What is the National Student Poets Program?
The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers have partnered to launch the National Student Poets Program, the nation's highest honor for young poets (grades 9-11) presenting original work. The program is designed to elevate and highlight their work for a national audience, inspiring other young people to achieve excellence in their own creative endeavors and showcasing the essential role of writing and the arts in academic and personal success.

The National Student Poets Program reflects the national imprimatur of the President's Committee and its Honorary Chairman, First Lady Michelle Obama, as well as the Administration's commitment to arts and humanities education. It links the National Student Poets with audiences and resources in their neighborhoods through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' community-based network of libraries and museums, and builds upon the Alliance's long-standing work with educators and creative teens through the prestigious Scholastic Art & Writing Awards.

What are the duties of the National Student Poets?
National Student Poets promote reading, writing, and the appreciation of poetry among youth and the general public. By their example and words, they will encourage creative self-discovery, impart new skills, and inspire their peers to dream big and work hard to achieve those dreams. They will also work with poet mentors and serve as a resource for the White House, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Library of Congress.

How are the National Student Poets recognized for their achievement?
National Student Poets are honored during a ceremony at the National Book Festival in Washington, DC, in cooperation with the Library of Congress. They each receive an academic award of $5,000, funded by the Bernstein Family Foundation. The National Book Festival marks the beginning of the Student Poets’ appointment year as literary ambassadors, during which they will design community service projects and engage audiences through readings, workshops, and other events in their respective regions.

How are the National Student Poets selected?
Winning a National Medal in poetry from The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards is the exclusive pathway to be considered for the National Student Poets Program. This pool of Award-winning students provides additional work to be evaluated on creativity, dedication to craft, and promise. The 2012 panel of jurors included Robert Casper (Head of the Poetry and Literature Center, Library of Congress); Mayda de Valle (Poet); Andrea Gibson (Poet); Kimiko Hahn (Poet); Terrance Hayes (Poet); James Kass (Founder and Executive Director, Youth Speaks); David Lynn (Editor, Kenyon Review); Alice Quinn (Executive Director, Poetry Society of America); Jeff Tweedy (Musician); and Kerry Washington (Actress). Each National Student Poet represents one of five geographic regions in the U.S.

Meet the Inaugural Class of National Student Poets…

Students in grades 9-11 who are interested in becoming a 2013 National Student Poet can submit their work to the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards throughout the fall www.artandwriting.org

(more)
THE INAUGURAL CLASS OF NATIONAL STUDENT POETS

Luisa Banchoff, 17, is a senior at Washington-Lee High School in Arlington, Virginia, where she is an International Baccalaureate Diploma Candidate and serves as poetry editor for the school literary magazine. Luisa grew up in a bilingual and bicultural family and has spent two years in Bonn, Germany. She has been active in community service, helping to found a social justice youth group at her church and serving as a Girl Scout for over 10 years. She has been an avid poet since the eighth grade, receiving a Scholastic Gold Medal in poetry in 2011 and a Gold Medal and American Voices Medal this past year. For her Girl Scout Gold Award, she led a poetry workshop at her former elementary school. She hopes to major in English or creative writing in college.

Miles Hewitt, 17, has been writing since the third grade, when his love of Brian Jacques’ Redwall inspired him to write the imaginatively named Greenwall. In the eighth grade, as his ear for voice continued to develop, he discovered musical artists such as Bob Dylan and Paul Simon, and moved on to songwriting. Miles fell in love with poetry more recently. A senior at the Vancouver School of Arts and Academics in Vancouver, Washington, he was admitted this past year to the Focus (highest level) Literary Arts class. There, he's a member of a small group of burgeoning writers who come together to workshop one another's pieces and offer support. Miles is the president of the Young Democrats of Clark County, and founded and served as the editor-in-chief of his school newspaper. He's considering a career in political communications or speechwriting.

Claire Lee, 16, is a junior at the Chapin School in New York City. Her passions in life include creating lists, eating food, photography, reading, playing squash, and, of course, writing. As an only child who didn't like to play with dolls while growing up, Claire found comfort in writing stories in which she had many siblings, and poems about cool words. In school, Claire is the photo editor and a columnist for her school newspaper, Limelight; a member of Model UN, the literary magazine (Wheel), the dance club and the forensics club; and the editor-in-chief of an out-of-school newspaper, NY Girls’ Squash. Claire has also won awards for her creative fiction, nonfiction, and photography. This past summer, Claire attended the New England Young Writers’ Conference at Middlebury College (Bread Loaf).

Natalie Richardson, 17, is a senior at Oak Park and River Forest High School outside of Chicago. She has participated in her school’s Spoken Word Club and Slam Team for two years. This past year she competed in the Louder Than a Bomb poetry festival with her school’s team and recorded a piece for radio station WBEZ. In her spare time (when she is not writing or studying), Natalie enjoys painting, drawing, eating, debating philosophy with her opposite-minded twin sister, traveling, and scuba diving. She hopes to one day sell her art in a festival, travel to Chile, and dive the Great Barrier Reef.

Lylla Younes, 17, was born in Williamson, West Virginia, a coal miner’s town with a population of about 2,000. A few blocks from her house there was an old floodwall; her mother used to make up stories about the “great flood of 1969,” and she would stare down at the scraps of furniture in the water and imagine the lives of the people they belonged to. That’s where her dreaming began, where her imagination developed—at the Williamson floodwall. Her family resides in Alexandria, Louisiana, but she has recently begun a two-year program at the United World College—USA in Montezuma, New Mexico. Lylla enjoys science and philosophy and is often inspired to write by works that are not literary.

More information on the National Student Poets Program can be found at www.artandwriting.org/NSPP.