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## Essay Winners Learn Why Homeownership is the American Dream

By: Dr. Margot B. Weinstein, CIPS

Congratulations to the 129 students who received cash prizes and certificates and to the REALTORS® who sponsored the 43 schools that participated in CAR's Education Foundation 2005 Essay Contest. This annual Contest gives students from Chicagoland schools the opportunity to learn about the American Dream of homeownership.

CAR's Essay Contest, titled "Children are our Future," asked 7th and 8th grade students at a school sponsored by a CAR member office to write an essay titled: "Why I want to be a homeowner of my own someday." Children wrote two-page/500 word maximum length essays about how homeownership benefits the student, their family and their community. Children had their works reviewed by CAR members. Three students from each school of the 43 participating schools received certificates and cash prizes.

For the past three years, I have represented Inter-American Magnet School in a joint partnership with CAR's Essay Contest and Mayor Daley's "Principal for a Day Program"(PFAD). Inter-American Magnet School is a grammar school with over 700 students. I have learned through sponsorship the value of representing both CAR and Mayor Daley's efforts to support Chicagoland's school children. This year's Essay Winners and their Principal, Mrs. Helwing of Inter-American Magnet School, share some of the many benefits of this program:

- Principal, Mrs. Eva Helwing, believes: "This program has been wonderful for our students. Students are able to learn about homeownership and at the same time they improve their writing skills – two important values in American society."
- 1<sup>st</sup> place winner of \$100.00, Lezlie Ontiveros says, "I learned that owning a house isn't only the American dream, but is a necessity for every family. After studying the topic, I believe that homeownership makes sense and provides many benefits such as you earn equity



*while having a comfortable place to live.”*

- 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner of \$75.00, Annika Christine Swenson says, *“Becoming a homeowner is many people’s main goal in life. Owning a home is something to be proud of, and it can provide a profit for homeowners. In addition to the equity invested in the home, I would receive tax breaks, have more control over my living space, and have a safe palace to live and raise my family.”*
- 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner of \$50.00, Dante Gonzalez (whose sister, Lilian won last year) adds, *“I would like to be a homeowner someday, because after writing the essay I learned the money I could earn as the property increases in value could be used to help myself, my family and members of my community.”*

Today’s real estate professionals live very busy lives. Therefore, it is always a challenge to find time to volunteer. However, I truly believe that CAR’s program is extremely beneficial for all involved parties, and I encourage REALTORS® to become a sponsor next fall. It will give you and opportunity to teach children about real estate careers and writing. But in the end, you will receive more than you give in the personal satisfaction that comes through building new relationships, working with children and supporting Chicago’s schools and surrounding communities.

John Vranas of Vranas and Chioros Realty Group, Inc., past President of CAR, and this year’s Chairperson of CAR’s Education Foundation believes so strongly in this program that he sponsored not one, but two schools: Eberhart Elementary and Penn Elementary. In a letter to REALTORS® who sponsored schools for the Essay Contest, Vranas explains his dedication to this program: *“We at CAR are very grateful for REALTORS® who supported the 2005 School Essay Program. The Education Foundation has established our identity as a catalyst for enhancing the quality of life in Chicago. We stand committed to building the Chicago of tomorrow through excellence in education. We are proud of all our accomplishments and hope to build on our success in the years to follow.”*



Essay Contest Awards are presented at the Inter-American Magnet School. From left to right: Cindy Zucker, 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Lezlie Ontiveros, 1<sup>st</sup> place winner, Dante Gonzales, 3<sup>rd</sup>, place winner, Annika Christine Swenson, 2<sup>nd</sup> place winner, CAR’s sponsor, Dr. Margot B. Weinstein, (CIPS) President & CEO, MW Leadership Consultants, and Principal Mrs. Eva Helwing, Inter-American Magnet School.

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