

Local student's poetry taking him to New York City

Gil Haylon
Staff Reporter

On April 9, a local fifth grade student, Jonah T. of the Henry Grew School, will stand on stage at Harlem's Apollo Theater, performing a poem in front of hundreds of people.

Jonah takes part in America SCORES Boston, the local chapter of a national non-profit that empowers inner-city kids through a unique combination of soccer, poetry, and public service. He will represent the region at the National America Scores poetry slam in New York, where he will perform alongside kids from 12 other U.S. cities, including New York, Cleveland, Dallas, Atlanta, San Francisco, Seattle and Washington, DC.

Jonah wrote "The Person Inside Me" about all of the changes he's experienced since he started exercising and making positive choices in his life.

"I'm very excited," said Jonah, who lives in Hyde Park. "I'm a little nervous but not too much."

Jonah had written a few poems before the start of this

competition, but has really blossomed through performing on stage.

"He's so expressive on the stage, he's a great entertainer, and makes it fun for those who watch," said Freya Hoffmann-Terry, the elementary education coordinator for America SCORES in Boston.

Jonah's parents immigrated from South America, and he is very proud of his heritage. He was first drawn to America SCORES for its athletic focus, and was thrilled to recently meet Patriots quarterback Tom Brady. Jonah hopes to someday open a multi-national animal rescue service, and has already written a mission statement for the program, which he calls "Animal Worldwide Services." His poem is called "The Person Inside Me," and it includes the following verses:

*I was grumpy and mad
And now look at me, I'm healthy
and glad. Learning from the
past, making healthy choices,
Now I'm running fast.*

*The person inside me is
myself, I am a helpful person,
And no matter who it is I will
always lend a helping hand.*

As one of the very first members of the SCORE pro-

gram at the Henry Grew School, Jonah has become a much better writer through the program, he said.

Originally, he became interested in the program at the beginning of last school year because of its involvement with sports, something he loves. The SCORE program features a variety of writing and sports, with students participating in the program for 90 minutes every day after school.

He noted that one of his favorite moments was being able to meet Tom Brady as part of the Play 60 program with the NFL, where he got to shake Brady's hand.

"It was cool, I got to shake his hand quickly before all the [media] people surrounded him," said Jonah.

Recently, Jonah was able to go to the Winter Challenge soccer tournament, where he was able to meet several professional soccer players and got to recite his poem in front of the attendees.

Having never been to New York City, he said that he was very excited and has begun working on a new poem for the event. Jonah will compete against students from around the country.



Jonah, a student at the Henry Grew School, will be heading to New York City in April to perform one of his poems.

PHOTO BY GIL HAYLON

Hyde Park Bulletin