Olive Garden Announces Winners Of Its National Essay Contest

ORLANDO, Fla., April 22 /PRNewswire/ -- If 15-year-old Amanda Pipich of California could trade places with anybody for a day, she would be Neil Armstrong and "view the world from a different perspective and step foot where no man has before." Her essay gave an imaginative description of what Neil Armstrong must have felt when he first stepped foot on the moon and it won her the grand prize in Olive Garden's Pasta Tales national essay writing contest.

Aspiring student writers answered in 250 words or less, "If you could trade places with anybody for a day, who would it be and why?" In addition to Pipich, a winner was announced in each age category from seven to 16 years old. Winners were chosen from more than 13,000 entries.

In her essay, Pipich states that being the first to land on the moon would allow her to "view the globe of life from thousands of miles away and grasp a sand never touched by a living creature." Guessing what his feelings were at the time, Pipich writes, "Neil Armstrong not only felt this wonderment, he felt honor to be the first, to see and feel what no other had seen or felt."

Pipich goes on to express her admiration for Armstrong as she describes him as "an intelligent man with big dreams that took him all the way to the moon," and "a man that could look at that big blue-green marble set against the darkness of space, reach out, and call it 'home'."

As the overall Pasta Tales winner, Pipich receives a $1,000 U.S. Savings Bond, and a trip to New York City for dinner for her and her family at the Olive Garden restaurant in Times Square.

The winners in each age category are:

Age 7: Hannah Rose Beasley, Minnesota
Age 8: Andrew (A.J.) Bouch, Pennsylvania
Age 9: Sarah Dvorak, Iowa
Age 10: Katie Fletcher, Virginia
Age 11: Brian Riley, New York
Age 12: Timothy Papp, New Jersey
Age 13: Katie O'Brien, Illinois
Age 14: Nicole Andrews, Michigan
Age 15: Vanessa Allen, California
Age 16: Jonathan Kamler, New York

Age group winners receive a $250 U.S. Savings Bond and dinner for them and their family at their local Olive Garden.

"We congratulate all those who entered Pasta Tales," said Steve Coe, spokesperson for Olive Garden. "We want to send students the message that writing is a positive, fun experience. This contest is also a credit to the teachers and parents who encourage these young writers to be expressive and creative."

Pasta Tales is designed to encourage young writers to express themselves and to improve their writing skills. Entries were judged on creativity, organization, grammar, punctuation, and spelling by the Quill and Scroll Society of the College of Journalism and Communications at the University of Iowa.