

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

The QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning and PNC Bank are once again inviting New Jersey students in Grades 2 through 12 to take part in the 14th 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, Sabrina Carpenter and Dove Cameron.

Last year's award presentation to Michael Miano, a third grade student from Raritan Valley Elementary School in Hazlet, was televised during a Flag Day ceremony to honor America.

This year's winning student's immediate classmates will each receive one complimentary general admission ticket to the 35th 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 28-29-30, 2017 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.

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 mailed to Essay Judges, QuickChek New Jersey Festival of Ballooning, 363 Route 46 West, Suite 200, Fairfield, NJ, 07004, or emailed to pncessay@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 his or her teacher. The deadline to enter is May 1.

Additional information may be found at www.balloonfestival.com/pncessay.

