

REFLECTIONS PROGRAM

The National PTA Reflections Program is an arts recognition and achievement program for students. The Reflections Program provides opportunities for students to express themselves creatively and to receive positive recognition for original works of art inspired by a preselected annual theme, while increasing community awareness on the importance of the arts in education.

The Reflections Program was established in 1969 by National PTA board member Mary Lou Anderson. Since that time, more than 10 million students have participated in the program. The program's longevity and participation figures attest to its strength. The excitement and enthusiasm that the program generates for children, parents, schools and communities is unmatched.

The goal of the Reflections Program is participation and appreciation for the arts. Although the Reflections Program follows a "contest" format, winning should not be the emphasis. The Reflections Program can give children who have never tried creating a work of art a chance to experiment and feel good about their art work. Participation in the Reflections Program is a great way for students to explore and learn about various art forms. Creating art is a valuable learning process.

Each student may enter in any of the four art areas: Literature, Musical Composition, Photography and Visual Arts. Each student enters in one age category: Primary – Preschool-Grade 2, Intermediate – Grades 3-5, Middle-Junior – Grades 6-8, Senior – Grades 9-12. Participation in the Reflections Program is open to all students in attendance at a PTA/PTSA school in good standing. Entries are advanced through PTA channels.

There will be two new arts categories for the 2006-2007 National PTA Reflections Program: Dance Choreography and Film/Video Production! The rules for these new categories will be included with the Reflections Program packet in the California State PTA summer mailing.

The 2005-2006 Reflections Program Theme was

I Wonder Why...

The 2006-2007 Reflections Program Theme is

"My Favorite Place..."

Congratulations to Meghan Blunt, a 4th grader at Sutherland Elementary PTA, Glendora, 1st District, whose theme "***I Can Make a Difference By...***" was chosen by National PTA for the 2007-2008 Reflections Program theme. Meghan will receive \$100 from National PTA and will be recognized at the National Convention in Phoenix, Arizona this June.

**A special thanks to
KATHERINE MURRAY, Vice President and Team Leader of
The Private Bank, Beverly Hills, a branch of the Union Bank of California
for continued support of the California State PTA Reflections Program.**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The California State PTA would like to extend a special thanks to all of the unit, council and district PTA Reflections Program Coordinators for their support of the program this year.

JUDGES:

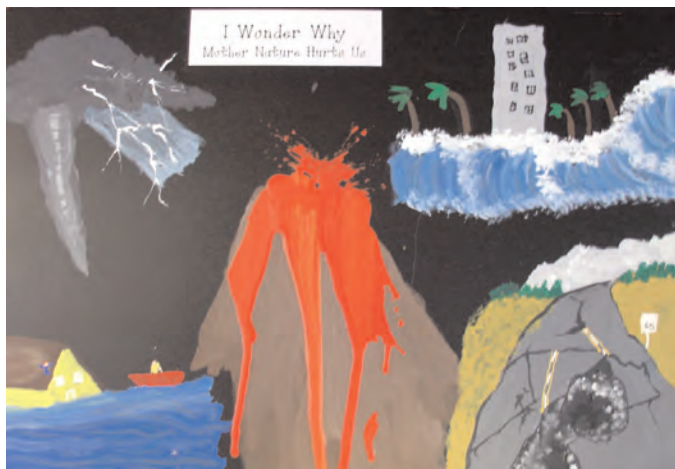
Literature: Chapman University, Creative Writing and Communication Departments

Musical Composition: Orange County and Los Angeles County Professional Musicians and Music Teachers

Visual Arts & Photography: Los Angeles County Office of Education Visual & Performing Arts Department

