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SMC's River of Words 2023, a youth art and poetry competition, sparked dramatic results

By Vera Kochan



"Made for Each Otter," Joy Y., 5th Grade, Georgia, Category II Grand Prize Winner Photo Vera Kochan

all over the world.

According to the SMC exhibit description, "As the world continues to evolve, it is crucial that we nurture a deep understanding and appreciation of our natural environment in the hearts and minds of the next generation." The exhibit offered "a unique glimpse into the perspectives of young people, presenting their visions of the natural world through a diverse array of artistic mediums and poetic expression. These young artists and poets remind us of the wonders of nature and the importance of preserving our planet for future generations."

On display were the works of more than 10 artistic finalists along with a binder of the winners in the poetry category. The entrants were asked to thoughtfully consider specific ideas, images or language; "show" the reader something either through a picture or with words; use images/words that will take people on a journey; have fun with forms and textures; feature a specific aspect, formation, ecosystem or organism of nature that resonates with you; show your scientific knowledge; get your inspiration from the outdoors by using all of your senses; and display an awareness of your global community.

A few of the artistic pieces were geared toward the ocean and its inhabitants with a visual commentary regarding pollution and the destruction of the ecosystem. On the other hand, most of the younger poetry finalists wrote about the beauty found in nature and the hope of its continuance; whereas the older finalists' poems expressed elements of sadness with the things mankind has done to create environmental disasters. Even in art, the innocence of youth gives way to the realities of the older and wiser.

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

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