

Connolly, Jackson named youth poetry ambassador, deputy: Celebratory reading Jan 27

Natasha Connolly has been selected as youth poetry ambassador and **Sadie Jackson** has been selected as deputy youth poetry ambassador for 2023 by RI Poet Laureate **Tina Cane**, the RI Center for the Book announced. Both are students at Classical High School in Providence.

Karuna Lohmann of Quest Montessori High School in Narragansett, **Marvellous Awe** of Classical High School, and **Favour Akinnagbe** of Blackstone Academy in Pawtucket received honorable mentions.



Natasha Connolly of Classical High School, 2023 youth poetry ambassador.
(Photo: RI Center for the Book)



Sadie Jackson of Classical High School, 2023 deputy youth poetry ambassador.
(Photo: RI Center for the Book)

“This initiative is designed to bring more poetry directly to our state’s youth and to inspire young people through example. Just as the state poet laureate position symbolically affirms Rhode Island’s support of poetry, the youth poetry ambassador is meant to validate and support the creative potential of our young people,” said center director **Kate Lentz** in a statement.

The deputy collaborates with the ambassador and performs any duties in her stead should she be unavailable.

Connolly said her goal is “to encourage other Rhode Island youth to develop a love of poetry by sharing the work of a diverse array of poets with the community through social media and other tools, as well as encouraging youth to write their own poems.” She said she is a lifelong reader inspired by the work of poets such as Richard Siken, Sylvia Plath, and Ocean Vuong, and that she has read the *Heroes of Olympus* fantasy novel series by Rick Riordan approximately 50 times.

Jackson said, “I hope to share my experience of the universe and discover life in the words of others. I believe that there is nothing more wonderful than that which language can offer: simple comfort and human connection.”

A launch and reading celebration will take place at the State House Library on Jan 27 at 5:30pm to which the public is invited. Connolly and Jackson will participate in poetry readings with other youths at additional library events to be announced.

Connolly will receive a \$1,000 cash prize and Jackson will receive a \$500 cash prize. Both will have the opportunity for their poetry to be featured on RIPTA buses as part of the “Poetry in Motion” series.

The 2023 appointments will be the fifth annual (except for a two-year term during the pandemic), following previous ambassador Moira Flath and deputy ambassador Kiani Sincere-Pope (2018), ambassador Catherine Sawoski and deputy ambassador Tyler Cordeiro (2019), ambassador Halima Ibrahim and deputy ambassador Eugenie Rose Belony (2020/2021), and ambassador Lourdes Nicolella and deputy ambassador Adi Gamache (2022).