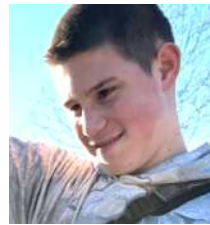


# Dyslexic Advantage Newsletter



CONGRATULATIONS  
KARINA EIDE YOUNG WRITERS AWARD WINNERS 2026 !



THE DAILY THINKER



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ADVANTAGE MOVIE**



Dr. Fernette Eide  
Editor in Chief

Dear Dyslexic Advantage community,

We're thrilled to present to you the winners of the 2026 Karina Eide Young Writers Awards! These gifted writers are the brilliant beyond their years.

Thanks to [The Writer's Studio](#) and [The Daily Thinker](#) for making this awards program possible and too the Dyslexic advantage donors who power all our work. 💖

Thanks to our amazing editorial team: Trish Seres, Shelley Wear, Cheryl Kahn, Jack Martin, Lady Grace Belarmino, and Michelle Williams.

Visit [DyslexicAdvantage.movie](https://DyslexicAdvantage.movie)

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## Congratulations to the Karina Eide Young Writers Award winners of 2026!

You are an inspiration to us all.

Thank you for share this beautiful, insightful, and brilliant works. Each one is a little gem.

Special thanks to Philip Schultz and Monica Banks of the award-winning [Writers Studio](#) and Preston Ausbrook of [The Daily Thinker](#). The Daily Thinker is the brain child of Preston who has created an amazing array of quote pads note cards (creativity, courage, gratitude, and more to benefit this program and Dyslexic Advantage programs. Both The Writers Studio and The Daily Thinker have been essential in helping fund the award. Their gifts to the next generation is incalculable. We are so grateful to them.

If you plan to read these award-winning entries with young students, remember to read them first to determine the appropriateness for your particular child.

And congratulations again to these spectacular writers!

Thanks also to the parents and teachers, and others who inspired and supported them to be the amazing people that they are.

Fernette Eide, MD



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These awards are dedicated to our remarkable daughter [Karina Eide](#) who love writing imaginative stories and encouraging others.

**ADDIE, 9**

Windsor Elementary

I would like to thank my teacher Miss Bachman and my horseback riding instructor Miss Erica

**Where I'm From**

I'm from walking and trotting diagonals in the arena.

I'm from jumping.

I'm from the barn cat Ollie.

I'm from my friends at the barn.

I'm from Molly and Jazz and Cesar and Hondo.

I'm from bucking and rearing.

I'm from apples and hay and carrots.

I'm from brushes, blankets, saddles and bridles.

I'm from lead ropes and stirrups and bits.

I'm from helmets and boots and shiny show outfits.

I'm from horseback riding at the barn and back home again.



**HAILEY, 9**  
Dyslexic Edge

I would like thank my mom  
for help with reading,  
writing, and math.

## Spaghetti

One day I was playing with my leftover spaghetti that mom made for the 5th time this week. When suddenly it started to change!

It grew 10 times my size. It grew four legs made of NOODLES!!!! Then, right before my eyes, he grew two garlic bread wings.

He had two meatball horns and meatball eyes. When he started shooting out spaghetti sauce and meatballs, I realized he was a...!!!SPAGHETTI DRAGON!!!

Then, he started to lecture me. "This is why you should eat your spaghetti," said the spaghetti dragon.

**Kahlan, 13**

Homeschool

I would like to thank my friend, Saoirse, and my sister Keela

## Preface

Linden's lungs screamed for air. Her head pounded. Blurry memories swam before her eyes. The water dragged her down away from the surface. Panicked thoughts pounded through her head. *I can't die here.* She silently screamed. *How could this have happened? The Gift Tree was wrong?* She couldn't believe it. *Generations of Silvans had relied upon the Gift Tree, and now...*

Linden forced herself to calm down and think. Panicking would make her breath run out faster. And she didn't even know which way was up. *Follow the bubbles. Follow the light.* Birch's deep voice rang through her mind. Her father's training as a fearless soldier had been strict but she knew it was true. Peering through the dark and murky water Linden searched for a sign of a way to reach the surface. The water stung her eyes but she finally glimpsed a small sliver of light and kicked out trying to reach the surface. But black was pressing at the edge of her vision. Terror seized her chest. She knew she wasn't going to make it. She was going to die here alone. Her family was far away. *There was no way out.*

## The Day Before

Linden sat on her bed and anxiously gazed out the window of her bedroom. The view of the village was slightly obscured by the trees of the forest but she knew that the village she lived in was a beautiful bustling town full of hardworking Silvans.

It was a cool autumn afternoon and gloomy thoughts were racing through Linden's head. Tomorrow was her thirteenth birthday and she would receive a special power at the Gift Tree in the Elder's Hollow. Thirteen Elders who were the siblings of a former king or queen of the Silvan kingdom chose to live and work for the rest of their lives in the Elders Hollow. When a Silvan child turned thirteen they received a magical power from a dead ancestor who had possessed the same ability. But she was distinctly different from all the other Silvans of the forest. *How can I receive a gift if I'm so different?* Linden thought.

Linden was tall, with beautiful long gold-blond hair and striking periwinkle eyes. She was unusual, she knew that. Her hair and eyes were extremely rare. She stood out amongst the dark haired and emerald eyed Silvans of the forest. She was also different

## Kahlan, 13 (continued):

from the other Silvans because she was an only child and all other Silvan families had twins, triplets, quadruplets, or quintuplets.

And tomorrow, on her birthday, she would receive her power, a gift left behind by a long dead ancestor. When a Silvan died, his or her spirit left them and took root inside the Gift Tree in Elder's Hollow and remained there until the chosen descendent's thirteenth birthday and the Silvan child inherited the power for their own. *What if I don't get my power? Will the Elders throw me out of the tribe? What would they do with the powerless thirteen year old girl... What would happen to my parents...* Linden pulled her legs up to her chest and buried her face in her knees, feeling sick. As the unanswerable questions burned through her mind, her stomach roiled at the horrible prospect.

Spore's squeaky Silvish chitter broke Linden's drowning train of thought. Spore was her cute little pet who was a mushturtle. His white spots and red shell were unusual colors for a mushturtle. Most other mushturtles had brown shells and two tiny white mushrooms on either side of their heads. Spore's mushroom ears were red.

