

Harlan County High School sophomore Noah Hughes has been named one of 20 winners in the National Youth Storytelling Showcase. He will now participate alongside other National Youth Torchbearers and professional storytellers at the Timpanogos Storytelling Midwinter Conference in Orem, Utah in February.



Harlan County High School sophomore Noah Hughes, son of Carlton and Kathy Hughes of Cumberland, has been named a national winner in the National Youth Storytelling Showcase competition and represent Kentucky at a national conference in Utah in February. He was also honored as a Kentucky State Torchbearer. Pictured, left to right: HCHS Principal Bob Howard, Hughes, local storyteller and Kentucky Storytelling Association officer Pam Holcomb, and HCHS drama teacher Pam Hoskins.



Harlan County High School freshman Michaela Simpson, daughter of Dave and Angela Simpson of Baxter, was recently named a Kentucky State Torchbearer for storytelling. Pictured, left to right: HCHS Principal Bob Howard, Simpson, local storyteller and Kentucky Storytelling Association officer Pam Holcomb, and HCHS drama teacher Pam Hoskins.

“I was really surprised I made it to state, much less nationals. I’m really excited to represent Harlan County High School on the national level,” Hughes said.

For this year’s competition, Hughes performed “Romeo and Juliet, as told by Andy Griffith,” the popular entertainer’s comical spin on the Shakespeare classic. He previously competed with Griffith’s story “What It Was, Was Football.”

Hughes, the son of Carlton and Kathy Hughes of Cumberland, began his journey to the national stage in his HCHS drama class, taught by Pam Hoskins. Students in the class were assigned to develop a story, and five of those students entered the Kingdom Come Swappin’ Meetin’ Storytelling Competition at Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College this past October. From there, the students recorded videos of their stories to submit to the Kentucky Storytelling Association for review.

Hughes and Michaela Simpson, HCHS freshman and daughter of Dave and Angela Simpson of Baxter, were named Kentucky Torchbearers, an elite group of the top five youth storytellers in the state, and their videos went on to the national committee.

“Having two state torchbearers from one school is quite an accomplishment,” said Pam Holcomb, local storyteller and an officer in KSA, “and having a national winner is beyond outstanding.”

Hughes will join two other national winners from Kentucky, Chandler Emmons Smith of Paducah and Samantha McMillian of Florence, at the Utah festival, where they will tell their award-winning stories, perform in area schools, and receive instruction from professional storytellers. They will then serve as Storytelling Ambassadors for the next year. Hughes and Simpson will also perform as part of a showcase at the Kentucky State Fair in August.

“I am very excited that our students are participating in something like storytelling that is indigenous to our area,” said HCHS Principal Bob Howard. “It’s great for our school to have a national winner in this competition.”

Hughes is also a member of the cross country and track teams, as well as the academic team and the Beta and French Clubs. He is active in the school’s theatre productions and has appeared in two *Higher Ground* plays at SKCTC.

“I am extremely proud of Noah’s accomplishments, and the Harlan County drama department will support him however we can as he moves on to nationals,” said Hoskins.