

Schools

Youngsters excel in Elks' Americanism Essay Contest

Submitted for Citizen News

The Athens Elks Lodge No. 1927 – the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks – recently announced the winners of its Americanism Essay Contest for the 2009-2010 school year.

The theme was "The American Dream: What Is It?" and more than 5,500 students in fifth through eighth grades in McMinn, Meigs and Monroe counties were invited to participate. Essays were 250 words or less, and were judged on originality, development of theme and mechanics and neatness.

Winners were:

• **Division I (grades 5-6)** – first place winner was Dylan Beverly, a sixth-grader at Riceville Elementary School; second place winner was Zeb Idol, a sixth-grader at North City Elementary School; and third place winner was Hailey Parente, a fifth-grader at Westside Elementary School.

• **Division II (grades 7-8)** – first place winner was Kristen Contreras, a seventh-grader at Christ's Legacy Academy; second place winner was Indeia Tackett, an eighth-grader at Englewood Elementary School; and third place winner was Tyler McFall, a seventh-grader at Vonore Middle School.

All winners have received certificates and Americanism pins. In addition, U.S. Savings Bonds were awarded: \$100 to first-place winners, \$75 to second-place winners; and \$50 to third-place winners.

The Elks congratulate all the winners and applaud all who participated.

According to Jane Ingram, Americanism Essay Contest co-chairperson, the contest was a success.

"We were happy to see such mixed representation among the winners: Gender (three girls and three boys); public and private schools; and three different school systems (two counties, one city and one private); Ingram said. "I assure you we did not plan it this way."

Ingram said it is gratifying to see firsthand the quality of the minds and the education of America's future leaders.

"Next year, we hope to have a larger number of entries and an even better contest," she said.

In addition, Ingram said that the experience of organizing the contest – from asking for school superintendent approval, to getting the information out to the students, and to presenting awards at the six different schools – went smoothly.

"Our encounters were, without exception, entirely positive and enthusiastic," Ingram said.

The two first place-winning essays are printed below:

Just a Dream?

Dylan Beverly

Extra! Extra! Read all about it! January 2009, unemployment was at an all time high. The housing market was collapsing. Most adults were tuned in every night to hear the latest on the country's failing economy.

But me, I was only 10 years old at the time and had a lot more on my mind than what was going on in the big world around me. I was more concerned with how to reach the next level on my new video game I had gotten for Christmas. I did not expect to get off the bus that day and find the world's problems on my doorstep. Both of my parents had lost their jobs.

What I didn't realize was that this same scenario was being played out all over the country. Many people were losing their jobs and homes every day. It appeared that the idea of The American Dream was just that – a dream.

James T. Adams defined The American Dream as "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability and achievement."

A key word in Mr. Adams' definition is achievement. We cannot expect material things to be handed to us. In a speech given by Barack Obama at a school in Virginia the president stated that "all young Americans, regardless of their family's wealth and income, even those who goofed off in high school" like he did "could reach the top."

I disagree. I believe that we are forgetting that The American Dream can only be achieved if we hold true to our American values. Only by working hard and trusting the God our country is founded upon can we ensure that this dream remains a reality.

"The American Dream: What Is It?"

Kristen Contreras

The American dream is not the same to everyone, but usually it is. The American dream is my dad's life. My dad is from Mexico City, and came to America to find a new life. He could go to school, have a good job, have a good house, and have a family. That's all he wanted at first.

My dad lived in an apartment in Cleveland, Tennessee, for eight years, and was a chef at the Cleveland Country Club for eight years also. He started by washing dishes, then he worked himself up to start cooking in the kitchen. He became the second head chef in the kitchen!

He met my mom, and they got married a few months after. We bought a house, and a taekwondo school in Athens, Tennessee. The taekwondo business was slow, but then got faster! My dad started to be in the newspaper and on the radio.

When I asked my dad what the American dream was to him, he said, "To me, it's for my family and I to be successful and to be happy." I think that is the American dream to a lot of people living in America. My dad came to this country looking for a life, and look where he is now. My dad is living the American dream. Having happiness, prosperity, health and a way of living is the American dream.