



The Office Of State Treasurer
Denise L. Nappier

News

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TREASURER NAPIER RECOGNIZES 84 STATEWIDE WINNERS OF 2015 CHET DREAM BIG! COMPETITION

\$44,000 in CHET College Savings Accounts Awarded To Kindergarten – 8th Grade Students

HARTFORD, CT – The statewide 2015 CHET Dream Big! Competition, which asks students to share their dreams about life after college through drawings and essays, selected 84 winners from across the state out of more than 6,200 entries – the most ever in the program’s eight-year history.



Aspiring doctors, police officers, teachers, scientists, charity workers, veterinarians, musicians, artists, writers and more participated in this year’s competition, which drew entries from schools in 135 of the State’s 169 municipalities.

Four grand prize winners will each receive a \$1,000 contribution to a CHET college savings account, and 80 additional students in kindergarten through eighth 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,” said State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier, Trustee of the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET). “The consistent theme from the kindergarten drawings to the 8th grade essays is a great desire to make the world a better place to live and help others.”

All the winners were recognized at a lively ceremony attended by approximately 300 students, parents and educators on May 28 at Rentschler Field in East Hartford, with Scot Haney of WFSB-TV Channel 3 as the Master of Ceremonies. Treasurer Nappier presented plaques to each student winner.

Julia Walker, a 7th grader from East Lyme and recipient of one of the four grand prizes, wrote an essay about her dream to “inspire children who are less privileged than I” with stories she has written from the heart. “When I am done writing my books, I will go to poor schools and donate my writing to them. Everybody deserves the same amount of education, even if we are in different countries, and I want equality around the world,” she wrote.



Also a grand prize winner, Matthew Breier, a 5th grader from Woodbridge, said he wants to study biology in college to become a scientist involved in conservation. “By being a scientist, I know that I will be able to use my observations not only to help primates, but also to save our forests and our world in all its amazing green beauty,” he wrote.

The other two grand prize winners were Rachel Guzman, a 1st grader from Norwalk, who said she wants to be an artist, and Joshua DaSilva, a 2nd grader from New Britain, who said he wants to be a police officer. They submitted drawings depicting their dreams.

(Photo, left to right, Rachel Guzman, Matthew Breier, Treasurer Nappier, Julia Walker, Joshua DaSilva)

Among the attendees was Allan Taylor, Chair of the State Board of Education, who said that he plans to share Julia Walker’s impressive essay on writing books at the next meeting of the State Board.

Two award recipients were repeat winners: Sommer Prime of Thomaston, who is in 8th grade at Thomaston High School and won previously in second, third and fifth grades, and Grace Gunning, a sixth grader who attends Sports and Medical Sciences Academy in Hartford and also won two years ago as a fourth grader.

Treasurer Nappier kicked off the competition in January at Vance Village Elementary School in New Britain, encouraging students to think about their goals and the role college can play in achieving those goals.

Historically a contest for kindergarten through 5th grade, Dream Big! was expanded this year to include 6th, 7th and 8th grade students. More than 1,150 students in the new grade levels took advantage of the opportunity to submit essays that answered the question, “How will I change the world after I go to college?”

Fourth and fifth graders also submitted essays while kindergarten to third grade students were asked to share what they want to do after college through a drawing.

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 hope is every child will have the ability to pursue higher education. For some students, Dream Big! is their first introduction to the idea of going to college and encourages them to dream beyond boundaries,” said Treasurer Nappier. “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.”

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 school 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 539 students entering the competition, "It is wonderful so many of our students participated in the CHET Dream Big! Competition," said Elsa Saavedra-Rodriguez, Principal of Smalley Academy. "The CHET Dream Big! Competition goes along perfectly with our school mission of college awareness and our daily school message: 'Smalley Bees work hard, get ready for college and change the world'."

Additional school winners were: Madison Elementary School, Bridgeport (Fairfield County), Sarah Noble Intermediate School, New Milford (Litchfield County), Macdonough School, Middletown, (Middlesex County), John C. Prendergast School, Ansonia (New Haven County), Lisbon Central School, Lisbon (New London County), George Hersey Robertson Intermediate School, Coventry (Tolland County), and Woodstock Elementary School (Windham County).

At the awards ceremony, the 21 teachers statewide who had the highest student participation received certificates. Four teachers each from Bridgeport and New Britain, three from Manchester, two each from Bethel and Hartford, and one each from East Hartford, Meriden, New Fairfield, New Haven, Norwalk, and Wolcott were recognized. "We know these teachers not only encouraged students to participate in this year's competition, but inspire students to Dream Big! every day and are truly making a difference in the lives of their students," Haney said.

"Dream Big provides educators an opportunity to motivate students to dream about where their futures will take them. Most importantly, however, this competition helped focus attention on having every child, no matter their background or financial status, see that continuing their education after high school is an important and realistic goal that they will achieve on their way to making a difference in our world," said David Adamson, Library Media Specialist at CREC Montessori Magnet School in Hartford. "I saw how hard the students worked to complete their essays and drawings in school and at home and how excited they were to look beyond the limits of their neighborhoods and personal experiences."

The Dream Big! Competition is administered under the banner of the Connecticut Higher Education Trust. It is funded by TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing Inc., 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.

