The
Thirty-Fourth Annual
Jo-Anne Hirshfield
Memorial Poetry Awards

Evanston Public Library Community Meeting Room
Sunday, April 29, 2012, 2:00pm
In loving memory of

Dr. Hyman Hirshfield

1921-2010
The prizes in poetry are awarded in memory of:

Mabel Brail

Ellen Ritman

The Middle School Awards are endowed by:

Sara and Robert C. Busch
Welcome
Karen Danczak Lyons, Library Director

Introductory Remarks
Lesley Williams, Head of Adult Services

Remarks by 2012 Poetry Judge
Laura Purdie Salas

Presentation of 2012 Awards and Prize Money

Elementary Age Students
Middle School Students
High School Students
Unpublished Adults

Poetry Readings
Laura Purdie Salas

Refreshments Immediately Following the Program
Meet the Award Winners

Past Judges

1979 - Eloise Fink
Lisel Mueller
1980 - Mark Perlberg
1981 - Mark Perlberg
1982 - Daryl Hine
1983 - Eleanor Gordon
1984 - Mark Perlberg
1985 - Dennis Brutus
1986 - Lisel Mueller
1987 - John Dickson
1988 - Eloise Fink
1989 - Gertrude Rubin
1990 - Reginald Gibbons
1991 - Angela Jackson
1992 - Richard W. Calish
1993 - Beatriz Badikian
1994 - Maxine Chernoff
1995 - Martha Modena Vertreace
1996 - Effie Mihopoulos
1997 - Mark Turcotte
1998 - Mark Turcotte
1999 - Allison Joseph
2000 - Sterling Plumpp
2001 - Richard Jones
2002 - Susan Hahn
2003 - Julie Parson-Nesbitt
2004 - Dr. Haki R. Madhubuti
2005 - Paulette Roeske
2006 - Jared Smith
2007 - Averill Curdy
2008 - Janice N. Harrington
2009 - Janet S. Wong
2010 - Bobbi Katz
2011 - Janet S. Wong

We regret any errors that may have occurred in this publication.
I Am

I am the grandfather tree
I have rough bark
but a smooth inside
a woody dark brown
but you will never know
my true colors
I am the glowing firefly
making brighter
the dark world
around me
my tiny wings
are always beating
excitedly
I am the shooting star
an opportunity
to wish on
only a streak of light
and yet
very powerful
I am the river
swirling fast
flowing through
the regions of the world
Second Place: Jamie Lauderbaugh
Lincolnwood Elementary School, Grade 4

Similie

Chocolate is like water flowing down a stream
Birds are like babies learning how to walk
Cats are like vampires sleeping in the day and coming out at night
Computers are like parrots repeating what you say
Your life is like a never ending rainbow
Books are like pages of your memory
I am shy and nice.
I wonder how trees grow so fast.
I hear lawn mowers cutting grass.
I see flowers in the color of white.
I want my cousin to get out of jail.
I am shy and nice.

I pretend that I can fly in the sky.
I feel cold air.
I touch water.
I worry about the world ending.
I cry when I see my cousin in jail.
I am shy and nice.

I understand how people feel when they are sad.
I say my cousin will get out of jail.
I dream about freedom.
I try to be a nice friend.
I hope the war will end.
I am shy and nice.
Elementary Age Students

Honorable Mention: Vanessa Lopez
Willard Elementary School, Grade 5

Untitled

Do you ever wonder why we grow…

Why the grass is green

Why the clouds…

Are gray

Why the wind blows

Why the people cry…

Why the ground shakes

Why the butterfly flies

But do you know that when only one little thing happens

Something big can happen

Something big.
Honorable Mention: Teagan Hueneke
Willard Elementary School, Grade 5

My marathon mom

She faces long roads
26.2 miles
While she runs I ride my bike
Her feet hit the ground like the beat of a song
And my bike wheels are like a small car
Her blond hair flows in the wind
She opens her mouth to taste the wind
I love my marathon mom
Elementary Age Students

Honorable Mention: Fernando Esteban
Willard Elementary School, Grade 5

Soccer

Fun
Run
Score
Excited
Celebrate
Gooooooooooool
Honorable Mention: Damian Franchere
Chiaravalle Montessori School, Grade 4

Weeding with M.J.

