



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Japhet School Students Shine in Oratorical Contest

Clawson, Michigan - "How My Passions Impact the World" ... this was the opening statement of every competitor of this year's Optimist International Oratorical Contest, to which Japhet School sent seven students in late March. Japhet School students annually compete in the contest sponsored by the Lakeshore Optimists in Grosse Pointe.

Of six possible award positions in the contest, Japhet School students took four of them: the second- and third-place awards in both the girls' and boys' competitions. It is the fifth 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. Its preschoolers and kindergartners are involved in all-school performances. Students' public speaking experience culminates with a 25-minute, interactive keynote presentation that each eighth-grader writes about a character quality and delivers to the entire school community.

The seven Japhet School students who competed in the Optimist competition are (L-R in photo on page 2): Jeannie Lam (6<sup>th</sup> grade, Warren), Nate Hodgson (6<sup>th</sup> grade, Mt. Clemens), Vanessa Baker (7<sup>th</sup> grade, Detroit), Katya Kornievskaia (8<sup>th</sup> grade, Beverly Hills), Taryn Harrison (8<sup>th</sup> grade, Pontiac), Graham Hoops (7<sup>th</sup> grade, Madison Heights), and Casey Golbiw (7<sup>th</sup> grade, Royal Oak). An excerpt of each award-winning speech follows.

"How My Passions Impact the World" – short excerpts from Japhet School students' five-minute presentations:

**Vanessa Baker:** "My passion is reading. I have learned that being able to read can help children everywhere become better writers. Reading also helps kids realize there's a world outside their own. They learn that there are people who live in different ways than they do. It opens kids up to thinking about going to new places and learning about the things around them. Lastly, reading teaches children empathy, because we can feel something without it happening to us. Author Roald Dahl said, 'If you are interested in something, embrace it, hug it, love it.' When we love something or someone with all our heart, we put more love in the air." *Vanessa was the second-place winner in the girls' contest.*

(see page 2)

**Katya Kornievskaja:** "Your passion is something that you devote your life to. That is why it is crucial to not waste your life on something meaningless. Every person has a responsibility to direct their passions toward good causes. What we strive for affects all of our surroundings, not just us. My passion is to travel, learn about different ways of life, and meet new people. A Russian writer, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, once said, 'nations are the colors of humanity.' I would like the painting of the world to be filled with peace and understanding, and I want to do my part in bringing this vision to life." *Katya was the third-place winner in the girls' contest.*

**Nate Hodgson:** "One of my passions is engineering. When asked the question of how my passion would impact the world, my answer would be: How doesn't it? If you research engineers like Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, and Steve Jobs, you will find that they did not actually invent the things they are famous for, but adapted other people's inventions and make them fit for people to use and enjoy. I think that this may be what engineering is all about. This year I invented a battery and solar-powered phone charger. You can find these separately, but not together. So with my own invention I did my own job of making something better." *Nate was the second-place winner in the boys' contest.*

**Graham Hoops:** "'Teamwork is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results.' This quote from Andrew Carnegie speaks volumes to me. Teamwork can change the outcome of any game or project. For my passions -- hockey, football, and even soccer -- that means not only having fun and making friends, but also feeling the excitement of winning points together. Some say sports shouldn't be played in school. I wonder why anybody would support this; sports help you concentrate and build relationships. Playing sports is my passion, but the impact of teamwork on players is much greater than just winning the game." *Graham was the third-place winner in the boys' contest.*

**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 of fewer than 20 students in each, which enables teachers to challenge students with academic material that is appropriate for their intellectual readiness, regardless of age or grade. Integrated with strong academics is Japhet School's national award-winning character education curriculum, which builds a peaceful community within the school and creates leaders with integrity. Japhet is a National School of Character: it was the first school in Michigan -- and the first independent school in the country -- to receive this award. Japhet School is located in Clawson, Michigan, at the corner of Crooks and Normandy roads. To learn more about Japhet, visit [www.japhetschool.org](http://www.japhetschool.org).



L-R - full-size photo attached to email:

- Jeannie Lam (gr. 6, Warren)
- Nate Hodgson (gr. 6, Mt. Clemens)
- Vanessa Baker grade (gr. 7, Detroit)
- Katya Kornievskaja (gr. 8, Beverly Hills)
- Taryn Harrison (gr. 8, Pontiac)
- Graham Hoops (gr. 7, Madison Hts)
- Casey Golbiw (gr. 7, Royal Oak)