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DELAYED RECOGNITION

Aldo Leopold Writing Contest awards, lecture postponed indefinitely

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Winners of the 2020 Aldo Leopold Writing Contest will have to wait to receive their awards publicly. Albuquerque native William D. Nordhaus, the 2018 Nobel laureate in economics, was scheduled to present the awards to the winning student essayists as well as deliver the 2020 Annual Leopold Lecture on April 20 at the KiMo Theatre. The event has been postponed indefinitely due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The winning students have been notified of their awards.

Matthew Oschwald, a 10th grade student at Estancia Valley Classical Academy, took first place in the grades 10-12 category.



Matthew Oschwald

He also was recognized with the David E. Stuart Humanitarian Award for overall best essay. Merrick Word-Brown, an eighth grade student at Santa Fe School for the Arts and Sciences, placed first in the grades 8-9 category. Avery Bell, a seventh grade student at Taos Integrated School of Arts, won first place in the grades 6-7 category. Each winner received \$500 in each of the three categories,



Merrick Word-Brown



COURTESY OF ALDO LEOPOLD FOUNDATION

Aldo Leopold and Estella Bergere Leopold at Mi Casita in Tres Piedras.

and the overall best essayist got an additional \$250 and the David E. Stuart Humanitarian Award, named after Stuart, a board member and a professor of anthropology at the University of New Mexico.

In this year's contest, 203 New Mexico students in sixth through 12th grades submitted their work. The essays were reviewed by 11 judges. Critical thinking and good writing are among the criteria the judges take into consideration.

"That program has been going since 2009, and since then over 2,000 students from all over New Mexico have participated in the contest," said Anthony Anella, program

chairman. "The point of the contest is student participants, their fellow classmates, their teachers, their parents and grandparents and their larger communities, it touches all of them and gives voice to the generation of writers that will be most affected by the changing environmental realities of our time. It's about giving voice to young people."

Having a Nobel laureate in economics give the lecture influenced this year's essay prompt on how might reuniting our understanding of ecology and economy help solve today's environmental problems.

"'Ecology' and 'economy' both derive from the same

Greek roots, which is 'ecos,' which means house, dwelling place or habitation," Anella said. "Over time, the subject matters for ecology and economy have been separated. We thought it would be interesting to ask the kids how might reuniting our understanding of those two help address today's environmental issues, because it's certainly true that the economic health of society depends on the ecological health of the planet."

Each year, students are given a prompt related to Aldo Leopold and his book "A Sand County Almanac," which he wrote in 1948 and had published in 1949.

ONLINE

More information about the Leopold Writing Program as well as the winning writing contest essays can be found at leopoldwritingprogram.org

The mission of the Leopold Writing Program is to build on Aldo Leopold's legacy as a writer by inspiring the next generation of environmental leaders to participate in the evolution of environmental ethics through the written word, Anella said.

Leopold came to New Mexico in 1909 fresh out of the Yale School of Forestry. He came to work for the U.S. Forest Service southwest regional office in Albuquerque and was assigned to Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest in Arizona. He later went to the Gila National Forest in New Mexico.

"The first wilderness area in the country is named for Aldo Leopold down in the Gila Wilderness," Anella said. "It is the Aldo Leopold Wilderness Area. And then he was assigned up to the Carson National Forest up in Tres Piedras."

Leopold later married Estella Luna Otera Bergere in 1912. The two lived in Mi Casita in Tres Piedras that now serves as the the Aldo and Estella Leopold Residency.

"Residents get to spend up to one month writing as part of the residency program, and we've had writers from all over the country and 10 award winners," Anella said. "We have had a total of 17 residents since the residency began in 2012."