

had their vaccines by then," he said. "I don't expect everyone will come back, but it'll be exciting."

It was a year ago in March when churches — along with businesses and schools — shuttered their doors against the virus. Since then services have been held via Zoom with the

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WEST VERMONT PARISHES ANNOYED BY VISAS Immigration issues delaying work visa renewals, clergy shortage could last a year

By LEE J. KAHRS

WEST RUTLAND/PROCTOR — The already shrinking number of Catholic priests in Vermont was dealt a blow on Sunday when the state Diocese announced a major re-

signment of clergy.

Three parishes in West Rutland and Proctor are among those that have lost their current priest. In fact, that happened last month.

Citing unexpected delays in

U.S. immigration regarding the visa renewal process, the Diocese said in a press release Sunday that four Vermont priests have to return to their native countries to re-apply for their work visas.

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With two other priests retiring, that means Vermont will lose six Catholic priests by July.

Four international priests

Neshobe fourth graders win

Environmental Film Competition

By LEE J. KAHRS
BRANDON/RUTLAND —

Hardship often breeds creativity. Judging from the winners in the second annual Rutland County Environmental Film Competition, the pandemic has fueled impressive video offerings from some of the area's youngest global citizens.

First place went to Laura O'Brien's fourth grade class at the Neshobe School, who call themselves "O'Brien's Otters."

The class created a video titled, "Let's make the Neshobe Woods Safe for Everyone."

"This is an extraordinary

group of students," O'Brien said. "They learned how to film, how to clearly communicate and how to use editing software. All of this, on top of deeply caring about the Neshobe woods and supporting each other as they created the film. Their ownership of the process was a teacher's dream."

Second and third place went



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THE AWARD-WINNING FILMMAKING team of fourth grade Neshobe students, O'Brien's Otters, exploring the woods. Pictured are: front row - Lucy Howe, Otto Feldman; second row - Solon Berry-Barrett, Max Lavelle; third row - Cloe Hutchins, Tucker Cram, Bryce Abare; fourth row - Hillary Desabratis, Aubrie Munger, Ryan Willey, and Kalina Snow. Sidney Rogers is missing from the photo.

Contributed photo

Film

(Continued from page 1)

to two different films from students in Stafford's video communications department, led by instructor and former journalist Christina Kumka. Austin Gallagher of West Rutland School and Grant Doenges of Rutland High School won second place for their film, "COVID-19 Has Changed Us."

"It took us about a month and a half to make. I guess the work paid off."

Lucy Howe, Neshobe fourth grader

Third place went to Isaac James and Seth McCutcheon of Otter Valley Union High School for their film, "Our New World — How Our Environment Has Changed."

The competition was created by Brandon resident Michael Shank, an environmentalist and lover of the arts and education. Shank said he decided to create a film competition to give local students an outlet to showcase their filmmaking skills and bring environmental issues to the fore from a different generation.

"Another year of incredibly inspiring, introspective and creative filmmaking by local student leaders," Shank said. "Films like these give me hope. The next generation of leaders already knows what's needed to protect and preserve the natural world around us. We should listen to them and take heed."

Shank had high praise for O'Brien's Officers.

"Ms. O'Brien's class astounded me this year with their ability to work as a team, and the video-making skills that they developed in a few short weeks were impressive," he said, adding that it's hard to believe the students only started using the education video editing software WeVideo

in February.

The Reporter asked the students for some of their impressions of the filmmaking process. Here are some of their comments:

"The hardest part was the editing part," Hillary Desabrais said. "It took us a really long time. It was fun working all together as a team to make a film."

"I learned that making a film takes time and effort," Sidney Rogers said. "It was hard with 12 kids because people were agreeing and disagreeing. But we did it! It was fun having effort from all of us."

"I took us about a month and a half to make. I guess the work paid off!" Lucy Howe added. Neshobe Librarian Hannah Field has been introducing students at the school to the world of video over the past five years. She said youth is an asset to creativity in the medium.

"I am so grateful to Michael Shank for providing an authentic audience to Neshobe students," Field said. "Being young should not preclude having a voice in the world, and giving students the tools to share their voice is an important way to empower them. Having an audience for their work outside of their peers

to do their very best work."

The first place winner receives \$500, second place wins \$250, and third place gets \$100. Honorable Mentions each win \$50. The categories and the films that won honorable mention were:

- Clear and Coherent Environmental Message — "Corey's Environment"
- Compelling Invitation that Encourages the Public to Get Engaged in The Environmental Effort — "Air Pollution"
- Creative Storytelling, Visuals, And Site Visits — "Trash"
- Concise Editing — "Littering"

Kumka said her students have entered a few film competitions and earned prize money, which has proved to be a worthy incentive to motivate them during the pandemic.

"Another year of incredibly inspiring, introspective, and creative filmmaking by local student leaders. Films like these give me hope."

Michael Shank, Rutland County Environmental Film Competition

also entered the state's Districted Driving film contest and won \$50 for second place, as well as several other video contests.

Kumka said there was a month quarantine for video equipment at Stafford, meaning her students needed to be prepared before they started filming. "It was a logistical nightmare, but the kids made it happen,"

RUTLAND COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL FILM COMPETITION

1ST PLACE: "LET'S MAKE THE NESHOBEE WOODS SAFE FOR EVERYONE" BY O'BRIEN'S OFFICERS (4TH GRADE CLASS AT NESHOBEE ELEMENTARY)

2ND PLACE: "COVID-19 HAS CHANGED US" BY AUSTIN GALLAGHER AND GRANT DOENGES

3RD PLACE: "OUR NEW WORLD - HOW OUR ENVIRONMENT HAS CHANGED" BY ISAAC JAMES AND SEETH MCCUTCHEON

HONORABLE MENTIONS

"TRASH" BY SIDNEY ROGERS (4TH GRADE CLASS AT NESHOBEE ELEMENTARY)

"AIR POLLUTION" BY HILLARY DESABRAIS (4TH GRADE CLASS AT NESHOBEE ELEMENTARY)

"COREY'S ENVIRONMENT" BY HILLARY DESABRAIS (4TH GRADE CLASS AT NESHOBEE ELEMENTARY)

focused and descriptive before they could use the equipment. They had to have a clear plan, and they had to make it happen in the first take."

Kumka said this year's Rutland County Environmental Film Competition challenged the students in ways it normally would not have.

"This contest shows how to problem-solve your way through video production," she said. "Also, the students had to figure out how to tell a story about COVID and the environment. It's constant critical thinking, it's constant problem solving. That's where my students are shining this year."

Kumka went on the thank O'Brien's Officers for their work outside of their peers

tion, saying that any program that engages students like this is needed, now more than ever.

"It's important that students are rewarded and incentivized through these contests," she said. "Not everybody takes the initiative to do that for high school students. It's important that they do quality video and tell quality stories."

Then, thinking ahead, Kumka added, "I also hope that Hannah tells her kids to come to my program."

Ultimately, there is a team of educators in Rutland County who are working in concert to shepherd the next generation of filmmakers here. All of the films can be viewed