



Hello to all of CT's public high school educators and administrators!

We're launching a new nationwide movement to celebrate creative and technical teens—just as we do our amazing high school athletes-- starting right here in *our home state* of CT; and we'd love for you to help lead the movement!

I'm Linda Neaton, founder of The Verge Awards® for Teens on the Verge of Greatness! We're partnering with local to global brands to sponsor **FREE** nationwide public high school talent contests for **teenage singers, musicians, dancers, visual & media artists, technologists and innovators, comedians and even novelty performers** that will award prizes and scholarships to winning students, and funding to their schools for STEAM education!

And the first statewide championships in the nation will be held on APRIL 23, 2020 at The Oakdale Theatre in Wallingford, CT, with production by Live Nation! We hope you'll join us and encourage your students to enter the contests and/or rally around your contestants for the weeks leading up to the main event!

We're awarding at least **\$10,000 IN CASH AND PRIZES to winning students** if we receive at least 100 entries in each of the six main contests, and hopefully much more to their *schools* from contest sponsors like **Travelers Insurance!** (But not to worry, you will *never* be asked to recognize sponsors in any way.)

The deadline for students to upload their video entries for the 6 main contests is midnight March 15th. Then, for *each* contest category, adjudication will determine eight finalists to advance to the Oakdale Theatre and two additional finalists will be selected through *online public voting* March 20th-29th.

It's worth repeating--there is absolutely **NO COST FOR STUDENTS TO ENTER!**

And get this - **Hunter Hayes** (five-time Grammy nominated, People's Choice, CMA and Teen Choice Award winning artist) has **volunteered** to join us! He's a huge supporter of music education, and he sees the potential for The Verge Awards to make these programs available to millions of teens nationwide. Hunter will mentor the singing finalists during the week leading up to the event, and he's **assembling a band from among CT's high school musicians to perform with him!** What a life-changing experience for these aspiring musicians!

Why should students participate?

In addition to potentially winning cash and other prizes?

- This will be an experience of a lifetime! State finalists will perform or present their final entries on stage, in front of 4,500 supportive fans and celebrities like Hunter Hayes, at the Toyota Oakdale Theatre!

- They may be discovered by college and other talent recruiters (many of whom will be in the audience)! All contestants may opt in (at no cost) to showcase their abilities to pre-screened recruiters that subscribe to our contestant database.
- They'll be appreciated for their talents and hear applause from their peers, families, and communities – often for the first time!
- They will experience the excitement of competition! Much like athletic competitions, they'll establish goals and reap the benefits of practice and persistence; and not to worry, a loss will help them build resilience and fuel their determination to improve.
- For the prestige of competing in and maybe even winning a verge award, which can even bolster their college applications and other auditions.

We want *all* students to be able to participate!

- **We're also holding video auditions for a teen co-host; two drumlines/percussion acts** to open the main event; and **jazz, mariachi, garage bands and other performers to play in the Dome.**
- We've made our contests *very accessible* with *no cost to enter*, and by allowing videos captured on *mobile devices*! In other words, high-cost audio and video production will not be an advantage.
- Our *judging criteria includes passion and potential*, ensuring that teens who may not have had access to training in their schools or private lessons have a chance. (If we have a difficult time determining winners because of this, we will split the prize money across all ten finalists!)
- Our *contest guidelines are very broad* and allow students to use a video they already captured, or artwork they already created.

Three easy ways you can help make this a huge success:

We're sure you have some amazing talent in your school, whether or not you can offer or they participate in formal school programs; and we hope you can help us reach them so that as many students as possible will benefit from this uplifting and potentially life-changing program.

- ☐ **Encourage your students to enter the competitions!** Entries are due March 15th! They can go to www.thevergeawards.com and get all the information they need, register and enter.

You can post an announcement on your website, promote the contests during your athletic events, engage your PTO's and other parent groups and student organizations, send an email and/or record a voicemail to parents, make morning announcements, distribute the attached flyer (electronically, post it on your website, print copies), and much more! *Would you like a few hundred flyers? Posters? Postcards to mail home? Sample announcements? Let me know!*

- ☐ **Schedule a simple recording session before March 15th** for any students that wish to perform in a live setting to record their entries. YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO THIS, but it would be so helpful to your students if you do!

This could be a talent show with a live audience, or you can simply put a video camera (and maybe a microphone if possible?) on a tripod and record, then send them their video and they'll upload it to the contests. Here's a video showing how simple but effective this setup can be (click on photo):



No video camera? Use a mobile device. Or let us know if you'd like *a local college* to send A/V students seeking meaningful service-learning opportunities!

- ☐ **Spread the word to all of your students' parents and entire communities to vote!** *The more who do, the more sponsorship funds for prizes!*

We know you're crazy busy

That's why schools are not required to do anything in these contests (except if any of the finalists indicate they attend your school; we will ask you to verify their enrollment). We are working to get sponsors to fund grants and prizes for winning schools as well, and you'll be able to start a trophy case for Verge Awards right next to your athletic trophies. But most important, The Verge Awards will enable you to:

- Help students be discovered by college recruiters!
- Provide an enriching experience for all students
- Increase mutual respect among all students
- Discover and support hidden talent and potential among your more reserved students
- Reach disengaged students and demonstrate your support of their unique passions & abilities
- Engage parents in an uplifting, unifying program
- Increase community engagement in school activities, and much more

[This is a link to a Q&A](#) that will likely answer many of the questions you may have, but if you have any additional questions, concerns or ideas, or just want to get to know me a little better before engaging your students, please feel free to call or email me!

I look forward to working in partnership with you to make The CT State Championships unforgettable and even life-changing for many of your students and families.

