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Students Win Cash Prizes in Essay Contest

May 5, 2016, 4pm: Three Capital Region high school students won big cash prizes for composing independently researched essays involving the relationship between the United States and Russia.

The essay competition is sponsored by the Albany-Tula Alliance, a quarter century old sister city relationship between the Albany area and Tula, Russia. For over 25 years there have been a significant number of exchanges in the areas of business, education, the environment and other topics. The overall aim of the relationship is to promote a better understand of each other - citizen diplomacy at the grassroots level.

First prize winner is Erin Lippitt, sophomore at Albany High School. Lippitt wins a \$1,000 prize for an essay titled "The Final Frontier: The Key to Unlocking Russian-American Relations." The essay provides a picture of how, despite government tensions through the decades, Russia and America have found ways to cooperate in the exploration of space.

Second prize of \$500 is awarded to Robert Willard, senior at Bethlehem High School, whose essay researched the influence of jazz in opening doors for artistic exchanges through most of the 20th century.

Third prize of \$250 goes to another Albany High School student, sophomore Ian Boldiston, who also researched how music is helping encourage cultural exchanges. Ian researched the rock group, The Red Elvises, and their impact on improving relations between the citizens of Russia and the United States.

The prizes were awarded during a celebration hosted by the Albany-Tula Alliance at the Fort Orange Club in Albany, Thursday, May 5. Each of the three students presented a brief synopsis of their essays and their research. All participating students received a certificate in honor of their thoughtful essays.

