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Young winner of ‘Stop the Spread’ video contest learned art of filmmaking in Sally Ride Science class



(<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Lauren-Mathios-copy.jpeg>)

October 13, 2020 (<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/young-winner-of-stop-the-spread-video-contest-learned-art-of-filmmaking-in-sally-ride-science-class/>) by Sally Ride Science (<https://sallyridescience.ucsd.edu/author/mking/>)

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By Margaret King

When 15-year-old Lauren Mathios won the grand prize in the “Stop the Spread” video contest with a [public service announcement](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA4CcEao4LQ&feature=emb_logo) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IA4CcEao4LQ&feature=emb_logo) about COVID-19 prevention, she thanked her family, her friends and her teachers for helping and encouraging her.

She also gave a shout-out to Sally Ride Science. “I took a weeklong (filmmaking) class from Sally Ride Science at UC San Diego, and I learned a ton in that class and was able to use those skills in this video,” Lauren explained in an [interview on FOX 5 TV](https://fox5sandiego.com/morning-news/sage-creek-high-sophomore-is-winner-of-stop-the-spread-contest/) (https://fox5sandiego.com/morning-news/sage-creek-high-sophomore-is-winner-of-stop-the-spread-contest/).

The “Stop the Spread” contest, sponsored by the [San Diego Union-Tribune](https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/) (https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/) and FOX 5, attracted more than 90 entrants. Lauren, a sophomore at [Sage Creek High School](https://sagecreek-cusd-ca.schoolloop.com/) (https://sagecreek-cusd-ca.schoolloop.com/) in Carlsbad, took the top prize with a fantasy-themed video that shows the coronavirus spreading like a flock of tiny dragons.

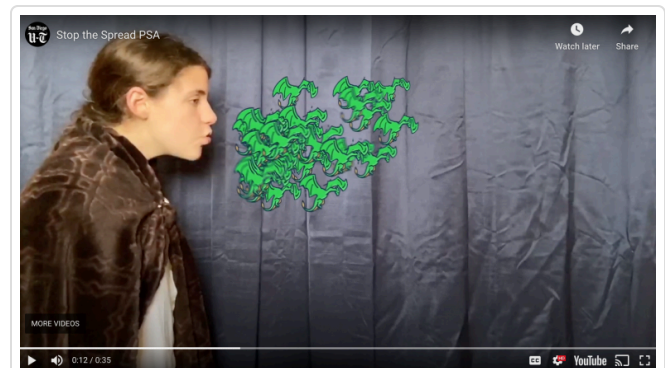
In announcing the results, the Union-Tribune said, “Lauren’s creative video caught the judges’ attention with its whimsical approach to the harsh realities of COVID-19.” She received a \$2,500 prize, and the newspaper is running a series of ads about her video, which urges people to wear masks and maintain social distance.

“We need to move forward and save lives,” Lauren told the Union-Tribune. “It shows love and respect for our communities when we wear masks. It’s a little bit of a sacrifice on ourselves to help our whole community.”

The art of video

In a phone interview, Lauren explained that she got interested in video production in the early days of the coronavirus shutdown. She took online tutorials to learn basic skills.

In June she entered the Breakthrough Junior Challenge, a global contest where students make short videos explaining science concepts. Lauren entered in the COVID category. While she didn’t win, the experience piqued her interest in video production.



Lauren’s winning video uses tiny dragons to represent the coronavirus.

Lauren was looking for online resources when she came across a Filmmaking class from Sally Ride Science. “I thought, wow, this is an amazing opportunity!” she said. The weeklong class in July was part of Sally Ride Science Junior Academy, normally an in-person summer program with dozens of hands-on STEAM workshop for grades 4-12. Classes moved online this summer because of the pandemic.

Although Lauren already had some technical skills, the class gave her a different perspective. “I learned a lot more about filmmaking as an art,” she said.

