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WINNING YOUNG WRITERS

The *Around DB* and *Life on Lantau* Young Writer's Competition 2016 reached a total of 12,470 through social media. Congratulations to Katrina Lowe, whose story, posted on the *Around DB* and *Life On Lantau* Facebook pages from April 16 to 19, gained an impressive 362 votes. Coming a worthy second and third place respectively, were Ryan Harling with 230 votes and Maria Andreeva with 65 votes. This year's three finalists, and the three runners-up, were presented with their prizes, sponsored by EpicLand and Meat Snacks Group, on April 25. To read more about these writers, turn to page 34; to read the winning article, turn to page 39.



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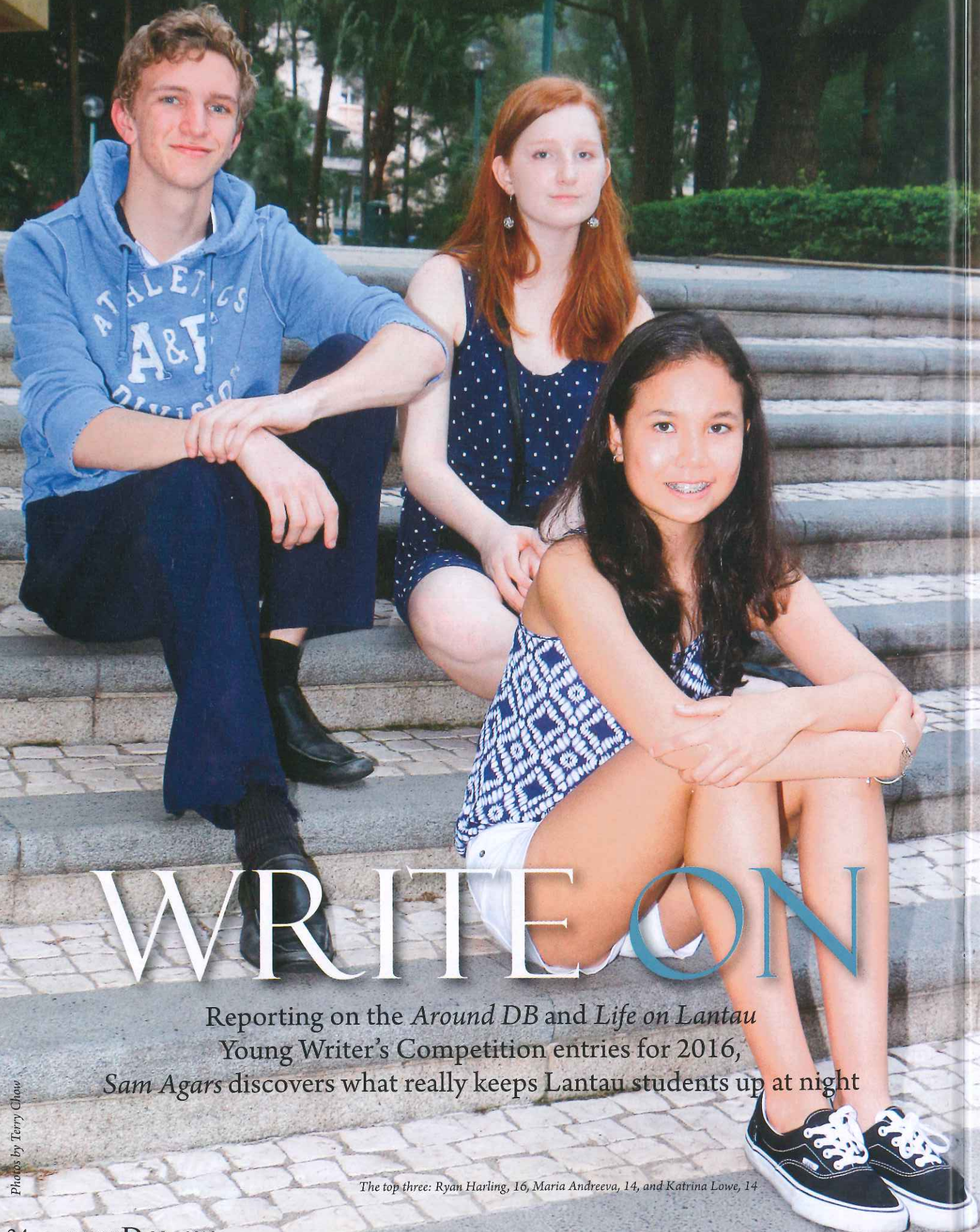
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WRITE ON

Reporting on the *Around DB* and *Life on Lantau* Young Writer's Competition entries for 2016, Sam Agars discovers what really keeps Lantau students up at night

The top three: Ryan Harling, 16, Maria Andreeva, 14, and Katrina Lowe, 14

The entries for this year's *Around DB* and *Life on Lantau* Young Writer's Competition (YWC) were many and varied, but there was again one constant – quality. Each year a new crop of local writers delivers engaging, thoughtful and hugely readable stories that belie their age and impress the judges.

This year, the competition's fourth, entrants were asked to write about a particular community concern. Topics ranged from local littering to teenage lawlessness and the need to raise awareness about people living with spectrum disorders. In April, it was up to the judges Elizabeth Kerr, Peter Sherwood and Martin Lerigo (all regular writers for *Around DB* and *Life on Lantau*) to select and mentor the three finalists – Maria Andreeva, 14, Katrina Lowe, 14, and Ryan Harling, 16. The judges also chose three runners-up – Alix Leonard, 17, Xander Ito Low, 16, and Marcus Cheung, 16.

In the subsequent online vote, conducted on the *Around DB* and *Life on Lantau* Facebook pages, April 16 to 19, an incredible 12,470 people responded (by viewing, voting, commenting and sharing). Katrina placed first, Ryan placed second and Maria third.

You can read all the stories submitted at www.arounddb.com, and turn to page 39 to read Katrina's winning story. But now it's time to meet the three finalists.

Maria: disconnectedness

In her short story, Discovery Bay International School (DBIS) student Maria Andreeva, who was also a finalist in last year's YWC, writes about disconnectedness – how many of us get so caught up in our own worlds, we choose to ignore the bigger

picture. She urges readers to become more aware of what's happening around them and of the small things everyone can do to help the planet and each other.

By focusing on the bigger picture rather than concentrating on a single, isolated issue, Maria has delivered a piece that makes readers think twice about how they are living their lives.

"My story is actually a very personal topic for me, as I used to hide behind my 'shield' and didn't notice the world and problems surrounding me," DB resident Maria says. "But once I realised that I can make a positive impact and it would count, it changed my view on the world quite a lot."

Mentor Peter is impressed with the insight shown by Maria at such a young age. "She is thinking quite deeply about life and human behaviour," he says. "I feel she is on a good path to some significant insights. It's unusual for someone her age."

Maria took plenty away from her work with Peter and is planning on putting his advice and encouragement to good use in the years to come. "I gained a lot of knowledge and encouraged myself to give more to this world," she says. "Writing has been my passion since I started reading a lot of books. I love creating my own unique worlds and characters the most, so fictional writing is my favourite genre."

Ryan: commercialisation

Ryan chose to write about something he feels strongly about – the commercialisation of Ngong Ping and other parts of Lantau. "Walking around Ngong Ping during Christmas time there was Christmas music playing and I was wondering, 'What is this? This isn't real, this isn't the real deal,'" he says.

In his story, Ryan looks at the government's insistence to put the economy ahead of environmental conservation. He drew inspiration



The runners-up: Alix Leonard, 17, Marcus Cheung, 16, and Xander Ito Low, 16

Photos by Terry Chow