



For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Charleston County High School Senior Earns Nation's Two Top Writing Prizes

North Charleston, SC – SOA Creative Writing major and senior, Niamh Carmichael, just returned from an eight-day National YoungArts Week in Miami, FL where she was one of only six students in the nation to be awarded the YoungArts Award with Distinction in Fiction. And soon she will be on her way to Carnegie Hall to accept the nation's other highest honor for a teen writer – the Scholastic Gold Medal Portfolio. The nonprofit Alliance for Young Artists & Writers awarded her this honor as part of the 2026 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards; she is one of only eight high school senior writers in the nation to earn this recognition.

Carmichael described her award-winning portfolio as a collection of two poems and four short stories, revolving around shared themes of family, loss, and grief. Her work emerged from her own life experiences, particularly those involving the death of her father to pancreatic cancer when she was nine, and learning to navigate the world without him. For example, the collection's two poems explore this loss through the lenses of bird-watching and religion, and each of the four stories centers around the absence of a family member from various perspectives. Her work will be displayed in the National Exhibition in early June and made available for public reading on Scholastic's website. Carmichael will be honored at Carnegie Hall in New York City, on June 10, 2026, where she will be recognized on stage at the national ceremony and presented with a \$12,500 Gold Portfolio 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, fiction, painting, photography, sculpture, and film animation.

Carmichael said, "I'm so grateful to Scholastic for giving me this opportunity, both to be honored for my work and to expand my community of fellow writers just as I

was able to do so during YoungArts Week in Miami. I'm truly excited to go to New York City and celebrate alongside the other incredible artists there, including a few connections I recently made through YoungArts! To have achieved both of these national awards is an honor which I'm incredibly humbled to receive. This success is all the more rewarding and meaningful considering I recently earned a pizza party for my creative writing class by accumulating ten rejection letters from various literary magazines."

What's more, Carmichael will soon publish her collection of poetry and short fiction, *Root Stock*, which will be 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.

Regarding the YoungArts honor, over 13,000 artistically gifted students from across the country in grades 10 – 12 submit their work to be judged for the prestigious National YoungArts Foundation Competition each year. Of these 13,000 students, 164 Finalists are invited to YoungArts Week in Miami, Florida where they participate in a week of intensive master classes and workshops with internationally renowned artists.

SOA Creative Writing is a nationally recognized, award-winning program that offers young writers – grades six through twelve – the unique chance to study poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and scriptwriting through middle and high school every day, culminating in the publication of their senior thesis. Over the years, our students have won thousands of writing awards, scholarships, and honors. Wordsmiths find and cultivate their voice in our one-of-a-kind program!

Dr. Shannon Cook, principal at SOA proudly shared, "As her principal, I am incredibly proud of this remarkable creative writer whose talent and voice have earned her both the Scholastic Gold Medal for Portfolio Writing and the prestigious YoungArts award!"

For more about Carmichael's accomplishment, contact Principal Cook at (843) 529-4990 or publicity representative (and creative writing teacher) Beth Webb Hart at (843) 345-2008. To learn more about her honor, and to find a complete list of the 2026 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.