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## Top student speakers compete at county level in 37th Annual Levy County 4-H Tropicana Speech Contest



(from left) Judge Hannah VanBuren, Judge Kedrick McKissock, Judge Hannah Locop, Judge Nick Zimmermann, Judge Nicholas Luhrsen and Speech Contest Coordinator Brenda Heberling pause for a photo opportunity just before the winners are announced.

**Story Photos and Video By Jeff M. Hardison © Dec. 7, 2016 at 10:37 p.m.**

**BRONSON** -- Speeches titled "If I Was Principal," "Florida Cattle" and "Hurricane Hermine" captured first place trophies and scholarships in three age-based classifications on Tuesday night (Dec. 6).

There were 14 students competing in three age ranges at the 37th Annual Levy County 4-H Tropicana Speech Contest. This contest has happened in Levy County since the first one in 1979.



**Speech Contest Coordinator Brenda Heberling welcomes everyone to the event. This was her 20th year of coordinating this contest.**

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Ella Gore of Chiefland Elementary School won first place in Elementary Speakers (grades 4 and 5) with her speech "If I Was Principal."

Hunter Sharp of Chiefland Middle School won first place in Middle School Speakers (grade 6) with his speech "Florida Cattle."

Alexis Lipscomb of Cedar Key School won first place in Intermediate School Speakers (grades 7 and 8) with her speech "Hurricane Hermine."

All of the first place winners not only received very attractive plaques, but they also were awarded a full scholarship to 4-H Camp Cherry Lake for this summer.

That scholarship has a value of \$240.



**First Place winner Hunter Sharp (left) of Chiefland Middle School gives the full scholarship to attend 4-H Camp Cherry Lake in the summer to second place winner in Middle School Speakers' classification Jason Foley of Cedar Key School.**

Before leaving the Bronson Middle-High School Cafetorium, where the event was conducted, Sharp asked Levy County 4-H Program Assistant Brenda Heberling, who heralded her 20th year of coordinating this speaking competition this time, to let him give his camp scholarship to another winner.

Jason Foley of Cedar Key School placed second in the Middle School Speakers with his speech "Sharks." Sharp gave Foley his certificate to go to camp.

Foley thanked Sharp for the gift and said "I guess I will get to go to Camp Cherry Lake this summer." It was one of the many happy and warm moments of the evening.

The five judges who decided the winners in each category are all University of Florida students who are active in speech and debate there.

Coordinator Heberling introduced the judges.

Kedrick McKissock is a freshman at UF, studying biochemistry. He feels that improving his skills in speech and debate will help him relay important medical information to the public.

Hannah VanBuren of Orlando is a first year environmental science and political science student. She loves marine science and fun music.

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Hannah Locop of West Palm Beach is a senior political science major at UF. She is minoring in Arabic and has been involved with speech and debate since she was a freshman in high school.

Nicholas Luhrsen a sophomore at UF is originally from Miami. He is on the Policy Squad of the UF Speech and Debate Team.

Nick Zimmermann of Niceville, a first year engineering student, is a member of the UF Speech and Debate Team.

All 14 competitors on Tuesday night already had won at their respective schools in their age groups. So they were all first place winners to start.

Every one of the 14 speakers went home with a very attractive plaque for their competing and placing in this contest.



**Elementary winners are (from left) Honorable Mention -- Lillian Morgan of Williston Elementary School; Honorable Mention -- Paskall Nedeltchev of Yankeetown School; Honorable Mention – Breana Buesing of Cedar Key School; Third – Liam Meeks of Bronson Elementary School; Second – Faith Hardy of Williston Central Christian Academy; and First -- Ella Gore of Chiefland Elementary School.**

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## ELEMENTARY SPEAKERS

The students in grades four and five finished in the following order at the county level:

First -- Ella Gore of Chiefland Elementary School "If I was Principal." In her speech, she promised ice cream for students for breakfast and lunch.

Second – Faith Hardy of Williston Central Christian Academy "Lucky Dog." She told a very moving story about the dog that was with her family even before she or her sibling were. The dog's paw prints no longer leave marks on the ground, but they left indelible marks on the hearts of this Air Force family as it went from continent to continent with that canine.

Third – Liam Meeks of Bronson Elementary School "Farms." He shared with listeners that everything they eat comes from farms. This was a very strong speech on behalf of agriculture.

Honorable Mention – Breana Buesing of Cedar Key School "Strange Animals." She told about some creatures that are different than normal.