Linden lovingly stared down at her beloved pet. Right now she was glad for his company. Although Spore was only the size of a small walnut now, Linden knew he would eventually grow to be the size of a buffalo.

Linden sighed, and her anxiety returned. A gentle hand was laid on her shoulder and she jumped, and turned. Linden's mother and father, Brook and Brich, stood beside her bed. She was surprised, she hadn't heard her parents enter. Linden relaxed as her parents lovedly enfolded her in its grasp. Tomorrow didn't matter. Whatever happened next, her family was by her side.

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## Kam, 14

Woodbine Community  
School

I would like to thank  
my mom and my  
teachers for believing  
in me and  
supporting me.

### The Other Side

I kayak across the lake to where it almost seems like a different place.

There are no cabins on this side of the lake. When I am here it feels like I am exploring a place that no one has ever been.

The reeds and cattails are like a wall. I can hardly see our cabin even though I know right where it is.

Reed clusters form a maze. Sometimes I have to back up and paddle out the way I came in to get to where I am trying to go.

I can't even see the bottom of the lake in some spots, because it looks like it goes down forever.

In other spots the sand looks untouched.

I spy an eagle nest up in a tree. From our cabin you can hardly see the nest, but when I'm across the lake, I can see every detail and stick.

The boats and jet skis sound miles away when I am on this side of the lake. It *feels* like they are miles away when really they are just on the other side of the reeds.

Even on a hot day the air feels cooler here, the wind seems more gentle here.

How can the same lake look and feel so different, just by exploring the other side?

## The Sometimes River



**Lydia, 15**

Jackson Preparatory  
School

I set my bag on the floor of my new room in our new house and grabbed my rain jacket. It was raining, but I still wanted to see the back yard Mom told me about.

Water seeped into my shoes. There was a small stream at my feet.

*Why is there a stream here? Mom didn't mention it.*

An old play castle stood beyond it, so I jumped over the stream to take a look. Suddenly I stood in a meadow full of wildflowers. In the distance towered a stone castle. Behind me, where the stream had been, a thirty-foot-wide river raged. Unicorns ran gracefully across a distant field, their silver manes flowing behind them, diamond horns shining in the sunlight.

*Unicorns? Actual unicorns?*

This had to be a dream. I paced the bank, taking deep breaths. *It's fine. I'll just go up to the castle and find some help.*

When I finally reached the castle's towering gates, a girl with brown hair tied in a loose bun looked through the peephole. She seemed about my age.

"Hello," I waved awkwardly.

"Did my mom send you?" the girl demanded.

"No."

"Good."

A grin broke across her face. "Could you do me a favor and grab the key from behind the loose brick and unlock the door?"

I felt the bricks in the wall and found the loose one.

*Who is this person, and why is she locked in this castle?*

When I unlocked the door, the girl sighed. "Everyone in the castle went on an adventure and locked me in here 'for my own protection.' They wouldn't even tell me where they were going." She rolled her eyes.

"It could be worse. My parents insist on dragging me everywhere."

**LYDIA, 15 (continued):**

“I wish my parents did that.” Her expression looked mournful.

“What’s your name anyway?”

“Emma.”

“I’m Maddie. Nice to meet you, but I really need to find a way home. I was just in my backyard, and then—poof—I was here.”

“That’s easy. All you have to do is cross the Sometimes River.”

“The what?” I asked.

“I’ll show you.”

We walked back down the hill to the meadow where I first appeared, but there was a new problem. The river was gone.

“Oh no!” Emma groaned. “Was it raining in your world?”

“Yeah,” I replied.

“It must have stopped raining in your world causing the river here to dry up”

“So, what do I do about it?” I asked.

Emma looked thoughtful. “You could open the floodgates. The only problem is my dad locked them before he left.”

I climbed back up the bank.

“So, where’s the key?”

“I think it’s in his study.”

For the second time that day, I walked up to the castle. This time, Emma took me inside and showed me her dad’s study

“Now we just have to find the key.”

“Check the drawers.”

“Found it!” I yelled running towards the door.

We ran outside, but when we were halfway to the Sometime River, Emma stopped short.

“Don’t move.” Emma said, her voice trembling.

“What? Why?” I slowly turned around and saw the unicorns from earlier standing behind me. “It’s just a unicorn.”

**LYDIA, 15 (continued)**

We tried, but the unicorns came charging after us. We just barely made it to the control room of the gates and slammed the door. The unicorns rammed the door, but it held firm. Emma stopped to catch her breath.

“What are you waiting for?” I demanded. “Put the key in. That door won’t hold forever.”

She put the key in the lock and turned it. The sound of the crashing water was deafening.

“What do I do now?” I asked.

“You jump.”

“But what about you?”

“I’ll be fine. My parents will be home soon.”

“No way! You need your own adventure. Come with me.”

We both jumped.

Suddenly I was home, my mom calling me inside for dinner. Maybe this new house will be an adventure after all.

As I walked inside for supper, I called to mom

“I met a new neighbor. Can she come eat with us?”

“Yeah, unicorns that can impale you with their horns.”  
*Right.*

“Slowly back away. Then run.”



## Nathan, 15

Georgia  
Connections  
Academy

I would like to  
thank all my  
parkour coaches  
for teaching me all  
the flips and to  
never let an  
obstacle get in my  
way.

### This is What Flipping Feels Like

What others might see  
is recklessness or foolishness  
not something pretty and delicate

What others might see  
is a body thrown into the air without thought without caution or care

What I see  
is the world turning into a blur a wonderfully,  
exhilaratingly, beautiful blur

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*"Summit Center didn't focus on what's wrong with me—they helped me see what's right. I have dyslexia and I'm smart too."*

