

Contest Recognizes Creative Writing Talent

By Lian Walden



From left: Kate Nerone, Hannah Fishlow and Kate Dunn

Photo Ohlen Alexander

The Orinda Junior Women's Club recognized 13 young writers April 25 for their talent and imagination at the Youth Ink 2013 Awards. All 13 writers read their work aloud to an audience consisting of family, friends, teachers, supporters, and community members in the auditorium of the Orinda Public Library prior to a reception.

Youth Ink, an annual creative writing contest now in its sixth year after a several decade hiatus – the contest was originally created in the '80s – was open to sixth-, seventh- and eight-grade students who live or attend school in Orinda.

"The contest celebrates creative writing in a community that is oriented around sports and provides an outlet for non-athletes to receive recognition for their abilities," explained Christine Gkatzimas and Molly Griffin Wilson from the Orinda Junior Women's Club.

The students were given the prompt "Future," which was chosen because it allowed writers to personalize their pieces and to embrace

their individual writing styles. Students were encouraged to write about anything that inspired them, real or imaginary.

The young writers responded to the prompt in distinct and imaginative ways. First place winner Kate Nerone wrote about a girl who feels pressure from her community to be a "complete package" so that she can get into a good college.

"I might have drawn some inspiration from real life," quipped Nerone.

Second place winner Hannah Fishlow wrote about a character charged with the task of ending and then restarting the world, commenting on the myriad ways in which a society tries to destroy itself.

"I wanted to write about the difficulty of trying to do something and not succeeding," she said. Fishlow's twin sister Olivia received honorable mention for her piece written from death's perspective. The twins both enjoy science fiction, are interested in writing novels, and often submit their work to young adult writing

contests.

Third place winner Kate Dunn wrote about a homeless man who decides to change his life. Asked about her inspiration, Dunn replied, "I write stories about things I see."

All three writers are avid readers of fiction, favoring work by John Greene and JK Rowling.

Submissions to the contest were evaluated by a panel of local professional writers, including reporters and best-selling novelists. The panelists first ranked the submissions individually before coming together to hash out the winners.

Youth Ink 2013 was generously sponsored by The Orinda Association, Friends of Orinda Library, and The Orinda Community Foundation, which provided cash prizes to the first, second, and third place winners as well as gift certificates to a local bookstore for the 10 honorable mentions. The organizers are also grateful to Mary Risso, Ginger Wadsworth, Beth Girshman and the entire OIS English department for their support.

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2013 Youth Ink Winners

- 1st place (\$250) - Kate Nerone - "Nowhere Wheels"
 2nd place (\$125) - Hannah Fishlow - "All the World's a Stage"
 3rd place (\$75) - Kate Dunn - "The Courage to Change"
- 10 Honorable Mention (Gift certificates) - not ranked, listed by last name in alpha order
- Neil Binnie - "Bigfoot was my Neighbor"
 - Sarah Coufal - "Miracle"
 - Julia Dureault - "Minimum Wage"
 - Olivia Fishlow - "A Grand Adventure"
 - Steve Ginsburg - "What Never Fades"
 - Jessica Guo - "Shooting Stars and a Pink Hamster"
 - Arman Marchiel - "Big Bad Wolf's Secret"
 - Erin Mohr - "Soaring"
 - Clara Wu - "Leticia's Diary"
 - Jasmine Zhang - "Shadows"

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By Alex Pawlakos

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Alex Pawlakos enjoys biking, weightlifting, and tutoring in his spare time. He is a reporter on Express Yourself™ Teen Radio.

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