

**A Guide to Creating A Local Level
“River of Words” Environmental
Poetry and Art Contest for Students**

by Carol Mahler

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The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

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The International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest

The annual International River of Words: National Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students was co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997). The contest is co-sponsored by the International Rivers Network and the Library of Congress Center for The Book. The deadline for the national contest is February 15.

For the poetry and for the art contest, one international prize and four grand prizes award a trip to Washington DC with a parent. Honored at an awards ceremony and luncheon at the Library of Congress, winners also will have a VIP tour of the White House, a canoe trip, and visits to many historic sites. Also, 50 finalists will receive books in the poetry contest and 50 finalists will receive art supplies in the art contest. All entries will be acknowledged with a personalized "Watershed Explorer" Certificate. The judge for the poetry contest is Robert Haas; the judge for the poster contest will be Germaine Juneau, Director of the International Children's Art Museum.

For more information about the contest, visit the web site www.riverofwords.org or call Pamela Michaels at 510-433-7020.

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I. Groundwork for the Contest

I.A.1. Securing Sponsors and Soliciting Donations for Prizes

A copy of the booklet, *River of Words International Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students Partners Guide*, is included in a pocket (page 9 in this booklet).

The responsibilities of the co-sponsoring organizations are two:

- first, to be available to provide information about the ecology, geography, and cultural history of the watershed and estuary to students, teachers, and parents who request it;
- second, to help publicize the contest, especially to their members through printing a notice in their monthly newsletter and by providing flyers at their meetings as well as posting notification on their web sites, if available.

In addition, a sponsoring organization may wish to donate a prize (see section I.B.2 Establishing and naming awards).

Good choices for co-sponsors are those organizations which include education about the Charlotte Harbor Watershed--its ecology, geography, or cultural history--in their mission statement. Sponsoring organizations in Charlotte County have included the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Peace River Audubon Society and others. Audubon Society chapters exist in the following counties: Manatee, Sarasota (2), Charlotte, Lee (2), and Polk (2). Find links at www.audubonflorida.org.

The first step to invite a sponsoring organization is a phone call or personal visit to the executive director or president of the group. You should offer, or you may be requested, to send the invitation in writing, so a letter should be sent on your organization's letterhead. Because not-for-profit organizations are governed by boards of directors, you may offer, or you may be requested, to present your invitation during a regularly scheduled meeting of the board or the general membership. If you do make a presentation, be sure to prepare, bring with you, and

I.A.1. Securing Sponsors and Soliciting Donations for Prizes (continued)

distribute handouts which explain the contest and include the other organizations that have already agreed to participate or those who have been invited. Handouts may be as simple as copies of the letter of invitation to the group and/or the flyer calling for entries.

As you contact these organizations, try to discover opportunities to network. Often, the same people who belong to one organization also belong to other similar organizations. Personal visits or phone calls are excellent opportunities to ask if other organizations may be interested.

As a sponsor, the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program will provide a set of printed materials (posters and/or booklets) for each school in the county.

A sample letter, to invite an organization to co-sponsor the local level contest, follows.

I.A.2. Securing Sponsors and Soliciting Donations for Prizes
Letter of Invitation (sample document)

_____(date)_____

Active Volunteer, President
Co-sponsoring Organization
P.O. Box 0000
Our Town, FL 33000

Dear Ms. Volunteer:

_____(Our organization)_____ invites the _____(name of organization)_____ to sponsor our local level "River of Words" Environmental Art and Poetry Contest. The poetry contest is for middle and high school students and the art contest is for middle school students only. The theme for the contest is the Charlotte Harbor Watershed and its geography, ecology and cultural history.

Cosponsored by _____(name other co-sponsoring organizations in alphabetical order)_____, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, the contest is a local level of "The International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students." Co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is based on the belief that writing and creating art about a watershed requires students to closely observe and appreciate that natural environment. Such observation and appreciation in turn will inspire students to preserve and conserve nature.

All entries submitted to the local contest will be forwarded to the national contest; however, prizes awarded locally will provide incentive and positive reinforcement for the students, and I hope you'll consider donating a prize for each contest as well.

All poems will be displayed at _____(name event and define event)_____, on _____(give day and date)_____, at _____(place and street address or town)_____. In addition, a poetry reading/awards ceremony will be held, and you're invited to send a member to represent your organization as a sponsor and/or to award any prizes you may donate.

All art will be displayed at _____(name event and define event)_____, on _____(give day and date)_____, at _____(place and street address or town)_____. An awards ceremony will be in the entertainment schedule; you're invited to send a member to represent your organization as a sponsor and/or to award any prizes you may donate.

Prizes have included certificates for harbor and river tours by boat and plane, scholarships to an Eco-Week Summer Camp, shadow days with biologists, sweatshirts, t-shirts, books, and posters.

**I.A.2. Securing Sponsors and Soliciting Donations for Prizes
Letter of Invitation (sample document) (continued)**

Your sponsorship and awards will be advertised in the “call for entries” flyers distributed county-wide to students; in all press releases announcing the contests, winners, awards ceremonies, and festivals; and during the awards ceremonies. Your donation will show your commitment to the students of _____ County and writing and art that showcases the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. Please will you help?

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, (position with sponsoring organization)
 (phone number) or online at (e-mail address)

I.B.1. Establishing and Naming Prizes

The local level contest in Charlotte County has solicited prizes from individuals, businesses, and organizations that encourage, agree with, or educate about the protection and preservation of the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. Prizes have ranged from gift certificates for swamp buggy tours, kayak and canoe rentals and tickets for boat trips on and plane rides over Peace River, Myakka River, and/or Charlotte Harbor, to books about Charlotte Harbor and southwest Florida, t-shirts and sweatshirts with environmental or nature messages and logos. When requesting “tickets” for excursions, be sure to ask for two (one adult and one child) so that at least one parent and/or guardian can accompany the child.

As you contact prospective donors, be sure to mention that in return for the donation of a prize, each individual, business, or organization will be included in the publicity (media releases and flyers) about the contest, exhibit, and awards ceremony, as well as acknowledgment on the winners’ certificates and at the awards ceremony.

Prizes can be named for or given in memory of a particular individual. For example, an individual whose mother had passed away donated money in her memory. The money paid for a scholarship for a child to participate in a week-long “summer camp” at the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center. Another prize, the entry to best portray “the land-and-sea connection,” was named to honor a long-time environmental activist.

Prizes can also be awarded for focusing on one of the three parts of the watershed theme: ecology, geography, or cultural history. For example, the Punta Gorda Historical Society and the Charlotte County Historical Center’s Museum Society both donate prizes for submissions that best portray the “cultural history” aspect of the watershed theme.

The first step to invite the donation of a prize is a phone call or personal visit to the individual, business, or organization. Because not-for-profit organizations are governed by boards of directors, you may offer, or you may be requested, to present your invitation during a

I.B.1. Establishing and Naming Prizes (continued)

regularly scheduled meeting of the board of directors or the general membership. If you do make a presentation, be sure to prepare, bring with you, and distribute handouts which explain the contest and include the other organizations that have already agreed to participate or those who have been invited. Handouts may be as simple as the letter of invitation to the group and/or the flyer calling for entries.

A letter of invitation to donate a prize follows.

**I.B.2. Establishing and Naming Prizes
Letter of Invitation (sample document)**

(date)

Business Owner
The Best Cruises Ever
0000 Shore Avenue
Our Town, FL 33000

Dear Mr. Owner:

(Our sponsoring organization) invites you to award _____ County students for art and poetry that showcases the Charlotte Harbor Watershed by donating two pairs of tickets for one of your "Sightseeing Cruises."

Cosponsored by _____
(name other co-sponsoring organizations in alphabetical order) _____, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, the contest is a local level of "The International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students." Co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is based on the belief that writing and creating art about a watershed requires students to closely observe and appreciate that natural environment. Such observation and appreciation in turn will inspire students to preserve and conserve nature.

All entries submitted to the local contest will be forwarded to the national contest; however, prizes awarded locally--such as yours--will provide more immediate recognition, incentive, and positive reinforcement!

All poems will be displayed at _____
(name event and define event) _____, on _____
(give day and date) _____, at _____
(place and street address or town) _____. In addition, a poetry reading/awards ceremony will be held, and you're invited to award any prizes you may donate.

