

## [A cousin's mission trip to Haiti inspired Kara Hampton's award-winning pencil drawing](#)

June 1, 2011

YORKTOWN -- Artists in all mediums -- painters, sculptors, writers and actors -- often speak of a "big break," of a chance to be noticed for their talents. For Kara Hampton, 18, Anderson, her biggest break so far carries the prestige of national attention.

Each spring, the Congressional Institute in Washington, D.C., sponsors a nationwide 2-D art competition in each congressional district, according to the House of Representatives website. The winners from each congressional district are chosen by local artists, and winning entries are displayed for one year in the Cannon Tunnel of the Capitol Building. This year, Hampton was among the more than 650,000 high school students who have participated -- and the relatively few students who have won.

Selected as the Sixth District winner for the 2011 Congressional Art Competition through the office of Rep. Mike Pence, Hampton will get to attend a reception for the winners in D.C. later this month, with round-trip tickets provided.

"I didn't really expect me to win it," said the Yorktown High School senior, "I thought out of so many students I had a very slim shot, but I feel really proud. I feel like I've accomplished something."

Her pencil drawing, Haitian Hope, depicts a little girl that her cousin, Tiffany, saw while working in a hospital in Haiti on a mission trip.

"There was this family of a little girl, her older brother and her mom," Hampton said. "They hiked five miles from their village to come to the hospital because her mom was so worried about them getting sick, ... and they gave her a bag of vitamins. They (the family) carried a bucket of water and a backpack, and that was it."

Hampton has been drawing since she could hold a pencil. She said she has received art supplies every year for her birthday.

"I don't even use half of them, and I still have a whole box of them underneath my bed," she said. "I have so many drawing books that I probably won't be able to fill."

The Congressional Art Competition award is hardly Hampton's first. While she usually draws pencil portraits, her paintings have won best of show and first place for Yorktown High School. Some other pencil drawings have won awards at a student art exhibition at Anderson's Mounds Mall sponsored by the Art Association of Madison County. Haitian Hope won best in show at the AAMC exhibition.

"My friends all think I'm going to be famous," said Hampton, laughing. "They think I'm going to get my picture with the president or something."

Hampton's art teacher, Kiki Pavlechko, has been teaching at Yorktown High School for seven years and has taught art for 13 years after working as a graphic artist at the state college of Pennsylvania. She said Hampton's attention to detail and the photographic likeness of Haitian Hope was one of the things that set the piece apart.

"She's very deliberate when she works," she said. "She has an amazing eye for art in general. Some people are just born with that."

Pavlechko said Hampton has already received offers to purchase some of her works, though Hampton isn't quite ready to sell most of it.

"She said 'No, I'm kind of attached to these pieces,' and I told her I totally understand that, but if you decide you want to do some artwork to sell, you just have to go into the whole project with the thought that 'I'm not going to get attached to this.' " Pavlechko said.

Despite her talent, Hampton has no interest in making art her career. She plans to attend Purdue University in the fall for the school's two-year pre-veterinary program and then go on to earn her veterinary degree. Hampton said if she doesn't get accepted into the veterinary program, she will continue in zoology.

"I have tons of pets," she said. "I bring home animals every other week ... I have three indoor cats, one indoor and outdoor cat, one outdoor cat. ... I have a chinchilla; he's my baby."

While she can't take these or some of her other pets along to college, she does plan on taking her hermit crab with her to Purdue, where she plans to join art clubs to keep up with her drawing and painting.