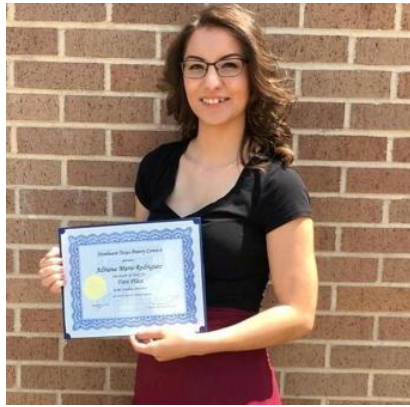


# Rodriguez and Wylie Win 2017 Northeast Texas Poetry Contest



Adriana Rodriguez (\$400) and long-term winner, Angela Wylie (\$200) were the 2017 winners of the annual Northeast Texas poetry contest. Both winners explored oft-neglected aspects of regional serenity--the liberation from distraction, the roads that measure distance in generations, the melodies of the wind, and the lingering histories of abandoned ancestral homes. The student winner, Rodriguez, a sophomore Presidential Scholar from Mount Pleasant, also won third-place (\$200) last year for her lyric, "After a Storm." Rodriguez currently also is one of 30 finalists this year for the National Collegiate Honors Council's "Student of the Year." Wylie, a Winnsboro teacher, also has compiled an enviable résumé. Over ten years, Angela Wylie in the adult division has compiled an amazing record, earning her the sobriquet, "Poet Laureate of Northeast Texas." She has won this same contest in 2009, 2011, 2015, 2016, and 2017.

In the student division, Cypress Bank Scholar, Chesney Davis won second place (\$300) this year, after winning first place last year. This year, again he found new examples to adorn his refrain, "East Texas is as Big as it is Little." Jazmin Garcia (\$200), Hannah Dickson (\$100), and Morgan Martin (\$50) three freshmen members of Honors Northeast, completed the winner's circle of the 2017 contest. Garcia detailed the welcoming scenes that drew her from Brownsville to her new Northeast Texas home. Dickson, in a larger assessment of the state, reminded us that among other things, every Texan should know three phrases: "Remember the Alamo," "Come and Take It," and "Don't Mess with Texas." Martin detailed nature's secret artistry behind the "pine curtain."

The Reading on 8 September at the Whatley Foyer of Northeast Texas Community College featured the above poets reading their poems, with the exception that Winnsboro

High School Principal, David Pinnell, read for Wylie, who was on a trip. The Reading also featured observations by Dr. Elaine Beason, and Kristin Ellermann, two regional educators. Beason surprised many with a slideshow of Northeast Texas scenes, showing a photographic gift that evoked the extraordinary in the ordinary. A world traveler, and former Peace Corps worker, Kristin Ellermann, gave a spirited address noting that while many places in the world became a home to her, home in another sense, does not travel. Much can become familiar, but memories can imbue what is familiar—such as her native region here—with the defining sense of peace.

For the tenth year, Northeast Texas language professors Chuck Hamilton, Anna Ingram, and Jim Swann served as judges for the contest. Ingram also chaired the session this year, while Dr. Andrew Yox, Honors Director, introduced the Reading.



Student winners above (left to right): Jazmin Garcia, Hannah Dickson, Chesney Davis, Adriana Rodriguez, and Morgan Martin

## **First-Place Student**



Adriana Rodriguez reading her winning poem: Above photo courtesy of Dr. Chuck Hamilton

## Imagine

Imagine:

Sitting in silence, broken only by the nostalgic creaks of the old wooden rocking chair  
A warm aroma lingers and finds its way into memories seeming all too familiar  
The crisp pages of a worn down book telling you a tale about those three silly bears  
And every clouded thought throughout the day all becomes much clearer

Imagine:

Stepping outside to reveal long blades of green dripping with cold morning dew  
The sunlight peaking over the vast pasture, enhancing the silhouette of every creature  
Trees whistling in the wind, singing their perfectly, improvised melody anew  
And walking onto the loose gravel roads, a commonly pleasant country feature

Imagine:

Walking along the old market square, with painted murals along the sides of brick buildings  
Old and new faces striding past, expressing gentle eyes and reassuring smiles  
A place to gather for others unknown only with the hope of creating new beginnings  
And security in the future achieved because the people will embrace any extra trials

Imagine living life in quiet peace without the fear of distraction

Imagine living life where the people constantly display a fervent passion

Imagine living life where warmth and love is easy to find

Imagine living life where nature's beauty is always inclined

Imagine, Imagine, only, I don't have to imagine

Because a place like this is what I've always known

Because a place like this is what I've grown to call home

## **First-Place Adult**

### **The Road by Angela Wylie**

As I drive along the road - My road  
The road along which I was brought home  
As a tiny infant babe  
To the old, old ancestral home  
Where wind blew through the walls  
Surrounded by a vast sea of golden jonquils  
Swaying beneath old sycamore trees

I drive past the house that Daddy built  
Where wind did not blow through walls  
That we moved away from  
And left my dog behind  
It became my Uncle's house  
Who raised his family there  
And kept my dog.