All art will be displayed at _____
(name event and define event) _____, on _____
(give day and date) _____, at _____
(place and street address or town) _____. An awards ceremony will be in the entertainment schedule; you're invited to award any prizes you may donate.

Your prize will be advertised in the "call for entries" flyer distributed county-wide to students and in all media releases announcing the contest, awards ceremony, and the winners. To increase your media exposure, you may wish to name your award in recognition of an individual or your organization or to make some other particular designation.

I.B.2. Establishing and Naming Prizes
Letter of Invitation (sample document) (continued)

Your donation of two sets of tickets for two for your "sightseeing cruise" will show your commitment to the students of Charlotte County and your interest in and appreciation of the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. Please will you help?

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, (position with sponsoring organization)
 (phone number) or online at (e-mail address)

I.C.1. Scheduling Venues For Art and Poetry Exhibit and Poetry Reading / Awards Ceremony

Annual art or nature-themed festivals are perfect venues for the art and poetry exhibits as well as the poetry reading/awards ceremony(ies). Although not as ideal, other kinds of events and festivals may also serve as venues. Exhibits and awards ceremonies for the art and poetry can be combined at one event, or they can be held at separate events. Festival or event organizers should be willing to display the exhibit for the entire festival or event and to schedule a half-hour (or less) awards ceremony for sometime during the festival or event.

The first step to invite a festival or event to serve as venue for the art and/or poetry exhibits and award ceremony(ies) is a phone call or personal visit to the director or president of the festival or event. You may offer to send, or you may be requested to send, a written invitation on your organization's letterhead. Because not-for-profit organizations are governed by boards of directors, you may offer, or you may be requested, to present your invitation during a regularly scheduled meeting of the planning committee, board of directors, or the general membership. If you do make a presentation, be sure to prepare, bring with you, and distribute handouts which explain the contest and include sponsoring organizations that have already agreed to participate or those who have been invited. Handouts may be as simple as the letter of invitation to the group and/or the flyer calling for entries.

When discussing the possibility with organizers, be sure to point out the following:

- displaying student writing and art will increase attendance for the festival as parents, relatives, and friends will want to see the exhibit;
- members of sponsoring organizations as well as individuals, businesses, and organizations that donate prizes will also increase attendance;
- exhibits of poetry, although unconventional, attract people who will read some of them;
- exhibits of art or poetry can range from low to high tech:

I.C.1. Scheduling Venues

For Art and Poetry Exhibit and Poetry Reading / Awards Ceremony (continued)

- copies of poems have been taped to the windows of an auditorium's lobby;
- poems were typed into a "power point" presentation that was shown continuously via the monitors throughout an institution;
- exhibits of the art can also range from low to high tech:
 - art was pinned with clothespins to a line at an outdoor festival;
 - art was scanned into a "power point" presentation that was shown continuously before, during, and after an awards ceremony.
- publicity about the contest--including announcing a call for submissions, exhibit locations, poetry reading/awards ceremony, and winners--will help promote the event or festival.

A letter, inviting festival or event organizers to include an exhibit and awards ceremony, follows.

I.C.2. Scheduling Venues
For Art and Poetry Exhibit and Poetry Reading / Awards Ceremony
Letter of Invitation (sample document)

(date)

Executive Director
Annual Festival
0000 Celebration Avenue
Our Town, FL 33000

Dear Ms. Director:

_____(Our sponsoring organization)____ invites you to include an exhibit and award ceremony for our local "River of Words" art and poetry contest for students in your annual _____(name of festival or event)____. The exhibit will feature artwork and poetry, focusing on the Charlotte Harbor Watershed, created by _____ County students. The poetry reading/awards ceremony will recognize the winners of both contests.

Cosponsored by _____(name other co-sponsoring organizations in alphabetical order)____, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, the contest is a local level of "The International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students." Co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is based on the belief that writing and creating art about a watershed requires students to closely observe and appreciate that natural environment. Such observation and appreciation in turn will inspire students to preserve and conserve nature.

All entries submitted to the local contest will be forwarded to the national contest; however, a local exhibit and award ceremony will provide more immediate recognition, incentive and positive reinforcement!

Your festival or event will be advertised in the "call for entries" flyers distributed county-wide to students and in all media releases announcing the contest, the awards ceremony, and the winners. In addition, your festival or event will be promoted by all sponsoring organizations and those individuals, businesses, and organizations who donate prizes. Students, their parents and/or guardians, relatives, and friends will all visit your festival or event to view the art and/or poetry.

Your inclusion of an exhibit and awards ceremony in your festival will show your commitment to the students of _____ County and your interest in and appreciation of the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. Please will you help?

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, _____(position with sponsoring organization)____
_____(phone number)____ or online at _____(e-mail address)_____

I.D.1. Inviting and Confirming Judges of Art and Poetry

You need to create teams of judges: one for the poetry contest and one for the art contest. At least three (3) judges should comprise each team.

Published poets, teachers of creative writing in secondary or post-secondary schools, poets who are members of local poetry societies or writing guilds--all can serve as judges.

Local artists, teachers of art in secondary or post-secondary schools, artists who display at local galleries or are members of guilds, clubs, or cooperative galleries--all can serve as judges.

A biologist, environmental educator, or naturalist, who may or may not also be a writer or artist, is a great asset to a team of judges. These experts are invaluable when judging the accurate and appropriate depiction of the natural world in an entry. For example, an environmental educator noted that one entry promoted the message, "Plant native trees," by portraying an imported rather than native species of palm tree. The other judges were able to use the expert's observation when scoring the entry.

Public officials are also important members of teams of judges. Their participation ensures that the judging and contest results are items noted in local publications and on local broadcasts.

Usually, someone will call (in person or on the phone) to invite a prospective judge. A formal letter of invitation, on the organization's letterhead, is then sent. Finally, a phone call, personal visit, or e-mail message will confirm the judge's participation.

A letter to invite judges follows.

I.D.2. Inviting and Confirming Judges of Art and Poetry
Letter of Invitation (sample document)

(date)

Member of the County Commission
Board of County Commissioners
0000 County Lane
Our Town, FL 33000

Dear Mr. Member:

(Our sponsoring organization) invites you to help judge our local "River of Words" art and/or poetry contest for _____ County students. The theme for the contest is the Charlotte Harbor Watershed and its ecology, geography, and cultural history.

Cosponsored by _____
(name other co-sponsoring organizations in alphabetical order), and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, the contest is a local level of "The International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students." Co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is based on the belief that writing and creating art about a watershed requires students to closely observe and appreciate that natural environment. Such observation and appreciation in turn will inspire students to preserve and conserve nature.

All entries submitted to the local contest will be forwarded to the national contest; however, local awards will provide more immediate recognition, incentive and positive reinforcement for our students.

On _____
(date and time), at _____
(location of judging), you'll join with other members of a team of judges to select the prize winners. We acknowledge your participation in all media releases announcing the awards ceremony and the winners as well as during the awards ceremony itself.

Your participation as a judge in our local level "River of Words" art and/or poetry contest will demonstrate your commitment to the students of _____ County and your interest in and appreciation of the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. Please will you help?

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, _____
(position with sponsoring organization)

(phone number) or online at _____
(e-mail address)

I.E.1. Inviting and Confirming Volunteers to Install Art and Poetry Exhibit

You need to have a group of volunteers who will assist you in displaying the exhibit of art and poetry entries at the festival or event.

No particular skills are necessary, although interest in and enthusiasm for art and/or poetry are wonderful assets. One of the sponsoring organizations may wish to offer volunteers for this job. Service organizations, scout troops, and others may also serve.

Usually, someone will call (in person or on the phone) to invite a volunteer. A formal letter of invitation, on the organization's letterhead, is then sent. Finally, a phone call, personal visit, or e-mail message will confirm the volunteer's participation.

A letter, to invite volunteers to create the poetry and/or art exhibit, follows.

I.F.1. Locating Publication Opportunities for Winners

When requesting publication of winning artwork and/or poetry, the best targets are local weekly or monthly publications. In Charlotte County, the editors--of weekly publications focusing on different geographical regions of the county--have been very enthusiastic and generous in publishing the winning artwork and poetry by students living in their delivery area. They have also either requested photographs of the students receiving their awards or have taken their own photographs of students.

