



## *Connecticut State Treasurer Celebrates Winners of the CHET College Savings Challenge at the State Capitol*

### *– K-6 Children Ponder How They Can Change the World –*

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Date: January 23, 2008**

(Hartford)- Connecticut State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier will host more than 50 grade school winners of the first statewide Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET) College Savings Challenge at the State Capitol building in the Old Judiciary Room on Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> beginning at 4 p.m. The CHET Challenge for K-6 school children in Connecticut was designed to engage students and families about the importance of a college education. In the contest, students at each grade level entered a poem, essay or drawing depicting what they want to be and how they hoped to impact the world after they go to college. The top award recipients – a male and a female winner were selected for each grade – will receive a \$100 award. Additional awards are provided for second and third place and honorable mention.

Students submitted essays and drawings in response to two CHET Challenge contest questions, “What do I want to do after I go to college” and “How will I change the world after I go to college?” The successful entries revealed serious thinkers with humanitarian instincts among Connecticut grade schoolers, some who said they wanted to cure cancer, bring clean water to children in Africa, work with autistic children or become the first kid president. Other submissions expressed goals of a lighter nature, such as making a new ice cream flavor, traveling through the Bermuda triangle, or helping the Mets vanquish the Yankees in the upcoming baseball seasons.

Student art work and creative writing entries will be on display in the Old Judiciary Room during the awards ceremony.

Treasurer Nappier noted that among all the CHET Challenge winners are budding environmental scientists, doctors, writers, veterinarians, lawyers, teachers, a zoologist and preacher. She said whatever the students’ long-term goals, “it is clear that they understand the importance of going to college, and the important to start saving now – and saving regularly.”

Planning and saving for college with CHET has become easier and more affordable for Connecticut families, Treasurer Nappier said. Savings and qualified withdrawals are state and federal tax-free, and Connecticut’s new state income tax deduction, which allows Connecticut taxpayers to deduct annual contributions of up to \$5,000 for a single taxpayer or \$10,000 for taxpayers filing jointly, “can put money back in parents’ pockets, so there is no time better than now to start saving and planning,” Nappier said.

“I expect great things from all of our winners – keep studying hard and keep reminding your family and friends to keep saving and to Check CHET Out,” said Treasurer Nappier.

-more-

**Students in grades K-3 submitted an original picture responding to the question, “What do I want to do after I go to college?”**

- **Kindergarten winners:** Taylor Casine of Stratford, CT (St. Mark School); Christopher Vasquez of Bridgeport, CT (Beardsley Elementary)
- **First grade winners:** Emily Gonzales of Manchester, CT (Bowers Elementary); Gustavo Xara of Waterbury, CT (Carrington Elementary)
- **Second grade winners:** Katherine Ryan of East Haddam, CT (East Haddam Elementary); Kevin Vo of Waterbury, CT (Carrington Elementary)
- **Third grade winners:** Madeline Morris of Stamford, CT (Holy Spirit School); Kyle Mogielnicki of Berlin, CT (Emma Hart Willard School)

**Students in grades 4-5 wrote an essay responding to the question, “How will I change the world after I go to college?”**

- **Fourth grade winners:** Vanessa Brokaw of Wallingford, CT (Wintergreen Magnet School); Gunnar Smith of Ridgefield, CT (Branchville Elementary)
- **Fifth grade winners:** Guilia Cardillo of Norwich, CT (St. Joseph’s); Jack Richards of Plantsville, CT (Strong School)

**Students in grade 6 composed a poem responding to the question, “How will I change the world after I go to college?”**

- **Sixth grade winners:** Keiley Gaston of Wilton, CT (Middlebrook School); James Wollschlager of Wethersfield, CT (Charles Wright)

Students in each category who placed second, third or received an honorable mention will be awarded \$75, \$50 and \$25, respectively. The three schools that had the highest percentage of student participation in the CHET College Savings Challenge were: Charles Wright Elementary School in Wethersfield, Strong Elementary School in Plantsville and Bowers Elementary School in Manchester. Each of the three schools will receive \$1,000.

Six grade school teachers will also be honored with monetary awards in the amount \$50 for their dedicated participation. Those teachers are: Rebecca Kolpak, Alexandra Kowalchuk and Amber Smith, Strong School in Plantsville; Denise Levasseur, Charles Wright School in Wethersfield; Catherine Roy and Rose Marie Smith, Bowers Elementary School in Manchester.

Three school principals will receive award certificates: David Welch, Charles Wright School in Wethersfield; Linda Lackner, Strong School in Plantsville; Mary Lou Ruggiero, Bowers Elementary School in Manchester.

Also on hand to recognize the CHET Challenge student winners, teachers and school administrators will be Commissioner Valerie Lewis, State Department of Higher Education; Bureau Chief Barbara Westwater, State Department of Education; Bernard Kavalier, Assistant Vice Chancellor of the CT State University System.

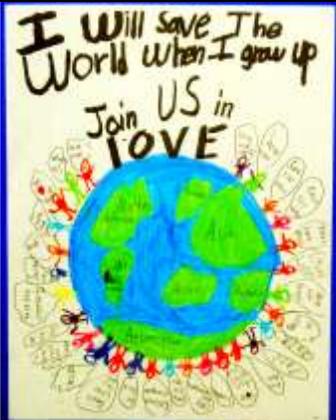
CHET is the only 529 college savings plan that provides the opportunity for a Connecticut state income tax deduction for state income taxpayers. Coupled with the program’s low fees, federal tax benefits, diverse investment options, which keep getting better, and solid performance, the program offers great value for families struggling to save for the rising costs of college.

The Connecticut Higher Education Trust College Savings Program (CHET) is administered by the Connecticut State Treasurer's Office. TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc. (TFI) serves as Program Manager. TFI's affiliate, TIAA-CREF Individual & Institutional Services, LLC, is the distributor. Cash awards for the Connecticut CHET Challenge are provided by TIAA-CREF.

Contact: Christine Palm  
(860) 702-3013  
Christine.palm@ct.gov

# # #

Selected Drawings of Connecticut CHET Challenge winners:

<p><b>"I Want to be a Scientist"</b> Grade 2 – First Place East Haddam Elementary School East Haddam, CT</p>	
<p><b>"I Will Save the World When I Grow Up"</b> Grade 3, First Place Emma Hart Willard School Berlin, CT</p>	
<p><b>"After College, I Will Become a Teacher"</b> Grade 1 – Third Place Sprague School Waterbury, CT</p>	

# # #