

Feinstein students win anti-bullying contest

Pair will have their poems converted to dramatic stage performances

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COVENTRY — Two middle school students recently won an anti-bullying poetry contest and will take a field trip this Thursday to witness their pieces turned into live performances at the Providence Performing Arts Center (PPAC).

Paige Rice and Evan Hammer never imagined when they were called to the office the other day that it was to learn they won the contest.

"I wrote mine in less than a minute while I sat on my couch," Rice admitted. "When (science teacher) Mrs. (Maria) Boulmetis first called me, I thought I was in trouble."

"I didn't think I was a good writer and I thought the same thing — that I was in trouble," Hammer said. "I forgot about the contest pretty much after I wrote it."

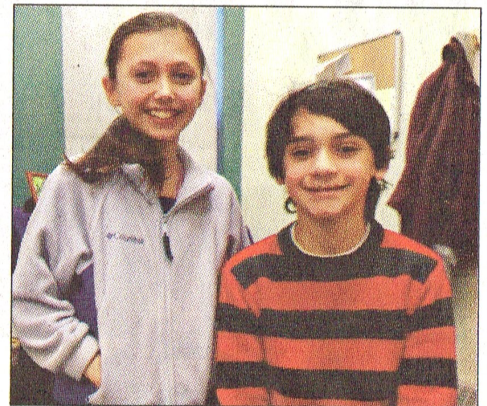
Hammer said his poem, called "Stand Up," is about how sometimes it's really difficult for others who witness bullying to stand up and intervene.

"It's about being strong and being able to do that," he said. "Because sometimes, that's what I see. I see people who want to help, but aren't sure how and I never understand why."

Rice's poem focused on being an advocate because she said that's how she tries to handle it when she sees someone being bullied.

"At one point, I wasn't sure what was happening but I went to the principal's office, explained what I saw and they knew what to do," she said. "My poem is about how to tell others and I want to teach others how to be advocates."

"Helping people and always the right thing to do," Hammer said.



Submitted photo

Paige Rice (left) and Evan Hammer, winners of Feinstein Middle School's anti-bullying poetry contest.

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Students will have poems performed live

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Sponsored by The TSETSE Gallery, located in Providence, their mission is to increase access to the arts, provide exposure for the young, as well as skilled artists, encourage young artistic talent, and promote individual and community development through art.

According to their website, tsetsegallery.org, the children's gallery exhibits art work from children inclusively. This gallery and its art programs aim to enhance a child's emotional stability, self-esteem, communication skills and assist them overall to become more emotionally grounded.

The organization is a clinically docu-

mented program with results.

Various school departments, psychologists, clinicians, group homes, state and National Police Associations have all enthusiastically endorsed their programs for children inclusively.

Based on the past 12 months, approximately 470 children have been given the opportunity to participate in The TSETSE Children's Gallery art programs, which according to the website, "inspire healthy creative expression."

"The judges felt these poems not only followed the directions for that they were looking but can convert perfectly into music performances," said science teacher Maria Boulmetis.

The contest is open to any middle school student in the state, and the poems had to be no more than 500 words and were only accepted through email to tsetsegalleryri@gmail.com with one entry per person.

Things the students were asked to think about as they created their poems were: how would the poem transpire to music, how to inspire and add confidence to a victim of bullying, how to advocate for bully prevention and be inspirational and problem solving.

The performance at PPAC will take place February 12, at 9:30 a.m. by the Professional Musicians and Dancers.