



# *Living River of Words*

## Youth Poetry and Art Contest



### ***Sluggish Bugs***

*Bianey Franco, age 15*

*Tucson High Magnet School • Ms. Jenness*

**Grand Prize–Art–Category 4**

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*This book is dedicated to 2017 Living River of Words*

*Teachers of the Year:*

*Elizabeth Gary – Roadrunner Elementary*

*and*

*Kevan Kiser-Chuc – Morgan Maxwell K-8 School*

*And all the teachers and parents/guardians that promote and support  
the integration of science and the arts while creating opportunities  
for children to connect with nature.*

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## **Living River of Words 2017 – 2018 Traveling Exhibit Schedule**

**April 8 – May 30, 2017**

Wheeler Taft Abbett Sr. Branch Library • 7800 N. Schisler Dr.

**June 2 – July 5, 2017**

Martha Cooper Branch Library • 1377 N. Catalina Ave.

**July 8 – August 16, 2017**

Agua Caliente Park – Ranch House Art Gallery • 12325 E. Roger Rd.

**August 18 – September 29, 2017**

Murphy-Wilmot Branch Library • 530 N. Wilmot Rd.

**October 1 – October 30, 2017**

Dusenberry-River Branch Library • 5605 E. River Rd., # 105

**November 2 – November 30, 2017**

Joel Valdez Main Library • 101 N. Stone Ave.

**December 2, 2017 – January 8, 2018**

Mission Branch Library • 3770 S. Mission Rd.

**January 10 – February 28, 2018**

Valencia Branch Library • 202 W. Valencia Rd.

# *Living River of Words: Youth Arts and Science*

*Living River of Words (LROW)* sets the stage for learning, inspires science inquiry, and excites creativity.

The cycle begins with teachers who invite *LROW* arts and science instructors to their classrooms.

Students are introduced to the concept of watersheds and study wetland habitats through a multi-disciplinary series of science investigations and the practice of poetry and visual arts.

After exploring these topics, children ages

5–19 have the opportunity to share their impressions with entries of poetry and/or visual art to *Living River of Words: Youth Poetry and Art Contest*. In these pages you see the award winning youth poetry and art works that are the result of the field trips, school residencies, and independent study.



*Photo: Elany Favela, Maxwell K-8*

The Santa Cruz River has long been the lifeblood of the region, attracting the first humans over 12,000 years ago. In fact, the Santa Cruz River Valley has the longest continuous record of agriculture in the United States. Early inhabitants settled along the valley because the river supplied water year-round. Today, due to a variety of factors including groundwater pumping, many stretches flow only when it rains. Thanks to the release of highly treated wastewater into the riverbed the Santa Cruz River in northwest Tucson and Marana, the river is alive



*Photo: Cody Smith, Flowing Wells High School*

with perennial flows, lush trees lining the riverbanks, and diverse wildlife. Effluent in this reach of the Santa Cruz River is not new; two wastewater treatment plants have been operating on this section of the river since the 1970s. What has changed is the quality of the effluent being released. In December 2013, Pima County completed upgrades to Agua Nueva and Tres Rios wastewater treatment plants. The upgrades significantly improved the

quality of water released into the river. The river now attracts walkers, bikers, and is a popular birding destination from the Sweetwater Wetlands to the Marana Flats.

The Living River Project, conducted by Pima County and the Sonoran Institute, measures conditions of this valuable ecosystem and track the impacts of our community investment.

*Living River of Words* plays a role in the broader Living River Project by introducing students, teachers and parents to the lower Santa Cruz River and to wetland habitats of Agua Caliente Park and Sweetwater Wetlands. While at the field study site, students conduct water quality tests, record wildlife sightings, and survey riparian vegetation, using methods that reflect the Living River Project indicator assessments. A visiting poet or artist spends time with the students by the river to guide their journaling, photographing, and drawing in preparation for poetry writing and artwork back in the classroom.



Photo: Omar Sotelo, Maxwell K-8

Several dedicated teachers in Pima County, Arizona brought their classes on outdoor excursions to the Santa Cruz River or spent a day by the pond at Agua Caliente Park to learn about watersheds and wetlands habitats.

We hope you will enjoy the richness and wonder of these special places through the eyes of the *Living River of Words 2017* award winning youth poets and artists.

