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**64th TEXACO CHILDREN’S ART COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED**

**Mayo student is chosen overall 2018 Competition winner**

**Dublin, 17th April 2018**: Young Mayo artist, Hetty Lawlor – a 17-year old student from Kilmeena, near Westport and a pupil at the local Sacred Heart School – has been chosen overall winner of this year's 64th Texaco Children's Art Competition taking first prize in the senior 16-18 years age category.

Her winning entry – a portrait study of a young neighbour entitled ‘Gráinne’, which she completed in acrylic and colour pencil – was described by competition adjudicators as ‘a captivating portrait, beautifully composed, perfectly executed and life-like in its use of colour, tone and texture’.

From an artistic family – her father Jimmy is an artist, her mother Phyl designs carpets and rugs, and her sister Anna studies animation at college in Dun Laoghaire – Hetty is familiar to television viewers here and overseas thanks to her participation in the recent Sky Arts Portrait Artist of the Year competition and her subsequent appearance on the Ray D’Arcy show on RTÉ One.

Said by her mother to have been ‘over the moon’ with her success, Hetty expressed her ‘amazement’ at having been chosen overall winner, adding: ‘knowing of the many renowned and highly talented artists who have won prizes in the Competition down through the years, I feel hugely honoured to be amongst them’.

Having been ‘trying for years’ to achieve overall victory – she was a prize winner on three occasions previously, winning a Special Merit award in 2015, 2016 and 2017 – Hetty was inspired by her father Jimmy and his success as a 16-year old student when, in 1984, he too won the overall first prize in the Competition. ‘His support, and the hope that I could follow in his footsteps, is one of the main reasons why I persisted in entering the Competition’ Hetty said.

Describing Hetty as ‘an exceptional talent’, the Chairman of the judging panel, Professor Declan McGonagle, said ‘she is the latest in a generation of young prize winners whose work is testament to the depth of artistic ability existing in Ireland today and an illustration of the very high standard of entries being submitted in the Texaco Children’s Art Competition’.

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

Planning to pursue third-level studies in art, Hetty’s prize will include a cheque for €1,500 plus a visit to Tokyo in August at the invitation of the International Foundation for Arts and Culture. There she will be guest at the 19th International High School Arts Festival in which her winning artwork will be exhibited at the National Arts Center.

Also in **Category A**, second prize (€1,000) was won by Evan Kearney (age 18), from Bray, Co. Wicklow, for his portrait work, while third prize (€750) was won by Jack McGrath (age 16), a pupil at Coláiste Muire, Ballymote, Co. Sligo, for his piece entitled ‘Wisdom’.

**In Category B** (14-15 years), the €450 first prize was won by Kildare student Tara Neville Moynihan (age 14), from Coláiste Chiaráin, Leixlip, for her self-portrait, while second prize (€350) was won by Justin Cole (age 15), from Dunclug College, Ballymena, Co. Antrim, for his self-portrait artwork. No strangers to the competition, both Tara and Justin won Special Merit Awards in last year’s competition. Third prize (€250) went to Jean O’Riordan (age 15), from Model Farm Road, Co. Cork, for her detailed piece entitled ‘Mirrored’.

**In Category C** (12-13 years), first prize of €350 went to Yuxuan Chen (age 13), a pupil at Sancta Maria College, Ballyroan in Dublin, for a colourful self-portrait. Second prize (€250) was won by 13-year old student Sophie Ward, from St. Paul’s High School, Bessbrook, Co. Armagh, for her pencil sketch entry entitled ‘Eye Spy’, while third prize (€200) went to Ava Henson (age 12), from The Harold School, Glasthule, Co. Dublin, for her work entitled ‘Bursting With Excitement’. No stranger to the competition, Ava won first prize in the 7-8 years age category of the 2014 competition and second and first prize in the 9-11 years age category of the 2016 and 2017 competitions respectively.

**In Category D** (9-11 years), first prize (€250) was won by 11-year old Luke Joyce, a student at St. Laurence’s Boys’ National School, Stillorgan, Co. Dublin for his self-portrait work. Second prize (€200) was won by Rian O’Reilly (age 9), from Glasnevin Educate Together in Dublin, for a study entitled ‘The Pink Flamingo’. Third prize (€150) went to Sara Jagodzinska (age 9), from Scoil Mhuire Girls National School, Lucan, Co. Dublin for her entry entitled ‘Midnight Swim!’.