Honorable Mention -- Paskall Nedeltchev of Yankeetown School "Blue Angels." He spoke about the United States Navy pilots who impressed him with their talent.

Honorable Mention -- Lillian Morgan of Williston Elementary School "Cell Phones." She shared with listeners many of the hazards associated with cell phone use, including deaths from distracted driving.



**Middle School Speakers winning on Tuesday night were (from left) Third -- William Hudnall of Yankeetown School; Second – Jason Foley of Cedar Key; and First – Hunter Sharp of Chiefland Elementary School.**

## MIDDLE SCHOOL SPEAKERS

The students in grade six finished in the following order at the county level:

First – Hunter Sharp of Chiefland Elementary School "Florida Cattle." He told people all about the

Florida Cattle Ranchers of today and why Floridians can be proud of their state for its progress in cattle ranching. Last year, he was the Elementary School Speakers' first place winner.

Second – Jason Foley of Cedar Key "Sharks." He told about different species of sharks

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from prehistoric time through today.

Third -- William Hudnall of Yankeetown School "How to Prepare a Pumpkin for Halloween." He shared with listeners the rigorous exercise and diet regime to pump up a pumpkin for that fateful day.

**Intermediate School winners (from left) are First - Alexis Lipscomb of Cedar Key School; Second - Grace Hardy of Williston Central Christian Academy; Honorable Mention - Emma Wilson of Chiefland Middle School; Honorable Mention - Luke Henderson of Home School; and Third - Daniel Sheldon of Yankeetown School.**



## INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL SPEAKERS

First – Alexis Lipscomb of Cedar Key School "Hurricane Hermine." This was a dramatic and accurate presentation of the circumstance this young lady experienced from the Category 1 hurricane that left destruction in its wake after it hit Cedar Key. She captured the spirit of helpfulness of off-island neighbors who came to help afterward as well.

Second – Grace Hardy of Williston Central

Christian Academy "Fashion Victim." This accomplished speaker who has participated since fourth grade told listeners about some horrific fashion customs from throughout the ages, and even into modern time. Women suffered severe physical trauma all in the name of style, fashion and in some instances cultural norms. Last year, she was the Intermediate Speakers' first place winner.

Third – Daniel Sheldon of Yankeetown School "Chaos Theory." He spoke about the originator of a theory that random events cause the best laid plans of men to go astray. He wove in a little bit about the "Butterfly Theory," in which the smallest action can have an impact on something far removed as the ripples of the first action cascade onto a series of other actors and actions.

Honorable Mention – Emma Wilson of Chiefland Middle School "How Not to be a Mean Girl." She gave a well-prepared speech about being a better person rather than following the crowd's lead of bullying others.

Honorable Mention – Luke Henderson of Home School "YouTube Experience." He shared with listeners that there is a valuable resource of reference material, that includes entertaining videos and more. He advised the audience to give YouTube a try.

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**People enjoy Tropicana orange juice and other treats as the judges make their rulings.**

While the judge deliberated about the merits of each speaker, parents, guardians, teachers, speakers and other guests enjoy treat and refreshments that were available from tables at the back wall.

Judges presented the plaques and certificates to Camp Cherry Lake to the winners – and all of these speakers are winners.

Speech Coordinator Heberling thanked all of the contact teachers for their help in finding the best students at each school through the public speaking programs they used. She presented teachers with a gift on stage.

Following are the schools and teachers who contributed to make this event a success: Bronson Elementary – Margaret Perryman; Chiefland Elementary School – Lisa Baxter; Chiefland Middle School Julie Gerhart and Laurie Beauchamp; Cedar Key School – Jessica Sloan; Williston Central Christian Academy – Julie Alexander; Williston Elementary School – Jenny Adkins; Williston Middle School – Natalie Couey; and Yankeetown School – Natalie Sullivan.



**Levy County Extension Director Ed Jennings and Levy County 4-H Agent Genevieve Mendoza are introduced to the audience. Jennings and Mendoza fill the vacancy created when former Director and 4-H Agent Albert Fuller retired. With the new leadership in place, Levy County Extension and Levy County 4-H show great promise**

**going into 2017.**

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Heberling also enjoyed a special opportunity this year. She introduced Levy County Extension Director Ed Jennings and Levy County 4-H Agent Genevieve Mendoza.

For more information on 4-H Public Speaking Programs and other 4-H activities in Levy County, contact the Levy County Extension office at 352-486-5131 4-H Agent Mendoza and 4-H Program Assistant Heberling are happy to help families become involved with 4-H.