## Thank You!

*Living River of Words* succeeds with in-kind services and financial support from Pima County Regional Flood Control District, Pima County Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department, Pima County Office of Sustainability and Conservation, Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation, Pima County Public Library, Friends of Agua Caliente Park, Arizona Project Wet, Udall Foundation: Parks in Focus, and Sonoran Institute.



Photo: Elany Favela, Maxwell K-8

Many thanks to the community partners, school administrators, teachers, science, poetry, photography, and art instructors, judges, volunteers, and graphic designers that worked diligently to bring Living River of Words through the annual cycle of activities: Yajaira Gray, Wendy Burroughs, Jeffrey Babson, Sandy Reith, Eryn Kirkpatrick, Neil Diamente, Doris Evans, Carolyn King, Gavin Troy, Elizabeth Quinn, Edie Price, Helen Wilson, Noemi Zazueta, Carol Brown, Brenda Rentfro, Susan Knoll, Brian Powell, Steve Dell, Parks in Focus – Bret Muter, Arizona Project Wet – Kerry Schwartz, Elizabeth Wilkening, Maximiliano Campos, Faith Schwenning, Berenice Castro, U of A Poetry Center – Tony Luebbermann, Brianna Sheaffer, Jeanne Osgood, and Katie Sharar.

Sunshine shines  
on the stream's stones

A rattlesnake's smooth  
soft secret leaves  
whisper sounds all around.

Mother Earth dreams half open stars.

Between footsteps,  
sparkle soft blue hills.

Mountains though grasslands.

Pathway of birds' wings  
over the water.

*Anelise Moreno, age 8*  
*Agua Caliente Elementary • Ms. Johnson*  
***Grand Prize–Poetry–Category 2***

### ***A Walk Down the River***

As I walked down the river,  
I saw tree swaying in the wind  
and the water rushing by.

Then as I went farther down the river,  
I heard birds singing, water flowing,  
and the wind whispering in my ear.

As I reached the end of the river,  
I felt the sand between my toes, water on my skin,  
and the wind in my face!

*Dennis Leo, age 12*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

## ***The River***

The river is a panther  
Racing through and catching its prey

The river is a dragonfly  
Leaping up and taking off

The river is a treasure box  
Holding shiny, sparkly treasures

The river is a stomach  
Hungry and gurgling  
Rumbling, bubbling and cracking

The river is a mirror  
Reflecting on everything around it

The river is a life  
For everyone it saves

The river is a hero  
Saving everything it feeds

*Amaya Preciado, age 9*  
*Ochoa Elementary School • Ms. Selden*

## ***River Bank***

The birds chirping up in a tree  
The green leaves rustling with the wind  
The feel of the cool mud below my shoes  
The smell of the moisture along the river  
Tells me I am home.

*Quim Al-Fayed Musa, age 12*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

## ***The Song of the River***

The song of the river played endlessly through the night,

As the small insects were chirping away,

and the river was flowing,

the owls hooting,

the fish swimming through the water.

These are the things that make up the song of the river,

one of the most beautiful sounds in the world.

*Alexander S. Frazier, age 11*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*  
***Grand Prize–Poetry–Category 3***

## ***Who Are You?***

The river is a pencil

Writing its story

Until it is done

Working day and night

Write and write

Every day write and write

No one knows

How its story will end

Finally it settles

And as it settles

It enjoys family and friends

*Sariyah Parham, age 8*  
*Ochoa Elementary • Ms. Selden*

## ***I Don't Know Where I'll Go***

I don't know where I'll go,  
I don't know when I'll stop, all I can do is hope.  
Hope that I can help.

I know that I am... Sort of.

I also know that the bacteria flowing with  
me is killing slowly  
as others drink from my water.

Oh, the sins I have upon me!

All I feel is the damp sand  
that was once dry that summer.

Gliding through the desert, underestimated

I don't know where I'm going,  
I don't know when I'll stop, but when does anyone?

I don't know if I'll freeze,  
I don't know if I'll dry, but now I am flowing.  
I hope I'll never stop.

I hope I will hear the bobcat's song.

The willows whistling, and the children laughing,  
I hope I'll never stop.

