

# Kent County News

— A Direct Descendant Of The Chestertown Spy, Established 1793 —

## Making poetry accessible to all

By LEANN SCHENKE

lschenke@thekentcountynews.com

**ROCK HALL** — Poetry is leaving college lecture halls and making a comeback into everyday life with the help of the newly created Maryland Poetry Circuit.

"Poetry is for everyone," Robert Earl Price, co-founder of the Maryland Poetry Circuit, said Sunday. "It should not be limited to college lecture halls. Everyone can enjoy it."

The circuit was created through the combined efforts of Leslie Raimond, the executive director of the Kent County Arts Council, and Price. The inaugural circuit occurred Sunday afternoon at the Mainstay in Rock Hall.

After a brief introduction by Raimond, local poet and professor at Washington College Meredith Davies Hadaway opened the reading. She read a few selections from her books "At The Narrows," "The River is a Reason" and "Fishing Secrets of the Dead."

The Kent Count Arts Council sponsored the first reading at the Mainstay, and Raimond

has notified the Maryland State Arts Council and various arts councils in other counties of the circuit. A few have expressed interest in being involved in the circuit.

Modeled after a poetry circuit Price experienced in Georgia, the Maryland Poetry Circuit will see two poets travel to different venues around the state where they will read their poetry to a small audience.

"We are actively looking for new venues to host the circuit," Raimond said Sunday. "We are not going to limit ourselves to any part of the state, we want to spread our local poetry all over Maryland."

Many Kent County residents will recognize Price from his various involvements within the arts district. Most recently he, along with Pam Ortiz, created the play "Red Devil Moon," which made its way to the Fringe Festival in New York City over the summer. Price, dressed in his signature red shoes, took the stage after Hadaway and gave a spirited reading of a few of his poems.

The relaxed environment of



PHOTO BY LEANN SCHENKE

Meredith Davies Hadaway reads a poem Sunday at the Mainstay as part of the Maryland Poetry Circuit. Hadaway and Robert Earl Price are the first poets to be part of the circuit, which plans to send the poets to various venues around the state.

the poetry reading seemed to allow for a more open conversation about poetry. Hadaway and Earl were able to give a small explanation of each poem before they read.

"People used to have this love of poetry, but it has lost its accessibility," Price said. "Most kids

don't have to memorize poems in school anymore. People used to memorize poems because they loved them that much. I want to have people experience that level of understanding of poetry again."

"I want my poetry out on the streets with everyday people," Price said. "There is this feeling that you need a college diploma to understand poetry, but that is not true."

Audience members sipped beverages, laughed along with the reading and even teared up at a of the few poems.

"I've found poetry resonates most with the everyday people," Price said. "Factory workers, not just the college students. I want poetry to stray from the classroom and get back into the real world."

The readings were followed by a short question and answer session with the poets. The audience was also given the chance to read some of their own poetry, and one audience member did so.

For more information on the Maryland Poetry Circuit, visit [kentcountyartsCouncil.org](http://kentcountyartsCouncil.org).