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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 9, 2018

OSLO MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT WINS AMERICANISM ESSAY CONTEST

*Rachel Estillore wins 1st place in the State of Florida for her
"Why Our Veterans Are American Heroes" Essay*

Vero Beach, FL, May 9, 2018—The School District of Indian River County is proud to recognize Rachel Estillore, 6th grade student at Oslo Middle School, for placing 1st in her division in the Elks Grand Lodge Americanism State Essay Contest. The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks selected the theme, "Why Our Veterans Are America's Heroes," for their 2017-2018 Americanism Essay Contest. The contest starts with the Local Lodges, progresses through District and State levels, and ends with the naming of National Winners at the Grand Lodge Session in San Antonio, Texas in July 2018. This very important patriotic contest gives school children in grades 5-8 the opportunity to express views on their pride in America.

The judging criteria was: originality, development of theme, mechanics, and neatness. Rachel, one of our Division 1 finalists, represented Vero Beach Lodge #1774 in our District competition and won first place in this year's State competition. Her essay will represent Florida in the National contest. Rachel will be reading her essay at the Florida State Elks Convention on May 26, 2018, in Orlando. She is receiving a check for \$1,500 from the Florida State Elks Association and a check from Vero Beach Elks for \$250.

The Elks Lodge of Vero Beach notified our district last week of Rachel's incredible achievement. "We have a winner!" were the words spoken over the phone by Mr. James McFadyen, member of the Elks Lodge of Vero Beach #1774.

Rachel Estillore, State Contest Winner and Oslo Middle School Student, stated, "I really want everyone to understand the true struggles of our veterans and how proud I am that they fought for our freedom!"

Jim Rannazzisi, Exalted Ruler, Vero Beach Lodge #1774 said, "The Vero Beach Elks Lodge wanted to give students in grades 5 through 8 in Indian River County an opportunity for them to express their views on their pride in America. We were highly pleased with the enthusiastic response by the school administration, teachers, and students to this Americanism Essay Contest. We received 100 essays each in the two divisions in our competition: grades 5-6 and 7-8. Rachel's essay stood out as one of the best. We are so proud and fortunate to have a person of Rachel's writing skills and love of country to be the Vero Beach Elks Lodge representative and to win the State competition in the grade 5-6 division. Her success has generated much enthusiasm in our Lodge to further engage Indian River County students in patriotic endeavors."

Beth Hofer, Oslo Middle School Principal, said, "What a wonderful opportunity for our Wildcat to show how her thoughts can make a positive impact on the world. We are so proud of her!"

Susan Kehoe, Rachel's Language Arts teacher, added, "It's true that the Language Arts teacher at the middle school level assigns plenty of essays, the kind that are very structured - informative, argumentative - in preparation for state assessments. When one more writing assignment falls into their lap, it is usually greeted with moans and groans. This particular one about Veteran's Day, however, was a narrative, and allowed for students to write about their own personal family history, if relevant. Or it made them look outside themselves and research the various conflicts our country has been involved with over the years.

We, at Oslo, teach our students to Believe in BLUE: **B**uild Relationships, Stay **L**earning Centered, **U**nderstand each other's unique needs and **E**xcel through rigor, technology, and kindness."



Susan Kehoe, Rachel Estillore, Beth Hofer, and Jim Rannazzisi

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If you would like more information about this topic, please contact Cristen McMillan at 772-564-5527 or via email at cristen.mcmillan@indianriverschools.org