2015 Peace Poetry Contest

Alachua County Schools
Grades K–12

A collection of the winning poems from the sixth annual Peace Poetry Contest in Alachua County schools, grades K–12, sponsored by the Gainesville Chapter of Veterans for Peace.
The text of all the poems contained in this book are printed exactly as submitted. Due to space and color restraints, we were unable to include special illustrations and designs that accompanied poems.

A full video of the 2015 Peace Poetry Reading will be available via YouTube. If you would like to be added to the email list so that you are notified when it is available, please email vfppeacepoetrycontest@gmail.com. Veterans for Peace will also make photographs and video from the Reading available on our website at vfpgainesville.org.
About the Peace Poetry Contest

This is the sixth year that Gainesville Veterans for Peace has organized the Peace Poetry Contest in Alachua County, where all students, grades K–12, are encouraged to submit one original poem focusing on their interpretation of “peace.”

Veterans for Peace members believe that peace-making and hope for a peaceful world begin in our community, our homes and our schools. That is why we invited you and your students to participate in the contest this year; a peaceful possibility lies in the younger generations of today who will be leading, transforming and inspiring the world tomorrow.

We want to honor the ideal of peace through the perspectives of young people. Peace is a uniquely human conception and affirms the human spirit. It is especially important to remember that peace is not merely a goal but a human right.

This year we received approximately 230 poems from all grades, and the poems were judged by UF English professor Dr. Sidney Wade and her panel of graduate students. The winners were asked to read at the Peace Poetry Reading, and their poems are published in this book.
Veterans for Peace would first and foremost like to thank all of the participants in the 2015 Peace Poetry Contest. This year we received approximately 230 poems from students of all ages in Alachua County with diverse interpretations of peace. Without the poetry submissions, there would be no Peace Poetry Contest and none of the dialogue that comes with it.

The purpose of the Peace Poetry Contest is to encourage young people to think about peace and describe their ideas in a creative way with no rules and no direction. The result of this process is a dialogue about peace and nonviolence that will hopefully develop into peaceful worldviews applied to real world situations when the now-young poets grow up to be the future leaders of the world.

Parents and teachers also play a large role in the Peace Poetry Contest every year by encouraging their children to participate, sometimes awarding extra credit and providing other incentives. Thank you for helping make the 2015 Peace Poetry Contest a success.

UF English professor, Dr. Sidney Wade, was integral to this year’s contest as head judge of the poems. Dr. Wade also enlisted her team of graduate students to help judge the large number of submissions. Thank you to Olga Rukovets, Gizelle Fletcher, Biz Kechejian, Jackson Sabbagh, and Tara Tatum for your time and effort.

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Gainesville has hosted the Peace Poetry Contest six years in a row now, and Veterans for Peace is grateful for their support and continued cooperation.

With the sustained support and work of everyone involved, Veterans for Peace believes the Peace Poetry Contest will continue to grow and prosper, spreading the ideal of peace to more and more people each year.

Thank you for making this year’s program a success.
Earlier this year, Veterans for Peace announced the annual Peace Scholarship award, a college scholarship program for Alachua County students. The scholarship competition was open to eligible high school seniors, college students, and adults who need financial support to succeed in college and who have demonstrated a commitment and leadership in activities involving: peace & social justice and/or nonviolent social change.

Peace scholarship applicants were asked to provide a brief autobiographical statement and evidence of leadership and/or personal initiative in activities in an organization (including volunteer or paid work) relating to peace and social justice, conflict resolution and/or nonviolent social change. Applicants were also asked to provide two letters of recommendation.

In the end, VFP awarded peace scholarships to three students in the amount of $500 each. The scholarships were awarded to Manuela Osorio of Santa Fe College, Catalina Cardenas of St. Francis Catholic High School with plans to matriculate to Santa Fe College in the Fall of 2015, and Michelle Neilson of Santa Fe College.

