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Young Northampton artist wins kudos for Google doodle

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SOUTH HADLEY - Sixteen-year-old Pioneer Valley Performing Arts sophomore Melissa Krok-Horton is one of eight state finalists in the second-annual "Doodle 4 Google" national logo design competition, which received more than 28,000 entries.

1

The drawing that Melissa Krok-Horton of Northampton submitted to Google.

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"Honestly, I jumped up and down - I was really excited," said the Northampton teen, recalling when she was called to the school's administrative office and told how she had placed.

"She was pretty excited," added Bob Brick, the school's executive director. "Melissa is really an amazing artist."

Last year, she heard of the first ever Google doodle logo competition from her younger sister, who attends JFK Middle School and drew a design. But she missed the submission deadline.

However, this year she was prepared. She drew a new logo for the contest, sent in her drawing by the March 31 deadline and was one of two students chosen from the grades 10-12 category for Massachusetts.

Google doodles are the drawings that are designed on, around and through the Google logo on the site's homepage.

According the contest's Web site, the competition is open to all U.S. residents aged of 5 to 18 who attend elementary and secondary schools.

Krok-Horton said she has participated in a few art contests before, including this year's "Create-An-Ad" contest in the Gazette.

She said was hoping to do well in the Google competition, but did not expect the results to turn out as they did. "After I sent it in, I had kind of forgot about it, actually," she said.

The theme of this year's contest was "What I Wish for the World." Krok-Horton drew a picture of a girl with "a really warm smile" holding out a large basket of food and incorporating the Google logo to "illustrate an end to world hunger."

Though Krok-Horton's entry was not chosen to advance to the regional finals, she is pleased to have ranked among the finalists in the country. She plans to submit another drawing in the 2010 contest.

"I do a lot of art work. It's part of my life," she said. "I enjoy being given a task and then trying to include my own interpretation."

In all, 400 drawings were picked. Entries came in four age brackets: kindergarten to grade 3, grades 4-6, grades 7-9 and grades 10-12. Out of those, two finalists are selected from each state. Students attending private schools and home schools are also eligible to participate.

"Students' doodles, including Melissa's, were judged on artistic merit, creativity, representation of the theme, and other criteria," said Anne Espiritu of Google's press office.

None of the Bay State doodlers advanced to the regional finals this year.

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The winning doodle, by sixth-grader Christin Engelberth of San Antonio, Texas, called "A New Beginning," was chosen by the judges to go live on the Google home page for 24 hours.

As national winner, Engelberth got a $15,000 college scholarship, a trip to Google's New York City office, a laptop computer and a T-shirt printed with her doodle.

"Doodle 4 Google" is held in separate competitions around the world in countries such as Ireland, Australia, England, Germany, Netherlands, Mexico, China and Israel.

The idea for Google doodles originated with company intern turned Webmaster Dennis Hwang in 2000.

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