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Creative expression

First-place District 214 and Daily Herald Community Art and Writing Contest winners

Daily Herald report

Northwest Suburban High School District 214 has announced the winners of the Arts Unlimited District 214 and Daily Herald Community Art and Writing Contest.

The annual contest invites residents of the school district — which encompasses Arlington Heights, Buffalo Grove, Elk Grove Village,

Mount Prospect, Prospect Heights, Rolling Meadows and Wheeling — to submit their original prose, poetry or artwork.

Judges chosen by District 214 evaluate the work and name first-, second- and third-place winners. The winners are published in the Daily Herald and recognized at the district's Arts Unlimited Reception, which is being held virtually this year.

This year's winners for first place are: Benny Ortiz Galicia, Dennis F. Depcik and Martin McGowan; for second place, Megan Stefens, Bev Ottaviano and Joe Lynn; and for third place, Emily DePaz, Janani Venkat Ramanan and Alexis Petrielli.

This year's judges were Jonathan Pruc, an artist, District 214 alumnus and art teacher at

Mundelein High School, in the visual art category; Bill Leece, a retired English and journalism teacher, in the prose category; and Jan Botigliero, a writer, poet and editor for the poetry annual Rhino, in the poetry category.

The first-place winners will publish today; the second-place winners on Friday; and the third-place winners on Sunday.

First place, Prose: 'Things Happen'

BY DENNIS F. DEPCIK
Buffalo Grove

Judge's comment: Read the first line, and you're hooked. "Maggie, it doesn't mean anything." And so we continue reading, wondering if that's true. The piece ends with an intriguing image: Maggie just standing there in the middle of the door frame, as if the frame is holding her in place. This is a well-crafted story; with its omens and superstitions, it's a bit reminiscent of Stephen King.

"Maggie, it doesn't mean anything!"

I inch closer to her on the couch and place my arm around her shoulder. She stiffens to my touch and resists as I try to pull her to me.

"Look," I tell her. "It just happened. That's all. Don't make more out of it than that."

Maggie continues to sit upright in silence, staring at the floor — not looking at me, and perhaps not even hearing me.

I let out a deep sigh as I pull her tighter.

"Maggie, come on. It's nothing!"

She shakes her shoulder free from my arm and leans back, resting her head on the cushions of the couch, looking up now at the ceiling.

"No, Dennis, it does mean something. Things like this don't just happen."

Maggie sits up again, rigid and with a lost look in her eyes, as if she's the only one in this room. I gently touch her cheek to comfort her, but she brushes my hand away. Exasperated, I grab both of her shoulders and turn her to face me.

"Why are you doing this to yourself?"

Maggie slowly closes her eyes as tears begin to well, then turns her head from me.

Not knowing what else to do, I rise quickly from the couch and, saying nothing, walk to the kitchen.

I rummage through the "drawer that has everything" and grab the roll of tape. Carrying it in one hand and dragging a kitchen chair with the other, I return to the archway of the living room. Maggie remains seated, arms limp on her knees and head down. She glances up as I stand beneath the "Welcome Home Daddy" sign with the pink and blue crepe paper and balloons that she made this afternoon to surprise me. Bending over, I reach to the floor and pick up the white knit booties.

I place the chair beneath the sign, step up, and triple tape the booties in the exact spot they once hung. Still on the chair, I hop completely around to face Maggie, catching my balance as I teeter to my left. Stable again, I stretch my arms out to my sides and proclaim "Ta-Dah!" for my simple solution to end this drama that has been unfolding for the past twenty minutes.

A hint of a smile creases Maggie's face as I step down, sit next to her and again place my arm around her shoulders, gently pulling her toward me.

Maggie rests her head on my chest, sighs deeply and says,

"It's an omen, Dennis."

Apparently it's not over.

In utter frustration and in hopes of moving past this senseless superstition, I plead with Maggie,

"Look! Can we please get back to where we were before this happened?"

She knows from the tone of my voice that my empathy is losing its battle with my patience and agrees to continue the ritual of going through the litany of baby names that neither of us seem to be able to agree upon. But I can tell that Maggie isn't here right now as she furtively glances at the white booties hanging securely on the sign, believing they will fall again while willing them to stay there.

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First place, Visual Art: 'Always Forever'

Judge's comment: Good art raises more questions than answers. This piece definitely makes you think. It is a beautifully rendered drawing that also has a social commentary. The facial expression and the hands are skillfully depicted in a realistic manner while the background and tentacles are playfully illustrative, resulting in a wonderful juxtaposition.



"Always Forever," Benny Ortiz Galicia, Elk Grove Village

First place, Poetry: 'Spring Flowers'

BY MARTIN MCGOWAN
Arlington Heights

Judge's comment: I love ekphrastic poetry — that is, poems written about a work of art — and this poem is an example of why. We don't even need to have seen the painting that the poem describes; lush words and phrases like languor, flower-figured, and crumbs of pastel hint at the style and richness of the art. The poet doesn't merely describe the painting, but shares the timeless feeling that the art evokes. The reader reading the poem identifies with the poet gazing at art, as we realize that the poem is about art itself, more than just one painting.