REFLECTIONS PROGRAM FINALISTS 2005-2006

Visual Arts Awards of Excellence



Primary Division: Preschool-Grade 2

Taylor Buchalla

Grade 1, Waleria Elementary School PTA
33rd District

I Wonder Why Mother Nature Hurts Us

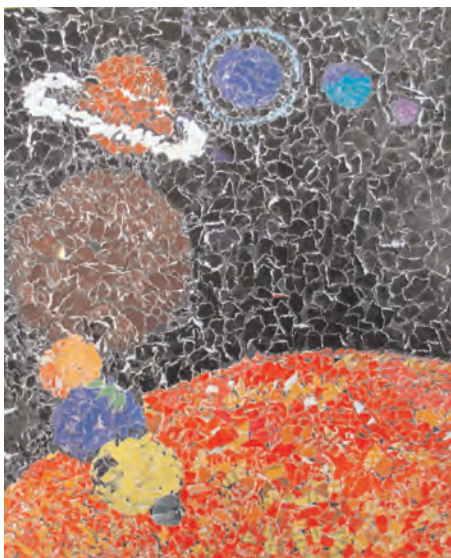


Intermediate Division: Grades 3-5

Brandon Huang

Grade 3, Cecil B. Stowers Elementary PTA
33rd District

untitled



Middle-Junior Division: Grades 6-8

Esther Kang

Grade 6, Mountain Avenue Elementary School PTA
1st District

I Wonder Why There Are Planets in the Sky



Senior Division: Grades 9-12

Tony Kim

Grade 12, Rancho Bernardo High School PTSA
9th District

I wonder why so many catastrophic events are happening?

REFLECTIONS PROGRAM FINALISTS 2005-2006

Musical Composition Awards of Excellence

Primary Division: Preschool-Grade 2

Veronica Mansour

Grade 1, Charles Helmers Elementary PTA
34th District

I Wonder Why Music Has Such Beautiful Colors

Intermediate Division: Grades 3-5

Andrea Jieun Kim

Grade 5, Plaza Vista Elementary PTA
4th District

The Dream

Why not Peace? Kevin Schwarzwald

Middle-Junior Division: Grades 6-8

Kevin Schwarzwald

Grade 7, Paul Revere Middle School PTSA
10th District

Why not Peace?

I Wonder... J.C. Scheid

Senior Division: Grades 9-12

Justin Scheid

Grade 10, Westview High School PTSA
9th District

I Wonder...

REFLECTIONS PROGRAM FINALISTS 2005-2006

Photography Awards of Excellence



Primary Division: Preschool-Grade 2
Charlotte Marston

Grade 1, Balboa Elementary School PTA
1st District

I Wonder Why Shadows Are Connected To My Feet



Intermediate Division: Grades 3-5
Marisa Low

Grade 4, Brookside Elementary PTSA
8th District

I Wonder Why the Glacier Ice is Blue...



Middle-Junior Division: Grades 6-8
Miles Kunisaki

Grade 7, Herbert Hoover Middle PTA
2nd District

I Wonder Why...we can't change our need for oil?



Senior Division: Grades 9-12
Leah Banks

Grade 12, Carlmont High School PTSA
17th District

I wonder why we have inner demons

REFLECTIONS PROGRAM FINALISTS 2005-2006

Literature Awards of Excellence

I wonder why the freeze bell always rings

I wonder why the earth was created.
I wonder why it rains and snows.
I wonder why we have oceans,
rain forests, and deserts.
I wonder why I hiccup.
I wonder about that allot.

I wonder why we are human.
I wonder why we need food, and water,
and homes, and love to survive.
I wonder why my best
friend always wins at Yugi-oh games.

I wonder what is the sum
of 4,210 and 57,172, and why it matters.
I wonder why elephants
are big and mice are small.
I wonder why disasters happen
to planet Earth.

I wonder why we are so smart and
so strong and yet we can't fly all
the way to China and back in one
second. At least not yet.

I wonder why I can do so many
things with my body and my mind.
But I can't fly
to the moon and back.
I wonder why we don't
know many things.

I wonder why the freeze bell
ALWAYS rings
when it's my turn
to be Duel Master
of the Universe!

I wonder why I wonder
all these things.
Because I'm a kid.
That's why!

Primary Division: Preschool-Grade 2

Aziz Fellague Ariouat

Grade 2, Edison Elementary School PTA
33rd District

Things I Wonder...

I wonder why adults go to war
when they teach us it's wrong to fight
or hurt one another—
It seems to me they don't practice what they preach
and should learn to make peace with their "brother."