To learn more about the VFP Peace Scholarship so you can apply next year, visit vfpgainesville.org. There you will find detailed instructions and the application for the scholarship. If you have specific questions, contact VFP member Paul Ortiz at ortizprof@gmail.com or 352-373-3435.
Winning Poets

Grades K–2

Dylan Fitzpatrick 9  
First Place
Allison Stubee 9  
Second Place
Connor Edwards 10  
Third Place
Callista Reed 10  
Honorable Mention
Deonte Dallas 10  
Honorable Mention

Grade 3

Andrea Loosli 11  
First Place
Da’sha Riley 12  
Second Place
Daisy Adams 13  
Third Place
Tyson Garner 13  
Honorable Mention
Natalie Rodriguez 14  
Honorable Mention

Grades 4–5

Maggie Klein 15  
First Place
Elise Amerman 16  
Second Place
Amanda Malnik 17  
Third Place
Sydney Ruth 17  
Honorable Mention
Elizabeth Shaffer 18
   Honorable Mention
Kyanda Mosley & Makaylyn Hargrove 18
   Honorable Mention
Jay’Marlon Wilson & Laci Wimes 19
   Honorable Mention

**Grades 6-8**

Khary Khalfani 20
   1st Place
Amelie Thompson 21
   2nd Place
Sim Haug 21
   3rd Place
Sidney Washburn 22
   Honorable Mention
Jack Hudson 22
   Honorable Mention
Kate Porter 23
   Honorable Mention

**Grades 9-12**

Selena Cho 23
   1st Place
Taylor Burch 25
   2nd Place
Hannah Walker 26
   3rd Place
Dakeirra Sherman 28
   Honorable Mention
Elif Kilic 29
   Honorable Mention
Megan MacDonald 30
   Honorable Mention
Courtney Reed 30
   Honorable Mention
Catherine Ruwell 31
   Honorable Mention
Peaceful Things

When there is peace,
There is no war.
Peace is happy.
The sky is quiet and slow.
Birds flying by flapping
Their wings up and down.
A lake or a river or a pond
Can be peaceful.
It is quiet. It has a reflection.

Dylan Fitzpatrick
Grade 1, J.J. Finley Elementary School

1st Place, Grades K–2

Serenity, Peace

Peace is a waterfall that sounds like rain. Peace is heaven above.
Peace is a quiet rest. Peace is avoiding war. Peace is everywhere.
Peace is inside of you all the time. Peace is a moment by yourself.
Peace is here.

Allison Stubee
Grade 1, Healthy Learning Academy

2nd Place, Grades K–2
Peace!!

Peace is fun.
Eat candy hearts.
All about quiet.
Care about people.
Eat chocolate.

Connor Edwards
Grade 2, Idylwild Elementary School

3rd Place, Grades K–2

Peace 123

1 one puppy that was alone.
two puppies came
2 two manatees swimming side by side.
3 three manatees are swimming slowly

Callista Reed
Kindergarten, Healthy Learning Academy

Honorable Mention, Grades K–2

Peace for Everybody

Peace is all about the love.
Everybody give peace signs.
A man named Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., he gave us freedom and peace.
Some people are black. Some people are white.
But the white people have to give us black people peace.

Deonte Dallas
Grade 2, Idylwild Elementary School

Honorable Mention, Grades K–2
Peace is the love and joy, when you make someone feel good. Peace is when you laugh at all your own mistakes.

Peace brings soft music to your heart. Peace is being honest with one another and trusting. Peace is the opposite of violence.

Peace is when you try to be nice to all your enemies or bullies that might hurt you. Peace is having patience with anyone who rushes.

Peace is the water flowing through a waterfall. Peace is tuning out everything that makes you mad or unhappy. Peace is being ok with anything you don’t like.

Peace is the sun shining on the beautiful valley. Peace is the heavens opening up to the world. Peace is the rain gently falling down on your face.

Peace. Pass it on.

