



NEWS RELEASE

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Three BCPS students win Baltimore County Public Library's horror story writing contest

Student winners represent Parkville Middle, Westchester Elementary, Dumbarton Middle schools

Towson, MD – Three Baltimore County Public Schools students swept the “under 21” category of Baltimore County Public Library’s Tales of the Dead Short Horror Story Contest.

- **Polly Sloan, a Grade 7 student at Parkville Middle School**, won first place for "The Letters from No One," about a man receiving mysterious and terrifying letters predicting his imminent death.
- Second place went to **Nicholas Krabitz, a Grade 5 student at Westchester Elementary School** in Catonsville, who told the story of a young teen discovering the truth about his father's murder in "Ghost in the Graveyard."
- **Lucy Bray, a Grade 7 student at Dumbarton Middle School**, took third place for “Victim,” which tells of a harrowing accident and the eerie aftermath.

The contest began in August when Baltimore County Public Library challenged writers of all ages to write original horror stories with a “Ghosts in the Graveyard” theme.

The contest was split into two categories: “over 21” and “under 21.” First-, second-, and third-place winners in both categories were selected by a panel of judges including Baltimore County Public Library’s Director Sonia Alcántara-Antoine, librarians, and published authors. Criteria for judging included originality, fear factor, and quality of writing.

As the panel of judges calculated scores and began to notify winners, they quickly realized something unprecedented in the history of the contest: the first-place winners in each category are father and

daughter. Polly Sloan's father, David Sloan, took first place in the "over 21" category for "A Hole at the Edge of the Woods," a story about a young fox whose curiosity gets the better of him on Halloween night.

"My daughter and I really enjoyed this challenge and had fun trying our best to out-write and out-scare each other," said winner David Sloan. "Storytelling is an important part of our family identity, so we look forward to more challenges like this to inspire our creativity."

The Tales of the Dead Short Horror Story Contest started in 2016, inspired by a 1816 ghost story challenge that led to the creation of Frankenstein's monster and the first modern vampire story. The contest is held in conjunction with [A Toast Among Ghosts](#).

The young winners will receive a prize package including a 2021 "A Toast Among Ghosts" T-shirt and gift card. "Over 21" winners received VIP tickets to [A Toast Among Ghosts](#), the Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library's annual Poe-themed outdoor festival. They are invited to read their winning stories next to the fire pit at the October 16 festival, which will take place at the Reisterstown Branch. All winning stories will be published on the [Foundation for Baltimore County Public Library](#)'s website.

(Editor's note: Photos of Polly Sloan, Nicholas Krabitz, and Lucy Bray accompany this release.)

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[Baltimore County Public Schools](#), the nation's 25th largest school system, is focused on raising the bar and closing gaps to prepare our students for the future. Thanks to innovative and talented leaders, teachers, staff, and students, BCPS celebrates [many honors](#).