Another possibility is requesting a daily newspaper to donate a full page or two facing half-pages to publish the winning artwork and/or poetry. They may also wish to include photographs of students. This donation may be acknowledged as are the other sponsorships and/or donations to the contest.

A third opportunity for publication of the winning artwork and poetry is through your county's public school system. It may publish an annual literary and fine arts annual magazine; individual schools may publish literary magazines and/or school newspapers and/or school pages as part of the daily or weekly newspapers. Many schools also publish yearbooks. One downside of this publication is that the audience may be limited to students, teachers, and their families and friends.

The monthly or quarterly publications of sponsoring organizations and/or businesses or organizations that donate prizes are usually too brief to include all entries; however, they may publish the artwork and/or poetry that win top prizes or the prize donated by the business or organization. One drawback is that often beautifully colored artwork reproduces less dramatically in a black-and-white publication.

Finally, an area museum, theater lobby, educational institution, shopping mall, or other facility may have space suitable to display the winning artwork and poems. Although this

I.F.1. Locating Publication Opportunities for Winners (continued)

display is not formal publication, it does give the art and poetry exposure to a wider audience. Including photographs of the winning students makes a complete exhibit.

If you are able to arrange any of these publications and or displays, be sure that the publication or display includes information about the contest, sponsoring organizations, prizes, and how students may enter the contest the following year. For a display, a pocket or rack may provide flyers for visitors to take with them.

Usually, someone will call (in person or on the phone) to arrange for publication or public display. A formal letter of invitation, on the organization's letterhead, is then sent. Finally, a phone call, personal visit, or e-mail message will confirm the publication and or display.

A letter, to invite publication of the winning artwork and poetry, follows.

I.G. Establishing a Timeline and Setting Contest Deadlines

The two main considerations for setting contest deadlines are the deadline for the international contest, February 15, and the date of the festival or event at which the entries will be on exhibit and at which your awards ceremony will be held.

Ideally, a festival or event will be scheduled in November, December, January or the first week in February. In this case, the deadline for entries should be set two to three weeks before the festival or event so that the entries may be judged and the display set up the day before the festival or event is to take place.

Timeline

One to three months before the festival or event:

- The contest should be announced and a call for entries flyer distributed throughout the county's public school system, to private schools, and to local home school co-ops or support groups. Media releases should also be sent when the contest is first announced and again about two weeks before the final deadline as a reminder.

Three weeks before the festival or event:

- As soon after the deadline as possible, volunteers should log every piece of artwork, assigning each entry a number. Important information is name of artist, home phone, title of artwork, school, and grade level. Volunteers should also log the poems, noting the same information, making one copy of each poem without identifying information on it.
- Then the judging should take place: the winners are selected, the awards certificates are prepared, and the prizes gathered and marked. All winners should be telephoned. They should be told that they have won but not the prize or place. They should be invited to attend the poetry reading/awards ceremony to receive their award and--in the poetry contest--read their poems.
- Media releases announcing the awards ceremony should be sent out.

I.G. Establishing a Timeline and Setting Contest Deadlines (continued)

One week before the festival or event:

- The awards ceremony should be planned, and a media release prepared that names the winners, the title of their artwork or poems, their places and prizes.

One day before the festival or event:

- The exhibit of artwork and poetry should be displayed.

The day of the festival or event:

- The awards ceremony should be conducted and photographs taken by the media or a volunteer.

A week after the festival or event:

- The artwork or poetry that will be submitted to the International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest should be packaged and mailed.
- Thank you letters should be sent to co-sponsoring organizations, donors of prizes, judges, volunteers, and so forth.

Within a month after the festival or event:

- Planners should meet to critique the contest: what worked well and can be repeated and what needs to be improved.

I.H. Identifying “Target” Students

Although the International River of Words Poetry and Poster Contest is open to students in kindergarten through twelfth grades, Charlotte County has limited the contest to students in middle and high school for the poetry contest and to students in middle school for the art contest. In our poetry contest, which is open to both middle and high school students, the majority of entries are received from middle school students.

I.H.1 Public School Students

To invite students in the public school system, first contact the curriculum specialists in the administration of your county’s public school system. Usually, one curriculum specialist oversees art, another language arts, and yet another science. Sometimes, the same curriculum specialist directs other subjects as well; however, the teachers who teach art, language arts, and science are the ones to target for this contest. In our county, the curriculum specialists help us get copies of the flyer calling for entries to the teachers at each school, through the inter-school delivery service as well as through the e-mail and e-bulletin board systems. Usually, a letter to each teacher accompanies the hard copies of the flyer. A sample letter to teachers follows.

I.H.2. Private School Students

To invite students in the private schools in your county, check the yellow pages for listings of schools. Then call and talk to the principal of the school about the contest and invite the students to participate. Also send a letter of formal invitation along with hard copies of the flyer/entry form.

I.H.3. Home Schooled Students

To invite students in home school co-ops and support groups, someone will have to make a presentation at a meeting of the group. Be sure to bring enough hard copy flyers to distribute at the meeting. Because so many home school families network through the internet, also offer an electronic version of the flyer and entry form.

I.I. Requesting Donations of Materials from CHNEP

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP) has copies of posters and a book that detail specific information about the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. For our contest, posters by Shelly Castle and by Diane Pierce were available--as well as the publication: *The Story of the Greater Charlotte Harbor Watershed*.

These materials can be donated to each school library so that the teaches and students have some basic information about the watershed. Contact CHNEP for materials currently available.

The Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program

4980 Bayline Drive, 4th Floor
North Fort Myers, FL 33917-3909
239-995-1777
www.charlotteharbornep.org

I.J. Purchasing copies of “River of Words”
National Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students Teacher’s Guide

The Teacher’s Guide included in this booklet is no longer available from the International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest. The information has been revised and greatly expanded. The current book is available for \$43 a copy at www.riverofwords.org. The guide included here is the previous edition; however, the international contest was very generous in authorizing duplication of it for schools.

II. Conducting the Contest

II.A. Publicizing the Contest: “Call for Entries”

To begin the contest, you must advertise a “call for entries” to students. A few sites should be established that will provide the entry forms and accept submissions. The entry form is also available online at <http://www.riverofwords.org/entry.html>. A flyer should be created and widely distributed, and a media release and public service announcement should be sent out to local newspapers, magazines, radio and television stations. A local newspaper, if a sponsoring organization, may agree to run “free” advertisements as space permits.

Basic information that should be included in any flyer, media release, or advertisement:

- theme of contest: Charlotte Harbor Watershed
 - Geography (physical, social, or political)
 - Ecology (physical and biological aspects)
 - Cultural History (human influence on or response to)
- deadline for entries
- grade levels or ages of the students who may participate in the local contest
- the date and place of the festival or event at which the exhibit will be displayed and during which the awards ceremony will take place
- the basic rules for the poetry entries:
 - **Requirements:** Original poetry, typed or legibly written in ink
 - **Length:** Not to exceed 32 lines
 - **Identification:** Student’s name, school, city & state on page
 - **Permission Form:** Official “River of Words” Contest Entry Form
- the basic rules for the art entries
 - **Medium Accepted:** Paint, Pencil, Marker, Chalk or Pastel (fixed), Photography, Ink, Crayon, Cloth, Collage

II.A. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries" (continued)

- **Size Requirement:** Not to exceed 11 " x 17 "
- **Signature:** Student's first & last name signed in the lower right-hand corner
- **Permission Form:** Official "River of Words" Contest Entry Form & original art
- all co-sponsoring organizations
- all individuals, businesses, or organizations donating prizes
- a list of local and/or national prizes
- a local phone number and e-mail address for more information
- the Official "River of Words" Contest Entry Form (usually copied onto the back of the flyer).

II.A.1. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries" Flyer and Distribution

Copies of the flyer should be distributed to all sponsoring organizations, teachers in public and private schools, to home school co-ops and support groups as well as in libraries, book stores, and other likely sites. Although the flyer can include the logos of the partnering organizations, a simple electronic version, in a common word processing program, should be available as well.

Copies of flyers created for the contest in Charlotte County follow. Although we have always held separate contests for the art and poetry, they could easily be combined. We have created two versions of the flyer: one which details the prizes to be awarded and another, more recent, which only lists those individuals, businesses, and organizations donating prizes and not the particular awards.

When distributing copies of the flyers to teachers in the public schools or to private schools, we usually send a letter of introduction that describes the contest.

