

Schools

Fountain Hills VFW announces essay winners, teachers of year

Fountain Hills VFW Post 7507 has selected this year's winners of the Patriot's Pen, Voice of Democracy and Teacher of the Year award with plans to honor recipients at a special event scheduled for February.

Each year, local students are invited to take part in a pair of essay writing contests while local administration nominates educators for their work with students in the classroom.

According to Post 7507 Senior Vice Commander Phil Yin, the 2013 school year has shined a light on quite a few high achieving students and teachers, with this year's finalists being announced in December.

"Congratulations to all of you for being selected finalists for this year's essay contests and Teacher of the Year award," Yin said in a statement to those selected.

"A huge thank you also to Cynthia Couture and Tim Yoder for their work in making this possible for all of their students and to those who nominated our Teachers of the Year."

Post 7507 selected five high school students as finalists in the Voice of Democracy competition. Brandon Barth took first place



Brandon Barth receives the fourth place award during the Patriot's Pen state awards ceremony.



Patriot's Pen finalists Amara Feyrer-Melk and Spencer Clark will represent their school and town at the next level of competition.

with Samantha Ferrato in second and Andy Szwiec in third. Honorable mentions went to Emilia Lawrence and Michael Appel.

Over at the middle school, Kyle Spencer Clark was selected as the first place essay for the Patriot's Pen.

Eduardo Levato took second with Amara Feyrer-Melk in third. Honorable mentions went to Drew Hoffman and Kathryn Reed.

High School teacher John Burnett was selected as the Teacher of the Year with McDowell Mountain's Susan Bovinette taking second.

Of these winners, Burnett and a pair of students from each essay writing contest were selected to represent Fountain Hills as District 4 finalists and continue on in the competition at the state event held Saturday, Jan. 11.

Barth and Ferrato continued to compete for the Voice of Democracy competition with Clark and Feyrer-Melk continuing on in the Patriot's Pen category. With his parents, sister and two sets of grandparents in the audience, Barth placed fourth in the state competition.

"Our post will be holding an awards celebration in February at the Fountain Hills Unified School District Learning Center, awarding the 10 student finalists with cash awards and award certificates and the two Teacher of the Year finalists with a gift," Yin explained.

"Lastly, we would like to thank Mr. [Tom] Lawrence, superintendent of FHUSD, and all of the principals for their support of all of our patriotic programs each year."

School board elects officers

Helen Howard has been elected the Fountain Hills Unified School District Governing Board president with member Jill Reed named to the vice president seat.

The local district's governing board made its selections Jan. 8.

For the role of president, member Melanie Anderelli nominated Howard while Karl Gaardsmoe threw Reed's hat in the ring.

Vote was taken by roll call with a two-two split. Former President C.T.

Coalition hosts essay contest

The Fountain Hills Coalition, which focuses on the prevention of underage drinking and educating about the dangers of drug use, is sponsoring an essay contest for all high school students.

This includes those who are home-schooled or attend schools elsewhere in the Valley who live in Fountain Hills. The contest is ongoing and all entries are due by Jan. 31.

The students are being asked to write a typed essay, up to 750 words, on one of three topics:

1) What concerns you most when you think about your generation, and what do you believe can be done about those concerns?

2) Consider lessons you have learned from your parents, your teachers, your peers and other influences. How have you been empowered to deal with peer pressure? What strategies do you use? How can your experience empower other teens?

3) Think about a teacher or other adult who has had

a positive impact on your life. What attributes did that person possess that contributed to that impact, and how have you changed as a result of that influence?

Thanks to the generosity of the local business community, organizers have more than \$2,000 in awards this year. One student will win the grand prize of \$500 in cash. Second place gets \$100 and third place receives \$50. There will also be 14 honorable mentions who will receive \$25 each.

Event gold sponsors providing \$200 in cash or in-kind merchandise include: Tait D. Elkie of Elkie Law Firm; The Fountain Hills Times; Loving Family Dental; Christopher Peer, CPA; Phil's Filling Station; Redendo's Pizzeria; Stephenie of Sami Fine Jewelry; and Dori Wittrig - Sonoran Lifestyle Real Estate.

Providing a silver sponsorship of \$100 in cash are: Sheri Patton - American Family

Insurance; Cyndi Dunham - MCO Realty; Meridian Bank; and Stop & Go Traffic School.

The judges of the contest this year will be Mayor Linda Kavanagh, Pastor Todd Forrest of Fountain Hills Christian Center, Mike Scharnow, editor of The Fountain Hills Times, former Mayor Wally Nichols, speaker and author Jerry Traylor and seventh grade English teacher Amy Nichols.

"This contest is off to a phenomenal start," said Coalition board member Dwight Johnson.

"We've had wonderful enthusiasm from our high school Principal Tom Brennan, as well as tremendous support from our six high school English teachers."

"I'm confident we'll hit our goal of 325 entries, which would equate to over half of our high school students participating. Learning to write well is so extremely important and the FH Coalition is pleased to be able to support this endeavor."

FHHS receives TV donation

Fountain Hills High School curriculum and athletics recently received a hefty technological advancement in the form of a 62-inch television, courtesy of the FHHS Student Store and Wired Up.

As cheer instructor Kate Pruett explains it, the need for a larger TV arose after spending years of watching films (both educational and athletic) on a tiny screen.

With as many as 45 students crowded around a tiny 24-inch screen to watch videos for class or go over game film, for instance, she thought it was time for an upgrade.

Martha Carillo and the Student Store agreed, offering to foot the bill. Former student David Racich, now president and CEO of local Wired Up, said he appreciated the chance to give back to his old high school, and jumped at the opportunity to provide and wire the new TV at a large discount.

The new screen is wall-mounted in the high school gym, easily accessible for PE classes, the cheer squad and athletic teams. The TV is outfitted with all of the modern bells and whistles, including internet access.

Pruett said she is excited to see the TV enhance students' experience at FHHS, from watching game films to analyzing practices and displaying classroom materials and instructional videos.



David Racich of Wired Up (right) presents Kate Pruett (cheer), Shannon Kramer (PE) and Jim Fairfield (PE, Football) with their new TV. Not present is Martha Carillo of the Student Store, the on-campus organization that joined with Racich to foot the bill.



Voice of Democracy finalists Brandon Barth and Samantha Ferrato join Teacher of the Year John Burnett.

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Terrific Kids

McDowell Mountain Elementary School is proud to present Ezra Davis (kindergarten), Justin Jibbens (first grade), Colin Gallagher (second grade) and Savannah Schroeder (second grade) and Gavin Furi (third grade) as Terrific Kids for the week of Jan. 5. The program, sponsored by the Noon Kiwanis Club of Fountain Hills, recognizes students for positive achievements with respect to attitude, helping out, kindness to others, etc.

Fountain Hills Charter School, a public Montessori school, honors students who have displayed good character as Kiwanis Terrific Kids. Congratulations to Gracie Bryner, Skye Alker, Michaela Quintana, Corinne Jacobsen and Marcus Schwartz for the week of Jan. 5.

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