

KP Students Win First Place in Teen Writing and Art Contests

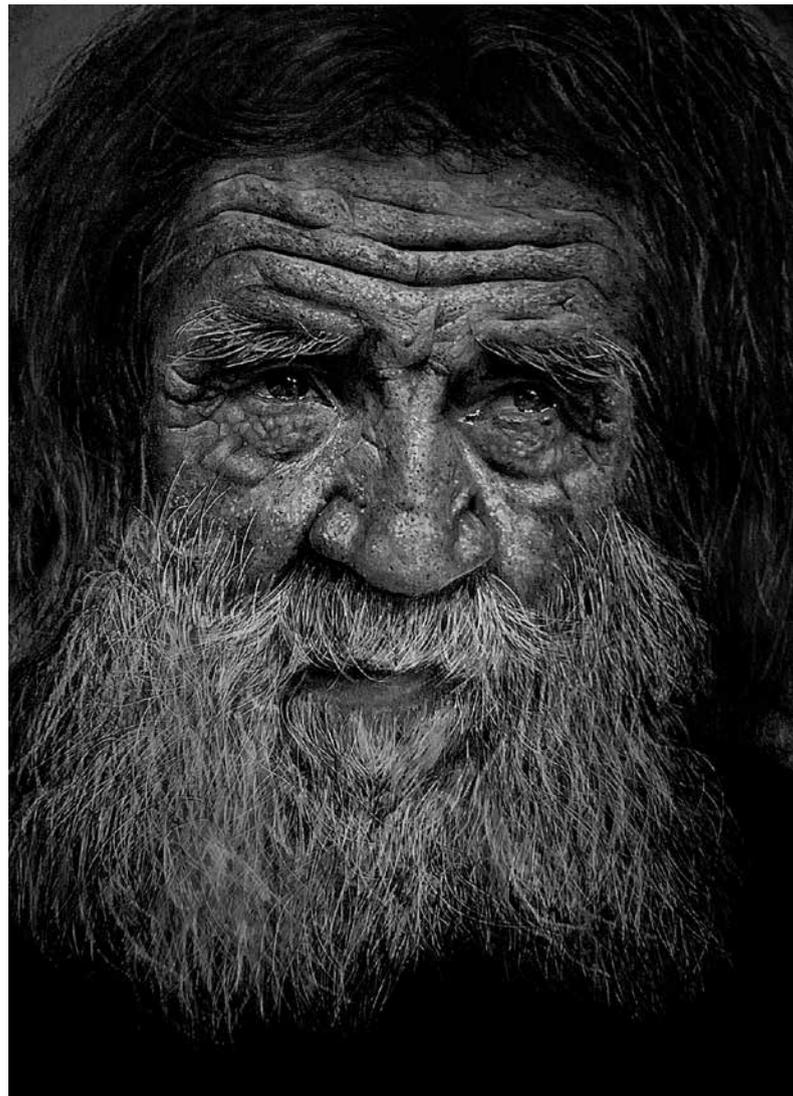
Young local artists brings home the gold, again.

KRISA BRUEMMER, KP NEWS

Local students Angelina Cruz and Kyleigh Helland each won first place in the Pierce County Library System's 24th annual Our Own Expressions Teen Writing & Art Contest, which celebrates the creative visions and voices of Pierce County youth and awards winners cash prizes and publication.

Over 800 photography, drawing, poetry and short story entries were submitted for the contest in spring 2020 by students in grades seven through 12.

First-place drawing, Timeless, by Angelina Cruz, PHS senior



ANGELINA CRUZ – DRAWING

Peninsula High School senior Angelina Cruz, 17, won first place in drawing for the second year in a row with her piece titled “Timeless.” Cruz learned about the contest from a teacher during her sophomore year, and in 2019 she took first in the ninth and 10th grade division for her drawing of American boxing legend Muhammad Ali.

“I was trying to do a lot of things I’d never done before,” Cruz said. “I’d never drawn beards or facial hair so I wasn’t completely confident with those techniques yet,” Cruz said. “It’s hard to get a very clean, white line. I etched into the paper, like, engraved into the paper, a bunch of tiny, small white lines, like white hairs. Then I drew over them with pencil and it left the white lines.”