*Ella Morrison, age 11*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

## ***The River is a Loose Tooth***

The river is a loose tooth  
It wiggles like a loose branch

It wiggles in the wind  
Back and forth

Smooth like a new tooth  
Or a new leaf on a branch

Sparkly like a clean tooth  
Like the sun on the water

*Dominic Ornelas, age 8*  
*Summit View Elementary • Ms. Carr*

## ***The River***

The river is like a snake  
Smooth and cold

The river is like a shining star  
Twinkling in the sky

The river is like a camera  
Where the turtle comes  
To look at its reflection

The river is like a warm bath  
That cleans the animals

In the river there are bugs,  
Worms, spiders and leeches

The river is like a wolf running...

*Damaris Gallego, age 9*  
*Ochoa Elementary • Ms. Selden*



***Desert River***

*Rylee Dankert, age 7*

*Roadrunner Elementary • Ms. Carroll*

***Grand Prize–Art–Category 1***



### **Snake Mountain**

*Ximena Ojeda, age 8*  
*Borton Magnet School • Ms. Cavazos*



### **Cosmic Lotus**

*Josephine Tisdell, age 12*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*



*Elara Wallenmeyer, age 14*  
*Tucson High Magnet School • Ms. Jenness*



***My House***  
*Estevan Moreno, age 5*  
*Sewell Elementary • Ms. Dolan*



## Cactus

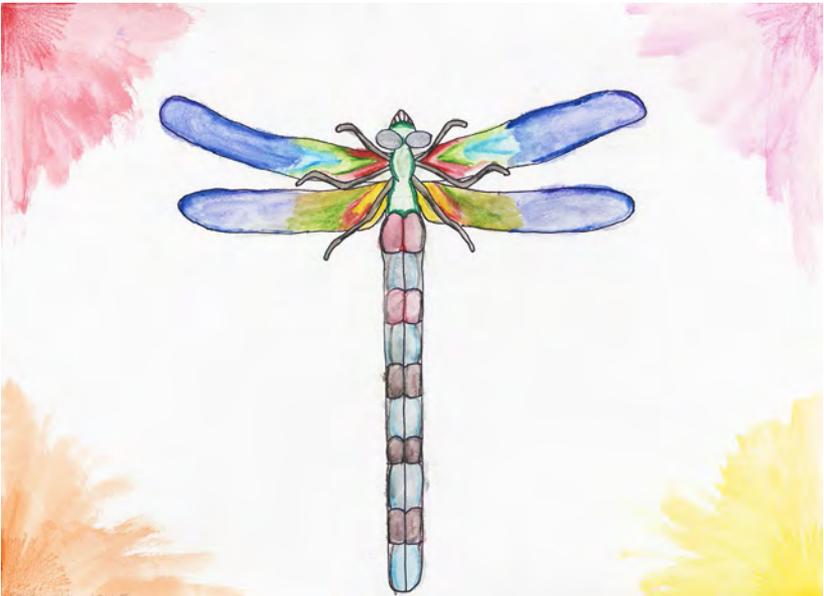
Amira Dolan, age 8

Borton Magnet School • Ms. Cavazos



***Mottled Coyote in Water***

*Marta Wrzeszcz, age 11*  
*Basis Tucson North • Ms. Vonier*  
***Grand Prize–Art–Category 3***



*Chris Santos, age 15*  
*Tucson High Magnet School • Ms. Jenness*



***Mystical Colorful Bug***

*Ghazaul Dickson, age 8*

*Borton Magnet School • Ms. Bennett*



**Boy Observing**  
Justin Bemis, age 11  
DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca



***Duck Oiled a Pink Turtle Today***

*Annabelle Vasquez, age 6  
Sewell Elementary • Ms. Payton*



*Emmani Middleton, age 7  
Wheeler Elementary • Ms. Kiser-Chuc*



**Soaring Over the River**  
Jaime Moreno, age 11  
DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca



**The Shrimp**  
Kaycee Molina, age 12  
Anza Trail Elementary • Ms. Tanner



*Mathilda Hand, age 9  
Borton Magnet School • Ms. Bennett  
Grand Prize–Art–Category 2*



