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ALABAMA CENTER FOR THE BOOK ANNOUNCES RIVER OF WORDS ART AND POETRY CONTEST WINNERS

The Alabama Center for the Book in the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts & Humanities, in partnership with the Auburn University College of Liberal Arts, Auburn University Environmental Institute, Auburn University Libraries, Auburn University College of Agriculture, and Alabama Water Watch announces the student winners of the River of Words poetry and art contest for 2009.

Each year, River of Words invites students in kindergarten through 12th grade to explore the natural and cultural history of the rivers, lakes, and streams of their communities and to express through poetry and art what they discover. The contest is sponsored nationally by River of Words, in affiliation with the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, and in Alabama by the Alabama Center for the Book and its partners.

Scott Styslinger, an 8th-grade student at The Altamont School in Birmingham, was named a national winner for his artwork, *Night Flower*. In addition, two students from Alabama were named national finalists in art: Karmen Gaines, The Altamont School, and Hannah McGee, Madison Academy, Madison. Obianujunwa Anakwenze from Florence High School in Florence was named a national finalist in poetry.

Former US Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner Robert Hass, co-founder of the River of Words program, commented on this year's entries: "It's thrilling to see, year after year, these young writers and artists giving us back the places where we live through their words and images. Through their explorations and reflection on their homegrounds, we are all made more aware of the beauty, history, and fragility of our natural landscapes."

Alabama winners at the state level, selected from 750 entries, are:

Art, Level I, kindergarten-grade 2: Harley Gerald, Chelsea (first place); Hannah Looney, Montgomery (honorable mention).

Art, Level II, grades 3-6: Tyler Rhodes, Altamont School, Birmingham (first place); Andrew Harless, Madison Academy, Madison (second place); Rachel Lee, Madison Academy (third place); Mrs. Christopher's 4th-grade class, Kilby Lab School, Florence (honorable mention); Emily Hillhouse, Altamont School (honorable mention); Addison Rucker, Madison Academy (honorable mention).

Art, Level III, grades 7-9: Jordan Bacon, Madison Academy, Madison (first place); Brannum Forsyth, Altamont School, Birmingham (second place); Jason Dietz, Madison Academy (third place); Kayla Burns, Nichols-Lawson Middle School, Sylacauga (honorable mention); Karmen Gaines, Altamont School (honorable mention); Emily Spears, Madison Academy (honorable mention).

Art, Level IV, grades 10-12: Sarah Eckinge, The Altamont School, Birmingham (first place); Genie Smith, Altamont School (second place); Lauren Lambert, Madison Academy, Madison (third place); Caleb Jones, Madison Academy (honorable mention), Hannah McGee, Madison Academy (honorable mention), Madeleine Moss, Altamont School (honorable mention), Dru Selden, Altamont School (honorable mention), Brittain Williams, Altamont School (honorable mention).

Poetry, Level I, kindergarten-grade 2: Mina Oates, Pinson (first place).

Poetry, Level II, grades 3-6: Caleb Rogers, Highlands School, Birmingham (first place); Molly Kauper, Highlands School (second place); Ming Li Wu, Huntsville (third place); Lexi Sigle, Kilby Lab School, Florence (honorable mention); Brennan Smith, St. Pius X School, Mobile (honorable mention).

Poetry, Level III, grades 7-9: Blake Lawson, Cleveland High School, Cleveland (first place); Kacie Mathis, Cleveland High School (second place); Elizabeth Anne Brown, Birmingham (third place); Kasey Armstrong, Cleveland High School (honorable mention); Kelsey Mallon, Cleveland High School (honorable mention).

Poetry, Level IV, grades 10-12: Robyn Hunter, Opelika High School, Opelika (first place); Alex Lindley, Florence High School, Florence (second place); Forrest Burgess, Florence High School (third place); Mariah Sankey, Opelika High School (honorable mention).

The Alabama Center for the Book is a state affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Housed at the Caroline Marshall Center for the Arts & Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts at Auburn University, the center sponsors programs around the state on books and reading. For more information on River of Words, visit <http://riverofwords.auburn.edu> or contact the Alabama Center for the Book at

334-844-4946.

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