

News Release

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Contact: Lora W. Jones

Call: 908.735.4271

Rural Awareness Names Franklin Essay Winners

Hunterdon County – Six winners of the fifth annual Rural Awareness Scholar Award essay competition in Franklin Township were presented awards at Franklin’s End-of-School Assemblies in June. All winners submitted PowerPoint essays with photographs.

Third grade winners are Gabrielle Lamer, first place, and Alice Lundgren, second. Fourth grade winners are Brittany Marcantuono, first place, and Adam Coe, second. Fifth grade winners are Cole Salemo, first place, and Sky Gonzalez, second; both added voice-over audio to their essays. Brittany is a repeat winner, having won second place last year for her grade.

The winning essays were chosen from a field of 93 entrants from classes taught by Joan Kot, Dr. Barry Kramer, Marjorie Sharp, and Tracy Strycky. Third and fourth grade essays required around 100 words; fifth graders’ work required between 100 and 200 words. Students got the option of submitting Power Point presentations or hardcopy text. All were required to write on the same theme: Tell us why we need farms in our rural community, using your favorite farm in Franklin Township as an example.

Essay committee member Kim Goodwin reported, “All the students took the idea and made it their own. Even the essays of the youngest were amazingly sophisticated, though themes were increasingly well-developed with age. Many demonstrated an impressive use of technology.”

Essays showed an appreciation of farms as a source of food and self-sufficiency as well as for the beauty of our rural countryside, our history and the importance of sustainable agriculture and protecting nature in general.

Gabrielle Lamer wrote about her own family farm, Bella Cria Alpacas, where they also have chickens. She thinks kids who grow up on farms learn how to take care of animals and how to be responsible members of the community.

Alice Lundgren says that local farms remind us that food doesn't just appear on grocery store shelves. She says there's fun in farming, too, when you pick-your-own strawberries and throw the rotten ones that have fallen on the ground at each other.

Brittany Marcantuono likes the Bonacorsi Family Farm run by third generation farmers. Going to local farms means getting food at its peak and keeping money in the community, she says, "but it isn't only about a *need* for farms. The nice thing is people who choose to live in our rural community *want and appreciate* farms here. That is special!"

Adam Coe says Franklin has flower, fruit, grain, horse, tree, and vegetable farms, but calls the Rutgers Snyder Research Farm the "helping farm" because it solves problems for farmers. He tells us, "Researchers there are even working on ways to stop stink bugs."

Cole Salemo contrasted a beautiful rural farm with a city development and emphasized the responsibilities and hard work of farmers. He enjoys the view of a farm out his bedroom window and hopes kids in the future will have the same opportunity.

Sky Gonzalez says farms bring families together. "People come and go, she says, but farms are here to stay."

All six winners get a copy of *Franklin Township, Hunterdon County*, a pictorial history by Dan and Marty Campanelli and Lora Jones. First place winners receive a 16 GB Flash Drive and second place winners, an 8 GB Flash Drive. All entrants receive a certificate of participation.

Winning essays are posted on the web at www.ruralawareness.org.

Rural Awareness, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to preserving the historic and rural heritage of Franklin Township.

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CAPTION FOR ATTACHED PHOTOGRAPH

Rural Awareness Scholar Award essay competition winners for 2011 are (l. to r.) Sky Gonzalez, Cole Salemo, Brittany Marcantuono, Alice Lundgren, and Gabrielle Lamer. Adam Coe is missing from the picture.

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