

Chippewa Valley Schools student wins art contest

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Ottawa Elementary art teacher Matthew Stockton stands with fifth-grader Stella Clark, who is holding her drawing of a gentoo penguin that won the Comerica Bank Penguin Art Contest. (Photo provided by Matthew Stockton)

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — Ottawa Elementary fifth-grader Stella Clark recently took first place out of 350 entrants in the Comerica Penguin Art Contest.

Elementary school-aged children were invited to submit penguin artwork to Comerica's Facebook page. More than 350 submissions were received, and a panel of judges from the Detroit Zoo and Comerica Bank narrowed submissions down to several finalists.

A public vote took place to decide the final winner, and Stella Clark received more than 3,330 of the 9,100 votes casted.

"We wrote an all-school email to encourage all district employees to vote, and art teachers were encouraging students to vote as well," said Suzanne Clark, Stella's mother. "They sent a flyer home to all students because she was the only finalist to make it from Chippewa Valley Schools, so everyone was very excited."

Stella Clark's victory in the contest means that her class will go on a field trip to the Detroit Zoo to see the zoo's new gentoo penguins, and see a presentation from a penguin keeper. Ottawa Elementary will also receive a \$1,000 grant.

Suzanne Clark said that her daughter has always shown an interest in drawing, but Ottawa art teacher Matthew Stockton has helped her blossom.

"He's really been the driving force and has given her a lot of different ways to learn," she said of Stockton.

Stockton, who is in his fifth year as Ottawa's art teacher, said that recent classwork helped Stella Clark complete the penguin project.

"We just previously finished a project done with all graphite pencils, and it was a hawk. She took what we just did in our previous project, and adapted it to the penguin project. It took 1 1/2 class sessions before submitting," Stockton said.

"The hawk drawing was a value project to show how to change drawings from light to dark," Stockton added. "She really blossomed on that project, and did her own version for the penguin, which was very cool."

Stockton, who had all of his students enter the contest, said that Stella Clark has grown in confidence with her artwork.

"I've had the opportunity to watch her blossom through the artistic world. She's very passionate about the arts and is very creative. Some of the stuff she's doing now is just outstanding. I'm very blessed to teach her and all of the other students at Ottawa," Stockton said.

The contest coincides with Comerica's \$50,000 contribution to the Detroit Zoological Society for the new Polk Penguin Conservation Center, which is slated to open early next year.

Stockton said he was confident when Stella Clark's victory announcement came on March 30, and a sense of relief followed.

"It was a long process with the voting," Stockton said. "The smile on Stella's face was priceless."