I pull out another weed.
So does he. I listen to his dance
shoes hitting the ground. He’s in his
white suit and white hat. We put the
weeds by the curb. He starts singing
so I sing along. “You been hit by
a smooth criminal.”
Middle School Students

First Place: Aela Morris
Chute Middle School, Grade 7

Dictionary Demarcation

Step through the swinging door
First a right, then left
Four rows down
Reference section (noun)
There, you’ve found me!
Touch my cover of soft, smooth leather,
Let your fingers grace (verb) my leaf-thin paper.
Oh! The words you can find in me
From A to Zymurgy (noun).
Let your mind wander past temptation, structural, superfluous.
Don’t skip over aardvark, bibliomania, condolence.
Whether you’re a skimmer or a searcher,
a gentle page turner, atearor a ripper, or the kind fixer,
Don’t be deterred by words like
Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis
or the big red Do Not Remove stamp.
Just take the time to sift through my pages and
discover the magical power of words.
Kabuli Runner

BOOM!
CRACK!

A muffled cry. Surrounded by thick air.
Past me running, running.

BOOM!
CRACK!

A stifled scream. Covered in red.
Past me, running, running.

BOOM!
CRACK!

An orphaned child. Pain beneath her chador as she watches me.
Past me, running, running.

BOOM!
CRACK!

A crumbled tower. Underneath, so many choices.
Past me, running, running.

BOOM!
CRACK!

A broken country. Dotted with bullet holes and hope.
HALT. For this is war.
Third Place: Stella Davis-Perney
Bessie Rhodes Magnet School, Grade 6

Untitled

The black cat
wanders around the alley.
Nobody wants her, an omen of bad luck.
When people see her, they run away.
When she looks at them with her hungry green eyes, they shudder.
But the cat’s blackness only brings bad luck
to herself.
Middle School Students

Honorable Mention: Anne Raspe
Chiaravalle Montessori School, Grade 6

Nature is alive

A blossom in the bushes becomes a rustle in the trees. The rustle becomes a gust
the gust becomes a breath and then a swell and finally a sob.
The sob becomes a swell then a breath, a gust, and then a
Rustle becomes a blossom and the blossom an echo in the trees.
A distant memory.
Middle School Students

Honorable Mention: Anne Umbanhowar
Haven Middle School, Grade 7

Perspective

There is a certain poetry in physics
A song to the perfect tension of the ground
Look:
Adrenaline is angled feathers
Awe:
The speed of light, the speed of sound
Listen closely
And you may see stories
Captured in a shining slide of sky
We are a jewel in darkness, dew in morning
As the fleeting, flickering stars flash by.
Do not be afraid, for we are giants
Gods of the domain cupped in our hands
Close your eyes or heed the graceful warning
While the dying light of suns still stands.
Middle School Students

Honorable Mention: Yngrid Jean-Philippe
Chute Middle School, Grade 7

Tropical Dance

Follow your tips,
Turn your hips!
Shake your belly,
Like a delicious jelly.
Let’s take a chance,
And do the tropical dance!
Honorable Mention: Chirasree Mandal
Haven Middle School, Grade 6

The Voyager

Little hands make the folds, carefully guiding the paper.

Big hands take the boat,

it is now ready for its journey,

through the straits of Grandpa’s pond.

All hands on deck, lowering the boat to the water.

As it sails, its wake rises and falls with an ebb and flow of its own,

and the Koi fish wonder, who could create such a vessel.
Seamingly

she rummaged through the box
she grabbed that needle
she grabbed the thread
blood red
trying to sew herself back together again
stitching back up who she thought she was
stitching herself into who she is
who she will be
she gingerly touches the lines so prominent on her ivory skin
man made, sewn up in nature.
she held herself together with the thinnest of wires
filling her ears with sea shells
‘cause all she wants to hear is the ocean
but she can’t escape the land locked skin
so surface.
so superficial.
so she continues
to fill herself full with far away life.
tied together with needle and thread
but what is the point if she’s still splitting at her seams.
What My Grandpa Taught Me

I learned from my grandpa how to be more social, to accept the offer from a friend to go play shuffle board at the community center. I learned to be ready for a night out at the bowling alley with the in-laws, the shoes that smell of industrial cleaner and hoots of laughter in between bites of pizza. I learned to stop and find the remedy to a neighbor’s air conditioner while out for a spin on my battered yellow bike bought at a garage sale. I learned to jump up on stage when a volunteer is needed for the third lion during the annual community play. I learned to lounge on the deck of the Princess cruise ship with a Dos Equis in hand friends on either side as the captain explains the lock system of the Panama Canal. For every encounter you chance, to start with a joke and walk away with two smiles.
I could write a poem
that no one could tell
was for you. It would be about
a room full of black lab tables,
and a red mechanical pencil
I always had to guard. About
a classroom rave with emergency glow sticks.
About your navy cross country jacket
I like to wrap myself in even though
it’s too big for me. About
moose ears and banana hands
and a bear named Fuzzy Wuzzy.
About a square lunch table,
an orange couch, a bag
that was always breaking.
About a pipe cleaner mess
and a hefty baby pig.
It would be about jellyfish. About
gingerbread houses and apple cider.
And about a squeeze of a hand
and a whispered, “I love you”.

