

NEWS RELEASE

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Interlake High School senior Justina Chen wins 2014 Scott Johnson Open Government Essay Contest



Justina Chen, a senior at Bellevue's Interlake High School, has won the \$1,000 top prize in the 2014 Scott Johnson Open Government Essay Contest conducted by the Washington Coalition for Open Government. Justina is the daughter of Peter and Jenny Chen of Newcastle.

Brian Sonderen, a Camas High School junior, and Emily Halvorson, an Olympia High School junior, received \$100 honorable mention awards. The statewide contest was open to all high school juniors and seniors.

The contest honors Scott Johnson, a longtime WCOG board member who was elected as a King County Superior Court judge in 2012 but died of a heart attack before he was to take office. Johnson was an attorney at the Stokes Lawrence law firm in Seattle. Stokes Lawrence is a co-sponsor of the contest.

Chen will begin college at Cornell University this fall. Her winning essay observed that "local government has remarkable control over citizens' livelihoods, access to resources and overall well-being . . . Citizens of Washington State need the Open Public Meetings Act and the Public Records Act to verify that public officials are upholding citizen interests and the constitutional foundation of our human rights." Chen cited an instance in which the Bellevue School District wrongly refused to open to the public the meetings of an advisory committee that was revising the district's math curriculum.

All three essays are posted online at
http://www.washingtoncog.org/scott_johnson_sa_award.php.

The Washington Coalition for Open Government is a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advocates for the people's right to access government information. WCOG stands for the principle that transparency and public participation are essential building blocks of good government.

Membership in the coalition is open to all those who want to promote and protect open government. More information is available online at www.washingtoncog.org or contact WCOG at info@washingtoncog.org or call (206) 782-0393.