



NSW winners in UNHCR School Writing Competition

Sydney students have won key places in each category in the latest UNHCR high school writing competition, *Refugees- telling their stories*.

Fifteen-year-old Avalon resident Tania Gneccchi-Ruscione has won first place in the Essay Category for her piece *It takes courage to be a refugee*, submitted last year when a student at Kincoppal Rose Bay. Tania now attends Year 10 at Barrenjoey High, Avalon Beach.

The piece reflects on various definitions of the term 'refugee', different personal stories and the reasons people fled their homes. Competition Judge and Time Magazine Journalist Tom Dusevic described Tania's essay as empathetic and informative, with a good all-round understanding of issues.

Another Sydneysider, 15-year-old Abbotsleigh College student Sophie Armitage, has won second place in the interview category for a refugee story from World War II. In *Watching over Ruza*, Sophie presents the key memories of Ruza Bulovan who, as a 14-year-old girl, was forced to flee her homeland in northern Yugoslavia with her mother. The story recounts various episodes of seeking shelter in one place only having to flee again. Eventually, Ruza and her family made it to northern Italy where they lived on a football field in the small town of Cesena, before the International Refugee Organisation (UNHCR's predecessor) organised their resettlement to Australia.

Fifteen-year-old Alexander Kennedy, of Kellyville High School, won a Highly Commended Award in the interview category for *Danny's story*. The piece described by Dusevic as 'passionate good story-telling' recounts the escape from Iran of Baha'i follower Danny Fanayan, his time in Pakistan -- where he was assessed as a refugee -- and his eventual resettlement to Australia.

Grace Jook, aged 18, from Greystanes High School in Western Sydney took out third place in a category for personal stories submitted by refugee students. *Grace's Story*, described by Dusevic as 'deeply moving, intimate and well-structured', charts the student's harrowing journey from

Page 1/2

her home in Sudan, survival in forests without food, water or shelter, and

the heart-wrenching separation from her mother who was too weak for the journey.

UNHCR runs an annual writing competition for high school students around Australia with the aim of generating understanding of refugee issues through the sharing of personal stories. The competition now comprises three categories: an article based on an interview with a refugee; a personal story written by a former refugee; and an essay based on the World Refugee Day theme *It takes courage to be a refugee*. In 2005, more than 160 entries were received.

The stories of winners and finalists in all three categories have been published in a book, *Refugees: telling their stories*, available online at www.unhcr.org.au or in hard copy from UNHCR.

UNHCR's External Relations Officer and competition judge, Ariane Rummery, said the collection includes some excellent writing from Australian high school students and showcases the diverse refugee communities that have built a new home in Australia over the past five decades. "The collection includes stories ranging from refugees fleeing WWII, the 1956 Hungarian uprising, Cambodia in the 1970s, Bosnia in the 1990s to the more recent arrivals from Sudan," she said.

Contacts:

UNHCR 02 6120 1104, 0409 501 355
