



PRESS RELEASE

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2026 Poetry & Fiction Contest Winners Awarded

Madison, Wisconsin – The Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters is proud to announce the winners of the 32nd annual *Wisconsin People & Ideas* Poetry and Fiction contests. This annual contest celebrates the state’s rich literary talent and supports established and emerging Wisconsin writers with cash prizes, publication, a five-day residency, and public readings.

“Wisconsin writers tell us that they appreciate these opportunities to participate and the chance of finding a statewide audience for their work,” says Erika Monroe-Kane, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Academy. “This year, our judging team included Wisconsin Poet Laureate [Brenda Cárdenas](#) and internationally beloved novelist [Nickolas Butler](#), as well review committee members from writing communities around the state. They had the delightful but daunting task of reading an incredible number of submissions representing voices and perspectives that were fresh and interesting.”

First prize in poetry goes to **juj e lepe** for a poem called “Masculinity Study.” Cárdenas explains that the winning poem “resonates” and “surprises” while calling the reader to wrestle with meaning and imagery.

First prize in fiction goes to **Noreen McAuliffe** for a story called “The End of the Apostrophe.” Butler calls it an “exceedingly fluid, honest, and likeable story.”

The winning poetry and fiction will be published by the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters in *Wisconsin People & Ideas* magazines. First place contest winners also receive five days of room and board on the 2.5 acre campus of Shake Rag Alley Center for the Arts in Mineral Point, as well as \$500 apiece. They will present at the Wisconsin Book Festival as part of a special reading on Wednesday, October 21st at 7 pm at Madison Central Library.



2026 Fiction Winners

First place: Noreen McAuliffe “The End of the Apostrophe” (Madison)

Second place: David Heinen “Still Life” (Milwaukee)

Third place: Dan Lyksett “The River Waits” (Eau Claire)

Honorable mention: Scout September Holloway “Sleep Studies” (Madison)

Honorable Mention: Allison Slavick “Balsam of Gilead” (Cable)

Finalists:

Todd Michael Cox “The Man in the Weeds” (Madison)

Steve Fox “Otter Stone, Wolf Rock” (Hudson)

Jeff Oloizia “High Dive” (Madison)

Robert Russell “Split Shift” (Madison)

Peter M. Sherrill “Back Then, Under the Lights” (Forestville)

Exeter T. Stevens “Grandma Anne Would Approve” (Hartford)

Timothy Walsh “Morning Glories and Dragonflies” (Madison)

2026 Poetry Winners

First place: juj e lepe “Masculinity Study” (Madison)

Second place: Sam Niven “Low Tide” (Milwaukee)

Third place: Samantha Schoville “Why We Prayed” (Madison)

Honorable Mention: Carly Davis “Reading Lorine Downriver” (Janesville)

Finalists:

Lynn Aprill “Dismantled” (Seymour)

Ryn Hintz “Women in Red at the Phillies” (Madison)

Jill Madden Melchoir “Dung Beetle Polka” (Green Bay)

Kassandra Palmer “Telepathy Practice” (Madison)

Carolyn Pralle “For Next Time” (Wisconsin Rapids)

Masarah Van Eyck “A Field Guide to the Birds” (Madison)



Bios for the Fiction and Poetry winners available on request.

Wisconsin People & Ideas magazine has sponsored the premier annual fiction and poetry contests for Wisconsin writers since 1994. All contest judging is done blindly and the winning submissions are selected through criteria established by the individual judges, who serve for one year. The 2027 window for submission opens January 15, 2027; deadline is March 31, 2027. Winning entries from past years can be found at wisconsinacademy.org/content/writing-contests.

About the Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters

A champion of independent thought, creativity, and civil discourse, the [Wisconsin Academy of Sciences, Arts & Letters](https://wisconsinacademy.org) connects people from across the state and builds common ground. Through exhibitions, publications, and initiatives, the Wisconsin Academy increases understanding about who we are and the world around us. The James Watrous Gallery celebrates contemporary Wisconsin artists, while *Wisconsin People & Ideas* magazine explores the intersections of science, culture, and the humanities. The Climate and Energy Initiative advances pathways to a sustainable future, and public talks foster meaningful connections among engaged and inquisitive people. The Academy also honors excellence through the Fiction & Poetry Awards and Fellows Awards, supports the Wisconsin Poet Laureate, and nurtures ideas and conversations that shape a better future for Wisconsin.

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