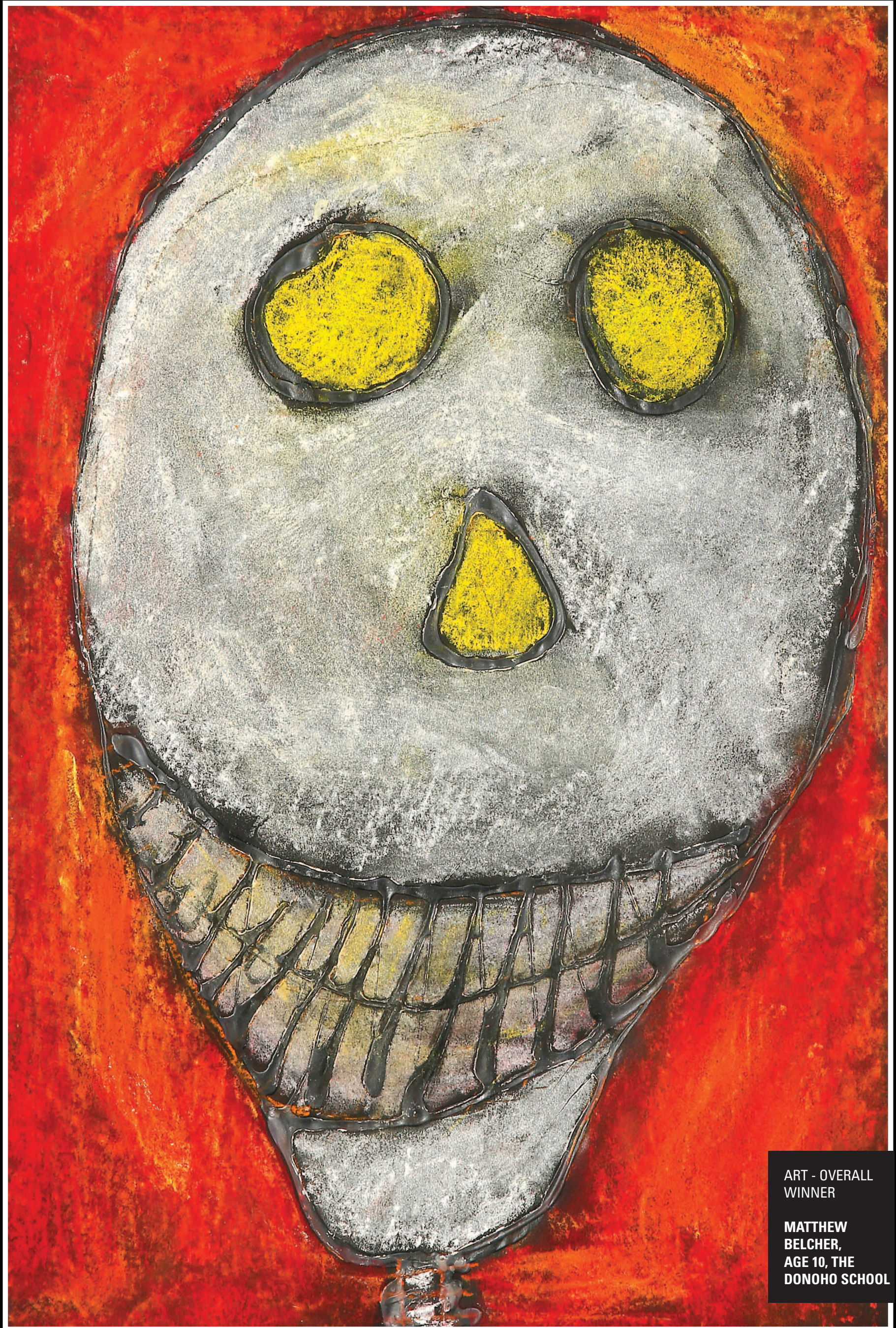


GHOST WRITERS 2015

Editor: Lisa Davis, ldavis@annistonstar.com • Saturday, October 31, 2015 • Page 1B



ART - OVERALL
WINNER

**MATTHEW
BELCHER,
AGE 10, THE
DONOHO SCHOOL**

Twenty-six years ago, The Anniston Star started a scary story contest called “Ghostwriters.” Every Halloween since, we have been tricked and treated to tales of murder and mayhem.

We’ve gone multimedia since then, adding a video contest and — new this year — an art contest.

This year, we received nearly 200 entries from kids in kindergarten through 12th grade. Read on for the winners’ tales of haunted pumpkins and zombie snakes, kidnappings and ghostly pranks. See the winners’ drawings of werewolves, haunted houses and a monster called “The Heart Breaker.” Watch the video entries online at AnnistonStar.com/ghostwriters2015.

Oh, and one last thing ... boo!

Elementary Division



1st Place "The Haunted Pumpkin"

Two twins, Clara and Chloe, went to the pumpkin patch to pick them out the perfect pumpkin. They saw the prettiest and biggest pumpkin ever!



Charli Perry, Age 7
White Plains

The girls loaded the pumpkin in a wagon and ran home to show their mom. Clara and Chloe started to carve the pumpkin. As Clara and Chloe put the knife in the pumpkin to carve the eyes, the pumpkin was hard as a rock. They gave up and went to bed.

