jeannette Senior High School  
Ligonier Valley Middle School  
Norwin High School  
River Valley High School  
Shanksville-Stonycreek High School  
Somerset Area Junior High School  
Southmoreland High School  
Turtle Creek Elementary STEAM Academy  
Wilkins Elementary STEAM Academy  
West Hempfield Middle School  
Westmoreland Christian Academy

Ligonier Valley Writers thanks the following sponsors for their generous contributions to the Student Poetry Contest.

Judith Gallagher  
*Sponsor of the Jane Robb Gallagher Poetry Award*

The Busch Family  
*Sponsors of the Jim and Glenda Busch Memorial Award*

Candace Green  
*Sponsor of the Henry Clay and Gladys Maas Pruitt Award*

Sally Shirey  
*Sponsor of the Highview Farm Award  
and the Shirey Poetry Award*

Anita Staub  
*Sponsor of the Ogden Nash Award*

Ruth McDonald  
*Sponsor of the Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award*

Ronald J. Shafer  
*Sponsor of the Hayden Savinda Memorial Award*

Phil and Mary Lou Fleming  
*Sponsors of the Marie Martin Memorial Award*

Michele Jones  
*Sponsor of the John L. Naccarato Memorial Award*

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>List of Sponsors</b>   | 1  |
| <b>Categories A-C (Grades 4-6)</b>                                |    |
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| <b>Third Prize: The Amazing Hockey Player</b><br>by Hunner Wood   | 5  |
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***Congratulations to all the winners  
of LVW's Student Poetry Contest!***

Ligonier Valley Writers thanks  
all of the students who submitted poems  
to this year's Student Poetry Awards.

Ligonier Valley Writers thanks AIW Press  
for its generous donation of the printing cost  
of this booklet of winning poems and  
for helping with the production of this booklet.



## ***The Best of the Best in Grades 10-12***

**Flickering Years** by Caylin Raymond  
*Southmoreland High School, Grade 11*

The clocks were soft then  
They ticked in rhythm with dandelion breath  
And the slow tilt of a worn swing.  
Late afternoons pooled gold  
Now the seconds pass  
Time is pounding  
Behind my ribs  
Messy and uncounted.  
We buried worlds in the dirt  
Certain they would wait for us.  
Now the air tastes faintly  
Of something left on the stove too long  
The same afternoon light shining through dust  
Like years suspended in still air.  
Sometimes memory warms  
Without flame,  
A small flicker hidden in the lining of an old coat  
And I carry it  
Careful not to notice  
How small it's become.



## **Categories G-I (Grades 10-12)**

*G. The Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award*

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <b>First Prize: Working Teen Blues</b> by Lennon Bobby                   | 16 |
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|  |    |
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|  |    |
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## **The Best of the Best in each grade grouping**

**John L. Naccarato Memorial Award**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| <b>Grades 4-6: Beautiful Night</b> by Ariella Gunn      | 25 |
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## A. Jane Robb Gallagher Poetry Award

*Grades 4-6: rhymed verse, any subject*

*Sponsored by Judith Gallagher*

### **First Prize**

#### **Summer Fishing**

*by Charlie Zelazny*

*Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6*

fishing is so much fun  
yesterday I caught the sun  
bait is disgusting and the worms are cool  
but now I'm covered in fish drool

### **Second Prize**

#### **Little Yellow Writer**

*by Colton Frayvolt*

*Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6*

I am a pencil, bright and yellow,  
scribbling stories that are soft and mellow.  
I glide across the paper white,  
turning blank pages into light.  
Though I shrink down bit by bit,  
big ideas are born from my tip.



## John L. Naccarato Memorial Award

*Sponsored by Michele Jones*

*The Best of the Best in Grades 4-6*

### **Beautiful Night** *by Ariella Gunn*

*Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6*

velvet ink above  
silent stars spill frozen fire  
night drinks in the light

*The Best of the Best in Grades 7-9*

### **Love Language**

*by Van Bobby*

*Somerset Area Junior High School, Grade 7*

Not wanting to be MEAN or to seem OBTUSE,  
But some who know you shout "Abuse!"  
Me? I think you're ACUTE subject. For real!  
In my experience, you have RADICAL appeal!