I wonder why people can't just get along
instead of trying to prove who's the greater race—
If black, white, and the rest learned
we're all the same underneath,
the world would be a better place.

I wonder why innocent people have to suffer in this world
due to hunger, terror, disaster, and even more—
I've always been taught that when God closes one passage,
He always open another door.

I wonder why the planet seems to be changing so fast,
with global warming changing our weather
and darkening our skies—
Could it all be a sign that we need to clean up our act
before the world ends right before our eyes?

I wonder why there are kids who think it
makes them cool to make others feel miserable or sad—
I can only assume that the example set by
their parents was non-existent or very bad!

I wonder why people like to spread rumors or tell lies
when the truth is a much more favorable tool—
While the truth sets us free, it just seems to me,
that telling lies only brands you a fool!

I wonder why kids are expected to remember
every detail of their day, while adults can
forget things all the time—
It doesn't mean we're not responsible,
we're just human, after all,
and forgetting homework is not a crime.

It's good to sit and ponder the ways of the world
and the people on whom we rely—
So, if you see me with a pensive look on my face,
I'm probably wondering why...

Intermediate Division: Grades 3-5

Jonathan Goode

Grade 5, Rose Drive Elementary School PTA
4th District

REFLECTIONS PROGRAM FINALISTS 2005-2006

Literature Awards of Excellence

Loss

I put my cheek against the cold window, sparkling with raindrops. A loud thundering noise gives me goosebumps. It's pouring rain, freezing cold, gusting wind outside. I see a pink blur slowly moving up the crowded street, and I realize it's a woman. I know this woman.

On my way to school every morning, I see her. An elderly woman, perhaps in her mid-eighties, may be younger, maybe older...we'll never know. I see her every single day on my way to school, riding her bicycle. Her old fashioned bicycle...one of those bikes that looks like it's about to fall apart. No gears, just a regular bike. My mom calls it an original Schwinn. Not only is she riding her bike on a street with no sidewalk, but this street just happens to be Sunset Boulevard, one of the curviest, most dangerous streets in town, at one of the busiest hours. Any day could be this woman's last. She is always biking so nonchalantly up the hill, traffic zooming inches away from her. She wears the most bizarre outfits: dresses of all colors, sometimes neon green, sometimes bright pink, with a matching bonnet. My family nicknamed this woman – "Death Wish Lady" – after her daily routine that seems to be a cry for death. Every single day, I see this woman, pedaling up the hill, coming from who knows where, going to God knows what. I've had the idea of following her once or twice. Every day is a phenomena...the days I don't see her, either it's too early and not the exact time she pushes her way up the hill, or we can only imagine what had happened the previous morning, to end her daily habit. Sometimes I don't see her, and I have horrid visions of her last day. I feel as though I've come to know this woman, and care about her.

Who is this woman? What is she doing, and why does she do this? I often like to watch her and contemplate her past, what led to this unusual routine, why she takes this seemingly senseless risk.

"Noah, come get your lunch!" yelled Suzanne cheerfully. A little boy ran in and grabbed the paper sack that was on the table. He hugged his grandmother. A middle-aged man walked in and smiled at her.

"Have a great day at school, sweetie!" the woman called out to the boy. She kissed the man. He picked up a briefcase and walked outside with the young boy.

Before he left, the middle-aged man stuck his head in the door and smiled at the old woman. "And I can never say it too much. You look beautiful in those bright colors."

The woman smiled and praised her wonderful son cheerfully. He always know how to make her day. He was one of the two things she cherished in her life. She loved her son, Alexander Brown. He was 40 years old, had beautiful blue eyes, and short brown hair. Suzanne, his 75 year-old mother, was proud of her son. He was the smartest, funniest, bravest man in her life. He was her pride and joy.

Suzanne's husband had died in a fiery crash about eight years before. Her daughter-in-law, the beautiful Anna-Beth, was killed in the same crash, driving back from the grocery store with her father-in-law, and only three months after the birth of Suzanne's other most prized possession.

