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## Albany-Tula Alliance announces winners of Annual Essay Contest

Three Capital Region high school students win \$1000, \$500, and \$250

**April 8, 2020** – Passion and a sense of urgency were the underlying moods in the essays submitted by Capital Region teenagers in the annual Albany-Tula Alliance Essay Contest. This year's topic was "Youth Saving the Earth."

With a grateful nod to Greta Thunberg, who mobilized youth from around the world to fight climate change, teens were asked to write about how young people in the U.S. and Russia are working on issues related to the environment. All entries proved well researched and insightful with an emphasis on being proactive.

Albany High School senior Amelia Colafati took first prize and received \$1000. Bethlehem Central senior Michelle Moczulski won second place and received \$500. Shaker High School sophomore Abigail Poole earned third place, and received \$250 for her efforts. All three winning essays offered concrete ways young people might act now and in the future to mitigate the climate crisis.



The first place winner Colafati cited how ineffective both superpowers have been in curbing planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions. This makes the work of youth-led protests like "FridaysforFuture" and the "Sunrise Movement" more urgent than ever.

Ms. Colafati wrote: "Youth may be the key" to bringing the United States and Russia into renewed cooperation "because the youth of today are the most connected generation in the history of the planet" and "youth bring a fervor and energy to this issue because young people's future literally depends upon what they do today." She went on to discuss a joint Russian-American agreement that could help slow the impact of climate change. A lack of unity, on the other hand, "could lead to the end of humanity."



Second place winner Moczulski reminded us of the lawsuits filed by adolescents against the U.S. federal government for its inaction while also citing the strict restrictions on public protests that teenagers face if they wish to protest climate change in Russia. Moczulski cited the organization Zero Hour, created by Brown University students, “to train other students on climate activism” like the New Green Deal.



Third place winner Poole suggested a possible reason why the younger generation’s sense of urgency may be greater than that of their elders. Perhaps in earlier years, the climate change statistics seemed too bad to be real and people remained in denial of global warming. “Now that climate change has been identified and assessed, kids are starting to find ways they can help.”

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the scheduled awards reception at the Fort Orange Club was cancelled. Prizes and ATA souvenir bags were mailed to each student.

The Albany-Tula Alliance is a grassroots, volunteer, 501(c)(3) organization composed of citizens of Albany and the surrounding Capital Region of New York State. Partnering with citizens of Tula, Russia, we have come together to provide mutual support and inspiration and to carry on a long-term program dedicated to the growth and well-being of both communities.