

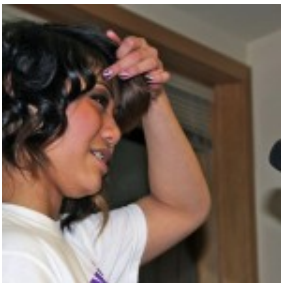
8th-grader wins LTCC poetry slam

By Kathryn Reed

“That’s so gay” isn’t a phrase that sits well with Joemae Santos.

The eighth-grader at South Tahoe Middle School wrote a poem about how hurtful those three words are. How derogatory they are. How teachers say just let it go. How she isn’t letting them go.

Her words, her passion, her delivery and her conviction earned her bragging rights as the winner of the inaugural Lake Tahoe Community College Poetry Slam, which is part of the college’s Writers’ Series.



Joemae Santos
wows the
poetry slam
crowd April
26.

Photo/Suzanne
Roberts

The April 26 event was open to anyone who had \$5 to spend and two poems to read. On the other end of the age spectrum was Vern Lee. A cowboy hat covering a head of white hair, Lee took second place. His first poem was called “The Frog that

Rocked.”

It was a night hosted by Matt Blesse and Denise Jolly, poetry grand slam champions. They’ll be at Sierra Nevada College tonight. Blesse is a word poet, activist and educator from Truckee. Jolly lives in Washington where she co-hosts and facilitates the Seattle Poetry Slam.

They got the crowd going with riveting poems delivered with such passion that the audience was whopping it up as they spoke.

Poetry slams are a bit like rap without the music. But it’s better – if only because much of what is said is personal, not full of hate like so many rap lyrics.

Had some of the eight contestants at LTCC put a little more oomph into their delivery, their scores from the five judges would have undoubtedly been higher.

It was such a raucous event that the class next door had to be moved.

Santos’ second poem was about being Filipino in the United States.

“Asia-America, can you tell me where you are?” she said.

Her provocative topic had the crowd thinking just like the first time she took the mic.

“Never take a microphone for granted. You, miss, did not take the microphone for granted,” Jolly told Santos after her first stint.

As the winner, Santos was asked to share some words of wisdom with the more than 50 people in attendance.

“Always have confidence in yourself. Never doubt yourself. You never know when you’ll do something great,” Santos said.