

August Wilson Center Presents \$1,000 Awards To Five Area Students

Essay Contest Winners Mark August Wilson's Birthday By Recounting Their Own Stories Of Triumph

Pittsburgh, PA – June 8, 2007 – The August Wilson Center for African American Culture (AWC) announced the winners of its 2007 essay contest. The contest was part of a month-long celebration marking what would have been playwright August Wilson's 62nd birthday on April 27, 2007.

High school students from five counties in southwestern Pennsylvania were invited to read some of Wilson's award-winning plays and "write their own stories" of how they overcame challenges in their lives.

The winners are:

Allegheny County

Kate Bauer (Mount Lebanon, PA)
Junior
Shady Side Academy

Beaver County

Leanne Murray (Freedom, PA)
Junior
Freedom Area High School

Butler County

Dillon Schwertz (Renfrew, PA)
Freshman
Knoch High School

Washington County

Maura Rodgers (Eighty Four, PA)
Junior
Ringgold High School

Westmoreland County

Emily Tolvinski (New Derry, PA)
Senior
Derry Area High School

Each received a \$1,000 prize at ceremonies during the opening of the exhibit, *Art for August*, at the AWC's Gallery 209/9 in downtown Pittsburgh on May 17.

"August Wilson's plays as well as his life have motivated many people to succeed over what are seemingly insurmountable odds," says Neil Barclay, the August Wilson Center's president and CEO, who presented the awards. "Our judges found that these young awardees already had remarkable stories of their own to tell, inspiring all of us."

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Raised in Pittsburgh and self-taught, August Wilson (1945-2005) became a prolific playwright best known for his "10-Play Cycle," all but one set in his native Hill District. He won Pulitzer Prizes for "Fences" in 1987 and "The Piano Lesson" in 1990. "Fences" also won a Tony Award.

Members of the Pittsburgh Chapter of The Links, Inc., a not-for-profit organization of more than 12,000 women of color committed to enhancing the quality of life in their communities, served as judges for the essay contest. Judges included: Mrs. Margaret Burley, retired Pittsburgh Public School teacher and "Teacher of the Year Award" recipient; Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Haley, community leader and retired chair of the Schenley High School English Department; Dr. Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard, an award-winning children's book author and professor emeritus, West Virginia University; and Mrs. Gwendolyn Simmons, a community leader.

The August Wilson Center for African American Culture, Alcoa Foundation, the Kingsley Association, the Allegheny County Library Association and Dollar Bank sponsored the contest.

Curated by Janera Solomon, *Art for August* runs through August 31 at the August Wilson Center's Gallery 209/9, 209 Ninth Street, between Penn and Liberty avenues in the Cultural District. It features work in a variety of media by 11 Pittsburgh-based artists. Each work was inspired by the plays, poetry and life of August Wilson. The exhibition is free and open to the public. Gallery hours are Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, noon to 5 pm, and Thursday, noon to 7 pm.

Previously shown in Pittsburgh in early 2006, *Art for August* is a project of The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's Education and Community Engagement Department, with the generous support of Dollar Bank, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, the Multicultural Arts Initiative and the Pittsburgh Chapter of The Links, Inc.

For more information, visit www.augustwilsoncenter.org or call 412.258.2700.

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