The instructor, Camille Campion, encouraged students to focus on the storytelling aspect of filmmaking. “She emphasized how to communicate in an impactful way and to make people think about things differently,” Lauren said.

Students learned how to structure a story and create a storyboard, Lauren said. “We also learned how to set up shots in an interesting way and how to make a story more cohesive instead of choppy.”

Even though the class was online, students had chances to interact, Lauren added. “We went into breakout rooms, and it was fun to talk about people’s ideas and to watch the final products together.”

Campion assigned students to create a short film about a day in the life of an inanimate object. Lauren’s fanciful film traces the progress of a “cone of shame” dog collar that gets separated from the dog who should be wearing it.

Dangerous dragons

When she heard about the “Stop the Spread” contest, Lauren decided to apply her new skills and enter. In her earlier contest video, she had envisioned the series of events in an epidemic as rings. When her brother mentioned Lord of the Rings, Lauren, a fan of fantasy and science fiction, seized on that idea.

In her new video, she decided to use tiny dragons to represent the virus. “It started as a way to make myself laugh, but then I thought about how important it was to show how deadly the coronavirus is in this very obvious way,” she said. “It makes you realize how dangerous a simple sneeze is.”

Since her contest victory, Lauren said she has been “almost overwhelmed” by all the attention. But, she added, “It has really been amazing in how kind people are. That has definitely been inspiring. People from all parts of my life have made a point of congratulating me.”

In addition to her videomaking, Lauren maintains a full schedule of activities. She is enrolled in the Biomedical Sciences pathway at Sage Creek High School, and she is active in Science Olympiad and Girl Scouts. Over the summer, she worked as a counselor at a day camp for elementary students.

Lauren's concern about coronavirus prevention is part of a larger interest in the health field. "My ultimate goal is to go to medical school and work in health care," she said. She's inspired by her mother and grandfather, both pediatricians.

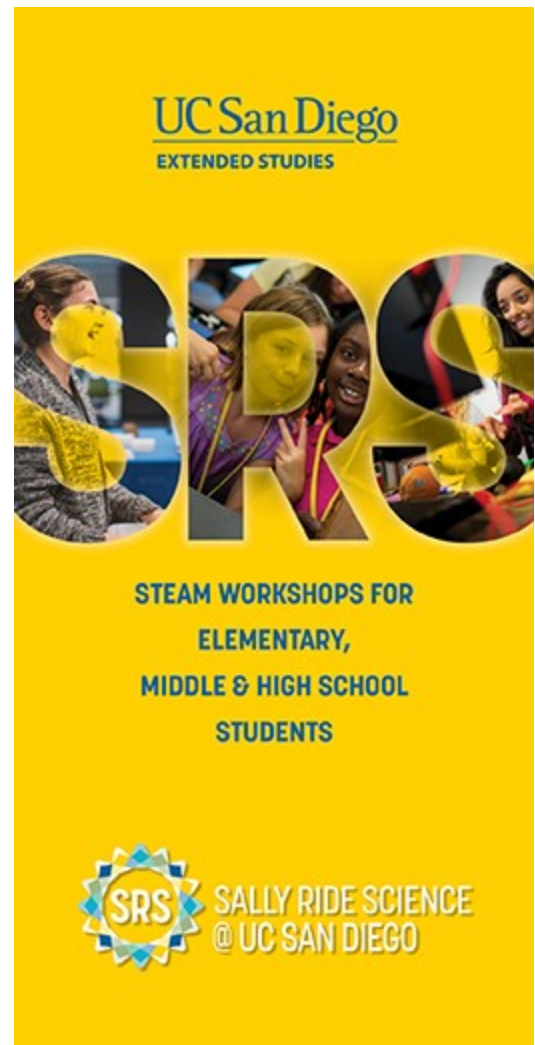
Along with pursuing a medical career, Lauren hopes to continue making videos. "I really enjoy getting to put it all together and see the final product," she said. "My family and friends help me, but I don't need a whole team – I can just tell my own story."

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