Noah Brown was the most amazing boy on the face of the earth. He looked exactly like both of his parents, with incredible eyes and beautiful features. Noah was special, because he had an immense imagination. He'd spend his spare time drawing pictures and writing poetry. The boy was deep and spiritual, and he loved his dad more than anything. Noah and Alex were the only things Suzanne had in the world. The three of them lived in a small house in Brentwood, California.

Every morning, Alex drove along Sunset Boulevard to Marquez Elementary School, to drop Noah off for 1st grade. Then he'd make his way into downtown Los Angeles, where he worked at a small hardware store and received little pay. Sunset Boulevard was one of the busiest streets in Los Angeles, also the scene of Suzanne's husband's accident. Every day, she prayed her son and grandson would have a safe drive.

The family was of the middle class. They lived off of Alex's monthly pay, which wasn't much, but enough. Alex also was a member of the National Guard. He went away on weekend once a month. Alex enjoyed the camaraderie and made a little extra pay.

One day, Alex came home with news.

"Mom, I can't believe it. My guard unit is being sent to Iraq. I just got the news."

Suzanne gasped.

"Are you going to leave home, daddy?" Noah asked with big, curious eyes.

"Just for a little bit, Noah."

"Gramma will take care of me, right?"

"Yes, of course."

A couple months later, Suzanne wrote to her son, stationed somewhere deep in the hot, lonely desert of Iraq.

Dear Alex,

Where are you? I haven't heard from you in so long. Why haven't you written? Noah and I miss you. How's it going? Are you all right?

Love, Mom

She was saddened to read his response.

Dear Mom,

We spent the first few weeks preparing for Iraq and now we've arrived. It's pretty dismal, but you know me, I'll survive, especially thinking of you and Noah. I won't be able to write for a while. We'll be spending most of our days on patrol. I love you and tell Noah that I love him too.

Love, Alex

The next couple months were terrible. Noah had to take the bus to school, and Suzanne hated seeing the agony and sadness in his eyes every day. She'd spend as much time with him as she could. Suzanne had to open her deceased husband's account in the bank, now that they were no longer receiving Alex's paycheck.

Months and months passed, and Suzanne and Noah were getting more and more miserable. Still no reply from Alex as to where he was.

One day, Noah walked home from school because he missed the bus. He opened the door and gasped in terror. There, lying on the couch was his grandmother her eyes open and she was breathing; she looked as though she had had a stroke. Noah ran up to his grandmother and sat next to her, panicking.

"Grandma, what's wrong? What happened? Are you okay? Should I call the emergency?" She shook her head and slowly lifted herself into a sitting position. She slowly read her horrified grandson a letter, and he immediately burst into tears.

Dear Mrs. Suzanne Brown,

We are extremely sorry to say that your son Captain Alexander Brown, has been killed in Iraq.

Our deepest sympathy go out to you and your family.

THE CALIFORNIA ARMY RESERVE

REFLECTIONS PROGRAM FINALISTS 2005-2006

Literature Awards of Excellence

Loss – continued

The letter said nothing about how he died when, or where. It just stated the facts plainly and clearly. Noah read the words over and over again in his head... "Your son, Captain Alexander Brown, has been killed in Iraq." Was Noah dreaming? This was all false. This couldn't have happened.

Noah helped his grandmother to bed, who was still recovering from the shock and horror. "This can't possibly get any worse," Suzanne thought, as she stared at the ceiling.

She was wrong. Everything happened in a blur. The most terrible things in the world happened to this poor woman in less than a week. She had lost one of her two reasons for living. Due to Noah's unbearable sadness, she had lost half of the second. Suzanne Brown had lost everything.

The following morning, Suzanne woke up early, ready to take her grandson to school. Her driver's license was almost expired, but she could use Alex's old car.

The drive was long and quiet. Suzanne was tense; vivid memories of that horrible accident so long ago swirled in her head. Noah sat in the backseat, staring out the window. Suzanne could barely stand having to watch him amble towards school with such a miserable expression on his face. No, she could never do this again.

