

**Congratulations to the 2022 Hildene Lincoln Essay Competition winners!** We received 186 applications from all over Vermont. A first, second, and third place winner was chosen from each of four regions and four honorable mentions were selected from the combined pool of finalists. If you are one of the applicants, whether or not your essay garnered an award, you are to be congratulated. It was clear to all the judges that every single one of you put a lot of thought, time and effort into your writing in order to answer the following prompt:

What gives YOU hope? Identify a challenging issue facing humanity today, whether at the local, state, national, and/or global level. Express why this issue matters to you. Investigate a scientific, legislative, technological, or other type of solution that is currently being proposed or employed to address the issue. Explain what it is and why it holds promise as part of the solution to the problem.

Students across the state identified a wide range of concerning issues and highlighted fascinating and promising solutions that give them hope. Tackling the global warming crisis was by far the most frequently targeted issue (61 out of the 186 essays submitted), followed by the gender pay gap; poverty, housing shortage and food insecurity in VT; animal cruelty; girls' access to education globally; racism and discrimination; gun violence and school safety; reproductive healthcare rights; and more. While the proposed solutions are too numerous to include here, they reflect the ongoing work of a multitude of innovators working tirelessly all over the world—and that should give us all hope!

As always, submissions were passed along anonymously to the judges. The panel assessed them on content, the student's understanding of the subject and their ability to convey that understanding using good writing practices including style, composition, grammar and factual accuracy. Hildene applauds all who took part in the competition.

All participants will receive a letter in the mail, along with guest passes to visit Hildene. We hope you will all come and enjoy the many pleasures that Hildene's 412 bucolic acres have to offer. On behalf of Hildene and all of the LEC judges, I thank you for tackling this year's prompt. The range of concerns and solutions proposed were impressive and thought-provoking. May your efforts inspire you to continue to hone your communication skills and to remain civically engaged. I have no doubt that your contributions will make the world an even better place.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Moffett-Hynds  
Programming Director

**Prompt:**

What gives YOU hope? Identify a challenging issue facing humanity today, whether at the local, state, national, and/or global level. Express why this issue matters to you. Investigate a scientific, legislative, technological, or other type of solution that is currently being proposed or employed to address the issue. Explain what it is and why it holds promise as part of the solution to the problem.

**Inspiration:**

“We can succeed only by concert. It is not ‘can any of us imagine better?’ but, ‘can we all do better?’ The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew.”  
- 1862 Second Annual Message to Congress, President Abraham Lincoln

## 2022 WINNERS

**REGION ONE:  
Grand Isle, Franklin, Orleans, Essex, Lamoille,  
Caledonia, Washington Counties**

### **FIRST PLACE, \$500**

#### **Hadley Reed**

Hadley wrote about social media as a powerful tool which organizations (particularly nonprofits) can use to raise both awareness and funds to combat monumental problems such as plastics pollution in the ocean. She highlighted #TeamSeas which raised \$30 million for The Ocean Conservancy and The Ocean Cleanup, two groups which hope to reduce plastics pollution by 90% in waterways and oceans by 2040.

Green Mountain Valley School, Waitsfield; Teacher: Grif Edwards

### **SECOND PLACE, \$400**

#### **Katya Synkova**

Katya wrote about what it's like to be made to feel as someone “other” in Vermont, identifying bills in the legislature that could break down barriers and encourage inclusivity for all people regardless of their cultural or ethnic heritage.

Home Study Student, Roxbury; Teacher: Sean M. Cummings

### **THIRD PLACE, \$300**

#### **Hannah K. Darov**

Hannah draws hope from witnessing great strides in science, and specifically in medicine, which have helped her personally and are addressing global health challenges.

Green Mountain Valley School, Waitsfield; Teacher: Grif Edwards

**REGION TWO:  
Chittenden County**

**FIRST PLACE, \$500**

**Esther Lokossou**

Esther addressed the fact that the BIPOC community has not always felt supported in mental healthcare and she applauds increasing openness about the specific challenges they face, while advocating for expanding services and hiring doctors from the BIPOC community in underserved areas of the country.

Edmunds Middle School, Burlington; Teacher: Richard Boyers

**SECOND PLACE, \$400**

**Siena DeMink**

Siena wrote about the importance of policy changes that address the income wage gap between men and women, finding hope and inspiration in female leaders such as VT Lt. Gov. Molly Gray and US Vice President Kamala Harris.