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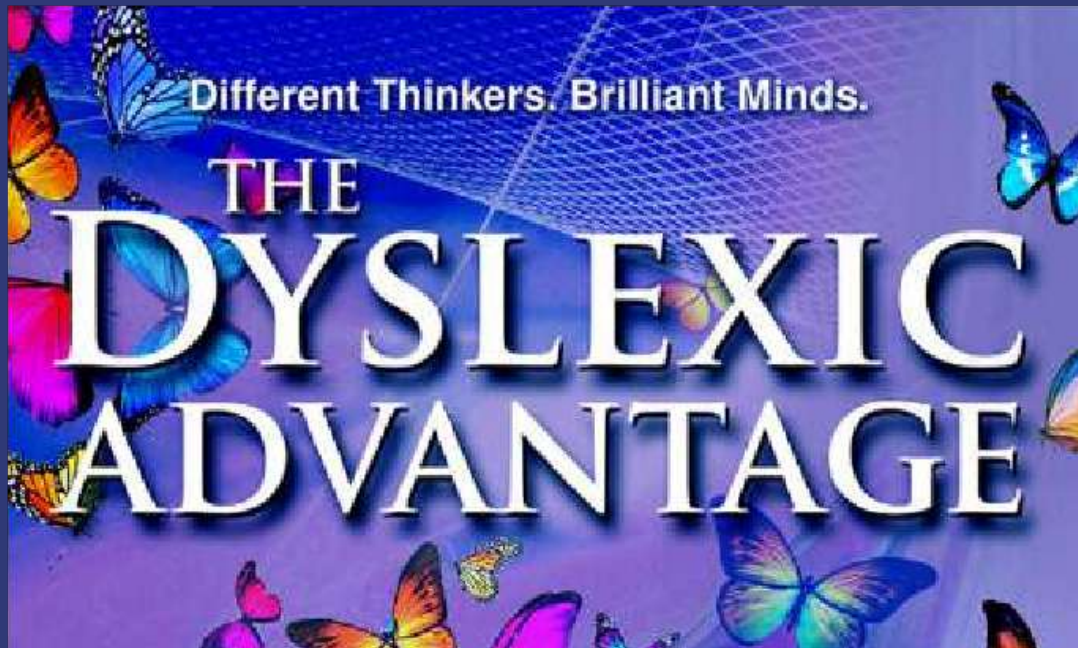
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Posted January 20, 2026 |  Reviewed by Devon Frye



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**Stefan, 15**  
Homeschool

I would like to thank my Mom because she always pushes me to improve and make my writing the best it can be.

## Modern Day Seven in One Blow

Hurry, friends, do as I say, let us all comply: stop our convoys home for every castaway chasing on our city! As for Poseidon, sacrifice twelve bulls to the god at once— the pick of the herds. Perhaps he'll pity us, pile no looming mountain ridge around our port.' The people, terrified, prepared the bulls at once. So all of Phaeacia's island lords and captains, milling round the altar, lifted prayers to Poseidon, master of the sea..."

But the mighty god of the sea was not so easily assuaged, there he stood among the clouds, seething at the praying seafarers like a serpent, slithering through the long grasses, concealed to the hunter who had the misfortune to take his meal...

So the god of raging waters Poseidon raged at the impudence of the Phaeacians. He relished the terror and panic he ensued upon the island people,

"Ha! Foolish mortals, you try to appease the outrage you have wrought! You insects have aided the killer of my son, the traveler Odysseus! And you all shall reap the just reward for your treachery!"

With that, Poseidon plucked the heaviest, most sprawling, sharp crag that he could find... and hurled it, with all the force of the mighty oceans at the Phaeacian port city. The mountain groaned and screamed as it fell, blotting out the sun and the sky. Like a lid closing over a pot, leaving all under shrouded in dank darkness, so the peak smashed the seafaring islanders home.

As the shadow of their black deaths closed over them all, blotting out the light of the sun and the freedom of the sky, all Phaeacians wept and despaired. All the lords scattered from their altars, giving up the prayers to the god that had sealed their dark fate. All crumpled to the ground, sobbing, memories of the ones they held dear flashing through their minds while they sobbed and wailed their final sounds of sorrow.

## Stefan, 15 (continued):

All who could hear or see would have remembered not the shadowy mountain falling from the sky, but the wails and cries of the dead that echoed from the ones beneath the stone... crushed souls crying out in terror.

The lid of the pot pounded down with a deafening boom and crash, the entire earth trembling as the god of earthquakes and waves wore a satisfied smirk, climbing back to the blissful city of Olympus, debts collected...

“Don’t sulk so brother!” chortled Zeus. “I see the mind inside you working! You wish I had let you drop that mountain on those Phaeacians. Cheer up, at least I let you turn the scoundrels ship to stone!”

“Yes yes brother, I know very well to be thankful.” Poseidon, perturbed, responded. “I was only dreaming.”

## Song Thrush



**Rachel, 16**  
Classical Consortium  
and  
Homeschool

The gravel crunched under Mavis's ratty blue converses, the twin stars faded. She pulled her puffy coat closer around her shoulders, hurrying up the driveway to the washed-out, yellow house. The paint of the brown shutters was chipped, and the mail box at the end of the driveway was askew. The door creaked loudly as she opened it, slipping the house key back under the fraying welcome home rug. The house was dark and still... like a massive crypt. She walked down the hall, passing the faded pictures in their dusty frames, the faces of a frail woman and a smaller version of Mavis smiling down on her. The woman was her mother and Mavis always tried to focus on her smile instead of the IV she had in a few of the pictures. The kitchen tile made her shiver, the cold seeping through her socks. She placed her backpack on the rough wooden table. Yellow light shone through the window above the sink, throwing beams across the kitchen. Mavis sighed, seeing the pile of dirty dishes waiting for her.

After pushing a small pile of laundry away from the corner, she found the old, wooden stool with little birds carved into it. The water was cold running over her pale hands. She began to scrub the dishes. After the customary ritual of washing dishes, she dried them, carefully tucking the chipped plates into the low cabinets. On the fridge were a wide range of colorful letter magnets, scattered into nonsensical words, Mavis brushed her fingers over a sticky note reading:

“Will be home late. Leftovers from work in the fridge, love you, little song bird. - Dad”

Inside the fridge, packaged in greasy bags with *Sunny Sundays Diner* printed on them, were big cheese burgers and crispy, overdone fries. Mavis had liked the free food Dad had brought home when she was younger, but now all it did was remind her that he couldn't be home to make her her real food. She left the burgers alone not feeling hungry.

## Rachel, 16 (continued):

The clock hanging over the kitchen seemed to be as loud as the beating of a drum, echoing through the cold kitchen. Mavis rummaged through her backpack, ignoring the A+ and B+ papers and instead pulling out the wrinkled C- sheet. It was a graveyard of math problems slashed by red pen. She leaned over the sheet at the table. Her fingers tapped on the wood in time with the clock. Mavis frowned, her eyes squinting as she scanned the page, lingering on the C-.

The faint crunch of gravel was like an alarm bell in the kitchen. Mavis leapt out of her chair, socked feet thumping across the floorboards down the hall, past the pictures. "Dad?" Mavis called, leaning out the door and looking to the driveway.