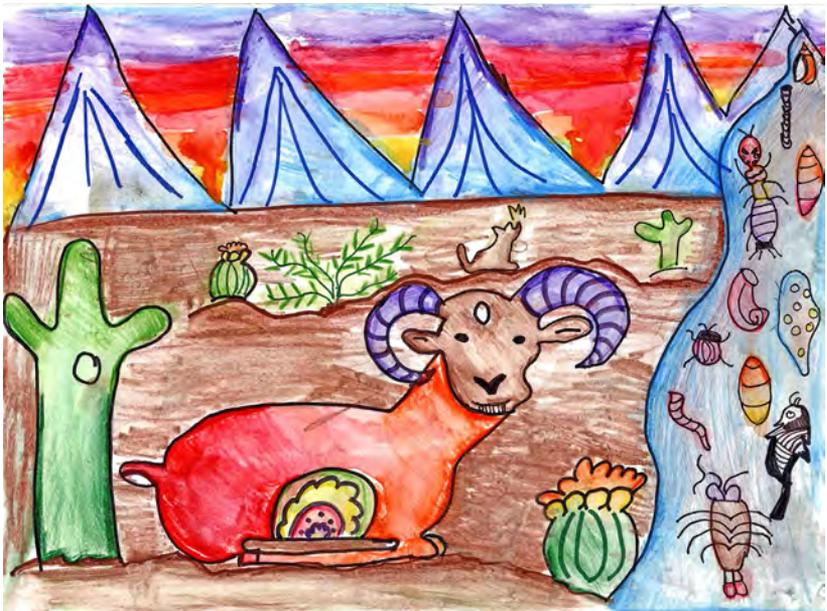
**Water Makes it Green**  
Lorelei Pierce, age 6  
Roadrunner Elementary • Ms. Gary



### **Water Life**

*Mia Rubio, age 11*

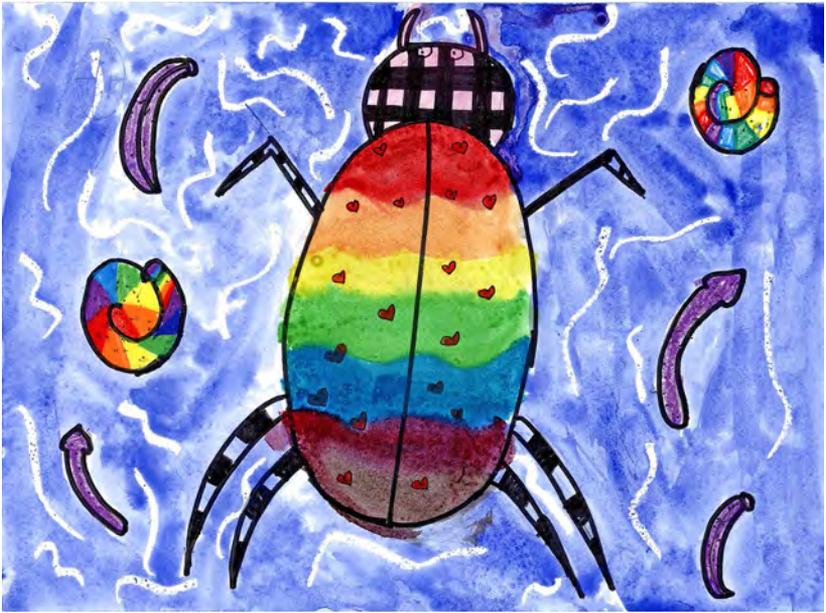
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*



### **Sunrise in the Desert**

*Emma Gerber, age 11*

*Anza Trail Elementary • Ms. Tanner*



*Cecilia Trinh, age 9  
Presidio School • Ms. Mahony*



**Arizona Colors**  
*Evelyn Vazquez, age 12  
DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*



***Mayfly Nymph in Flower Pond***

*Hannah Arocha, age 15*

*Palo Verde Magnet School • Ms. Knochel*



*Willa Barron-Gafford, age 9  
Borton Magnet School • Ms. Bennett*



### **Picacho Peak**

Tyler Drummond, age 8  
Agua Caliente Elementary • Ms. Johnson



### **Flowing Together**

Gillian Hammett, age 12  
DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca



***It Could Be Beautiful***  
*McKenna Whisenant, age 11*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

## Facts

- Many rivers long ago are now washes
- Only during monsoon season and when snow melts the washes flow
- wells can be deep as 4000 ft
- Tucson means "O'odham Cuk 5/01," meaning "at the base of the black hill," which is "A" Mountain

Pima

County



## Facts

- Around rivers, there are usually large forests of mesquite trees
- People bring down the water table by pumping water out of the ground
- Native Americans were dependable on rivers of Arizona



## Present vs. Past

Mindy Dinh, age 10

Basis Tucson North • Mr. McDonald



**Desert**

Maya De La Torre, age 12  
DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca



