



The Office Of State Treasurer  
Denise L. Nappier

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## News

For Immediate Release  
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### **TREASURER NAPIER RECOGNIZES 48 STATEWIDE WINNERS OF 2016 CHET DREAM BIG! COMPETITION**

*\$26,000 in CHET College Savings Accounts Awarded To Kindergarten – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students*

HARTFORD, CT – Forty-eight students from across the state have been selected as winners of the 2016 CHET Dream Big! Competition, which asks students to share their dreams about life after college through drawings and essays. The Competition received more than 3,700 entries.



Aspiring doctors, police officers, teachers, scientists, social workers, astronauts, entrepreneurs, musicians, artists, writers and more participated in this year's competition, which drew entries from schools in 113 of the State's 169 municipalities.

Four grand prize winners will each receive a \$1,000 contribution to a CHET college savings account, and 44 additional students in kindergarten through 8th grade will receive \$500 contributions.

“This year's entries reflect how keenly aware Connecticut students are of their communities and of the world around them, and how motivated they are to make a difference. The consistent theme from the kindergarten drawings to the eighth grade essays is a great desire to make the world a better place for everyone to live and help others,” said State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier, Trustee of the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET).

All the winners were recognized at a lively ceremony attended by approximately 175 students, parents and educators on May 24 in the Atrium at the Legislative Office Building in Hartford, with Scot Haney of WFSB-TV Channel 3 as a special guest. Treasurer Nappier presented certificates to each educator and student winner.

Two of the grand prize winners were Matthew Myslenski, a 5th grader at Brookfield Middle School, who wrote that he wants to find a cure to cerebral palsy, and Sandra Tello, an 8th grader at the Bridge Academy in Bridgeport, who wrote that after college she wants to become a psychologist and work to end domestic violence against women. They submitted essays on how they will change the world after college.

The other two grand prize winners were Thomas Gerlach, a 1<sup>st</sup> grader from Crystal Lake in Ellington, who said he wants to be a biologist, and Alexandra Saon, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader from Davenport

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Ridge Elementary in Stamford, who said she wants to be a doctor in a foreign country. They submitted drawings depicting their dreams.

While most students enter as part of a school or class assignment, students can also enter on their own. As more families look for ways to decrease the burden of saving for college, participation in the competition has grown.

“As Trustee of CHET, my goal is for every child to have the ability to pursue higher education. For some students, Dream Big! is a stepping stone to start on their journey to saving for college. Whether college is a decade away or just around the corner, we hope that every student who submitted an entry stays focused on preparing, both academically and financially, for college,” said Treasurer Nappier.

### ***Eight \$500 School Prizes Awarded to Top School in Each County***

This year’s competition also included school prizes. Eight schools, one in each county, won a \$500 top prize for submitting the highest number of entries on behalf of students in that county.

Smalley Academy in New Britain, the winner in Hartford County, submitted the highest number of entries statewide with 551 students entering the competition. “It is an honor for us to be the #1 school with the most entries in the State of Connecticut. It is great to be the winning school in the Hartford County,” said Elsa Saavedra, Principal of Smalley Academy. “CHET is a wonderful compliment to our school brand ‘College Awareness Begins at Smalley’. Kudos to CHET and to our Smalley Academy Team for our success,” she added.

Additional school winners were: Madison Elementary School, Bridgeport (Fairfield County), Sarah Noble Intermediate School, New Milford (Litchfield County), Macdonough School, Middletown, (Middlesex County), Shepherd Glen Elementary School, Hamden (New Haven County), North Stonington Elementary School, North Stonington (New London County), George Hersey Robertson Intermediate School, Coventry (Tolland County), and Woodstock Elementary School, Woodstock (Windham County).

At the awards ceremony, the 10 teachers statewide who had the highest student participation received certificates. Three teachers each from Bridgeport and New Britain, two from Bethel and one each from Manchester and East Hartford, were recognized.

The Dream Big! Competition is administered under the banner of the Connecticut Higher Education Trust. It is funded by TIAA, the program manager; no state funds will be used for awards issued through the Dream Big! competition.

A full list of student winners follows. Winning entries will be viewable at: [www.chetdreambig.com](http://www.chetdreambig.com).