But It Is
Honorable Mention: Kyndall Jones
Oak Park and River Forest High School

Size 3

My Mother tells me she had an abortion. Said her body wasn’t ready to cradle stretch marks that tuck into her. She is addicted to alignment. Thinks the arcs of her stomach should run parallel with her hip bone.

She was so afraid her thighs would spread wider than wire hangers, she made her body spit up its insides. Her blood settling in puddles on our bathroom floor. Tells me, “these are how angels look.” She can’t tell when a body is wounded from starving. My mother has always fit into size 3. Now, I watch as her stomach pushes past her chest like hangers bent with wet clothes. Hates the way her skin laps over itself. No longer fitting into my father’s desires. She tells me, she doesn’t know how it feels for him to tread his fingertips down her spreading stretch marks. She’s sick of elastic waist bands. Wishes the mirror captured the woman who blended in the creases of bed sheets. The insides of her thighs are bruised. Jeans swing in her closet because
they hang uneven. She doesn’t know how it feels for them to not brush past each other. She says, “Kyndall go to the gym with me, I’ll pay you.” Like I wouldn’t do it if she just asked. Her body holds yield signs. Vulnerability etches itself over her skin. I’m scared to ask if this outfit makes me too big. My sister taunts me at dinner.

Says the youngest always ends up being the biggest. Jagging her fingers into my side, howling “you’re the fattest, just stop eating.” I want to believe that beauty doesn’t always have to fit into a size 3. Yesterday, I stretched a wire hanger so far it broke, like my mother did the day she filled trash bags with clothes too tight for her full-sized body. I want to believe that God made me with motive. Not wanting me heavy with pounds of skin sucked bone. Hangers are not meant to bend, Mothers are not meant to break. We all turn our body sideways in mirrors sometimes but eventually, we have to face ourselves.
High School Age Students

Honorable Mention: Zoe Johannsen
Evanston Township High School

1933

It started with Identification
Soon there was need for Transportation
For too long, it was Conservation
Families suffered from Separation
So much cause Desperation
Little need for more Starvation
Pain and tears of Suffocation
No name left, Cremation
All in the name of
Purification
High School Age Students

Honorable Mention: Chris Racz
Buffalo Grove High School

Springtime

I will never hear an A chord again
without remembering those mornings
spent tripping over chords
as my amp shook the walls.
And the ceiling so low,
my bass would knock the chandelier
and ten years of dust,
would fall like snow
in an abandoned living room.
And our hourly breaks to the back porch,
where we would stare out across the open field,
and duck as neighbors peered out their windows.
How you would refuse to pick up your sticks
without first removing your clothes,
and the drums would bang long into the night.
This morning, I woke up the clock.
And then, the bed got out of me.
So, I brushed my breakfast and ate my teeth.

The school was waiting to take me to the bus.
After the bus got off me,
I took my locker out of my books.

School was bored with me
Until glorious fifth period, lunch -
Where I dipped my ketchup into my fries,
And gobbled my lemonade and drank my burger.

In History, my pencil took notes on me.
And in English, my journal turned me in.
In Spanish, we spoke English.
In Math, the problems solved me.

When the day finally ended,
I couldn’t wait until home got to me.
And, when it finally did I said,
“What a wonderful day!”
According to Goldilocks