But there was no dented Ford pick up with rust on the bumper cooling down in the driveway. The wind whistled into the open door, reminding Mavis that she was the only soul for miles. Surrounding the house were only the sprawling fields littered with round hay bales, and beyond that, the branching forest growing on forever.

The little town of East Perch felt an eternity away.

Mavis startled at the rattling of the gate leading to the hay fields. It was far off from the house and road, but she saw something moving, its figure accentuated by the setting sun. It slipped into the golden field, the shadow inching along as it ran.

Mavis did not take risks, as a general rule. She studied before tests, and always double-checked the stove before bed. But faced with the ticking of the clock down the freezing hallway and the crisp air of the fields painted with sunlight, Mavis barely remembered to pull on her coat before running after the figure.

## The Players

I sit still in my seat.



### Sarah, 16

North Allegheny  
Intermediate High  
School

I would like to thank  
my mom for  
supporting me and  
believing in me and  
Shakespeare for the  
inspiration.

*"All the world's a stage...,  
And one man in his time plays many parts...,  
At first the infant..., then the lover..., then a soldier," Jaques proclaims.*

I spin. I float. I am on stage, in a performance, surrounded by actors and an audience. It is everchanging and before I know it, I am moved on to the next stage and there is nothing I can do about it. I take on and portray so many different roles and characters. There is no stopping the stages of life from passing by and the inevitability of change. I am not only the star of my play, I take part in many other people's stories. In some people's stories I am the sweet little boy, in others the grumpy old man, a kind person, a rude person. In everyone else's story that I am apart of I leave an impact, that being a good positive impact or a negative one and that's how I am seen by the audience as a good or evil character. There is no turning back or changing an action once I have made it because the show never stops, the show must always go on. The cycle of life never stops, no matter what happens.

*"And so he plays his part," Jaques observes.*

No matter what, time keeps moving and I keep acting sometimes not even realizing the change my character is going through. Sometimes in the craziness of life and just trying to make it to the end of the day, waiting for the next scene, waiting for it to get better, time ends up passing before my eyes.

*"Last scene of all,  
That ends this strange eventful history,  
Is second childishness and mere oblivion," Jaques announces.*

Before I know it, I'm not a child anymore. My loved ones have passed and I realize how quickly it goes, how the play keeps going.

And then just like that, it's over.  
I take my final bow and finally realize how precious all of the moments were.

*"Sans everything," Jaques concludes.*

Will they heed my aside?

*Your life is like a play constantly moving on to the new scene and there is nothing you can do to stop that. You will get to act as many characters and make many memories, but there are no redos, no going back and no stopping the cycle of nature.*

## I Believe



### Paige, 18

Johnston High School

I would like to thank my 10th grade ELA teacher for helping me find my love of writing and never doubting me or letting dyslexia hold me back.

After seeing my first code when the patient wasn't able to be saved everyone cleared the room, talking as they left. One went to lunch, another went back to passing meds, one went to get a diet coke from the vending machine. There I stood shocked, out of breath, feeling numb. I had never felt this way before, it confused me. I looked down at my hands still wrapped up in those ugly grey gloves. I felt the sweat underneath built up over the 42 minutes of compressions and life saving measures that just didn't work. I looked back up at the patient who just laid there the collapsed chest: maybe from the ribs that were broken or from their lungs being empty never to be filled again.

It felt cruel to leave this person here like this. This was someone's child, someone's parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, sibling, roommate, friend, coworker, god parent, teammate. This was someone who had lived a whole life with a thousand stories and had dreams they hadn't yet reached and now they would never reach them.

I knew it was my job to clean the patient up and prepare the body for the morgue to come get them, so they could be delivered to their final resting place. Of course I learned how to do this, but over videos. I had never seen this done or done it myself. I always thought I would be prepared for this but now that the time has come I couldn't move. But this was my job. I knew I needed to do this, so I went through the steps with a few hot tears rolling down my face.

One day a few months later, I was trying to eat my dinner during an overnight shift, it was 01:30 am. I was sitting in the break room with our charge nurse who I also happened to be close friends with. I was pushing around the chicken and rice that my mom had made for dinner. It was another dinner I had missed out on because I was sleeping trying to get some rest before my shift.

## HIGH HONORS

**Elliott, 10**

Lab School of  
Washington DC

would like to thank  
the Lab School for all  
their help!

**St. Simon's**

The beach winds were so strong that even the seagulls couldn't fly.  
The hotel smelled like daisies.

The water in the pool was like the ocean and every beach was like  
walking on flower petals.

The snow cones were the best thing I tasted in a long time.  
Imagine the candy store.

Only three cents!

Nerds, fake candy cigarettes, bubblegum...

The restaurants there are full of shellfish.

We jumped off rocks into the ocean and looked at the fish beneath the  
surface.

The water was so cold even the fish couldn't feel it!

## HIGH HONORS

**Lena, 11**

Lab School of  
Washington DC

I would like to thank  
Amy Young, my  
poetry teacher.

**Three-Toed Sloth**

napping in a tree  
as you can see  
three toed sloth  
looking at me  
eating hibiscus tree leaves  
for brunch  
black nose, long nails  
and fur as brown as tree bark  
climbing high above the branches  
slower and slower  
three toed sloth  
you complete me.

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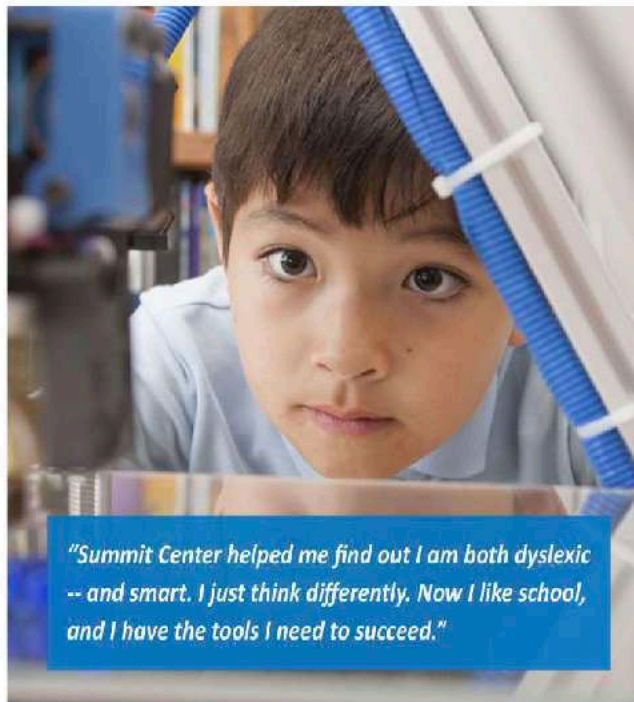
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*"Summit Center helped me find out I am both dyslexic -- and smart. I just think differently. Now I like school, and I have the tools I need to succeed."*

## HIGH HONORS



### Mabel, 11

Lab School of  
Washington

I would like to  
thank my Authors  
and Illustrators  
Teacher Amy  
Young

### Who Am I?

I am the sun in the day and moon at night. I am a  
cake.

