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Jesse White Congratulates Two Illinois “Letters About Literature” Winners on Capturing National Prize

Winners are from Chicago and Hoffman Estates

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White proudly congratulates two of the statewide winners, Akosua Haynes of Chicago and Rylee Johnson of Hoffman Estates, on being selected as national winners of the 2018 “Letters About Literature” contest. Now in its 26th year, the program prompts fourth-12th graders to write to an author about how their work affected their lives. National winners are awarded \$1,000.

“I am proud to recognize and congratulate Akosua Haynes and Rylee Johnson for their amazing letters which merited national awards from the Library of Congress,” said White. “Their award winning letters were chosen from more than 46,800 letters submitted by young readers from across the country – truly an outstanding achievement.”

Akosua Haynes was named the national winner for Level I (Grades 4-6) for the letter she wrote to author Margot Lee Shetterly about her book, “Hidden Figures.” Haynes is a student at St. Thomas the Apostle School in Chicago.

Rylee Johnson was named the national winner for Level II (Grades 7-8) for the letter she wrote to author Gabrielle Zevin about her book, “Elsewhere.” Johnson attends Eisenhower Junior High in Hoffman Estates and her letter was submitted by her teacher, Tracy Otto.

Read the winning essays at http://cyberdriveillinois.com/departments/library/center_for_the_book.

More than one million students have participated in the national contest since its inception. Illinois has had more entries than any other state for 11 consecutive years – amassing nearly 7,000 letters this year.

The national reading and writing contest is made possible by a grant from the Dollar General Literacy Foundation, with additional support from gifts to the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. The contest is promoted by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress through its affiliated state centers, state libraries, state humanities councils and other organizations.

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