Cruz said that “Timeless” took her around 60 hours to complete. She found the image that inspired her winning drawing on a Pinterest board of reference pictures online.

“There was so much expression behind his eyes and I kept going back to the piece and it really stuck with me, so I decided that was what I wanted to capture.”

When Cruz first started drawing portraits in eighth grade, she would sometimes spend a whole day drawing just eyes, or just noses. And for years, she has devoted time to analyzing

pictures of faces, reading art books, and watching YouTube videos with tips and techniques from artists she admires, such as Mark Crilley and Dan Beardshaw.

“At home at my desk, I just put on music and draw,” she said. “I get the most joy from drawing portraits. It’s a very satisfying feeling when I’m finished.

“My stuff wasn’t amazing when I first started. I don’t think anyone’s is. It’s definitely a matter of sticking with it, even when you’re not completely proud, or you don’t feel completely confident, you just keep going,” Cruz said. “With my art, I want to try to keep on challenging myself and pushing myself. My biggest dream would be to be recognized by artists I’ve looked up to for so long now.”

KYLEIGH HELLAND – POETRY

When freshman Kyleigh Helland, 14, was an eighth grader at Key Peninsula Middle School, she was required to enter a competition as part of her Advanced English and Language Arts class. She selected the Our Own Expressions contest and her poem, “Anxiety,” won first place in poetry for grades seven and eight.

“It was kind of surprising to see that my poem won. I was really excited,” Helland

said. “My inspiration was my own personal struggles with anxiety and some of the ways I’ve watched my family and friends struggle with anxiety. My mom was also a big inspiration because me and her both struggle from chronic anxiety, so just being able to write something that we can both read and relate to was really important for me.”

Helland went through multiple drafts of her poem, changing words, editing and cutting lines to meet the competition guidelines.

“It was really hard to find words that could describe the feeling,” she said. “Everyone’s panic attacks are

ANXIETY

BY KYLEIGH HELLAND

Shaking, quaking, trembling, your lungs refuse to work. These thick black waves of dread are ever present, they lurk and out from under you, your feet they jerk.

It spreads lies like a disease, causing doubt and fright but it always wins, no matter how hard you fight and it will sneak up and extinguish your light

though you say you’re fine, and pretend you’re okay as your mind decays they only see a fake display of a smile, not the true one of utter dismay

the other people say you’ll be alright, but how much longer will you have to fight how long, for the freedom, for light

you believe these lies you’re fed up until the day you’re dead and even then it still lingers, the dread

and you’re trapped in a dark endless hole you’ll never find the key, the loophole and you won’t find it until it’s full

and its name, is anxiety

different. And everyone has a completely unique experience with their anxiety. So I was just trying to find a way to make everyone relate to it even though everyone is unique in the way they have their anxiety and the way that it presents itself.

“The first stanza was really powerful for me. It was one of my favorites, just talking about the dread you’re feeling in anxiety attacks and how it does feel like you’re drowning and you can’t get out and there’s no way to swim to shore,” Helland said. “I wanted to have people connect to that, and maybe learn a bit of awareness about how people really feel when they’re going through panic attacks because it is scary and it does feel like you’re dying.”

Helland started writing poetry in seventh grade and she is currently working on a novel, a short story, and multiple poems and songs. She enjoys listening to music while she writes, typically selecting a playlist on Spotify that relates to specific emotions.

“I use that as inspiration for the words that are flowing from my mind,” she said. “Adults downplay our emotions a lot of the time, telling us we’re not anxious, we’re just worried. But it’s not healthy to constantly be told that

your emotions aren’t valid. Anxiety is a very valid issue people struggle with and it’s not just worry — it changes your life. It gets really hard to do a lot of things when you’re anxious. It’s really hard for teens struggling with it, especially,

to find the help they need.”

Helland’s advice for aspiring young poets and anyone who struggles with anxiety: “Find something that you’re passionate about and use that to cope. Find your inspiration and don’t worry about other people’s opinions. Write about what you feel strongly about.”

To view all winning entries, go to expressions.pcls.us ■