I am the voice of my ancestors. I  
am the eyes of my sister.

I am the name of my father.

I am the soup my mother makes.

I am the glasses of my grandfather.

I am the sweet heart of my grandmother. I am the  
speed of light.

I am the sweet voice my mother has. I am  
the biscuits my sister makes.

I am  
Glinda.

I am  
Elphaba.

I am a dead animal.

I am the ocean.

## HIGH HONORS



## Addison, 12

Lab School of  
Washington

I would like to thank Miss Amy for teaching me about poetry and my parents for always being there for me. I also want to thank Mac, the pony, for making me feel better when school is tough.

## My Delights

*after the Delight Song of Tsoai-Tailee by N. Scott Momaday*

I am no school and freedom

I am bare trees and the air  
blowing I am me and my horse  
together

I am painting while watching  
TV I am a cake pop from  
Starbucks I am a strawberry  
acai lemonade

I am a freshly warmed oatmeal raisin  
cookie I am freshly baked easy-bake  
sugar cookies I am riding through a field  
on my horse

I am the TV listening to the warm glow of the  
screen I am fresh grass

I am blossoming flowers right after the winter freeze

I am Christmas with pretty wrapped presents right under the tree

I am alive

I stand in good relationship with the animals of this  
world I am in good relationship with my family

I am in good relationship with the Earth

I'm in good relationship with my horse

I am alive

## HIGH HONORS



### Jackson, 13

Homeschool

I would like to thank  
my tutor Shaynee  
Sherwood for always  
believing in me and  
encouraging me.

### Life in the Country

When I go out to the pasture  
I take my fishing pole with me  
As I'm walking towards our pond  
I hear my stubborn, noisy, and lovable donkey braying and the  
Screeching hawks are circling over my head  
They won't leave me alone!  
I see armadillos that look like they are wearing armour  
Mean snapping turtles that look like  
They are carrying a shield on their back

I see cranes that are being crooks by  
Stealing the fish out of our pond  
I see a beaver's dam  
Clogging up part of the pond  
I guess we are all trying to fish

I see copperhead and cottonmouth snakes  
I see big bullfrogs and coyotes

I'm so glad I live in the country

## HIGH HONORS

**Liv, 13**Lab School of  
WashingtonI would like to thank  
Amy Young**Woman in the Blanket**

Every day I look out the window of my bus. Through neighborhoods and past schools, I stare. I examine, people watch, take in the world around me. Some things are different, most stay the same. The sky is always blue, the trees are always still, and the buildings have not walked away in the night. But the people's faces are always changing as their feet are always moving. Though, there is one face I can always rely on. The woman in the blanket. Every morning we speed by Santa Anna church and I see her face, but she has never seen mine. A woman without a home lying there alone, huddled in her blanket, wishing for warmth. I only wish she was me, sitting with a friend every morning. I wonder how it must feel to pray for warmth on the doorsteps of God. Sometimes she speaks to herself, lord knows what. It is the prayer, I imagine. Or, it is her brain that can stand no more of her suffering and so she screams and whispers to herself, waving her fist at the universe and all those that pass her by.

**Stella, 9**

The Christ School

I would like to thank my mom for inspiring me to be an author when I grow up.

**Cavities Forever**

There once were three sisters eating dinner. After they were done eating dinner, they decided to take a walk in the park. While they were walking, they saw a magical portal open in front of them. They went inside the portal, and as they arrived, they were shocked to see candy everywhere. They were very scared when they heard gummy bears talking. One gummy bear saw them and came over to say, “Can you help us?” The three sisters said, “What?” The gummy bear said, “We need your help saving us from the vegetables. Parents are making kids eat their vegetables, and they’re trying to take over Candyland.” The three sisters said, “That’s terrible! We’ll do it!”

**Ezra, 10**

Lab School of  
Washington

I would like to thank  
Mrs. Amy Young for  
being so supportive and  
my family and friends  
who help me be  
creative and  
expressive.

**Gingerbread**

It's snowing on the grass.  
The mouse is eating fast!!!  
It's snowing on the rat  
in the raggly-paggly hat  
The cat eats some snow,  
that turns out to be dough.  
The dog chases the cat  
down the gingerbread road.  
Wait, oh no!  
It's the gingerbread man.  
He's being chased by the whole town!!  
And powdered sugar is falling down.  
Now the mouse (as large as a house) wants to play!  
So they follow the gingerbread man as fast as they can.  
And the gingerbread road cracks as they run and they run.  
Until nothing is left but gingerbread crumbs.



## Keela, 10

Homeschool

I would like to thank  
my sister because she  
helped me pick which poem  
from my collection to enter.

### Our Great God

He makes the mountains bow down,  
And makes the waters rise.  
In a mighty promise,  
He ran a rainbow across the sky.  
Look up in the heavens,  
You see him standing there.  
In his wondrous glory,  
His triumph's in the air.

**Zora, 10**

Lab School of  
Washington

I would like to thank  
Ms. Amy Young

**Beyond the Iron Gate**

What's behind the iron gate if no one has been behind the iron gate?  
Old man James said, "A cat with one eye is beyond the iron gate."  
The Billy twins said it was a pink castle behind the iron gate.  
But my mom said there's nothing behind the iron gate.  
And my dog said that it was a sausage behind the iron gate.  
And I said, "What's behind the iron gate?"  
So I went behind the iron gate.  
I saw a cat one night. I saw a castle too  
and I saw so many cotton candy trees.  
What do you think is behind the iron gate?  
Oh, and I saw you too.  
And that's what's behind the Iron Gate.



