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Xaverian Student's Painting to be Featured in Capitol Hill Art Exhibit

August 6, 2021

By [Paula Katinas](#)



"Bohemian Waxwing Bird," a watercolor by Jemma Parsons, will go on display in the U.S. Capitol in the fall and will be on exhibition for a year. (Photos courtesy of Jennifer Parsons)

WINDSOR TERRACE — Artists dream of displaying their paintings in museums, but Jemma Parsons has found a more intriguing place to present her work — Capitol Hill.

Jemma, entering her junior year at Xaverian High School, is the winner of the 2021 Congressional Art Contest in Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis's district (NY-11).

Her prize-winning watercolor painting, "Bohemian Waxwing Bird," will go on display in the Capitol for an entire year starting this fall alongside winners from each congressional district.

"I was ecstatic!" Jemma said, recalling the moment she received the phone call from the congresswoman telling her she had won.

Jemma, an accomplished artist whose work has been shown at Snug Harbor Cultural Center & Botanical Garden on Staten Island, said "Bohemian Waxwing Bird" was inspired by nature.

"I enjoy painting birds of all types and I have several works in my previous painting

collections," she said.

While there wasn't a specific reason for choosing the Bohemian waxwing as her subject, she said she was eager to capture its vibrant colors and habitat. Working on the painting also gave her a chance to express her patriotism.

"It's in a winter setting that features red, white, and blue. And the bird itself is native to Northwest America, so there are two elements of it being patriotic," she said.

Malliotakis said she was looking forward to seeing Jemma's piece in U.S. Capitol.

"I'm delighted she chose to share her talents with us and I look forward to celebrating her achievements in person and seeing her artwork displayed," she said.

Jemma entered the contest at the suggestion of her mother, Jennifer, who heard about it from a friend.

"We're so proud of her," Jennifer Parsons said.

Jennifer and her husband, Andrew, have always encouraged their daughter's artistic ambitions.

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"When I was little, my parents noticed that I might have had something special, a little talent, and they encouraged me to go to art classes," Jemma said.

Jemma has received encouragement from Xaverian art teachers John Hendrick and Joanna Mesiti, as well as Art Department Chairman Patrick Matthews. A painting she created featuring the school's mascot, a clipper ship, sailing toward the Star of Bethlehem was used as Xaverian's Christmas card in 2018

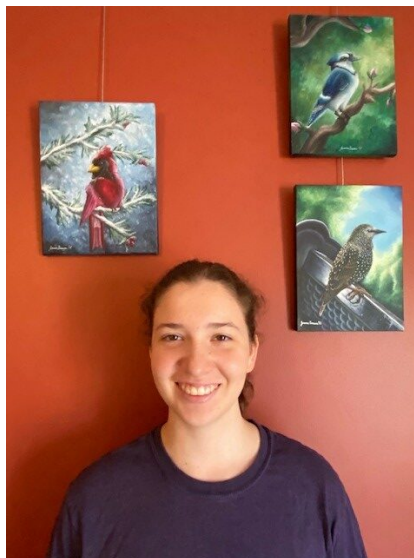
Her Catholic faith plays also a role in her artistic development. Her favorite artist is Gustave Doré, a 19th Century French printmaker known for illustrating the Bible.

"I like the fact that he's able to depict religious scenes with such accuracy, despite its being an interpretation," she said. "That's something I always go back to for reference."

Despite her talent, Jemma doesn't plan on an art career — she wants to be a doctor.

"I'm interested in reconstructive surgery," she explained. "There's an art to it."

Tags: [Congressional Art Competition](#), [Congresswoman Nicole Malliotakis](#), [Jemma Parsons](#), [Xaverian High School](#)
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"I enjoy painting birds of all types," Jemma Parsons said. Here is the young artist with some of her works.

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