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## LEC Students Compete for Design of Novel Cover

They will vie for cover and \$1,000 prize

By [Deborah Bostock-Kelley](#) [Email the author](#) September 16, 2011[Print](#)[0 Comments](#)[Recommend](#)

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Historical novelist Michael N. Cantwell is publishing a novel, *Irish Pony Boy*, and has exclusively selected members of The Life Enrichment Center to compete for the cover art, depicting a scene from the story.

Michael's wife, Ruth, who has been a student at the Center for several years, recommended using the talents found at the Center, 9704 N. Boulevard.

Ronna Metcalf, executive director, of the Center, said, "Ruth knows the quality of artwork that we have, and Michael said, 'I need a cover for my book, and that's where we are going to find an artist to do it.'"

The novel takes place during the American Civil War, predominantly in the Virginian hills of the Luray and Shenandoah Valleys. The protagonist is a 17-year-old boy with green eyes and flaming curly red hair. The story – though historical fiction – is based on a real person.

"The story is based on a 100-year-old veteran that I met in 1946 when I was 10 years old," explained Cantwell. "We met every week for three months, and he told his story. I will never forget him. He made an indelible impression on me."

Cantwell is currently doing final edits to the book that has taken 10 years to perfect. He hopes to submit his work to a publisher by the end of the year.

In order to ensure that the cover met the historical period requirements, Cantwell met with people interested in participating and gave out handouts detailing particular items like the specific style of Confederate uniform and the type of horse that he was seeking in the winning cover design.

Submissions included watercolor, oil and acrylic paintings by students Bob Buckley, Bill Bellgraph, Isabel Aarons, Frank Bolock and Danny Lord.

Cantwell said, "It was difficult to select because the submissions varied widely in style, composition and technique. We had to have an artist who was interested in history and appreciate what he (the protagonist) did."

Cantwell said the artist had to connect with the true, yet fictionalized, story, too.

Though The Life Enrichment Center has been in Carrollwood for 31 years and has participated in numerous juried art exhibits, the opportunity to design a book cover is a first for the Center.

"This is one-of-a-kind. The winning artist receives \$1,000, and the Center is getting a \$200 donation," said Metcalf. "This is a big thing for us."

Cantwell explained that the donation was "for their help in finding an artist for me, and for having the competition."

He hopes to publish *Irish Pony Boy* by 2013 for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War and his protagonist's enlistment date, June 1863.

"The winner captured what I was looking for," said Cantwell. "I am very pleased."

The reception for the awards presentation will be held on Sept. 21 at the Center. The event is free and open to the public. The contest winner will announced at noon and will be presented with the \$1,000 award at the event.

Annual membership to the Center starts at \$30. For more information, call (813) 932-0241 or visit [www.lifeenrichmenttampa.org](http://www.lifeenrichmenttampa.org).

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