

This 10-year-old girl who was born without hands just won a national handwriting competition

image: <http://www.jewishworldreview.com/images/clear.gif>

*By Marissa J. Lang The Washington Post
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image:

<https://joeformerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Girl-750x430.jpg?ref=relatedBox>



Sara Hinesley, 10, doesn't understand why it's so remarkable that she won a national handwriting competition.

She paints and draws and sculpts clay. She can write in English and some Mandarin. When she learned to write in cursive this year, Sara said, she thought it was "kind of easy."

Never mind the fact that Sara was born without hands.

"I have never heard this little girl say, 'I can't,' " said Cheryl Churilla, Sara's third-grade teacher. "She's a little rock star. She tackles absolutely everything you can throw at her, and she gives it her best."

Sara, a third-grade student at St. John's Regional Catholic School in Frederick, Maryland, won the 2019 Nicholas Maxim award for her cursive handwriting. The award is given annually to two students with special needs - one for print writing, the other for script.

Sara has never worn a prosthetic. When she is offered help or a tool that might ease some tasks - like cutting paper with scissors - she rejects it, said her mother, Cathryn Hinesley.

"She has this independent streak where she just knows that she can do it and she'll figure out her own way," Hinesley said. "She is beautiful and strong and mighty just the way she is, and she just lives that way. She really does."

To write, Sara grips her pencil between her arms. She focuses on the shapes of letters, each point and curve. Writing in cursive feels like creating artwork, Sara said.

"I like the way the letters are formed," Sara said. "It's kind of like art."

Sara came to the United States from China about four years ago to join her new family. When she arrived in July 2015, her mother said, she could speak and write in Mandarin. She picked up English quickly with the help of her sister, Veronica.

"We learned pretty quickly to trust her judgment and let her gauge how much she wants to do and then let her do it," Hinesley said. "That's Sara. She moves through life in this way that you never really see her as having a disability because she has this can-do, I-can-tackle-anything attitude."

In her free time, Sara likes to draw "things that are around me," like sunflowers. She enjoys swimming, playing with Veronica, also 10, and participating in her school's chess club. There's little she isn't willing to try, her mother said.

"Sara is a testament to perseverance and the human spirit," Hinesley said. "Every day I'm amazed at the things she is able to do and that she chooses to do. She doesn't try to find her way to avoid an obstacle, she finds a way to complete the task."

Sara will receive her national award - a trophy - at an awards ceremony on June 13. The award also comes with a \$500 prize. She is the first student from St. John's to ever receive the Nicholas Maxim award, Principal Kathy Smith said.

"I feel so excited and proud," she said.

http://www.jewishworldreview.com/0419/handless_competition_winner.php3#SIBliULQ3RbqKALF.99

"The best artist has that thought alone Which is contained within the marble shell; The sculptor's hand can only break the spell to free the figures slumbering in the stone."