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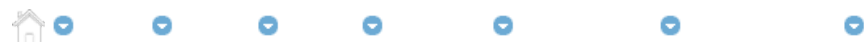
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## Louder Than a Bomb event: Tulsa-area teens share poetry at Cain's Ballroom

■ They perform their work for Tulsa's Louder Than a Bomb event.

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### Louder Than a Bomb event: Tulsa-area teens share poetry at Cain's Ballroom



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Team Union student Meghan Lee performs Saturday during the Louder Than a Bomb poetry contest at Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa. JAMES GIBBARD / Tulsa World

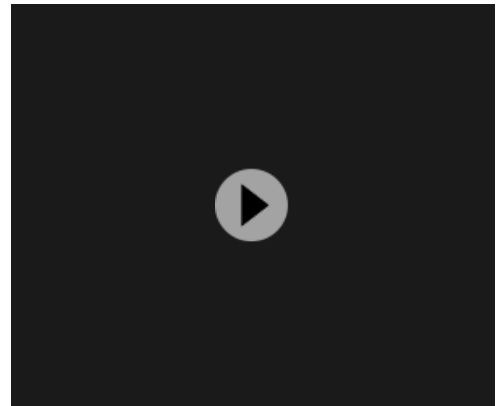
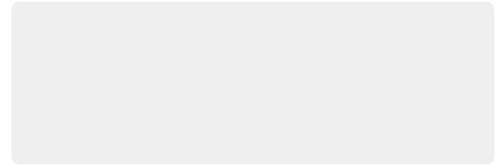
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Posted: Sunday, February 9, 2014 12:00 am | Updated: 8:09 am, Sun Feb 9, 2014.

By DAVID HARPER World Staff Writer | 0 comments

Local teens opened up their hearts on Saturday at Cain's Ballroom and heard applause that sometimes seemed louder than a bomb.

The Louder Than a Bomb poetry finals filled the venerable venue at 423 N. Main St. with



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Bixby student Brook Becker performs during the Louder Than a Bomb poetry contest at Cain's Ballroom on Saturday. Photos by JAMES GIBBARD / Tulsa World



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a supportive crowd that came to hear the participants offer up three-minute slices of their souls in the spirit of competition.

"It's a way to share our experiences with each other," said Savanna DeWeese, an 18-year-old senior from Jenks High School, who was part of "The Outsiders" team, a collection of competitors from various local schools who squared off against teams from Bixby, Holland Hall, Booker T. Washington and Newcastle.

Newcastlesophomore Jessica Newby said Saturday that she saw YouTube footage of a prior version of the event several months ago. That started a series of events which led to Newcastle having a squad at Saturday's competition even though the rest of the teams were from the Tulsa metropolitan area.

Newby, 16, said she has been competing in other poetry slam events for about 2 1/2 years.

For the uninitiated, these competitions originated in Chicago and date back about 30 years. Participants read or recite original work, and their performances are rated on a numeric scale by judges, similar to a figure skating or gymnastics competition.

It's almost ironic that these readings are judged because they take place in a nonjudgmental atmosphere.

The competitors who took the stage on Saturday at the Cain's Ballroom spoke about topics as personal as lamenting a long-lost brother who died in childhood and as universal as the importance of being yourself.

Kerri Walker, a 19-year-old student at Phoenix Rising, said that writing poetry "came easy once I started being truthful with myself."

Walker said he's been writing rap songs for quite some time but that writing poems for competitions such as Louder Than a Bomb is a bit different.

CheyenneCarlton, a 17-year-old Booker T. Washington High School senior, said she's been writing poetry ever since she was a sixth-grader.



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Carlton said that performing before a boisterous crowd at a poetry slam is a positive experience because "when they start clapping, it gets you even more into it."

She said this was the second year she has participated in the Tulsa version of Louder Than a Bomb, which is a program of the Arts & Humanities Council of Tulsa and sponsored by the Tulsa City-County Library System and Holland Hall.

A series of competitions began in mid-January to narrow the field to Saturday's finalists.

DeWeese said she found out about Louder Than a Bomb when she saw a postcard in a library. She said the poem she read to the audience early in Saturday's competition was written over a two- to three-hour time frame a couple of months ago.

A few moments after she left the stage on Saturday, DeWeese said, her knees were still shaking. She said the bright stage lights made her feel a little like a "deer in the headlights."

However, she also said she had a lot of fun and that she has made a lot of new friends through her participation.

"There are a lot of really cool people here," she said.

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