Letters of introduction, to a teacher and to a principal of a private school, follow.

II.A.2. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Flyer and Distribution (sample document: art flyer)

RIVER OF WORDS ART CONTEST

for middle school students only



Theme: Charlotte Harbor Watershed

Geography (physical, social, or political)

Ecology (physical and biological aspects)

Cultural History (human influence on/response to)

Deadline: January 31, 2003



Arts & Humanities Council
of Charlotte County

Art Exhibit and Awards Ceremony at ArtSensation, Saturday February 8,
at Edison Community College in Punta Gorda.

- Medium Accepted:** Paint, Pencil, Marker, Chalk or Pastel (fixed),
Ink, Crayon, Cloth, Collage
- Size Requirement:** Not to exceed 11" x 17"
- Signature:** Students first and last name signed
in the lower right hand corner.
- Permission Form:** Official "River Of Words" Contest Entry Form.
All original art will be returned from contest.



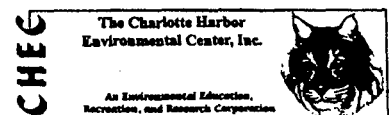
Three First Prize entries published in *Keep Charlotte Beautiful 2004 Calendar*.
All entries sent to International River of Words Contest.

Local awards donated by: Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County,
Babcock Wilderness Adventure, Charlotte County Historical Center, Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center,
Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve, Keep Charlotte Beautiful, Peace River Audubon Society,
Punta Gorda Historical Society, Peace River Center for Writers.

Local contest co-sponsored by and environmental information from:
Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, Charlotte Harbor Aquatic & State Buffer Preserves,
Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Inc., Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program,
Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Keep Charlotte Beautiful, Peace River Audubon Society,
Peace River Center for Writers.

Information and entry forms available from:

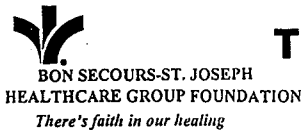
Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County ~ 941-764-8100 ~ charlotte_arts@nut-n-but.net
Peace River Center for Writers ~ 941-575-1976 ~ peacriverwriters@comcast.net
Keep Charlotte Beautiful ~ 941-764-4390 ~ keepcharlottebeautiful@charlottefl.com



II.A.2. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Flyer and Distribution (sample document: art flyer)

RIVER OF WORDS ART CONTEST

for middle school students



Theme: Charlotte Harbor Watershed

Geography (physical, social, or political)
Ecology (physical and biological aspects)
Cultural History (human influence on/response to)

Deadline: November 10, 2000



Arts & Humanities Council
of Charlotte County

**Art Exhibit at the Bon Secours/St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation's
Fall Festival, Charlotte County Fair Grounds, November 17, 18, 19
Awards Ceremony: November 19, 4 p.m.**



Medium Accepted: Paint, Pencil, Marker, Chalk or Pastel (fixed)
Photography, Ink, Crayon, Cloth, Collage

Size Requirement: Not to exceed 11" x 17"

Signature: Student's first & last name signed
in the lower right-hand corner.

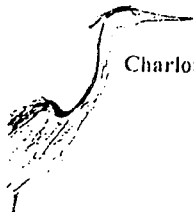
Permission Form: Official "River of Words" Contest Entry Form &
original art. No art returned from national contest.

Local Awards: Best of Show: Eco-Tour by Grande Tours, Inc. of Placida
Three First Prizes: Scholarships to Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's Eco-Week,
donated Bon Secours/St. Joseph's Healthcare and Florida Environmental, Inc.,
Lyle Danielson Land and Sea Connection Prize, donated by the Friends of Charlotte
Harbor Aquatic Preserves: a set of *Florida Fabulous* books
and three honorable mentions.

National Awards: 4 grand prizes, trip with 1 parent to Washington D.C. - 50 finalists
(art supplies) -all entrants receive "Watershed Explorer" Certificates.

Supported by Charlotte County Public Schools (CCPS): award-winning art by CCPS
students will be published in *Enthusiasm*, an annual Literary and Fine Art Magazine.
Local contest co-sponsored by Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, Bon
Secours/St. Joseph Healthcare Foundation, Charlotte Harbor Aquatic & State Buffer
Preserves (FLDEP), Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Charlotte Harbor National
Estuary Program, Charlotte Sun-Herald, Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves.
River of Words presented by International Rivers Network, supported by The Library
of Congress, Poet Laureate Robert Hass, and The Orion Society (<http://www.irn.org>).

For information: the Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, 764-8100.



Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Inc.
10941 Humm Stone Road, Punta Gorda, Florida 33955

Charlotte Sun HERALD



35 Friends of the
Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves
From Lovers, Not a Paper Boy



II.A.2. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Flyer and Distribution (sample document: poetry flyer)

RIVER OF WORDS POETRY CONTEST

for middle and high school students



Theme: Charlotte Harbor Watershed

Geography (physical, social, or political)

Ecology (physical and biological aspects)

Cultural History (human influence on/response to)

Deadline: January 31, 2003

**Poetry Reading, Exhibit and Awards Ceremony
at ArtSensation, Saturday February 8
at Edison Community College in Punta Gorda.**



- Requirements:** Poetry must be original, either typed or legibly written in ink.
Length: Not to exceed 32 lines
Identification: Students first and last name, school, city and state included on page
Permission Form: Official "River Of Words" Contest Entry Form &

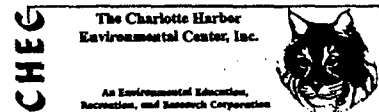
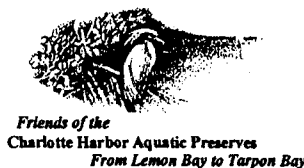


**Three First Prize entries published in *Writing Currents*.
All entries sent to International River of Words Contest**

Local awards donated by: Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, Babcock Wilderness Adventure, Charlotte County Historical Center, Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserve, Keep Charlotte Beautiful, Peace River Audubon Society, Punta Gorda Historical Society, Peace River Center for Writers.

Local contest co-sponsored by and environmental information from:
Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, Charlotte Harbor Aquatic & State Buffer Preserves, Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Inc., Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Keep Charlotte Beautiful, Peace River Audubon Society, Peace River Center for Writers.

Information and entry forms available from:
Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County ~ 941-764-8100 ~ charlotte_arts@nut-n-but.net
Peace River Center for Writers ~ 941-575-1976 ~ peacriverwriters@comcast.net
Keep Charlotte Beautiful ~ 941-764-4390 ~ keepcharlottebeautiful@charlottefl.com



II.A.2. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Flyer and Distribution (sample document: poetry)

RIVER OF WORDS POETRY CONTEST

for middle & high school students

Theme: Charlotte Harbor Watershed

Geography (physical, social, or political)
Ecology (physical and biological aspects)
Cultural History (human influence on/response to)

Deadline: January 31, 2001



Arts & Humanities Council
of Charlotte County

**Poetry Reading & Awards Ceremony at Arts & Humanities Council
of Charlotte County's Artsensation, February 10
Edison Community College, Punta Gorda**



- Requirements:** Poetry must be original, either typed or legibly written in ink
Length: Not to exceed 32 lines
Identification: Student's first & last name, school, city and state included on page
Permission Form: Official "River of Words" Contest Entry Form

Local Awards: **Grand Prize:** Boca Grande Seaplane/Futch Tours, tickets for two
Two First Prizes: Riverboat Tour at the Nav-A-Gator and King Fisher Fleet Tour
Four Second Prizes: Scholarships to Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's Eco-Week, donated an anonymous donor and Scott Glover, Isles Yatch Club, and Babcock Wilderness Adventure, two sets of tickets for two
Five Third Prizes: books donated by Peace River Audubon Society and posters of *Victory Chimes*, 1900 sailing vessel, donated by Paul DeGaeta
Two Lyle Danielson Land and Sea Connection Prizes, donated by Charlotte Harbor Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves and Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves: "shadow" day with a biologist and a field guide

National Awards: 4 grand prizes, trip with 1 parent to Washington D.C. - 50 finalists receive books -all entrants receive "Watershed Explorer" Certificates.

Supported by Charlotte County Public Schools (CCPS): award-winning art by CCPS students will be published in *Enthusiasm*, an annual Literary and Fine Art Magazine.