**Carlota, 11**

Lab School of Washington

I would like to thank my family for supporting me, my friends for never getting bored when I share my ideas, and my teacher Amy for sparking my passion for writing, and my grandparents for believing in me.

### **Together**

We dance together  
We sing together  
We live together  
We nurture together  
We cry together  
We'll die together  
We laugh together  
We take care together  
We go through love and despair together  
We'll go somewhere together  
We do whatever together  
We sing and sway together  
We spend our time together  
We live our lives together  
We understand the world together  
We work together  
This is our home and we're all here together

## HONORS



### Elizabeth, 12

Denver School of the Arts

I would like to thank my  
mom and my cat.

#### I Followed My Cat

I looked at my cat as he sat on my lap

The way he spends his days No work, all play!

I thought on a whim, How to be like him?

Cats have so few worries But I'm always in a hurry!

Cats eats treats

But I have to eat my mom's meat!

I have so much homework But cats have no work!

So I followed my cat In the sun he sat

I am warm as I lay

I could do this all day!

I followed my cat as he sat on the mat

I'll go out on limb

To say this isn't so grim!

I began to worry It all feels blurry!

I followed my cat As he ate his snack

**HONORS****Elizabeth, 12 (continued):**

I followed my cat

As he sat like a bat

I began to worry It all feels blurry!

I followed my cat As he ate his snack

It tastes like raw meat This isn't too sweet!

I followed my cat as he chased a rat

The rat seemed to smirk

I thought i was going to Jerk

But I realized something... I'm not a cat  
that sat in the sun!

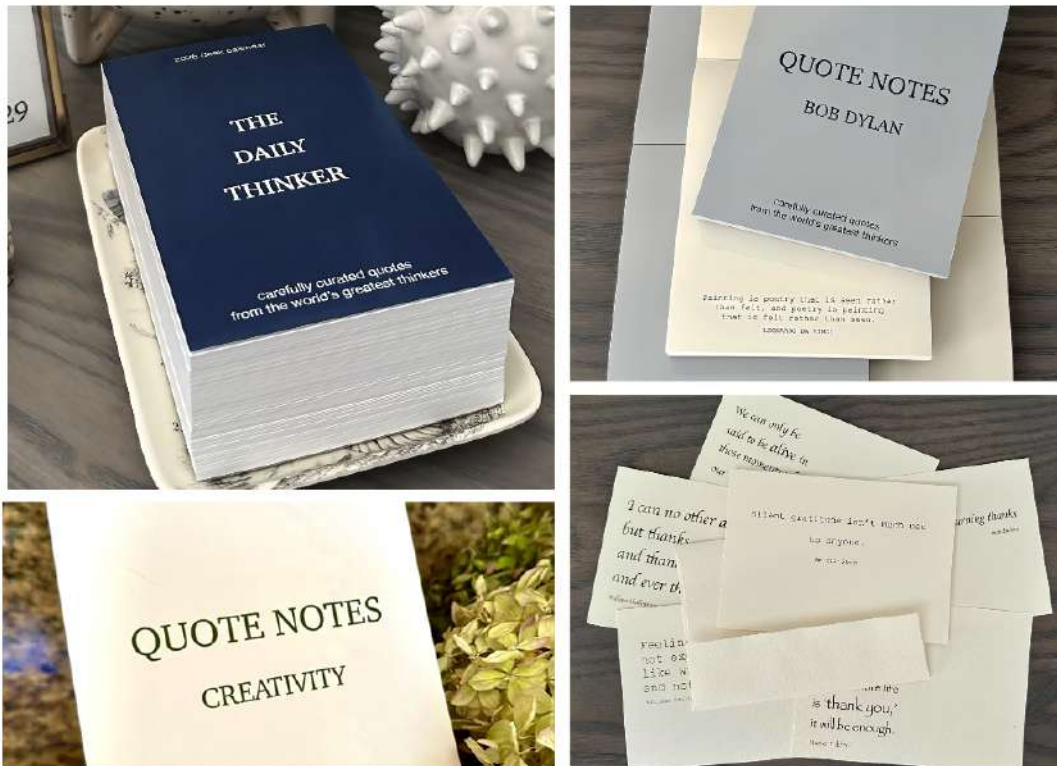
I'm not a cat that sat on the mat!

I'm not a cat that sat like a bat!

I'm not a cat that ate her snack!

I'm not a cat that chased a rat!

I'm Just not a cat!



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## Henry, 12

Lab School of Washington

I would like to thank my  
creative writing teacher  
Ms. Amy for supporting  
me.

### Mourning Doves Low and High

One mourning dove as soft as silk  
And as pale as snow.

Perched on a branch of a  
Maple hanging low

Cooing softly  
As people pass by

Another coo is heard nearby,  
It's another mourning dove,

The only difference is It's flying high up in the sky.

## HONORS



### Jack, 12

Crocker Middle  
School

Self-reflection is hard, when there are so many reminders that I am not “normal” when a part of me, my dyslexia, feels like it is drowning me. Explaining this feeling is much easier, when I give myself a little distance; ironically, the more unreal the story, the more I can express my real feelings.

I want to thank my teacher Lynne Shepherd for finding me a way to express how it feels to be dyslexic through the eyes of a fish.

### Life as a Fish

Lynda Hunt, in her book Fish in a Tree, said, "Everyone is smart in different ways. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will spend its whole life thinking that it's stupid." Well, there once was a fish who thought exactly like that.

In a big, blue world, there lived a fish named Bob who had a pet rock named Blob. He wistfully watched the other creatures from a distance, wondering what it felt like to have friends.

He turned to Blob and whispered, “If only I could swim like a dolphin, be as beautiful as a jellyfish, or be as good a problem solver as an octopus, I wouldn’t feel so lonely.” Blob was silent. “ Everyone admires the octopus, dolphin, and jellyfish more than me.” If a fish could cry, Bob would have bawled his eyes out. Blob started back blankly.

The Oceanic YouTube Channel announced pompously that the octopus was the chess master, the dolphin was the best swimmer, and the jellyfish was the Supreme Supermodel of the Underwater Runway. Although he knew that not all the other animals got prizes, his fins drooped as the others celebrated, and he drifted to the back of the crowd with Blob. They seemed so carefree and were able to do everything, whereas he struggled with the simplest things, like writing his own name. Because he struggled with spelling, the other fish bullied him. To cope with his pain, he would he would hide in the storage closet. He didn’t dare share any of his struggles with the other creatures. How could he? It would only make him look weak.

