



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

SOA Scholar Earns Nation's Top Writing Prize

North Charleston, SC – Lillian Hughes is on her way to Carnegie Hall to accept the nation's highest honor for a teen writer. The nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers awarded her with a Gold Medal Portfolio as part of the 2025 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards; she is one of only eight high-school senior writers in the nation to earn this top honor.

"I scribbled my first story for Scholastic in 8th grade on the back of my algebra homework," Hughes said. "I've always been sort of hopelessly in love with writing, so hearing the news about my portfolio felt like being told 'this really is your path, you belong there.' To say I was ecstatic is an understatement."

Hughes received the Gold Medal Portfolio for her writing and will receive a \$12,500 scholarship. According to the Alliance, hundreds of thousands of art and writing submissions are received every year; the Scholastic Art & Writing Awards are divided into 29 categories, including poetry, photography, and video game design.

Hughes said her award-winning portfolio is a collection of poetry, short stories, and an essay, all sharing the central themes of appreciating nature and advocating for its conservation. She added that she used experiences from her own life as launching points for her work, which will be displayed in the National Exhibition in early June. She is also invited to participate in the national celebration in New York City, which includes an awards ceremony at Carnegie Hall on June 11, 2025.

"Scholastic is giving me this opportunity to come to Carnegie Hall and be surrounded by people who have just as much love for the craft as I do," Hughes added. "I couldn't be more excited to learn from the guest speakers and the other winning writers, all of whom are so insanely talented. Hopefully, having my work displayed means at least one more person will consider the natural world and how important it is we protect it."

What's more, Hughes recently published her thriller mystery novel, *Bellflower's Bloom*, and is now available on Amazon.

The Scholastic Art & Writing Awards is the longest-running recognition program for creative teenagers in grades 7-12 in the country; it started in 1923. Past winners include Truman Capote, Joyce Carol Oates, Stephen King and Sylvia Plath.

Dr. Shannon Cook, principal at SOA proudly shared, "We're excited to recognize Lillian's incredible achievement and honored to see Charleston County School of the Arts showcased among this year's Gold Medal Portfolio recipients."

For more about Hughes' accomplishment, contact Principal Cook at (843) 529-4990. To learn more about her honor, and to find a complete list of the 2025 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards national recipients, visit: www.artandwriting.org.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is the second largest school system in South Carolina representing a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools that span 1,000 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves more than 50,000 students in 86 schools and specialized programs. With approximately 6,100 employees district-wide, CCSD is the fourth largest employer in the region.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, charter, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), and Montessori schools, and is divided into three Learning Communities. Options include specialized programs in science, engineering and mathematics; liberal arts; music and other creative and performing arts; career and technical preparation programs; and military and other public service enterprises.