

Local teacher inspires winning student-poets

MARION — Amanda Keefe is more than a teacher. She's an inspiration.

That inspiration has resulted in two of her students' poems being selected to appear in A Celebration of Young Poets, published by Creative Communications which, according to its Web site, is devoted to the promotion of writing, teaching and appreciation of student writing.

Keep in mind that Keefe has

never "met" her students in person. Rather, she meets them in Elluminate© rooms, talking one-on-one with her students, while utilizing computer whiteboards, even iPods, to teach English.

A Galion resident, Keefe teaches at Marion-based TRECA Digital Academy (TDA), a public online school for K-12 students, all who take classes via computer at home.

Currently, 62 students from Crawford County attend TDA.

"To the best of my knowledge, this is the first time TDA students have had their poems published in a national poetry publication," explained Keefe, who along with her 63 full-time TDA colleagues, is a state-certified teacher. "I personally think it's a real honor for these students. I'm immensely proud of them. These poems are so impressive."

Keefe's winning poets are Taylour Angelo of Tuscarawas (near New Philadelphia) who wrote, "The Perfect Inspiration," and Lindzey Robinson of Euclid (near Cleveland), author of "Life" (see poems in accompanying article). Both are sophomores at TDA.

"Miss Keefe, she's awesome," explained Robinson, who wants to pursue a career in music and/or philosophy. "She is so cool and friendly. And she e-mails me all the time. She's really helpful."

Angelo, who maintains a 4.0 grade point average, agrees. "My favorite class is Miss Keefe's English class," says Angelo, who is interested in psychiatry as a career. "In all of my classes, my teachers tell me I do well in writing. I love to write."

A graduate of Capital University who is pursuing a master's degree at Ashland University, Keefe also serves as the high school English department chair.

She encouraged both stu-



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Galion resident Amanda Keefe, who teaches English at TRECA Digital Academy, was the inspiration for two students to submit their poetry, selected and published in "A Celebration of Young Poets."

dents to enter the national poetry contest. "It was up to them to decide to enter," she noted. "But for these two students, it was a 'natural.' They are both very creative. And when it comes to poetry, they shine."

Keefe said her ultimate goal as a teacher is to give students the ability to appreciate and understand art in any form. And that includes poetry. "With so much emphasis on testing, we sometimes lose the importance of art in our lives," explained Keefe, who admittedly has a passion for art and poetry. "Art gives you the ability to understand humanity from a cultural viewpoint, to gain an understanding of our morals and values. It's timeless."

It's a gift, too, she says. "Whatever these students do in life, they have this gift," Keefe notes, "the gift of writing with artistry."

TRECA Digital Academy students and teachers utilize the latest education technology

available, including iPods and podcasts in their curriculum. To listen to the award-winning student poems, as recited by Keefe, follow this link: http://tdacurr.treca.org/blogs/TDA_PubPoets/

The poets are among the 2,420 students statewide who are enrolled or take classes through TRECA Digital Academy.

With five regional offices across the state, TDA's home office is located in Marion. For more information, visit www.tdaonline.org or call toll-free 1-888-828-4798.

'The Perfect Inspiration'

by Taylour Angelo, sophomore at TRECA Digital Academy

I fell into the story I leaped through yesterday

A fairy tale existence where I wanted to stay.

Flowery things that talked to me, a tree whom I'd confide.

All the animals guided me, never scared to run and hide.

I took in all the scenery, perfect doth it sound.

But then I wondered who I'd be

In this magical world I found.

Oh I couldn't be a princess getting things my way,

For that role is full of heart-break.

Every prince doesn't always choose to stay.

Oh I couldn't be a peasant, Mysterious in every way,

For I'd be hiding under an empty bridge,

Wishing this lovely place away.

But I could be a poet,

In this land where I could just be me,

My surroundings consume me with their existence

Inspired, I'd write down everything.

And I'd return only just to tell you

The beauty of a fairy tale; the magic of it all,

And how falling into your imagination must be the furthest fall.

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'Life'

by Lindzey Robinson, sophomore at TRECA Digital Academy

I'm awake

Awaken to an existence without my consent

I know nothing from where I came

Or where you are taking me

Who are you?

I'm surrounded by smiles and laughter

I speak that movement even though I cry

It's not my fault

Nine is the present year as I become aware

Aware of my strengths and possibilities

Introduced to a uniqueness that has yet to be seen by the world's eyes

Or has it?

I feel like I've been here before

My memory is being joggled

Fifteen is the present year as I breathe in more life

Many have tried to destroy me

But my spirit can withhold man's words

For now I will live immune to the world's materialistic ways

And continue this journey until my mind is set free.

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