The next morning Clara and Chloe woke up to try again. They saw the pumpkin

carved itself. The face was very scary. Its eyes were big like a wolf, its nose was scary as a witch's nose and its teeth were scary as a vampire. It glowed like a fire!

Clara and Chloe screamed and ran in the house. And Dad comes running down the stairs with a gun and shoots the pumpkin into a million pieces. That was the end of the haunted pumpkin!

2nd Place "Katie's Doll"

One day Katie was sitting on her bed playing on her laptop. And before she knew it her doll was watching her in her room. So she went



Rachel Easterwood,
Age 9, Ohatchee

into the kitchen for a snack. When she turned around guess who was waiting for her? It was Sally, her doll. Then she grabbed her phone and ran outside to call her mom. Her mom answered the phone and she said she'll be home soon, so Katie hung up. Then her doll was sitting right beside her. She got so scared. She threw her doll in the pool. After that she went to her room and she found the doll dry as can be on her bed holding a knife and the doll said, "You first." The doll looked at her and said, "Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water, Jack fell down and broke his crown, looked up and Jill was gone."

3rd place "The Robin and the Scarecrow"

It was October 8, a robin was under a tree branch eating some seeds and saw a funny-looking human. So it flew away.



Aiden Gann, Age 9
Ohatchee Elementary

A few days later, on October 12, the robin came back and there was that same human just standing there. He didn't move an inch for all those days.

That puzzled the robin. So he went up to it. It sounded like it was struggling to move. So the bird got on it. But then just as he got on it it said "Booo!" in a loud voice. And robin jumped off as fast as he could, which is in a flash because robin is very fast.

And the human said, "Get off me," and the robin said, "Why'd you scare me? I was just chillin'."

"On me," the human said.

"You're a scarecrow aren't you? Is that why you scared me?"

He sighed. "Yes, I'm a scarecrow," he said. "I can't move, can you help me?"

"Yes," said robin. So he untied him and he collapsed.

"I don't know how to walk, could you teach me?"

"Yes," said robin. "I can. Just put one foot there and one there. Then repeat it."

"I get it now," said scarecrow. "I'm walking. Yay! I don't need you robin."

"But I taught you to ..."

"I don't need you! OK, you get it. It was a trick. You untied me, you taught me to walk. So I am outta here, goodbye. See ya," said scarecrow as he ran in the woods.

Robin felt ashamed. So he flew away to find scarecrow, and he found him. He snuck up on him and grabbed him by the shoulders and flew to his pole, and tied him to his pole. And then left. The end.

Honorable Mention - Elementary Division

"The Lonely Little Boy"

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Jack. Jack's parents died five years ago. One day he was sleeping and he heard something. He thought he was going to get robbed. He thought it was his friend's house. It looked like his dad. It was his dad as a ghost. At first he was scared and then he was ok. He did not know if it was a dream or if it was real or a vision. His cat saw it too. The cat ran away. The cat was scared and did not know what to do. The cat meowed very loudly. The end.

— Dylan Ramsey, 4th Grade, Ohatchee Elementary

"The Ghost Who Lived in a House"

Once a nice family with three children and a dog moved into a huge house. When they moved in the house, strange things started to happen.

One night, the family was watching television and the TV turned off by itself. They turned it back on and it shut off again. They called the cable company and they

said nothing was wrong. They bought a new TV and it started turning off again.

They noticed that the light in the living room would turn on and off and nobody was in the living room.

They also noticed an old photo album had fallen off the shelf. Every time they put the album back on the shelf, it would fall off again and open to a certain picture.

When the family went to work and school and when they would come home, the house would be a mess. Everything had fallen off the shelves. The children's things would be thrown all in the house and not in their rooms.

One day they came home and they smelled fresh bread baking. They opened the oven and it was off. And nothing was in it, but there was flour all over the counters and on the floor.

The daughter was having a tea party with her dolls. All of a sudden, one of the teacups raised up in the air with no one holding it, like someone was drinking tea. Then the tea cup was placed back on the table. The daughter ran screaming from the room where she was playing.

Many nights the dad heard footsteps walking

behind him, but nobody was there. Several nights later they heard someone crying in the attic. They went up there and no one was there.

They were eating dinner one night and noticed the dog laying by the fireplace wagging his tail as if someone was petting him, and no one was there.

One night the dad was working at his desk and he felt someone touch him on the shoulder and turned around and no one was there.

At night when they went to bed there were all kinds of sounds coming from the living room. The dad would go downstairs to check it out and the light would be on and the photo album was off the shelf opened to a picture. He turned off the light and went back upstairs. He heard footsteps behind him, but nobody was there.

All these strange things kept happening over and over. They called the police, electricians and contractors to check out the house, and they said nothing was wrong.

One day, the mom was looking in the mirror and saw a reflection of a woman in the mirror and written on the mirror was "Leave my house and me alone!" The reflection of the woman in the mirror faded away.

The family had enough and moved out of the house.

— Maya Duncan, 4th Grade, The Donoho School

Middle School Division

1st Place "Journal Entry #24: When I Was Kidnapped"

I'm sorry I haven't written anything in awhile, but I have a pretty good reason. I was kidnapped.