Andrea Loosli
Grade 3, Healthy Learning Academy

1st Place, Grade 3
What Is Peace

Peace is when you laugh not cry

Peace is when you can sit but not being judged by your skin

Peace is love being shared but not being spread

Peace is when Veterans get together but not for a war

Peace is like love in a peaceful way

Da’sha Riley
Grade 3, Chiles Elementary School

2nd place, Grade 3
peace is not loud,
peace is a calm world,
peace is a part of young and old,
peace is not made from the heart,
peace is made of two hands meeting and turning into friends,
peace is love,
peace is clean air,
peace is unpolluted water,
peace is happiness.

_Daisy Adams_
_Grade 3, Healthy Learning Academy_

_3rd Place, Grade 3_

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We need peace because without peace we wouldn’t have anything.
And to get peace we need love.
And when we have peace we won’t have to worry about anything.

We need peace and peace is love.
And if you need peace just have some love we all need peace Is good we all need peace all you need is love!
but we all are different but we still need love.

*continued on p. 14*
I want to have peace. My grandad’s dad has peace. He was a veteran but he died but I know he had peace. But he didn’t die in the war.

Tyson Garner
Grade 3, Reichert House Youth Academy

Honorable Mention, Grade 3

Peace is ... ...

Peace is when sorrow turns to happiness. Peace is when all is quiet. Peace is glorious. Peace is when people don’t judge people by their looks. Peace is when people are happy no matter what is happening. Peace is beautiful on every face. Peace is unique. Peace is what peace is.

Natalie Rodriguez
Grade 3, Healthy Learning Academy

Honorable Mention, Grade 3
Peace is the bubbling ocean.
Peace causes your emotion.
Peace is the greenness of earth.
Peace is knowing how much you’re worth.
Peace is the winter snow.
Peace is the music you bow.
Peace is the swirling wind.
Peace is the one person who grinned.
Peace is when you try to be in intonation.
Peace is your imagination.
Peace is the wishing well.
Peace is a ringing bell.
Peace is the river flowing through.
Peace is the cleanness in you.

Note: Peace is everywhere. But it only works when you use it, so spread the word!!!

Maggie Klein
Grade 4, Healthy Learning Academy

1st Place, Grades 4–5
Nightly noise
As I lay peacefully
My eyes slowly closed
I heard noises
I wondered
They sound so peaceful
What can it be
I sprang out of bed
I grabbed the flashlight
I head out the door
I listened to the noises
They lead to a pond
Crickets and frogs
Sang a song
so soothing
I could fall asleep
I went back to bed
With the cricket and frogs song
stuck in my head
I fell asleep in peace.

*Elise Amerman*
*Grade 5, Oak Hall School*

*2nd Place, Grades 4–5*
Peace

Peace is happiness.
Peace; the waves crashing on to the beach.
The calm, quiet, soothing hum of the air conditioning.
The single leaf falling to the green grass.
The soft giggle of a baby.
The warm feel of the hot cocoa swimming down your throat.
The stepping into your bath feel.
The nights when you put the fireplace on, and get cozy.
The silent moments, full of happiness.
The wonderful things in life, peace.

Amanda Malnik
Grade 5, Oak Hall School

3rd Place, Grades 4–5

Waiting and waiting for my mom to come home
Waiting to give her a big warm hug
I had to let it go I had to
My mom was the bravest and the one to watch that
red, white, and blue flag go up
She had been in the war and hoped to come home soon
I missed her a lot and I cried and cried
Till I got a text saying she was home and I went
downstairs and hugged her so much
I was glad she gave people the freedom they needed

Sydney Ruth
Grade 5, Jordan Glen School

Honorable Mention, Grades 4–5
I one day wish to see peace
To see all the wars end
For no more people to need to worry
So our enemies are our friends
To see love not hate
For no more tears
So life can be simple
One day there can be peace but only if we try

*Elizabeth Shaffer*
*Grade 4, Hidden Oak Elementary School*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 4–5*

