

GASTON COUNTY

Students celebrated by local Rotary clubs



1st Place (\$2,000) - John Williams - Highland School of Technology PHOTOS PROVIDED BY RICHARD ABERNETHY

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Rotary International "4-Way Test" — "In all that we think, say and do: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships? Will it be beneficial to all concerned?"

High school seniors applied the "Rotary 4-Way Test" to their everyday personal lives during the Rotary 4-Way Test Scholarship Challenge, held on Sunday, April 28, at the Schiele Museum in Gastonia. Eleven finalists presented their original essays as a speech, and four students were awarded scholarships totaling \$5,250.

The Rotary 4-Way Test Scholarship Challenge was sponsored by four Rotary clubs in Gaston County: Belmont, Gastonia, Gastonia East, and Gastonia Evening. Between the student speeches, students, guests learned about Rotary,



3rd Place (\$1,000) - Faith Waelz - Gaston Early College.

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Students

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each club's unique activities and projects, community, youth, international and vocational service.

Students addressed a diverse range of real-life issues in their essays, including: digital immortality, media literacy in world conflicts, food insecurity, volunteering with children who have special needs, poverty, social media, adverse childhood experiences, chronic illness, impactful leadership, influence, and the power of words.

Scholarship winners were: 1st place (\$2,000) - John Williams (Highland School of Technology), 2nd place (\$1,500) - Kya Roorda (Forestview High School), 3rd place (\$1,000) - Faith Waelz (Gaston Early College High School), and Honorable Mention (\$750) - Hayes Kucera (Forestview High School). Other finalists were: Danica Barker (Piedmont Community Charter School), Kate Bomgaars (South Point High School), Jay Crawford (South Point High School), Jocelyn Doorley (Piedmont Community Charter School), Mauro Maya-Castro (Highland

School of Technology), Kennedy Russell (Stuart Cramer High School), and Katherine White (Forestview High School). Finalists were selected in a preliminary judging of 20 essays submitted by students representing eight public and private/charter high schools in Gaston County.

Rotarians commented that the high quality of the essays was very impressive, and it was probably one of the most competitive years in the scholarship's history. The scholarship challenge was open to high school or early college seniors living in or attending school in Gaston County. The scholarship awards can be applied for post-secondary education or training (not limited to college) and not based on grade-point average or financial need.

Rotarians from outside Gaston County served as judges for the event, and students were not introduced until after the judges' decisions, to be "fair to all concerned."

Judges for the event were Rotarian Linda Rakvic from Mecklenburg South Rotary Club and Rotarian Lorena Prince and Allison Burkett from Queen City IMPACT club associated with Charlotte Dilworth South End Rotary Club.

Speakers from the sponsoring clubs

included Scholarship Chair Sharon Heinrich (Gastonia), President Les Davis (Gastonia), President Thomas Hunter III (Belmont), President-Elect Brenton Hartman (Gastonia Evening), and Assistant Governor Laurel Morris (Gastonia, speaking for Gastonia East). Laurel Morris presented certificates and announced awards, and Les Davis presented students with a Rotary 4-Way Test medallion.

The Rotary Club of Gastonia served as the lead club for the 2024 project, and received a \$2,500 District Grant from Rotary District 7680, matched by scholarship funding from participating clubs. The 4-Way Test Scholarship was started in 2012 by the Gaston Breakfast Rotary Club.

The "4-Way Test" was adopted by Rotary International in 1943 and has served as a guide for Rotarians in their personal and professional lives for more than 80 years. It was originally developed by Herbert J Taylor in 1932.

Rotary International is comprised of 1.4 million members worldwide, committed to "Service Above Self". To learn more, visit "Rotary7680.org" (Rotary District 7680), visit "Rotary.org" (Rotary International), or ask a Rotarian.