

## **Aleutian, Pribilof Kids Are Big Winners in Statewide Calendar Contest**

I fly through the mountains,  
Soar with the wind,  
Scavenging for crustaceans,  
Then a family I begin.

So began the poem, “The Journey”, by Makani Zaima, age 11, of Adak who was one of the five students from the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge region whose work won a place on the statewide 2010 Migratory Bird Calendar. Geselle Vieyra, age 7, Liorah Dushkin, age 7, and Dacia Mitchell, age 12, all of Adak, also were winners in the literature division while William Leakanof, age 11, of St. George won in the poster division.

There have never been this many winners from the Aleutian/Pribilof region and William is the first Pribilof winner. When Adak head teacher, Julie Plummer, was told that her students had won 1/3 of the statewide literature prizes she said, “Oh Wow – That gives me little goose bumps.” Adak School has only 13 students and 4 of them were statewide winners. Plummer also said, “It’s (the calendar contest) a big deal out here. These kids still talk about past years when they or one of their friends won. It’s a way to get published.” Refuge educator Lisa Matlock who worked in Plummer’s classroom said she feels Plummer is a particularly strong language arts teacher which contributes to her students extraordinary success in this contest.

The Adak and St. George students’ work beat out over 1000 entries from throughout rural Alaska and will be published in the 2010 Migratory Bird Calendar. Kids compete in age categories for the 12 poster and 12 literature spots on the calendar. Each month will be illustrated by students’ work based on this year’s theme: Alaska, America’s Bird Nursery. Over 18,000 copies of the calendar are distributed throughout Alaska. In addition to having their work published and widely distributed, winners’ birthdays are on the calendar and they receive prizes and ribbons.

The calendar contest began in 1988 as a way to help local children learn about the birds of their area while developing their art and writing skills. The Bird Calendar has become a favorite throughout rural Alaska and can be found hanging in many Native Corporation or Village offices as well as homes. The 2010 calendar will be distributed in late November. All the statewide winners and more details about the contest can be found on-line at <http://alaska.fws.gov/external/education/calendar.htm>.

Caption: William Leakanof’s poster of the Pribilof’s unique birds will illustrate one month in the 2010 Migratory Bird Calendar.

Attachments: Winning Poster and Winning Literature pieces