

WE READ YOUTH VOICES



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MADISON
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LIBRARY

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Winners of Madison Public Library's We Read Youth Voices Writing Contest Announced

MADISON, WI – Three young Madison writers were announced and recognized over the weekend as the winners of Madison Public Library and Forward Madison FC's 2nd Annual We Read Youth Voices Writing Contest.

Overall Winners:

- Grand Prize Winner: Diyah Dhawal, 15, for *The War of a Million Years*
- Runner Up: Hazel Krueger, 11, for *The Strength to Move Forward*
- Runner Up: Eliza Thwing, 13, for *Time*

Each winner was presented with Forward Madison FC gear at halftime of this past weekend's match. The winners will also receive a cash prize thanks to the Madison Public Library Foundation - the Grand Prize Winner will receive \$500 and the runners up will receive \$250 each. All three winners will also have the opportunity to attend a Young Writer's Camp of their choice from the Greater Madison Writing Project in the summer of 2024. Additionally, three other youth were recognized for having the best story in their age group and will receive \$100 each from the Madison Public Library Foundation.

Age Group Winners:

- Age Group Winner (13-18): Monona Faasuamalie, 13, for *She*
- Age Group Winner (Ages 10-12): Ronav Vasanth, 10, for *Together We Move*
- Age Group Winner (9 and under): Olivia Lubcke, 9 for *Upside Down*

The Grand Prize Award-winning story this year, *The War of A Million Years*, spoke to the contest's theme of Moving Forward - Together, as it told the story of a friendship Dhawal – who is Sikh/Hindu – was able to form with another girl her age who is Muslim. The story talks about how not only they, but also their families, were able to overcome their differences to become close and start new traditions together. All of the six winning stories are available to read online now at madpl.org/youthvoices.

“The quality of writing from the contestants of all ages was incredibly high, but what impressed me the most was the diversity in storytelling present across all the entries. It is a wonderful thing to have this platform for these young writers to share their unique experiences and perspectives,” said Andrew Wheeler-Omiunu, Forward Madison FC Midfielder and Youth Voices Writing Contest Judge for the 13-18 age group. “Diyah's winning entry was a beautifully crafted and well written short story that stood out in a strong field for its ability to evoke empathy and compassion while demonstrating how friendships can form between people who may superficially appear to be complete opposites.”

The We Read Youth Voices Writing Contest received 142 submissions from kids aged 5 to 18, all of which were read and carefully reviewed by a panel of community judges representing a wide swath of the literary community in Madison:

- Madeleine Bohn, the Youth Ambassador for the writing contest and the former City of Madison Youth Poet Laureate
- Andrew Wheeler-Omiunu, Forward Madison FC Midfielder
- Ollie Schaal, Briarpatch Youth Services & Teens Like Us Councilor
- Kadjata Bah, Journalist at the Simpson Street Free Press and 2023 Youth Journalist of the Year
- Casem AbuLughod, a Senior Teaching Artist at Whoopensocker
- Kiersten Kansteiner, a Bilingual Resource Teacher at Nuestro Mundo Community School

Anthology Unveiling at the Wisconsin Book Festival

Although only six stories won prizes, 52 youth will see their work published both digitally and in print in the We Read Youth Voices Anthology later this fall. The print version of the anthology will be available at all Madison Public Library locations and at all Madison Metropolitan School District library locations.

All featured young authors will have the opportunity to come pick up their own copy of the We Read Youth Voices Anthology on Saturday, October 21 in the Children's Area on the Lower Level of Central Library as part of the Four-Day Celebration for the Wisconsin Book Festival.

The book festival is honoring and encouraging these young authors with a short reception from 10-10:30AM. A short Q&A with the grand prize winner and two runners-up will take place as part of the reception.

"I'm blown away by the passion and creativity of the young people in our community," said Wisconsin Book Festival Director Jane Rotonda. "It's so cool to play a small role in uplifting and sharing our youth's imaginative stories. They are critical members of our literary community and they represent the future of writing in Madison. I like to think that while this is their first Wisconsin Book Festival appearance, it won't be their last!"

Light refreshments will be provided, and families are invited to stay afterwards for a youth-centered Wisconsin Book Festival author event, too.

About Madison Public Library

Madison Public Library's tradition of promoting education, literacy and community involvement has enriched the City of Madison for more than 145 years. Visit the library online at www.madisonpubliclibrary.org, [madisonpubliclibrary](#) on Facebook, [@madisonlibrary](#) on Twitter, or [@madisonpubliclibrary](#) on Instagram.