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Local Teachers Awarded Mini-Grants, Hartford Native Wins National Essay Contest

**Hartford Education Foundation and GiveKidsGoodSchools.com Honor
Hartford Teachers and Middle School Student at Awards Ceremony**

Hartford, C.T. – At an awards ceremony sponsored by the Hartford Education Foundation, Hartford middle school student Tyrone Jenkins today was presented with the first-place award for the national ‘My Teacher is the Best’ essay contest sponsored by www.GiveKidsGoodSchools.com, a campaign of the Public Education Network (PEN). At the same awards reception, 55 teachers, representing 22 Hartford elementary, middle, and high schools, received mini-grants from the Hartford Education Foundation, a member of PEN.

Tyrone Jenkins, a 13 year-old from Hartford, was awarded with first place by PEN from a field of over 2400 other middle school students nationwide for his essay about Marion Robinson, his teacher at Lewis Fox Middle School. Theodore Sergi, retiring Connecticut Commissioner of Education, presented the winning award to Jenkins.

“The essays we received were truly inspiring – from coast to coast and even abroad, American students have honored their favorite teachers and demonstrated why good teachers are so essential to a quality education,” said Wendy D. Puriefoy, president of PEN. “Tyrone Jenkins’ essay about his favorite teacher, Marion Robinson, truly stood out.”

At the same reception, the Hartford Education Foundation (HEF) awarded 55 Hartford teachers with funding as part of its first Mini-Grant for Teachers Program.

“The tremendous response we received from this first grant cycle speaks to the great need and interest of Hartford teachers in providing quality teaching,” said Marie Dalton-Meyer, executive director of the Hartford Education Foundation. “These grants provide support for those who are on the front lines of education – our children’s teachers.”

The Hartford Education Foundation provided \$41,000 in funds for this mini-grant program, its first initiative.

The ‘My Teacher is the Best’ essay contest, launched in mid-April by GiveKidsGoodSchools.com, a citizens’ campaign to improve public education with over 60,000 members, challenged public school students in grades 6, 7 and 8 to write about their experience with a favorite teacher. Both Jenkins and Robinson received a laptop computer and won a free trip to New York City in January for a special event honoring excellent middle school teachers.

The 'My Teacher is the Best' essay contest benefited from generous sponsors: the computers were donated by Discovery Communications, Inc., the gift certificates were donated by Discovery Channel Stores and the trips to New York City were donated by JP Morgan Chase. Visit <http://www.givekidsgoodschools.com/goodteachers/winners.html> to see the essay contest winners' announcement and to read the winning essay.

GiveKidsGoodSchools.com is a campaign by the Public Education Network (PEN) to enable individuals to support and demand high-quality public education for all children in America. Since the launch of the campaign in December 2002, GiveKidsGoodSchools.com activists have voiced their support for public education by demanding that policymakers protect education budgets from cuts. To date, the campaign has generated over 105,000 emails and faxes to elected officials regarding the importance of quality teachers and afterschool programs.

Established in 2002, the Hartford Education Foundation was created as a community-based, independent, nonprofit organization to provide funding for innovative Hartford Public Schools initiatives, partnerships and collaborations that will improve the quality of education for all Hartford students.

Public Education Network (PEN) is a national organization of local education funds (LEFs) and individuals working to improve public schools and build citizen support for quality public education in communities across the nation. PEN believes public engagement is the oft-missing ingredient in school reform, and that the level of public involvement ultimately determines the quality of education provided by public schools. Its mission, therefore, is to build public demand and mobilize resources for quality public education through a national constituency of organizations and individuals. PEN and its 81 LEF members, who work in 31 states and the District of Columbia on behalf of 10.6 million children in more than 1,220 school districts, seek to bring the community voice into the debate on quality public education in the firm belief that an active, vocal constituency will ensure every child, in every community, a quality public education.

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