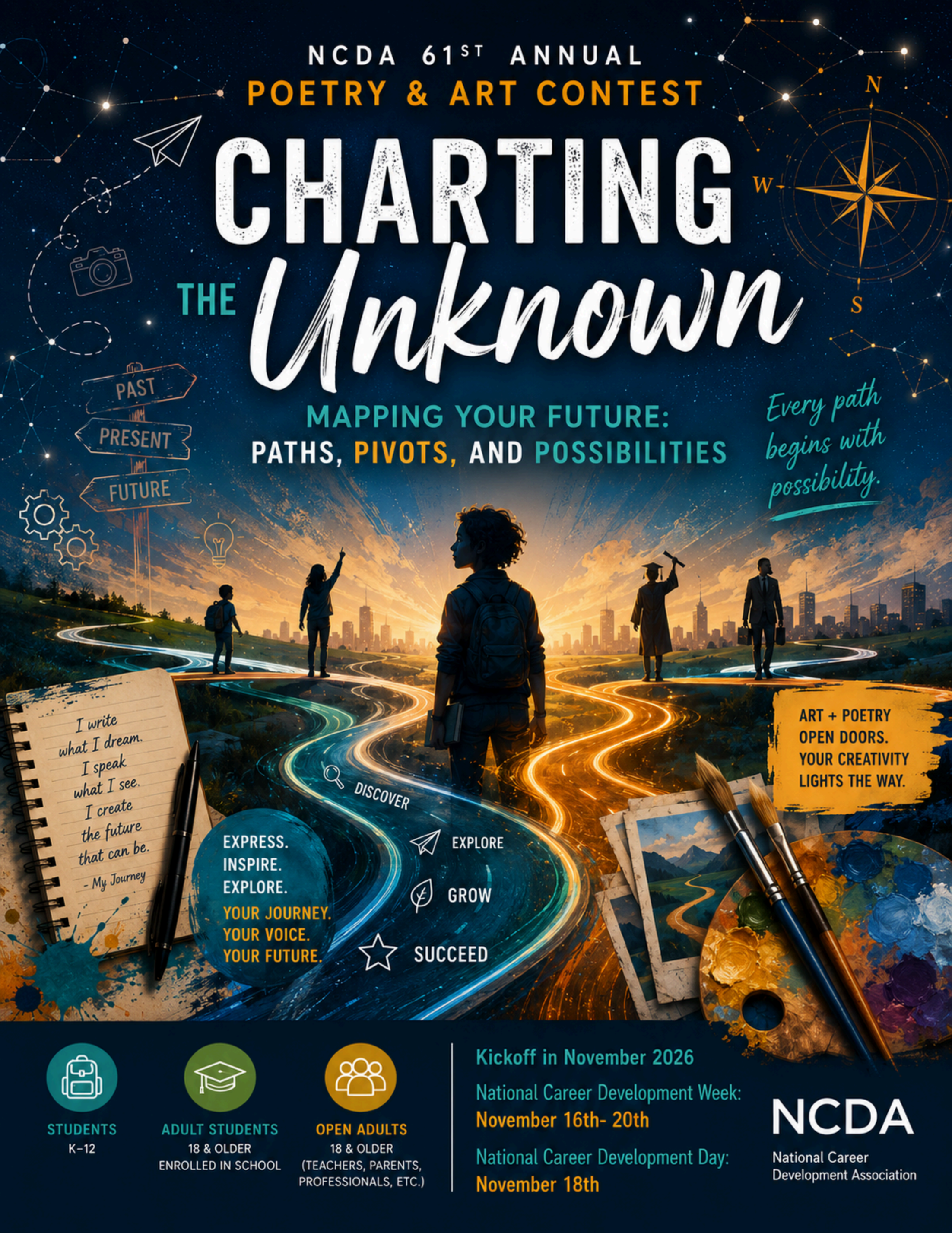


NCDA 61ST ANNUAL
POETRY & ART CONTEST

CHARTING THE Unknown

MAPPING YOUR FUTURE:
PATHS, PIVOTS, AND POSSIBILITIES

*Every path
begins with
possibility.*



ART + POETRY
OPEN DOORS.
YOUR CREATIVITY
LIGHTS THE WAY.

EXPRESS.
INSPIRE.
EXPLORE.

YOUR JOURNEY.
YOUR VOICE.
YOUR FUTURE.

