

## **Area Youth Have Strong Showing in Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association and C&F Bank Middle School Essay Contest**

The more than 50 Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) members who attended the virtual Annual Membership Meeting on January 9th were delighted by the extraordinary Middle School students who won the TOGA and C&F Bank essay contest this year. Because there were exceptional essays submitted from across the State, the judges decided to recognize five winning essays.

Winners of the contest were:

Carina Pallo, 8th Grade, Home School, Richmond - 1st Place

Jordan Sadeg, 6th Grade, Thomas Hunter Middle School, Mathews - 2nd Place

Hunter Owens, 6th Grade, Thomas Hunter Middle School, Mathews - 3rd Place

Shyanne Carlton, 7th Grade, Peasley Middle School, Gloucester -

Honorable Mention

Aiden Major, 8th Grade, St. Claire Walker Middle School, Locust Hill -

Honorable Mention

To read these outstanding essays or to see these talented young people reading their essays go to [oystergardeners.org](http://oystergardeners.org), and click on Youth Writers 2020.

Awards this year were \$500, \$250, and \$100 for the top three essays. Each of the Honorable Mention essayists will receive \$50. In addition, each of the winning essayists will be awarded a TOGA t-shirt and cap, and the top three winners will receive an oyster grow out float. The school of the first place winner also receives \$200 to spend on educational aides. Because Ms. Pallo is home schooled the check will be sent to her mother.

"This year we had an extremely competitive contest with essays submitted from across the State of Virginia," said Terry Lewis, Past President of TOGA and chairman of the contest. "All of these award winning writers should be very proud to receive their awards, as should their area communities."

"Because of the Covid pandemic we held our annual membership meeting virtually. More than 70 people signed up for the zoom call. It was an exceptional meeting, with information from the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences TOGA Endowment winner about her research on oysters, and a discussion about the importance of safely handling oysters for consumption. TOGA extends a special thanks to VIMS for arranging this virtual meeting," Lewis said.

TOGA and C&F Bank are again sponsoring the contest for 2021, which is open to all Middle School Students in Virginia. Theme of the contest is Consider the Oyster, a wide open subject concerning anything to do with oysters. Prizes for the next contest will again be \$500, \$250, and \$100 for the top three essays, plus other oyster gear. More information about the upcoming contest and all of the winning essays can be found at [www.oystergardeners.org](http://www.oystergardeners.org).

