



STATE OF NEBRASKA

Don Stenberg, State Treasurer

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NEWS RELEASE

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Treasurer Stenberg to Recognize NEST 'Why I Want to Go to College' Writing Contest Winners on Sunday at Werner Park

Lincoln, Neb. (May 8, 2015) - Nine winners in the 2015 NEST "Why I Want to Go to College" writing contest for seventh and eighth graders will be recognized Sunday at Werner Park in Papillion, Neb., State Treasurer Don Stenberg announced today.

This is the 13th year for the annual writing contest sponsored by the Omaha Storm Chasers and the Nebraska Educational Savings Trust (NEST), a division of the State Treasurer's Office.

Nine young Nebraskans will be recognized near home plate before the 2:05 p.m. start of the game between the Storm Chasers and the Oklahoma City Dodgers. Three winners were chosen in each of Nebraska's three U.S. congressional districts. Three winners from outside Nebraska also were chosen, but are not expected to attend the Sunday game.

Winners receive contributions to Nebraska Educational Savings Trust college savings plans, ranging in value from \$500 to third place, \$1,000 to second place,

and \$2,000 for first place.

“We look forward to this writing contest each year and to reading about seventh and eighth graders’ plans for the future and their paths to get there. Students wrote about careers as teachers, coaches, authors, physical therapists, veterinarians, pilots, engineers, and scientists. They wrote about the hard work and perseverance that it will take to reach their dreams, and they freely acknowledged they will need the help of family, teachers, and mentors along the way,” State Treasurer Stenberg said. “This year we were particularly struck by the number of writers who have experienced family tragedies and who told us that those experiences inspired and guided them.”

Stenberg said students also wrote about the cost of college, their families’ resources, and the need to save for higher education, which is in line with the mission of the Nebraska Educational Savings Trust.

A total of 1,064 writing entries were received this year from all across the United States. The contest was announced in January and entries were due March 27. Preliminary judging was done by students and faculty in the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha with final selections made by Treasurer Stenberg.

Details about the 14th annual “Why I Want to Go to College” will be announced in January 2016.

The winners are listed below:

1st Congressional District – Nebraska

First:	Jared Nielsen	Waverly Middle School	Waltor
Second:	Colton Meyer	Lincoln Lutheran School	Eagle,
Third:	Priscilla Lebesse	Goodrich Middle School	Lincoln

2nd Congressional District – Nebraska

First:	Kellen McLaughlin	Gretna Middle School	Omaha
Second:	Jacqueline Cervantes	Papillion Junior High School	Papillio
Third:	Richard McManus	Papillion Junior High School	Papillio

3rd Congressional District – Nebraska

First:	Katie Bathke	Allen Consolidated Schools	Dixon,
Second:	Raif Ruppert	Loup County Public School	Taylor
Third:	Andi Bargstadt	Winside Public Schools	Winsie

Outside Nebraska

First:	Nyah German	Southwest Middle School	Orlando
Second:	Kurt Rinehart	Monterey Bay Charter School	Marina
Third:	Sarah Johnson	Family of Christ Christian School	Tampa

Below are excerpts from the first-place winners:

Jared Nielsen, Walton, Neb. – “I am interested in an engineering degree. It might be agriculture engineering so I can try to develop equipment that would be easier to use and maintain and be more efficient for the farmers today. Or, I might be interested in automotive engineering so I can build vehicles with more power, better gas mileage, and more safety features.”

Kellen McLaughlin, Omaha, Neb. – “After earning my English and education degrees from the University of Iowa, I strive to become a middle school English teacher. I have been blessed to be surrounded by educators who inspire me with their dedication, enthusiasm, and passion for teaching. They have acted as the trails that lead me up my mountain toward success. Accomplishing my role as a teacher will boost me higher up through the peaks of my journey. As a teacher, I hope to inspire a new generation of students to pursue their goals.”

Katie Bathke, Dixon, Neb. – “College has been a dream of mine from the day I learned what was truly my passion. Ever since I was little, I followed my dad all throughout his science room. He had things from various microorganisms to dissection tools; there wasn’t a thing in there that didn’t spark my curiosity. My dad has taught me how to understand, love, and learn the importance science has on the world.”

Nyah German, Orlando, Fla. – “My dream has always been to become an author. As an avid reader, I have a deep connection to books. Every book that I read touches my heart, which is why I want to be an author. I want to be the one who writes magical books that readers become attached to. I wish for my work and ideas to affect others, as many authors’ works have done to me. I want to create something others will relate to and love. And this dream of my career has resulted in a goal that I am currently pursuing – attending college at the University of Oxford. Several famous and important authors have gone to this historic school, and the libraries of Oxford are truly a bibliophile’s heaven.”