



North  
Cross  
School

**For Immediate Release**

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**Dr. King - 50 Years Later**

*North Cross Student Wins Award for Her Perspective*

**ROANOKE, VA (February 19, 2013)**— Beginning in October 2012, about 220 students in grades 5 - 9, from Montgomery, Floyd, Giles, Pulaski and Roanoke Counties entered their original works to compete in the Virginia Tech *Martin Luther King, Jr. Poster, Essay & Oratorical Contests* to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the March in Washington, D.C..

According to the contest guidelines, students were challenged “to think critically about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s legacy and develop goals that illustrate how they will help others within their communities.” Winners and their families were recognized in ceremonies conducted at Virginia Tech on January 21, 2013.

North Cross School freshman, Olivia Hanson, finished first in her category for her essay. Hanson remarks, “My essay was on women’s rights in relation to Dr. King, so I think that had a lot to do with how mine was chosen. Many students focused on race instead, and that made mine stick out.” Hanson and other students enrolled in the North Cross School Horace G. Fralin Program for Global Studies were asked to enter the contest as part of their course of study. Hanson recalled, “When I first heard of the assignment, I started thinking about what topic I could write about. The directions we were given were very vague, so there were many different ways I could go with it. I didn’t think my topic was too ‘out there,’ but I suppose it was unique enough! Dr. King was a very powerful speaker and speechwriter, one of the best in history and I think it is amazing what he could inspire in people. Also, his methods of changing the world without using violence or demeaning others is something that I really admire.”

In her 4-page award winning essay, Hanson discussed how she thought Dr. King would have embraced women’s issues. She thinks he would have spoken about their treatment in countries like Pakistan and China and in groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaida. She believes he would have used today’s technology and social media to help spread messages of non-violent protest and would have remained focused on the work left to be done here in the United States. “Since Dr. King’s death, the world has been introduced to a huge amount of new technology, including cell phones, the Internet, social media, tablets, and personal computers”, Hanson asserted. “We are more connected to the rest of the world than ever before - which also means that it is very easy for people with similar ideas to find each other. In fact, with technology like [change.org](http://change.org) (a site that allows individuals to create and sign petitions), staging effective, nonviolent protest does

not even require leaving your home. This presents a good case that social media and other technology can and should be used to implement Martin Luther King's methods for social justice today.”

Hanson spoke of another important difference that exists today that would help implement Dr. King’s dream, “I think that Martin Luther King would have been a strong supporter of Ms. Ledbetter and the act that bears her name. Compared to the 1960's, I believe that our judicial system is much more likely to hear a controversial case today, even one that many do not agree with, than it was during the Civil Rights movement. For this reason, I believe that for Dr. King's ideas to be implemented, much more emphasis would have to be put on seeking legal action, as this seems to be much more effective today than it was during his lifetime.”

Mark Thompson, Director of the Upper School at North Cross School, was pleased not only with Hanson’s recognition, but also by the enthusiastic response from students to his contest assignment, “The students took the challenge seriously, and each of the essays was well-reasoned. I know that every time we stretch them to creatively consider broad perspective issues, they are more than up to the task. We’re all proud of Olivia and her recognition, and we are looking for more opportunities like this to expose our students to global issues. When they graduate, they will be ready to compete in a fast-changing and competitive world.”

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### **About North Cross School**

*North Cross School is a college-preparatory day school grounded in a strong liberal arts and science curriculum combined with exceptional co-curricular programs. The academic program, from junior kindergarten through twelfth grade, prepares students to become responsible, successful citizens by encouraging them to explore their interests and develop their talents. The School is located at 4254 Colonial Avenue, Roanoke, VA, 24018. For more information, visit [www.northcross.org](http://www.northcross.org).*