EXPLORE

GROW

SUCCEED



STUDENTS
K-12



ADULT STUDENTS
18 & OLDER
ENROLLED IN SCHOOL



OPEN ADULTS
18 & OLDER
(TEACHERS, PARENTS,
PROFESSIONALS, ETC.)

Kickoff in November 2026

National Career Development Week:
November 16th- 20th

National Career Development Day:
November 18th

NCDA

National Career
Development Association

WHO CAN ENTER

Adults and students enrolled in public, private, and parochial schools in states with participating NCDA state divisions can enter the Poetry & Art Contest. A list of participating state divisions is available on the NCDA website at www.ncda.org.

Contest division areas include:

- Elementary School (Grades K-2)
- Intermediate School (Grades 3-5)
- Middle/Junior High School (Grades 6-8)
- Senior High School (Grades 9-12)
- Adult Student (18 and older enrolled in College, University, or Training Program)
- Open Adult (18 & older that is in a Non-Student Contest Division)

WHAT CAN I SUBMIT?

POETRY

Share your story through original poetry.

REQUIREMENTS FOR POEMS

- **Poetic Form:** Acceptable poetic forms, e.g. cinquain, free verse, diamante, haiku, limerick, metered, rhyming, blank verse
- **Size:** Submit each poem on a single sheet of paper 8.5" x 11", 12 point font
- **AI:** AI-assisted poems are permitted but must include a disclosure of tool(s) and prompt(s) used. See additional AI submission guidelines below

ART

REQUIREMENTS FOR ARTWORK

- **Lettering:** Simple bold lettering is preferred. Captions are to be used to convey the theme, attract attention, and to achieve goals of clarity, vigor, and originality. All lettering will be considered part of the design.

ART CATEGORIES

- **Art 1 (A1):** Standard use of ink, pencil, poster paints, magic marker, acrylics, and oils
- **Art 2 (A2):** Use of photos, clipart, graphic art software, collage, cut and pasted paper, and mixed media
- **Size:** Each poster must be created in 8.5" x 11" format, including matte, to be eligible
- **AI:** Digital artwork created with the help of AI tools is permitted — **Applicable to Art 2 submissions only.** Full disclosure is required. **See additional AI submission guidelines below.**

AI-GENERATED SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

(Applicable to Poetry and Art 2 submissions only)

We welcome the thoughtful use of AI tools in creative expression.

Submissions assisted by AI must include:

- The name of the AI platform used (e.g., ChatGPT, CoPilot, Midjourney, etc.)
- A short sample of the prompt(s) used.

Example disclosure: "This poem was edited for structure and flow after generation to better align with the author's intended message and emotion using ChatGPT."

Submissions that do not include this information may be disqualified.

THEME

"Charting the Unknown: Mapping Your Future-Paths, Pivots, and Possibilities"

Show us how you imagine your future and the journey that shapes it.

IMPORTANT CONTEST DATES

- Building/School Poetry & Art Contest Entries submitted to State Contest by **December 20, 2026**
- Contest Participants who do not have an assigned State Coordinator must self-submit their entries online using the following submission link: <https://forms.gle/5GJnS7dpEVK6a6Qe7>
- State Poetry & Art Contest Entries submitted online to NCDA National Contest by **February 20, 2027**

HOW TO SUBMIT

READY TO SHARE YOUR CREATIVITY?

Please contact the NCDA Poetry & Art Contest State Coordinator for the state in which you reside to obtain the designated submission link for your state. All Poetry & Art Contest entries should be submitted through the designated link provided by your State Coordinator.

Not sure who your State Coordinator is? Please contact Dr. Kimberly Carothers, Chair, NCDA National Career Development Month Committee, at kimberlycarothers8@gmail.com for assistance.

Please review the full contest guidelines, rules, and requirements at www.ncda.org.

JUDGING PROCESS

- Judging will be based on originality, creativity, and development of the national theme
- Poems will be evaluated on appropriate form, execution, spelling, and grammar
- Art evaluation will focus on the appropriate use of media, lettering, and basic principles of art

NATIONAL AWARDS

National awards will be presented to the first-, second-, and third-place winners in each of the six divisions across both the Poetry and Art Contests. National winners will be formally recognized on the NCDA website, www.ncda.org, in May 2027.

The winning entries will also be on display at the Annual Global Conference to be held in Anaheim, California, June 29 - July 1, 2027.



QUESTIONS?

Please contact your specific State Coordinator or email Dr. Kimberly Carothers at kimberlycarothers8@gmail.com.