



NEWS RELEASE

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

1021 North Grand Avenue East, P.O. Box 19276

Springfield, Illinois 62794-9276

Phone: 217/782-3397

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 7, 2025

Contact: Kim Biggs

217-558-1536

Kim.Biggs@illinois.gov

Illinois EPA Celebrates Earth Month by Recognizing Young Environmentalists through Annual Poster, Poetry, and Prose Contest

Students Recognized for Creativity on the Topic of Waste Reduction

SPRINGFIELD — On Saturday, April 5, the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) honored a group of creative fifth and sixth grade students selected for their artistic and writing skills used to express environmental awareness, as part of the Agency's Annual Poster, Poetry, and Prose Contest. The students selected from throughout Illinois were recognized at a ceremony at the Illinois State Library in Springfield.

Each year, fifth and sixth grade students in Illinois take part in the Poster, Poetry, and Prose contest as one of the Agency's environmental education initiatives. As part of the contest, participating schools study environmental concepts with an emphasis on the current year's environmental theme. Teachers round out the classroom instruction by having the students create posters or poetry/prose works to illustrate what they have learned and submit these to the Illinois EPA. Participating schools can select four works in each category to submit for competitive judging. This year's theme, "***How Can You Slash Your Trash?***" invites students to think creatively on how to reduce the amount of waste they produce. This could include buying fewer single-use products; composting food waste; repairing broken items instead of replacing or buying new; and recycling items that cannot be re-used or repaired.

"Each year, the Poster, Poetry, and Prose Contest provides us the opportunity to recognize the creative and artistic talents of environmentally engaged fifth and sixth grade students throughout Illinois," **said Illinois EPA Acting Director James Jennings**. "We also want to thank the teachers and families for their participation, and for incorporating this important environmental topic into the classroom so the students can learn the importance of reducing the amount of waste they create."

Poetry/Prose Top Award Winners

Eliana Avila

St. Giles School, Oak Park

Mia Bader

Sunset Ridge School, Northfield

Layla Folie

Providence St. Mel School, Chicago

Áine McCormack

Pope John XXIII School, Evanston

Connor Yaffe

St. Giles School, Oak Park

Emma York

Fabian Elementary School, Geneva

- more -

Posters Top Award Winners

Milanya Garcia

Sadlowski Elementary School, Chicago

Avery Kirk

Fabyan Elementary School, Geneva

Aibike Kydyrgychova

Chappell Elementary School, Chicago

Emma Mikkelson

Eswood School District #269, Lindenwood

Jianna Loren Mulles

Hadley Middle School, Homer Glen

Finn Schott

Fabyan Elementary School, Geneva

Students, their families, and teachers were invited to Saturday's awards ceremony at the Illinois State Library, where the top award and honorable mention winners received environmental reference books for their school libraries. The winners, along with all finalists, also received certificates and ribbons for their creative efforts.

A complete list of winners by school is attached. The top twelve entries will also be displayed on the Illinois EPA's website at: <https://epa.illinois.gov/topics/education/contest/elementary/2025.html>.

Information about the Poster, Poetry, and Prose Contest can be obtained by contacting Kristi Morris, Environmental Education Coordinator for the Illinois EPA at Kristi.Morris@Illinois.gov.



**Illinois Environmental Protection Agency
2025 Poster, Poetry, and Prose Winners**

Beecher City Grade School, Beecher City

Hunter Burrus, Special Recognition
Zoey Chartrand, Special Recognition
Eden Morrison, Special Recognition
Myra Thomas, Special Recognition

Central School, Lemont

Emma Schaefer, Special Recognition

Chappell Elementary, Chicago

Aibike Kydyrgychova, Top Award Winner
Jaxen Rosado, Honorable Mention
Sloane Carpenter, Special Recognition
Felix Glaser, Special Recognition
Ira Shearn, Special Recognition

Cowlishaw Elementary, Naperville

Saiakshar Manimaran, Special Recognition
Amy Zhang, Special Recognition

Edison Middle School, Wheaton

Arhaan Shahid, Special Recognition

Eswood School District #269, Lindenwood

Emma Mikkelsen, Top Award Winner
Felix Contreras, Special Recognition
Marli Cooper, Special Recognition
Helen Miller, Special Recognition

Fabyan Elementary, Geneva

Avery Kirk, Top Award Winner
Finn Schott, Top Award Winner
Emme York, Top Award Winner
Ellie Bain, Honorable Mention
Makayla Costello, Honorable Mention
Ethan Flaks, Special Recognition
Owen Knecht, Special Recognition
Sophia Vitacek, Special Recognition

Hadley Middle School, Homer Glen

Jianna Loren Mulles, Top Award Winner
Carson Moran, Special Recognition
Kiara Pavez Phillips, Special Recognition
Dawid Piechowski, Special Recognition

Highcrest Middle School, Wilmette

Mor Ben Shai, Special Recognition
Nora Brown, Special Recognition
Caroline Cho, Special Recognition

Hoffman Elementary, Glenview

Milena Cich, Special Recognition
Martina Dragojlovic, Special Recognition

John B. Murphy Elementary, Chicago

Lizbeth Salgado, Special Recognition
Adeline Schmidt, Special Recognition

Lake Forest Country Day School, Lake Forest

Larkin George, Honorable Mention
Hailey Cordova, Special Recognition
Madelyn Kohl, Special Recognition
Anneka Maish, Special Recognition

Mary Morgan Elementary, Byron

Emily Doyle, Honorable Mention
Collin Wendt, Special Recognition
Ashlynn Helms, Special Recognition
Mateo Muren, Special Recognition
Lydia Oliver, Special Recognition

North Elementary, Crystal Lake

Declan Krotser, Special Recognition

Pope John XXIII School, Evanston

Áine McCormack, Top Award Winner
Alexa Lee, Honorable Mention
Nicole Zamudio-Abonce, Special Recognition

Prairie Crossing Charter School, Grayslake

Averie Miller, Honorable Mention
Leah Gernady, Special Recognition
Violet Kaminski, Special Recognition
Maya King, Special Recognition

Providence St. Mel School, Chicago

Layla Folie, Top Award Winner
Caroline Jolaoso, Special Recognition
Brooklyn Walker, Special Recognition
Khloe Worthy, Special Recognition

Rondout Elementary, Lake Forest

Grant Ruzich, Special Recognition

Sadlowski Elementary, Chicago

Milanya Garcia, Top Award Winner
Jameson Cruz, Special Recognition
Diego Vega, Special Recognition

Shiloh Jr. High, Hume

Ralph Ritchey, Special Recognition

St. Aloysius Catholic School, Springfield

Stella Ambrose, Honorable Mention
Amelia Mikolajczyk, Special Recognition

St. Anthony Grade School, Effingham

Adalyn Conant, Special Recognition
Caroline Field, Special Recognition
Sienna Kaufmann, Special Recognition

St. Giles School, Oak Park

Eliana Avila, Top Award Winner
Connor Yaffe, Top Award Winner
Emilia Clark, Honorable Mention
Lillian Shaker, Honorable Mention
Clara Walsh, Honorable Mention
Noah Amaro, Special Recognition
Hannah Martin, Special Recognition
Vivienne Serrato, Special Recognition

Sunset Ridge School, Northfield

Mia Bader, Top Award Winner
Emily Brandel, Honorable Mention

Wilson Middle School, Moline

Aubrey Larson, Special Recognition