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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Local Youth Win 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Cultural Poetry Contest**

June 2005 (**LONG BEACH, Calif.**) — As the school year wined down, hundreds of third through fifth graders at fourteen Long Beach and San Pedro based elementary schools took on an extra school assignment to research and write creative poems about Italian celebrations and the culture. The educational opportunity was all part of the Buono's Authentic Pizzeria 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Poetry Contest. From explaining Italian wedding customs to honoring icons and monuments such as artist Leonardo da Vinci and the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the students whet the creative appetites of all the judges who chose the top five entries from each school. Two new categories were added this year, the Poets' Choice Awards won by fourth graders Valentino "Tino" Avalos of Cesar Chavez Elementary School and Mo Johnson of White Point School, and the Kids' Choice award presented to Karli Dreizler who is a third grader at South Shores Magnet. All the students were personally congratulated by Buono's general manager/owner Frank Buono and handed an award certificate and Buono's gift certificate during on campus assemblies and classroom visits. Winners of the Poets' and Kids' Choice Awards also earned a trophy and they, along with the first place winner at each school, were honorees at pizza parties held in each of their classrooms. Artwork from Brooke Smith of Cesar Chavez Elementary School and Aleksandra Bolta and Sarina Edwards from Leland Street School adorned the front and back covers.

California State University, Long Beach Department of English professors Dr. Gerald Locklin and Rafael Zepada and a panel of youth members of the San Pedro Boys & Girls Club TEENS supreme served as the judges for the two newest "overall best" categories. According to Zepada, "The poems I judged were fun and they used language well. They leave one satisfied that they've read something where the writers were thinking and also having fun as they worked."

In addition to the contest being fun, Carolyn Johnson says the educational contest inspired her daughter Mo to enter again this year with the goal this time of making it into the top three for her school. Mo also learned as much as she could about the Italian culture and wrote many poems before choosing the one she wanted to enter. Carolyn adds, "The recognition Buono's gives children is so empowering and critically important, from the complimentary poetry booklet they create for the kids to having the owner of Buono's come to every single participating school in order to congratulate each child in person. It would be nice to see all local businesses show this kind of connection with our schools."

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Buono's Poetry Contest Winners  
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"We are committed to help make where we work and live better," says Buono. "To see the students beam with pride as their classmates and teachers applaud their success has been wonderful—we could not ask for anything more rewarding than that." According to Buono, the 8<sup>th</sup> annual contest will kick-off in early February 2006.

The Kids' Choice Award by Karli Dreizler, a third grader at South Shores Magnet titled, "Celebrate Italia," reads:

T'was on my trip to Italy  
a country shaped like a boot,  
where I ate like crazy  
fish, salad and fruit.  
There were so many people  
and churches abound  
red brick roofs and steeples  
I couldn't stop looking around.  
Mt. Etna – an active volcano  
"David" – a sculpture so big  
Rome – the capitol city  
Pompeii – an archeological dig.  
Italy is just so amazing  
I close my eyes and ears  
imagining that special trip  
I'm going on next year.

The Poets' Choice Award by Mo Johnson, a fourth grader at White Point School titled, "Hey Mombo," reads:

Hey mombo!  
Stringy chessy sauce  
with white flour dough  
preferred by Michelangelo  
he hailed Marco Polo  
to say, "Let's be Italian!"  
Hey mombo! Palermo, Salerno  
Hey mombo!  
Pesaro, Sarreno  
Say say hey Juliet  
come mombo in Verona with Romeo!

The Poets' Choice award by Valentino "Tino" Avalos, a fourth grader at Cesar Chavez titled, "Italy," reads:

Italy, the land of dreams  
Where the hills are green  
and the people are friendly.  
Where the castles gleam  
of tales of old, and cobblestone streets  
where my ancestors once walked.  
This land of family welcoming me home,  
and hoping I'll stay and rest for a while.  
Italy forever with me where I go.

Buono's Poetry Contest Winners  
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The poetry winners from each school are as follows in order of first through third place:

The winners from Long Beach schools are: **Alice M. Birney Elementary**: Seiko Serizawa, Michelle Moreno, Charles Ton; **Burnett Elementary School**: Amanda Ray, Elizabeth Casillas, Lilliana Ojeda; **Cesar Chavez Elementary School**: Valentino Avalos, Ashley Senart, Jahshua Pallares; **Garfield Elementary**: Anabel Garcia, Jankarlo Castaneda, Stephanie Gonzales; **International Elementary School**: Jasmine Ayala, Priscila Nungaray, Lawrence Wandick; **Lafayette Elementary School**: Daishia Nichols, Tiffany Khou, Devontae Reynolds; **Los Cerritos Elementary**: Mikhail Golden, Emily Henderson, Jacob Belkin; **St. Lucy School**: Oliver Guevarra, Kayla Peji, Tatiana Rodriguez.

From the San Pedro schools are: **Fifteenth Street School**: Leonardo Velasco, Denise Aguilar, Esmeralda Silva; **Leland Street School**: Aleksandra Bolta, Raquel Cortez, Selena Jiang; **Mary Star of the Sea**: Finina Cabanban, Riley Seidman, Jessalie Buntan; **Seventh Street School**: Sabriana Rubalcava, Alexander Gonzalez, Daniel Puig; **South Shores Magnet School**: Karli Dreizler, Victor Villalobos, William Nodvik; **White Point Elementary**: Mo Johnson, Madi Dixon, Hannah Cross.

Buono's Authentic Pizzeria, a southern California tradition since 1973 and heralded by the San Pedro Chamber of Commerce as the "2005 Restaurant of the Year," has restaurants in Long Beach and San Pedro. For more information about the school poetry contest contact Frank Buono at (562) 427-8665.

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