



**THE OFFICE OF  
STATE TREASURER  
DENISE L. NAPPIER**

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**NEWS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CHET Dream Big! Competition Winners Announced**

*Creative Contest Challenged Kids to Change the World After College*

**HARTFORD, Conn. – June 4, 2009** – Connecticut State Treasurer Denise L. Nappier is proud to announce three overall statewide winners and 20 county winners of the CHET Dream Big! Competition. Sponsored by the State Treasurer's Office and the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET), the CHET Dream Big! Competition is a drawing, poetry and essay contest for students in grades Kindergarten (K) through six (6). CHET is the state's 529 college savings plan. Treasurer Nappier, who serves as trustee for CHET, hosted the official award ceremony held on May 27, 2009 at Goodwin College in East Hartford.



The three statewide winners are Sarah Michelle Viele of Naugatuck-(Grade 3, drawing); Emily Coderre of Waterford-(Grade 4, essay); and Kayleigh Fowler of Wallingford-(Grade 6, poem). Their winning entries, along with the entries of the 17 other county winners, are currently on display at <http://www.chetdreambig.com>.

Hena Daniels, WFSB Channel 3 news anchor, was an enthusiastic emcee for the event. Goodwin College President Mark Scheinberg warmly congratulated the students, their schools and their families. But the luminaries of the afternoon clearly were the students.

The three statewide winners were thrilled about their win. "I am so excited! I can't believe I won!" said Sarah Michelle Viele of Naugatuck. "My teacher, Mrs. Orsini, really wanted my whole class to enter, and this goes to show that if you just try, you really can win!"

Emily Coderre of Waterford was happy to win for something she enjoys doing. "This is so exciting. I can't believe I won! Writing is my favorite subject, and it was really fun writing this essay. I want to become a teacher some day and help other children become good writers."

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Kayleigh Fowler of Wallingford won for her poem about her dream to work for the Department of Children and Families. "I was really excited to win the statewide Competition. My step mom works for the DCF and tells me a lot about it. After college, I really want to help people, too."

Featuring more than 1,800 student drawings and creative writing entries submitted from across the state, the contest inspired students to imagine how a college education would help them to change the world for the better, while it motivated parents to think about how to save for that college education to support their children's dreams. "The current economic climate, and the resulting financial strain on families in Connecticut and across our nation, make saving an essential part of family financial planning today", said Treasurer Nappier.

"Promoting opportunities to increase financial education for individuals and families has been a priority of my administration, and will continue to be. Parents and guardians need to be knowledgeable of the potential benefits that investing early can provide to their long term educational goals," Nappier said. She also cited a study by student loan agency NellieMae that found "graduating seniors average more than \$20,000 in tuition loans, combined with credit card debt which students often amass in their efforts to meet college expenses." (Source: [www.nelliemae.com](http://www.nelliemae.com), "Undergraduate Students and Credit Cards.") The goal of the CHET Dream Big! Competition is to emphasize to parents and loved ones the importance of having a plan in place as early as possible to help pay for the growing costs of a higher education.

Nappier applauded all of the students who entered the Competition and who, at young ages, are already dreaming about college and their role in making a positive contribution to their communities.

A panel of judges, including writers, poets, artists, representatives from the Treasurer's Office and TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc., which serves program manager for CHET, selected the competition winners.

Children in grades K through three (3) were asked to draw a picture that portrays the answer to the question, "*What do I want to do after I go to college?*" Fourth (4) and fifth (5) grade students were asked to write an essay explaining, "*How will I change the world after I go to college?*" Sixth (6) grade students answered the same question by penning an original poem.

All prizes were awarded during the official award ceremony. The parents or legal guardians of the 20 county winners received a check for \$250. The parents or legal guardians of the three statewide winners received an additional check for \$500. The teacher or principal of the three statewide winners received a check for \$150 to put towards a classroom celebration.

