



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

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CAIRO STUDENT GERALD CORKER WINS SECOND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT ART CONTEST

Cairo Junior's Painting Will Be on Display for a Year With Other District Winners at the U.S. Capitol

[For Release April 30, 2018 – Albany, GA] — Gerald Corker's long drive from Cairo to the Albany Museum of Art on Friday, April 27, has set up an even longer journey for the young artist—a trip this summer to Washington, D.C., where he will see his painting of his grandmother displayed at the United States Capitol.

Corker is the 2018 winner for the 29-county Second Congressional District of Georgia in the 37th annual Congressional Art Competition. His acrylic painting of his grandmother, depicted in a red dress with a cellphone to her ear in *Pick Up the Phone Sugar*, will be on display for the next year—along with winners from nearly 400 other congressional districts—in the heavily traveled underground walkway between congressional offices and the Capitol.

The Cairo High School junior was at a loss of words after learning he had won at a 5 pm Friday announcement at the Albany Museum of Art.

"I'm kind of speechless," the young artist said.

Congressman Sanford Bishop, D-Albany, who represents the Second Congressional District in the House of Representatives, "always thinks the Second Congressional District of Georgia artwork is the best," said Kenneth Cutts, Bishop's district director. Cutts announced the winner Friday because Bishop, who was working in Washington, was unable to attend.

Southwest Airlines provides roundtrip airfare for the winner to attend the opening reception in Washington in June. The Albany Museum of Art provides airfare for a parent to accompany the student, two nights at a Washington hotel for the student and parent, and a \$250 purchase offer for the winning artwork.

AMA Executive Director Paula Bacon Williams said the museum's Board of Trustees realize how difficult it is for a student to travel to Washington alone and to pay for hotel accommodations.

"We wanted to help make it something bigger," Williams said. "We want to make sure family can go with you. We really want you to take advantage of this awesome opportunity.

"I thank the trustees of the museum because they're the ones that contribute financially to make this prize money and trip possible."

Melaine Corker, the artist's mother, said she was proud of her son's accomplishment. She said Gerald Corker has been interested in art since he was in prekindergarten drawing "stick figures." She also praised his teacher, Maria Vesquez, for working with him.

"He already has the talent, but she makes it better," Melaine Corker said.

Vesquez, who accompanied the Corkers to the Albany ceremony, said she was nervous as the names for runners-up were called out and Corker remained in contention for the top award.

"I know the hard work he puts into his artwork and the passion he has," the art teacher said. "Once they said first place, I was ecstatic. He's won several competitions this year so far, but this is the biggest in my art career that a student has won. For him to represent South Georgia, I'm just ecstatic for him to have this opportunity and I know he'll go far. I'm excited to see what else he has up his sleeve.

"I love the way he highlighted his grandmother and brought out her social (aspects), her always getting on the phone and things like that, showing her pearls off, and the classy aspect of granny. I'm very proud of him."

Three Albany students placed in the district competition. Johnathan Herrbold, a senior at Deerfield-Windsor School, won second with a self-portrait done in charcoal. His younger brother Jake Herrbold, a freshman at Deerfield-Windsor, was third with a mixed-media piece titled *In the Wild*. Honorable mention went to Nicole Craig, a senior at Dougherty Comprehensive High School, for her pastel work *Royalty*.

Cutts noted that the judges told him that choosing a winner from this year's submissions was not an easy task.

"They have told us this year's entries are exceptionally impressive and making a decision from the pieces that were submitted was very difficult," Cutts said.

"The artwork here is fabulous," Williams agreed. "I watched the judges and they had a hard time deciding."

Judges for this year's contest were Scott Marini, associate professor of fine arts at ASU; Michael Mallard, artist and professor of art at ASU, and Albany artist Steve Hinton.

Cutts said nearly 400 members of Congress sponsor the annual district competitions because they realize the importance of art.

“It is a voluntary activity on the part of each member,” he said, “but it is something Congress supports because they know how important it is for young people to develop and showcase their extraordinary talent.

“The goal is to encourage young artists, promote art education and give recognition to the outstanding work that our students are doing to enable young people to realize their full potential.”

Cutts said the competition wouldn’t be possible without the support of parents, teachers at both the secondary and college levels, community arts organizations and museums.

At the end of Friday’s announcement, Cutts presented Williams with a certificate of congressional recognition signed by Congressman Bishop.

“The museum sought us out,” Cutts said. “They saw what we were doing and they wanted to enhance this competition.”

Williams said she would “only accept this on behalf of our Board of Trustees because it’s really because of them that this happens. We really appreciate it.”

She said AMA officials saw a need to support the important program when they were in Washington about five years ago and saw the Southwest Georgia student’s on display with that of students from the other 50 states.

“And Mr. Cutts is right, our kids do the best work,” Williams said. “We felt it was important the museum get behind this program and recognize the important work that our congressional members are doing to raise the arts, especially here in Albany where it is so important.”

The Albany Museum of Art, located at 311 Meadowlark Drive in Albany, Georgia, adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road, has an impressive collection that includes 19th and 20th century American and European art, as well as a substantial collection of sub-Saharan African art including masks, sculpture, pottery, textiles, and musical instruments. The Albany Museum of Art is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open 10 am through 5 pm Tuesday through Friday and noon until 5 pm on Saturday. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229.439.8400.

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