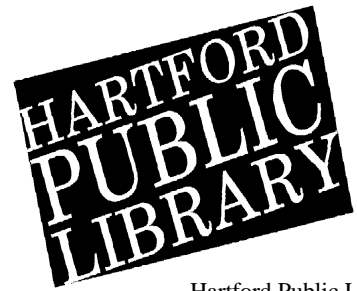


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WOW Essay Winners Named

World of Words Provides a Winning Opportunity for Students

Winning student essayists enjoyed a standing ovation at the State Capitol April 2 from an audience of foreign consulates, state librarians, family and peers during the opening ceremony of the sixth annual World of Words (WOW).

Connecticut Center for the Book's *WOW* initiative began April 1 at public libraries throughout the state and runs through the month of April. Governor John G. Rowland officially designated April 2, 2004 "World of Words Day" to mark the *WOW* initiative to celebrate Connecticut's literary and cultural roots while exploring ethnic similarities and differences through arts and cultural programs and to encourage Connecticut's children to become the best readers in the world.

The three winning essayists named at the State Capitol are:

- 1st Place - Nwanyinma Nnodum**
Grade 12, Kolbe-Cathedral High School, Bridgeport
- 2nd Place - Stephanie Hom**
Grade 6, Rippowam Middle School, Stamford
- 3rd Place - Nicolas A. Austin**
Grade 7, Rippowam Middle School, Stamford

The *WOW* essay contest "Why We Came and What We Brought," developed for students in grades 6 – 12, encouraged children to learn from their families why and how they came to live into the United States. Whether because of political torture, enslavement, economic incentive, or romance, more than 100 student essayists statewide took the time to consider their personal stories, which, together, combine to make Connecticut's story, and ultimately, America's story.

This year's entries were judged by Hartford Public Library staff members: Homa Naficy, coordinator of The American Place (TAP), an information and resource center for new immigrants and refugees; Richard Daigle, a TAP instructor; and, Daniel Alexandre, special projects coordinator, whose parents immigrated from Portugal. Cash awards of \$100, \$50, and \$25 were presented to the first, second and third place winners.

Diane Smith—host of the morning show on WTIC NewsTalk 1080, host and producer of “Positively Connecticut” on CPTV, and author—has been the honorary chairperson of *World of Words* since 2001.

University of Connecticut Professor and *Hartford Courant* columnist Regina Barreca joined her this year as co-chair and was the April 2 WOW luncheon speaker preceding the State Capitol awards ceremony at The Museum of Connecticut History.

The Connecticut Center for the Book is an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. For more information on this and other Connecticut Center for the Book programs, visit online at www.hplct.org/cfb.htm or call (860) 695-6320.