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The words that we say will be with us every day.
They come from our heart and will never tear us apart
The freedom that we have is a joyful noise
Every day, we get to make a choice
Freedom is what we have and what we will keep
No more brutality putting black men to sleep
Kids have a voice and want to take a stand
Time to stop the violence and come hand to hand

*Kyanda Mosley & Makaylyn Hargrove*
*Grade 5, Duval Elementary School*

*Honorable Mention, Grades 4–5*
Free at Last

We shall overcome with freedom and justice for all mankind
Standing for what’s right has led us to a better life
We might be blinded by racism and terrorism of the past
But we have no fear that can tear us hand from hand
We shall overcome with freedom and all people will rejoice as friends
We should all take a stand and gather together once again

Jay’Marlon Wilson & Laci Wimes
Grade 5, Duval Elementary School

Honorable Mention, Grades 4–5
Peace?
Easy to explain when you try to be generic
   Outside the norm
Peace takes a different form
   Like a eagle
Peace can fly
Peace could be the truth
   Could be a lie
It’s in disguise but not a villain
   Peace to me is just chillin’.
   Go deeper you say?
   Peace is just floating
   Deep within its true chaos
Peace is hidden even when you take the day off
   Peace is being human
   No racists assumin’
   That you act a certain way
   Because the color on your face.
   What a disgrace
   That we have come so far
   But we’re still so far away
I just hope I live to see the day
   Where the world is peaceful and great.
We need to gather all the misconceptions
   And put them away
   Because that’s the only way
   To true peace
   Only way to break the cast
   And break into a new age
   A new day
   It’s the only way I say
   Peace

Khary Khalfani
Grade 8, Oak View Middle School

1st Place, Grades 6–8
Peace is a flower
Peace is a flower
It begins as a seed
Covered in dirt, hiding in the dark
Slowly, with lots of love and quiet care
It begins to sprout, showing itself to the world
Leaving it’s shell, it pushes through the dirt and takes a deep breath of air
Vulnerable it stands up tall and continues to grow until it reaches the sky
Fragile as glass, it begins to crumple under the weight of the world
It’s petals brown and rot
And it’s wide green stem falls to the ground
Until next spring when it blooms again

Amelie Thompson
Grade 6, Westwood Middle School

2nd Place, Grades 6–8

Peace.
It does not mean to be in a place where there is no noise, trouble
Or hard work, it means to be in The midst of those things and still
Be calm in your heart.

Sim Haug
Grade 8, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

3rd Place, Grades 6–8
I was walking along a creek on one of my favorite trails of all time. I could hear birds chirping, and the sound of crickets. The sound was soothing and reminded me of peace; everything about the trail was beautiful. All I could think about was how the sun caught the creeks surface just right, I could see every fish swimming, and every frog hopping from rock to rock. There was a opening with a meadow filled with all different kinds of plants and flowers. I’d remember when I would take my best friend down to the meadow to play with our frisbee, and collect dandelions. These memories would remind me of the peace in the world.

_Sidney Washburn_
_Grade 7, Jordan Glen School_

_Honorable Mention, Grades 6–8_

Please, don’t fight
End all wars
Peace is might
So open the doors…

We can find another way
We don't have to kill
Keep anger away
Take a chill pill…

Peace helps mankind
And saves so much time
Look for it and find
It won’t cost you a dime…

Be kind and see
What it can do
Stop fighting- oh gee!
Peace has come to you.

_Jack Hudson_
_Grade 7, Howard Bishop Middle School_

_Honorable Mention, Grades 6–8_
Flowers are blooming,
While bees are zooming.
Bluejays and cardinals will sing
In this gorgeous season named spring.
Beautiful, lush green meadow
Sits under a weepy willow.

Daisies, Pansies, Sunflowers
They are all delightful
Some are like blue powder
Though you should never be frightful.