The next week, Suzanne received a call from Noah's school, informing her that Noah had been displaying odd behavior during the past couple of days. He was perfectly quiet during class, and during recess and lunch, some faculty members had found the boy in the corner of campus, weeping while eating his lunch.

When Suzanne heard this, she immediately went to Noah. She asked him if he was acting this way because of his father's death, and the boy slowly nodded.

"Do you miss him?" Suzanne asked carefully.

"Yes," Noah replied quietly, a tear flowing down his cheek.

Months passed. Suzanne had nothing to do in her spare time, so she went into the garage, looking for something. She found an old bike, almost old enough to be an antique. It had belonged to her son when he was just a little boy. She took it out a couple of times, biking for hours on end, sometimes until it started getting dark.

The farthest she ever got was the intersection of Sunset Boulevard and Allenford Avenue. She didn't dare bike up that hill. That was the place that started her nightmares about her son getting into a car accident.

After months, Noah spoke. He hadn't opened his mouth since he had read the letter saying his father had died in Iraq.

"Grandma, you need to take risks. You never drive me to school. It's not because you can't drive. It's because of Sunset. I don't want to be afraid anymore. I don't want to miss my daddy. Why did he have to die? Why did my mom and grandpa die? Do we always have to be so sad?"

From then on, Noah spoke continuously. It seemed like the everlasting rainstorm of grief and depression had finally passed, and the sun's rays were overpowering the boy. That had always been one of his weaknesses: moving on and forgetting the past. He had overcome his intense sadness, and now Suzanne was determined to do what her grandson had done.

One day, while Noah was at school, Suzanne rode her bicycle. She pedaled for a very long time, until she saw it. The blue street signs...one that said "Allenford," the other saying "Sunset." She continued pedaling until she was at the top of the hill, past the intersection, past the danger. She had done it. Those couple seconds were filled with the most happiness, triumph, and victory Suzanne had ever felt in her life.

This is why Suzanne Brown, also known as "Death Wish Lady," can be seen bicycling up Sunset Boulevard every day in the morning after dropping her grandson off at school...in memory of her son, Alexander Brown, and her husband and daughter-in-law. It's her way of riding beyond the inexplicable events of two horrifying days.

This is my story for this brave and unusual woman. Who knows...maybe her life is actually similar. We will never know but we can always wonder, "Why?"

And Still I Wonder...

I wonder why the hearts of men have turned the deepest shades of money-green, littered with dollar signs and wide-eyed visions of future belongings, and long-awaited purchases. Why we speak the words of peace, and anti-violence, as we seat our children in front of television sets that display the horrors of war on the nightly news. Why we are taught not to see physical attributes, but daily sit in awe of magazines brimming with air-brushed unrealities. Why teenagers are so often beaten down, and stereotyped for recklessness and immaturity, but never recognized for the little things they do that could one day change the world. And I wonder why they are told they can never change it.

Why?
Because.

I wonder why the universe is endless, but humans have seen fit to fill it as much as they can with public scandals, superiority complexes, and one-track minds. Why the air is no longer fresh and the water is no longer blue. And why we regard that as someone else's problem. Why self-expression costs too much money, and questioning it costs even more. Why people continue to starve, but brand-name labels continue to thrive. Why we learn history to keep ourselves from repeating the mistakes that were made, yet follow the never-ending parallel between the daily news and our time-lined text books.

Why?
Because.

I wonder why Gandhi seemed alone in believing "We must be the change we wish to see in the world." Why my generation can't be the ones who aren't afraid to think differently. Why the next president shouldn't be a woman, and why it would be the first time that such a feat was accomplished. I wonder why we aren't using the here and now. Why we feel the need to wait until adulthood to get involved, get busy, get educated and opinionated. Why we shouldn't start now to prepare ourselves for the chances that are coming, the chances to change the world.

But most of all, I wonder why we wonder so broad, so vast and inescapable imaginative, yet continue to take "because" for an answer.

Middle-Junior Division: Grades 6-8

Nicole Savage

Grade 7, Paul Revere Middle School PTSA
10th District

Senior Division: Grades 9-12

Staci Rose Richie

Grade 12, Vista Murrieta High School PTSA
23rd District