



March 14, 2014

Students Step Up at MSCC Spoken Word Poetry Contest

Seven students demonstrated their considerable writing and presentation skills during Mid-South Community College's Spoken Word Poetry Competition on Wednesday, March 12, and when the applause ended, David Washington of Proctor earned top honors.

In a closely contested battle for first place, Washington edged Taylor Creekmore of West Memphis by the slimmest of margins. Erin Clark of Millington came in third. Poems of the top three finishers will be entered into a national writing contest.

The contestants presented their original poems to fellow students and staff members and were judged by the audience through clapping and vocal expressions of approval. Evaluation criteria included creativity, originality, and use of language and rhyme.



From left, David Washington, Taylor Creekmore, and Erin Clark

Sponsored by the Sigma Epsilon chapter of Sigma Kappa Delta, a new English honor society on the Mid-South campus, the overall event included poetry reading from Dr. Seuss books and a thought-provoking presentation by English instructor Daniel Turner.

“The 2014 Spoken Word Poetry Contest was a huge success, and it truly showcased the talents of the MSCC students and Communication faculty,” said Stephanie S. Eley, Lead Faculty, Communication and Fine Arts. “Obviously, we all share a love of language and learning that was enthusiastically displayed at the contest.

“I think the reading of Dr. Seuss's poems made poetry relevant to all of our students on a primary level, and having Daniel Turner expound upon the philosophical and societal implications of the poetry read provided a snapshot of what students would learn in our upper level English literature classes.”

Eley said the event was designed to promote interest in literature and English and provide cultural stimulation through the expression of original poetry penned by MSCC students.

MSCC faculty and staff members couldn't help but be impressed with the students' efforts.

“I was impressed, not only with the thoughtful and culturally challenging nature of their pieces, but also with the quality of their presentations,” said Erin Schlauch, MSCC Title III Structured Learning Assistance and Tutoring Coordinator. “They truly made the audience feel their passion for writing and the conviction of their beliefs. It was obvious they had poured their heart and soul into those pieces, and I think the audience responded to that.”

Communications and Digital Media instructor Anwar Jamison, who presented one of his original poems at the event, said the students did a great job.

“I thought they gave us a great example of how poetry can be used as a tool to bring awareness to important issues. I don't think it was a coincidence that the poems of the three winners dealt with politics, the economy, religion, racism and other topics that tend to spark a lot of conversation. Often, poetry can resonate with people in ways that other forms of communication cannot.”

Christopher Tindall, instructor of English and Developmental Communications, said the exchange of ideas through poetry is powerful.

“The event exemplified a love that our faculty, staff, and students have for eloquent language that challenges all people to be productive individuals constantly striving to make a positive difference in the world. We must never forget that words have the power to change people for the better. Words are the bricks that build dreams, and poetry is the medium that changes dreams into reality.”

Originally scheduled to coincide with Read Across America Day, a promotion of the National Education Association, the MSCC event centered on a “Cat in the Hat” theme in honor of Dr. Seuss’ birthday.

For information about other cultural and educational enrichment opportunities at MSCC, visit the campus at 2000 West Broadway in West Memphis, call the Admissions Office at (870) 733-6728, email admissions@midsouthcc.edu, or see the College’s website at www.midsouthcc.edu.