2019 Winners

Throughout history, people have been forced to reckon with difficult issues and have passed through what Abraham Lincoln might call “fiery trials.” Pick one person who inspires you because they have chosen to take on a daunting societal challenge. This challenge could be within their community, their state, their nation or the world. Describe the challenge this person is tackling, the actions they are taking, the character traits that compel them to act, and the lesson(s) you draw from their example.

Region One: Grand Isle, Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Lamoille, Caledonia, Washington Counties
First Place, $600
Sage Conley
Sage wrote about Cindy Levin and her work with the organization Shot@Life
Glover Community School, Glover; Teacher: Renée Piernot

Second Place, $400
Kathryn Cox
Kathryn wrote about Emma Gonzalez and her efforts to rally support for gun control
Harwood Union Middle School, Moretown; Teacher: Sarah Ibson

Third Place, $200
Jillian Stevens
Jillian wrote about Boyan Slat and his organization The Ocean Cleanup
Glover Community School, Glover; Teacher: Renée Piernot

Region Two: Chittenden County
First Place, $600
Lydia Sheeser
Lydia wrote about Malala Yousafzai and her efforts to promote equal education for all.
Edmunds Middle School, Burlington; Teacher: Richard Boyers

Second Place, $400
Georgia Wool
Georgia wrote about William Kamkwamba, who, from scrap metal, created a windmill to generate his village’s first electricity in Malawi.
Edmunds Middle School, Burlington; Teacher: Jane Lavigne

Third Place, $200
Aya Goldstein
Aya wrote about Sonita Alizadeh, Afghan refugee singer protesting child marriage and labor.
Edmunds Middle School, Burlington; Teacher/Librarian: Carole Renca
Region Three: Addison, Rutland, Bennington Counties

First Place, $600
Ainsleigh Johnson
Ainsleigh wrote about Emma Gonzalez and her advocacy for stricter gun legislation.
Middlebury Union Middle School, Middlebury; Teacher: Sara Nadeau

Second Place, $400
Gabrielle Lucci
Gabrielle wrote about Malala Yousafzai’s standing up for girls’ education in spite of the Taliban.
Christ the King School, Rutland; Teacher: Melissa Bledsoe

Third Place, $200
Maria Hogankamp
Maria wrote about Emma Gonzalez and her efforts to secure stronger gun legislation.
Rutland Town School, Rutland; Teacher: Peter Patterson

Region Four: Orange, Windsor, Windham Counties

First Place, $600
Avery Swett
Avery wrote about Ricky Bernstein and Hands in Outreach, overcoming female illiteracy in Nepal.
Upper Valley Waldorf School, Quechee; Teacher: Amy Fredland

Second Place, $400
Fern Patton
Fern wrote about Isatou Ceesay who transforms waste into wealth and empowers women in The Gambia.
Putney Central School, Putney; Teacher: Amanda Dixon

Third Place, $200
Anthem Philip
Anthem wrote about Malala Yousafzai and her efforts to promote girls’ rights to equal education.
Upper Valley Waldorf School, Quechee; Teacher: Amy Fredland

4 Honorable Mentions, $100 each
Greta Kilburn
Greta wrote about Sabra Davidson’s Little Bellas that promotes girls’ self-esteem through bike riding.
Region Two, Edmunds Middle School, Burlington; Teacher: Kathleen Gallagher, Librarian: Carole Renca

Olivia Campbell
Olivia wrote about Dr. Christine Blasey Ford and her testimony against Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh concerning sexual assault.
Region Three, Mt. Abraham Union High/Middle School, Bristol; Teacher: Emily Beattie

Paige Samuelson
Paige wrote about Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the Green New Deal.
Region Three: Maple Street School, Manchester Center; Teacher: Conor Welch

Lily Welch
Lily wrote about Maggie Doyne and the Kopila Valley Children’s Home she created in Nepal.
Region Four, Upper Valley Waldorf School, Quechee; Teacher: Amy Fredland