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## Canyons Film Festival teaches organizational, literacy skills

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**Canyons School District Spokesman Jeff Haney and Secondary Education Technology Specialist Camille Cole present Midvale Middle School's Abigail Slama-Catron with her award for Best Middle School Documentary. (Julie Slama/City Journals)**

By Julie Slama | Julie@mycityjournals.com

It's a few months after the red carpet at the eighth annual Canyons Film Festival rolled up, but what students learned in creating their entries will be put to use in the classroom.

District Education Technology Specialist Katie Blunt said the skills students learn, such as organization and literacy, translate into their classroom work as well as in the films they create.

"The students start with brainstorming, turn their idea in to a story with a storyboard and screen play, they write, they research, they synthesize the information to learn how best to communicate their message," she said. "It's a group project, they learn how to collaborate. These are skills that translate into the classroom as well as into the real world."

Through the process, students learn not only how to create their film, but also how to edit and revise.

"Students learn how to do revisions just like they may have to with a writing assignment in school. We see improvements in films from year to year," said Blunt, who is the project lead of the film festival.

She also said it allows the students to become creative, which can be seen from stop-motion films to creative features.

"Being creative and coming up with my own ideas is part of the fun of the film festival," said Midvale Middle School sixth-grader Abigail Slama-Catron, who has won five awards in the past five years at the film festival. "Last year, I just took an idea of what all my dog could accomplish in his daily life and went with it — he chose to fly."

This year, Abigail won with her documentary "Strike Out," based on her First Lego League team's project.

“I look into what I’m doing and what’s going on around me for ideas as well. I’ve made PSAs (public service announcements) about selling Girl Scout cookies or helping homeless pets. I’ve made documentaries about a church providing a temporary home and hand-up to transitional families and about the construction of Mt. Jordan Middle School. I like directing people and creating the films, but I do it because it’s fun.”

Abigail and other students in the school district can get assistance, if they choose, from their educational technology specialists, who are assigned to schools to teach students numerous skills.

“I’ve learned about using a tripod, organizing my storyline so it’s not going all over the place and preparing before I actually begin filming,” Abigail said.

The district also provides tutorials to help students, Blunt said. This year, it was on storyboards. Next year, students can look for enhanced audio and script writing.

“We try to identify areas in the films where all students can improve,” Blunt said.

Through the years, the interest in the film festival has increased. Five years ago, there were only 50 entries. This year, there were 154 entries by 442 students at 24 schools. Some students were multiple winners, such as Liam Morgan of Brookwood Elementary in Sandy. Liam teamed up with his sister, Chloe, to be the elementary PSA winner for “Road Rules,” and he won elementary animation with “My Little Story.”

Liam and Chloe also were repeat winners from last year, as was Entrada High Draper campus teacher Wade Harmon, who submitted “Any Given Saturday,” which won both the teacher film category and the Utah American Graduate Teacher Film Award.

Other double winners were the high school documentary winners, Gavin Hawkins, Ethan Perry and Connor Cagle of Entrada High Draper Campus, with “Merry Joseph.” They also won the Utah American Graduate Champion Award.

Other PSA winners include Emily Erickson, Indian Hills Middle; and Cassidy Wixom, Corner Canyon High.

Other animation winners include Ethan White, Draper Park Middle; and Alma Sabey, Connor Cagel, Devin Johnson, Entrada High Draper Campus.

Newscast winners include Quail Hollow Elementary’s James Anderson, James Covey, Anna Fetzer, Jade Fiedler, Amelia Harris, Cole Madsen, Kaden Morzelewski, Raegan Simmons, Priscella Smingler, Jamus Wangsgard; Draper Park’s journalism classes; and Corner Canyon High’s Christopher Collins, Connin Fife, Sean Garrick, Bethany Hardy-Smith, Joshua Hurt, Madison Jolley, Gabe Schino and Taylor Sampson.

Other documentary winners include Belle Davidson, Basil Gillette, Payton Romero, Clara Biesinger, Lucero Reyes, Addison Darling, Bianca Brito, Mason Daytonn, Maddox Titan Schaugaard, Aliyah Wilkins, Mia Yanagui and Elise Montesinos of Bell View Elementary.

In the feature category, the winners include Charlotte Smith, Sunrise Elementary; Eastmont Middle’s Tayler Peisley, Sara Batoo and Alysya Brown; and Amelia Pena and Isaac Bowen from Corner Canyon High.

The Utah American Graduate Elementary Inspiration Award recipient is Krissy Holsonbach, Midvale Elementary; and the Utah American Graduate Documentary Award winners are Ethan Perry, Gavin Hawkins and, Alma Sabey from Entrada High Draper Campus.

The poster contest winner is “Film the Stars,” by Joshua McGee, Draper Park Middle.



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