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PRESS RELEASE

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Youth Winners of 9th Annual Cultural Poetry Contest Announced *Winners Recognized at Professional Ball Team's Italian Heritage*

(Long Beach, CA June 2007) A 9-year long tradition in Long Beach and San Pedro this year ended with a unique twist. Two of the Poets' Choice Award winners of the Buono's Authentic Pizzeria Youth Poetry Contest were in the spotlight as the Long Beach Armada professional baseball team played its seventh game of the season at Blair Field in Long Beach on June 22. Poet's choice winners Antonio Andabaka, a 5th grader from Holy Trinity School in San Pedro, and Madison Gifford, a 3rd grader from Los Cerritos Elementary School in Long Beach, presented their poems as part of the pre-game festivities. One of them also threw out the ceremonial first pitch of the game. It was all part of the baseball team's spectacular Italian Heritage Night that Buono's sponsored. The evening also included a rendition of the Italian National Anthem by the world renowned operatic star Agostino Castagnola, who had sung before Pope John Paul II, Mother Theresa, and three U.S. Presidents and whose voice has been used in more than 200 major motion pictures. Andrew Buono sang the American National Anthem.

After hundreds of poems were judged from third through fifth graders at 18 participating Long Beach and San Pedro schools, Andabaka tied for first place in the Poet's Choice Award category with Michael Amalfitano, a 4th grader from South Shores School in San Pedro. Madison Gifford earned second place in the category. Andabaka's poem also took first place in the Kids' Choice Award category.

California State University, Long Beach Department of English professors Dr. Gerald Locklin and Rafael Zepeda and a panel of youth members of the San Pedro Boys & Girls Club TEENS supreme served as the judges for the two "overall best" categories – Poet's and Kids' Choice awards. According to Locklin, the winning poems illustrated the best combinations of natural voice, musical sense, imagery, content, fidelity to the topic, and clarity. Zepeda added, "It's very clear that the teachers keep their students thinking with this assignment."

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Buono's 2007 Poetry Contest Winners
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Additional judges selected the top five winners from each school. Students were congratulated in person by Buono's general manager/owner Frank Buono who handed out award certificates and Buono's gift certificates 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 participating school, were honorees at pizza parties held in their classrooms. Artwork from 5th grader Vanessa Wilder of Longfellow Elementary School appears on the front cover of the 2007 Poetry Booklet. The back cover artwork is from 3rd graders Brenda Ramos of Cesar Chavez Elementary School and Reylyn Cardenas of Garfield Elementary School.

This educational opportunity was all part of the Buono's Authentic Pizzeria 9th Annual Poetry Contest, with its 2007 theme being "Italy For Kids." Students wove in cultural, historic, and recreational references to Italy with some spotlighting the Pinocchio Theme Park, the great sports of soccer and bocce ball, and the joy of visiting historic museums and going sightseeing throughout the country.

"We are pleased to see more and more youth and schools participating each year, and delighted that this educational experience has brought so much joy to the children and their families." says Frank Buono. Plans are underway for a unique 10th anniversary contest to kick-off with a few new twists in early February 2008.

Long Beach student winners include (in order of 1st through 5th place):

Birney – Oshin Tudayan, Bianca Nicdao, Jaidee-Mae Benasfre, Maya Jacquez, Sereniti Hodge
Burnett – Jahlyn Woods-McGuire, Cesiah Sosa, Sergio Lopez, Nathan So, Katherine Mejia
Cesar Chavez – Christopher Venegas, Andrea Santos, Coleen Villegas, Melanie Bueno, Cynthia Ramos
Garfield – Lisette Mendoza, Jankarlo Castaneda, Julia Montes, Sua Rheannon, Gaetano Gambino
Holy Innocents – Therese Anne Liwanag, Janalee Tabayoyong, Luis Ochoa, Brianna Regan, Gregory Salazar
Jackie Robinson – Noah Roman, Samantha Alaman, Michael Auditor, Bre'yonna Williamson, Alyssa Ignacio
Longfellow – Andrew Hean, Justin Sharer, Stephen White, Ashley Kron, Vanessa Wilder
Los Cerritos – Madison Gifford, Zoey Jablonski, Isabela Consunji, Brielle Biscocho, D'andre Todd
St. Lucy – Chelsea Sheltman, Catherine Domingo, Kathleen Porras, Farrah Ferrer, Kyler Victorio

