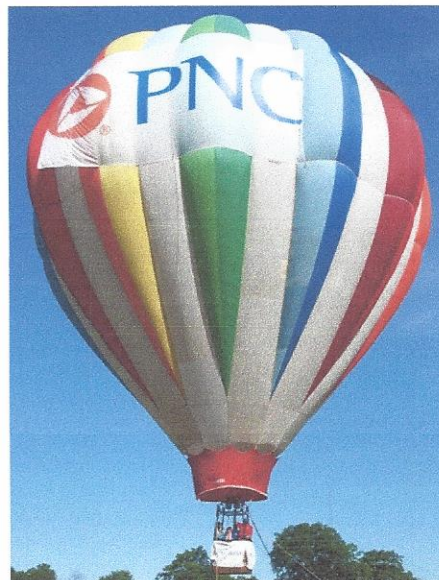


March 1, 2016

Essay contest will bring hot air balloon to winner's school

By Staff | NJ Advance Media for NJ.com



The QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning and PNC Bank are once again inviting New Jersey students in grades two through 12 to take part in the 13th annual PNC Bank "American Patriot Essay Contest" by writing a short essay on the topic "What the American Flag Means to Me."

The Grand Prize winner will receive a visit to his or her school by a gigantic, 75-foot-tall hot air balloon in June and a special VIP package at this year's balloon festival in July: a hot air balloon ride for two, four Blue Sky Club VIP tickets, and the opportunity to meet one of this year's concert headliners, which in the past have included Disney teen sensations the Jonas Brothers, Demi Lovato and Sabrina Carpenter.

Last year's award presentation to Hannah Faruolo, a Korean orphan and fourth grade student from Cedar Grove Elementary School in Toms River, was covered by media outlets in New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia.

The winning student's immediate classmates will each receive one complimentary general admission ticket to the 34th annual QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning in Association with PNC Bank, the largest summertime hot air balloon and music festival in North America, July 29-30-31, at Solberg Airport in Readington.

The winning student's teacher and school principal will each receive two Blue Sky Club VIP tickets. Second and third place prizes consisting of festival admission and merchandise will be also awarded.

All teachers in the state who submit a group of 15 essays or more on behalf of their students will receive two free general admission tickets to the festival regardless of whether one of their students submits the winning essay.

"Each year we receive thousands of heartwarming essays on how the American Flag has inspired a child during a time of hardship, reminds them of a loved one, or how it raises their spirits during their everyday lives," said Festival Executive Producer Howard Freeman. "We want to thank all of the educators who encourage their students to enter this contest and share their feelings with us."

"The PNC Bank American Patriot essay contest provides us with compelling evidence, year-after-year, that love of country burns strong and bright in the hearts and minds of New Jersey's young people," said Joseph Whall, PNC Senior Vice President & Director of Client and Community Relations.

The essays must be 100 words or less. They will be judged by a panel of representatives from PNC Bank and the balloon festival. Winning essays will be selected based on creativity, poignancy and clarity with consideration given to the grade level of the contestant. Contestants are not required to be U.S. citizens.

Entries should be submitted by April 30, to Essay Judges, QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning, 363 Route 46 West, Suite 200, Fairfield, NJ, 07004. Students can also enter the contest through the festival website at www.balloonfestival.com/pncessay or by emailing their essays to information@balloonfestival.com.

Entries should include the student's name, home or school address, home or school telephone number, grade, age, school name and the name of their teacher.