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Winners named at statewide MLK oratorical contest

COLUMBUS (April 7, 2017) — Ohio students inspired by the lessons and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. presented original speeches on his teachings during the 18th Annual Statewide MLK Oratorical Contest held today in Columbus.

Twenty-four regional contest winners from grades kindergarten through 12 spoke before judges and others at the King Arts Complex.

Speakers were judged on performance, originality and composition.

“Dr. King exemplified bravery and resolve, stoking the urgency of peaceful dialogue even when it’s tough. These young people took command of the stage, standing boldly in his legacy,” said Will Lucas, chair of the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission, sponsor of the contest.

The following speakers placed in the top of their respective divisions:

Senior Division (grades nine through 12) First place – Nana Eshun, 14, 10th-grade, Eastmoor Academy High School, Canal Winchester. Runners-up – Bre’Anna Walker, 15, ninth-grade, Columbus Alternative High School, Columbus; and Marcus Brown, 17, 11th-grade, Charles F. Brush High School, South Euclid.

Junior Division (grades six through eight) First place – Alexis Cunningham, 10, sixth-grade, Columbus Academy, Westerville. Runner-up – Lia Symer, 11, sixth-grade, Columbus Academy, Upper Arlington.

Intermediate Division (grades three through five) First place – Elena Earley, 8, third-grade, Clinton Elementary School, Columbus. Runners-up – Adonia Balqis, 8, third-grade, Clinton Elementary School, Columbus; and Layla Schneider, 9, third-grade, Benjamin Harrison Elementary School, Marion.

Primary Division (grades kindergarten through two) First place – Addison Captain, 7, second-grade, Glendale Primary School, Bedford. Runners-up – Isaiah Gatson, 6, kindergarten, Glendale Primary School, Bedford; and Kori Johnson, 8, second-grade, Communion of Saints School, Cleveland.

First-place finishers are invited to speak at the 2018 Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Celebration on Jan. 11, 2018, in downtown Columbus.

The celebration also is sponsored by the Ohio Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Commission. The commission is housed in the Equal Opportunity Division of the Ohio Department of Administrative Services.