

2026 Student Poster Contest for Chicago River Day

Poster Contest Submission Guidelines

Friends of the Chicago River is happy to announce a student poster contest to inspire people to take action to improve our rivers and communities, and to work towards creating a [Litter Free Chicago-Calumet River system](#). The contest is in celebration of the 34th Annual [Chicago River Day](#) and is [sponsored by WM](#).

- The contest is free and open to all youth ages 8 to 18 in the Chicago region.
- Only one submission per person is allowed.
- Youth can be from public or private school, homeschool, or civic/religious/community groups. Entire classrooms may submit posters. Youth may submit entries with or without teacher/school involvement.
- Original artwork and drawings by the student are encouraged, and the poster may include photos as well. Posters must not include any copyrighted images or illustrations.
- The theme for this year is “Taking Action for a Litter Free River,” and should engage an audience on the issues of litter reduction, individual or community action, and ways to improve our rivers.
- All submissions should be in a digital format at print-quality resolution when viewed at full size (JPG, PDF, or PNG). All photos should be high resolution. Hand-drawn submissions should be scanned if possible.
- Submissions must be sized 11x17 inches. Posters can be in “portrait” or “landscape” format.
- Posters must include Friends’ logo and WM’s logo. You can download them at <https://tinyurl.com/CRDContest>.
- **Submissions due by April 3, 2026. Posters must be submitted through the QR code, or through the Google Form found at <https://tinyurl.com/CRDContest>.**
- Questions regarding content, format, and other design elements can be sent to mwalker@chicagoriver.org.



Winners and Prizes

One winner and two honorable mentions will be selected in three categories:
Ages 8-10, 11-14, and 15-18.

Selected posters in each age group will be displayed at [Friends' McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum](#), which is located on the Chicago Riverwalk, during its 2026 season. The exhibit will engage visitors and provoke thought on the issues of litter reduction, individual or community action, and ways to improve our rivers.

Winners/honorable mentions will all be recognized and receive free passes to the Bridgehouse Museum.

Timeline

January to April 2026 – Poster Contest will be held

April 3, 2026 – Deadline for contest submissions

April 2026 – Posters will be reviewed and winners chosen by Friends and WM staff

May 2026 – Winners and honorable mentions announced and students notified

May 9, 2026 – Chicago River Day; Bridgehouse Museum opens to the general public

May to October 2026 – Winning and honorable mention posters will be displayed at the Bridgehouse Museum