Poetry that is spoken, whether on the stage or on a library floor, allows me to not only share what I love, but I get to watch other people learn that they love it, too.

It’s all driven by a Young Poets Advisory Board—currently four young women aged 17-25. They brought in hip hop artist Chiney Mayne as a guest artist. Poet Soharn Patel will headline on January 28, one day after Dreams of Hope premiers its 10th anniversary season. And of course, about ten young performers will also go on.

Niebler says for him and the other young performers, the pure terror leading up to that moment in the spotlight is strangely a draw.

“Every single time the sign up list stays real empty until about halfway through the performance, then people are slowly building up courage, they’re seeing other people put themselves out there.”

Michelle Reed, a member of the Young Poets Advisory Board, is compelled to get up on other grounds. She says, “I perform because I like being on stage and to get recognition as a writer. You have to start somewhere.” But for her, excitement is still a big part of it—“Like when I hear a particular melody or voice in the music world that causes my adrenaline to rise...that’s the feeling I want people to have with the things that I say.”

Many slam and spoken word poets say their aim isn’t to be taken too seriously — it’s to entertain. Adriana E. Ramirez, who performs all over the country, says providing a voice, an outlet, is invaluable. She and her teammates would also like to grow Steel City Slam, get more support from the city, and nurture partnerships like the one they have with the Shadow Lounge and their new programs with the Union Project. But in the end they just want people to know, through experience or word-of-mouth or the Pittsburgh Literary, “We’re doing this rad thing, and it’s really fun,” she says.

For more information, visit pghpoetry.org, dreamsofhope.org/#speaq, webpoets.dreamsofhope.org or Calendarsampsoniaaway.org/pittsburghliterarycalendar/index.php