It was a Sunday morning, bright and sunny, and the breeze was just right. The sermon at church sent out a great message, as usual. When



Chloe Cater, Age 12
The Donoho School

church was over around noon, my family and I went to eat lunch. When we walked inside the restaurant, I realized I had left my phone in the car. My mom gave me the keys so I could unlock the car and grab my phone.

When I walked outside, a strange man asked if I would help him look for

something he had lost in his car. I tried to say no, but he looked so crazy I was scared of what he might do to me if I didn't help him! I should've been scared of what would happen if I said yes.

He had opened the door so I could start looking for whatever he couldn't find. I never knew what I was looking for, because before I could say anything, he shoved me in and locked the door.

I was so scared. I tried to open the door, even though it was locked. I banged on the window crying for help. No one could hear me. I didn't know what else to do, so I just laid there and cried. I wondered if he would just kill me or if he would torture until I couldn't take it any longer. He got in the car and started to drive, but I guess he drugged me or something because it's all just a blur.

You're probably wondering how in the world do I have my journal. I always keep it in my purse, which I carry with me at all times. I guess while I was unconscious he didn't worry about taking it away from me, and I am VERY glad!

Anyways, back to the main point. I woke up recently in a dark room with nothing but a dim lamp on. There was a piece of bread and a glass of water waiting for me in the room. I have no idea where I am or how long it's been since he kidnapped me. I don't know his name. I don't know anything.

Oh no, I hear footsteps coming closer and closer! What is he going to do to me? The door's creaking open! Please, someone, anyone, if you're reading this ...

2nd Place "Ghost Town"

Riley walked across the street. She was alone and scared because she was in Ghost Town. Her big brother, Anthony, dared her to do it. She shivered and shook. She didn't know what to do. Suddenly a sharp pain grew in her back and she passed out.

It was Halloween when Riley got up. "I feel ... weird," Riley said suspiciously. She began to walk home. She wasn't paying attention and she ran into the door. When she looked up she was inside her house. "OK then ..." she said.

Riley walked into her brother's room. He was getting ready for Halloween. "Anthony, I did it," Riley said.

Anthony kept packing up like he didn't ever hear her. "ANTHONY," Riley shouted. He left the room. Riley stood there and screamed, "THIS ISN'T FUNNY ANTHONY. QUIT THIS INSTANT!"

Riley turned around to look in the mirror. She didn't even see herself. "What is going on," Riley wondered. She walked into the kitchen to hug her mom but she went straight through her. Suddenly she remembered, "Ghost Town. I am a ghost!" she thought. She now knew why everyone had been ignoring her. She cringed at the thought of walking into that ghost town.

"Anthony wonders why I hate him sometimes," Riley murmured to herself. Riley walked downstairs as she wiped away her ghost tears. She saw her cousin Katie looking aggravated in the kitchen.

"Katie! Can you hear me?" Riley asked. "Yeah, but obviously your mom can't," Katie said rudely, banging two pans together.

"Where was the last place you went?" Riley asked her. "My mean brother sent me to Ghost Town!" Katie said, pushing her beautiful golden hair out of her eyes. "That's exactly where I went. Those boys probably planned this. I just wish I wouldn't have done what Anthony told me to do," Riley said sadly.

"Yeah ..." Katie said, looking at the ground. Anthony ran out of the house dropping a book on the floor. He was catching up with his friend to go trick-or-treating. Riley took a glimpse at the book. "This is called 'Ghost Town.' Katie! Do you know what this means? We can become regular people again!" Riley said.

Here:
"To reverse the spell,
On Halloween night, go in the bathroom
Turn off the lights, and say I wanna be a human and snap."

The girls went into the bathroom and turned off the lights.

"We wanna be a human," the girls said as they snapped. "Riley, come put on your Halloween costume. It is time to go trick-or-treating!" her mom called.

"Mom, can you hear me?" Riley yelled at the top of her lungs.

"Yes Riley, now stop screaming," her mom laughed.

Riley looked into the mirror. She smiled and put on her costume, and went trick-or-treating with her cousin Katie.

3rd Place "Once Upon a Deathday"

Have you ever been trick-or-treating and things started getting out of hand? Well, I have. Just wait and you'll see.

One Halloween night, I went trick or treating alone. There was a swarm of kids going into one of the houses.

I was thinking, "What's going on?" When they came out they turned into whatever they were dressed up as. There were ghouls, monsters, bats, princesses, food and vampires.

I decided to investigate, but first I asked, "Since I'm dressed up as a duck, will I turn into a duck?"

I walked up to the house, found my friends and asked, "Do you guys want to go to the house over there?" They all said OK and we started walking.

We stepped inside and we all turned into our favorite animal instead of what we were dressed up as. Hayley turned into a horse, "Naa." Chloe turned into a Chihuahua, "Yip, yip." Savannah turned into a cat, "Meow," Ireland turned into a pig, "Oink, oink," and I turned into a duck, "Quack."

It was fun for us! We played and laughed and even scared people!

After a little while Chloe realized, "This is getting scary!" "I'm getting worried. What if we never turn back?" said Ireland.

I said, "Follow me. I have an idea of what's going on!" We started walking. We finally got to the graveyard. "I thought something was fishy!" Savannah screamed. There were five gravestones all in a row.

We all screamed. I read mine out loud, "Erin Dewsnap (Ducky), Oct. 31."

"We're all ghosts!"

