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DVC students win top prizes in Inspire Oakland contest

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Three DVC students were the top three winners in the Oakland Digital Arts & Literacy Center's "Inspire Oakland" billboard contest. All three are students in Eva Cohen's graphic design course, ARTDM 214.

Announced in January 2010, the contest generated a significant amount of interest from the public, and artists and designers from all over the Bay Area jumped at the opportunity to have their work published on a billboard that hundreds of thousands of viewers would see daily.

"A colleague of mine told me about the 'Inspire Oakland' billboard contest," Cohen explained. "It was just the beginning of the class, and I thought it was too early to introduce the project. Many of the students had never even used the design programs on the computer. But I decided to go ahead anyway.

"These students blew my mind! There were so many talented and motivated students in this class," Cohen continued. "I felt very humbled and proud. Shaun Tai came into our class, took photos, and talked to the students, and it made the project very real and exciting.

"One of the students who won had never touched the computer before, and I think he was really surprised," Cohen said. "I feel proud of all of these students for being a part of this project. I can introduce something, teach about design, and show examples—but they did the designing, and it really blew me away."

Of all the submissions, the judges chose their 12 favorites and then put them on display in Oakland and asked the public to vote on them.

Grand prize winner was **Eric Welden**, who grew up in the East Bay and cites the "wonderfully diverse area" as his main inspiration.

"When I entered the contest, I was just shooting to make it into the top 10," Welden said, "because I thought it would be pretty crazy to be in the top 10 student designers in the Bay Area who entered the contest.

"I entered two designs," he said. "One I worked on for two or three weeks for about 40-50 hours, and that one, of course, got the least number of votes of the top 12 designs.

"The other, I did on the fly in class the day it was due, putting in about one or two hours. I threw it together with random bits and samplings from things that I thought resembled inspiration, and that one won the entire contest! Sometimes, it just has to feel right. You can't force a good design with elaborate plans and schemes. It just has to come from inside.

"I was ecstatic to find out that I won, and I literally ran around the house screaming for a good five minutes!" Welden said. "It was almost an out-of-body experience to see something as monumental as a billboard that I designed, when I saw it for the first time. This win, of course will benefit my portfolio greatly. But I almost don't care about that, because I will hold this memory forever as a great achievement and a first step in my design career."

The other two of the top three winners were also from DVC. First runnerup was **Stanley Santoso**, and second runner-up was **Joshua Hernandez**. All the winning designs will be displayed on a digital billboard viewable from Interstate 80 near the Gillman Street exit in Berkeley. In addition, Welden's grand-prize-winning design will be on a commercial billboard in downtown



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