- Aayan Ahmed, Noah Webster MicroSociety Magnet School, Hartford
- Nicole Apicelli, Pomfret Community School, Pomfret
- Gavin Arruda, North Stonington Elementary School, North Stonington
- George Asiedu, Illing Middle School, Manchester

- Denzel Balgobin, CREC Montessori Magnet School, Hartford
- Solenne Barclay, Marvin Elementary School, Norwalk
- Julio Barreto, Alfred E. Burr Community School, Hartford
- Geetha Benzy, Highland Elementary School, Cheshire
- Garrison Biggs, Oakdale Elementary School, Oakdale
- Marques Boase, Annie Fisher Montessori Magnet School, Hartford
- Matthew Breier, Beecher Road School, Woodbridge
- Elena Brennan, Celentano Academy, New Haven
- Sofia Brenson, Ana Grace Academy of Art, Avon
- Faith Brown, R.M.T. Johnson Elementary School, Bethel
- Delroy Campbell Jr., Six to Six Magnet School, Bridgeport
- Jason Cao, Dorothy C. Goodwin Elementary School, Bridgeport
- Giacomo Colangelo, Sarah Noble Intermediate School, New Milford
- Annabelle Colonna, Sarah Noble Intermediate School, New Milford
- Harmony Cooper, Vance Village Elementary School, New Britain
- Angel Corona, John S. Martinez School, New Haven
- Kaitlyn Corrigan, George Hersey Robertson Intermediate School, Coventry
- Jaedan Curcio, Alcott Elementary School, Wolcott
- Jaylen Dade, Chamberlain Elementary School, New Britain
- Joshua DaSilva, Smalley Academy, New Britain
- Diego Diaz, Madison Elementary School, Bridgeport
- Matthew Fleischer, Spring Glen Elementary School, Hamden
- Molly Freeman, Nathan Hale Ray Middle School, Moodus
- Swathi Ganesh, Gov. William Pitkin Elementary School, East Hartford
- Brian Gartner III, Macdonough School, Middletown
- Christopher Glover, Oakdale Elementary School, Oakdale
- Nora Grisanty, Northeast Academy, Mystic
- Grace Gunning, Sports and Medical Sciences Academy, Hartford
- Rachel Guzman, Jefferson Science Magnet School, Norwalk
- Mahmoud Hafez, Polk Elementary School, Oakville
- Ryan Harnisch, Hindley Elementary School, Darien
- Lenah Hellerich, Tolland Intermediate School, Tolland
- Harley Hicks, Park City Magnet School, Bridgeport
- Isha Islam, Smalley Academy, New Britain
- Jason Jagoda, Brownstone Intermediate School, Portland
- Jaden Jones, Madison Elementary School, Bridgeport
- Tessa Kawall, Worthington Hooker School, New Haven
- Katelyn Koning, Mohegan Elementary School, Montville
- Lucas Lawlor, Burr Elementary School, Higganum
- Emmyline Lind, Bennie Dover Jackson Middle School, New London
- Brielle Maier, Burr Elementary School, Higganum
- Amelia Manicke, Washington Primary School, Washington Depot
- Isaiah Martel, Smalley Academy, New Britain
- Leah McMullen, Macdonough School, Middletown
- Tristan Meester, Wequonnoc Magnet Elementary School, Taftville
- Cameron Miles, Weston Intermediate School, Weston
- Jillian Murray, Memorial Middle School, Middlebury
- Isabella Nayman, Sterling Community School, Sterling
- Sarah Ney, Coventry Grammar School, Coventry

- Eddie Perez, Smalley Academy, New Britain
- Ella Pitman, Essex Elementary School, Centerbrook
- Katherine Poirier, Thompson Middle School, Thompson
- Sophia Portillo, Vance Village Elementary School, New Britain
- Sommer Prime, Thomaston High School, Thomaston
- Maria Proulx, Juliet West Long School, Gales Ferry
- Zachary Redshaw, George Hersey Robertson Intermediate School, Coventry
- Layla Reynolds, Woodstock Elementary School, Woodstock
- Thomas Rhoades, Vernon Center Middle School, Vernon
- Brady Rider, Lisbon Central School, Lisbon
- Joshua Rio, Memorial Middle School, Middlebury
- Hailey Rivera, Smalley Academy, New Britain
- Ciara Roberts, Lordship Elementary School, Stratford
- Kristina Sandoval, Dominick H. Ferrara Elementary School, East Haven
- Elizabeth Silva, Multicultural Magnet School, Bridgeport
- Erin Sim, Betances Early Reading Lab Magnet School, Hartford
- Mary Singer, Tolland Middle School, Tolland
- Aidan Stewart, Putnam Middle School, Putnam
- Stanley Strycharz, George Hersey Robertson Intermediate School, Coventry
- Taksheel Suresh, Interdistrict Discovery Magnet School, Bridgeport
- Collin Teal, Woodstock Elementary School, Woodstock
- Lexi Thomas, Washington Primary School, Washington Depot
- Sadie Truscio, Central School, Simsbury
- Angel Vasquez Jr., Alfred E. Burr Community School, Hartford
- Francisco Vega, Macdonough School, Middletown
- Gabriel Victoria, Scotland Elementary School, Scotland
- Samuel Victoria, Scotland Elementary School, Scotland
- Julia Walker, East Lyme Middle School, East Lyme
- Ani Watson, Carl C. Cutler Middle School, Mystic
- Callum Young, Colebrook Consolidated School, Winsted
- Ty Zaccagnini, Swift Middle School, Oakville

About CHET

The Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET) direct-sold college savings plan, which is managed by TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing Inc., was established in 1997 and as of December 31, 2014 has grown to more than \$2.6 billion in assets and 110,000 accounts. More than \$1 billion has been withdrawn from CHET accounts to help more than 30,000 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.

For more information about CHET, visit www.aboutchet.com or call the customer service center at (866) 314-3939.

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