

Rural Awareness Annual Essay Awards Recognize Franklin Township Students

The 15th Annual Rural Awareness Scholar Award essay winners were announced by the organization at Franklin Township School's virtual awards assembly June 15. 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 59 entries best conveyed the theme of the year's topic.

The 2021 topic asked students which kind of school they would prefer to attend: a one-room schoolhouse with one teacher and students of all ages, or the kind of school they have today. They were challenged to think about the differences in the two styles and asked if they would learn more in one school or the other. Franklin has an 1837 one-room schoolhouse on the school grounds in Quakertown.

The first-place winner in the fifth grade and also Grand Champion for 2021 is Payton Motis whose essay advocates for modern schools because they have many more subjects beyond reading, writing, and arithmetic—like social studies, art, and music and activities like student council, sports, and clubs that inspire children and make school more enjoyable. “There are many reasons why I choose school now but really, all that matters is getting an education,” she wrote.

Second place in the fifth grade went to Jonas Thompson who wrote, “One room for me!” because there would be fewer students so you can most likely be friends with everybody in the school and the teacher teaches all the kids the same things.” Gavin Krehely received honorable mention for firmly casting a vote for modern schools. “I am very relieved that I am alive now and not back then,” he wrote.

Fourth grade winners are Jens Gallacher, first; Vincent Randall, second; and Ashley Luciano, honorable mention. Gallacher wrote to the 1837 students, “Hello from the future!” He expressed concern about the small one-room building being too cold in winter and too hot in summer and asked, “Did you guys really have to walk an hour a day to school? That sounds crazy to me!” Randall researched having classes in a one-room school and, while admitting he would enjoy a brief bit of time travel to truly experience 19th century life, he “would still choose to go to school as I do today.” Luciano would welcome “having all the kids in one room so we can learn from each other and play together,” and opined having “one teacher would be like having a mom in the classroom.”

Third grade winners are Jack Armagast, first; Ellah Varughese, second; and Jack Carlton, honorable mention. All third graders voted for the modern school. Armagast's

essay made the point that the “technology we have allows us to learn more than we could then.” Varughese wrote in today’s school, she “gets social studies, math, science, reading, writing, Spanish, health, music, and art.” Carlton thinks, “Since it’s just third graders in the [modern] classroom, I feel like I would learn more, because we’re learning things that third graders are meant to learn.”

Teachers of the winning students are Janet Prassl, Susan Rainaldi, Jordan Simon, Tracy Strycky, Jeffrey Weinhold, and Alyssa Zollinger.

Prizewinners all receive gift certificates from Rural Awareness for Barnes and Noble. First place gets a \$50 certificate; second, \$30; and honorable mention, \$10. The grand prize winner is selected from the three first place winners and additionally receives a \$40 gift certificate from sponsor Duke’s Pizzeria and Restaurant in Pittstown for a family pizza night dinner. 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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