"Then how come we could scare some people and not scare other people?" Ireland chirped. We all walked back to the neighborhood. We found people laying on the ground. Hayley realized they were our bodies on the ground!

When we got close enough, we got sucked into the bodies again. I was swirling around. I heard people screaming and calling my name. As soon as I woke up it was pitch black. I wondered who called my name.



Erin Dewsnap, Age 11
White Plains
Middle School

Honorable Mention - Middle School Division

“The Sound”

Creekkkk!!! “What was that!” said Autumn.
“Just stay calm,” said Princeton.
“But if someone is following us, they will get a frog to the face,” said Brock.
“Hahaha! By the way, what’s a frog?” said Landon.
“It’s a punch and it really hurts,” Autumn said funny.
“But let’s get back to what that sound was,” said Wade.
“Also, don’t forget we’re in a haunted house, then we will go to the street Spooky Avenue,” said Princeton.
“Oh, that’s why we keep hearing all these sounds, I totally forgot. I’m so dumb,” said Landon.
“But what was it? Was it a frog, dog, cat or rats?” continued Landon.
“It could be anything, just be careful,” said Payton.
“I just think we should go home,” said Autumn.
“No way, we have to get as much candy as we can,” said Kyla.
“But that shadow is still moving, what can it be?” said Princeton.
A snake slithered out of nowhere and Autumn and Kyla screamed.
It slithered on Payton’s back. We called his name, but it was too late. He got bit by the three-eyed snake with four wings. Then it slithered off.
“Over time he’s going to grow weak,” said Landon.

“But we will all take care of him after we get all the candy we need,” continued Wade.
“But, there is something else, crawling on my leg. It’s ... it’s ... It’s a ZOMBIE DOG!” said Kyla.
“It bit you,” said Luke.
“She will also become weak. But I will take care of her. Y’all figure out what’s in the shadows. Also, don’t forget about Payton; he’s still weak but he can still hang in there,” said Princeton.
“What about Princeton?” said Autumn.
“No, we have to leave NOW!!!”
“Watch out, there’s a three-faced bull behind you!!!”
BLAST! “Is that a plasma gun?” said Princeton.
“Yeah, it is, I got it out of my dad’s shop. I also got everybody else one. CATCH,” said Luke.
“But you keep Payton’s and I’ll keep Kyla’s. Give Payton his when he recovers,” said Princeton.
“By the way, the guys told me that Payton is not going to recover. He’s ... going to turn into a ZOMBIE SNAKE!” said Luke.
“So that means that Kyla’s going to turn into a ZOMBIE WEREWOLF!” said Princeton.
“Correct! But let’s get away from Kyla,” said Luke.
“But where are the others?” said Princeton.
“I’m not sure. Wait, there they are, but they look different. I think they got bit too!”
“By what?” said Princeton.
“But they’ve also teamed up with Kyla and Payton,” said Luke.
“We can’t hurt them, but we have to defend ourselves,” said Princeton.
“Come on, let’s get them,” said Luke. Wooooshh!
“They’re gone.”
“Nooooo!” said Luke and Princeton, yelling. “But where did they go?”

— Princeton Newbold, Age 10, White Plains Middle School

“The Cemetery”

BAM!
Yes that was the sound of the gargantuan night on Friday the 13th. The shifting of the wind left chills on my neck. I couldn’t stand the suspense that lingered with me through that dark shadowy cemetery across from my house.
Earlier, I heard a blood quenching scream across the road coming from the cemetery. I was just patiently waiting on dinner when I heard it.
“AAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH.”
I’ve been out here for hours, lost in the dark with no sense of direction.
BAM!
I feel like the thundering won’t stop until I feel water trickling down my face. “OH NO, RAIN.”
While I scurry like a mouse under a willow tree, I hear that bloodthirsty scream, but this time closer.
I see a shadowy figure in the fog of the night coming closer as my heart skips a beat. Frozen in fear, I try to dart away and succeed.
I’m running, my heart beating a mile a minute. I’ve been running for the past five minutes.
I stop and look behind me for any chance of the ghostly figure that was chasing me. Gratefully, I see nothing. I turn back around, and in my face there it was.
Once again I’m running, keeping track of where the figure is. I turn back around and trip over a tombstone with the name engraved SKYLIN HUTCHISON.
I couldn’t believe my eyes. “Am I really dead?” I think to myself. I can’t believe that ghost figure finally got me
— Skylin Hutchison, Age 11, Fruithurst Elementary School

High School Division

1st Place
“A Halloween Display”

