

Fourth-Grader Wins Award

THE DAILY NEWS

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Mayor Thomas presented the Wilder Award for Writing on Monday. The contest is open to all students in grades 4–12 in Maryland. The judges needed weeks to read the entries. This year's winner was a real surprise. It is Laura Cole, a fourth-grade student at Mountain Ridge School. She entered an essay about her trip to Washington, D.C. Laura is the youngest writer to earn the top award.

Laura explained how she did it. "The rules for the contest stated the essay needed to be 1,000 words long. That reminded me of the saying, 'a picture is worth a thousand words.' I decided to turn that phrase around. I used my 1,000 words to paint a picture."

The judges all agree Laura more than met her goal. As one judge commented, "Laura takes the reader by the hand and brings him along for the trip. The reader sees what she sees, feels what she feels, and hears and smells what she hears and smells. The setting was perfect. Who wouldn't want to visit our nation's capital? After reading Laura Cole's essay, I felt like I had experienced the outing, too. I could tell from the essay that the writer must really enjoy writing. I looked forward to meeting her."

Along with a plaque, the contest winner receives a \$1,000 savings bond. But Laura says the best prize she won will be having her essay printed in the local newspaper. "I know the school board is thinking about dropping this school trip. But I could not have written my essay without that trip," she said. "We can read about Washington, D.C., in our textbooks. They can tell us about the city's history and show us photographs of the sites. However, now I know things I could only learn from being there. I know how soft the cherry blossom petals are. I can describe what they feel like. I know the sweet scent of the flowers. I know how small I felt standing next to Lincoln's feet at the monument. I could only learn those things by experiencing them."

