



South Schuylkill Unified
Character of Our Community
The SSU Regional Identity Contest

Official Contest Rules and Frequently Asked Questions

South Schuylkill Unified (SSU) invites people of all ages to create an original character or symbol that brings South Schuylkill to life. Submit a name, drawing, and short concept statement showing what makes our region special. The winning entry will receive a \$500 prize sponsored by an SSU Board member.

Who may enter

Individuals, families, students, artists, businesses, classes, teams, and community groups are welcome. All skill levels are encouraged. There is no entry fee. Entrants do not need professional art or design experience.

Each person may submit one individual entry, and each group may submit one group entry. A person who participates in a group entry may also submit one separate individual entry.

Every participant under age 18 must have written parent or legal guardian consent. Group entries must identify all contributors, designate one primary contact, and include the required permissions from adult contributors and a guardian for each minor. A teacher or group leader may coordinate the entry; that role does not replace required guardian consent.

Important dates

Contest step	Date
Entry deadline	Monday, November 2, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time
Regional Community Committee review	Monday, November 9, 2026
Notification to all entrants	By Wednesday, November 11, 2026
Finalist presentations and Board vote	Thursday, November 19, 2026

What to submit

- A completed entry form with contact information, signed originality certification, and required contest permissions.
- A name for the proposed character or symbol and an original drawing. A simple sketch is welcome; a polished illustration is not required.
- A short concept statement explaining the character, its story, its connection to South Schuylkill, and possible uses by SSU.
- Parent or guardian consent for each minor, and group contributor information when applicable.

How to submit

Email the completed entry materials to deberhart@southschuylkillunified.com. Use the subject line "SSU Character Contest Entry." Submit artwork as a clear JPG, PNG, or PDF file. Hand-drawn artwork may be scanned or photographed. Signed forms may be scanned or photographed as long as all text and signatures are readable.

Complete entries must be received by the deadline. Keep a copy of everything submitted. If you need help submitting electronically, contact Donna Eberhart before the deadline to discuss arrangements.

Preparing materials for blind review

Put participant names and contact information on the entry form only. Do not place names, signatures, school or group names, or other identifying information on the artwork, concept statement, or their filenames. SSU will assign an entry number and keep identifying information separate from the materials provided to the Regional Community Committee review.

Creative requirements

The character should reflect the South Schuylkill region and its shared identity. SSU serves Schuylkill Haven Borough, Cressona Borough, South Manheim Township, North Manheim Township, and Wayne Township. A concept may draw inspiration from a particular local feature, but its story should explain its relevance to the wider region.

- Create a welcoming, family-friendly character or symbol connected to local places, people, nature, history, arts, small businesses, or community life.
- Consider how the idea could work in future graphics, stickers, coloring pages, signs, educational materials, or a costume or display.
- Do not use trains, locomotives, railcars, railroad logos, or train-based characters. SSU is seeking a distinct regional identity.
- Do not copy existing characters, mascots, artwork, photographs, or logos. Entries may not incorporate school or business logos, political or religious symbols, partisan messaging, or commercial advertising.
- Entries may not contain profanity, hate speech, discriminatory content, sexual content, violence, or drug references.

Originality and prohibition on artificial intelligence

The concept, character name, artwork, and written statement must be the original work of the named entrant or contributors. AI-generated concepts, names, images, and text are prohibited. Tracing, redrawing, or modifying an AI-generated image does not make it eligible. Standard digital drawing tools may be used to create original work without generative AI.

Entrants must certify compliance with this rule. SSU may request sketches, process notes, or other information to clarify how an entry was created. An entry found to violate the originality or AI requirements may be disqualified.

Contest administration

SSU may reject late, incomplete, ineligible, or noncompliant entries and reserves the right not to select a winner. Submission does not guarantee finalist status, a prize, or adoption of the design. Final selection rests with the SSU Board.

Judging and selection

The Regional Community Committee will conduct a blind review on November 9 and select three finalists. SSU is seeking the strongest original community idea. Technical drawing skill or professional presentation will not be a separate judging criterion. Entries will be evaluated using the following criteria.