*Brandon Gonzalez, age 16*  
*Flowing Wells High School • Ms. Pechuzal*  
**Grand Prize–Photography–Category 4**



*Amerie Gaytan, age 14*  
*Maxwell K-8 • Ms. Kiser-Chuc*



*Gabe Marcott, age 16*  
*Flowing Wells High School • Ms. Pechuzal*



*Karena Garcia, age 12*  
*Flowing Wells High School • Ms. Pechuzal*



*Paulina Cancio, age 14  
Maxwell K-8 • Ms. Kiser-Chuc*



***The Calm After the Storm***  
*Katherine Daily, age 17  
Flowing Wells High School • Ms. Pechuzal*

## ***Scorpion Shadows***

Scorpion shadows have leaves on them  
with the far, far stars  
that start with dust.

Branches are on trees  
and days go by  
and we discover mountains  
with voices.

Deep twilight streams  
spill away into the pond.

Blue tears are here  
on a trail of ironwood trees.

*Jonas Casad, age 7*  
*Agua Caliente Elementary • Ms. Johnson*

## ***Why must we***

I wonder why we do

what we do? We destroy, conquer,

but never defend what helps

us live. The one thing that

never forgets, yet we abuse it

and never repay our gratitude.

But there is one group of people

who has to care

Who do payback thanks

They thank the water

Will it be you? .....

*Monique Cota, age 11*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

## ***The River***

As the river deeply flows  
The deer hesitantly approaches the river.  
The deer then says, "Hello river may I drink from you?"  
The snake then attempts to jump into the river  
But the river flows, quickly flows  
It begins running as the scorpion attempts to jump  
Onto the river bank and drink  
As it notices it, it shakes it off and  
Does not approach the wolf that yells  
"I will drink you!"  
It creeps slowly from the wolf as  
He drinks a part of the river,  
Then faster and flows safely away from the wolf.  
The river boasts, "Indeed no one may drink from me!  
I am life eternally and no one deserves my secret."  
And the river, as old as time, continues to flow away.

*Anthony Bates, age 12  
DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

## ***Dream of the Glistening Stream***

The silent, great horned owl,  
windblown across the trees.  
  
Mountain lions running  
through the sunset.  
  
The relaxing sound  
of the clear river.  
  
The coyotes howling  
in the valley.  
  
The starlight rains  
on the trees.  
  
The dream of the glistening stream.

*Alex Provenzano, age 8  
Agua Caliente Elementary • Ms. Robinson*

## ***The River***

The water bubbles while the cricket splashes with joy.

The plant flows with sadness

While the rock rushes with anger.

Then comes a snake skin

Crumbling with fear.

The cricket hops while the

Birds chirp.

The rocks come splashing down

While the snake starts to

Crumble up when he is shedding.

The plants flow while the

Fish bubbles.

Do you think nature is

Nice and quiet?

*Tristen Potter, age 11*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

### ***As I Walked By the River***

As I got closer and closer to the river,

I started to notice a sparkle.

A flicker of light so bright.

My eyes falling in love with the water.

I hear the birds chirping a song  
when I walk towards the big green trees.

The water running sounds like  
tiptoeing softly on the tip of my ears.

A golden fish splashing out of the waves.

I smell the clean, blue water and trees.

It's the scent of beautiful, colorful nature.

I fell the bright sun eating down on my golden brown skin.

And I touch the rough texture of the hard, yet smooth rocks.

*Elle Somogyi, age 12*  
*DeGrazia Elementary • Ms. Mirlocca*

### ***In the River the Sunset Happens***

Listen to the hawk in the saguaro.

Underground is the water.

The sound of thunder awakes the wildlife.

The branches of bones are alone,  
waiting for it to widen.

In the river the sunset happens.

*Rene Cruz, age 8*  
*Agua Caliente Elementary • Ms. Mansour*



Photo: Michael Ahumada, Flowing Wells High School

For more information about *Living River of Words: Youth Arts and Science* contact:  
Pima County Natural Resources,  
Parks and Recreation  
Environmental Education  
Phone: (520) 615-7855  
Email: [eeducation@pima.gov](mailto:eeducation@pima.gov)  
Website: [www.pima.gov/nrpr](http://www.pima.gov/nrpr)



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parks in focus  
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Regional Wastewater Reclamation Department  
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