

The curtain call of climate action

A visual arts project and a one-act play have received top honors in the 2026 SOU Student Creative Arts Competition, a new student-centered climate arts initiative.

This year's first-place award winners are Lily Mayo for Visual Art with her piece, "Protect Our Parks," and Aydin Eliason for Theatre/Short Play with his one-act play, "The Fish Hatchery" - which explores self-worth, the post-pandemic era and the urgent need for awareness and advocacy around endangered spring-run Chinook salmon.

Lily and Aydin received their award certificates during the Café Lumina Awards Ceremony in April, and were presented their official awards recently in an informal on-campus event.

The competition was designed as a creative way to build resiliency in communities, uplift student voices, and inspire meaningful climate action through artistic expression. It was created and executed by Dawn Hightree, founder of Usolec Company, a sustainability consulting and management company.

The goal is to grow the competition in future years as an annual opportunity for SOU students to use the arts to engage the community in climate solutions, sustainability and hope. For more information, contact Dawn Hightree at Usolec Company at (831) 346-2316 usoleccompany@gmail.com, or visit www.usoleccompany.org.