



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Japhet School Student from Royal Oak Takes First Place in Oratorical Contest

Clawson, Michigan - “How my best brings out the best in others” ... this was the opening statement of every competitor of this year’s Optimist International Oratorical Contest, to which Japhet School sent eight students on March 23. Japhet School students annually compete in the contest sponsored by the Lakeshore Optimists in Grosse Pointe.

Japhet School students took first and third place in the boys’ contest. It is the seventh year that Japhet School students have competed in the contest, and every year they have won awards. Japhet’s Upper Class teacher Susan Butler embraces the preparation for the contest, and students enter it with confidence.

Outstanding public speaking is a hallmark of Japhet School’s curriculum. Students in first through eighth grade have several opportunities every year to prepare and practice oral presentations. Japhet’s public speaking curriculum is connected to the school’s award-winning character education program and develops students’ confidence in leadership roles.

The Japhet School students who took first and third place in the Optimist competition are Conor Edwards of Royal Oak and Nate Hodgson of Mt. Clemens. Both students are eighth-graders. First-place winner Conor will advance to the regional competition next month. A short excerpt from each speech follows.

Conor Edwards connected the topic to ice hockey: “As I began to grow up, learned to skate and fully understand the icy sport and I became fascinated with the idea of team captains. These guys are the brain and the motivation of the team ... I watched to learn how these skaters used teamwork to play, and it was then that I realized that a captain was not a yelling drill sergeant but a role model for everyone. I decided at that moment that the best player is a team player. I’m not the greatest hockey player who ever graced the ice now, and I’m sure I’ll never be, but I try my absolute hardest to inspire. I can just strive to do what I think will allow others to strive for their best.”

Nate Hodgson began his speech with this quote by Steve Prefontaine: “ ‘To give anything less than your best is to sacrifice the gift.’ My academic best has been something at the front of my mind for much of my life. I consider myself to have a healthy curiosity and a mindset of extreme growth. In the end, my best is all that I can do. Applying your personal best to anything is how you expand it, how you make yourself better at anything. Possibly the most important: your best can be the way to understand others, their problems, their hopes, their dreams. I hope to inspire everyone I touch to learn, to work, to be their own best. This is how I strive to bring out the best in others.”

About Japhet School: Founded in 1973, Japhet School is an independent school, serving children the metropolitan Detroit area in preschool through eighth grade. Its mission is to nurture and prepare each child for life by integrating character education with a strong academic program. The school provides small classes -- enabling teachers to challenge students and get to know each child well -- with integrated technology, hands-on learning, and individual and team projects. At every age, leadership skills are developed and practiced. The school has a special focus on oral communication, giving students confidence in sharing their voice. A national award-winning character education curriculum builds a peaceful community and gives graduates an ethical foundation. To learn more about Japhet, visit www.japhetschool.org.

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