

ANTICIPATION. Performer Silas Roman (7) watches a fellow poet while he waits his turn on stage. "It was kind of terrifying because they were doing so good, and I was worried if mine would go as well, but it ended up being fun," Roman said.

WINNER, WINNER. The top three winners, Blake Lawrence (3rd place), Jude Creek (2nd place), and Evan Yellow-Fox (1st place) show off their awards. "It felt pretty good getting to share my hard work and to know that people liked it," said Blake Lawrence (7). Second place winner Jude Creek said, "I was surprised that I had won second. I didn't really expect it, but I was proud of my poem and what went into it."



THIS IS EVERYTHING

An excerpt from "Cars" by Lyla Skubish

"If it makes you happy it doesn't have to make sense to anyone else.

This information is far from false.

A woman in the car community?

They say that's not right

But I'm willing to put up a fight.

Since a little girl I loved them;

So much, my parents couldn't fathom.

Today, Hot Wheels litter my room's floor;

Car shirts folded in every drawer.

It truly is a love that will never die

And it'll always be by my side.

...I know if I follow my dreams I'll be happy.

If it makes you happy it doesn't have to make sense to anyone else.

Cars make me happy,

and I know that doesn't

make sense to you,

But do me a favor and let

me live my life.

Let me be happy, chilling

with my car crew.



CRAZY FOR CARS. Lyla performs her slam poem (above) and poses with her Hot Wheels collection (left). "Cars are really fun, and I like how there are different models. They can be very cool; some make loud noises or are very bright colors. I am not sure why I like cars; they are just very interesting."



EVERYTH

EVERYTH

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MIC DROP. At the conclusion of his poem, Henry Cox (7) replaces the mic. Cox describes himself as an extrovert and doesn't mind public speaking at all. "Presenting was kind of fun because I love being in front of people, so I was kind of excited," he said. **RAISE THE ROOF.** One of the first to go, Cat Bassett (7) delivers their poem complete with gestures. "I was a bit worried about messing something up, but the overall idea of doing these kinds of things is good to get people out of their shell. For me, it was a really good step toward performing," Bassett said.

LOTSA' LOVE. At the conclusion of the event, Evan Yellow-Fox (8) receives a big hug from their mom. Yellow-Fox expressed a lot of gratitude for all the support their mother has given. "She has helped me a lot," Yellow-Fox said.



First Slam Poetry Contest gives opportunity for self expression. Story by Sienna Burford.

On Thursday, November 18th, Evan Yellow-Fox (8), who chooses to identify as they/them, won Drake's new Slam Poetry Contest. "I was just kind of in shock when I went home with first place," Yellow-Fox said.

Yellow-Fox's poem was inspired by their difficulties with mental health. "I have struggled this year especially, and I wanted to bring out this poem because I know a lot of other people have the same problems as I did," Yellow-Fox said. "My message was that teens struggle with mental health every day, and it's nothing to joke about, laugh about, and say it's not real. I struggled with suicidal thoughts for a very long time. I wanted people to know that it's okay. I mean, it's not okay to hurt yourself or anything, but it's okay to announce yourself and say, 'Hey, I need help.'"

Yellow-Fox had a big supporter from the beginning. "My biggest

supporter is definitely my mom. She has helped me through tough times even though she is having a tough time herself."

Going public about such a personal topic could be scary, but Yellow-Fox discovered something important. "I gained a lot of empowerment. I have really bad social anxiety, and going up on stage and just doing it was just such a big thing for me, but actually getting to share improved my mental health." Instead of judgment, Yellow-Fox received a lot of positive feedback.

When the top awards were announced, Yellow-Fox was very surprised they had won. "I felt like I was really good, but at the same time, I didn't think I was gonna' win because there were a lot of other people that had really good slam poems." Also finishing in the top three were Jude Creek (7), who took second place and Blake Lawrence (7), who came in third.

CHECK it out

It takes work to write a poem and get it performance ready. Participants give their best tips.

-  I brainstormed ideas and shared it with my friends over Facetime to make sure they liked what I was thinking.
-Caydance Hunter (7)
-  I started by writing a rough draft to decide if I liked what I was doing and if I had to fix any mistakes.
-Annie Erwin (7)
-  "I was practicing so my voice wasn't shaky or made me sound like I was scared."
-Shaun DiGiovanni (6)
-  "I had to calm my nerves before going on and sharing my story because I thought that if I failed, I would've still had fun doing it."
-Body Kass (7)

SPEAKING Out

The performers were courageous enough to be very real, open and vulnerable. "It was intense emotionally," said eighth grade assistant principal and guest judge Ms. Nimita Weiss. "There were some students who talked about medical issues that they were going through that I didn't know about. Some students that talked about passions that they have, and stereotypes that they had to overcome; a student who talked about the stigma around being obese or fat and how it felt, students who felt like people had failed them, and students who talked about mental health and what it's like, you know, to just be in their skin and deal with that every day."

Following their win at Drake, Yellow-Fox will share their message with a larger audience. "I'm going to perform at a slam poetry café in Denver. I am actually very nervous, but I want it to have an effect on people."