

## Friends of the Orinda Library Present Writing Contest Awards

By Andrea A. Firth



Pat Rudebusch presenting an award to Orinda Academy Junior Matt Loudon  
Photo Marianne Payne

Each year the Friends of the Orinda Library sponsor a writing contest for high school students living in Orinda. The Poul Anderson Writing Contest—named for the acclaimed science fiction writer who lived in Orinda until his death in 2001—awards \$250 cash prizes in four categories: short story, essay, poetry, and science fiction.

Orinda Academy Junior Matt Loudon was this year’s winner for essay. Loudon’s essay was based on a literary response to word incognito—a fairly complex topic for his first entry in a writing contest. “It’s about how human interaction is disguised by common courtesies and the boundaries and shields we use to mask who we really are.” Loudon relates with disarming charm. “I was trying to get to the elements of being incognito,” he explains.

Loudon, who “kind of started” writing in his freshman year, discovered that he actually

enjoyed the writing assignments that he was required to do for English class. “I took the opportunity to put my own spin on things,” says Loudon. With the encouragement of his English teacher who noticed his passion for writing, Loudon began to keep a journal and work on drafting a play. “It just sort of progressed. I just started writing things down.”

Loudon has also been chosen to participate in a four-week residential writing program in Valencia this summer. “I’m definitely excited. Initially, I thought it would be a long month and that I would rather just hang out in Orinda with my friends,” states Loudon. “But there is no downside to it—writing, new people, new friends.”

Winners of the Poul Anderson Writing Contest sponsored by the Friends of the Orinda Library are listed in the sidebar.

### Poul Anderson Writing Contest Winners for 2008

Science Fiction	Katharine Yu
Short Story	Meredith White
Poetry	John Scalise
Essay	Matt Loudon

Honorable Mentions went to Bryan Oczkus (science fiction) and Elisabeth Berger (poetry).