



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 3, 2008

FIFTEEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN WIN SECOND ANNUAL SMART529 “WHEN I GROW UP” CONTEST

Charleston, WV – The future is a lot brighter for fifteen West Virginia elementary school children this holiday season. The students were recently selected as winners in the second SMART529 “When I Grow Up” Essay Contest.

More than 1,800 students from across the state entered the writing contest, answering the question: “What do you want to be when you grow up?” The winners include, among others, a future geologist, occupational therapist, meteorologist and President of the United States.

Fifteen winners were selected from five regions in three grade categories. Each regional winner will receive a \$500 SMART529 account. One of the fifteen regional winners will randomly be selected at today’s news conference to receive an additional \$4,500 account.

“A SMART529 college savings account is the best holiday gift that a parent or grandparent can give,” said State Treasurer John Perdue. “The Hartford and the Treasurer’s Office are proud to help make the dream of a college education come true for these elementary school children.”

In addition to the student’s winnings, each winner’s elementary school will receive \$500, bringing the total amount distributed during the contest to \$19,500. The contest was funded by Hartford Life, administrators of the SMART529 College Savings Plan.

The “When I Grow Up” entries were judged by State Board of Education Vice-Chair Priscilla Haden, Charleston Daily Mail Editor and Publisher Nanya Friend and The Manahan Group Vice President of Account Service Amanda Wilson. The Manahan Group is the advertising, public relations and marketing agency for SMART529 in West Virginia.

****MORE****

“I was heartened to see that many of the entries were from students who would be pursuing careers that required math and sciences,” said Mrs. Haden. “There certainly are some future writers in the group, as well.”

SMART529 is a qualified tuition program issued by the West Virginia Prepaid College Tuition and Savings Program Board of Trustees and administered by Hartford Life. SMART529 offers significant tax benefits including a special West Virginia state income tax deduction for state residents, tax-free earnings, and tax-free withdrawals for qualified higher education expenses. Non-qualified withdrawals are taxable as ordinary income to the extent of earnings and may also be subject to a 10% federal income tax penalty, and may also have state tax implications.

“We are thrilled to partner with the Treasurer’s Office to promote college savings in West Virginia,” said Hartford Life Assistant Vice-President Jeff Cohan. “Nothing opens the doors of opportunity like a college education.”

For more information on SMART529, visit SMART529.com.

For additional information, contact: Kerri Keefer, (304) 720-5453

Excerpts from Winning Entries

“I want to help poor people. I want to give them money and some food and the poor little kids some books and crayons. I will have to go to President’s college to learn how to be helpful and nice. “

- Molly, Future President of the United States

“I have always loved sea animals. At Sea World I saw dolphins and seals doing tricks. It was fascinating. I will need to go to college and study animals if I want to be a good trainer. This will be fun because I like to read and study sea animals.”

- Georgia Grace, Future Seal and Dolphin Trainer

“The weather has always fascinated me. Even though my parents warn me to stay indoors while it is storming, thundering or even lightening, I usually sneak outside and enjoy the weather. Chasing a tornado is my ultimate dream.”

- Nicholas, Future Meteorologist

“An archeologist is someone who uncovers the past. There are many different reasons I want to be an archeologist. The main reason is that I can study different cultures. The benefit of studying cultures and people from the past is to learn from the good things and bad things the groups of people did long ago.”

- Nathan, Future Archeologist

“I enjoy watching the weather on the Weather Channel. My favorite TV shows are ‘Twister Sisters’ and ‘Storm Chasers’. I would like being a weatherman because people always want to know about the weather, and the weather affects everybody’s life every day. I have my own weather map on my bedroom wall and I also have my own weather scanner.”

- Aidan, Future Meteorologist/Tornado Chaser

“Astronauts get to go to the moon and see all of the beautiful stars and the Milky Way. Right now I am reading a bunch of books about the planets and parts of the solar system. I love learning about the solar system because it kills me that I am not old enough to be an astronaut. One of my favorite planets is Neptune. Neptune is the blue planet.”

- Ashley, Future Astronaut

"I like animals. I wanted to learn about them. I went to the Galapagos Islands on the equator. Naturalists told me about the animals and plants that only live on the Galapagos. I liked the giant tortoise. I told my class about the animals I saw. Now maybe they will want to protect the animals like I do."

- Robert, Future Naturalist

"I think bugs are cool. Most girls think bugs are icky, but not me. I have a spider friend named Steve that lives outside my window. He builds fantastic webs with neat designs. I love to watch him wrap webs around bugs. It's getting colder and I know Steve won't be able to stay outside. I would like to bring Steve inside for the winter, but Mom says, 'Absolutely not!'"

- Megan, Future Entomologist

"In Geology, I would study the Earth, everything in it, and around it. I could get to be peoples' bosses and tell them where to construct businesses, mine for coal, or drill a well. Being a geologist I could also travel the world and give advice about my expertise of our Earth. I could also help the United States by finding natural resources to address our energy crisis."

- Jacob, Future Geologist

"I want to help sick people. I will volunteer to help poor citizens. My goal is to find new cures for illnesses. I am still a little girl, but my parents tell me that it is never too early to have dreams. I hope I can get help to go to college and become a doctor."

- Keyzar, Future Doctor

"I like to help people learn things. When I was only in kindergarten my teacher let me help other kids in my class who needed extra help. I loved helping them because it made me feel good inside. Now I help my youngest sister with her math, reading and spelling. I want to be as good as my kindergarten teacher who inspired me."

- Kara, Future Teacher

"My grandmother is a judge. To be a judge you must be smart, trustworthy, a good listener, and fair. I will go to college to learn about laws so I can make fair decisions. I want people to know I am trustworthy so I will not lie. I will listen to both sides of the case so I will know who is right."

- Nicholas, Future Judge

“My little sister has autism and sometimes I get to go with her to therapy. When I found out that therapists used animals to help kids like my sister, I decided that I wanted to be a therapist. My favorite is hippotherapy. This is therapy using horses. I live on a big farm so after college I’m going to build a horse barn, therapy pools and even a petting zoo.”

- Maci, Future Occupational Therapist

“My music teacher makes learning cool. We love to play the World Drums. It is exciting to learn about new instruments and how to play them. I want to teach children to love music like I do. I decided to be a music teacher because my whole family is music teachers.”

- Kailey, Future Music Teacher

“I love children. I’ll comfort children in their time of pain. I’ll also show up to work 15 to 20 minutes early to see every one of my patients. When my shift is coming to an end I’ll go to each one of my patients’ rooms and tell them goodbye and that I will see them tomorrow.”

- Raeann, Future Pediatric Nurse