



Media Release

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Grand Erie Writers Shine at Laurier Steadman Creative Writing Awards

Brantford Ont. – A Brantford Collegiate Institute and Vocational School (BCI) student was awarded the top prize – with several Grand Erie students among the runners up – at the recent Laurier Steadman Prize celebration recognizing outstanding creative short-story writing by secondary school students.

Samaha Sanjida is in Grade 12 at BCI, and received \$3,000 for her first-place entry *The Year I Dreamt*, a first-person narrative set in 1971 against a backdrop of political conflict and military confrontation in present-day Bangladesh, then East Pakistan. It's the second time the biennial award has been presented, and the second time a Grand Erie student has won the first-place award.

"Samaha's writing has the ability to transport the reader right into the scenes she's creating with incredibly strong, raw, and poignant elements," said Stephanie Taylor, head of the English department at BCI, and one of the staff members who assisted with the anonymous submission process. "At times, the writing can make the reader feel quite uncomfortable, and I think that speaks volumes of her abilities as a writer."

The awards, funded through an endowment and estate gift to Wilfrid Laurier University and managed under the Faculty of Liberal Arts' English program, include cash prizes for the first, second, and third-place winners, with recognition given to runners up. BCI student Sovai Di Veto took home \$1,000 for garnering third place. Sam Earls and Cassidie Kent of Waterford District Secondary School, Stephanie Pugh of BCI, and Chloe Schaefer of Paris District High School all received recognition in the runner-up category, honoured among the 42 students from both school boards in the region whose works made it to the final selection. The top entries were evaluated by a jury including academics and award-winning writers. The Laurier Steadman Prize is among the largest prizes awarded for creative fiction that is open exclusively to secondary school students.

"Creative writing provides a valuable outlet for young people to express what they're going through, what they're struggling with, and the ability to convey what you mean is a skill that will serve students well in whatever they choose to pursue," said Taylor, noting that the Laurier Steadman prize is unique in the opportunity it provides. "Evidently, there are a lot of fantastic writers at each of our schools, and I hope more students will be inspired to work towards it."

[Grand Erie's Multi-Year Plan](#) includes the pillar of Achievement, setting high expectations for students and staff in the effective instruction and assessment in literacy and numeracy, which is reflected in programs such as the Laurier Steadman Prize.

Sanjida's winning entry can be read [here](#). Please note that the story contains descriptions of sexual assault and violence.

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Contact:

Kimberly Newhouse
Manager of Communications and Community Relations
Grand Erie District School Board
349 Erie Avenue, Brantford, Ontario, N3T 5V3
Office: 519-756-6301 ext. 281147 | Cell: 519-732-8540
www.granderie.ca