



Erick Russell
CONNECTICUT STATE TREASURER



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TREASURER ERICK RUSSELL ANNOUNCES 2023 CHET DREAM BIG! COMPETITION WINNERS

Three Prize-Winning Students Awarded \$20,000; 24 Students Awarded \$6,000; Ten Connecticut Schools Also Announced as Recipients of Technology Prizes

HARTFORD, CT (March 18, 2024) — State Treasurer Erick Russell, Trustee of the Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET), today announced the winners of the 2023 CHET Dream Big! Competition.

Three students were awarded \$20,000 prizes and 24 students were awarded \$6,000 prizes. An additional 336 students will be awarded \$500 prizes this month.

Treasurer Russell also announced ten schools that will receive a \$7,500 technology prize to help provide new items like tablets, smartboards and small electronics for classrooms. Each school in Connecticut represented by at least one entry in the Dream Big! Competition was eligible for a random drawing for these prizes.

Since 2013, the Dream Big! Competition has awarded over \$4.5 million dollars to Connecticut students to help pay for future education expenses. The 2023 competition began on August 1, 2023, and ended on November 6, 2023, and was open to all Connecticut residents in grades K-12.

To enter, students were asked to submit a drawing, short essay or video answering a question focusing on their dreams for the future – dependent on their grade level group, as defined in the competition [Official Rules](#).

From bettering neighborhoods with free sports equipment, improving the environment, helping people with addiction, and working in a soup kitchen to sheltering the homeless, being kind, and collecting donations, winning entries showcased imaginative and innovative dreams for themselves and their communities through essays, drawings, and videos.

“I was so impressed with the nearly 3,000 entries we received from students from across the state for the Dream Big! Competition,” said **Treasurer Russell**. “These students’ entries were so creative and show that they are truly committed to their goals and their communities. I congratulate all our winners and look forward to seeing all they do in the future.

“I also want to congratulate the ten schools that won technology prizes,” he continued. “We are grateful for your encouragement of students to Dream Big.”

First-prize winner in the kindergarten through fourth grade group, Flynn J. of Watertown, wants to organize a community garden at his school to benefit people in need. “Each week, a different grade would be responsible for caring for the garden. After each grade has improved the garden, we could harvest the vegetables and divide them into groups to sell 50% and donate 50%,” he wrote.

Grand-prize winner in the fifth through eighth grade group, Zia V. of Manchester, created a detailed and colorful collage showing different ways someone could improve the lives of others. Examples include helping the less fortunate, being an active listener, becoming a teacher, supporting people with mental health needs, and protecting the Earth.

First-prize winner in the ninth through twelfth grade group, Layan J. of Farmington, wrote about a nonprofit organization she created to benefit people in Yemen, her mother’s home country. “After receiving a tremendous amount of support from the public, (my organization’s) outreach increased dramatically, ultimately allowing me to acquire a greater sense of purpose,” she wrote. “As I transition into the next chapter of my education, I plan to pursue political science in order to expand my ability in solving international issues.”

For more information about the CHET Dream Big! Competition and the winners’ vision, go to www.chetdreambig.com.

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About the Office of the Treasurer

The Office of the Treasurer is charged with safeguarding Connecticut’s financial resources through prudent cash and debt management, with the State Treasurer serving as principal fiduciary for six state pension and twelve state trust funds. Additionally, the Office enhances the state’s fiscal stability through programs promoting financial literacy and college savings, and it leverages business partnerships to support the advancement of Connecticut’s social and policy priorities, including combating gun violence and protecting our environment. The Office of the Treasurer is led by State Treasurer Erick Russell, the only Black elected state treasurer in the country. To learn more, visit portal.ct.gov/ott.

About CHET

The Connecticut Higher Education Trust (CHET) direct-sold college savings plan was established in 1997 and has grown to more than \$4.2 billion in assets and 161,000 accounts. Over \$2.1 billion has been withdrawn from CHET accounts to help more than 57,000 students pay for college expenses. The State of Connecticut offers CHET to help families save for future higher education costs. Funds deposited into a CHET account have tax advantages and can be used at accredited colleges and universities across the country, including vocational and technical schools, and some colleges abroad. Connecticut residents are allowed to deduct 529 contributions from their state income taxes – up to \$5,000 for an individual or up to \$10,000 for a married couple filing jointly. Investment earnings are exempt from state and federal taxes if used for qualified educational expenses.

For more information, visit [AboutCHET.com](https://www.aboutchet.com). Find us on Facebook ([facebook.com/CHET529](https://www.facebook.com/CHET529)), follow us on Twitter ([@CHET529](https://twitter.com/CHET529)) or on Instagram ([@CHET529](https://www.instagram.com/CHET529)).

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