One day, when he was in school, his favorite teacher found him in the storage closet and teasingly said, “Bob, you worry so much, you must be afraid of drowning.” Little did his teacher know how detrimental this comment would..

## HONORS

This small comment tipped Bob's head upside down; Bob had always overthought everything, so the joke stuck in his mind like a hook. He completely forgot about breathing automatically. He focused all of his energy on breathing in and out, barely moving in a straight line. After that, he hung out with Blob on the other side of the reef. His scales turned dimmer and dimmer.

Every day, he felt smaller and smaller and more nervous. He stopped swimming and ended up just floating aimlessly. While he was there, he saw the animals differently. The octopus was taking all of the seaweed, the dolphin was bullying the jellyfish, and the jellyfish took the seaweed back to the other animals. He realized that no one was perfect. Watching them Bob realized something important: everyone struggled, even the ones who won the prizes. His scales started to become brighter and brighter.

Then one day, he saw another dull fish hanging out by himself. This fish looked exactly like him. He realized that he was not the only fish having these same feelings of loneliness and negative self-worth.

"Hi," Bob said bravely.

"H-hi, " the other fish responded timidly. "I'm Fr-ed."

It was terrifying to talk to another fish. It was terrifying to talk to someone who is just like him. Talking to someone who had the same fears and same differences, made all his differences seem more apparent. He wanted to hide from Fred. He thought "Two idiot fishes together are more noticeable than one."

But then he thought that he would have to be alone again, and he didn't want to have those same feelings. Maybe, just maybe he could take a chance and see what being himself with another person felt like.

He talked to Fred every day, slowly building a connection. Bob and Fred realized that not everyone is good at everything. Bob started to not feel so small anymore and realized that he was breathing fine. He had started to worry less about everything.

Over time, Bob understood that he wouldn't ever win the juggling awards, the swimming awards, or the most beautiful awards like other animals, but he found his own talents in making friends. He never did win a trophy, but his prize was being surrounded by his friends, family, and community.



**Bella, 13**  
Harmony Middle  
School

I would like to thank Ms. Shaynee Sherwood for always helping me write and encouraging me to submit my writing.

### **Bye Bye Balloon**

I got filled up with helium. I think I was at a birthday party. It was outside, so I thought I was going to move a lot, but then someone let go of me, and I flew up to the clouds. I saw a rainbow and I saw trees. I saw the little people below me. They were sad that I blew away, but then I saw something I have never seen before! It was a bird! It flew right into me, and I popped! And I dropped back down to the bottom. And then someone picked me up and threw me right into the trash. They said I'm in Italy.

## HONORS



## Isabella, 13

The Cambridge School

I would like to thank my family for their love, and my teachers at The Cambridge School. I have been a student here since 4th grade, and this community has helped

### The Fragrant Hush

Fall soft and fall slow all around like hushed snow  
Fleeting beauty  
shedding their petals

A pink blizzard surrounds me as I feel like I've been  
reborn As most moments like this are yet the  
shortest

The mind in the present moment here and now That exact petal,  
that exact breeze

Pale velvety blossoms drift to the ground

As the violence of the wind takes them away like pink breath in the breeze

Only for more to rain down upon my head

Cherish this moment as you only miss something once its gone

While the flowers get all the glory the bark remains

The flowers are the main attraction but when they vanish the tree stands alone I  
look to the ground at the pink sea beneath my feet

Just standing in the of beauty floods my mind with peace The  
season nears its end

So I wish farewell to cherry blossoms with a heartfelt goodbye

Until next year when they bloom once more

**HONORS****Zach, 13**

Lab School of  
Washington

would like to thank  
Ms. Amy for doing  
his kind of writing.

**The Red Door**

I see him open the very red door, A house different from the  
others Sky blue around a sea of brick and red. He pulls out his  
key but wait! Before he closes it he grabs the newspaper. He  
looks at the main headline and chuckles, Then locks his door,  
walks down the stairs, And starts to run.

## HONORS



**Lachlan, 14**  
Homeschool

I would like to thank my mom and my guineas fowl who inspired this story.

### The Return of the Guineas (An Excerpt)

A lone guinea is a dead guinea. No guinea should be left by itself because they will mourn until they die. He was like that. Bob, a brother to five, was the last to die. He would not die to a fox or break his neck by flying into a fence or be shot, like the others, but he would die because of grief and loneliness. One day this all changed.

Bob lived on a large farm with many acres to roam. On this property, obstacles abounded. Long and tall fences would separate the flock from each other. Buildings blocked their view and were sometimes used to imprison them. On top of it all, the featherless stompers, which are what the guineas called humans, were always petting them and trying to hold or herd them to places they didn't want to go. But of course Bob didn't have to worry about fences and buildings separating him from his siblings anymore. They were all dead. His only obstacle was loneliness. All his siblings had been picked off, one by one. Each unfortunate accident left him one sibling less until he was the last one alive. He was distraught.

One day Bob was standing next to the chickens, when what he called a rumble box came up the thunder path. The box was long and slender with an H on the front. It's the one the family of featherless stompers called the minivan. Inside were the two male featherless stompers of the family. The rumble box crawled over to the house and stopped. Then the featherless stompers got out. They opened the back and took out a box. Afterwards, they carried it over to Bob's hut.

Usually, Bob and his siblings would scamper excitedly to the rumble box to greet the featherless stompers. Announcing to the world their arrival, they would scream and yell with their loud squawks and barks. This time he didn't care though. He wanted his siblings back.

Soon, his favorite featherless stomper called to him, but Bob didn't want to come. The stomper kept calling though, so Bob finally obliged and mournfully walked to find him. The featherless stomper led Bob to his hut. Bob didn't want to go over because it reminded him of his siblings and how they would never be together again.

## HONORS

He looked around, but didn't see anything, then suddenly, he heard something! He ambled into the hut. There was another bird! It was a guinea! It was several guineas!

"Hi, I'm Sora. What's your name?" chirped a light brown and purple guinea

"My name is Bob," babbled the bewildered guinea.

"Hi Bob, this is Greta and Snowfall" replied Sora as she gestured with her wing to two gray guineas with white spots.

Bob was overjoyed because he could now be part of a flock with birds of the same feather.

Soon it was roosting hour, so they jumped onto their roosting bars to sleep. The next morning the guineas woke up to the sound of Bob's featherless stomper opening the door of their hut. They all flew down at the same time and got stuck in the doorway.

