

Rep. Israel Holds Congressional Arts Competition

Friday, April 27, 2007

Farmingdale, NY—On Saturday, Congressman Steve Israel (D-Huntington) held his annual Congressional Arts Competition, where over 60 high school artists from 11 area high schools competed to win airline tickets to Washington, D.C. and the opportunity to have their work displayed in the United States Capitol. The art, which was displayed at the American Airpower Museum, was reviewed by local sculptor Charles von Schmidt, Newsday Director of Design Dan van Benthuyzen, and Hecksher Park Museum Executive Director Dr. Erik Neil. Air tickets to Washington, D.C. were furnished by Southwest Airlines.

“Each day as I walk to the Capitol Building from my office, I’m able to admire the winning piece of art from my congressional district,” said Congressman Israel. “It serves as a constant reminder of the talent and abilities that Long Island students possess.”

"Southwest Airlines is proud to recognize these talented high school artists by providing air travel for the winner to travel to Washington, D.C. for the reception," said John Lecker, Marketing Manager for Southwest Airlines. "As these students continue in their education, this art competition helps foster the creative spirit in each of them."

The show's winner was Sayville High School Student Lorraine Rilling, who was recognized for her piece, "Waiting for Dinner." Ms. Rilling will travel to Washington, D.C. in June for a ribbon cutting ceremony to unveil the display of her work in U.S. Capitol Building.

Other winners included:

- Best Painting to Katherine Jurado of Huntington Station
- Best Photograph to Amelia Aboff of Northport
- Best Drawing to Alexandra Mallilo of Sayville
- Best Digital Image to Esther Kim of Jericho
- Best Mixed Media to Nicky Marino of Northport
- Judge's Favorite to Lawrence Gerardi of East Northport
- Honorable Mention to Alyssa Piro of Jericho
- Honorable Mention to Colby Grace of Northport
- Best Non-Objective to Neil Nayi of Sayville

Judges were impressed by the caliber of artwork in this year's competition.

"As an artist I know how much encouragement can mean," said judge Dan van Benthuisen of Newsday. "The thrill of being acknowledged by a Member of Congress for one's art and the excitement of exhibiting in the Capitol are tremendous incentives. As judges we were each impressed with the high levels of technical mastery shown by all of the students. Those who were given awards and honorable mentions also showed a willingness to take that technical mastery into more personal realms of self-discovery and expression in exciting compositions. All of which made the judging very tough but also very thought provoking."

"I love to get involved with exhibitions and juried shows like this, and I feel it is a key part of my role as a representative of the rich cultural life of Long Island," said Hecksher Park Museum Executive Director Erik Neil. "For some High School artists who may or may not be high performers in academics or athletics, the arts offer the chance to experience success, understand the value of disciplined work, and express themselves as individuals. Perhaps they will find an avenue for professional success. They may also be embarking on an activity that will bring them joy and satisfaction for their whole lives."

"In art, as in all fields of endeavor, it is important to encourage young people to pursue their passions," said von Schmidt, a local sculptor and judge of the competition. "There is so much excitement and energy in these works that it is infectious."

Each year, members of the U.S. House of Representatives join together to recognize the creative spirit of American high school students nationwide. One piece of artwork from each congressional district is selected for display in the corridors of the U.S. Capitol Building for one year. District winners receive an invitation to a special ceremony and ribbon cutting in Washington to unveil the display.