



*For Immediate Release*

## **PATRIOTIC ESSAY CONTEST OFFERS STUDENTS CHANCE TO WIN A RIDE IN A HOT AIR BALLOON**

READINGTON, NJ --- The New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning and PNC Bank are inviting New Jersey students in grades 2 through 12 to take part in the 17th 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 the opportunity to take a ride in a 75-foot-tall hot air balloon in front of their classmates at their school in June and then fly in one of the 100 hot air balloons at this year’s 38<sup>th</sup> annual New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning in Association with PNC Bank, July 24-25-26, 2020 at Solberg Airport in Readington, NJ.

The Festival VIP Grand Prize package includes 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 such as the Jonas Brothers and Demi Lovato.

This year’s winning student’s immediate classmates will each receive one complimentary general admission ticket to the Festival. Second-place and third-place prizes consisting of Festival admission and merchandise will be also awarded. The winning student’s teacher and school principal will each receive two Blue Sky Club VIP tickets.

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.

“We receive thousands of heartfelt essays every year from students who are inspired by the American Flag and the personal meaning it has to each of them,” said Festival Executive Producer Howard Freeman. “They write how the flag connects them to a beloved family member or how it is part of their everyday lives. We look forward to this year’s entries and wish to continue to thank all of the educators who take the time to encourage their students to take part in this contest.”

“The PNC American Patriot Essay Contest gives students across New Jersey the chance to display their love of country and their skill with words,” said Joe Whall, PNC Senior Vice President and Director of Client & Community Relations. “We are delighted to continue to support the essay contest as part of our overall sponsorship of the New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning in Association with PNC Bank. Talent and patriotism are indeed alive and well in the Garden State.”

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.

### **HOW TO ENTER**

Entries should be mailed to Essay Judges, New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning, 363 Route 46 West, Suite 200, Fairfield, NJ, 07004, or emailed to [pncessay@balloonfestival.com](mailto:pncessay@balloonfestival.com). Entries should include the student’s name, grade, and age; the school name, address, and telephone number; and the name of their teacher and the teacher’s school email address. The deadline to enter is May 1, 2020.

Additional information may be found at [www.balloonfestival.com/pncessay](http://www.balloonfestival.com/pncessay).

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