

Rappahannock Community College Student Wins Literature Prize

W.W. Norton & Company, a New York City book publisher, recently announced winners of its 2021 Norton Writer's Prize. Rappahannock Community College (RCC) student Mary Margaret Fanning of Westmoreland County won the \$1,000 prize for a student attending a 2-year college or university.



“Dr. (Gena) McKinley, my ethics professor at RCC, nominated me for the award. Frankly, I’m over the moon to have won,” said Fanning. “Dr. McKinley’s course challenged me to think deeper about what I believe and helped me better understand the beliefs of others. She’s also been incredibly supportive of me, both in and out of the classroom, and has been a wonderful influence on my academic career. I’m very thankful for all the support and advice she has given me, as well as for her presence in my life.”

Fanning’s essay, *Many of Those Trees Were My Friends: An Apologia for the Land Ethic*, impressed the judges who commented, “The author of this essay compares and contrasts different approaches to the environment, assessing each philosophical stance and seeking to understand the consequences of human behavior in relation to the environment.” They continued by saying, “Combining analysis and personal experience, the author follows Aldo Leopold in emphasizing the need for humans to see themselves as part of an interconnected community and to show respect for nonhuman members.”

“This award means a lot to me. I plan to graduate from RCC in May with an Associate degree in Arts & Sciences and might take some elective courses in the summer before I transfer to a 4-year institution to get my Bachelor’s degree,” said Fanning. “The professors and staff at RCC have been very supportive and really care about having students thrive. I’m paying for my own education so this award, and the scholarship I received at RCC, has given me great peace of mind.”

Each year, The Norton Writer’s Prize contest recognizes “outstanding original nonfiction by undergraduates. Three cash prizes are awarded for coursework submitted during the academic year to a first-year student in a 2- or 4-year college or university; a student in a 2-year college or university; and a student in a 4-year college or university,” according to W.W. Norton’s website.

“Mary Margaret was a stand-out student in Philosophy 220 (Ethics) from the beginning of the semester, and this essay represents the culmination of her hard work in the course,” said McKinley. “When I read the essay, I thought about the Norton Writer’s Prize because it recognizes the many qualities of great writing, including creativity and originality. Mary Margaret’s essay checked all of the boxes!”

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