

Writing competition for Edinburgh schoolchildren

Senior high school pupils from across Edinburgh have been invited to take part in a writing contest to help generate money for the city's Sick Kids.

The Sick Kids Friends Foundation is inviting fifth and sixth year pupils from schools across the capital to take part in the competition. Entrants are asked to produce a reading to be performed by a celebrity guest at the charity's prestigious Carols for Christmas service, sponsored by The Miller Group, in St Cuthbert's Church on 6 December.

The competition is being backed by internationally-acclaimed Edinburgh author Alexander McCall Smith, who will support the judges in choosing the overall winner. The closing date for entries is Friday, 11 November.

Maureen Harrison, chief executive of the Sick Kids Friends Foundation, said: "Many well-known Scottish stars attend and take part in our ever popular annual Carols for Christmas event each December. This year we decided to open up the event to the young people across the capital, giving a pupil from each S5 and S6 the opportunity to write a piece. Their work will be read aloud by one of the special guest attendees during the service to an audience of around 400 members of the public and Edinburgh luminaries.

Scotland has a rich history of producing fantastic world-renowned writers and perhaps we may help uncover the country's next talented writer. The competition is a fantastic opportunity for our young people to get their writing noticed by some very influential names."

Stephen Dunn, Group HR Director, The Miller Group, said: "We are absolutely delighted to be sponsoring this highly prestigious event. The Sick Kids Friends Foundation has our full support in opening up this competition to S5 and S6 pupils. By providing a reading for this hugely successful annual event one inspiring pupil will have the opportunity to contribute to this wonderful celebration in addition to creating a possible platform for a new career."

The Sick Kids Friends Foundation's Carols for Christmas

concert will include a selection of carols sung by an Edinburgh school choir and also readings performed by a host of special guests. Previous guests have included actress Jennifer Black, actress and comedienne Una McLean MBE and Taggart star Blythe Duff. The readings will include a blend of traditional and comical poems and prose.

The charity hopes the carol service and evening dinner reception at the Signet Library will help raise £25,000.

Maureen added: "The funds raised on the evening are used by the Sick Kids Friends Foundation to provide extra medical equipment, additional family facilities, training, research and a myriad of comforts and treats for children at the hospital."