I woke up in a small cage in a cold room that appeared to be a basement. The floor was cement and there was one window but it was boarded up with wood. Most of my clothes were missing except for my briefs. All of the hairs on my body stood up and I shivered uncontrollably. I tried to scream but I realized I had duct tape covering my mouth, I guess it had been there for so long I couldn’t feel it.
Suddenly, I heard someone above me walking around. The footsteps were over me and then went farther away from me until I heard a door open with a loud creak and the squeaking of the steps the person went down.
A tall man, hooded with a dark cloak and black boots, slowly walked towards me. He had a white mask with a nose that made him look like a bird; as a matter of fact, it was one of those black plague doctor masks. The mask was so frightening I scooted as far back as possible in the cramped cage.
The man knelt down in front of me, wrapping his fingers around the bars that surrounded me. “Did you sleep well?” he asked with a deep voice. I didn’t answer; I just stared back at the horrific mask, shivering nervously. “I understand, you may not want to talk to me, but if you just remain calm, and don’t provide me with any unnecessary setbacks, you’ll walk out of here alive.” He stood back up and grabbed a white blanket that he covered the cage with.
When he finally removed the blanket, I was in a front yard that was completely decorated with Halloween props. There were gravestones, fake spider webs stretching from bush to bush, skeletons hanging from a tree that stood tall beside the driveway, and hands, arms, heads and fingers that were randomly scattered in the grass and carport. They looked so real.
The man knelt down beside me once more and pointed at the skeletons and body parts. “Be thankful you didn’t end up like them.” My jaw dropped in horror as I realized the “props” weren’t props. Sweat rolled down my forehead and neck and my heart was pounding. I choked, as I was too shocked to scream for help, now that I was outside in a neighborhood. I was this sick monster of a man’s Halloween display.
As the night came, children and teenagers all came to the house to get candy. But no matter how many times I screamed for them to help me,



Leighton McCrimmon, Age 16, Oxford High School

they laughed. They laughed because they thought that I was part of the display and that I was there to put a show on for them.
When the night was over, the man brought me back into the basement, claiming that I was so good, he wanted me again for next year.

2nd Place
“The Harvest”

My usual steady pace on the shiny, wet pavement of New York made it seem like a usual day. I stopped at the end of the pavement where others were eagerly waiting for the crosswalk to clear of cars. I wove my way through the herd of people to the front of the crowd. I looked at the end of the crosswalk, where another crowd was waiting to get to our side. Different people. That’s why I love New York.
I scanned the front of the crowd and saw your usual businessmen and women. Though someone caught my eye ... an old man, with translucent skin and khaki clothing. He had a cane and bulky black sunglasses. Knowing how people are, I could see him getting trampled by know-it-all office workers who just bought their coffee, trying to make their way to work.
The crosswalk was soon clear and I walked at a sensible pace. I watched as the blind old man tapped the ground with his cane. I was about to pass him when he stopped in front of me.
“Excuse me sir,” I said politely. He turned his head toward me and gave me an envelope. “Can you deliver the letter to the address on this envelope?” he asked.
I stopped at looked at the address; it was on my way to work and wasn’t far away. Plus, I’m a sympathetic person. “Yes sir, I will.” I rushed away before the cars began to move.
I turned around to see if the man had made it through the crosswalk OK. I saw him walking fast without his cane after he had just taken his glasses off.
I was naturally suspicious and mostly scared about what to do next. The letter had no return address, so I couldn’t just plop it in a mailbox.
I went to the police station and told them what had happened. They paid a visit to the address on the envelope and made a gruesome discovery. Butchers had been harvesting organs and body parts and selling them to the black market. The letter found in the envelope said, “This is the last one I’m sending you today.”



Haley Holmes, Age 15 The Donoho School

3rd Place
“The Nightshade Killer”

BREAKING NEWS: Girl Found Dead in Woods
For the past three weeks, people have been appearing dead in the Evergreen Woods off of 30th Street. Yesterday, another girl was found in the woods. Forensic experts say the people have all died in the same manner, leading us to believe they are all connected to one serial killer. Another hint police have to catching this killer is the appearance of a bouquet of nightshade on their doorsteps, about a day before the murder takes place. For this reason, the murderer has been dubbed the “Nightshade Killer.”
...
“Is it good enough?” I grimaced as my editor’s face cringed.
“You can do better. With all these murders around town, we’re getting good business. And good business means we need ... ?” He glanced up and me and gestured for me to continue the sentence. “Um, good articles?” He clapped. “Exactly. If we don’t have well-written articles, we don’t have business. Now get back there and write me a better article.”
With that, I grabbed my draft and headed back to my desk. The newsroom was the busiest it’s ever been. The new Nightshade murders have had everyone buzzing, other than the usual tabloid-type articles. This time, I was determined to find the secret of the Nightshade Killer, and make it big in the journalism world. Pulling out my laptop, I began to research more about the recent string of murders.
The people weren’t connected in any way, other than how they were killed. It’s simple: bouquet of nightshade, murdered in the woods.
We had no information on the killer yet, just the victims. The girl was 23, and she had just gotten a new apartment. She worked for a local coffee shop and went to the local community college. The police ruled she had been dead less than 24 hours when they discovered her, so the killings had to happen fast.
Before the girl, there was a man in his mid-40s. He worked on Wall Street and was a well-off, middle-class man.
Him and the girl had nothing in common, so why kill them? No one had any relationship. I decided to call it a day and headed home.
I crawled into bed and pondered over the case. “Why them? How could they connect?” And then it hit me. It finally clicked. All the hours of work and pouring my soul into articles finally clicked together. The people were all close to discovering the truth.
The Wall Street man didn’t want his stock to go under, so he tried to get rid of the murderer. The college girl was majoring in forensic studies, and she assisted on the murder scenes multiple times. I flew out of bed and put on my coat, racing downstairs. I put on my shoes and swung the door open, when I noticed there was a bouquet of nightshade sitting on my doorstep



Mahaley Tucker, Age 14 The Donoho School

TURN THE PAGE, IF YOU DARE!

