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Release No. 0097.03
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VENEMAN CELEBRATES NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY AND EXCELLENCE IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MATH EDUCATION WEEK

National Agri-Science Essay Contest Winners Honored

WASHINGTON, March 21, 2003—In honor of National Agriculture Day, Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced the National Agri-Science Essay Contest winners, whose essays addressed the role of science in producing safe, abundant and affordable food and fiber. The essay winners were also announced as part of USDA's celebration of Excellence in Science, Technology and Math Education Week (ESTME).

"The Agri-Science Essay Contest provides an opportunity for students to learn about the close ties between agriculture and science," said Veneman. "The entire agriculture production chain relies on science and math principles, so it is an important field for students to study to enhance their education."

Additional Information

[Leaders of Tomorrow website](#)



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The essay contest is a natural fit into Secretary Veneman's Agriculture Leaders of Tomorrow program to encourage young people to learn leadership skills, the value of public service and a better understanding of agriculture. More than 800 students competed in the contest, which was co-sponsored by the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST). The theme of this year's contest was "Boundless Science for Bountiful Agriculture."



Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman and Steve Frick, commander, National Aeronautics Space Administration with Marshall Edwards, Clio, GA., Emily Group, Chatham, NY, and Christina Zarrilli, Boca Raton, FL winners of the Agriscience Essay Contest, "Boundless Science for Bountiful Agriculture."
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The national award winner, Christine Zarrilli of Boca Raton, Fla wrote her thoughts on food in space with an essay called "Space Mash Potatoes, Anyone?" Christina is a home-schooled sixth grader who has been involved in the U.S. Air Force-Civil Air Patrol and hopes to become an astronaut.

In honor of her achievement and the topic of her essay, Secretary Veneman presented Christine with the first place award in conjunction with Commander Stephen N. Frick, USN, one of NASA's elite corps of astronauts. Frick presented all the winners with a NASA photo of the space shuttle Columbia and a NASA patch.

The second place winner was Emily Group of Chatham, New York. Emily is a home-schooled seventh grade student with a strong interest in science and is a member of two 4-H clubs. Her essay, "The Importance of Agriculture in Urban Areas" highlighted her thoughts on the future of agriculture.

Marshall Edwards received the third place award for his essay, "Biogenetics in the Future." An eighth grader from Rincon, Ga, Marshall is vice president of his middle school chapter of FFA.

In making the presentations, Veneman was joined by L. J. Koong, president of CAST and professor in the Department of Animal Science at Oregon State University. The winning essays are posted on the CAST website at <http://www.cast-science.org>.

USDA is also partnering with other U.S. public and private organizations to observe ESTME Week which focuses on the role math and science education and technology will have in shaping the future of agriculture. USDA has marked this week with a new website <http://www.reeusda.gov>.

Students in grades K-12, teachers and parents will find activities and materials about nutrition, food safety, minerals, microorganisms, the soil, sustainability, conservation and lesson plans for fun hands-on projects.

ESTME Week was initiated by the Office of Science and Technology Policy of the Executive Office of the President and was chosen to coincide with other events including National Agriculture Week, which runs through March 23, 2003.

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