

# Well-versed for a good cause

## Poetry contest raises funds for Byram animal shelter

BYRAM — Dogs and cats gained notice in the literary world in BARKS' first annual poetry contest that drew entries from throughout the world.

The contest, hosted by the Byram Animal Rescue Kindness Squad in May to raise funds for the animal shelter, was open to people of all ages. Poets were encouraged to write about their pet's quirks, write from their pet's perspective or take a creative and unique slant to tell the world about their pet.

There was no entry fee, just a suggested donation of \$10 per poem entered.

Because the contest was promoted on the Internet (Facebook, Twitter, Poetry Forums), entries were received from all over the United States and from several other countries, from as far away as Zimbabwe. More than 250 entries were received, with the bulk of them being from New Jersey.

Hackettstown Middle School adopted the contest as a school-wide project. Students created beautiful displays of their poetry throughout the school building and conducted a coin collection to raise money for BARKS, resulting in a donation of more than \$228.

The contest judges were Don Zirilli, editor of Now Culture literary magazine, and Priscilla Orr, Associate Professor of English at Sussex County Community College. Both judges are Sussex County residents who have been deeply affected by the pets in their lives. The poems were judged anonymously on originality, emotion, technique and skill.

Poems about cats and dogs were most abundant, but there were also very interesting poems about pets like fish, ferrets, chickens, and even pet rocks.

The top winner for the Under 13 age category was Jessica Tucker of Hackettstown. Her poem was entitled, "The Smoke through the Trees." Runners up were Sarah Alitz of Hackettstown, Jade Baccara-Nicholls of Hardwick and Sally Olson of Sparta. There were 13 Honorable Mentions.

There were two top winners for the 13 and Over age category. Ann Drysdale of Old South Wales, UK won with her poem entitled, "Sleeping in Tongues."

The other top winner was Elaine Koplow of Blairstown, who had two poems chosen, entitled "Kittatiny Jake" and "Snowbound with the Dog." Fourteen poems in the 13 and Over group were awarded Honorable Mentions.

Poems from the winners were published on the Internet in Now Culture literary magazine (nowculture.com) and on the BARKS web site (barksinc.com).

Tucker and Koplow read their winning poems at a recent BARKS luncheon at the Adam Todd Caterers, where they received award certificates and a few small prizes.

BARKS is a non-profit, all-volunteer, animal rescue organization founded in 1973 to provide veterinary care, housing, and permanent placement of stray and abandoned cats and dogs. Each year, BARKS places more than 250 cats and kittens and 100 dogs and puppies in loving homes.

### The Smoke Through the Trees

by JESSICA TUCKER

Hackettstown  
First place, Under 13

When you call out to me  
With your whimpers and your willful whines  
Your cries of hopefulness and plea  
It is music drifting through the sky

When you cry out  
Lonely, abandoned  
Missing those who were once there  
Filling our dreary world with sapphires and emeralds

With subtle movements  
I know your unasked questions  
I guide you  
As much as you guide me

Apart, we are a willful force  
Together, we are accomplished and proud  
A team that communicates through silence  
Strong, powerful, cunning

That is why  
When you run for me, gasping at thin air  
Paws only touching the ground for a fleeting moment  
Never quite reaching me  
As you are swept away by death's icy fingers

