



St. Serra 8th Grade Students Win Awards in Writing Contests

St. Serra is proud to be able to celebrate the extraordinary achievements of two of our eighth-grade students! Last week, we received word that essays written by Jacob S. and Riley S. were prize winners in two separate writing contests.

This year, essays written by Delaney S., Andi S., and Jacob S. were selected to be St. Serra's submissions in the Chapman University Holocaust Art and Writing Contest. Jacob's essay, titled *Unwavering Essence, Unwavering Strength*, placed first in the middle school prose category. Jacob's essay is based on the testimony of Holocaust survivor Leopold Page and focuses on the courage, resilience, and hope that can be drawn from remembering who we are and what our values are. With all of the unrest in the world today, this message is particularly relevant and powerful.



Jacob is the sixth first-place winner from St. Serra in the past eight years. In that time, we have also had one second-place winner, six additional middle school prose finalists, and two middle school art finalists. (So, out of 17 prose entries over the last 8 years, 13 have finished as finalists or winners. Of the seven art entries over that last eight years, two have finished as finalists.) Thousands of students participate in the annual international contest. This year, students from 258 schools representing 32 U.S. states and 12 countries competed.

Jacob and his teacher, Ms. Lynne Pantano, were recognized at the official awards ceremony on Friday, March 11. You can read Jacob's winning essay and the essays of all previous winners [here](#), and you can watch a video of the awards ceremony [here](#).

In addition, Riley S. wrote an essay, titled *Poor In Heart*, that placed second in the Division I Maryknoll Student Essay Contest. Riley's work is a reflection of how she has seen the "good news" message of Jesus operating in her own life. The Maryknoll contest is open to students in the United States and Canada and draws thousands of entries each year. Although the Maryknoll missionary priests and brothers have sponsored the essay contest for more than 30 years, this is the first time that St. Serra Advanced Plus ELA students have participated.



Maryknoll representatives will visit campus soon to recognize Riley and teacher Ms. Lynne Pantano, and Riley's essay will be published [here](#) on or before April 1.

Our students' performance in these two highly-respected writing contests are a testament to both the academic excellence and the Catholic Identity of St. Junipero Serra Catholic School. The entire St. Serra community—administration, staff, students, and parents—can take pride in the knowledge that we have all contributed to creating an environment in which our students can grow not only in knowledge and skills, but also in the gospel values that guide all of our efforts.

Congratulations, Jacob and Riley!