Spring Flowers

(Peonies Wm. Merritt Chase, Terra Foundation collection)

A common yet ritual moment captured.

Japonisme artifice of course — the kimono wraps a counterfeit geisha, the sister of the artist's wife.

With exquisite languor, drooped arm with still fan, red-orange flower-figured kimono reflected in the brass vase, the woman's slender neck bends to a peony's fragrance.

Beauty bows to beauty.

Yet we know all beauty bows to time. Kimono, flowers, vase, fan and woman

now are shredded threads, compost, scrap or dust.

It has begun within the image: peony petals faded and fallen upon the soft green cloth.

This fragile work itself will bow.

The paper weakens, wrinkles, fades in light, flakes and sheds its colors.

Crumbs of pastel, shaken by footsteps, jarred by movement, fall behind the glass.

The artist, his vision and the work itself will vanish as have the peonies.

Forest Preserves of Cook County celebrates Earth Day

Submitted by Forest Preserves of Cook County

Cook County Board and Forest Preserves of Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle joined Forest Preserves General Superintendent Arnold Randall and Commissioners Sean Morrison, Bridget Degnen and Donna Miller at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center to announce a weeklong celebration of Earth Day in the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

Throughout the program, speakers shared information on an array of programs and opportunities being hosted by the preserves throughout the week.

The Forest Preserves is hosting Earth Week events through Sunday, April 25. Visitors can join in a self-guided wildflower walk, help clear invasive plants, join in on Earth Day trivia and more. The Forest Preserves is also hosting litter cleanup events on Earth Day through the weekend.

At nine Litter Hotspots, the Preserves will provide bags and gloves for anyone who wants to give back to natural areas by helping keep them clean.

"Since COVID-19 turned our world askew, we've been reminded of how much



Volunteers are needed from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. Sunday, April 25, at Sagawau Environmental Learning Center in Lemont to pull invasive garlic mustard.

outdoor spaces and nature means to our health and our spirit. Whether or not you join in a scheduled event, I encourage everyone to plan a visit to your local preserve or explore someplace new in the nearly 70,000 acres of Forest Preserves in Cook County," said Preckwinkle.

The event included a brief wildflower walk to see spring ephemerals like marsh marigold, Virginia bluebell and spring beauty at Sagawau Canyon Nature Preserve, one of 26 designated Illinois Nature Preserves in the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

The site has benefitted from ecological restoration work, part of the 14,000 acres under active restoration in the Forest Preserves.

"Every day is Earth Day for the Forest Preserves. Healthy ecosystems help plants like our beautiful spring ephemerals and wildlife from foxes to frogs to local and migrating birds. And these healthy natural areas make our air and water cleaner and make our region more resilient in the face of climate change," said Randall.

The trees and other plants growing in the Forest



Create a cute native animal out of recycled materials, learn how to go greener in your cleaning, pick up supplies to clean up a preserve or neighborhood park and/or start a native plant to take home for your garden in a Mini Earth Day Celebration on Sunday, April 25, at Crabtree Nature Center in Palatine.

Preserves are estimated to absorb more than 1.5 million metric tons of CO2 from the atmosphere annually — as much greenhouse gas as produced by about 330,000 cars in an average year.

As more land comes under active restoration, the Preserves' capacity to sequester

CO2 will increase, further helping to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Beyond Earth Week, anyone can commit to regularly volunteering in the Forest Preserves through opportunities like the Select Organized Litter Obliterators (SOLO) program. SOLO volunteers collect litter

on their own, or with a small group of family or friends, at one of the Litter Hotspots or any Forest Preserves location they choose. Explore even more opportunities to join the volunteer community at fpdcc.com/volunteer.

Learn more about Earth Day programs at fpdcc.com.

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Saving You Time & Money for What Matters Most

Visit our new Vernon Hills location at 175 E Hawthorn Pkwy.

0.50% APY¹

Business Money Market

Tier Two: \$10,000.00+ 0.50% APY

Tier One: \$0.00 - \$9,999.99 0.00% APY

¹ Business Money Market Account Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is accurate as of April 13, 2021. During the first 6 months, the introductory APY is fixed at 0.50%. After the introductory period has ended, the interest rate on your account will be renewed into the Business Relationship Money Market Account. The minimum balance required to open and obtain the stated APY is \$10,000. New money only. This is a tiered account. This is a variable rate account. A \$30 monthly fee will be imposed every statement cycle if the balance in this account falls below \$10,000 any day of the cycle. Fees could reduce earnings. Activity restrictions may apply. Speak to a banker for details, fees and terms.

0.57% APY²

12 Month CD

² The Certificate of Deposit Annual Percentage Yield (APY) is accurate as of April 13, 2021. The minimum balance required to open and obtain the APY is \$1,000. New money only. This is a 12 month term. A penalty may be imposed for early withdrawal. Fees could reduce earnings on the account. Offer may be withdrawn at any time without notice. Automatically renews at maturity. FDIC insured up to \$250,000. Speak to a banker for details, fees and terms.



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