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"Don't Turn Your Back on AIDS"

By Lee Borrowman



(L-R) Claire Longyear, Marika Carrel, Kirsten Burrowes Photos provided

Over 25 million people worldwide have died from HIV-related causes since the beginning of the AIDS pandemic, according to USAID. In the United States, says AIDS charity Avert, about one million people are living with HIV and more than half a million have died after developing AIDS. Data compiled by the California Department of Health Services indicate that in our state, 30% of all people living with HIV/AIDS are between the ages of 13 and 29. The Flowers Heritage Foundation recently hosted its fourth annual "Don't Turn Your Back on AIDS" Student Art Competition, which is designed to highlight the impact that AIDS continues to have on young people. Three Lamorinda students took top honors in the contest.

100 artists from fifteen high schools participated in the competition. The first place winner was Marika Carrel, who attends Acalanes High School; 2nd place went to Claire Longyear, also from Acalanes, and the 3rd place winner was Kirsten Burrowes, a student at Campolindo High School.

Carrel explains that she entered the contest because, "I am in Art 2 at Acalanes and for our last assignment we were required to enter a piece for the AIDS competition, or create a piece about another controversial issue. When I

was given the choice, I knew right away that I would enter the AIDS competition because my dad's cousin has had AIDS for about twenty years." Her winning work is of a girl with AIDS; she is crying and wrapping a red ribbon around her body. "I had a lot of difficulty starting, but I knew that I wanted to draw a picture of a girl and incorporate a lot of emotion as well."

Longyear's piece depicts a boy named Simon who she met in Uganda while on a mission over the summer. "He was in my group for a weekend retreat," Longyear explains. "We taught over 100 AIDS orphans about family, morals/ethics, and AIDS. I learned towards the end of the trip that he was positive for HIV." The background is a mosaic of photos she took during her visit. Longyear says that she was motivated to enter the art contest because, "I really connected with Simon and he is such a wonderful kid. I was so sad when I heard that he was positive."

The winners were presented at a ceremony held at the Waterfront Hotel in Jack London Square on Saturday, December 5th. Burrowes' mother, Kim, was in attendance. "The organizers for this event did an incredible job," she says. "They really went out of their way to make all of the student artists feel special."

For more information on the Flowers Heritage Foundation go to: www.flowersheritagefoundation.com.

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First Place: Marika Carrel, Acalanes High School, "Don't Turn Your Back on AIDS"



Second Place: Claire Longyear, Acalanes High School, "Simon: Positive"

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