ON PAGE 4, FIND:

- Honorable mention stories, high school division
- More winning entries in the Ghostwriters art contest

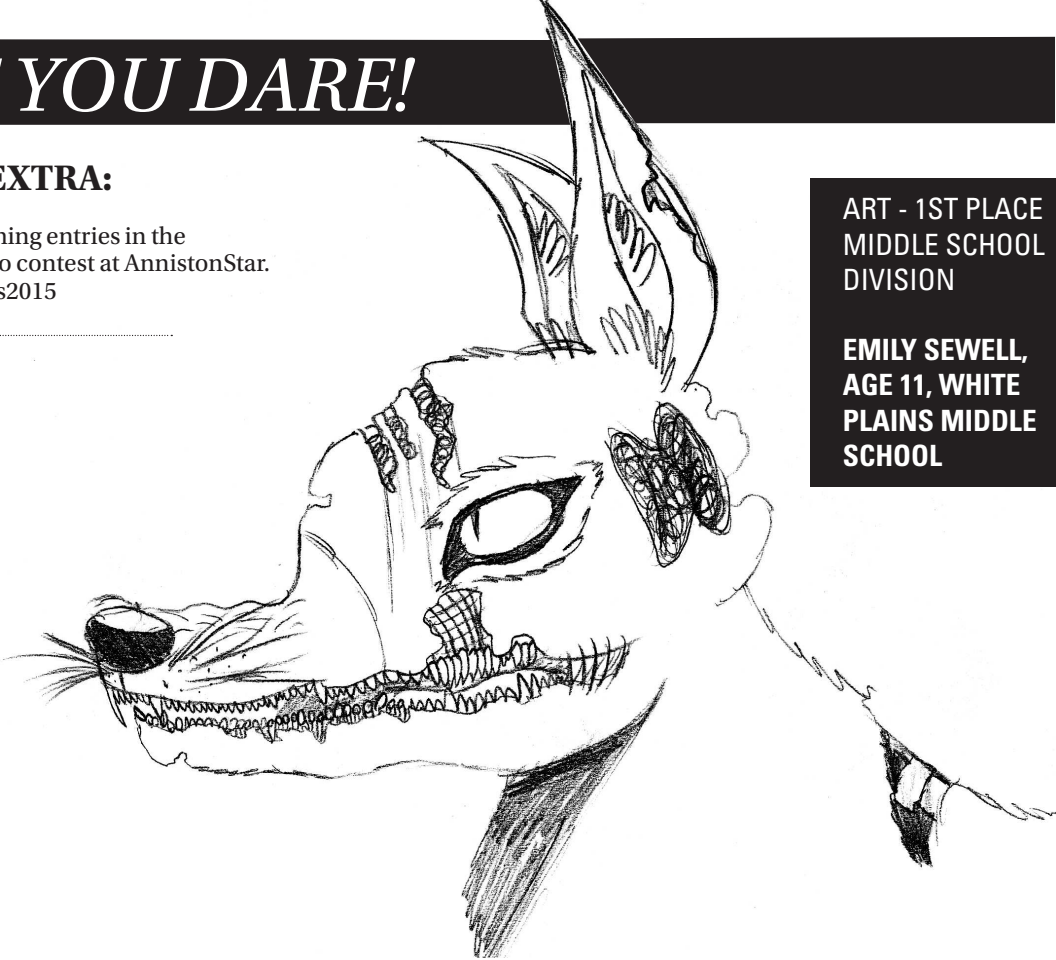
ONLINE EXTRA:

Watch the winning entries in the Ghostwriters video contest at AnnistonStar.com/Ghostwriters2015

Ghostwriters video contest winners

- 1st place:**
“Anime music video,” Savannah Edwards, Oxford High School.
- 2nd place:**
“The Stranger’s Box,” Carter Stremmel, The Donoho School.
- 3rd place:**
“Ghost Hunter,” Janiyah McDonald and Naira Rehman, The Donoho School.

- Honorable mentions:**
“Our Creepy Trip to a Haunted House,” KB Benkwith, Jack Ballard, Garrett Orth and Noah George, The Donoho School.
- “The Dark Eyes,” Sean Keel, Logan Melton and John Perry, The Donoho School.
- “The Curse of the Killer Dog,” Cailin Campbell, Gracie Perry, Julia Wiedmer and Lily the Great Pyrenees, The Donoho School.



