

Monster of a gift lands Aurora student writing prize



By Brock Weir

Looking for just the right gift to give to her infant cousin, Morgan Giamov wasn't interested in a rattle or a onesie.

The St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School student got her creative juices flowing and set pen to paper to make the perfect creation.

Delving deep into her imagination, Morgan found a fun little monster and spun a tale of a frustrated creature getting sick of his parents not believing his tall tales and setting out into the world on his own.

"Monsters can be silly or scary or just about anything," says Morgan. "I never wrote a story before, but I just felt like writing something."

Her efforts caught the imagination of her teachers over at St. Joseph's. When she told her teacher, Kathleen Baldwin, she had written the story as a Christmas present for her cousin, she asked her to translate it into French. This was an easy request for the French Immersion student, and when she read the finished product to her class, she was encouraged to enter it into the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Federation's annual Young Authors contest.

The awards herald the talents of students in the Catholic stream, be it in the form of plays, poems, articles, essays, or short stories in either official languages. After a series of evaluations, Morgan's "Mon Bebe Monstre" received top honours as Best French Short Story in the Grades 3 & 4 Category.

Morgan is one of seven students from the York Catholic District School Board to take home honours in the annual contest, and one of two Aurora students. Kara Waites, a student at St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic High School, was awarded Best Poem in the Grade 11 & 12 Category for "What Do You Do?"

"I was really happy!" said Morgan. "My dad printed out a bunch of copies to give to people."

Her parents, of course, are exceptionally proud of their daughter.

"We thought it was so sweet," said her mother, Denise, on Morgan's idea to create a gift for her cousin. "She wrote it at home and just knocked it out in a day. She took it up north and showed everybody at Christmas, then she showed it to her teacher and she was just so excited.

"I got a phone call one day from her teacher and principal and they were just jumping up and down that [she had won] and then I was jumping up and down. They told her and she was so calm and humble, and here I am freaking out!"

Building on her success with 'Mon Bebe Monstre', Morgan has already penned a second installment featuring the monster in question, this time with her own illustrations.

'We had to write a story about urban and rural communities, so we had to write a story about people switching and going to different communities,' she says, with both she and her mom noting her stories always come with a lesson. 'Even if people don't believe you, you know the truth and you don't have to run away. You could run into some trouble and realise you need that person and you miss them.'

To download your copy of the winning entries in the OECTA's Young Authors Awards, visit www.tinyurl.com/ycdsb-authors.