**In Category E** (7-8 years), the first prize of €200 was won by 7-year old Remy Long, from Georgian Montessori School, Belvedere Place in Dublin, for a piece entitled ‘Aquarium Lionfish’. Second prize (€150) was won by Walt Russell (age 8), from Scoil Íde, Raheny, whose work is entitled ‘The Lads’, while third prize (€125) went to Galway student Noah James Flynn (age 8), from Scoil Bhríde, Menlo, for a painting entitled ‘Fox Skull’. No strangers to the competition, both Walt and Noah won prizes in last year’s competition – a Special Merit Award and first prize in category E respectively.

**In Category F** (6 years and younger), the youngest age group in the Competition, first prize winner of €150 was awarded to 6-year old Callum Leonard, a pupil at Bunscoil Loreto in Gorey, Co. Wexford, for his study entitled ‘Boy On Skateboard’. Second prize (€125) was won by Niran Paul Melbin (age 6), from Santry in Dublin, for a colourful entry entitled ‘Home Flower Vase’. Third prize (€100) was won by Bella Reynolds (age 6), from Scoil Dairbhre, Dundalk, Co. Louth, for an imaginative work entitled ‘iPad Gremlin’.

**In Category G**, reserved for entries from young artists with special needs, first prize of €400 was won by 18-year old James Wellwood, a student at Coláiste Mhuire, Johnstown, Co. Kilkenny, for his painting entitled ‘Lighthouse’. No stranger to the competition, James won first prize in the same category in both 2016 and 2017. Second prize (€300) went to Louth student James Moonan (age 12), from The Arthouse, Drogheda, for his entry entitled ‘Hens On The Farm’, while third prize (€200) went to Henry Peare (age 11), from St. Declan’s Special School, Ballsbridge in Dublin, for his work entitled ‘Baby Groot’.

Final judging was carried out by the Chairman of the judging panel, Professor Declan McGonagle, former Director of the National College of Art & Design and a prominent figure in Irish contemporary art. Assisting him were preliminary judges Dr. Denise Ferran (President of the Royal Ulster Academy (RUA), 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 Dublin’s Royal Hibernian Academy today (Tuesday, 17th April 2018), James Twohig, Director of Ireland Operations for Valero – who market fuel in Ireland under the Texaco brand – pointed to what he termed ‘the groundswell of artistic talent’ to be found amongst Ireland’s young people. ‘Despite the numerous other attractions that exist today, it is extremely gratifying to know that our young people continue to show an enduring interest in art and to demonstrate their ability in the magnificent prize-winning entries we see today,’ he said. Paying tribute to the winners, Mr. Twohig thanked the many teachers from schools throughout the country who have given their support to the Competition throughout its 64 years history.

The Texaco Children’s Art Competition is popularly regarded as Ireland’s longest-running sponsorship of any kind and the longest-running sponsorship in the history of arts sponsoring in Ireland with 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 and skill, 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 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. Image available on request of Hetty’s father, Jimmy Lawlor, taken in 1984 when, as a 16-year old student, he won his prize in the Competition (see Paragraph 5 above).
2. The Texaco Children’s Art Competition celebrates its 64th 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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4. Valero Energy Corporation, through its subsidiaries, is an international manufacturer and marketer of transportation fuels, other petrochemical products and power. Valero subsidiaries employ approximately 10,000 people, and assets include 15 petroleum refineries with a combined throughput capacity of approximately 3.1 million barrels per day, 11 ethanol plants with a combined production capacity of 1.3 billion gallons per year, a 50-megawatt wind farm, and renewable diesel production from a joint venture. Through subsidiaries, Valero owns the general partner of Valero Energy Partners LP (NYSE: VLP), a midstream master limited partnership. Approximately 7,500 outlets carry the Valero, Diamond Shamrock, Shamrock, and Beacon brands in the United States and the Caribbean; Ultramar in Canada; and Texaco in the United Kingdom and Ireland. Valero is a Fortune 500 company based in San Antonio, Texas. Please visit www.valero.com for more information.