Criterion	What reviewers will consider
Idea and originality	A distinctive, creative concept developed by the entrant or team.
Story	A clear name and explanation that give the character meaning.
Regional relevance	A meaningful connection to South Schuylkill and its shared identity.
Memorability	A recognizable character that people can remember and connect with.
Adaptability	Potential to work across SSU materials and remain useful over time.

Reviewers must disclose a connection to an entry or its creators and step aside from evaluating or voting on that entry when a conflict exists. Blind review applies to the committee stage. Finalist identities will be known when they present to the Board.

All entrants will be notified of the status of their entry by November 11. The three finalists will be invited to give a short, in-person presentation on November 19, 2026, SSU Board meeting at Penn State Schuylkill. SSU will provide the meeting time, room location, and presentation instructions. The Board will make the final selection and vote at that meeting. There is no public voting component.

Prize

One winning entry will receive a \$500 prize sponsored by an SSU Board member paid by SSU check. A winning group receives one \$500 prize for the entire entry. Payment arrangements for a group or minor will be confirmed with the designated adult contact or guardian. Award of the prize is subject to completion of the required winner acceptance and artwork-use agreement.

Artwork permissions and future use

The signed entry permissions will allow SSU to reproduce, display, and share the submitted artwork, name, and concept statement for contest review, promotion, and reporting, including website, social media, newsletter, media, and event use. Submission alone does not transfer ownership of the entry to SSU.

The winning entrant must sign a separate agreement authorizing SSU to reproduce, publish, adapt, refine, and use the winning character, name, artwork, and story for ongoing SSU branding, events, educational and promotional materials, and merchandise, without additional payment beyond the contest prize. Required contributors and guardians must participate in that agreement.

SSU may simplify, redraw, recolor, or professionally refine the winning design. The final version may differ from the submitted artwork. SSU will seek separate permission before using a nonwinning entry for ongoing branding. Permission to use a participant's name, photograph, or likeness will be addressed separately from artwork permission; private contact information will not be published.

Frequently Asked Questions

Do I need to be an artist?

No. All skill levels are welcome. A simple sketch with an original idea and a clear story can be a strong entry. The judging criteria focus on the concept and its potential for SSU.

Can children, families, classes, or teams enter?

Yes. Individuals and groups of all ages are welcome. Each participant under 18 needs written parent or legal guardian consent. Group entries must identify contributors and one primary contact. One entry per person or group is allowed. A group member may also submit one separate individual entry.

Does the character have to be an animal?

No. It may be a creature, symbol, imagined personality, or another original visual concept. It should be welcoming, memorable, and relevant to South Schuylkill.

Must the design represent every municipality literally?

No. It does not need to show each municipality or landmark. Explain how its meaning connects to the region as a whole and can be shared across our communities.

May I submit only a written idea?

Include a drawing along with the character name and short concept statement. A basic sketch is enough to show the idea. You may photograph or scan a hand-drawn entry.

Can I use digital art or artificial intelligence?

Original digital art is welcome. Generative AI may not create the submitted concept, name, artwork, or text. Tracing or revising an AI-generated image is also prohibited.

Why are train-based designs excluded?

SSU wants a distinct character that can represent the broader region. The contest excludes train and railroad-based concepts to avoid duplicating an identity already associated with the area.

Will judges know who submitted my entry?

The Regional Review Committee will receive materials identified by entry number. Keep names and identifying details off the artwork and story. Finalists will introduce their entries at the Board presentation stage.

What happens if I am a finalist and cannot attend?

Contact Donna Eberhart promptly after notification to discuss the situation. Finalists are expected to present in person on November 19; any alternate arrangement must be confirmed with SSU.

Will there be a public vote or a prize for every group member?

The SSU Board selects the winner; there is no public vote. The prize is \$500 for the winning entry, including when that entry was created by a group.

Will SSU change or use my design?

Entries may be displayed for contest purposes under the signed permissions. SSU may refine the winning design and use it under a separate winner agreement. SSU also reserves the right to select no winner.

Where do I send my entry or ask questions?

Email Donna Eberhart, Executive Director, at deberhart@southschuylkillunified.com. Entries are due November 2, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time. Contest information and forms: SouthSchuylkillUnified.org.