Every Age Counts!

Poetry Contest

2022
How it all began......

Ageism, discrimination based solely on age, can be directed towards younger, as well as, older individuals. It devalues a person and negatively impacts each member of our community. It exists in the workplace, appears in advertising, is portrayed in greeting cards and is promoted in various ways throughout our culture.

The anti-ageism movement on the local, national and international levels strives to change the way people think, speak and act about aging in a more positive and respectful manner.

The Seniors' Council of Douglas County, and its partners, Changing the Narrative Colorado, the Douglas County Libraries and the Douglas County School District, worked together to raise awareness of ageism by sponsoring an amateur poetry contest focusing on anti-ageism.

We are grateful to all those who submitted entries to this first-of-its-kind endeavor and applaud your stand against ageism. Your willingness to share your creativity is much appreciated.

The poems contained in this booklet are the personal expressions of our winning poets. Congratulations to each of them for capturing their unique insights and life experiences relative to this important topic. We hope you enjoy their poems and are inspired to reflect upon your own thoughts about aging.

~ Gretchen Lopez
Chair, Senior's Council of Douglas County
Winning Entries
Helen Ostrowski

10 and under

My GG

- Favorite Subjects: English Language Arts.
- Favorite Book: The Harry Potter Series, especially Prisoner of Azkaban.
- Inspiration: What inspired me is that even though my GG is older, she is still very active. She really is the person who taught me to play cards, and she inspired me to make the poem.
- Other Writing: I write short stories, but this was one of the first poems that I'd written. I’m actually working on a chapter book right now.
My GG
Helen Ostrowski

My GG lived wars
Capable of anything
She taught me cards, too
Seventeen Today,
Eighteen Tomorrow

- **Favorite Poet:**
  Richard Brautigan

- **Writing Process:** I hadn't written a poem in a very long time before submitting this one. Since submitting it, though, I've been writing much more, and I've enrolled in a creative writing class. I don't spend a lot of time worrying about meter and structure - I like the messier, creative aspect of poetry writing.

- **Inspiration:** My great grandfather had just passed away. He was a really amazing, interesting, fun person, and I'm not sure that people knew that. I felt that I wanted to acknowledge that and to put back some positive energy into that experience of loss.
Seventeen Today, Eighteen Tomorrow
Rebecca Hensley

Seventeen is a Safety Net
Eighteen is a Rat Race

Eighteen is a Bartending License
Eighteen is a Wedding
Eighteen is a Tattoo

Eighteen is Dying for My County
Eighteen is Tomorrow

Seventeen and Eighteen are a Breath
Seventeen and Eighteen are a Blink of the Eye
Seventeen and Eighteen are Imaginary

eighteen today, eighteen tomorrow, seventeen inside
i'm still scared but
seventeen is not a safety net now
Nic Hussey
(photo not available)

14-17

The Wisdom of Age
I grow more right as days progress, my years have
made me wise.
These eyes have been a constant witness, and these hands
have built to the skies.
But ain't I old?

My back has cracked and snapped from strain,
my skin is riddled with lines.
But I've had years and years to train, and sharpen up my
mind.
But ain't I frail?

My hair is gray my eyes are aged, my breath is going
stale.
But I've survived through towering waves,
and storms and winds and hail. But ain't I helpless?

I've heard some may say I'm obsolete, some say my race is run.
But I'm here to guide the younger feet,
and pass my wisdom on. I ain't old till
I'm dead.
Montana Moore
18-22

What Age?

- Favorite Poet: Edgar Allen Poe
- Writing Process: I've been writing for six or seven years. I have a few poems I wrote when I was younger. I don't write as often as I should, and this was a way to get back into it. I kind of wrote it all at once – I knew how I wanted it to start and how I wanted it to end. So then it was just a matter of finding the right combination for the middle sections.
- Inspiration: My experiences growing up, which I used for the younger parts of the poem. Also my mom’s experiences with ageism, which she encountered while looking for a job. I used that for the older parts of the poem. I also wanted to make a poem that had an emotional impact.
What Age
Montana Moore

Age 10 Not good at anything as everyone tells you that you are too young Too young to succeed, too young to improve, TOO YOUNG

Age 17 the judgement
Heavy stares at grocery stores, glares from the elderly, no one believing in you-
innocence, depression

Age 18 Legally an adult
Innocence fades, responsibility takes hold, judged forever by actions committed

Age 30 Too old
Must have job before this age. Too old to have a family. Too old for government jobs. Too early for retirement.

Age 50 Too old they say
Too old to have a job. Too early to retire. Judgement comes for wanting a new job. Depressing thoughts come and it's too late to say sorry.

