

HoCoPoLitSo

Howard County Poetry & Literature Society

ENLARGING THE AUDIENCE FOR CONTEMPORARY POETRY & LITERATURE SINCE 1974

ANNUAL REPORT FY 2023

JULY 2022-JUNE 2023

Bauder Youth Prove That Literature Bridges Generational Boundaries

By Neal Goturi

Approaching its 50th year of operation, HoCoPoLitSo's future is undoubtedly predicated on youth engagement.

With the generous support of local philanthropist Dr. Lillian Bauder, HoCoPoLitSo brought four high school students onto its board: Claire Wu, Julia Lee, Naomi Ling, and Neal Goturi. Energizing the organization, the Bauder Youth on Board have helped spread the word that anyone can appreciate and harness the power of literature.

Kicking off National Poetry Month, the youth members organized a Poetry Picnic in the Howard County Library, Miller Branch. While the event was geared towards students, community members of all ages were able to write their own poetry, read the works of famous poets, and present their poetry to the audience at an open mic. The air in the room was warm, inspired and free. Young people were given a safe space to work through their unique challenges and connect with new faces.

The youth are already contributing creative content that highlights the power of literature. Neal Goturi wrote a blog post and poet Naomi Ling was the subject of a short video created by Claire Wu and Julia Lee. Students such as Joanne Yoon (Centennial) and Bella Horvath (Wilde Lake) were also found volunteering at HoCoPoLitSo's annual Blackbird Festival, featuring Noah Arhm Choi, and Irish Evening, featuring Colm Tóibín and Maureen Dowd.



PHOTO BY CHRIS JOHNSON

High school students Claire Wu, Julia Lee, and Neal Goturi, left to right, are infusing HoCoPoLitSo's board with youthful enthusiasm.

Bauder funding also helps sustain HoCoPoLitSo's Writer-in-Residence visits, so that many high school students can learn from renowned writers, such as 2022–2023 academic year's resident Regie Cabico. As they emerge from the pandemic, students consistently write about isolation, anxiety, and crisis. One student at River Hill likened herself in a poem to a compass with no direction; how could she face the pressures of leadership while unable to guide herself? Poetry gave her the words for these questions.

Young people are growing up in an evolving and increasingly divisive world, searching for comfort. James Baldwin said it best, "You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read." The Bauder youth prove that literature transcends boundaries.

Season Highlights July 2022-June 2023



E. Ethelbert Miller Colm Tóibín Maureen Dowd

The **Lucille Clifton Reading Series** welcomed poet, teacher, and literary activist **E. Ethelbert Miller** in the Lucille Clifton Room at Busboys and Poets in Columbia on September 25, 2022. He read from his newly released poetry collection, *How I Found Love Behind the Catcher's Mask*, and answered audience questions.

On Saturday, February 18, 2023, the **45th Evening of Irish Music and Poetry** returned to Smith Theatre, Horowitz Center, Howard Community College (HCC). **Susan Thornton Hobby** hosted a conversation, "Where Journalism Meets Literature" with novelist **Colm Tóibín** and *New York Times* columnist **Maureen Dowd**. **Poor Man's Gambit — Deirdre Lockman, Tim Buchanan, and Corey Purcell** — played traditional Irish music afterward. Photographer **Denny Lynch** once again exhibited his photos of Ireland. **Anne Reis** and **Ed Young** served their second years as Irish Evening co-chairs.

In partnership with HCC, the **Blackbird Poetry Festival** was held on Thursday, April 28, 2023, featuring **Noah Arhm Choi**, winner of the inaugural Ellen Conroy Kennedy Poetry Prize and author of *Cut to Bloom*, and poet **Regie Cabico**, 2022–2023 Bauder high school Writer-in-Residence. Earlier in the day the two offered a student and community workshop and recorded an edition of *The Writing Life*. At the evening Nightbird reading **Cabico** introduced **Choi** and Wilde Lake High School Poetry Out Loud finalist **Yasmin Roach**.

Celebrating its seventh season, **Wilde Readings** produced ten readings with open mic opportunities at the Columbia Art Center. Organized by **Linda Joy Burke, Ann Bracken, and Laura Shovan**, the diverse group of writers and readers included: **Noa Baum, Lisa Biggar, Alan Bogage, Ellen Aronofsky Cole, Scot Ehrhardt, Tara Ellicott, Chelsea Lemon Fetzer, Katy Giebenhain, Tara Hart, James Karantonis, Denise Magney, Martin Malone, Neha Misra, Anthony Moll, Scott Morrow, Sherry Morrow, Victor Franz Rogers, Katherine Smith, Patricia Van Amburg, and Chin-Yer Wright**.

Regie Cabico, with student book award winners Cyrus Saxton and Carlos Leiva, and media specialist Anne Reis.

Youth & Student Programs

HoCoPoLitSo's Bauder Writer-in-Residence **Regie Cabico** provided a workshop for teachers on August 22, 2022, and visited seven Howard County public high schools, Homewood Center, and Howard Community College between October 2022 and April 2023, meeting more than 226 students. An "accidental poet" by his own admission, he sees performance poetry as short plays. He encouraged students to explore their world by making lists of "triggers" and "glimmers" as the backdrop to their own poetry.

For forty-one years, so that we might foster a lifelong reading habit and love of literature, HoCoPoLitSo has honored students by presenting book awards with personalized bookplates to the winners of its All-County Writing Competition, and to students recognized for Promise and Achievement in Language Arts. With the support of donor **Dr. Lillian Bauder**, the tradition continued.

