



Date: April 11, 2008
Contact: Dick Dystrup, Exec. Director
Phone: 888-255-9140
E-mail: ddystrup@aol.com

For Immediate Release:

Illinois Dollars for Scholars Announces Finalists in 3rd Annual Lincolnland Legends Essay Contest.

Twelve Illinois high school students were recently awarded \$3,000 scholarships for their winning essays in the Lincolnland Legends Essay Contest. The first and second place essays earned their authors an additional \$7,000 and \$2,000, respectively, in scholarship funds. The essay contest, sponsored by Illinois Dollars for Scholars, culminated in an award ceremony at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield on April 5th.

Through their essays, the students designated outstanding Illinoisans for the title of "Lincolnland Legend" based on their business-related backgrounds, current or former Illinois residency, their contributions to the betterment of their communities, and their standing as role models for youth.

Ellen Dunne of Serena High School was awarded a total of \$10,000 in scholarship funds for writing the top essay in the statewide contest. Ellen's essay commended her mother, Marta Dunne, President of Dunne and Associates, a bilingual teacher for Sandwich School District #430, and President of the Sandwich Hispanic Coalition, for her tireless dedication in her roles as a wife, mother, businesswoman, educator, volunteer and community activist.

Molly Muhlbachler of Effingham High School authored the 2nd place essay, earning a total of \$5,000 in scholarship funds. Molly's essay honored Phil Golden, Human Resources Manager for the Sherwin-Williams Company's East and Midwest regions, for his role as the founder and Director of Effingham's Oneighty youth program, a program that challenges teenagers to turn their lives around *one hundred and eighty degrees* by making more positive choices.

~more~

The following students received \$3,000 scholarship awards for their essays:

Brittney-Jade Colangelo, a student at Zion-Benton Township High School, commended Anna Sherony, Chief Privacy and Security Officer for Sammons Financial Group/Midland National Life Insurance Company, proud mother of a U.S. Marine, and co-founder of the Wounded Heroes Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that provides needed support to severely injured servicemen and women.

Gabrielle Linnet Bell, a student at Von Steuben Metropolitan Science Center, honored the late Rev. John F. Norwood, former pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Evanston and the founder of Evanston's Police Clergy Team, for his generous support and leadership of his community and his church.

Rebecca Kruse, a student at Deerfield High School, praised John H. Sciarretta, Sr., President of the Italian Kitchen restaurant in Deerfield and a current board member and past President of the Deerfield Lions Club, for his humanitarian endeavors and his longstanding commitment to volunteer work in the community.

Adi Powell, a Trico High School student, commended her aunt, Dr. Barbara Brown, Randolph County Circuit Clerk and lecturer in political science at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale, for her extensive background in government and politics, her accomplishments as an educator and author, her support of various charitable causes, and her position as a role model.

Jaclyn Sullivan, a Lockport Township High School student, honored her grandmother, Loretto Dennis Szucs, Vice President of Community Relations and Executive Editor for Ancestry.com, as well as Co-Editor of "The Source: A Guidebook to American Genealogy," for her many outstanding contributions to the field of genealogy, her active volunteer work, and for her role as a devoted family member.

Emily Skelton, a Prophetstown High School student, selected Howard "Bud" Thompson, Mayor of Prophetstown, former President of the Illinois Association of School Boards, and a former member of the State Board of Education, because of his work in government, business, education, and volunteer service for the betterment of the Prophetstown community.

Tiffany Renee Ruphard, a student at Eldorado High School, commended Debbie Dullinger, owner/operator of a McDonald's restaurant franchise in Harrisburg, Illinois, for overcoming hardship and poverty with hard work, determination and faith to become a successful businesswoman who "gives back" to her community.

~more~

Elizabeth Tuohy, a student at Prairie Ridge High School, praised Shawna Egan, President and founder of the Cary Children's Center for Autism, for her hard work and personal sacrifice to establish one of only three centers in Illinois that provides comprehensive services for autistic children and their families

Jacob Maas, a Spoon River Valley High School student, honored his mother, Deon Maas, a K-12 art teacher in Avon School District #176, for inventing a wearable pillow for mastectomy patients and distributing her "Anti-Ouch Pouch" pillows and pillow patterns free of charge, helping mastectomy patients everywhere to have more comfortable recoveries.

Westley Volk, a Tremont High School student, commended Gerald D. (Jerry) Stephens CPCU, Founder and Chairman of RLI Corp. and MauiJim Sunglasses, as well as author of the motivational book, "Message of the Week," because of his outstanding business accomplishments and generous support of higher education and the Children's Hospital of Illinois.

Winning essays were selected from among entries in each of Illinois' Congressional Districts.

The title sponsor of the 2007-2008 Lincolnland Legends Essay Contest was AXA Advisors, with Nicor Gas participating as a major sponsor.

Application forms for the 2008-2009 Lincolnland Legends essay contest will be sent to all Illinois high schools in fall 2008. At that time, information will also be available on the Illinois Dollars for Scholars website, www.illinoisdollarsforscholars.org.

Illinois Dollars for Scholars is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to helping communities raise and distribute scholarship funds for local students. Scholarship America®, parent organization of Dollars for Scholars, is the nation's largest nonprofit, private-sector scholarship and educational support organization.

###