Kate Porter
Grade 6, Queen of Peace Catholic Academy

Honorable Mention, Grades 6–8

Law of Motion

An intelligent man once claimed that
for every action, there is an equal reaction.
Yet when turmoil temporarily saturates our capacity for Peace,
Our definition of Peace
morphs
into something distant, abstract, impossible.
Our minds obsess over an illusion
of an everlasting peace sent by supernatural means.
Our hearts wait for something
so much bigger than ourselves – stronger, wiser, deeper
than ourselves.

And maybe that’s the problem.

Maybe Peace doesn’t mean an eternal
Perfection,
But perhaps Peace is the perfect balance
of worldly Imperfections.

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Perhaps Peace is found
Not in absolute stillness and the illusion it creates,
But in the ying and yang and tug-of-war found in
every day.

Maybe Peace is not
A universal vaccine to cure all future ills,
Or a globally unspoken truce to end all future wars.
An endless surplus of rice in every future home,
Or a guarantee of happiness wherever each child may go.

But perhaps Peace is found when
A fresh first kiss soothes the loss of lovers past,
A single compliment outweighs self-hate of body mass.
A solider coming home ends his mother’s internal war,
A disastrous oil spill renews appreciation for the shore.
When an insomniac is first to witness waking of the sun,
When a sympathetic smile sings the song that can’t be sung.

Maybe Peace is not simply abundance of the good,
But an abundance
of actions and counter-actions that give meaning to life.

Maybe Peace is not a universal solution to universal strife,
But an intimate goal and a personal perspective
to seek and yearn,
pursue and learn...

that Peace is balance.
that Peace is in the miniscule and in the day-to-day.
that when we look for Peace in the forgotten details of our lives
Peace is yours.
and Peace is mine.

*Selena Cho*

*Grade 11, Eastside High School*

*1st Place, Grades 9–12*
“And Peace Cried”

From the depths of God's creation, Peace cried, down on its knees,
I am the waves that roll across the seven seas.
I am the light that shines down from the sun,
I am the wind that carries the songs of every bird and everyone.
I am the water that washes over the Earth,
I am the comforting fire within the hearth.
I am the comfort held within an embrace,
I am the face of love and amazing grace.
I am the light maintained by the moon and stars at night,
I am that for which every heart will fight.
I am the foundation of a world that God adores,
Yet I am in shackles behind the gates of war.
I have been here so long that my chains are rotten,
And Peace cried “I will not be forgotten”.

Taylor Burch
Grade 12, Hawthorne High School

2nd Place, Grades 9–12
THE FRAGILE PATHS

Soft elegance,
Extraordinary beauty,
Gentle flapping of innocent gulls,
Hushed whispers of the lovers.
A feast lies strikingly still on their checkered cloth.
They wait.

Mischievous waves swiftly sneak,
Tickling their tremulous toes.
Glimmering glasses gracefully collapse,
Surreptitiously clattering,
   Remorsefully splattering faded fabric.
They wait.

Small bits of sand shoot suddenly,
   Swiftly,
   Sharply,
Into the anxious eyes.
A harsh, chilling wind whirls,
Carelessly caressing,
   Inadvertently impressing straggled strands of hair.
They wait.

Winged shadows skulk closer and closer to the forgotten feast,
Crabs nestle deep into the fragile paths of settled sand,
Shedding salty tears in an unknown home,
   In eerie foam.
They wait.

Gleaming oranges and beaming pinks,
Tactfully teaming,
   Simultaneously scheming,
Splashing the sunken sky in their prominent part
   Of the well-prepared performance,

continued on p. 27

She dashes for the canvas,
Crudely crunching unlucky crustaceans,
He rushes for the brushes,
Sinking ever so slow
   Into the fragile paths below.
Sudden laughter.
They have come to paint
   Their first sunset.

Salty tears ferociously frolic to finally free fierce smiles
   That go on for miles.
Never had they dreamed they would catch even a glimpse,
   A glorious glimpse,
Of something so beautiful.