San Pedro student winners include (in order of 1st through 5th place):

Cabrillo – Samantha Zosaya, Janica Albino, Brianna Torres, Hector Salcedo
Fifteenth Street – Chloe Nora, Luis Galvez, Angelica Gonzalez, Michelle Solorio, Jewel Eldridge
Holy Trinity – Antonio Andabaka, Michelle Frost, Sam Foxworthy, Frank Vukojevic, Maddy Caserma
Leland – Erica Magana, Tyler McDougal, Mercedes Espinosa, Karla Linares, Nicholas Holt Francis
Mary Star of the Sea – Victoria Vitalich, Michael Flanagan, Chloe Barham, Krislyn Vara, Ariana Gutierrez
Point Fermin – Alicia Dorado, Carla Marroquin, Anneliese Cleere, Kaneida Valles, Victoria Green
Seventh Street – Tate Lopez, Marcos Ramirez, Doreen Corella, Heather Marsell, Bobby Strum
South Shores – Michael Amalfitano, Bronwyn Bunnell, Chanel Gomez, Meghan Swafford, William Nodvik
White Point – Michelle Leccese, Madison Power-Kruger, Ryan Lynch, Francisco Ummel, Julia Sampson

Buono's Authentic Pizzeria, a southern California tradition since 1973, has restaurants in Long Beach and San Pedro. For more information about the annual school poetry contest contact Frank Buono at (562) 427-8665 or go to www.BuonosPizza.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Poet's Choice First Place Poems and Photos are also provided. (Next Page – Poems)

1st Place Tie - Poets' Choice Award

My Visit to Italy

Michael Amalfitano, 4th Grade, South Shores School

My family and I are going to Italy this summer.
My parents promise me this trip will be anything but a bummer.
Amalfi is where my family name comes from.
It's very beautiful there, no glum.
Ischia will be the island where we'll stay.
It's near Naples, not far away.
I have lots of relatives there that I will meet.
We'll hang out and go to the beach to beat the heat.
I'm sure when I get there I'll get to eat the best pizzas ever!
The Italians really know how to make their pizzas so delicious and clever.
Gelato, gnocchi and spaghetti too.
There's so much to eat and see and do.
Saint John Joseph is Ischia's patron saint.
I look forward to seeing all the churches that are so quaint.
It will be a shame when we have to leave.
But at least I'll come home to my pet frog "Steve."

Italy, the land of my dreams

Antonio Andabaka, 5th Grade, Holy Trinity School

The beautiful country I dream about the most
Has a shape of a boot and stretches all along the Adriatic coast.
It has so many beautiful things I want to see
Let me mention some of them and maybe you'll take a trip there with me.
Bologna is the city at the very north I would rate it with more than five stars
How can you resist not to see its famous Masserati and Lamborghini cars?
Milano is a place of many fashion names: Versace, Armani, Prada and so on.
But it's best known thing is the theatre Scala – home of the opera and voices of: alto, soprano, and baritone.
Who wouldn't like a fancy gondola ride and a serenade if you had a chance?
Ciao Bella, come to the city of the water – Venice is for those who love romance.
From Venice I go all the way to Rome, and I can't believe the architecture and the arts I see
Vatican City and Saint Peter's Square shine on me with its light of Christianity
Volcano Vesuvius, pizza and gelato are the trademarks of the town called Napoli.
Welcome to the very south part of my dream country called Italy.
I can tell you so much more, I don't know where to start or end, it seems.
So, arrivederci to all of you...Italy is the land of my dreams.

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