Sure, you can be IRRATIONAL from time to time,  
And your PI is inedible, but that's no crime.  
Your TANGENTS are things many may resent,  
But I love you despite the PROBLEMS you present.

If you're looking for PROOF of my affection,  
Something that would MULTIPLY our connection,  
Slip me your DIGITS (no IMAGINARY NUMBERS, please!),  
And this opportunity, I'd be happy to seize!

What's the PROBABILITY that I'll love you always and forever?  
Well, to interact with you daily would be my loveliest endeavor.  
You've been the bedrock of KNOWLEDGE in many societies.  
That's why I love you, Math, in all your varieties!

*Third Prize*

**Ancient Love in Modern Times** by Lennon Bobby  
*Shanksville-Stonycreek High School, Grade 11*

When girls picture an ideal guy, they think of a king,  
Maybe like Zeus down on one knee with a ring.  
They want to be treated like Hera, as a beautiful queen,  
There to be adored ... not to launder, cook, and clean.

Girls want to be known for their wisdom, like the goddess Athena,  
Their adorers so plentiful, they would overcrowd an arena.  
And just like Artemis, renowned for her prowess on the hunt,  
Their words would flow like poetry; they'd never be blunt.

They want their beauty to be revered like that of Aphrodite,  
To be the object of affection for men brave and mighty.  
Now boys, not wanting to have a rizz rating of zero  
Try to emulate Hercules, the famous demigod hero.

They try to be athletic, like Hermes, so fast with winged feet,  
And try to polish harsh words so they come out sounding sweet.  
With an intent of shooting love arrows straight into girls' hearts,  
Just like Apollo balancing archery with the written arts.

Young bucks are intent on pulling all the single ladies  
With the level of attraction that pulls the dead to Hades.  
If you come seeking expert advice, I won't speak to thee ...  
Because when it comes to romantic love, it's all Greek to me.

*Third Prize*

**The Amazing Hockey Player** by Hunner Wood  
*Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6*

The puck drops fast  
the crowds alive,  
I skate in hard,  
I twist and drive.

A deke, a shot, the red light's bright  
Hockey feels like pure delight.



## B. Jim and Glenda Busch Memorial Award

*Grades 4-6: unrhymed verse, any subject*

***Sponsored by the Busch Family***

### ***First Prize***

**Broken Glass** by *Minerva Hall*

*Wilkins Elementary STEAM Academy, Grade 4*

I am  
broken  
glass  
A reflection  
of the big  
bright  
beautiful  
broken  
thing I am  
inside  
with checkerboard wings  
and twisted horns  
made of starry skies  
I am me  
Broken  
and  
beautiful  
I don't just reflect rainbows  
I am  
made  
of  
rainbows



### ***Second Prize***

**Seventeen Minutes before Dusk**

by *Vivien Wang*

*Bryn Mawr School, Grade 11*

now, the light.  
she curls into a finger, beckoning:  
the floating dust motes  
the wind's low humming.  
she whispers a secret only dissolution knows.

the dust rises, settles.  
it does not know change,  
only the wind's direction—  
i've learned the difference.

the air around me is loveless and stale,  
thick with the smell of coffee gone cold.  
the floorboards will stay warm  
for seventeen more minutes,  
then, she will move on.  
i have counted.

by the evening, the angle has changed.  
my shadow has fallen asleep, and—  
i have forgotten her voice again.  
her last kiss cools  
in the corner where i wait.

**Categories G-I (Grades 10-12)**

**I. Marie Martin Memorial Award**

*Grades 10-12, Romantic Poetry, any subject*

***Sponsored by Phil and Mary Lou Fleming***

***First Prize***

***Pressed Flowers*** by Caylin Raymond  
*Southmoreland High School, Grade 11*

Love does not knock loudly at my door.  
It lingers in the condensation of a shared drink,  
In the dented corners of a well-worn book.  
No violins swell, no harps sing  
Just the soft noise of footsteps in rhythm,  
Laughter folding into itself down a hallway.  
We sit cross-legged on bedroom floors,  
Passing secrets like salt across the table,  
Hands brushing.  
I watch the sky bruise into the evening,  
Collect inside jokes like pressed flowers,  
Watch dust turn golden in the early morning light.  
My love gathers quietly and loudly,  
Hard and soft.  
Not in romance, but in a shared glance,  
In the space people make for those they care about  
And never think to name.



