

For Immediate Release
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Two Ferris students win scholarship funds in reading contest

BIG RAPIDS – Two Ferris State University students have earned scholarship money in the national Townsend Reading Scholarship Contest.

Jennifer Aymor of Big Rapids and Shayna Cummings of Benton Harbor were the only two Michigan students to win in the contest. Aymor, one of 25 first place winners to read all 32 books on the reading list, received \$500. Cummings read 22 books and received \$100 as one of 93 third place winners.

The contest was conducted from last September through the end of December. However, due to a delay in notification, Ferris students did not receive an announcement until October, putting them a month behind other contestants. Toward the end of the contest, Aymor, a freshman in the College of Business, was reading six to seven books a week in addition to completing classes and taking final exams.

Both winners were students in Professor Helen Woodman’s College Reading Methods 106 class, all members of which were encouraged to enter the contest. “I would never have been able to do the reading required to win first place had it not been for Mrs. Woodman and Reading 106,” said Aymor. “We learned reading strategies of how to approach different texts and how to not read every word. I knew what to do when the book got boring, and I had the tools to help me continue to read. Reading is making meaning,” said Aymor, who covered 6,524 pages in all.

In addition to receiving the scholarship money, both winners were thrilled to have received all the books free. Cummings, a freshman in the University College, also attributed her success to Reading 106. “We practiced metacognitive skills – asking ‘what we know and why we know it,’” she said. “Reading increased my background knowledge and increased my vocabulary.”

Townsend Press sponsored the contest because a surprising number of college students admit that they have never read a book from cover to cover. And even more students say they do not make a habit of reading, according to Woodman.

“Research has proven that regular reading makes students better writers, speakers, listeners and thinkers,” said Woodman. “Regular readers score higher on standardized tests, and they greatly increase their chances for school and job success.”

Students registered for the contest and began by reading the short book, “Reading Changes My Life.” After they finished they called a toll-free number and a Townsend Press staff member talked to them briefly to confirm they had read the book. They were then sent a second book and repeated the call-in process throughout the contest.