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**63rd TEXACO CHILDREN’S ART COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

**Laois student is chosen overall 2017 Competition winner**

**Dublin, 11th April 2017:** Lucy Deegan, a 17-year old student from Luggacurren, Co. Laois – and a pupil at Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach in Co. Carlow – has been chosen overall winner of this year's 63rd Texaco Children's Art Competition having taken first prize in the senior 16-18 years age category. Her prize will be a cheque for €1,500 in addition to which she will be invited to travel to Tokyo next August at the invitation of the International Foundation for Arts and Culture. There she will be an honoured guest at an awards ceremony being held in conjunction with the 18th International High School Arts Festival in which her winning artwork will be one of the leading exhibits.

Described by competition adjudicators as a ‘beautifully composed and exquisitely finished piece’, her winning entry, entitled ‘Tom – Summer’, is a detailed portrait study of her brother, carefully executed with colouring pencils and white gel pen. Asked what inspired her to choose him as her subject, Lucy said: “My brother Tom is special to our family. Because he means so much to us, I wanted to capture him at his happiest.”

Lucy – who is well known to many as a midfield player on the County Laois ladies minor football team – attributes much of her artistic achievements to the encouragement and guidance she receives from her art teacher Noirín Ní Eireamhóin and from renowned artist Iwona Nartowska O’Reilly who runs a local art class.

Praising what he termed the ‘skill and maturity’ of her work – which took almost two months to complete – the Chairman of the judging panel, Professor Declan McGonagle described Lucy’s winning entry as “a life-like and brilliantly executed study in which the artist has so perfectly captured the personality of her subject and in which the affection she has for her brother is so wonderfully revealed.”

Asked how she felt upon hearing of her success, Lucy said: “I have been entering the Texaco Children’s Art Competition every year and it has always been my dream to be the overall winner. My mum was crying when she told me and I just burst into tears beside her.”

In winning the Competition, Lucy has underlined her own artistic talent (this is her fifth success in the Competition) and that of her siblings also – her brother Tom and sisters Annie Rose and Juliet have all won prizes in previous years.

In winning the coveted first prize, she fought off competition from thousands of young students from across Ireland who took part in the Competition. She will be presented with her prize at the prize-giving ceremony in the Royal Hospital Kilmainham next month, when all of the 126 winners, from seven categories, will be in attendance.

Also in **Category A**, second prize (€1,000) was won by Joel Smyth (17), a student at Bangor Academy & Sixth Form College, Co. Down, for his work entitled ‘Lone Tree’, while third prize (€750) was won by Grace Carson (17), from Cookstown High School, Co. Tyrone, for her untitled winter landscape.

In **Category B** (14-15 years), the €450 first prize was won by Dublin student Méabh Scahill (14), from Sutton Park School, for her self-portrait, while second prize (€350) was won by Amy Boylan (14), from Gorey Community School, Co. Wexford, for her artwork entitled ‘My Best Friend, Halle’. Third prize (€250) went to Nicole Forster (15), from Wilson's Hospital School, Multyfarnham, Co. Westmeath, for her work entitled ‘Portrait Of My Dad’.

In **Category C** (12-13 years), first prize of €350 went to Amy Zhao (12), a pupil at Scoil Na gCeithre Máistrí, Athlone, Co. Westmeath for her self-portrait pencil sketch. Second prize (€250) was won by Ciarán Leonard (13) from St. Mary's CBS, Portlaoise, for his portrait study entitled ‘Weathered Wisdom’. Third prize (€200) went to Emer Leahy (13), from St. Joseph's Of Cluny Killiney, Co. Dublin, for her entry entitled ‘Sun, Sea, Sisters’.

In **Category D** (9-11 years), first prize (€250 Art & Hobby gift voucher) was won by Ava Henson (11), a student at The Harold School, Glasthule, Co. Dublin for her self-portrait. No stranger to the competition, Ava won second prize in the same category last year and first prize in the 7-8 years age category in the 2014 Competition. Second prize (€200 Art & Hobby gift voucher) was won by Rachel Glynn (11), from Scoil Bhríde, Four Mile House, Co. Roscommon, for her pencil-sketch entitled ‘My Grandad’. Third prize (€150 Art & Hobby gift voucher) went to Ruth Donoghue (11), from Tarmonbarry, Co. Roscommon for a study entitled ‘Tiger Lily’.

