

# Young Poets <sup>in</sup> Action

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graduated from Jefferson High School. The event is free and open to the public and takes place at 7 p.m. at Artists Repertory Theatre, 1515 S.W. Morrison St.

Mayor Charlie Hales has honored the aspiring poets by declaring Sept. 28 as the first ever Portland Youth Poet Laureate Day.

“We talk about investing in our community’s young people,” said Hales about the event. “That means giving them opportunities to pick up a pen or a paintbrush, a keyboard or a mic – anything that helps them find their own voice and, by extension, craft their own place in our community. This program is an excellent example of doing just that. We look forward to watching the careers of these burgeoning artists and writers.”

Portland poet and educator S. Renee Mitchell, one of the head writers and poets leading the competition and poet ambassador program, said the idea is to infuse youth voices into traditionally adult spaces, so that young people’s perspectives, words and ideas are taken seriously.

“We also are intentional about collaborating with existing youth-focused programming and individual mentors to leverage what’s already available, so we’re building a community of support for our youth, rather than competing over scarce resources,” Mitchell said.

As poet ambassadors, each of the participating students will continue to engage the community for the upcoming year, sharing their words, voices, and ideas as part of a service-learning project to promote literacy, leadership, and youth activism.

The entire program has been put together by Spit/Write, a diverse group of artists and writers in Portland who are in partnership with Urban Word,

a larger literary organization based in New York, and have taken up its mission to bring unprecedented literary

movement that has momentum in Seattle, Atlanta, and Houston and is spreading to other cities in the future. The pro-

and celebrating youth writers since 1996 through Writers in the Schools, and we are thrilled the Portland Youth Poet Laureate program now provides the youth in our community another opportunity to write their truth and be heard,” said Mary Rechner, director of youth programs at Literary



PHOTO BY OLIVIA OLIVIA/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Chisao Hata mentors a group of young poet ambassadors, including Savanna Carter (right), a recent Jefferson graduate who will serve as a storyteller and emcee during a Youth Poet Laureate Night on Monday, Sept. 28.

experience to cities across the nation, including Portland.

It’s all part of a youth-empowerment

program also draws support from Literary Arts, a local literary organization.

“Literary Arts has been cultivating

Arts.

For more information, visit [spit-write.com](http://spit-write.com).

## FOOD

### Bacon and Butternut Pasta

Broth, thickened with flour and enriched with crème fraîche, forms the savory sauce in this dish. We like the addition of earthy, hearty kale which helps balance the sweetness from the squash.

#### Ingredients:

- 5 cups (1/2-inch) cubed peeled butternut squash
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- Cooking spray
- 12 ounces uncooked ziti (short tube-shaped pasta), campanile, or other short pasta
- 4 cups chopped kale
- 2 bacon slices
- 2 cups vertically sliced onion
- 1 teaspoon salt, divided
- 5 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 cups fat-free, lower-sodium chicken

broth, divided

- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper
- 1 cup crème fraîche
- 1/3 cup (about 1 1/2 ounces) shredded Gruyère cheese

#### Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Combine squash and oil in a large bowl; toss well. Arrange squash mixture in a single layer on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Bake at 400° for 30 minutes



or until squash is tender.

3. Cook pasta 7 minutes or until almost al dente, omitting salt and fat. Add kale to pan during last 2 minutes of cooking. Drain pasta mixture.
4. Cook bacon in a large nonstick skillet

over medium heat until crisp. Remove bacon from pan; crumble. Add onion to drippings in pan; cook 6 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add 1/2 teaspoon salt and garlic; cook 1 minute, stirring occasionally.

5. Bring 1 3/4 cups broth to a boil in a small saucepan. Combine remaining 1/4 cup broth and flour in a small bowl, stirring with a whisk. Add flour mixture, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, and pepper to broth. Cook 2 minutes or until slightly thickened. Remove from heat; stir in crème fraîche.
6. Combine squash, pasta mixture, bacon, onion mixture, and sauce in a large bowl; toss gently. Place pasta mixture in a 13 x 9-inch glass or ceramic baking dish coated with cooking spray; sprinkle evenly with cheese. Bake at 400° for 25 minutes or until bubbly and slightly browned.