The thirteen creative writing winners were **Lauren Shin** (River Hill), **Benita Besa** (Wilde Lake), and **Estelle Chen** (River Hill) with honorable mentions to **Uyen Nguyen** (Long Reach), **Imogen Archuleta** (Centennial) and **Mia Wolfe** (River Hill) in the personal essay category; **Mia Wolfe** (River Hill), **Charan Bala** (River Hill), and **David Lunsford** (Long Reach), with honorable mentions to **Angela Huang** (Centennial), **Natalie Shin** (Marriotts Ridge), **Carah Katz** (Long Reach) in the poetry category; and in the short story category, **Katie Cosgrove** (Hammond), **Siana Kabaria** (River Hill) and **Michael Vitlin** (Long Reach) with honorable mentions to **Emma Goldblatt** (Hammond) and **Jackson Stolte** (Oakland Mills). Coordinated and judged by HoCoPoLitSo's High School Liaison **Judy Young**, a retired English teacher, aided by professional storyteller **Marc Young**, the contest drew more than eighty submissions.



In addition, twenty-two students were chosen by their English Departments to receive HoCoPoLitSo's Promise and Achievement Award in Language Arts. The honorees were: **Simi Adeniya, Jessica Zhou** (Atholton), **Ranna Zara, John Roesler** (Glenelg), **Gabrielle Allan, Jack Taylor** (Hammond), **Cyrus Saxton, Carlos Leiva** (Homewood Center), **Carol Ceasar, Aaron Smith**, (Long Reach), **Haibib Abudukelimu, Sofia Romero** (Marriotts Ridge), **Reidar Blanco, Rohith Padmanaban** (Mt. Hebron), **Kylee Hoffman, Chisom Onukwugha** (Oakland Mills), **Lynelle Essilfie, Andrew Lawson-Munoz** (Reservoir), **Claire Fagan, Jennifer Gao** (River Hill), **Laurel Kelly, and Timothy Landers** (Wilde Lake).

Thirty-five students in all received books by such award-winning poets and writers as **Elizabeth Acevedo, Emma Donoghue, Carolyn Forché, Edward Hirsch, Joy Harjo, Colum McCann, Colm Tóibín, Isabel Wilkerson, and Ocean Vuong**.

Second Ellen Conroy Kennedy Poetry Prize

Emily Portillo was awarded first prize in the 2022 Ellen Conroy Kennedy Poetry Prize for their poem "The Cold." Reviewers noted the direct appeal to and engagement with the reader, the vivid and specific imagery, and the powerful shift to the first person towards the end; they also appreciated how "new meaning is found with each subsequent reading." **Portillo** was awarded a \$500 cash prize and the poem was published in the winter 2023 edition of the *Little Patuxent Review*.

Chrissy Stegman was awarded second prize with a \$100 cash award for their poem "Blue Irises" for its creative use of form, the original approach to the poem's poignant subject, the resonant voice of the speaker, and the powerful tension of the poem's arc.

Dean Gessie was unanimously awarded an honorable mention for "familicus zoologicus," a poem with remarkable creativity, wonderful music to its language, and a surprising and touching conclusion.

Poetry On The Street

New streets will be named in honor of former MD Poet Laureate and HoCoPoLitSo artistic director (1974 – 2009), **Lucille Clifton**. Rustling Sky Way, Distant Star Lane and Singing Stone Terrace will be located in the Lakefront District of Columbia.

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During these unique times HoCoPoLitSo is especially grateful to all who support the mission, production and distribution of live and virtual literary programs throughout our community. Together we bring outstanding writers and readers together. This list represents gifts received from June 1, 2022 through October 15, 2023. Serial gifts by the same contributor have been merged. Every effort has been made to include all contributors and to spell them correctly. Please let us know if there are errors or omissions.

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SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, February 3, 2024



46th Irish Evening

featuring novelist Darragh McKeon



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

Ellicott City 250

Patti Ross, Scot Ehrhardt, and Fred Foote read their work included in *Through the Eyes of Poets: Ellicott City at 250* at a reception held at the Columbia Art Center as part of *Howard Arts Council's Road to the Arts* on September 18, 2022. Another reading from the anthology took place at Howard County Library, Miller Branch on October 22 with Neal Goturi, Scot Ehrhardt, Susan Hobby, David H. Barrett, Sylvia Lee, and Susie Lee.

Howard Community College

In partnership with Howard Community College, HoCoPoLitSo supported the Bauder Reading Series as writer Tyrese Coleman interviewed Gabriel Bump, author of *Everywhere You Don't Belong*, on September 22, 2022.

On March 2, 2023 HoCoPoLitSo co-sponsored a Creative Write-In and provided poetry collections to attendees. Tara Hart, Sylvia Lee, Tim Singleton, and Laura Yoo offered workshops and mentored young writers.

Vietnamese poet and novelist Nguyen Phan Que Mai spoke and sang of her work in the Monteabaro Recital Hall, Horowitz Center, HCC, on March 29, 2023.

Howard County Library

Together with Howard County Library System, HoCoPoLitSo's Susan Thornton Hobby and climate educator Julie Dunlap hosted the Inconvenient Book Club at the Howard County Library, Miller Branch. The "cli-fi" (climate fiction) club met between July and June.

HoCoPoLitSo Online

HoCoPoLitSo produced one new edition of *The Writing Life* in April with Noah Arhm Choi hosted by Regie Cabico.

The Writing Life, a recording of the 45th Evening of Irish Music & Poetry with Colm Tóibín and Maureen Dowd, select Wilde Readings, and fifty-four new videos in the *Poetry Moment* series have been uploaded and are available to view free of charge worldwide at youtube.com/hocopolitso.

Online views of *The Writing Life* and the *Poetry Moments* series increased from 102,000 in 2022 to 108,000 in 2023, with an additional 513 subscribers, bringing the total number of subscribers to 3,200 and a lifetime number of views of 879,382.
