

# Powerful words from 2019 Coalition Essay contest

From the impact of modern technology to relatable fictional characters and the effects of peer pressure, local students recently tackled a trio of topics as part of the 17th annual Fountain Hills Essay Contest, sponsored by the local Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition.

With nearly 200 students taking part in this year's competition, writers of the top 19 essays were honored during a special recognition luncheon hosted at the Fountain Hills Learning Center on Thursday, Feb. 21.

Essay contest winners were joined by their families, teachers, friends, Coalition members and representatives of the community as excerpts from 16 honorable mention essays were read aloud, followed by complete readings of the

three winning essays.

For this year's contest, students were given three topics to choose from. The first asked students to weigh the benefits and costs of increased reliance on technology. The second asked essay writers to consider peer pressure, its impact on adolescents and methods for dealing with it. The final topic asked students to write about a fictional character they felt a connection to.

This year's first place winner of the \$1,000 prize was 10th grade student, Faith Shannon. The second place \$300 prize went to Anya Feyrer-Melk, with the \$100 third place prize going to Mikayla Anderson.

A total of 15 students received \$50 for their honorable mention essays, including John Adams, Andi Bohlman, Leo Cam-

pos, Annika Clark, Corina Deninis, Paige Despain, Allison De Vore, Hailey De Vore, Jayda Hindbo, Nick Knowles, Mia Kumar, Kendra Ludwig, Fatima Naranjo, Piper Ough, Taylor Pace and DeShawn Rivera.

Essays were judged on criteria including response to one of the given topics, content and composition. Essays were judged without knowing the identity of the participants. This year's judges included Tom Lawrence, Tom Lindsey, Marian Hermie, Joanne Meehan, Maryanne Ackaway and Ryan Winslett.

The event lunch was provided by The Hills' Pizzeria & Desserts.

Title Sponsor was the Verne C. Johnson Family Foundation, with numerous local entities and individuals contributing to award funding.



The winners of the 2019 Fountain Hills Essay Contest celebrated during a special luncheon on Thursday, Feb. 21. Seated are top winners Mikayla Anderson (third place), Anya Feyrer-Melk (second place, not present) and Faith Shannon (first place).

## Winning essay

### Faith Shannon and Frankenstein's monster

Following is the winning entry from the 2019 Fountain Hills Coalition Essay Contest, written by Fountain Hills High School sophomore, Faith Shannon. The selected topic was "Identify a fictional character from a book or movie with whom you can connect and write about that connection and how that character has affected your life or the way you think."

A fictional character whom I share a connection with is the creature from Mary Shelley's novel, "Frankenstein."

Victor Frankenstein's creature was immediately shunned from the moment he took his first breath of life. He was instantly labeled a monster with no actions to back such a harmful notion. He never felt the warm embrace of love, nor affection, nor kindness.

This left a hole in his heart with a longing for human compassion. Reaching out to others, he was rejected. Despite his many attempts to prove himself worthy of love, he was continuously recoiled from in disgust, leading to his hatred of the human race.

Although I do not share his same loathing of all humans (I think it would be a bit concerning if I didn't



First place essay writer Faith Shannon explains why she relates to Frankenstein's monster.

address that), I empathize with his lack of compassion from others, particularly his creator.

I was "blessed" with a deadbeat father at a very young age, realistically, from the moment I was born. When we still lived together, he would make empty promises, such as picking me up from school or taking me to his work to show me around. But they were empty promises. He never picked me up; instead I was left waiting on the elementary school curb for hours until my mother was called to come pick me up. Touring his work consisted of me sitting in his office by myself for more hours than I sat by myself

on that curb.

At the young age that I was, it was easy for him to make it up to me by going out and getting ice cream. As I grew older, that would change.

My mother and I moved to Arizona when I was six, leaving him behind in Florida. He would promise to call me every day and, for the longest time, I believed him. Yet, again, I was only fed these hollow pronouncements. Calls came in on important holidays and it didn't take too long for those calls to morph into text with a rare phone call. I painfully and slowly learned that he was not a man of his word, if he was even a man at all.