Fairfield County:

Drawing: **Michaela Luk**, Grade 3 – Lordship School, Stratford

Essay: **Corinne Wilklow**, Grade 4 – Roger Sherman School, Fairfield

Poem: **Kelly Vodola**, Grade 6 – Middlesex Middle School, Darien

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Hartford County:

Drawing: **Margot Eversdyke**, Grade 3 – South Elementary School, Windsor Locks

Essay: **Marina Tinone**, Grade 5 – Eric G. Norfeldt School, West Hartford

Poem: **Gina Cocce**, Grade 6 – John Wallace Middle School, Newington

Litchfield County:

Drawing: **Sommer D. Prime**, Grade 2 – Black Rock School, Thomaston

Essay: **Haley Stevens**, Grade 5 – Barkhamsted School, Barkhamsted

Poem: *None entered*

Middlesex County:

Drawing: **Nancy McQuade**, Grade 2 –Valley View School, Portland

Essay: *None entered*

Poem: **Jason Pawson**, Grade 6 – Thomas Edison Middle School, Meriden

New Haven County:

Drawing: **Sarah Michelle Viele**, Grade 3 – Maple Hill School, Naugatuck

Essay: **Gleimy Rodriguez**, Grade 4 – John C. Daniels School, New Haven

Poem: **Kayleigh Fowler**, Grade 6 – Dag Hammarskjold, Wallingford

New London County:

Drawing: **Gloryanna Blount**, Grade 3 – Moriarty School, Norwich

Essay: **Emily Coderre**, Grade 4 – Southwest Elementary, Waterford

Poem: **Priya Swyden**, Grade 6 – William J. Johnston Middle School, Colchester

Tolland County:

Drawing: **Amy Akerley**, Grade 3 – George H. Robertson Intermediate, Coventry

Essay: **Jenny Wells**, Grade 4 – Southeast Elementary, Mansfield

Poem: *None entered*

Windham County:

Drawing: **Maddie Donald**, Grade 2 – Killingly Memorial, Killingly

Essay: **Rebecca Feldman**, Grade 4 – Woodstock Elementary, Woodstock

Poem: *None entered*

Three (3) Statewide Student Winners – \$500 Check:

From the 20 county winners, three entries were chosen as the best drawing, essay and poem, and were named statewide winners. Those winners are Sarah Michelle Viele (drawing), Grade 3, Maple Hill School - Naugatuck; Emily Coderre (essay), Grade 4, Southwest Elementary - Waterford; and Kayleigh Fowler (poem), Grade 6, Dag Hammarskjold.

Three (3) School Winners – \$150 Check:

The teacher or principal of the three statewide winners received \$150 check to put towards a classroom celebration. Those winners are Mrs. Orsini (drawing), Maple Hill School - Naugatuck; Mrs. McCue (essay), Southwest Elementary - Waterford; and Mrs. Baltramatis (poem), Dag Hammarskjold - Wallingford.

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TIAA-CREF's group of companies have been providing financial services and investment experience for 90 years. Its combined assets under management equate to approximately \$351 billion (as of March 31, 2009), and it is best known as the leading provider of retirement services in the academic, research, medical and cultural fields. The CHET program was established in 1997, and has now grown to over **\$945 million in assets** with over **85,000 individual accounts (as of March 31, 2009)**.

For more information about CHET, visit [www.aboutchet.com](http://www.aboutchet.com); visit [www.chetdreambig.com](http://www.chetdreambig.com) for more information about the CHET Big Dream! Competition and the 2009 winners.

***Before investing in CHET 529 College Savings Plan, you should consider whether the state you or your designated Beneficiary reside in or have taxable income in has a 529 plan that offers favorable state income tax or other benefits that are only available if you invest in the state's 529 plan.***

***Consider the investment objectives, risks, charges and expenses before investing in CHET. Please call toll-free 1-888-799-2438 or visit [www.aboutchet.com](http://www.aboutchet.com) for a Disclosure Booklet containing this information. Read it carefully.***

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The CHET Plan is administered by the Connecticut State Treasury. TIAA-CREF Tuition Financing, Inc. (TFI) serves as Program Manager. TFI's affiliate, TIAA-CREF Individual & Institutional Services, LLC, member FINRA, is the distributor.

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