

## **CATHOLIC CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT NAMES WINNERS IN SEVENTH ANNUAL MULTI-MEDIA YOUTH ARTS CONTEST**

**WASHINGTON** – Benjamin Rieke, a recent graduate of Helias High School in Jefferson City, Missouri, is the winner of the grand prize in the 2007 Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) Multi-Media Youth Arts contest. CCHD is the national anti-poverty program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Mr. Rieke submitted a digital painting entitled, “The Weight.” It shows a person collapsing under the weight of poverty and being helped by a heavenly figure reaching out a hand. Mr. Rieke said, “It shows that poverty is a heavy burden that some people have to bear. We need to help them and lift the weight of poverty just as Simon helped Jesus carry his cross.”

Mark Friggle, the head of the art department at Helias High School, suggested that Mr. Rieke participate in the CCHD contest. “I began to do some research over the Internet and I was shocked at first,” said Mr. Rieke. “I’ve seen pictures and heard about poverty in Third World countries, but I didn’t realize how large of a problem it was in the wealthiest country in the world.”

He said that he began by painting an array of scenes depicting people living in poverty. “I was listening to the Beatles’ song ‘Carry that Weight,’” said Mr. Rieke, “and when I heard the line in the chorus, ‘Boy, you’re going to carry that weight,’ I came up with the idea of a guy collapsing under the weight of poverty.

“Mr. Friggle and I decided that just having a guy struggling under the weight was too depressing, so I added a heavenly figure reaching out to help this man.”

Mr. Rieke said that he hoped that his art work would “open the eyes of everyone to the very real problem our country has with poverty” and encourage people to come together in a spirit of hope to help one another.

Barbara Ross, CCHD director for the Diocese of Jefferson City, said, “We promote the contest to the schools each year because I want to teach people about CCHD. This is one of the things that the Catholic church consistently gets right.”

Ms. Ross said, “Benjamin is a delightful young man who has a heart for compassion. He ‘got it’ about what it means to be poor. I’m proud of him and of his artwork.”

Mr. Rieke will be honored as the grand prize winner on November 9 in Columbus, Ohio at the National Catholic Youth Conference, a biennial gathering of some 20,000 teenagers. The award will be presented by liturgical musician Steve Angrisano and Jill Rauh, CCHD Outreach Coordinator. Mr. Rieke will split the \$1,000 cash grand prize for the contest with Serve Incorporated, a Jefferson City group that reaches out to poor and low-income people and also receives CCHD funds.

Catharyn Gronefeld, from St. Cecilia Academy in Nashville, Tennessee, in the Diocese of Nashville, won second prize for a photo/poem entitled, “The Pain of Poverty.” She will receive \$375, with an equal amount to be donated to the Nashville Homeless Power Project, an organization she chose because of its focus on low income housing and education.

Third place was awarded to Paula Collado of Nativity of Our Lady in Darien, Georgia, in the Diocese of Savannah. Her entry was a collage called “Rose Window

Solution.” She will receive \$250 in cash, with an equal donation to the CCHD-funded organization of her choice.

The Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest was developed by CCHD to reach out to youth and encourage them to work in a creative way on projects that explore the issues of poverty and injustice in the United States. It is open to students in grades seven through 12 in Catholic parishes and schools. This year, students were asked to develop the theme, “This is Life in Poverty in the U.S.A.” through visual arts, audio-visual means or literature. Original works were submitted to diocesan-level competitions. Local winners were forwarded to Washington for final judging by a panel of professionals in the fields of art and religion.

Announcing the winners, John Carr, CCHD interim executive director, said, “This is the seventh year that we have invited students to take a hard look at the world around them and interpret poverty through their art. I am encouraged by the depth of their understanding and their ability to see hope and compassion in the actions of groups like CCHD.”

Mr. Carr added, “We sometimes think of high school students living in insular, self-centered worlds. The entries we received from around the country indicate that these youths are looking beyond themselves. They see at least a glimpse of the crushing poverty that grasps one of every six people in our country. Fortunately, they also share CCHD’s mission to help the poor empower themselves to break the cycle of grinding poverty.”

Honorable mentions in the Multi-Media Youth Arts Contest will be presented to Evan Optiz, St. Gerald School in Oak Lawn, Illinois in the Archdiocese of Chicago, for a

CD called “Immersed in Thought”, Kayla Wrasman, Delphos St. John’s High School in Delphos, Ohio in the Diocese of Toledo for a short story titled “Little Things” and Olivia Galioto, St. Charles School in San Carlos, California in the Archdiocese of San Francisco, for a drawing called “Tears of Poverty/Shields of Indifference.”

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development is the domestic anti-poverty and social justice program of the U.S. Catholic Bishops. With the support of Catholic parishioners, it has provided grants to more than 4,000 community and economic development projects over the past 38 years. The annual CCHD collection is taken up in most Catholic parishes in the United States on the weekend before Thanksgiving.

*Additional information about the contest and other CCHD initiatives for Catholic youth and young adults is available at the CCHD website*

<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/youth.shtml> or by calling Jill Rauh at (202) 541-3297.