

**Qld winners in UNHCR School Writing Competition**

Queensland school students have won first and third prizes in a national writing competition based on interviews with refugees.

Angela Leggett won first prize in the interview category of the UNHCR High School Writing Competition for her story on twenty-one-year-old former Bosnian refugee and university student Jasmina Joldic, who came to Australia as a 10-year-old. A student at Brisbane Girls Grammar when she submitted the prize last year, Angela is now taking a break from her studies at the University of Queensland.

The story titled *Courage under Fire* offers Jasmina's reflections on the conflict in her former homeland, its impact on her family and her efforts to rebuild her life in Australia. It also gives an account of the author's meeting with Jasmina, including how her own preconceptions were challenged by the encounter.

One of the competition judges, Time Magazine's Editor-at-Large Tom Dusevic, said Angela's story was confident, strong in journalistic form, with the writer's own reactions detailed convincingly. Another judge, former Australian cricket captain Ian Chappell and Special Representative for *Australia for UNHCR*, described the story as perceptive.

Another Queenslander, Joanne Chan, has won third place in the same category for a story about her father, a former Cambodian refugee. In *Charlie's Story*, Joanne (a 15-year-old student at Upper Coomera State College), gives a harrowing account of her father's escape from Cambodia, journeying across mine-laden fields and walking to a refugee camp in Thailand where he spent three years before coming to Australia. Dusevic said "Charlie's voice comes through with great conviction" in the story.

A second student from Upper Coomera State College, 15-year-old April Seymour, received a Highly Commended award for a story about her grandfather former Hungarian refugee Ernest Istvan Gerzabek.

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

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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 third 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.

This latest collection also includes a story *In Memory of Rose* submitted by the friends of Sudanese refugee Rose Bol who died tragically in a car accident on 23 October 2004. Rose was a student at St Ursula's College, Toowoomba.

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