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Out of 600 essay contest entries, Patel Conservatory picks four winners

Winners receive Patel Conservatory class, tickets to *Wonderland* and dinner at Maestro's Restaurant

TAMPA, Fla. – More than 600 students throughout Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties recently competed to win several prizes from the David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts (formerly the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center) by writing essays on the subject, “What makes your family wonderful?”

The contest was open to students in grades five through eight and one student in each grade was selected. Winners were awarded free tuition to a Patel Conservatory class, dinner at Maestro's Restaurant, valet parking and four tickets to *Wonderland: Alice's New Musical Adventure*. Each student also will choose a teacher to receive an additional pair of tickets to *Wonderland*.

Winners of the “Find your *Wonderland*: what makes your family wonderful?” essay contest are:

- Fabienne S., eighth grade, Carwise Middle School
- William D., seventh grade, homeschooled
- Kaylie C., sixth grade, Lee Academy for Gifted Education
- Brielle F., fifth grade, FishHawk Creek Elementary

Out of 641 essays submitted, 301 were written by fifth graders, 200 by sixth graders, 82 by seventh graders and 58 by eighth graders. Winners were selected by an impartial panel of judges.

Performances of *Wonderland* run in Ferguson Hall at the David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts through Jan. 3, 2010. *Wonderland* is about Alice, an author suffering from creative block, who is estranged from her husband and alienated from her daughter. It takes a trip to Wonderland to regain her balance in her life and again find the love and everyday magic that reside in us all – if we know how to look.

As part of the non-profit David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts, the Patel Conservatory offers classes for children and adults of all experience levels in all kinds of dance, music and theater. More information is available by calling 813.222.1002, and by visiting www.patelconservatory.org.

Events, days, dates, times, performers and prices are subject to change without notice.

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