***Second Prize***

**The Thinking Box**

*by Audrey Terry*

*Derry Area Middle School, Grade 6*

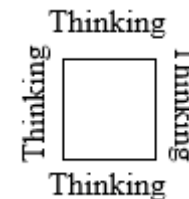
Did all the greatest people do it quite the same?

School creates obedient workers  
Not creative minds  
They teach us there is only one answer  
“Do as I say!”  
“Sit when I tell you to.”  
“Eat when you are told.”  
“Don’t speak when I’m speaking.”  
“Walk. Don’t run.”

Did the most successful people follow the rules?

No. They bent, shaped, and made their own.  
They asked questions  
no one else asked.  
They created another box,  
not the one they teach to think inside ...

the thinking box.



**Third Prize**

**Queen of the Court** by Rosalita Bobby  
Somerset Area Junior High School, Grade 6

Feet planted firmly behind the blue line.  
Thump. Thump. Thump.  
Twirling and slamming the ball to work off my nerves.  
Look to the ref up in his tower.  
Short whistle blast with arm extended towards me.  
It's go time.  
Toss the ball up with my left hand while my right is pulled back.  
Quick motion forward with my right palm to send the ball  
Soaring like a bullet over the net.  
Their player misreads the serve.  
She dives too late.  
Thwack.  
Ball slams off the waxed floor.  
Point for us.  
A-C-E!  
Teammates surround me  
Cheering and stomping in unison.  
Party over. Back to the blue line.  
Thump. Thump. Thump.  
The competition continues.



**Third Prize**

**Safety Feels Like This** by Savannah Gareis  
Norwin High School, Grade 11

Safety feels like this  
I am tucked into bed  
A nightlight glows softly in the corner of my room  
My parents check for monsters  
Their bedroom is across the hall  
If I need them

Safety feels like this  
Holding hands to cross the street  
Being lifted over a big puddle of water  
I am too small to jump over  
Reminders to wear my bike helmet  
And my seatbelt

Safety feels like this  
Being wrapped in my parent's arms after a hard day  
Bandages placed over my bruised knees  
Hot soup simmering on the stove  
When I was sick  
I swore it was the cure

But safety changes  
As you change

Safety feels like this  
Leaving the porch light on  
Driving yourself home  
Being brave enough to say yes  
Being brave enough to say no  
Walking away knowing you did the right thing

Safety feels like this  
Knowing you can fall apart  
And still put the pieces back together  
Knowing no matter the distance  
Your parents will welcome you home

**Second Prize**

**The Version of Me I Only Am at Night** by Allison Garstek  
Southmoreland High School, Grade 11

When there are no distractions, no noise, just silence, are you the same?

The lights are off, only your TV is playing, but no noise, just the light.

But you fall asleep, and you stop overthinking.

It's quiet and you are left with just your thoughts.

You are a whole new person, just you and your mind.

Scenarios play over and over again,

Thinking about how different things are when you think about them differently.

You're driving at night with your music playing. Do you have any other thoughts?

And you pull into the driveway and hear your dog in the house barking,

As you just come back to reality, are you changed?



**C. Henry Clay and Gladys Maas Pruitt Award**

*Grades 4-6: haiku. Sponsored by Candace Green*

**First Prize**

**Fish for Dinner!** by Gracie Mack  
Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6

New rod quiet hands  
ripples twirl where patience waits  
Dinner pulls back hard

**Second Prize**

**Mystery Mining** by Elliot Michel  
Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6

the rock full of gems  
glittering silently by  
no one will find it

**Third Prize**

**Chilly Season** by Blake Flickinger  
Ligonier Valley Middle School, Grade 6

winter pulls a scarf  
at night snowflakes dance on wind  
night shivers softly.

**D. Highview Farm Award**

*Grades 7-9: traditional verse, any subject*  
**Sponsored by Sally Shirey**

**First Prize**

**Brain Rot** by Van Bobby  
Somerset Area Junior High School, Grade 7

Where have all my classmates gone?  
Their faces can't be seen.  
Their eyes are focused elsewhere  
Glued to a glowing screen.

