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For immediate release

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Lincoln Hero Essay Contest Winners Visit the Land of Lincoln!

Winners from Nigeria, Georgia and Illinois

Springfield—Winners of the “Looking for Your Lincoln Hero” essay contest will be visiting the Land of Lincoln this week. Their trip will include stops at the Illinois State Fair, many iconic and historic Lincoln legacy sites across central Illinois, concluding with a day and a half of sightseeing at Chicago Museums. The contest was sponsored by the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area who partnered with another non-profit, called the My Hero Project, to offer the first ever global, online essay and art contest, celebrating the life of Abraham Lincoln, during this Bicentennial year.

“The contest winners each told touching stories about their own Lincoln heroes and were selected by panels of educators and historians from coast to coast, along with internationally known hero, Paul Rusesabagina of Hotel Rwanda fame. The contest’s distinguished co-chairs were the 3 US Lincoln Bicentennial Co-chairs, US Senator Dick Durbin, then-Congressman Ray LaHood and Lincoln scholar and author, Harold Holzer, from New York. The winners making the trip, made the case for three (3) different Lincoln Heroes that included Barrack Obama, one of the children’s mother and one youngster’s deceased grandfather,” said Hal Smith, Director of the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area.

“This contest was designed to transport the legacy of one of our greatest American heroes to the present. Abraham Lincoln’s most admired strengths of principle and character, throughout his life and during some of our nation’s most tumultuous times, have been sources of inspiration for generations of Americans and people around the world,” Senator Durbin, contest co-chair offered at the launch of the contest.

The purpose of the contest was to bring the Lincoln legacy forward, to have application in the lives of students today, by asking them to identify someone in their own life that reflected the

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qualities most admired in Lincoln. Links to the actual essays, located on the MyHero.com website, are below:

Barack Obama (High School- Senior) by Fatima

http://www.myhero.com/myhero/go/specialevents/hero.asp?hero=B_Obama_johnston_hs_US_2009_ul&eid=1

Hometown--I sent an email to see where "home" was and how long she would be in the U.S. Currently she is in DesMoines, IA

Lisa Saunooke- Mother- (Middle School- 8th grade) by James

http://www.myhero.com/myhero/go/specialevents/hero.asp?hero=L_Saunooke_campbell_ms_US_2009_ul&eid=1

Hometown--Marietta, Georgia

Grandpa Jalil Salman- Grandfather- (Elementary School-6th grade) by Christina

http://www.myhero.com/myhero/go/specialevents/hero.asp?hero=J_Salman_paloseast_es_US_2009_ul&eid=1

Hometown: Palos Park, IL

“Looking for Lincoln and My Hero are both extremely proud of the stories told by these 3 students from different parts of the world. We succeeded in tapping into the reservoir of good will and respect that exists for Lincoln on all continents. This contest offered us a way to remind students of the great legacy assigned to Lincoln while offering students a chance to find someone in their own lives that touches them with character strengths like Lincoln’s. Our hope is they will look for opportunities to incorporate some of those admirable human qualities into their own lives, as they move into adulthood, preserving Lincoln’s legacy and using it as a tool for positive mentoring, today and tomorrow!, added Smith.

Judges included the inspirational Paul Rusesabagina of Hotel Rwanda fame, Harold Holzer, Eileen Mackevich, Executive Director of the US Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, Kathryn Harris, Director of Library Services at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Dr. Marcia Young, Dr. Daniel Stowell, director of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln and Illinois Art Laureate, Kay Smith.

The winners will begin their tour of Lincoln sites on Tuesday, August 18th in Bloomington at the David Davis Mansion, and also visit Lincoln and Mt. Pulaski Courthouses where Lincoln argued cases on the 8th Judicial Circuit. On the 19th they are scheduled to meet Illinois Governor Pat Quinn on Governor’s Day at the Illinois State Fair and visit the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library, and the only home Lincoln ever owned in Springfield. On the 20th they will visit Lincoln’s Law Office, the famous Old State Capitol and Lincoln’s Tomb in Springfield, before moving to

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nearby New Salem Log Cabin village, where Lincoln first came to Illinois to live for an extended period. On the 21st, they will visit the Field Museum, the Chicago History Museum and the new

Skydeck at the Willis Towers, in Chicago. They return home mid afternoon on Saturday, August 22nd, armed with more knowledge about the Lincoln legacy.

The My Hero Project is a not-for-profit, interdisciplinary website (www.myhero.com) that honors the very best of humanity. All across the globe, students of all ages, along with their teachers, parents and friends use the site to learn about those who better the world around them, whether their world is as small as a single household or as large as an entire continent. In turn, myhero.com visitors, who generate nearly 2 million page hits per month, are also able to share their own stories about people who help make a difference.

The Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area is composed of the 42 counties of central Illinois where Lincoln spent 30 years of his adult life, preparing to become the most admired president in American history. The Congress designated the National Heritage Area last year and named Looking for Lincoln as the management entity for the Area. For more information on the Heritage Area and the Looking for Lincoln Story Trail, go to: www.lookingforlincoln.com.

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