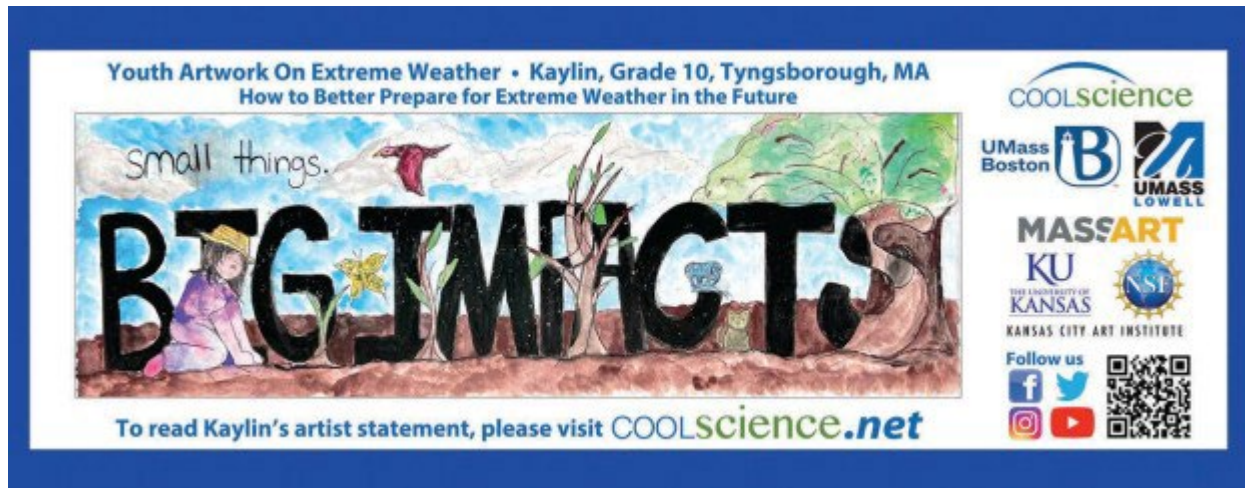


# Artworks by K-12 students sound alarm on changing environment



Artwork by Tyngsboro resident Kayla Oakes, a sophomore at Greater Lowell Technical High School, received the top prize in the Massachusetts division of UMass Lowell's annual Cool Science Contest. (COURTESY UMASS LOWELL)

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LOWELL — Kaylin Oakes, a sophomore from Tyngsboro whose art is teaching people about the climate crisis, is the top winner in the state's division of UMass Lowell's Cool Science Contest. The competition asks K-12 students to create illustrations that depict the science behind extreme weather, then shares the artwork on transit buses to educate the public.

As the state's top contest winner, Oakes, a Greater Lowell Technical High School student, received the university's David Lustick Award at the Cool Science Art Exhibition Celebration Saturday, April 6, at the Chelmsford Center for the Arts. This spring, Oakes and fellow contest winners' illustrations are being displayed in and on Lowell Regional Transit Authority buses, where passengers and passersby may learn about the science behind the environment.

Additional contest winners will be honored at another Cool Science award ceremony in the Midwest. There, artworks will be displayed on Kansas City Area Transportation Authority buses traveling through Kansas and Missouri.

"The student artists have done an excellent job learning about issues related to climate science and turning that knowledge into engaging art. It is so fun to talk to them about their artwork and the processes they used to arrive at their winning pieces," said Jill Hendrickson Lohmeier, UMass Lowell School of Education chair, and professor of research and evaluation.

The contest's top award is named in memory of the late David Lustick, a former Nashua, New Hampshire, resident, UMass Lowell professor, and nationally recognized champion of environmental education. Lustick and Hendrickson Lohmeier co-founded Cool Science to study how people learn science in informal settings. Supported by the National Science Foundation, the program is a research partnership between UMass Lowell, UMass Boston, the Massachusetts College of Art and Design, University of Kansas, and Kansas City Art Institute.

"The Cool Science student artists continue to produce beautiful, creative posters for public consumption, and now we know that the adult viewers are learning measurably more about climate science," said UMass Boston Professor Bob Chen, interim dean of the School for the Environment.

More than 4,500 students from around the world have participated in Cool Science since the annual program began in 2012.

"Each year, I'm amazed at the level of sophistication of the artwork – both in terms of visual achievement and the students' knowledge of climate science. Works created by elementary through high school students exhibited in this year's celebration are wonderful examples of how vigorous and successful the blending of the arts, education, and science can be," said UMass Lowell's Stephen Mishol, associate professor and interim chair of the art and design department.

Cool Science is just one example of UMass Lowell's commitment to the environment. The university is recognized as a gold-status campus and the highest ranked school in the state for sustainability, according to the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. These achievements underscore the work of UMass Lowell's Rist Institute for Sustainability and Energy, which advances research in these sectors and promotes community action in solving environmental challenges.

In addition to Oakes, contest winners from these hometowns will have their artwork appear on Lowell Regional Transit Authority bus lines:

- Daniel Aksianov of Winchester, a fifth-grader at Muraco Elementary School
- Niamh O'Connor of Milton, a fourth-grader at Glover Elementary School
- Navya Jain of Westford, a sixth-grader at Stony Brook School
- Zoya Pathan of Chelmsford, a sixth-grader at Parker Middle School
- Vivian Lun of Leesburg, Virginia, a senior at Loudoun County High School.

Runners-up also honored include:

- Aliya Qin of Winchester, a fifth-grader at Muraco Elementary School

- Sanvi Samala, Shrika Panchal and Suraj Sury, all of Westford and sixth-graders at Stony Brook School
- Esther Lee of Seoul, South Korea, a sophomore at Westminster School in Simsbury, Connecticut
- Hanna King, Mariel Rodriguez, Riley Richardson and Sophia Dixon, all of Lowell and sophomores at Greater Lowell Technical High School
- Victoria Largaespada of Virginia Gardens, Florida, a junior at Design and Architecture Senior High School.