



**CONTACT:**

Leon Rubin  
Office Depot Foundation  
561-251-8075  
[LRubin@jkggroup.com](mailto:LRubin@jkggroup.com)

Debby Dodge  
USA TODAY  
703-854-5917  
[DDodge@usatoday.com](mailto:DDodge@usatoday.com)

**OFFICE DEPOT FOUNDATION DREAM UP ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS SET SIGHTS ON REMARKABLY DIVERSE FUTURE ‘DREAM JOBS’**

*Program Offered to Nearly 60,000 Middle School Students In Two Years in Collaboration with USA TODAY Education*

**BOCA RATON, Fla., December 8, 2011** – Ask a group of middle school students what they’d like to be when they grow up, and the answers might surprise you. How about a fighter pilot, a chemist or an automobile designer?

These careers, along with teaching and broadcasting, were the “Dream Jobs” chosen by the five latest national essay contest winners in the Dream UP Career Exploration Program, which is sponsored by the [Office Depot Foundation](#) – the independent, non-profit foundation that serves as the primary charitable giving arm of Office Depot Inc. (NYSE: ODP) – in collaboration with [USA TODAY Education](#). The students will have the chance to live their dream job for a day through hands-on mentoring experiences.

Since its introduction in 2010 – and including the current semester – nearly 60,000 young people in 20 states have examined future career opportunities through this free program, which seeks to address the alarming problem of middle school students dropping out of school.

“By giving middle school students the tools and resources to begin to consider career opportunities, establish long-term goals and dream about what they might become in the future,” says Foundation President Mary Wong, “the Dream UP Program represents a vitally important strategy that teachers and schools can use to keep students in the classroom, rather than losing them to the streets.”

Throughout the Dream UP curriculum, students read and analyze real-world information found in the print and online editions of USA TODAY. They learn about workplace trends, explore and research numerous career options that they discover, develop a career portfolio and write an essay about their “Dream Job.”

The five essay contest winners from the spring semester (and their “Dream Jobs”) were:

- Alejandro Benitez, Albritton Junior High School, Fort Bragg, N.C. – automobile designer
- Hannah Fuchs, Kyrene Akimel A-al Middle School, Phoenix, Ariz. – chemist
- Vanessa Macias, Columbia Explorers Academy, Chicago – teacher
- Jenna Nabors, Seventy First Classical Middle School, Fayetteville, N.C. – broadcasting

- Aylin Stout, Albritton Junior High School, Fort Bragg, N.C. – fighter pilot (Stout now attends school in Oklahoma City.)

The 49 essays that were judged in the national contest cited 40 different occupations covering a remarkably wide range of interests. The health professions were well represented – orthodontist, neurosurgeon, pediatrician (three times), doctor (twice) and pathologist. So were the creative industries – author (twice), photographer, actress, singer, drummer and comic book creator. Such diverse careers as minister, architect, storm chaser, dolphin trainer and professional football player were chosen. Three students aspired to be lawyers.

“We are pleased to see that the students identified so many different career choices,” says Debby Dodge, director of USA TODAY Education Programs. “These young people truly see no limits. We are proud to play a role in giving them such an outstanding opportunity to dream about the future – and to create a plan to make their dreams come true.”

To learn more about the Dream UP Program, please visit

<http://www.officedepotfoundation.org/education.asp> or  
<http://usatodayeducate.com/wordpress/index.php/dream-up-office-depot>.

###

### **About the Office Depot Foundation**

The [Office Depot Foundation](#) is an independent foundation – tax exempt under IRC Sec. 501(c)(3) – that serves as the independent charitable giving arm of Office Depot, Inc. In keeping with its mission, Listen Learn Care<sup>®</sup>, the Foundation supports a variety of programs that help children succeed in school and in life; enable civil society (non-profit) organizations to become more efficient and effective; help people and businesses prepare for disasters, as well as recover and rebuild afterwards; strengthen local communities through grants, product donations and volunteerism; and encourage community development through entrepreneurship and economic innovation.

### **About USA TODAY**

Since 1983, USA TODAY has made a commitment to education that is unparalleled in the industry. [USA TODAY's Education program](#) is currently in place in over 30,000 K-12 classes across the country and on more than 450 university and college campuses, impacting over one million students daily. Educators have reached out to USA TODAY for over 25 years because of the unique format, credible non-fiction text and topics that are relevant and motivating for students. Students like reading USA TODAY because of its unique style, bold color and graphics and easy-to-access information. USA TODAY covers contemporary issues that students can relate to and easily understand.

USA TODAY is a multi-platform news and information media company. Founded in 1982, USA TODAY's mission is to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation. Today, through its newspaper, website and mobile platforms, USA TODAY connects readers and engages the national conversation. USA TODAY, the nation's number one newspaper in print circulation with an average of nearly 1.8 million daily, and USATODAY.com, an award-winning newspaper website launched in 1995, reach a combined 5.4 million readers daily. USA TODAY is a leader in mobile applications with more than ten million downloads on mobile devices. The USA TODAY brand also includes USA TODAY Education and USA TODAY Sports Weekly. USA TODAY is owned by Gannett Co., Inc. (NYSE: GCI).