ART - 1ST PLACE
MIDDLE SCHOOL
DIVISION

EMILY SEWELL,
AGE 11, WHITE
PLAINS MIDDLE
SCHOOL



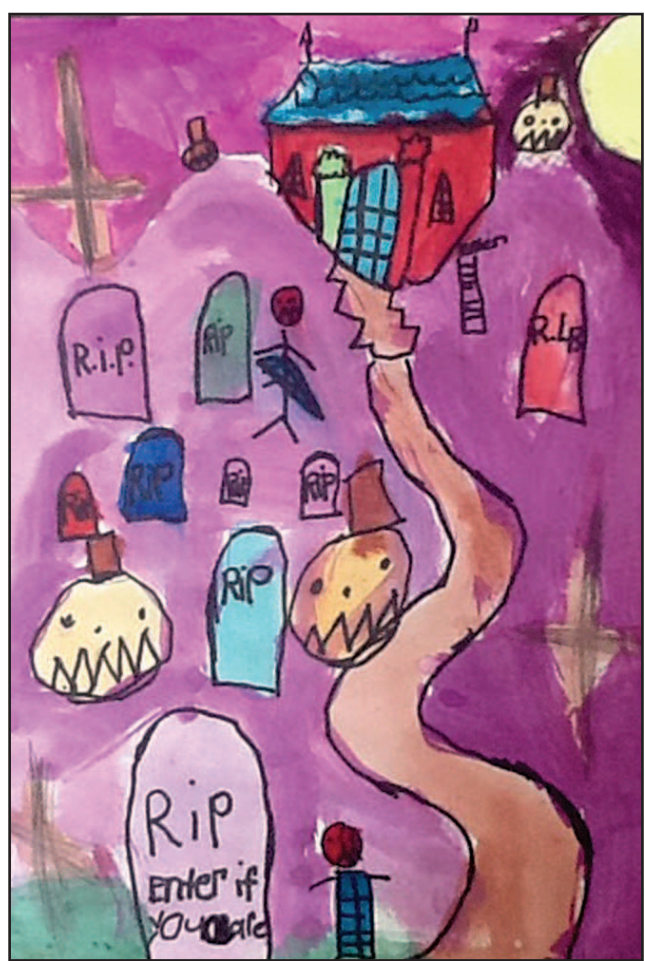
ART - 1ST PLACE
ELEMENTARY DIVISION

OLLIE BROWN, AGE 7, FRUITHURST ELEMENTARY



ART - 2ND PLACE
ELEMENTARY DIVISION

EMILY MAGUIRK, AGE 10,
OHATCHEE ELEMENTARY



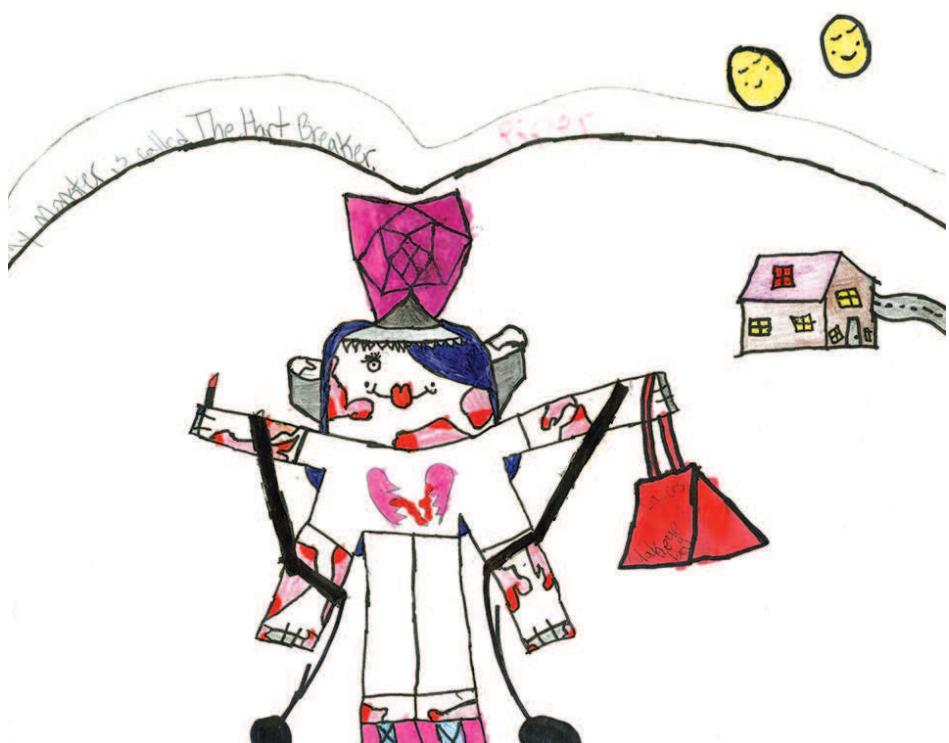
ART - 3RD PLACE
ELEMENTARY DIVISION

KATE WILLIAMON, AGE 7, THE DONOHO SCHOOL



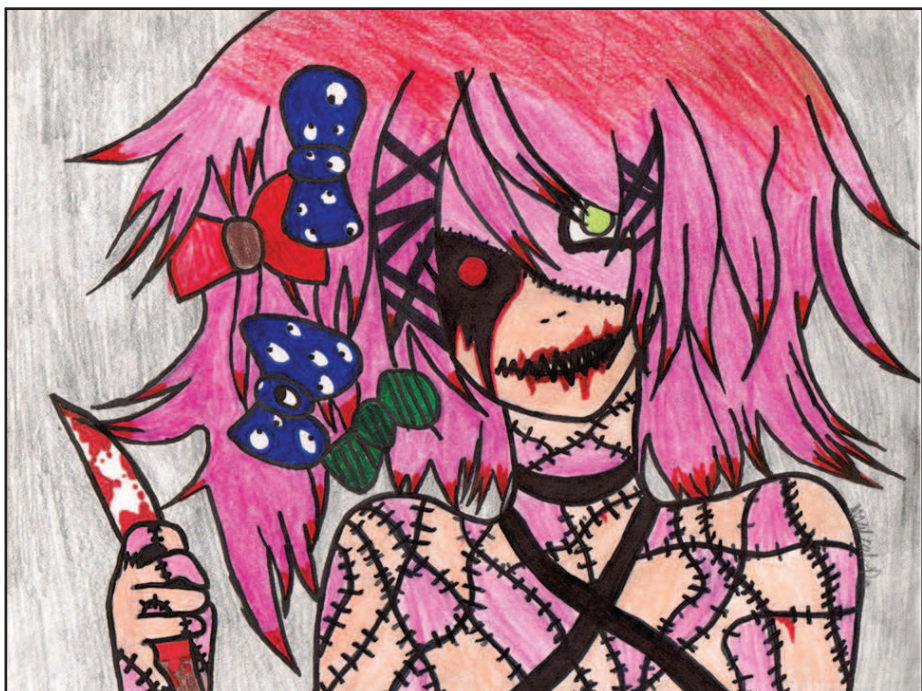
ART - HONORABLE MENTION
ELEMENTARY DIVISION

