Orange and Ulster students win regional writing contest

HYDE PARK, NY – Teaching the Hudson Valley (THV) is pleased to announce the results of its third annual K-12 “Writing about Place” contest. In the coming weeks many of the poems and essays submitted will be published on THV’s blog. In addition, the following top-scoring authors will host their classmates as they visit the places they wrote about.

**ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**
Summer Tyler, grade 3, Sanfordville Elementary School, Warwick Central Schools, Orange County, wrote *Discover a World of Adventure* about Albert Wisner Library in Warwick. Summer’s mother submitted her poem.

**MIDDLE SCHOOL**
Isai Martinez, grade 5, J. Watson Bailey Middle School, Kingston City Schools, Ulster County, wrote an essay called *Kingston Point Beach*. Teacher Suzanne Dodig-Sussman encouraged her students to enter the contest.

**HIGH SCHOOL**
Kelsie Costello, grade 12, Orange-Ulster BOCES Career and Technical Education Center wrote *Bench* an essay set at Rings Pond at Riverlight Park in Cornwall. Kelsie’s English teacher, Alison Miller, submitted her essay. Two of Ms. Miller’s students also excelled in last year’s contest.

An additional award from Friends of John Jay Homestead goes to David Mejia, grade 11, Newburgh Free Academy, for an essay called *Algonquin Park*. He and his fellow students have been studying the Valley’s history and culture all year with teacher Virginia McCurdy. They will visit John Jay Homestead State Historic Site.

**CONTEST DETAILS**
A panel looking for evocation of place, a vivacious voice, and mastery of conventions.
appropriate to each student’s age and development read each student’s essay or poem. Readers included teachers, published writers, and site educators from schools in our region as well as the Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College, the Hudson Valley Writing Project at SUNY New Paltz, the John Jay Homestead State Historic Site, NYS DEC’s Hudson River Estuary program, and the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites as well as THV.

Elementary students were asked to submit poems, while secondary students wrote essays. Writing about places of cultural, historic, or natural significance was eligible for prizes, but all students will receive feedback and have their work considered for publication on THV’s blog.

“It’s always heartening to hear from young people who are visiting and learning about our many important resources,” said Mark Castiglione, director of the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area and Greenway Conservancy, “caring for these cultural, historic, and natural treasures is really critical to our region’s future and getting to know them is the first step.”

THV sponsors “Writing about Place” as part of the annual National Day on Writing organized each October by the National Council of Teachers of English, the National Writing Project, and others. Public, private, and homeschool students throughout the 11-county Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area are eligible for the contest.

“Connecting people with parks, historic sites, and other significant places is central to the mission of the National Park Service,” said Sarah Olson, superintendent of the Roosevelt-Vanderbilt National Historic Sites, “and as we prepare for NPS’s centennial in 2016 we are even more eager to help students create and share memorable experiences.”

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**NEXT CONTEST**
Details about the 2014 contest will be published on THV’s website, www.TeachingtheHudsonValley.org, in July or August. Entries should be written in September or October and will be due in November.

**ABOUT THV**
Launched in 2003, Teaching the Hudson Valley helps educators and students discover and appreciate the natural, historic, and cultural treasures of the Hudson Valley.

THV programs foster collaboration between schools and informal learning sites, such as museums and historic site, through field trip grants, professional development opportunities, a free on-line collection of K-12 lessons and activities, support, and technical assistance.