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**Jesse White Announces Winners of “Letters About Literature” Contest from Algonquin, Northbrook and Barrington**

Secretary of State and State Librarian Jesse White has announced that students from Algonquin, Northbrook and Barrington are the winners of the 2014 “Letters About Literature” contest. It is a national reading and writing contest for students sponsored by the Illinois State Library and the Illinois Center for the Book, an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress.

“For the seventh year in a row, I am proud to announce that Illinois had more entries than any state,” said White. “The young writers we honored today have demonstrated, through their writing skills, how much literature impacts the lives of everyone.”

To participate in the competition, students in grades 4-12 must read a book and write a personal letter to the author explaining how the book changed their views of the world and/or themselves. Students may select authors, living or deceased, from any genre: fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or classic. The Illinois Center for the Book appointed judges to select the top essayists on three competition levels.

This year's Illinois winners are:

- Level I, Grades 4-6: **Jennifer Nguyen** of Algonquin, wrote to author Sharon Draper about her book, *Out of My Mind*. Jennifer is a student at Heineman Middle School in Algonquin, and her letter was submitted by teacher Wayne Blake.
- Level II, Grades 7-8: **Larissa Bersh** of Northbrook, wrote to authors Megan Kelley and Carrie Jones about their book, *Dear Bully*. Larissa attends Maple School in Northbrook, and her letter was submitted by teacher Lorene Schramm.
- Level III, Grades 9-12: **Jacqueline Barbera-Mirza** of Barrington, wrote to Jane Austen about her book, *Pride and Prejudice*. Jacqueline attended Barrington High School when she submitted her letter.

Each winner received a \$200 check from the Illinois Center for the Book, a plaque signed by Secretary White, a tour of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum in Springfield and a complimentary lunch at the Illinois State Library. Teachers received a \$100 check from the Illinois Center for the Book to purchase books for their school library, a certificate signed by Secretary White, a tour of the Lincoln Presidential Museum and a complimentary lunch at the State Library. Read the winning essays at <http://illinoiscenterforthebook.org/projects/projectse.html>.

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