In a world where war was all around,
   And never disappearing,
This idea of peace they might have found
   And it might be reappearing.
Just wait.

_Hannah Walker_
_Grade 12, Newberry High School_

_3rd Place, Grades 9–12_
Finding Peace

Where is Peace?
Is peace found in the lunchroom at school?
Is peace found in the streets of New York?
Is peace found in the disturbing party next door?
Is peace found in the stadium at UF?

No, I don’t think so.
Then where can I find it?

I was told that peace was tranquility.
Peace is the absence of noise.

Is it Freedom?
Could it be the sound of the wind through the trees?
If so, I think I feel peace when I’m alone in my room,
with my window open and curtains blowing.

Dakeirra Sherman
Grade 12, Eastside High School

Honorable Mention, Grades 9–12
Our Peaceful Moment

a soft breeze blowing
walking barefoot in the sand
tranquility
the sea flowing
water showering the land
serenity
dancing in the rain
finding that quiet place
harmony
living free of pain
a soft kiss on my face
equanimitiy
star gazing after dark
seeing everything with new eyes
peace
feeling the allure of our spark
the soul never dies

Elif Kilic
Grade 9, P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School

Honorable Mention, Grades 9–12
The Morning’s Peace

The gentle breeze of the morning’s song, everything awakened after dawn
The light peaks through the willow’s leaves, as the sun rises above the trees
Dew drops rest on a sunflower stem, shining like a glass filled to the brim
Birds flying high in the wind, reflecting on the water across the bend
Iridescent colors of wildflowers glow, as the life begins to show

Megan MacDonald
Grade 9, Eastside High School

Honorable Mention, Grades 9–12

Serenity

The waves that roll off of the rocks,
The birds that are all chirping,
The feeling of the cold rain.

The pull of a fish on your fishing rod,
The smell of a home cooked meal,
Spending quality time with your friends.

Looking out over the water,
Reading a good book,
Sitting in the sun.

Everyone deserves a happy place,
It’s a human right.

Courtney Reed
Grade 10, Buchholz High School

Honorable Mention, Grades 9–12
for her

trickling down through the canopy of leaves the sun pours over her face. the girl with sun kissed skin sits against the old oak trunk reading her favorite book peacefully. her dark green eyes dart up from the pages of her fantasy she wishes was real, but only exists in the yellow tinted pages she holds. she squints to see a small yellow bird perching on the branch high above her head. the little yellow bird tilts his head chirping before flitting away into the air. sweetly the breeze caresses her face as she takes in the sight of the tranquil nature. for her this is all she needs. this is where she is at peace.

Catherine Ruwell
Grade 9, P.K. Yonge Developmental Research School

Honorable Mention, Grades 9–12
Veterans for Peace would like to specially thank Gainesville’s own Mourning Glories for performing at the 2015 Peace Poetry Reading!

Hear more at www.facebook.com/mourningglories and mourningglories.bandcamp.com/

THINKING ABOUT THE MILITARY? MAKE AN INFORMED CHOICE. ADVICE FROM VETERANS ON MILITARY SERVICE AND RECRUITING PRACTICES
A Resource Guide For Young People Considering Enlistment

http://www.afn.org/~vetpeace/

Gainesville Chapter 14
Gainesville Girls Rock Camp is a week-long summer day camp that uses music and performance as a platform to encourage self-esteem, creative self expression, and community in girls aged 8-17. GGRC is now accepting applications for its July and August sessions of 2015. No musical experience is necessary. Instruments and equipment are provided during camp. Full and partial scholarships are available. For more information contact rockcampforgirlsgainesville@gmail.com.
If you’d like to support the Peace Poetry Contest or the Gainesville chapter of Veterans for Peace, you can donate or send suggestions to:

Gainesville Veterans for Peace
P.O. Box 142562, Gainesville, FL 32614

All checks should be made payable to Veterans for Peace, Gainesville. Thank you for your support this year!