

For Immediate Release:

SHELTON, CT.,

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**Barnum Financial Group Announces Winners of 6th Annual Essay Contest**  
***WHAT THE AMERICAN DREAM MEANS TO ME***

**Shelton, CT- July 15, 2011**– Barnum Financial Group, an office of MetLife in partnership with WTNH Channel 8 announced the winners of the 6th Annual Essay Contest and presented four students with a total of \$5,000 in college scholarships.

- Sophia Tsikitas of Unionville, Ct won 1<sup>st</sup> place and Xavier Cleare from Yonkers won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the 6-10 year old age group
- Casey Traverse from Riverside RI won 1<sup>st</sup> place and Nicholas Ricci from Norwalk won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the 11-14 year old age group.

After each winner read their essay, Paul Blanco, Managing Director for Barnum Financial Group presented each student with a check to be used for college and congratulated them on an outstanding job. As a young boy growing up in Brooklyn, NY, Blanco knows first hand the hard work it takes to achieve the American Dream. “As a community leader and businessman, I am committed to help as many children succeed in life. That is why, our firm is partnering with many non-profit organizations throughout the state whose goals are similar to ours.”

The contest was open to all students residing in CT, RI and Westchester County, NY between the ages of 6-14 years old who were asked to write an essay about “*What the American Dream Means to Me.*” Nearly 400 children participated in the contest and the winning essays were selected by an independent panel chosen by WTNH News Channel 8. Criteria included, originality, creativity, structure/grammar and relevance to the topic.

All winners received a cash prize, which will be deposited into a 529 plan account or a similar college savings plan.

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