



# PRESS RELEASE

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## Capital Region High School Students Win Essay Contest

**March 29 - (Albany, NY).** The Albany-Tula Alliance today announced the winners of its 2019 Student Essay Contest at the Fort Orange Club in Albany, NY. The essays of three area high school students were selected from a competitive selection of essays. Their 1500-word essays expanded on an important philosophical quote by the former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela. All essays were deemed original, well-researched, and well written.



The three top winners won prize money; first prize was \$1,000; second prize was \$500, and third prize was \$250. Distinguished guests from the Russian Consulate in NYC, along with Albany City Treasurer, Darius Shahinfar, Field Representative for U.S. Representative Paul Tonko, Katy Dunn, and the City Auditor representing the County Executive, Susan Rizzo, offered praise and congratulations for all the hardworking Capital Region students. Chair David Smith provided context of the annual contest: The ATA has worked very hard over the last 30 years fostering an understand between cultures through citizen diplomacy, not politics, and we aren't about to stop now.



**Anna Boggess**, a senior at Emma Willard School, won the first place award of \$1000. Being a Russian-American, Boggess said she had fun researching the relationship the U.S. has with Russia... and digging into Nelson Mandela's background and firm belief in the importance of language. Boggess researched academic articles describing the 'foreign language effect' and how better decisions were made when using a second language instead of a first.



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**Amelia Colafati**, a junior at Albany High School, won the second place award of \$500. Colafati spent her elementary years in a dual-language program in English and Spanish. She touched on the reasoning and importance of learning foreign languages and benefits of bilingualism in international exchange and diplomacy.



**Adam Aleksic**, a senior at Albany High School, won the third place award of \$250. Aleksic said that if we do as Nelson Mandela urges, shortcomings in current foreign language education practices can be improved. This is the third year that Aleksic has participated in the Essay Contest, he won third place in 2017 and first place in 2018.

## **Need Photos or Video of the Event?**

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