

Youth Speaks

OATHALL AND ROTARY PLAY HOST TO SUSSEX AND SURREY SCHOOLS

Oathall Community College was the chosen venue for 10 schools from Sussex and Surrey, when they came together to contest Rotary's "Youth Speaks" competition, in which schools have a chance to showcase their skills in public speaking before a large audience of VIPs, friends and seasoned adjudicators.

Organised by the Rotary Club of Cuckfield and Lindfield on behalf of Rotary International in Britain and Ireland (RIBI), the teams expounded their views on their chosen subjects, which were widely varied, ranging from saving the apostrophe, to horse racing, to American values and what to eat for breakfast.

Top school in the intermediate section (ages 11 to 13) was Guildford County School, with a discussion, well beyond their years, of what could happen to the Queen's English if text-speak and similar forms of communication are given unbridled freedom. Any communication is good, they argued, but it has to be the right language in the right place. Their Chair, Maisie Le Masurier, and Speaker, Tom Nicole, won best in class in their respective rôles.

After a tightly fought round of debates in the senior section (ages 14 to 17), the decision of the adjudicators was eagerly awaited and it went to Mid-Sussex school Ardingly College. Talking about the public perception of art, Juliet Frost, ably assisted by Hazel Chon (Chair) and Jenya Morrice (Vote of thanks), raised a smile or two as she described being admonished for chilling out on one of the exhibits at an art exhibition. Citing Wordsworth famous poem "Daffodils" and the works of Van Gogh, she showed how works of art, vilified when they first appeared, can later become great favourites. In this age group, Ellie Whitlock of Godalming 6th Form College was voted Best Chair, Isabella Woods of the Royal School, Haslemere, was Best Speaker and Kavien Sribalakrishnan, Ewell Castle School, was Best Vote of Thanks.

Among the VIP's there was nothing but praise for the way that the teams presented their arguments. Councillor Mandy Thomas Atkin, Chairman of Mid Sussex District Council was among those who expressed their support and congratulations to the participants and encouraged them to keep up their keen interest in public speaking. William Harmsworth, District Governor of Rotary District 1250, applauded the way that the teams had presented their thought-provoking ideas and provided great entertainment over a wide range of topics. Edward Rodriguez, Headteacher at Oathall said how delighted he was to welcome visitors to the college and, in reference to the farm for which it is so well known, proudly announced the arrival of an addition to its live-stock – a new-born lamb at the very moment the competition was getting under way!

For the Rotary Club of Cuckfield and Lindfield, Alan Bray, President, said, "This event showed so well what Rotary does for young people, by giving them a platform for their undoubted talents and imaginative ideas, and one which certainly makes us older people stand up and take notice!"

Further information about "Youth Speaks", and other competitions for young people, such as "Young Writer" and "Young Photographer", can be found on www.rotary1250.org or by contacting Bill Cormie, Rotary Club of Cuckfield and Lindfield on 01444 482780, email cormie-b@black-hill.freemove.co.uk.