Edmunds Middle School, Burlington; Teacher: Richard Boyers

**THIRD PLACE, \$300**

**Scarlett Contreras-Montesano**

Scarlett wrote about the many challenges migrant farmworkers face in Vermont, finding hope in the work of organizations such as Migrant Justice.

Edmunds Middle School, Burlington; Teacher: Jeremy DeMink

**REGION THREE:  
Addison, Rutland, Bennington Counties**

**FIRST PLACE, \$500**

**Nora Heffernan-Smith**

Nora wrote, "Food waste is a rapidly growing issue all over the world; not only is it an economic problem, but an ethical and environmental concern as well." She finds the work of Apeel Sciences promising because their edible plant-based produce coating can slow oxidation and considerably increase the viability of fresh food, thus reducing waste.

Long Trail School, Dorset; Teacher: Deb MacDonald

**REGION THREE, cont.**

**SECOND PLACE, \$400**

**Linus P. Tucker**

Linus wrote about the Kessler Syndrome (the problem of massive amounts of space junk in orbit, threatening astronauts and satellites) and described a proposal by JPL and Stanford robotics researchers and engineers to use a kind of sticky pad to grab objects in space.

Hiland Hall School, Bennington; Teacher: Brennan Cofiel

**THIRD PLACE, \$300**

**Phoebe Bissell**

Concerned about cancer and invasive treatments to combat it, Phoebe wrote about an effective new technology that is already proving to be very successful: “Cyberknife... tracks and precisely targets tumors, which minimizes the tissue exposed to radiation and therefore the amount of side effects cancer treatment causes.”

Long Trail School, Dorset; Teacher: Deb MacDonald

**REGION Four:  
Orange, Windsor, Windham Counties**

**FIRST PLACE, \$500**

**Lila Armour-Jones**

Addressing the rapid deterioration of coral reefs due to climate change, Lila identified two techniques that seem to be helping the reefs to revive: the installation of waterproof speakers in the dying reefs that play the sounds of healthy coral (thus attracting fish) and ArchiREEF 's 3D printing that creates a terraotta tile which mimics the shape of brain coral (to which baby coral is attached).

Putney Central School, Putney; Teacher: Amanda Dixon

**SECOND PLACE, \$400**

**Joaquin Jones-Welker**

Joaquin wrote about systemic poverty in Vermont, finding hope in the government's ability to alleviate hardship by implementing (and, he hopes, reinstating) child tax credits, increasing food stamps, and continuing to provide stimulus checks to those who need them.

Upper Valley Waldorf School, Quechee; Teacher: Julia Pellegrino

**REGION FOUR, cont.**

**THIRD PLACE, \$300**

**Ida Desjardins**

Ida writes about the lack of access to education for girls in many parts of the world. She finds hope in the work of the Malala Fund, the Girls Opportunity Alliance, UNICEF, and the Global Partnership for Education—all of which are endeavoring to make access to education universal.

Putney Central School, Putney; Teacher: Amanda Dixon

**HONORABLE MENTIONS**

**HONORABLE MENTIONS, \$200 each**

**Jonas Ackerman-Hovis**

Jonas wrote, “Global warming is an ever looming threat that is becoming more dangerous every day.” In underscoring the need to create a low carbon society, Jonas finds hope in the implementation of Enhanced Geothermal Systems.

Brattleboro Area Middle School, Brattleboro; Teacher: Christy Jackson

**Miriam Patton**

Miriam wrote about animal cruelty, focusing on inhumane conditions on factory farms in particular. She finds hope in a pending bill called the Farm System Reform Act that would prohibit the expansion or creation of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and would require the largest CAFOs to stop running by 2040 (using debt forgiveness and buyouts).

Putney Central School, Putney; Teacher: Amanda Dixon

**Savannah Rose**

Savannah pointed out the potentially harmful drawbacks of traditional grading systems and finds hope in the increasing use of proficiency-based assessments in public schools.

Putney Central School, Putney; Teacher: Amanda Dixon

**Robin Tashjian**

Robin addressed the magnitude of the climate crisis head on, while finding hope in the comprehensive solutions put forth in the Green New Deal which, if adopted by Congress, would provide a realistic path forward to a healthier, livable planet.

Maple Street School, Manchester Center; Teacher: Conor Welch