Local contest co-sponsored by Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, Charlotte Harbor Aquatic & State Buffer Preserves (FLDEP), Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC), Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP), Charlotte Sun-Herald, Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves (FCHAP) and Peace River Audubon Society.

For information: the Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, 764-8100.



Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Inc.
10941 Horny Store Road, Punta Gorda, Florida 33955

Charlotte Sun HERALD

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Friends of the
Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves



II.A.3. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Flyer and Distribution
Letter of Invitation to Teachers (sample document)

(date)

Language Arts Teacher
Our County's Middle School
0000 Education Way
Our Town, FL 33000

Dear Language Arts Teacher:

Please encourage your students to participate in our local level "River of Words" poetry contest. Writing poems for this contest will help them develop skills in the following Sunshine State Standards for middle school students: LA. B.1.3 & 2.3; LA.D.1.3 & 2.3; LA.E.1.3 & 2.3; and for high school students: LA.B.1.4 & 2.4; LA.D.1.4 & 2.4; LA. E.1.4 & 2.4.

In addition, all poems entered in this contest will be displayed during _____ (name of festival or event) on _____ (date and times) at _____ (location and address). Winners of this contest will read their poems and receive their awards at an awards ceremony and poetry reading that day.

Co-sponsoring this contest are _____ (list alphabetically the cosponsoring organizations), and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.

The contest is a local level of The International "River of Words" Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students. Created by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is based on the belief that writing or creating art about a watershed requires students to closely observe and appreciate that natural environment. Such observation and appreciation in turn will inspire students to preserve and conserve.

All entries submitted to the local contest will be forwarded to the national contest; however, prizes awarded locally--donated by local individuals, organizations, and businesses--will include first, second, third, and honorable mentions. Moreover, many of the organizations that sponsor prizes for the contest invite the winner of their prizes to attend a meeting to read his or her poem and receive applause and congratulations. As I'm sure you're aware, this kind of recognition is great for the students. It also connects students with members of the community.

I've enclosed some flyers which detail the contest with the required originality permission form on the reverse, but please make additional copies if you need to or contact _____ (our organization) to provide additional copies. I look forward to receiving poems from your students.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, _____ (position with sponsoring organization)

(phone number) or online at _____ (e-mail address)

II.A.4. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Flyer and Distribution
Letter of Invitation to Principals of Private Schools (sample document)

_____(date)_____

Principal
Private Academy
0000 Academy Dr.
Our Town, FL 33000

Dear Principal:

_____(Our organization)_____ invites the students of _____(name of private school)_____ to enter a poetry and art contest which focuses on the Charlotte Harbor Watershed.

Co-sponsoring this contest are _____(list alphabetically the cosponsoring organizations)_____, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.

The contest will be a local level of The International "River of Words" Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students. Created by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is based on the belief that writing or creating art about a watershed requires students to closely observe and appreciate that natural environment. Such observation and appreciation in turn will inspire students to preserve and conserve.

All entries submitted to the local contest will be forwarded to the national contest; however, prizes awarded locally--donated by local organizations and businesses--will include first, second, third, and honorable mentions.

All art submitted for the contest will be displayed at _____(name of festival or event)_____ on _____(date and time)_____ at _____(location and address)_____. Winners will be announced and prizes will be given at an awards ceremony that day.

All poems submitted for the contest will be displayed at _____(name of festival or event)_____ on _____(date and time)_____ at _____(location and address)_____. Students will read their winning poems and receive their prizes at an awards ceremony that da.

Enclosed are "call for entries" flyers for the contest, specifying requirements, prizes, and deadlines. Also, to help your students in entering this contest, the Arts and Humanities Council is donating a River of Words National and Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students Teacher's Guide, and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program is donating two posters--one by Shelly Castle and one by Diane Pierce--as well as their publication: *The Story of the Greater Charlotte Harbor Watershed* to your school. If you need other assistance and/or

II.A.4. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"

Flyer and Distribution

Letter of Invitation to Principals of Private Schools (sample document) (continued)

information, please contact (our organization) at (phone number) or online at (e-mail address) .

I hope your students will submit poems and art by (deadline) . All entries should be delivered by mail or by hand to (our organization's office and address) .

 (Our organization and sponsoring organizations) and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program look forward to their entries.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, (position with sponsoring organization)
 (phone number) or online at (e-mail address)

**II.A.5. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Media Release (sample document)**

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Date:

Phone:

E-mail:

Wanted: Poems for the "River of Words" Environmental Poetry Contest for Students

(Our organization) invites students in grades 6-12 to enter a local level River of Words Environmental Poetry Contest. Deadline for the local contest is (date).

The theme for the contest is the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. Poems can focus on the physical, social or political geography, the physical or biological ecology, or the human influence on and response to the cultural history of the watershed.

All poems will be displayed at the (festival or event) at (location, address or city), and winners will read their poems and receive their prizes during an awards ceremony.

Co-sponsors are (list co-sponsoring organizations in alphabetical order) and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.

The grand prize will be (list prize and individual, business or organization donating it).

Four first prizes are (list prizes and individuals, businesses or organizations donating them).

Three second prizes are (list prizes and individuals, businesses or organizations donating them).

Two third prizes are (list prizes and individuals, businesses or organizations donating them). Two third prizes for poems of cultural heritage are (list prizes and individuals, businesses or organizations donating them).

Three honorable mentions (list prizes and individuals, businesses or organizations donating them).

**II.A.5. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Media Release (sample document) (continued)**

All poems received will be forwarded to the annual River of Words: National Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students, co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997). The deadline for the national contest is February 15.

For the national contest, one international prize and four grand prizes are a trip to Washington, DC with a parent. Honored at an award ceremony and luncheon at the Library of Congress, winners also will have a VIP tour of the White House, a canoe trip, and visits to many historic sites. Also, 50 finalists will receive books. All entries will be acknowledged with a personalized "Watershed Explorer" Certificate.

All poems must be original, either typed or legibly written in ink, and not exceeding 32 lines in length. Each poem must include the student's name, school, city and state on the page.

An official "River of Words" contest entry form is required for any poetry submission. Forms are available at the office of (our organization) , from middle and high school language arts teachers, or can be found at the River of Words web site at <<http://www.riverofwords.org>>.

For information, contact (our organization) at (phone number) or online at (e-mail address) .

###

**II.A.6. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
Public Service Announcement (sample document)**

Public Service Announcement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Date:

Phone:

E-mail:

STUDENTS MAY ENTER THE RIVER OF WORDS ENVIRONMENTAL POETRY AND ART CONTEST, SPONSORED BY (OUR ORGANIZATION) . THE THEME FOR THE CONTEST IS THE CHARLOTTE HARBOR WATERSHED, AND THE DEADLINE FOR ENTRIES IS (DATE) . AN OFFICIAL ENTRY FORM MUST ACCOMPANY EACH POEM OR ARTWORK. FOR INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES, CONTACT (OUR ORGANIZATION) AT (PHONE NUMBER) .

###

II.A.7. Publicizing the Contest: “Call for Entries” “Free” Newspaper Ad

The newspaper will usually specify the size as how many columns by how many inches (for example, 2 columns by 10 inches). Be sure to ask about the width of a column as it may vary among publications.

The “call for entries” flyer can easily be modified and reduced to serve as a “call for entries” advertisement.

II.A.7. Publicizing the Contest: "Call for Entries"
"Free" Newspaper Ad (sample document)

POETRY CONTEST

for middle & high school students

Theme: Charlotte Harbor Watershed

Geography (physical, social, or political)
Ecology (physical and biological aspects)
Cultural History (human influence on/response to)

Deadline: January 31, 2001

Poetry Reading & Awards Ceremony

**Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County's
Artsensation, Saturday, February 10, 2001
Edison Community College, Punta Gorda**

Requirements: Poetry must be original, either typed or legibly written in ink.
Length: Not to exceed 32 lines in length
Identification: Student's first & last name, school, city and state included on page.
Permission Form: Official "River of Words" Contest Entry Form.

Local Awards: Grand Prize: Boca Grande Seaplane/Futch Tours, tickets for two **Two First Prizes:** Riverboat Tour at the Nav-A-Gator and King Fisher Fleet Tour

Four Second Prizes: Scholarships to Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's Eco-Week, donated by an anonymous donor and Scott Glover, Isles Yatch Club

Babcock Wilderness Adventure, two sets of tickets for two **Five Third Prizes:** books, donated by Peace River Audubon Society, and posters of *Victory Chimes* 1900 sailing vessel, donated by Paul DeGaeta

TWO Lyle Danielson Land and Sea Connection Prizes, donated by the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves and Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves: "shadow" day with a biologist & a field guide

National Awards: 4 grand prizes, trip with 1 parent to Washington D.C. - 50 finalists receive books - all entrants receive "Watershed Explorer" Certificates.