In **Category E** (7-8 years), the first prize of a €200 Art & Hobby gift voucher was won by Noah James Flynn (7), from Scoil Bhríde, Menlough, Co. Galway, for a piece entitled ‘Ruby May’. Second prize (€150 Art & Hobby gift voucher) was won by Niall Dalton (7), from St. Columba's National School, Co. Longford, whose colourful work is entitled ‘Anne's Dog, Molly’, while third prize (€125 Art & Hobby gift voucher) went to Westmeath student Xier Lin (7), from St. Mary's Primary School, Mullingar, for a composition entitled ‘Sweet Cherries’.

In **Category F** (6 years and younger), the youngest age group in the Competition, first prize winner of a €150 Art & Hobby gift voucher was Eibhlín Murphy (6), a pupil at St. Joseph's Girls National School, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, for her plant study entitled ‘Daisies’. Second prize (€125 Art & Hobby gift voucher) was won by Eve Aherne (6), from St. Marnock's National School, Portmarnock, Co. Dublin, for her colourful entry entitled ‘Fluttering Feathers’. Third prize (€100 Art & Hobby gift voucher) was won by Agnes Mae McCaubrey (5), from Dundonald Primary School, Belfast, for an imaginative work entitled ‘Fairy Garden’.

In **Category G**, reserved for entries from children with special needs, first prize of a €400 Art & Hobby gift voucher was won by James Wellwood, (17) a student at Coláiste Mhuire, Johnstown, Co. Kilkenny, for his painting entitled ‘Peafowl In The Forest’. No stranger to the prizewinner’s enclosure, James won the same prize in last year’s competition. Second prize (€300 Art & Hobby gift voucher) went to Antrim student Rhys Newbronner (15), from Jordanstown School, Newtownabbey, for his entry entitled ‘Frog’, while third prize (€200 Art & Hobby gift voucher) went to Dylan Carroll (17), from St. Peter’s Special School, Rathgar, for his work entitled ‘Peppers On A Plate’.

Final judging was carried out by the chairman of the judging panel, Professor Declan McGonagle, former Director of the National College of Art & Design, assisted by preliminary judges Dr. Denise Ferran (President, Royal Ulster Academy and well-known artist & art historian), Eoin Butler (Artist & Lecturer in Visual Arts), Seán Kissane (Curator: Exhibitions, IMMA), Aoife Ruane (Director, Highlanes Municipal Art Gallery, Drogheda) and Colleen Watters (Head of Learning & Partnership, Ulster Museum, Belfast).

Announcing the awards at a reception held in the Dublin City Gallery The Hugh Lane at Parnell Square, Dublin today (Tuesday, 11th April 2017), James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations for Valero, who market fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand, paid tribute to the winners, praising their imagination, skill and enthusiasm. He also thanked the many teachers from schools throughout Ireland who have given their support to the Competition throughout its 63 years history.

The Texaco Children’s Art Competition is the longest running sponsorship in the history of arts sponsoring in Ireland – and popularly regarded as Ireland’s longest-running sponsorship of any kind. It has an unbroken history that dates back to the very first Competition held in 1955. This year, as has been the case throughout its life, it has been a platform on which young artists have had their talents recognised and a springboard on which many have risen to national prominence. Aside from giving students the space to give expression to their talent, the Competition has focused a spotlight on the quality of art teaching in Irish schools and the importance that the educational establishment attaches to the subject of art education.

Past winners whose early interest in art and the arts may well have been encouraged by their participation in the Competition include artists Graham Knuttel, Robert Ballagh, Bernadette Madden, Dorothy Cross, fashion designer Paul Costello and former broadcaster and artist Thelma Mansfield. Other notable past winners include former Government Minister Ruairi Quinn (a four-times winner), communications consultant and broadcaster Terry Prone, Chairman of the Pension Authority David Begg, actress Jean Anne Crowley, musician Ethna Tinney, Trinity College Professor of Contemporary Irish History, Eunan O’Halpin and the late novelist Clare Boylan.

ENDS.

**Editor’s Notes:**

1. The Texaco Children’s Art Competition celebrates its 63rd anniversary this year. For further information about the Competition, contact Don Hall (mobile 087-2552699), Ashley Hall (mobile 086-3127774) or Maximilien McKenna (mobile 086-7848464) at Hall PR on 01-660 9377 (office) or email pr@hall.ie. For more information on Valero Energy (Ireland) Limited, contact Bronagh Carron on (+353) 01 6258208 or email bronagh.carron@valero.com
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