You are truly dazzling  
Like a wisp of smoke through the trees



JESSICA TUCKER

### Snowbound with the Dog

By ELAINE KOPLow

Blairstown

First Place, 13 and Older

Snowbound with the dog, I reflect upon my life:  
The parts I lived and those I didn't get to  
My gaze goes continually to the window  
Where flakes, like feathers, soft and pillowy,  
But bigger than golf balls, are falling,  
Aiming straight for my freshly plowed driveway  
Weather-dot-com can no longer be accessed  
And the radio has gone from watch to warning  
To snow emergency, blizzard conditions,  
Incalculable accumulations,  
Drifts and winds-gales gusting to 30 miles per hour-  
Freezing rain is in there somewhere, too  
Two glasses of wine into it, though, I no longer care;  
It's me and the dog-  
Against the world if need be.  
I calculate we can hold out for 19 days;  
After that we flip a biscuit  
And go the way of the Donner Party  
Throwing another log on the fire,  
I look back on the past  
And cannot help but wonder  
Where the years have gone.  
Perhaps they were "Measured out with coffee spoons,"  
I cannot say. I shrug and turn to the dog;  
He shrugs,  
He is given less and less  
To philosophy these days,  
Keeping his eyes keenly on the peanuts we are sharing;  
He watches my every movement-  
I am certain he is counting-  
I do not give him wine  
I tell him about my life before I met him;  
Most of it he has heard before:  
Where I grew up, went to school;  
We talk a little about his former father,  
But it's mostly about my family  
And how I heard at a very young age  
That the worst tragedy that could befall a person  
Was to lose a child,  
So that's why I never had kids,  
I explain to him  
But that did not inure me from loss-  
Nothing does, I tell him,  
Offering him the last peanut,  
And stroking his red-brown fur,  
Because there is always something to love



ELAINE KOPLow

### Sleeping in Tongues

by ANN DRYSDALE

Old South Wales, UK

First Place, 13 and Older

Three of us breathing, me and dog and cat.  
Wakening to a faint and plaintive mew,  
I hold my own breath, ascertaining that  
The sound comes from one of the other two.  
I act upon an educated guess  
And lay a hand on cat, who quickly twists  
Into a different pose of idleness  
And settles, silent. But the sound persists  
So dog it is, who wheezes in a dream  
That has bestowed on him the gift of tongues  
And things both are, and are not, what they seem.  
I let the captive air out of my lungs.  
Three of us breathing, dog and cat and me;  
Companionable synchronicity.

### Sportswriter shows softer side

By ROB MERRILL

Associated Press Writer

Plenty of people know Frank Deford as an award-winning sportswriter or the guy with the loud outfits on HBO's "Real Sports With Bryant Gumbel," but who knew he had a soft spot for Nicholas Sparks' novels?

"Bliss, Remembered" could have been ghost-written by that master of romantic pulp fiction. Readers who pick it up because of Deford's reputation as a sports journalist will be surprised.

It does have a little something to do with sports, but most of the action isn't of the athletic variety. The events of the novel are set in the 1930s and early '40s, with much of the plot taking place at the Berlin Olympics in 1936.

The novel features two first-person narrators — 61-year-old Teddy Branch and his 86-year-old mother, Sydney Stringfellow Branch — an American swimmer who fell in love with a German — is dying of cancer, and she wants to tell her son a slice of her life story before it's too late.

Once the more fantastic elements of the story are revealed, including a face-to-face meeting with Adolf Hitler himself and a party at Joseph Goebbels' house, the pages turn fast enough. The last 30 or so are filled with twists that force readers to see Sydney in a very different light.

But Deford never lets readers forget he's writing a love story. All the Nazis, FBI agents and 100-meter backstrokes are just grace notes as the old woman sings the song of how she met, lost and again found her soul mate.

## Class of 1979



About 20 people from New Jersey and beyond recently attended the 31st reunion of the Newton High School Class of 1979, held at Alex Dunlop's house in Lake Iliff. On Saturday, the class toured the high school and got together for pizza at Camp Auxilium. Greg Seifter, of California, came the farthest distance to attend. A Newton High School class of 1979 web page has been set up on Facebook, and a 35th reunion is in the works. Anyone interested should contact Donna Caton Meisinger dmeisingerkd@hotmail.com, with their updated information. Attendees at the recent reunion were, in top row, Lisa Bauerline Williams, Marilyn Davis Volpe, Laureen Smalley Armstrong, Rosanne Kosko, Debbie Williams Nannery and Donna Caton Meisinger. Center row, Eric Ankelein, Margaret Johnson, Kathy Stiff Hoffman, Debbie Murdie Downes, Jack Schleiff, Paul White and Paul Kroland. Front row, Alex Dunlop, Tim Beirle, Charles Barhite and Greg Seifter. Missing from photo: Maria Elvidge Fedorczyk.

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