



Jesse White

SECRETARY OF STATE

NEWS

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WHITE ANNOUNCES ILLINOIS WINNERS OF LETTERS ABOUT LITERATURE CONTEST

SPRINGFIELD-- Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White has announced the Illinois winners of the annual Letters About Literature contest sponsored by the Illinois Center for the Book, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the Weekly Reader Corporation and Target Stores.

The contest involves students in grades 4 through 12 writing a personal letter to an author, explaining how his or her work changed their view of the world or themselves. Young readers can select authors from any genre--fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. The Illinois Center for the Book appointed judges who selected the top essayists in the state on each of three competition levels. This year's winners are:

- Level I for children in grades 4 through 6, **Julia Quintero of Hinsdale**, who wrote to Judith Harlan, author of *Girl Talk*;
- Level II for grades 7 and 8, **Danae Alexopolous of Glenview**, who wrote to Terry Spencer Hesser, author of *Kissing Doorknobs*;
- Level III, grades 9 – 12, **LaToya Hicks of Chicago**, who wrote to Mary Monroe, author of *God Don't Like Ugly*.

"I am proud to congratulate these three talented young readers, who were among nearly 4,000 students from Illinois who participated in this innovative reading initiative," said White, who also serves as honorary chair of the Illinois Center for the Book. "Though only these three students advance to national competition, all of the students who participated are winners because they are taking part in the joy and magic of reading. It is gratifying to see so many young people reading, and I hope their involvement in this contest leads to a lifelong love of reading."

State winners advance to national competition. The three first place Illinois winners receive \$100, a plaque and a \$50 TargetGift Card. Winners and their parents will also meet Secretary White at a celebration at a later date. Six national winners, who will be announced at a later date, will each receive an expenses-paid trip to Washington D.C. to read their letters during the National Book Festival in the fall of 2004. In addition, they will receive a \$500 TargetGift card redeemable at any Target Store or target.com. Target Stores is the presenting sponsor of Letters About Literature.

Target Stores, along with its parent company Target Corporation, gives back more than \$2 million a week to local communities through grants and special programs. Since opening its first store in 1962, Target has partnered with nonprofit organizations, guests and team members to help meet community needs.

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