

Students Compete In Annual Williamson Oratory Contest

BY TERRY POPE

Two Brunswick County high school seniors received \$2,500 scholarships Sunday after being named winners in the 14th annual Virginia and Odell Williamson Oratory Contest.

Marian A. Gore, a senior at West Brunswick High School, and Christopher Milligan, a senior at North Brunswick High School, were chosen winners over the six contestants by a panel of judges.

Ms. Gore's speech was titled, "The Key to Survival" while Milligan's speech was titled, "The Peter Pan Syndrome." A male and female from each of the three county high schools were earlier chosen as school winners and given a chance to compete for the \$2,500 scholarships Sunday.

Each of the school winners received \$100 awards and a plaque for participating in the contest sponsored by Odell Williamson, an Ocean Isle Beach developer and his wife, Virginia. Other participants were Bradley Babson and Kathleen Somers of South Brunswick High, Randy Ward of West Brunswick and Veronica Phelps of North Brunswick.

Ms. Gore's winning speech stressed the need for students to obtain a good education. An education only requires a "free mind, body and soul," Ms. Gore said. "Sex and money can't always buy your way to the top. An education is like an American Express card—don't leave school without it."

Milligan's winning speech dealt with the Peter Pan syndrome, a psychological phenomenon that produces a man-child who, like the mythical Peter Pan character, refuses to grow up.

"He is a man because of his age," Milligan said, "but a child because of his actions. His body matured, but his mind didn't. Because of this he has many, many problems in his life."

Milligan urged others to help those recognized as suffering from the PPS syndrome by refusing to go along with his juvenile behavior and by not laughing at his boisterous comments.

Babson gave a speech titled, "Fire Fighting Volunteer Style," while dressed in the fireman's uniform, complete with shielded helmet and rubber boots. Babson expressed his concerns about needed community support for the fire departments in the county through the eyes of a



CONTEST sponsor Odell Williamson, left, presents winners in the annual oratory contest Sunday with plaques and their \$2,500 scholarships. Receiving the honors are Christopher Milligan of North Brunswick High School and Marian Gore of West Brunswick High School.

17-year-old fire fighter, the youngest member of the Bolivia Volunteer Fire Department.

Teenage suicide was the topic of a speech titled, "Help Me," given by Kathleen Somers of South Brunswick. Ms. Somers stressed the need for a crisis line, or a hot-line in Brunswick County to help troubled teenagers.

"Among 15- to 19-year-olds, suicide is the second leading cause of death next to car accidents," she said. "There are some people who do not choose to ignore suicide."

Veronica Phelps of North Brunswick touched on the problems

Christians often have in being accepted among their friends in a speech titled, "You Can't Judge A Book By Its Cover."

"The mark of a Christian lies inside and what they believe," she said. "Now there are a lot of misconceptions about Christianity. It's not an easy place to be."

West Brunswick senior Randy Ward depicted the declining role of the small American farmer in his speech titled, "An Endangered Species: The American Farmer."

"It seems people are saying, 'Yes, I want local agriculture, but not in my backyard,'" Ward said.

"Because of high production costs, the smaller farmers are having to sell out to the larger producers."

Judging this year's contest were Ms. Dorothy DeShields, principal of Topsail High School; Kenneth McLaurin, principal of Laney High School; Carlton Prince, associate

superintendent Whiteville City Schools and Dr. Steven Weiss and Dr. Carole Tallant, assistant professors of speech communications, UNC-Wilmington.

"This is the fourteenth year of holding the oratory contest and every year I always say, 'I think the com-

petition was tougher this year than in any previous year," said Odell Williamson before announcing the winners Sunday. "I'll say it again this year."

"There were 35 participants in this year's contest and they are all winners," Williamson said.

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