Supported by Charlotte County Public Schools (CCPS): award-winning art by CCPS students will be published in *Enthusiasm*, an annual Literary and Fine Arts Magazine.

SPONSORED BY: Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, Charlotte Harbor Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves (FLDEP), Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center (CHEC), Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP), Charlotte Sun Herald, Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves (FCHAP), Peace River Audubon Society
For information, call the Arts & Humanities Council of Charlotte County, 764-8100.

II.B.1. Receiving the Entries

As the entries arrive, they should be logged in and the entry/permission form should be verified as complete. A copy of a simple log sheet follows. Important information to include is name of student, name of poem or artwork, name of school, grade, and student's home phone number.

All poetry entries should be duplicated in two copies: one for judging without the identifying information required by the contest (name, age, grade, school), and one for display at the poetry reading/awards ceremony. The originals with the entry/permission forms attached can be mailed to the International Contest separately or can accompany the artwork which will also be submitted.

All art entries should be assigned a number for judging.

II.C. Judging the Contest

Finding judges for the contests is always a challenge, and a team of judges ensures a better outcome. At least one person on the team judging the art contest should be a professional artist; at least one person on the team judging the poetry contest should be published poet. Including a government official as a member of the judging team is potentially great publicity; another good choice for a judge is an environmental educator, to ensure accuracy of information about the watershed. Other members may join the teams; a minimum number of judges is three and an optimal number is five.

II.C.1. Criteria

The criteria for judging this contest should include both aesthetics and understanding of the Watershed. For instance, a poem or artwork may be technically accomplished and emotionally evocative, but if it does not focus on the ecology, geography, or cultural history of the watershed, it should not win the contest. For our contest, we request that judges select as “finalists” those poems and/or works of art which are technically accomplished and emotionally charged; then, those pieces are discussed as to how they address the theme.

II.C. 2. Judging Process for Poetry

To judge the poetry contest, the judges should gather together around a table to read submissions. They should respond to each submission with a “yes” or a “no” vote, and all poems should be read by at least two judges. Those poems which receive two “yes” votes are considered finalists; those that receive a “yes” and a “no” vote, should be read by a third judge. If the third judge gives a “yes,” then the poem becomes a finalist. The poems with two “yes” votes are then distributed around the table, and each judge reads a poem aloud. Discussion then follows. This procedure continues until all the finalist poems have been read.

When preliminary ranking begins, additional reading of the poems and discussion may be required. Be sure to note if any special prizes need to be given. For instance, a local historical society may give a prize for “cultural history,” and the award needs to be given to an appropriate poem or artwork. The judges should continue until all agree with the rankings.

II.C.3 Judging Process for Art

To judge the art contest, the judges need to have the art displayed. It may be “hung” for the display and awards ceremony, or it may be spread out on tables. Two methods of judging the art are available. One requires that the artwork be separated by grade level. Each judge considers the entries and selects ones that he or she thinks should be finalists because of their technical accomplishment and emotional import. These finalist pictures will then be considered by the group with discussion and ranking including how the pieces fit the theme of the Charlotte Harbor Watershed.

A second method is to have each judge score each piece of art. A sample ballot follows. This method helps each judge to consider each piece of art individually. This method also has three drawbacks:

- first, it is time-consuming for the judges (with even a couple hundred entries, it may take the judges 3 or 4 hours to complete);
- second, the artwork the judges first encounter may be judged more harshly or easily than the rest (to minimize this difficulty, judges should be encouraged to take an overview of all the artwork before they begin judging); and
- third, volunteers have to tally the ballots, and in the case of ties or prizes for a special aspect of the contest, someone other than the judges may have to make the decision.

II.D. The Art and Poetry Exhibits

Exhibiting art that is not framed may present problems depending on the venue for the display. One year, we used straight pins to attach the art to fabric-covered room dividers. Unfortunately, this method actually left small and large holes in the artwork.

Another year, we used thumb tacks on wall board with the same unfortunate holes in the artwork; we also tried "sticky tack" but the artwork did not stay up. Finally, we tried clothespinning the artwork to a clothesline for an outdoor festival, and it was an excellent solution until the strong gusts of wind began. As a quick and easy alternative, we arranged the artwork flat on cafeteria-style tables, but the presentation was less than desirable and the artwork was not secure.

Exhibiting poetry can be high or low tech. One year, we typed all the poems into a power point presentation that was broadcast over the closed circuit television monitors of the institution at which the festival was held. Another year, it was projected on a screen behind the stage before, during, and after the awards ceremony. In other years, we've opted for a more low tech presentation, scotch taping copies of the poems on the inside of the glass windows of the auditorium. This method may have actually promoted more people reading the poems.

No matter what your choice is for exhibiting the art and poetry, be sure that the display includes information about the contest, sponsoring organizations, prizes, and how students may enter the contest next year. You may want to create a pocket or rack may provide flyers for visitors to take with them.

II.E. The Awards Ceremony

An awards ceremony should be planned sometime during the festival or event at which the exhibit of art and/or poetry is displayed. If poetry is included in your contest, a poetry reading can be part of the awards ceremony. If art is included in your contest, be sure to temporarily remove the winning artwork from the exhibit so that the artists may display it from the stage when they receive the award. Businesses, organizations, and individuals sponsoring the contest and donating prizes should be invited to be publicly recognized and to present awards to and/or shake hands with the winners. Students who have won the contest should be telephoned and invited to attend the ceremony, but they are not told the place or prize which they have won.

The ceremony should include the following:

- an explanation of the contest,
- and thank-you announcements to the following:
 - festival or event organizers
 - judges for the contest
 - volunteers who helped in any way
 - teachers or administrators who especially encouraged students to enter the contest
 - co-sponsoring organizations
 - individuals, businesses, and organizations that donated prizes
- announcement of awards beginning with honorable mentions and ending with first prize
- readings of the winning poems by the poets who wrote them, or designated others if the poet is unable to attend the ceremony
- winning artists displaying their artwork from the stage when they are called to receive their awards.

An awards ceremony script follows.

II.E.1. The Awards Ceremony: A Sample Script

- **Welcome and introductions**
- **Explanation of the International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students**
 - All poems submitted for the Charlotte County contest will be forwarded to the annual River of Words: National Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students. Co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is co-sponsored by the International Rivers Network and the Library of Congress Center for The Book. The deadline for the national contest is February 15. One international prize and four grand prizes award a trip to Washington DC with a parent. Honored at an awards ceremony and luncheon at the Library of Congress, winners also will have a VIP tour of the White House, a canoe trip, and visits to many historic sites. Also, 50 finalists will receive books. All entries will be acknowledged with a personalized "Watershed Explorer" Certificate. The judge is Robert Haas.
- **Sponsoring Organization: Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County**
 - **Mission statement:** The Arts and Humanities Council is Charlotte County's officially designated local arts agency appointed by and partly supported by the Board of County Commissioners to serve the community by promoting, supporting, and developing the cultural climate of Charlotte County. This program is also sponsored by the State of Florida Division of Cultural Affairs.
 - **Thank you to** the Board of Directors of the Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County who gave unanimous support to the sponsorship of this contest, and to Executive Director Michele Valencourt and Janet Larsen for all of their time and assistance.