*continued*

*Continued from page 9*

Where have all my lunchmates gone?  
It's like I'm at the table alone.  
Instead of laughing and telling jokes  
They're staring at videos shown.

Where have all the players gone?  
We used to hang out as a team.  
Now instead, they stay indoors  
Sharing the latest meme.

Where have all my close friends gone?  
They've been replaced by clones.  
Their uniqueness has been draining away  
Ever since they got their phones.

***Second Prize***

***Secret Beauty*** by *Gia Fornalczyk*  
*Jeannette Senior High School, Grade 9*

The golden leaf hangs trembling on the bough  
While chilly winds begin to bite the air.  
The summer heat has lost its glory now  
And left the garden withered, stripped, and bare.  
The sun retreats behind a grey storm cloud;  
The forest floor is crisp with crunchy brown.  
The crows begin to cry their warnings loud  
As fading limbs of oak come tumbling down.  
Yet in this death, a secret beauty stays—  
A final flash of life before the sleep.  
I find a comfort in these shorter days,  
While shadows' frozen corners slowly creep.  
Though winter comes to turn the world to white,  
Your hand in mine shall keep the darkness bright.

**H. Hayden Savinda Memorial Award**

*Grades 10-12: free verse, any subject*  
***Sponsored by Ronald J. Shafer***

***First Prize***

***Because of Mrs. Bush*** by *Lennon Bobby*  
*Shanksville-Stonycreek High School, Grade 11*

Climb the risers.  
Robes swishing.  
Curtains open.  
Spotlight beating down.  
Sheet music rustling.  
Four-four time.  
Conductor sways his hand to give tempo.  
One.  
    Two.  
        Three.  
            Four.  
Voices begin to establish the melody.  
Layers of sound envelope me,  
Unifying to give strength.  
Soft as a whisper at first,  
    s l o w l y building in intensity.  
Tenors branch off, followed by altos.  
Well-rehearsed harmonies flow effortlessly now.  
Crescendo to finale. JOY!  
Breathe. Take a bow.

**Third Prize**  
**Washed Clean**

by Caylin Raymond

Southmoreland High School, Grade 11

The rain begins without a sound,  
A silver hush upon the street;  
It softens edges all around  
And cools the relentless summer heat.

It taps against my windowpane,  
A steady, patient, quiet song;  
Each drop a small and shining stain  
That lingers softly, yet not for long.

The world grows smaller, calm, and gray  
As thunder murmurs far away.  
I watch the sidewalks blur and gleam  
And let the gloom wash my mind clean.



**Third Prize**  
**Formula Sonnet**

by Jordan Martin

Jeannette Senior High School, Grade 9

The lights go out, a fury is unleashed,  
As beasts of carbon roar and strain to fly.  
On hallowed asphalt, titans are released  
Beneath a vast and unforgiving sky.  
A ballet wrought of nerve and perfect line  
Where meters can destroy a driver's pace.  
The chase for time, a fight that's so divine,  
Etched on the driver's focused, stoic face.  
A dance of physics, ruthless and precise,  
Where cleverness and perfect change align.  
To find the limit, pay the daring price,  
Walking the edge of the elusive line.  
So crown the champion with hard-earned praise,  
For victory on the most fiery days.

## E. Shirey Poetry Award

Grades 7-9: free verse, any subject

Sponsored by Sally Shirey

### *First Prize*

**The Day Everything Changed** by *Chloe Olson*  
*Jeannette Junior High School, Grade 7*

Small shoes by the door  
Still wait for your bright, soft laugh.  
Smoke erased our days.  
The bright fire called your sweet name.  
You live where light cannot burn.

### *Second Prize*

**An Evening at Home**  
by *Van Bobby*  
*Somerset Area Junior High School, Grade 7*

Clear off the table.  
Cue up an audio book.  
Dump out the contents of the box.  
Pieces scatter.  
Start to sort.  
Edges first.  
Corners are key!  
Snap together.  
Does that fit?  
Nope. Try again.  
Much better.  
Consult the poster.