NINA TOLLESON, AGE 9,
OHATCHEE ELEMENTARY



ART - 2ND PLACE
MIDDLE SCHOOL DIVISION

PIPER SANFORD, AGE 10, WHITE PLAINS MIDDLE SCHOOL



ART - 3RD PLACE
MIDDLE SCHOOL DIVISION

MALEAH RODRIGUEZ, AGE 13, PLEASANT VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL



ART - HONORABLE
MENTION
MIDDLE SCHOOL
DIVISION

MONTEZ BURNS,
AGE 10, WHITE
PLAINS MIDDLE
SCHOOL

Honorable Mention - High School Division

"They Drowned"

It wasn't a type of day that would be considered worrisome or stressful. I took the same route home from work; I couldn't afford a car. I lived in a low-income part of town where nothing was very active.

I've heard the stories before; they never bothered me. It was a man, long beard, aged face, who had recently lost his two children, a boy and a girl. They were 12 and 14. They drowned in the river east of our neighborhood. It was a very traumatic sight to see their corpses recovered.

It wasn't soon after that his wife shot herself dead with a 12-gauge.

It was just him left, the man. He had invited me into his house, a week after his wife was found in her room, dead. We sat and talked a bit. That is when he decided to reveal something ridiculous and clearly a result of intoxication.

"I've heard her, she walks down that street right there, she moans, calling for our dead children, I know she's there, I can hear her calling for me as well."

Becoming a bit creeped out, I excused myself, and quickly walked home. I convinced myself he had become insane from the loss of his family. I thought I should leave him be.

That night, I had trouble sleeping, with the thought of the lady in my head. I thought I heard her moaning a few times, but dismissed it as my active imagination.

It wasn't soon after I heard manic screaming and banging at my door. My face flushed, and I

felt a great deal of anxiety that made me tremble. Grabbing a pocket knife, I quickly opened the door and slashed, missing.

The figure never even flinched from the sight of a blade being swung six centimeters away from his neck. I quickly came to the realization that it was the man. "Hello." The way he said this simple greeting seemed to suck the life out of me.

I soon came to my senses and scolded the man for his behavior prior to his greeting. He said nothing, and we stood there at the door staring at each other, I turned on the porch light and saw the wound on his neck. I didn't miss.

He was smiling, and my heart was racing. "I wanted to borrow some water, for my garden," he said. "At two o'clock in the morning?" I responded. He said nothing, and invited himself into my home. I followed him, and he soon had a bottle of water and was heading back to his house.

I followed him, and came into his house with him. He was still silent, oblivious to my presence. He went to his backyard, and I went into his house. I went into a bedroom, horrified at the sight of gore.

I turned around and ran out of the house, and I looked back once more, to see him staring at me from his doorway.

— Alexander Taylor, Age 14, The Donoho School

"Bad Dreams"

It's 3:00 in the morning, my window is open,

and the cool crisp air is relaxing. The unsettling sense of another in my presence ruins my tranquil slumber. I quickly rise from my bed and search the room, but see no proof of another.

As I turn to go back to bed, the once cool and calming breeze is now warm and panted. Almost as if someone was breathing down my neck. My heart is racing so fast it feels like it'll burst through my chest.

All of a sudden the ungodly stench of a thousand years' decay fills the air, and I fear my end is near. I quickly turn to clearly see the withered face of the creature which filled my soul with grief and dread. This putrid thing that stood before me, that sent chills down my spine and struck a foreboding unease in my heart, was gone in a blink of an eye.

I'm unable to move. The shock of this interaction paralyzed me for what seems like hours.

Snapping out of my terror-induced trance, I grabbed the knife that I keep under my pillow and waited. Waited for the unholy abomination to return, so that I may destroy it and send it back to the darkness from whence it came.

I wake at a quarter to 6, soaked in sweat from the night before. My hand is sore and stiff from gripping the knife so tight. Carefully, I rose from my bed and scanned the room as I did the night previous.

Maybe it was nothing more than another nightmare. I almost can't tell the difference between my harsh reality and my twisted imagination anymore.

The truth is, being the last surviving member of the Van Helsing family is a burden that has haunted me since birth.

I will fulfill my destiny and rid the world of its demons despite my fears. But for now I have let my guard down. I was vulnerable and I was weak. This is unacceptable on my behalf, and I must be prepared for the upcoming battle.

— Ieisha McNeal, Age 16, Anniston High School