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Students design art for B.C. gateway

*Barrett Newkirk
The Enquirer*

Hot air balloons, zoo animals and cereal bowls soon will greet motorists entering downtown Battle Creek.

The Arts and Industry Council announced the winners of its Battle Creek Gateway Youth Design Competition on Wednesday during an event at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

The 13 student winners, selected from 323 entries, will have their images turned into steel art pieces that will adorn metal screens planned to go along M-66 coming into downtown.

Three winners were selected from each of four age categories. Students won scholarships, and first-place winners also won prize money for their school.

The grand prize went to Bellevue High School junior Naomi Haralson for her piece "Battle Creek Boom Train," which depicts a locomotive passing through a rustic town and carrying recognizable buildings from the modern day Battle Creek skyline.

Haralson, 17, said the idea was inspired by her interest in history. She credited her parents for encouraging her interest in art and her art teacher, Audrey Haddock, for suggesting she enter the contest.

"I've never really won anything this big, so I wasn't expecting much," Haralson said.

As well as having a version of her artwork on display at the city's major entryway, Haralson won a \$5,000 scholarship. Her school also will receive \$5,000.

The new downtown gateways are to be installed this summer. The Arts and Industry Council plans to hold a similar contest every four years so that fresh artwork can be added to the entryway.

Winners were selected with the help of local artists, city leaders and planners, said NormaLynn Cutler, a consultant helping Battle Creek Unlimited plan a major makeover of downtown.

"I have to say I never quite expected the number of entries that we got," Cutler said. "But I did expect all the talent we got to see as we judged the competition."

The students' artwork will be on display in the Arts and Industry Council's gallery at Commerce Pointe from Monday through June 22.

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Additional Facts

The winners

Winners of the 2009 Battle Creek Gateway Youth Design Competition:

Grand prize winner

Naomi Haralson, Bellevue High School

Kindergarten through third grade

First place - Grace Campbell, Wattles Park Elementary

Second place - Haley VanScoder, Wattles Park Elementary

Third place - Jamie Whitmore, Wattles Park Elementary

Fourth through sixth grades

First place - Aubree Jones, Springfield Middle School

Second place - Luke Saye, St. Joseph/St. Philip

Third place - Megan Manu, Lakeview Middle School

Seventh through ninth grades

First place - Ann Marie Sweeney, St. Joseph/St. Philip

Second place - Ellen Criswell, St. Joseph/St. Philip

Third place - Brittany McQuern, Springfield Middle School

Tenth through 12th grades

First place - Thian Sang, Lakeview High School

Second place - Janeesa Jamierson, Battle Creek Central

Third place - Brenden Barlow, St. Joseph/St. Philip