Sincerely,



Linda Neaton, founder and CEO
The Verge Awards for Teens on the Verge of Greatness!

www.thevergeawards.com
203.449.5044

PS - I've included some information about myself and summarized The Verge Awards categories and dates below.

A little bit about me, Linda Neaton

I have an economics degree and MBA from Binghamton University, and have been in corporate marketing for fifteen years. Both my education and my professional experience have given me the insights to know that *businesses invest \$17 billion or more every year marketing to children and teens, and very little positive impact is achieved with those investments.*

At the same time, you and I both know that millions of those *same* children attend public schools that cannot afford to offer music, theatre, dance, media arts, fine arts, or computer programming classes. That's absurd, right?

I figured there must be a way to bridge massive marketing budgets and the need for funding for these highly beneficial programs.

With no children of my own and a drive to achieve something positive in this world, I have committed this next chapter to leveraging all that I have learned in corporate marketing and in the nonprofit sector

to building that bridge, and to helping as many kids and teens as possible to blossom into successful adults, whatever that success may be.

The Verge Awards will do exactly that. As a platform that enables businesses to achieve their business goals *and* fund education in the communities they serve *with the same marketing investment*, *The Verge Awards* are an innovative, *fully sustainable* source of private sector funds that will completely fill the gap in tax-based funding for arts and technology education and help educate millions of teens over the years. In particular, teens in economically disadvantaged districts.

Just as important, we're building an uplifting movement that will be life-changing for thousands of teens who feel empowered by these contests and encouraged and supported by their schoolmates, parents entire communities and future employers to pursue their dreams.

The Verge Awards have become my child so to speak – they will be my legacy in this world. You have my assurance that my intentions are good.

I would be happy to meet with you in person to talk through the contests and any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Linda



VERGE AWARDS CONTESTS



PRIZES: \$10k across all 6 categories for winning students, additional \$(TBD) for their schools!

1. Singing - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members (any genre)
2. Music - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members (any genre and instrument)
3. Dance - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members (any genre and format)
4. Comedy & novelty acts - soloists, duos, small groups up to 10 members
5. Visual & media arts – any medium or combination of media
6. Technology & innovation – finalists qualify through partner competitions (CIC, CSEF, Expo Fest, etc.)

All submissions will need to pass an initial screening to ensure content is appropriate, and then they'll go through adjudication *and* public voting. The top ten in each category will advance to the finals where a pool of judges in the audience will submit evaluations and constructive feedback.

ENTRY DEADLINE: Sunday March 15, 2020 at midnight! Students upload entries (for FREE!)

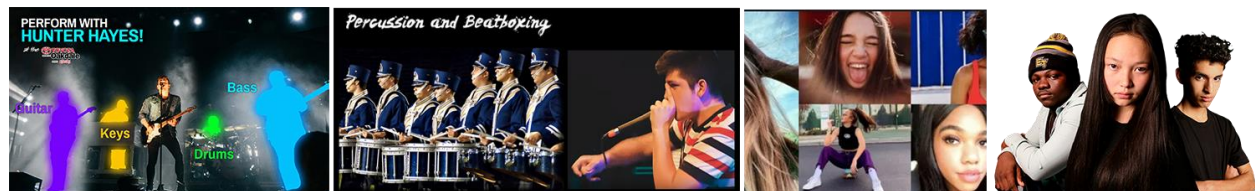
March 20-29 Public voting and adjudication to determine finalists in each category

March 29 State finalists announced

April 6-22 Public voting from among finalists for Statewide People's Choice

April 23 Live Statewide Championships at The Toyota Oakdale Theatre

LIVE EVENT PERFORMERS for April 23rd at The Oakdale Theatre



PRIZES: Money-can't-buy experience to perform at this amazing venue; resume builder

7. Hunter Hayes' bandmates and background singers – these can be an existing student band or individual guitar, bass, keyboard or drum musicians and background vocalists
8. Two (2) drum ensembles to open the main event – any percussion format including vocal (beatboxing)
9. Opening acts - Mariachi, garage, jazz and other small student bands, DJ's, comedians/skits, spoken word artists, etc. to perform in the Dome at Oakdale between 3-5 PM
10. Event emcee or duo to host Dome performances and co-host main event

ENTRY DEADLINE: Varies from February 16 to March 8, 2020; these performers will be selected by The Verge Awards from uploaded video auditions (no public voting)

BEHIND THE SCENES CREATIVE WORK



These awards are *for* teens, so they should be designed *by* teens - right?

PRIZES: Most will receive remuneration appropriate to the final product; resume builder

11. Visual & media artists to produce The Verge Awards visual assets (trophy, stage backdrop, posters, explainer videos, etc.)
12. Musicians, composers, music producers –work with music director of Broadway shows and Amateur Night at the Apollo to produce The Verge Awards theme song

ENTRY DEADLINE: Varies from January 31 to March 8, 2020; these winners will be selected by The Verge Awards

“PEP SQUAD” Positions offering community service or Capstone credit



Following our mantra of “by teens for teens,” we’re forming a pep squad of student leaders and creatives to help us build a statewide movement to celebrate all kinds of teen on the verge of greatness!

This *statewide pep squad* will create and implement marketing and communications tools that encourage students to participate in Verge Awards contests, rally schools and communities to cheer for their hometown contestants, ensure the Oakdale Theatre is filled with supportive and encouraging fans for all finalists, and discover, capture and share heartwarming and inspirational stories of student achievement.

We encourage teachers, school counselors and student councils to identify and invite students who would thrive in this creative, uplifting, high energy environment to **apply by January 5th** [on our website](#)

If you’d like to speak with us about our approach and if it satisfies your capstone or community service requirements, please email [mailto:lneaton@thevergeawards.com?subject=Capstone questions](mailto:lneaton@thevergeawards.com?subject=Capstone%20questions).