I lived off the frequent times my mother would tell me that he loved and cared for me. Otherwise, I never would have known. I eventually stopped believing her. I mean, where was the proof to back it up? Though she has always been the most amazing mother I could have ever wished for, I still had this father-shaped hole in my heart that has never healed.

He gave to me the same amount of love Victor gave to his creature, none. Much like the creature, it broke me up inside. How does one expect a six-

year-old child to understand that feeling? It has continuously scratched at the inside of my chest and kept me up in the dead of night. It's this empty pit that gnaws at my stomach and brings tears to my eyes. Everyone knows the feeling, no matter the reason.

Like the creature, I too watch in envy and sorrow as my friends share father/daughter moments with their dads; breakfast traditions, being taught to ride a bike, watching football games. Where were my bonding sessions with my father? I never could put a finger on why they were never there. I always felt so disregarded by him.

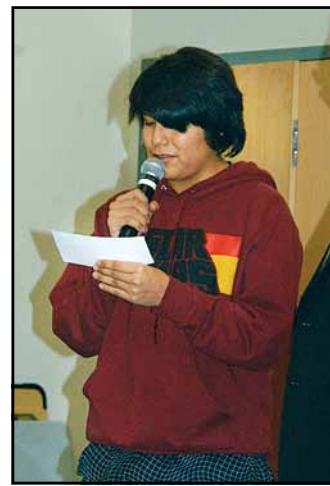
When I read "Frankenstein" for the first time this year, it was not hard for me to understand his reasoning for feeling so disregarded as well. I felt his pain, but the two of us dealt with it in a different way. While he went along, ruining the life of his creator and vowing revenge on all of the human race, I took a bit of a different path. I used my pain to make me stronger. I've learned that as much as people may try to bring you down, it's important not to give them your power and let them bring you down.



Mikayla Anderson reads her third place essay about the impact of technology on the life of modern teens.



Paige Despain reads her essay to the audience.



DeShawn Rivera talks about how 'Rocky' impacted his life.



Taylor Pace reads while Dwight Johnson hosts the event.

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#### CLUES ACROSS

- Iranian village
- Duct
- Holds potatoes
- Plant of the goosefoot family
- Spoken in Cameroon
- Students' rights document (abbr.)
- Skin lesion
- Went over the airwaves

#### CLUES DOWN

- Nestle malt drink
- Rockets' point guard
- Developed the polio vaccine
- Businessmen
- Animals have it
- Atomic number 58
- Cycles/second
- Japanese classical theater
- Slow nocturnal primate

#### CLUES ACROSS

- Used in a play
- One that breaks apart
- Yellow-fever mosquitoes
- Bag-like structure in a plant
- Simple wooden shoe
- Leeches
- Tide
- Fathers
- Decay

- Returned material authorization (abbr.)
- The Golden State (abbr.)
- Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand
- Unique garments
- True firs
- One who's not on time
- Angry speech
- Young children
- About aviation
- This (Spanish)
- Earns a perfect score
- People of Ghana
- Founding member of The Grateful Dead
- Of she
- Genus of lichens

- Abdominal pain suffered by babies
- Monetary unit
- Tendency to suffer from a particular condition
- Genus of flowering plants
- It comes up some days
- Koran chapters
- In support of
- One who crunches numbers
- A type of school
- Pops
- Tears
- Not influenced by drugs
- Forms a boundary
- Touch quickly and gently
- Stray

- A period between solar and lunar eclipses
- Third-party access
- A very large body of water
- Infections
- It might be due to nerves
- Hall of Fame ballplayer Rod
- Belittle
- Type of sword
- Makes very wet
- One-time Peruvian money
- A shoe typically has one
- Not nice
- Sea eagle
- Civil Rights figure Parks
- Humbug
- A precious metal (abbr.)

#### Answers on Fountain Spouts (12B)

#### CLUES DOWN

- Variety of pear
- Curved symmetrical structure
- A demon in some cultures
- Cricket frogs
- Atomic #45
- Abnormal bone joint
- Cain and \_\_\_
- Unhappy
- Dogooder
- Most babies need \_\_\_ when they eat

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