



CYO Art and Essay, 2019 edition. CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Worth 10,000 words; Nicole Lalji of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Elmsford, with Seth Peloso, acting director of CYO for the Archdiocese of New York; Arianna Chin of St. Augustine School, Ossining; Elizabeth Rauchet of Albertus Magnus High School, with family members.



Photos credit: Michael Scott

## TALENTED KIDS

# THE CYO YOU MAY NOT KNOW

Every May, students and their parents from around the Archdiocese of New York gather at the Terence Cardinal Cooke Catholic Center on First Avenue in Manhattan for an awards ceremony sponsored by the Catholic Youth Organization, better known as CYO. A succession of winners, from first graders to high school seniors, step forward to receive their awards – not trophies for athletic achievement, but ribbons and certificates for artwork and writing.

Welcome to the CYO Art and Essay Contest, an annual event that encourages young people to express their thoughts and dreams on paper or canvas instead of a track, field or court.

“The contest gives us a chance to recognize and develop kids who are not basketball- or sports-driven,” says

Anthony Badger, manager of county programs at CYO for the Archdiocese of New York. “Our real mission is to teach the values of community – love, caring and sharing. Art and Essay gives teachers an opportunity to foster their students’ talents while bringing them those same CYO values.”

In 2019, the contest fielded more than 1,400 art entries and 250 essays from students in seven counties. Most entries came through Catholic schools, but students from public schools and other programs also participated. Three prizes are awarded in each of six different groups, based on students’ grade levels.

“I am always surprised by the talent,” says Michael Neely, CYO regional director for Staten Island, which received 310 art submissions and 25 essays in 2019. “Every year the judging

process gets tougher because the work gets better and better.”

Participants must enter their county contest – usually through their schools, although Neely says he gets a few independent entries from people whose schools don’t participate. County CYO officials then submit winners of first, second and third place for judging at the archdiocesan level.

On Staten Island, Neely says, “We did our own art show for all entries about a week before the archdiocese event. We put out chairs for 50 and ended up having more than 100 people show up. It was a great community event.”

*For information on entering the 2019-2020 Art and Essay Contest, visit [cyony.org](http://cyony.org), click on “CYO Programs” and select “Art and Essay.” ❄*