II.E.1. The Awards Ceremony: A Sample Script (continued)

- **Thank you to** the members the Humanities Committee of the Arts and Humanities who solicited prizes for this contest: David Brannon, Fredye Cochran, Jan Dabrowski, Joan Donaldson, Connie Harbeson, and Lynn Jones.
- **Thank you to the contest judges**, who considered the 208 entries:
 - Charlotte County Public Schools Curriculum Specialist Marilyn Kline,
 - Immediate Past President Peace River Audubon Society Bob Wilkin,
 - poet Pat Wilkin,
 - Writers and Editors Lynn Jones and Carol Mahler.
- **Thank you to**
 - Charlotte County Public Schools Curriculum Specialist Marilyn Kline and
 - Jamie Reynolds of ECC so that all the poems can be viewed on the monitors throughout the campus.
- **and thanks also** to Marilyn to helping to get the word to teachers, and especially to
 - Punta Gorda Middle School teachers Christine Lyons and Lynn Sciarretta,
 - L. A. Ainger Middle School teachers Rose Hipps, Meg Potter, and Margaret Rossa
- **Thanks to all students** who wrote poems and entered them in this contest.
- **Thanks to**
 - Marlene Jeffers / Triple AAA Employment for donating the medals and ribbons
 - Carla Kappmeyer and the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves for sponsorship of the contest and donation of two "Shadow Days" with biologists as the Lyle Danielson Land and Sea Connection Prizes
 - Monica Dorken and George Marks of the Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center for sponsorship of the contest

II.E.1. The Awards Ceremony: A Sample Script (continued)

- Maran Hillgendorf and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program for sponsorship of the contest and the donation of 60 posters and 30 copies of their book *The Story of the Greater Charlotte Harbor Watershed*
- Kathy Hollinger and the *Charlotte Sun Herald* for sponsorship in free advertising
- Carla Kappmeyer and President David Scott of the Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Inc. for sponsorship of the contest and donating two *Audubon Field Guides to Florida* for the Lyle Danielson Land and Sea Connection Prizes
- Bob Wilkin, Immediate Past President of the Peace River Audubon Society, for donating books for a special prize
- **Thanks for donating prizes to:**
 - an Anonymous Donor,
 - Joan Morrison of Babcock Wilderness Adventures,
 - Kathy and Mark Futch of Boca Grande Seaplane,
 - Paul DeGaeta,
 - Scott Glover,
 - Captain Ralph of King Fisher Fleet, and
 - Captain Kirk at the Nav-A-Gator
- **Awarding the winners**
 - Honorable mentions
 - Third prizes
 - Second prizes
 - First prizes
- **Thanks to all readers, winners, and audience.**

II.E.2. Award Certificates, Ribbons, and Medals

Prepare award certificates for all winners of the contest. The award should name the sponsoring organization, co-sponsors, the student's name and name of the award, the place and date of the award ceremony, the award (for example, *second prize*) and prize (for example, *two tickets for a cruise*) It may also list the other individuals, businesses, and organizations donating prizes.

After the award certificates are printed, make two sets of copies. One set will be file copies; the others will be enclosed with thank you letters written to each individual, business, or organization donating prizes.

Ribbons and medals may also be given, especially if a sponsor is willing to donate the cost of the awards. Ribbons can be the widely available generic red, white, and blue ones with a paper tab to personalize the ribbon, or they can be specially printed with the name of the sponsoring organization, the contest, and the date. Medals can also be generic or inscribed; in our contests, medals are usually only awarded for the "grand prize" or "best of show."

A sample certificate follows.

The Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County
Local River of Words Art Contest Winner

Jennifer Belmont

First Prize

a scholarship for Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center's
Eco-Week Summer Camp
donated by Karen McBride
at Bon Secours/St. Joseph Healthcare Group Foundation's
19th Annual International FALL FESTIVAL,
November 10, 2001,
Charlotte County Fairgrounds, Port Charlotte, Florida.

Celebrate

Charlotte
ARTS!!!

Contest cosponsored by Bon Secours-St. Joseph Healthcare Group Foundation,
Charlotte Harbor Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves,
Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program,
Charlotte Sun Herald, Friends of the Charlotte Harbor
and State Buffer Preserves and Peace River Audubon Society.

Other prizes donated by Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County, Babcock Wilderness
Adventure, Bon Secours-St. Joseph Healthcare Group Foundation,
Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center, Florida Adventure Museum, Florida Environmental, Inc.,
Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Grande Tours, Inc., Old Punta Gorda, Inc.,
Peace River Audubon Society, and Sun Art.

The Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County
Local River of Words Poetry Contest
Grand Prize:

Family Cruise aboard *Oneness*,
donated by Robert and Peggydawn Moran

This award is presented to
Aimee Cervenka
for her poem "Dusk."



Given at Artsensation, February 9, 2002,
Edison Community College Auditorium, Punta Gorda, Florida.

Other prizes donated by Anonymous Donor, Arts and Humanities Council of Charlotte County,
Babcock Wilderness Adventures, Charlotte Harbor Aquatic and State Buffer Preserves,
Florida Adventure Museum, Friends of the Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves, Kathy and Mark Futch,
In Memory of Val Madura, King Fisher Fleet, Nav-A-Gator, Old Punta Gorda, Inc.,
Peace River Audubon Society, and Peace River Wildlife Center

*Co-sponsored by Charlotte Harbor Aquatic & State Buffer Preserves, Charlotte Harbor Environmental Center,
Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program, Charlotte Sun-Herald, Friends of Charlotte Harbor Aquatic Preserves,
and Peace River Audubon Society, with support of Charlotte County Public Schools*

II.E.4. Publicity

Two weeks before the awards ceremony, you'll want to issue a media release. After the awards ceremony, you'll want to issue another media release listing the winners and providing at least a group photograph. If you supply one or more photographs, be sure to write a caption for them that identifies who is in the photograph.

II.E.5. Publicity: Media Release for Awards Ceremony (sample document)

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Date:

Phone:

E-mail:

**Winners To be Announced
in "River of Words" Environmental Poetry Contest for Students**

 (Our organization) will announce the winners in the local level River of Words Environmental Poetry and Art Contest for Students at an awards ceremony at (festival or event) on (date and time) at (location and address) . The ceremony is free and open to the public.

Co-sponsors of the contest are (list co-sponsoring organizations in alphabetical order) and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program.

Students in area middle and high schools submitted poems and art on the theme of the Charlotte Harbor Watershed: the physical, social or political geography, the physical or biological ecology, or the human influence on and response to the cultural history of the watershed.

Winning poets will read their poems, and all winners will receive their awards donated by (list individuals, businesses, and organizations who donate prizes) .

All poems and artwork will be on display at the (festival or event) , and afterward, will be forwarded to the annual River of Words: National Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students, co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997). The deadline for the international contest is February 15.

For the international contest, one international prize and four grand prizes are a trip to Washington, DC with a parent. Honored at an award ceremony and luncheon at the Library of Congress, winners also will have a VIP tour of the White House, a canoe trip, and visits to many historic sites. Also, 50 finalists will receive books. All entries will be acknowledged with a personalized "Watershed Explorer" Certificate.

For information, contact (our organization) at (phone number) or online at (e-mail address) .

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II.E.6. Publicity: Media Release to Announce Winners (sample document)

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Date:

Phone:

E-mail:

Eight Students Win "River of Words" Art Contest

(Our organization) awarded eight prizes in the local level River of Words Art Contest at an awards ceremony at (festival or event) on (date and time) at (location and address). The festival featured an exhibit of all 118 entries.

(Name of school) eighth grader, John Doe, won "Best of Show," a harbor tour donated by (name of donor). (Name of school) eighth graders Joe Cool and Jane Cool won first prizes, scholarships to summer camp, donated by (names of donor).

(Name of school) eighth grader Sean Artist also won a first prize, a scholarship to a summer camp, donated by (name of donor).

(Name of school) sixth grader Lucky Guy won the Lyle Danielson Land-and-Sea Connection Prize, a set of "Florida Fabulous Books," donated by (name of donor). A retired educator, Lyle Danielson has worked for over 34 years to ensure the preservation of greater Charlotte Harbor and to further resource appreciation on the part of young people.

(Name of school) eighth graders Arna Attempts, Doug Determined, and Allie Almost won honorable mentions, donated by (name of donors).

All ribbons and medals were donated by (name of donor).

Representative Elected Official, County Commissioner Bill Neighbor, Artist Elaine Drawing, and Judge Tom Score judged the contest.

Art in Public Places Committee chairperson Alice Volunteer designed the scoring sheets and coordinated the judging. With committee members Becky Helper and Sue Assist, she helped hang the exhibit. Also assisting were Charlotte High School students Heather Community and Betty Service. Our neighborhood church loaned the display boards used in the exhibit.

The contest was co-sponsored by (list organizations), and the Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program (CHNEP). The contest was supported by, but not limited to students of, the Charlotte County Public Schools (CCPS).