- Kelsey Alonzo, Squadron Line Elementary School, Simsbury
- Luis Ayala, Vance Village Elementary School, New Britain
- Reid Babcock, Birch Grove Primary School, Tolland
- Emily Bafuma, R.E. Thalberg Elementary School, Southington

- Neel Banerjee, Newfield Elementary School, Stamford
- Deep Banerjee, Newfield Elementary School, Stamford
- Krishna Ruben Benzy, Highland Elementary School, Cheshire
- Sylvia Borla, Home School, Hartford
- Madelyn Cardenas, The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport
- Zuri Channer, Vance Village Elementary School, New Britain
- Jennifer Chen, Mohegan Elementary School, Montville
- Steven Chen, Madison Elementary School, Bridgeport
- Evan Clements, Voluntown Elementary School, Voluntown
- Chayten Cole Prashant, Sarah Noble Intermediate School, New Milford
- Julio Colon, Clark Elementary School, Hartford
- Juliette Condulis, Old Saybrook Middle School, Old Saybrook
- Talin Culp, Coventry Grammar School, Coventry
- Helen Day, Old Saybrook Middle School, Old Saybrook
- Annina Desabota, Brooklyn Middle School, Brooklyn
- Madeline Thi Doan, Southeast Elementary School, Mansfield
- Josephine English, Mohegan Elementary School, Montville
- Imraan Feroz, Northend Middle School, Waterbury
- Thomas Gerlach, Crystal Lake School, Ellington
- Jaden Gonzales, M.M. Generali Elementary School, Waterbury
- Dayna Green, High Horizons Magnet School, Bridgeport
- Ranya May Khaile, Moses Y Beach Elementary School, Wallingford
- Winston Kvanli, Woodstock Elementary School, Woodstock
- Logan Lee Hogue, Sterling Community School, Sterling
- Jo-Angelie Luna, Smalley Academy, New Britain
- Matthew Myslenski, Brooklyn Middle School, Brooklyn
- Kwabena Obiri-Yeboah, Langford Elementary School, East Hartford
- Lyle Pitman, Essex Elementary School, Centerbrook
- Anastasia Ramos, Smalley Academy, New Britain
- Thomas Rhoades, Vernon Center Middle School, Tolland
- Jessica Roy, Stafford Elementary School, Stafford Springs
- Eli Ryan, Mile Creek School, Old Lyme
- Alexandra Saon, Davenport Ridge Elementary School, Stamford
- Isaiah Jovon Saylor, Simpson Waverly School, Hartford
- Ronnie Silva, KT Murphy Elementary School, Stamford
- Luke Simon, Center Elementary School, Ellington
- Clara Sussmann, John Read Middle School, Redding
- Sybaljan Tahirova, Pomfret Community School, Pomfret
- Sanda Tello, The Bridge Academy, Bridgeport
- Kaeleb Tewksbury, Forbes Elementary School, Torrington
- Madelyn Ventola, John Lyman School, Middlefield
- Callum Young, Colebrook Consolidated School, Colebrook
- Alexander Yu, Memorial Middle School, Middlebury

## About CHET

The Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET) direct-sold college savings plan was established in 1997 and as of April 30, 2016 has grown to more than \$2.8 billion in assets and 125,000 accounts. Nearly \$1.3 billion has been withdrawn from CHET accounts to help more than 37,000 students pay for college expenses.

The State of Connecticut offers CHET to help families save for future college costs. Funds deposited into a CHET account have tax advantages and can be used at accredited colleges and universities across the country, including vocational and technical schools, and some colleges abroad.

Connecticut residents are allowed to deduct 529 contributions from their state income taxes – up to \$5,000 for an individual or up to \$10,000 for a married couple filing jointly. Investment earnings are exempt from state and federal taxes if used for qualified educational expenses.

CHET is an investment vehicle, not merely a savings plan. It offers fourteen investment options, allowing participants to select an option or combination of options that best fit their higher education saving needs and investment philosophy. Options vary depending on the age of the beneficiary and the participant's tolerance for risk.

The CHET direct-sold plan is administered by the Office of Connecticut State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier, and managed by TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc. For more information about CHET, visit [www.aboutchet.com](http://www.aboutchet.com) or call the customer service center at (866) 314-3939. Find us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CHETcollegesavings) (facebook.com/CHETcollegesavings) or follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/CHET529) (@CHET529).

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