*Continued*

### *Second Prize*

**Billionaires Are Your Friends** by *Sawyer Newhouse*  
*Derry Area High School, Grade 11*

The suited egos, dressed for their success—  
Designer hearts, fit for nepo babies  
The masters of wasteful grime and excess,  
The human equivalent of rabies

The investors, pros of the great con:  
Equal opportunity for each man,  
Opportunity to be spat upon.  
Halt evolution, halt the poor rat's plan

Oh, those baby faces, they know no work,  
Daddy made sure the slaves were in the will  
Never for Scrooge to pick up his own fork—  
But let him gobble down all of his fill

To that brave rich man, don't give up your hope—  
Just be careful to whom you sell your rope



**G. Dr. Len Roberts Memorial Award**  
*Grades 10-12: traditional verse, any subject*  
**Sponsored by Ruth McDonald**

**First Prize**

**Working Teen Blues** by *Lennon Bobby*

*Shanksville-Stonycreek High School, Grade 11*

Catherine lines up at the trendy shop to get her costly caffeine.  
Terry didn't think twice about ordering a pricey steak as his protein.  
Sasha suggested sushi and seafood as her favorite cuisine.  
Me? I make do with ramen noodles 'cause I'm a working teen.

Eileen's gran got her a new iPhone for better images on the screen.  
David's dad bought him another device to wipe a virus clean.  
Mike's mom was persuaded to purchase him an overpriced machine.  
And me? I rock a generic smart watch as a working teen.

Runway ready, Reagan's outfits are made for her to strut and preen.  
Beatrice bounces between Ulta and Sephora, spending like a queen.  
Jerry jumps around in his Jordans on the basketball scene.  
And me? I shop at thrift stores, budget-friendly to a working teen.

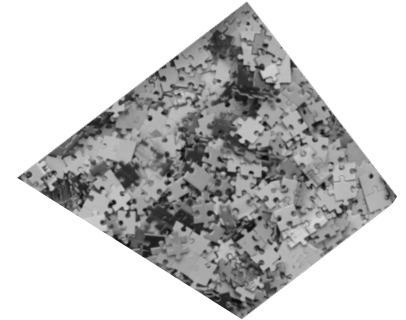
My friend Susie got a Subaru the day she turned sixteen.  
Helen was gifted a Honda in the shade of holly green.  
Kyle inherited a crimson Kia, the toughest one I've seen.  
And me? I got a piggy bank and the title of working teen.

"Don't worry," my parents assure me. "The benefits are unseen."  
"One day," they promise, "you'll be glad you were a working teen."



*Continued from page 12*

Sort the rest of the pieces.  
Piles of colors and shapes.  
Make slow progress.  
Frustration.  
These all look the same now!!  
Get help from Mom and sis.  
Completion! Victory!  
Crumble and re-box.



**Third Prize**

**My Favorite Necklace** by *Serena Boddie*

*Jeannette Junior High School, Grade 7*

Cold skin, bare and still  
A ghost where the pendant hung  
Searching on the floor  
I reach for what is not there  
Only silence in its place





## **F. Ogden Nash Award**

*Grades 7-9: light humorous verse, any subject*

***Sponsored by Anita Staub***

### ***First Prize***

***Fantastic Freckles*** by Maria Gacek

*West Hempfield Middle School, Grade 7*

Little specks of tawny hue,  
Glimmering embers rained down upon you.  
Mottled sunshine grazing my skin,  
Tiny constellations hidden within.

Blossoming and blooming with the sun's rays,  
They lead to a plethora of giddily fun days!  
Cherished elements all over my face,  
Down to my toes many of them race.

Freckles, oh, freckles, where do I start?  
The identity you bring me comes from the heart.

These sparks of self I adore lots.  
Hours upon hours of connect-the-dots!

### ***Second Prize***

***Vinegar Valentine*** by Aisley DeFelice

*Jeannette Junior High School, Grade 7*

Hearts are in windows; candy is here.  
But I'm skipping the romance this time of year.  
Don't send a card, don't plan a big scene.  
I'm not looking to be your Valentine queen.

### ***Third Prize***

***I Frown While Upside-Down*** by Cherith Smith

*Homeschooled, Grade 7*

I frown while upside-down.  
What's the use of smiling?  
If my smile looks like frowning,  
While I am upside-downing,  
I'll frown  
So it looks like I'm smiling.