II.E.6. Publicity: Media Release to Announce Winners (sample document) (continued)

 (Name of school) Art Teacher Christine Artist coordinated the contest in the middle schools and gave students opportunities in class to complete their artwork. Also encouraging students was (name of school) Art Teacher Ellen Watercolor: "I don't usually do art contests, but when I heard that Arts and Humanities was sponsoring it, I just had to." Catherine Pastel and Christine Acrylic of (name of school) also urged students to enter the contest.

All 118 entries will be forwarded to the annual River of Words: National Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students. Co-founded by Robert Hass, U.S. Poet Laureate (1995-1997), the contest is co-sponsored by the International Rivers Network and the Library of Congress Center for The Book. The deadline for the national contest is February 15.

One international prize and four grand prizes award a trip to Washington DC with a parent. Honored at an award ceremony and luncheon at the Library of Congress, winners also will have a VIP tour of the White House, a canoe trip, and visits to many historic sites. Also, 50 finalists will receive art supplies. All entries will be acknowledged with a personalized "Watershed Explorer" Certificate. Judges will be Robert Haas and Germaine Juneau, Director of the International Children's Art Museum.

For information, contact (Our Organization) at (phone number) or online at (e-mail address) .

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III. Concluding the Contest

III.A. Preparing Winning Art and Poetry for Publication

Preparing the art and poetry for publication may mean retyping the poems so that they can be submitted by e-mail, diskette, or CD. The art may also need to be scanned, photographed, or color copied in reduction.

Be sure to mark all entries with student's name, grade, school, award, prize, and donor. Also be sure to submit information about the contest, co-sponsoring organizations, prizes, and how students may enter the contest next year.

If you include photographs of the students accepting their awards or reading their winning poems, you need to mark each photo and provide captions.

III.B.1. Submitting Entries to International Contest

To ship entries to the international contest, you need the following:

- a sturdy box
- pieces of tissue paper to place between the pieces of art
- a cover letter on your organization's letterhead
- correct postage.

Shipments should be postmarked on or before the deadline of February 15.

A cover letter follows.

III.B.2. Submitting Entries to International Contest: A Cover Letter (sample document)

February 10, 2003

Pamela Michael, River of Words Project Director
River of Words Environmental Art and Poetry Contest Contest
P. O. Box 4000-J
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dear Ms. Michael:

Please accept the enclosed entries for the 2003 International River of Words Environmental Poetry and Poster Contest for Students. Entries include both poetry and artwork.

We had a local level contest and awarded 13 prizes in the art contest and 17 prizes in the poetry contest. We exhibited all of these art and poetry entries at our annual local arts festival during which we held a poetry reading/awards ceremony.

Thank you for continuing the contest. We're grateful for the adventure of learning about our watershed, and expressing it in art and poetry.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, (position with sponsoring organization)
 (phone number) or online at (e-mail address)

III.C. Thank You Letters

Within two weeks after the awards ceremony, thank you letters should be written. If for any reason, that time span passes without thank you letters being sent, they should still be sent as soon as possible. I know of at least one occasion when a donor of a prize called to renew her donation when she received a thank you letter that enclosed copies of the flyer, a copy of a news article about the winners, and the certificate prepared for the student who received the prize she donated.

Copies of the "call for entries" flyer can be included as well as copies of articles published in the newspapers, especially those that list co-sponsors or donations of prizes. For those donating prizes, copies of the certificates naming their prizes should be included as well as the winning poems and--if possible--photographs or other copies of the winning art.

III.C.1 Thank You Letters: Co-sponsoring Organization (sample document)

(date)

Maran Hilgendorf
Charlotte Harbor National Estuary Program
4980 Bayline Dr.
North Ft. Myers, FL 33917

Dear Ms. Hilgendorf,

Thank you for your sponsorship of and donation of books and posters for our local level "River of Words" art contest at _____ (festival or event) _____ on _____ (date and time) _____ at the _____ (location and address) _____. Copies were given to the four public middle schools and ten private schools with students in grades 6th+ in Charlotte County; copies will soon be distributed to the public and private high schools for our current local level "River of Words" poetry contest.

_____ (Name of school) _____ eighth grader, _____ (name of student) _____, won "Best of Show," donated by _____ (name of donor) _____. (List other students, their schools, grades, awards, prizes, and donors, from first prizes to honorable mentions.)

All 118 art entries will now be forwarded to the National Environmental Poetry & Poster Contest for Students, sponsored by the International Rivers Network and the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

Thank you, again, for your sponsorship and donation to make our local level contest a success. We appreciate your support of the arts, and the children of _____ County, and the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. We look forward to your assistance in next year's art contest.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, _____ (position with sponsoring organization) _____
_____ (phone number) _____ or online at _____ (e-mail address) _____

III.C.2. Thank You Letters: Business Donating a Prize (sample document)

_____ (date) _____

Captain _____ (person) _____
_____ (Name of business) _____
_____ (Street address) _____
_____ (City, FL zip code) _____

Dear Captain:

Thank you for your donation of a "Grande Tour" as the "best of show" prize for our local level "River of Words" art contest at _____ (festival or event) _____ on _____ (date and time) _____ at the _____ (location and address) _____. It was won by _____ (Name of school) _____ eighth grader _____ (Name of student) _____. I enclose a copy of the award certificate for you.

(List other award winning students, their schools, grade level, award, prize, and the prize donor starting with first prizes and continuing through honorable mentions.)

All 118 entries will now be forwarded to the National Environmental Poetry & Poster Contest for Students, sponsored by the International Rivers Network and the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

Thank you, again, for your donation to make our local level contest a success. We appreciate your support of the arts, the children of _____ County, and the Charlotte Harbor Watershed. We look forward to your assistance in next year's contest.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, _____ (position with sponsoring organization) _____
_____ (phone number) _____ or online at _____ (e-mail address) _____

III.C.3. Thank You Letters: Judge of Contest (sample document)

(date)

Commissioner (person)
 (Name of business)
 (Street address)
 (City, FL zip code)

Dear Commissioner,

Thank you for judging the local level “River of Words” art contest at (name of festival or event) on (date and time) at the (location and address) . All 118 entries will now be forwarded to the International River of Words Environmental Poetry & Poster Contest for Students, sponsored by the International Rivers Network and the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

 (Name of school) eighth grader, (name of student) , won “Best of Show,” donated by (name of donor) . (List other students, their schools, grades, awards, prizes, and donors, from first prizes to honorable mentions.)

Thank you, again, for helping to make our local level contest a success; we appreciate your time and effort in support of the arts, the children of County, and the Charlotte Harbor Watershed.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, (position with sponsoring organization)
 (phone number) or online at (e-mail address)

III.C.4. Thank You Letters: Volunteer (sample document)

(date)

(Name of person)

(Street address)

(City, FL zip code)

Dear _____
(Name of volunteer):

Thank you for all your help in “hanging” the art exhibit for the local level “River of Words” art contest at _____
(name of festival or event) on _____
(date and time) at the _____
(location and address).

All 118 entries will now be forwarded to the International River of Words Environmental Poetry & Poster Contest for Students, sponsored by the International Rivers Network and the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

(Name of school) eighth grader, _____
(name of student), won “Best of Show,” donated by _____
(name of donor). (List other students, their schools, grades, awards, prizes, and donors, from first prizes to honorable mentions.)

Thank you, again, for helping to make our local level contest a success; we appreciate your time and effort in support of the arts and the children of Charlotte County.

Yours sincerely and respectfully,

Name, _____
(position with sponsoring organization)

(phone number) or online at _____
(e-mail address)

III.D. Reporting on Success

Success of a contest of this kind can be measured in many ways, but tallies of various kinds are the usual. You should be sure to count the following:

- Number of entries
- Number of schools entering contests
- Number of co-sponsoring organizations
- Number of prizes donated and estimated dollar value
- Number in audience for
 - Art and/or poetry exhibit
 - Poetry reading / awards ceremony
- Numbers of flyers distributed to
 - Number of public schools
 - Number of private schools
 - Number of homeschool groups and/or individuals
 - Number of libraries, book stores, museums, and others
- Number of articles, ads, and other forms of publicity

Copies of all articles and photographs published plus all other photographs to document the exhibits and awards ceremony also measure success and should be included. A final report should also include the following:

- what worked and should be repeated
- what could be improved
- suggestions for improvements
- discussion (pro or con) of continuing and / or expanding of contest.