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Student to compete at national gathering

Simpsonville teen entered six poems

BY NATHANIEL CARY • TRIBUNE-TIMES WRITER • JANUARY 14, 2009

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A high-school student from Simpsonville is spending this week in Miami with a chance to win cash for her poetry.



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Neha Parthasarathy, 17, a senior at the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities in Greenville, won the weeklong all-expense paid trip as part of a National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts program called youngARTS.

Parthasarathy submitted a portfolio of six poems for the contest and was chosen one of 141 finalists in nine arts categories.

She will have a chance to attend master classes and meet successful artists and performers. In addition, up to 15 artists ages 17-18 could take home \$10,000 or a number of smaller cash prizes.

One of the two South Carolina students chosen to go to Miami, Parthasarathy said she's excited about the chance to get additional training and meet others who share her passion for poetry.

The young poet said she writes about what she knows best, and that's usually her Indian heritage and her family. Through poetry classes at the Governor's School, she wrote several poems for projects that she then submitted for judging.

YoungARTS chose finalists from a pool of 8,000 entries from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and all U.S. territories.

"Our teachers are always telling us to write what you know, and 'don't write about things that you don't know about because how can you connect to your reader if you can't connect to the subject itself?'" she said.

Her life inspires her, she says, from trips to India to Hindu customs and family traditions. Her culture impacts what she writes about and how it is reconciled with life in America.

"Growing up in America and being Indian is this really conflicting thing," she said. "So a lot of my poetry I see as a way of trying to figure myself out."

The NFAA focus is to identify and assist emerging artists at critical junctures in their development. YoungARTS was established in 1981 by the late Ted Arison, founder of Carnival Cruise Lines, and his wife, Liz Arison.



Neha Parthasarathy (GWINN DAVIS/Staff)

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