

Rural Awareness Annual Essay Awards Recognize Franklin Township Students

The 13th Annual Rural Awareness Scholar Award essay winners were announced by the organization at Franklin Township School's awards assembly June 19. The non-profit group sponsors the essay contest for all Franklin Township School students in grades 3, 4, and 5. Judges determined which essays of the 83 entries best conveyed the theme of the year's topic.

The 2019 topic asked students to write about their favorite species of flora or fauna found in rural Franklin, explaining why they made their choice and describing any personal experiences they have had with their subject.

The Grand Champion and first place winner in the fifth grade is Sophia Randall whose essay, *Hummingbird Moths*, describes adventures in her backyard with her younger brother "looking for a unique species that flies and moves just like a miniature hummingbird, hovering over our garden flowers and fluttering its clear wings at amazing speed." Second place in the fifth grade went to Mason Witkowski for *Sugar Maples*, in which he focused on a sugar maple tree in his backyard and its historical backstory. Sophia DeTorres received honorable mention for *The Cardinals of Franklin Township*, birds she believes to be "magical" and "an angel flying by."

Fourth grade winners are Reid Becker, first; Gavin Buczek, second; and Tyler Turek, honorable mention. In his essay *The Blue Heron*, Reid Becker wrote about "the largest bird in North America, a great sight to see," which, in flight, reminds him of pterodactyls. In essays titled *Foxes in Franklin* and *The Red Fox*, Gavin Buczek and Tyler Turek both wrote about Franklin's numerous and "beautiful" foxes, "gentle animals that leave people alone," but admittedly sometimes eat chickens.

Third grade winners are Erich Strauss, first; Alexis Mani, second; and Jonas Thompson, honorable mention. Erich Strauss' essay, *The Red-tailed Hawk*, relates how the bird became a talisman for his deceased paternal grandfather, one they believe often watches over their activities. Alexis Mani wrote in *Butterflies in Franklin* that she and her family "are always looking to make things better," particularly their butterfly garden and how they remember lost family members with new varieties of plants that appeal to butterflies. Jonas Thompson's essay, *Outside in Franklin Township*, told of his family's project to make syrup from their own sugar maple tree. "It took five gallons of sap to make two cups of maple syrup," he wrote, "...but it tasted delicious."

Teachers of the winning students are Lynn Johnson, Dr. Barry Kramer, Janet Prassl, Susan Rainaldi, Tracy Strycky, and Jeff Weinhold.

Prizewinners all receive gift certificates donated by new Rural Awareness partner The Book Garden in Frenchtown. First place gets \$50; second, \$30; and honorable mention, \$10. The grand prize winner is selected from the three first place winners and additionally receives a gift certificate for a pizza night at Frank's Italian Restaurant in Clinton, a long-time partner with Rural Awareness. All entrants receive a certificate of participation.

The nine winning essays will be posted on the Rural Awareness website at ruralawareness.org.

Rural Awareness, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the rich history and rural character of Franklin Township.

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