



Moon Area School District

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For Immediate Release

Eighth-Grader Win Statewide Braille Essay Contest

Moon Area Middle School eighth-grader Joelle Swyka has won a statewide Braille essay contest and will be honored during a special presentation at the State Capitol Building in Harrisburg on June 9.

The Pennsylvania Council for the Blind contest welcomed entries from visually-impaired elementary, middle and high school students. Joelle's essay claimed first-place in the middle school category and detailed her favorite pastime of completing jigsaw and Sudoku puzzles in spite of her visual impairment.

She wrote her three-page essay and edited it with the help of Diane Sahar, her Allegheny Intermediate Unit teacher, who works with visually impaired students. The pair typed the essay into Braille on a Braille machine, which looks similar to a small electric typewriter and utilizes six keys that represent the six dots in the language.

She will be recognized along with 19 other notable persons at the presentation, which will be conducted by Pennsylvania Association of the Blind and The Advisory Council for the Blind of Pennsylvania in conjunction with the state Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services as part of "Connecting the Dots: Literacy to Employment," the 2009 Blindness Awareness Expo.