

# 14-year-old ignites open stage

By **TROY GREGORINO**

Athens Insider staff writer

Filled with both fire and sensitivity, brashness and humility, Jasper Friend, 14, has ignited some recent local poetry readings. About a month ago, Friend (who reads under the name "Jazzy") decided to take her writings to the spoken word open stage, Tuesday nights at Donkey Coffee. Friend's poems and rants, always heartfelt and passionately delivered, tend to leave little room for interpretation.

Despite using a straightforward, declarative approach for much of her work, Friend's outlook on the world around her is decidedly inquisitive and receptive.

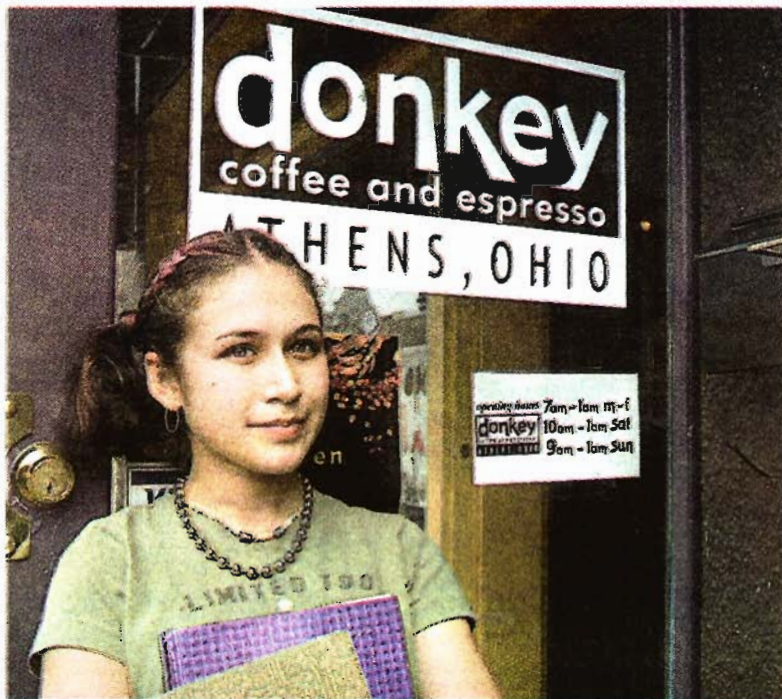
"It's okay for people to have an opinion," she said. "I try to be open-minded."

That said, Friend is not bashful about the value she places on attempting to influence listeners with the political content of some of her pieces, particularly in poems that address issues of war and social injustice.

"I don't think it's right that people should be blowing up people because they're mad at them," she said. "You can solve problems in other ways besides killing people."

Friend said much of her spoken word material came from songs she wrote (but hasn't yet performed) as a way to "vent." She said she enjoys writing and hearing poems that deal with a range of subjects, including family issues and friendships.

"I like all kinds of poems. I respect everyone's work," Friend said. "I really like the idea of seeing how people are liking your



**Jasper Friend**

work and seeing what you can improve on. I like to see how many people are actually interested in what I or other poets have to say."

Friend, who plans to pursue an acting career, said she appreciates the various political persuasions of audience members. She said she hopes to reach people by presenting her views in the context of an artistic performance.

"I really like poems that get a message out to you, that flow nicely, and that are meaningful to me and that catch your eye or catch your heart," Friend said.

## **STAND**

*P. is for pissed off, and that's what I am.*

*R. is for ridiculous, and that's what this is.*

*I. is for independence, what I don't have.*

*D. is for dipshits all around me.*

*E. is for enough. I'm through. So go on, get out, I'm done with you.*

*Not proud to be an American. Believe me, I'm not a George Bush fan. If something's wrong, I know it is, so now I'll take my stand. This beautiful place with every race, he calls it his own land. If you start, please don't begin, because you surely will not win. So fighting hard and pushing strong against everything that is wrong. Every night, I'll dream of rights and terrible fights. So, come on, take your stand.*

— Jasper Friend