*"Books are a form of political action. Books are knowledge. Books are reflection. Books change your mind..." Toni Morrison (1931-2019)*

Books, poetry, short stories, journals, diaries, essays - any kind of writing are reflection as the beloved novelist Toni Morrison wrote before her death last year. Writing, whether it be a personal diary or a more formal poem, can be healing as people weave their way through these uneasy times. The Wytheville Chautauqua Festival’s Creative Writing Committee remains committed to the contest and encourages each of you to “just write.” Write for healing. Write to express creativity. Write to record history. Just write.

Because we do believe that writing is a healing and creative outlet for anyone, we wanted to continue the tradition of the creative writing contest. Although we couldn’t meet in person for the awards ceremony, we congratulate the participants and the winners of this year’s contest. We extend a special congratulations to our young students to whom we say, “keep writing!”

The following placed in the 2020 Wytheville Chautauqua Festival’s creative writing contest. Each writer who placed will receive their award in the mail.

**Adult Winners**

Essay

1st place - Linda Hudson Hoagland (North Tazewell, VA)

2nd place - Ethan Samerdyke (Big Stone Gap, VA)

3rd place - Michael Samerdyke (Big Stone Gap, VA)

Short Story

1st place - Linda Hudson Hoagland (North Tazewell, VA)

2nd place - Michael Samerdyke (Big Stone Gap, VA)

3rd place - Andrea Green Burton (Wytheville, VA)

Poetry

1st place: Linda Hudson Hoagland (North Tazewell, VA)

2nd place: David Hardin ( Johnson City, TN)

3rd place: Lauren Hardin (Johnson City, TN)

**Teen Winners**

Essay

1st place: Ross Via of Rural Retreat, VA

2nd place: Bradley Turner of Rural Retreat, VA

3rd place: Lillian Viars of Rural Retreat, VA

Short Story

1st place: Ross Via of Rural Retreat, VA

2nd place: Ryan Newby of Wytheville, VA

3rd place: Jasmine Miller of Rural Retreat, VA

Poetry

1st place: Ross Via of Rural Retreat, VA

2nd place: Alexis Nowers of Rural Retreat, VA

3rd place: Hannah Stuart of Rural Retreat, VA

**6th-9th Grade Winners**

Essay

1. Willow Delp of Wytheville, VA
2. Bailey Umberger of Wytheville, VA
3. Cadence Deane of Wytheville, VA

Poetry

1. Willow Delp of Wytheville, VA
2. Seth Ortiz of Wytheville, VA
3. Audrey Angles of Wytheville, VA

Short Story

1. Willow Delp of Wytheville, VA
2. Seth Ortiz of Wytheville, VA

Congratulations again to these writers. Please hang your Chautauqua flags this week to support all the virtual festival activities and remember to support our local restaurants! We will see you next year!