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Rand McNally Announces Finalists of “Dear Mr. President” Writing Contest for Students

WorldStrides™ DiscoverNow! Trip to Washington, D.C. Awarded

SKOKIE, Ill., Jan. 29, 2013 – After receiving nearly 8,000 essays from 7th through 12th graders across the country, Rand McNally has announced the ten finalists in its [“Dear Mr. President”](#) writing contest. The ten finalists have been notified and will arrive in Washington, D.C. for a February 17 ceremony, during which two Grand Prize winners will be named.

The ten finalists are:

- Irfan Ansari, Charles Robinson Middle School, Wichita, Kan.
- Aleksander DeMott, Ocean Lakes High School, Virginia Beach, Va.
- Tucker Gabriel, Eudora High School, Eudora, Kan.
- Jade Greenfield, Columbia Secondary School, New York, N.Y.
- Elvin Luna, Central High School, Philadelphia, Pa.
- Noah Porter, Benson High School, Benson, Ariz.
- Sam Reynolds, Arrowhead Union High School, Heartland, Wis.
- Meghann Roessler, St. Richard’s Episcopal School, Indianapolis, Ind.
- Courtney Rozen, Cypress Bay High School, Weston, Fla.
- Zachary Staller, DHH Lengel Middle School, Belleville, N.J.

Launched in August, “Dear Mr. President” challenged student authors to present a 400 to 600 word persuasive essay answering the question, “What important issue would you like the President to address?” The ten finalists addressed a wide range of topics including economic issues, such as farm bill funding and tax structure; health issues, such as diabetes research and

autism health care funding; and social issues such as immigrant visas, education and the environment.

The ten finalists and a parent or guest will travel to Washington, D.C. in February for a three day trip compliments of WorldStrides, the global leader in accredited educational travel programs. From the ten finalists, two Grand Prize winners will be selected and announced on February 17, 2013. The Grand Prize winners (one from 7-9th grade and one from 10-12th grade) will receive a \$5,000 College 529 Savings Plan deposit. The schools of the Grand Prize winners will receive \$5,000 of classroom products from Rand McNally.

While in Washington, D.C. – just prior to President’s Day - the ten finalists will experience an exclusive WorldStrides DiscoverNow! program. WorldStrides is the nation’s largest educational travel organization. Finalists will spend three days and two nights exploring the nation’s capital with the guidance of a WorldStrides-certified course leader. Highlights of the experience will include:

- Witnessing the Changing of the Guard at the Tomb of the Unknowns;
- Reciting Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial and visiting the newly dedicated Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial;
- Experiencing life in the first “white house,” George Washington’s beloved Mt. Vernon;
- Seeing the government in action through a visit to the Supreme Court and the U.S. Capitol Building.

Prior to the selection of the finalists, 100 semi-finalists were also named. All of the semi-finalists will have their essays made available in a “Dear Mr. President” ebook on NOOK.com.

More detailed information and complete contest rules for “Dear Mr. President” are available at randmcnally.com/dearmrpresident. In addition to contest guidelines, the site also features professional lesson plans for educators that meet the Common Core Standards for Speaking and Listening, and some National Civics Standards correlations to the Common Core State Standards. Check back at randmcnally.com/dearmrpresident for details on future programs.

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About WorldStrides - WorldStrides is the nation's largest and most trusted student travel organization, having inspired more than four million students with interactive and educational travel experiences across the United States and worldwide. Founded nearly 50 years ago by a Chicago school teacher, WorldStrides has grown to a team of more than 500 professionals around the world dedicated to delivering life-changing experiences and improving the way students learn. WorldStrides' group travel offerings fall under four major brands: [WorldStrides DiscoverNow! programs](#), [WorldStrides Heritage Performance programs](#), [WorldStrides Capstone programs](#), and [Casterbridge Tours](#) and [NETC](#). In addition, WorldStrides introduced its [New Worlds Emerge](#) programs for individual travelers at the high school level, and launched [WorldStrides China](#), in 2012.