"Ouch Bob! You're squishing me," yelled Snowfall

"Sorry, but you're on my wing!" said Bob "I can't move!"

"Bob, can you get off the top of the pile?" asked Sora

"No I can't." said Bob "My wing is stuck under Snowfall."

"Greta, you're on the bottom of the pile.

Do you think you could get out because then we can all fall down and get unstuck." suggested Sora.

"Ok, I'll try," answered Greta

Greta rotated one of her feet to the ground, so she could push herself out from under the pile. Her other foot was stuck behind Sora. She got into position and gave a tremendous heave. All the guineas tipped and toppled. They landed on the ground groaning.

"Ouch" said Bob "My side hurts."

"My leg hurts," whimpered Sora.

"Wait! Where are we?" screamed Greta, "This isn't home!"

Sora, Greta and Snowfall immediately started yelling "Where are we? What is this place? This isn't home!"



## Morea, 16

**DC Everest  
Senior High**

I would like to thank my parents for supporting me and always believing in me.

### Where I'm From

I am from the pictures that hang above my bed filled with friends and family from legos and my room that I designed and built

I am from a ranch house that smells like whatever candle scent is being burnt I am from the aloe plant that is slowly dying in my room

The maple tree whose long gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.

I'm from Christmas pajamas and sibling gift exchanges from mom and dad I'm from going to each others events and watching movies and from traveling to see family

I'm from skiing with papa as a little kid and not assigned but assigned seats in the car and my parents saying shine your light as they drop us off for different activities or school

I'm from reading the Christmas story before opening presents I'm from St. Clare's Hospital and Wisconsin to Indiana coffee cake on Christmas morning

From thinking I will never have cousins to gaining 4 in 5 years and loving them with my whole heart

To having pictures on a wall in the basement featuring our family trip to South Dakota I am from a busy family who loves each other with all their heart

## HONORS



### Gianna, 17

Napa High

My parents for giving me support from day one after being diagnosed with dyslexia. I also want to thank my amazing cat Zuse.

### The Neighbors

Roger is an average guy who lives in an apartment next to a mysterious neighbor. One night, Roger hears noises coming from the other side of his shared wall. Radio static and dialed stations seem to jump all over the place. Because he's had a long day of work at the Veterans' Affairs Office, Roger reminds himself to breathe and give his neighbor James a break. He figures James will realize the issue soon enough. When Roger goes to sleep that night, it's silent, and he concludes James must've fixed it. He is proven wrong when he's woken up early by a random blast of a sports reporter screaming. Overwhelmed and frantic, he assumes James must have heard it by now, so he gets up to shower. Then, Roger goes to his last day of work before the weekend and meets his fellow veterans for their counseling sessions. When he returns home late, he is happy to hear the silence. Sighing, he goes to crash on the couch when he hears the disturbance again. This time, it's a trashy pop song, followed by static and a horrible humming noise. He decides that's it, tomorrow at a reasonable hour, he will go over and see what the hell is up with this guy.

That next morning, he showers, gets dressed, and walks straight out his door to James's.

He knocks on James' door and shuffles his feet while waiting for him to answer. He begins cataloging the disturbances, and he thinks of the unpredictable radio interrupting his sleep, keeping him awake at night, and interrupting his thoughts. Lost in his head, he flinches back into reality when James opens the door. The first thing he notices is the bags under his sunken eyes, and then his gaze travels lower to his dog tags. He notes to himself that this guy is probably a veteran, and that maybe there's an explanation for this whole thing. Feeling guilty, he takes a new approach and puts on a smile as he introduces himself as James's neighbor. James seems tired, but greets him back nonetheless. Then, Roger breaks the ice by telling James he's been hearing his radio act up a lot. James gets the message and starts nervously apologizing as he

## HONORS

fidgits with his hands, anxiously explaining himself. Roger notices his discomfort and stops him, casually telling him he doesn't have to worry about it or explain at all. But James persists and slowly builds up to telling Roger that he didn't even notice the radio. James goes on to say that it sits on a table which is at the far end of the apartment, against the wall they both share.

Continuing, James reveals that he had a PTSD episode, and Roger suddenly connects this to the dog tags he noticed on his neighbor earlier.

James goes on to say that PTSD has hit him pretty rough these past couple of days, and he would only get up to use the bathroom. Upon hearing this, the counselor in Roger immediately kicks in, and he offers his understanding by telling him reassuringly not to worry about it. Then, he kindly offers to come inside the apartment to see if they can fix his radio.

James agrees, then moves out of the way as he gestures for Roger to enter. By the time they end up fixing it, they are both hungry and tired, so they decide to just order in.

As they eat and talk, they discover how many things they have in common, and Roger realizes just how much he can help James. Roger reveals to James that he's a veteran, and James tells him he figured he was. From this point, they form the beginning of a strong bond. James even opens up to him about a few of the things that have been occupying his mind recently, and explains the dishes in the sink and the empty cups everywhere.

These two share many more hangouts, and eventually, Roger introduces James to his own friends and gets him into the Veterans' Affairs office for counseling. All thanks to a broken radio, James is able to slowly immerse himself in society once again.

# CONGRATULATIONS!!

## UNIQUE VOICE

Unique Voice Award Winners had at least one judge nominate their work for the highest rating.

Kate, 10, The Emerald Lake  
Eloise, 11, Cardiff  
Megan, 11, Life  
Nahliel, 11, T-rex  
Anais, 12, The Elephant Way  
Anna, 12, The Great Turtle Rescue!  
Kat, 12, To See a Crow Sing  
Samuel, 14, The Hangar

## EMOTIONAL TRUTH

Emotional Truth Award winners were cited for their strong empathy and compassion

Presley, 9, Everyone is beautiful in their own way  
Tristan, 13, Outcast's Revenge  
Sophia, 17, Tired of Hopeless

## SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Special Recognition award winners were cited for a wide range of excellences in writing.

Emery, 8, Dream Secret Hideout  
Alexander, 10, Tim Goes to the Pool  
Everett, 11, Animal Thoughts  
Livia, 11, Ode to Stockings  
Ian, 13, Bleep Blorps Adventure  
Mya, 13, The World is Your Stage  
Harry, 14, Life is Worth More Than Gold



"Find what causes a commotion in your heart.  
Find a way to write about that."

- Richard Ford