Age 100 After death
Someone cared.
Gina Popolizio

Why Isn't Age Just A Number

**Favorite Poet:**
I love Shakespeare, mostly his plays but also his sonnets, which I partly used for the inspiration for my poem. I love *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

**Inspiration:** Well, I have family that are older, that live active lifestyles and pursue their passions. So I have first hand experience of people who didn’t stop as they aged. I guess I was inspired to keep that tradition going - that people don’t have to stop.

**On the role of poetry:** I love to read, and I think reading is a universal experience that touches everyone. I wanted to share my thoughts, and inspire the reader not to give up on their thoughts and dreams. I think we can all relate to age discrimination – we’ve all seen it or experienced it, so I think it’s important to change the narrative. Reading is a good universal way to get the message across.
Why Isn't Age Just A Number?
Gina Popolizio

Society never lets us forget
That our place is determined by our age.
Painful damage is done with this mindset,
And we stay in our invisible cage.
The golden years are not as they would seem;
It's often thought we're past our prime by far.
What makes us too old to follow our dreams,
Or too elderly to reach for the stars?
When we're old, we don't even get a chance
To share the experiences we've gained.
Why should we be judged by just a quick glance
And overlooked by prejudice ingrained?
If we address our own preconceptions,
Together we can change flawed perception
Favorite Poets:

Inspiration: There are a lot of things I’ve come to later in life, for various reasons. Learning to snowboard was one of those things. When I was learning, I was on a mountain, having fallen for the 40th and 50th time, feeling exhausted - and then I saw someone older than me taking skiing lessons, and they went whizzing by me! I was really inspired to keep going and persevering.

On the role of poetry: I think that the arts in general open us up to different experiences and cultures and allow you to see the world through the eyes of others and encounter things you haven't experienced before. For older adults, there’s no limit on what you can do – art is a great voice for everyone.
Someone who is older sails past on skis.
A vision of precision they slice
in
and
out
the trees.
Carol Reed

To the Friends I Hope to Meet

- Favorite Poet: Robert Frost
- Inspiration: I liked the theme of the contest – I read about it in the newspaper. It really is an essential subject and being in the age bracket myself, I think asking young people to put aside prejudices and engage in conversation with those of us in our later years is really very important.
- Writing Process: This is my first serious effort at poetry. I've been writing since high school - I did a lot of writing as an English major in college, and as a paralegal in my working life. But I had never sat down and tried a serious effort at poetry. The general outline came to me fairly quickly. So I wrote that down, and then I would just think about it while I was doing other things, and rephrasing would come to me, and I would make a note on that part of the poem. I probably worked on it for 3 weeks from the time of the initial writing.
"You can't judge a book by its cover," the saying goes.
Surely, that's where our prejudice shows.
And inside the "book" that's the story of me?
Perhaps not as worn as the "cover" you see!

Perhaps not too old to get more than a glance,
To give conversation and friendship a chance.
I hope we can meet, share from each other's pages.
Let's try not to focus on difference in ages.

"I was." "I did.""I wish I had."
Too much past tense can be tiresome, or sad.
There's more on my pages. That's really not all.
There's more to discuss than past days I recall.

I want to converse with you, folks of all ages.
To add fresh ideas to the rest of my pages.
To grow, to discover, to write them well.
To fill some more chapters, new stories to tell!

Your acceptance of me, now please understand,
Helps me like my age now, and see ways to expand.
I hope you'll be willing to talk and engage.
My book will be finer with friends on each page.
Ron Saatjian

56+
The Wrinkle of My Skin

□ Favorite Poet:
Billy Collins. I also read all of Steinbeck's work when I was younger

□ Writing Process: I've never shared poetry before, but every now and then I get an idea and I write it down and save it. I have a couple of sheets of small poems that I keep to myself. It's usually when I'm in bed, almost asleep or half asleep when these ideas come. Then I make a good effort to remember – sometimes I do, so then I'll write it down in the morning.

□ Inspiration: Well, my partner just turned 83. She still coaches skating. And that I believe was an inspiration. She has more wrinkles than I do, and she's had experiences on the ice where folks don't respect her because of her age, and then, when the lesson's over, they say it's the best lesson they've ever had. She was my inspiration.
The Wrinkle of My Skin
Ron Saatjian

Judge me not by the wrinkle of my skin,
But by the merit of my experience;
Come to me when you don’t know,
For it has happened before;
Ask me how we handled it,
And how we would do it better this time;
Ask me what is important because I have learned,
That service to others is what really matters;
How can I help? You may be surprised;
Value my age, my wrinkles are prized!
Our Winners
Our Sponsors

* Booklet Design: Conor McCarthy, Grants Manager, Aging Resources of Douglas County