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Lamorinda Weekly Writer Wins First Place for Education Coverage

By Jennifer Wake



Uma Unni's first place win announced on the big screen during the May 9 award ceremony. Photo Andy Scheck

recognize outstanding journalistic achievements of California newspaper staff. Nearly 3,500 contest entries are received each year, according to the CNPA. Daily and weekly publications competed in separate divisions based on circulation. When evaluating the entries, judges considered comprehensiveness of coverage, quality of writing, local appeal, selection of material, and balanced reporting.

"Right after we published Uma's story last November a neighbor told me how much he liked the story and how well done it was," said Lamorinda Weekly publisher Andy Scheck. "Our team shared his opinion at our editorial meeting the same week."

Unni was not only recently recognized for her writing ability, but also for her entrepreneurial prowess when she was awarded first prize for entrepreneurship by the Lafayette Partners in Education (LPIE) for a series of free writing workshops for Lafayette middle schoolers she organized last year. After identifying a need for writing tutors among students, she did some research and found out that Saint Mary's College Masters in Fine Arts students were looking for teaching experience, so she connected the two.

"I put both groups, each with their own needs, together - students seeking teachers and teachers seeking students," said Unni. She didn't charge for this service, calling herself a "social entrepreneur who works for the satisfaction of accomplishing a social good." Unni also arranged for the workshops to be held on the Saint Mary's College campus so that the middle school kids could be inspired by the ambience of a university setting.

"The workshops were taught by a very accomplished panel of tutors, all of whom were writers, and many of whom were also editors," said Unni. "They clearly did something right, too - the girl who won first prize for writing in the 2nd Annual Writing and Photography Contest attended two of our workshops, as it happens!"

Unni also received an honorable mention in journalism for the "WISE" article in the LPIE contest.

To read the full article, go to <http://www.lamorindaweekly.com/archive/issue0818/WISE->

Lamorinda Weekly features writer Uma Unni was awarded First Place for Education Coverage in the California Newspaper Publishers Association Better Newspapers Contest at a May 9 awards luncheon in Coronado, Calif., for her article, "WISE Program Opens Doors for Miramonte Students." The article focused on Miramonte High School alumni and students enrolled in the Wise Individualized Senior Experience, which allows seniors to create intense, flexible learning modules to pursue unique areas of interest.

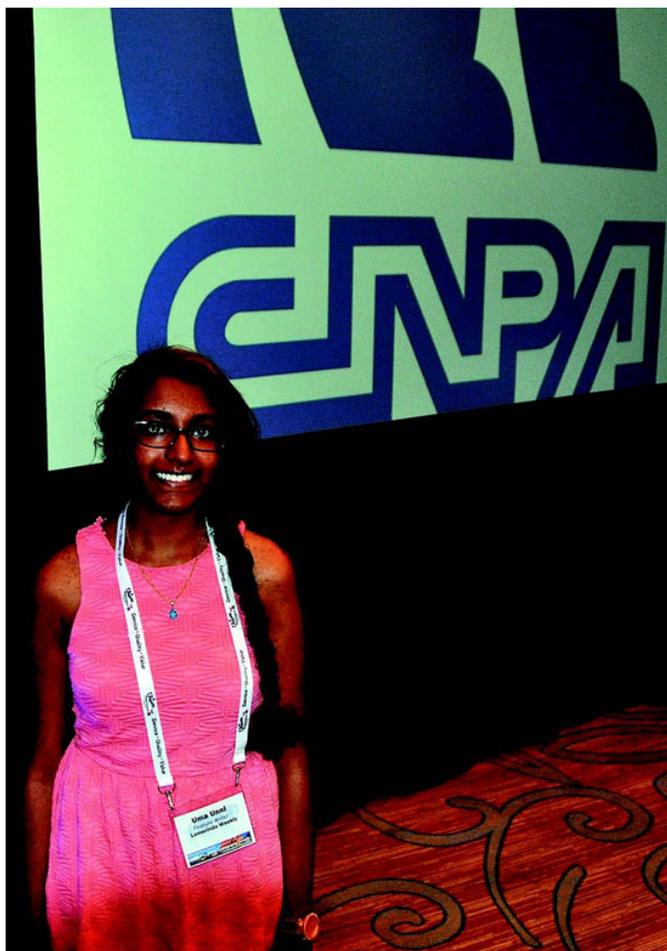
"We were in awe that Uma won this award with an article she wrote last year at the ripe age of 15," said Lamorinda Weekly associate publisher Wendy Scheck. "This was not a student contest. All of the submissions were published articles from California Newspapers that are members of CNPA."

Unni was competing with other writers from weekly newspapers with circulations between 11,000-25,000. The contest is designed to

Program-Opens-Doors-for-Miramonte-Students.html.

Acalanes High School Newspaper Receives Top Awards Submitted by Iris Wang

Acalanes High School's Blueprint Newspaper recently was honored with numerous awards from three different highly respected institutions for excellence in journalism. "This may be our biggest haul [of awards] the last twenty years," Marshall Grodin, Blueprint's volunteer advisor, said. "This is clearly a big day for Blueprint and for Acalanes." Quill and Scroll, an organization that honors individuals with national-level awards in a variety of different categories, awarded eight Acalanes Blueprint journalists with awards recognizing their top standing in the country. The American Scholastic Press Association in its 2014-2015 Annual Newspaper Review and Contest ranked Acalanes High School's Blueprint in its "First Place" category, recognizing Blueprint as among the top high school newspapers in the country. And the Dean Leshner Scholastic Journalism Awards, which celebrate student journalistic talent in Contra Costa County, awarded Blueprint its top award of First Place in "Overall Excellence," recognizing Blueprint as the best high school journalistic entity in the County. Leshner also awarded Blueprint 11 individual awards, including the most prestigious individual award, "First Place Contra Costa Journalist of the Year," to Blueprint Print Editor-in-Chief Megan Yee. The Journalist of the Year award was accompanied by a \$1000 scholarship.



Unni at the CNPA conference

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