

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SINA's Fourth Annual Young Author Awards

The Fourth Annual REACH Young Authors Awards ceremony will take place on **Wednesday, May 14, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.** at **Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy**. The event celebrates local students who have written and illustrated their own books, offering them a professional book-signing experience.

Hosted by **SINA (Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance)**—a partnership between **Connecticut Children's, Hartford Hospital, and Trinity College**—and in collaboration with the **Hartford Public Library Park Street Branch @ the Lyric**, the event honors the creativity and voices of students in grades K through 5.

The REACH program began four years ago after SINA staff heard the story of a young student who wrote a book and discreetly added it to a library collection. The delighted librarian chose to circulate it—an inspiring moment that led SINA to collaborate with Hartford Public Library to bring this opportunity to more young authors.

This year, 32 students worked together to create 16 books around the theme of **Community Heroes**. A panel of judges from the REACH committee and Hartford Public Library selected 18 authors and illustrators as winners. **Ten books were chosen for publication** and will be professionally printed and bound by the **CRT Print Center**, complete with ISBNs, barcodes, and copyrights. Copies will be distributed to the students' schools and the **Hartford Public Library Park Street Branch @ the Lyric**.

This Year's Winning Books

The Adventures of Coney

Written by Romy Blanco-Faustini and Genesis Martinez; illustrated by Arianna Moyer-Washington and Meadow Sobolow. These fifth-grade students from CREC Montessori Magnet School tell the story of a safety cone on a mission to keep roads safe for everyone—cones and people alike.

Bird Boy

Written and illustrated by Aryash Gupta, a kindergartener at Betances Learning Lab Elementary School. This heartwarming tale follows a boy and his friend as they help a bird family find a new home, bringing joy back to their community.

Books Galore

Written and illustrated by Dhyanaa Satish Kumar, a fourth grader at Glastonbury East

Hartford Magnet School and a four-time REACH winner. This Hartford student's imaginative story follows a cheerful little toad who brings brightness to a gloomy world.

Letters to Heroes

Written and illustrated by Jomyra R. Valentin, a fifth grader at CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering Elementary School. The book is about recognizing everyday heroes and discovering that anyone can make a difference through kindness and care.

Lola the Community Hero

Written and illustrated by Mayra Almodovar, a fifth-grade student at CREC Montessori Magnet School. Lola's adventure begins when she meets a service dog and helps save a young girl during a medical emergency, showing that anyone can be a hero.

Sophia Learns to Swim

Written and illustrated by Neishlee Guzman, a third-grade student at Maria Sanchez Elementary School. This story follows Sophia as she overcomes her fear of water with the help of a kind lifeguard and learns to feel safe at the pool.

The Transformers

Written and illustrated by Anaya Gupta, a third grader at Betances Learning Lab Elementary School and a three-time REACH winner. The story follows scientists who use creativity and teamwork to tackle pollution with innovative recycling solutions, inspiring a young boy named Jack.

Victor the Garbage Man

Written by Dayanand Arulampalam and illustrated by Emmett Ennever and Jason Devaux, all fifth graders at CREC Montessori Magnet School. The book follows Victor, a dedicated sanitation worker whose encounter with a boy named Alex teaches him that small actions can lead to big changes.

Will Tiara Feel Smart Again?

Written and illustrated by Viyankhaa Satish Kumar, a first grader at Glastonbury East Hartford Magnet School and a two-time REACH winner. This story follows Tiara, a girl who begins seeing the world in unusual colors after an accident—and the doctor who helps her find clarity.

Xyallah's Mystery Illness

Written by Natalie Reyes Mazaba and Sophia Stewart; illustrated by Alice Rodriguez Villanueva and Jayleen Diaz. These fifth-grade students at CREC Montessori Magnet School tell the story of nine-year-old Xyallah, whose fun summer turns mysterious when an unexplained illness sends doctors racing for answers.

Event Highlights

The event will be co-hosted by **Ravonne Barret** of Hartford Public Library and **Linda Torres** of SINA. This year's keynote speaker is **Stefania Munzi**, author and illustrator of *C'era una Volta in Wooster Square* and *Jojo's Tiny Ears*. A teacher at Hartford Magnet Trinity College Academy, Munzi uses her art to promote visibility and inclusion. Inspired by her son, who was born with microtia, she began creating portraits of children with disabilities. Her work has grown into a movement that has touched hearts across Connecticut.

Student authors will receive **certificates and trophies** and will read from and sign their books. The books are printed and bound by the **CRT Print Center** with support from the **Betty Knox Foundation**. Thanks to their generosity, copies will be available at all Hartford Public Library branches.

For more information, contact:

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