I pass the neighbor's houses  
The fenced pastures where cattle graze  
The weathered leaning barns  
The overgrown old home-places  
Silent remains with empty cellars and  
Steadfast old magnolia trees  
Home to people no more

Here is my life  
Along this winding curving road

A small highway in Northeast Texas  
Where generations along it have been reared.  
Some left the rural nothingness  
For the larger towns and cities  
Where neighbor rarely knows neighbor

Yet, many return to the fields and trees  
To the golden flowers bending in the breeze  
To rusted fence wire and knurled posts  
To people who know them the most  
To life where things go a little slower  
Where roosters crow and black birds fly over  
Where neighbor does know neighbor

I pass my grandparents' home-place  
A brick home built around the original house  
Crape-myrtle trees line the rutted drive  
A fig tree stands guard in the middle of the yard  
Green pastures surround the house  
Where Black Angus cattle did once graze  
Living out their lives in peaceful sunlit haze

Where I spent weekends of my childhood  
Walking barefooted along sandy cow trails  
Avoiding the black gooey plops of dung  
Wading in the cool shallow water of the creek  
Exploring the old garage and barn  
Eating popcorn and sipping stove-top hot coco  
Watching TV as the adults talked

Sleeping next to the open window  
Listening to night sounds different than home  
Cool breeze over sweat dampened skin  
No air conditioning here in the old house  
The house with the bullet holes in the window screen  
Through which Gramps once shot a rabid fox  
Patches carefully stitched over the rusted round holes

The road is my life

From birth to childhood to marriage  
My children now drive the road,  
Knowing every curve and hill  
Some of them live there still  
Raising their children in the country air  
Continuing the winding curving flow of life

## Second-Place Student



Chesney Davis

East Texas is as Big as it is Little Vol. II

From the pipe lines that crisscross all over the region  
To the oil that supported and helped win a world war  
From the interstates that zoom from end to end  
To the dirt roads that call this place home  
From the huge fancy restaurants that fill you to them brim  
To the hole in wall joints that are beyond amazing

East Texas is as big as it is little

From the Big Bass Bonanza craze  
To the cork floaters on a pond  
From the biggest Boone and Crocket bucks  
To the doe boys that smile from ear to ear  
From huge ranches that stretch for miles  
To little farms that are doted all over

East Texas is as big as it is little

From the largest Ag mechanics projects  
To the duct tape that'll hold it all together  
From the mass trailer production that makes you wonder  
To the "Nah that isn't rust, that just character" trailers  
From the boom and wonder that is Priefert  
To original blue head gate that started it all

East Texas is as big as it is little

From the best little league team in the country  
To the back-yard games that live forever  
From core marching band that march with elegance and grace  
To the crisp snap of the most decorated military band in Texas  
From the big city urban sprawl that creates a concrete jungle  
To the single flashing light towns that you blink and you miss them

East Texas is a big as it is little

From the "everything is bigger in Texas"  
To little bitty home towns all over this great region  
East Texas has it all

East Texas is as big as it is little

## **Third-Place Student**



Jazmin Garcia

# Northeast Texas, My Home

Brownsville, Texas-born but raised in Northeast Texas

Moving from the brush country to the piney woods

Leaving Cameron County for Titus

I consider Northeast Texas my home

Where I hear crickets chirping instead of honking horns

Instead of bright city lights, I'm amazed by fireflies

I don't need a florist shop to see natural roses protected by thorns

The beautiful wildlife and countryside is the view in my eyes

Where on a hot summer day, I'd visit the State Park lake

Instead of a crowded beach deciding where to lay

Where communities come together at 4<sup>th</sup> of July and Christmas

To watch the fireworks show or see the lit up parade at night

Northeast Texas is my home

Where small towns are nationally recognized

Like the "Black-Eyed Pea Capitol of the World" in Athens

Let me not forget the "Rose Capitol of America" in Tyler

Or the "Gas capital of the United States" in Carthage



Where I can travel to other countries while staying in Northeast  
I can visit the mini Eiffel Tower in Texas' very own city of Paris  
As well as there is a lot of history from the golden days  
The Kilgore Oil Derricks at the World's Richest Acre prove the oil boom

Northeast Texas is my home  
The adventure never stops in small towns  
Because as they say "Everything is bigger in Texas"  
Northeast has it all

## **Fourth-Place Student**



Hannah Dickson

### What Texas Means to Me

What does Texas mean to me?

Texas means beauty in diversity.

It means lush pastures, dry desserts, and dense forests

It means tiny rural towns and booming cities

It means unpredictable and everchanging weather

It means a melting pot of people under the same sun

Texas means love unconditional

It means friendships that last a lifetime

It means Nana's sweet iced tea and Granny's homemade goodies

It means treasured childhood memories, scrapping knees and climbing trees

It means Family, foremost and forever in every Texan's heart

Texas means a history as rich as its soil

It means "Remember the Alamo" and that "Come and take it" attitude

It means "don't mess with Texas"

It means a people with roots deeper than those of the pecan trees scattered across this land

It means knowing who you are, where you come from, and taking pride in your heritage

Texas means value in traditions

It means good ole Southern hospitality

It means the angelic song of a church bell on Sunday morning

It means a spirit of community and working together to get things done

It means big attitudes but even bigger hearts

From its awe-inspiring history to its beautiful diversity

From its valued traditions to its endless love

What does Texas mean to me?

Texas means home.

## **Honorable Mention**



Morgan Martin

## **East Texas Daze**

From the skyscraper pines, who emit the smell of the great outdoors, to the eternal oaks  
whose branches provide shade from the summer blaze,

From seas of bluest bluebonnets billowing in a warm Texas breeze, to the yellow rose  
whose name invokes feelings of strongest pride in any Texans heart,

The splendor of east Texas is sung by the birds and all of nature behind the pine curtain.

From the jubilant cheers on a cool night at the county fair, to the roar of a rowdy crowd  
under the bright Friday night lights,

From the highways and long, winding back roads where countless hours are spent, to the  
calm quiet ponds and fields where lazy cattle graze,

The sun paints the sky in shades of blue, purple, pink, and orange while weary, white clouds  
laze along the horizon.

With a wave and a smile East Texas welcomes faces both old and new that they might all call  
her home