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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Press Release

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West End Branch Library's 8th Annual Mary E. Finley Essay & Speech Contest



The families and friends of six finalists in the 8th Annual Mary E. Finley Essay and Speech Contest filled the West End Branch Library for the Awards Program on Saturday, October 10. Four winners were chosen by this year's judges after all finalists presented their speeches about what the Public Library means to them.

First place winner Shantel Haslon, an 18-year old senior at Hughes Center, won a laptop computer. Te'A Johnson, a 13-year old student at Walnut Hills High School; Asherah Bealer, a 15-year old student in the 9th grade at the School for Creative and Performing Arts; and Brandon Warren were the second, third, and fourth place winners who each received cash prizes for their work.

The 8th Annual Mary E. Finley Essay and Speech Contest for students in grades 6 to 12 who go to school or live in the West End was sponsored by retired librarian George Ferguson, Mrs. Finley's great-nephew Steve Rousseau and founder and CEO of Minority Recruit, and the Friends of the Public Library.

The contest originated as a way for Mr. Ferguson to honor the memory of Mary E. Finley, a librarian who had influenced him as a youngster growing up in the West End. Mrs. Finley was one of the first African American librarians hired by the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, retiring in 1972 after 44 years of service. She passed away in 2000.



Photo Captions

Photo 1: From left, George Ferguson, the Contest's founder and one of its sponsors; 18-year old Shantel Haslon, first place winner, a senior at Hughes Center; 15-year old Asherah Bealer, fourth place winner, a student at the School for Creative and Performing Arts; 13-year old Te'a Johnson, second place winner, a student at Walnut Hills High School; Brandon Warren; Steve Rousseau of Wyoming, the great-nephew of Mrs. Finley and a sponsor of this year's contest; and Larry Richmond, manager of the West End Branch Library.

Photo 2: A photo Mary E. Finley, one of the first African American librarians hired by the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County, sits on the head table at the 8th Annual Mary E. Finley Memorial Essay and Speech Contest Awards Program on October 10.

Photo 3: George Ferguson listens to Jovan West, an 8th grader at Cincinnati College Preparatory Academy, read his essay at the Awards Ceremony on October 10.

Photo 4: From left, Contest Judges Najiyah Duncan and Janet Huff.

Photo 5: Second place winner Te'a Johnson, center, with members of her family, Tawanda, and 18-month old Faith.