

Black Mountain Center for the Arts Student Wins National Youth Wildlife Art Contest



Will German, age 9, was having a very lucky day last week. First, he lost his pet snake; then he found it. Then one of his favorite teams, the Carolina Panthers, won their game. He was already excited. Then he and his family received word that Will won First Place for grades 1-3 in the National Youth Wildlife Art Contest with a prize of \$500. Will's reaction was to jump around in joy. With his earnings, German plans to put some in savings to help pay for future art classes, and to hold some back to be able to spend.

Will is a student of Bob Travers in his Painting and Drawing class at the Black Mountain Center for the Arts, located in the old City Hall at 225 W. State Street. Travers, a graduate of the Pratt Institute, is a nationally recognized and award-winning wildlife artist. He teaches painting and drawing classes to ages 8 through retirees at the Center two days a week. Will has been a student of his for 2 years.

Obviously Travers has a positive impact on Will's painting. When Will returned to classes after summer break and was making a decision on what to paint, Travers suggested the idea to Will of painting a turkey, which they in turn chose to be his entry for the contest. When asked how he would encourage other kids who are interested in art, Will said, "Mr. Bob helped teach me a lot to win it. You should take lessons from him."

This year, in addition to German's First Place, Tanner Besosa, won an Honorable Mention in grades 4-6 for his painting of a buffalo. Six other students of Travers also entered. Travers encourages all his students, but especially young people, to enter local, state, regional, and national contests on a regular basis. In 2007 three of his students won monetary awards in this particular contest, sponsored through the NRA, and supported through a gift from Jim Broering, President of AcuSport Corporation, for the creation of the James and Kathleen Broering Endowment. Other students of Travers at BMCA have had their paintings chosen to be in the NC Wildlife Commission's annual calendar.

Will's repertoire of paintings includes wildlife, landscapes, a self-portrait, and ships. Because he has liked ships since he was a little boy, they are Will's favorite things to paint. In his winning entry, Will thought the most difficult thing to paint was the feathers where the neck joined the body. His favorite part to paint was the background, an impressionistic landscape of yellow, gray and green.



Last year the National Youth Wildlife Art Contest brought in over 800 entries. Although it isn't known exactly how many competed in Will's age group this year, Will estimated he was competing against at least 200 first-third graders in his division. When asked what made his the best, this was Will's impressive answer, "It's not all about me – it's the judges – it's Mr. Bob," showing that at this young age he is aware that having a good teacher is important, and that other than doing one's best, participants seldom have control over the outcome.

A student in Ms. Council's third grade class at the local primary school, German is the son of Dr. Christina Smith and Christopher German. His mother helped him name his winning entry, "Wild Turkey in the Meadow." To view the winning entries, go to <http://www.nrahq.org/youth/wildlife.asp>. To contact the Black Mountain Center for the Arts, call 828/669-0930.

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