It rained cats and dog—
Gray Persian, Siamese, Calico,
Great Dane, Collie, Pekinese,
the day the pig escaped
the poke. Three blind mice
had their tails detached and Little Piggy
went to market with Old Gray Hen.
Henny Penny, still paranoid, sounded
the alarm. Red sky in the morning,
sailors take warning. The sky is falling again.
Agitated, the cow jumped over the slip
of moon near the horizon causing her calf
to cry over the milk she spilt.
Big bad Wolf chased Little Piggy
and the hen into the path of the three bears.
Mama Bear and Baby Bear searched for eggs,
but Papa Bear brought home the bacon.
the formica table

flashes quicksilver
  in sunlight
  under a bare bulb

I dress it for dinners in
oilcloth of apples pears bananas
  floating on a drop of sky

bowls of chicken soup teem
with diced carrots onions celery
  and parsnip taken for potato
  and gagged on by the six-year-old

plates steam with pot roast
  stuffed cabbage
  fried chicken
  beef stew

amid the heady
  brew of coffee the clank of silverware
  and chatter at the table

the past rises
  from the scratched face and rusted legs
  that now stand in a corner of the attic
Eddie Hernandez is Dead

Spring pulls the kids away from books, outdoors to cigarettes and blank stares, to the traffic crawling along the street. More kids crazy today, More kids crying than learning. Eddie Hernandez is dead.

The bell rings for class. No Eddie wiggling in his seat; no books, no paper, no homework— No jumpy gum-chewing kid crooning, “Hi, teach.” No worn-out smile, no sweaty fingers snapping that he’s ready for verbs and stories. Just the funeral march into the room. Everyone wants death erased from the blackboard. They bounce jokes around like balls. “Where’s Eddie’s big box radio?” “Where’s Eddie carving his initials into the desk?” I try arguing them out of lies and laughter.

But Eddie Hernandez is dead. I whisper, “Write, write, whatever you want.” I am whipped and wordless, without a lesson. Sweat settles on my forehead. Pencils creep in straight lines as
stories are composed about the Senior Prom,
about Eddie dancing in a tux and gym shoes
and then drowning in the lake the same night.
That's how his death is described:
matter-of-fact, on two sides of a notebook paper—
The short story of a boy's life.
Adults

Honorable Mention: Minna Zhou
Evanston

Ferry’s Favorite Things*

*This poem is an imitation and gentle parody of David Ferry.

Nobody seeming like much of anything anywhere at all;
The women wrinkling silently away in their rockers
Like pickles in glass jars; the barking sound of dogs
Outside by the wood, they are talking weighty matters;
The green trees in the wind and the rocks by the river.

The women sit in their bodies like cages; nowhere at all
Is anybody seeming like much of anything; the dogs are discussing
The wind, which has blown a number of rocks into the river;
There is a shuffling of limbs among the trees and the dogs
Who feel the earth as the women inside do not.


Local

Local corn in August, apples in September
A pleasure to anticipate, a pleasure to remember
As season follows season so I hope to enjoy
The sweet familiar kisses of my own Chicago boy
Adults

Honorable Mention: Anne Gavitt
Evanston

Swan

On the lake a single swan
glides home before the rain comes
On the wind-blown, black, jagged water
he sails, mysterious and sure
the only calm thing under the bulbous sky
the only hint of light
As a kid, Laura Purdie Salas devoured books. Books were like pieces of magic, conjured up to entertain her, keep her company, and show her the whole world before disappearing into the library return drop as if they had never existed. It never occurred to her that real people actually wrote those books.

College was the first time she considered a career in the publishing field. After graduating with an English degree, she worked first as a magazine editor, and then as an 8th grade English teacher. While teaching, she rediscovered her love for children’s literature. She began to focus on children’s writing, and she never looked back.

Laura is the author of more than 100 books for kids and teens. Although she’s written many nonfiction books, her first love is poetry, and her books include *Bookspeak! Poems About Books*, *Stampede! Poems to Celebrate the Wild Side of School* (Finalist, Minnesota Books Award), and her latest book, *A Leaf Can Be…* She enjoys helping kids find poems they can relate to, no matter what their age, mood, and personality.

Laura and her family live in the Minneapolis areas, and she still devours books.

See more about Laura and her work at www.laurasalas.com.
Acknowledgments

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Contributions

Contributions to the Jo-Anne Hirshfield Memorial Poetry Fund are welcomed, and will enable this program to continue.

Gifts may be forwarded to:
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In loving memory of

Jo-Anne Hirshfield
who found pleasure and delight in poetry

Her family has dedicated funds entrusted
to the Evanston Public Library
to award prizes for outstanding new poetry writing.

It is our hope that poets of all ages
will be inspired and encouraged,
and that the funds will serve
to reward excellence in poetry writing
as a memorial to Jo-Anne.

–Dr. and Mrs. Hyman Hirshfield

daughters, Laura, Leslie, and Deborah, and
grandson Justin Garrick

with special remembrance of

Brian Garrick