

The Sixth Annual Favorite Poem Project Revs Up

As the second semester begins, the new Creative Writing class will join with The Record Magazine staff and Poetry Soup group to sponsor The Sixth Annual Favorite Poem Project of Greater Newburyport. The brainchild of former U.S. Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky, The National Favorite Poem Project was launched in 1997 to celebrate the sheer pleasure of poetry with the public at large. Pinsky put out a call for favorite poems and received eighteen thousand responses from Americans of diverse regions, ages, and backgrounds. He compiled several of those responses into two books, which he edited along with one of his graduate students at Boston University.

While our local Favorite Poem Projects may not have been quite so grand, for the past five years, students have enjoyed reading through numerous submissions, culminating in an event at the Firehouse, which has included readings in Swahili, Spanish, Russian, and Serbo-Croatian, among others. This year we hope once again to receive poems from a broad spectrum of people in the greater Newburyport community. Students will then choose a representative sample of poems to be read at The Firehouse on April 27, 2008 at the end of the Newburyport Literary Festival. To submit a poem for consideration, send it to Mrs. Szabo by March 31 at Newburyport High School, 241 High Street, Newburyport, MA 01950 or email to dszabo@newburyport.k12.ma.us. **Please include a copy of the poem, a brief paragraph explaining why it is a favorite, your name, and a piece of identifying information such as your profession or age, so we can choose a wide variety of people to read at the performance.** We are not looking for literary analysis (students will be glad to tell you they get enough of that at school) but rather an explanation of your personal connection to one particular poem. It doesn't have to be THE favorite poem of your whole life – you will not be married to it! Just choose one poem you have read or heard that has touched you in some meaningful way, and share your appreciation of it.

Parents, business people, politicians, clergy, and all other members of our community are encouraged to participate. You do not have to be a poetry aficionado to have a favorite poem. In fact, one important aspect of this project is to demonstrate how poetry affects even the most unlikely people in surprising ways. Students will read and consider all entries, so the more entries we receive, the more poetry students will read!

Meanwhile, the Favorite Poem Project bulletin board is rapidly filling. Next time you enter Newburyport High School, walk left, towards the auditorium, and check out the favorite poems of students, administrators, teachers, and other members of the NHS community. We will assume that any writing submitted for the Favorite Poem Project can also be posted on our bulletin board, which we plan to change periodically.

Hopefully, by April a poem or two will be dancing in everyone's head!

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