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Ohio Student Awarded Grand Prize in Lions International Essay Contest

OAK BROOK, IL, USA, March 7, 2015 – Jalen Ballard, a 12-year-old boy from Toledo, Ohio, has been named the grand prize winner of the 2014-2015 Lions International Essay Contest for visually impaired youth.

Ballard received a check for \$5,000 during a special awards ceremony at the 37th annual Lions Day with the United Nations, held at the U.N. Headquarters in New York City. The event was attended by nearly 500 Lions from 30 countries and more than 20 U.N. ambassadors.

The Lions International Essay Contest, sponsored by Lions Clubs International, encourages visually impaired children ages 11-13 to express what peace means to them.

Ballard's essay was selected for his ability to convey this year's theme, "Peace, Love, and Understanding." Ballard wrote: "To get the greatest potential out of our precious and limited lives on Earth, we must all be peaceful, love each other, and be understanding. Our world will never be perfect, but that doesn't mean we can't strive for the best as a society."

Ballard's entry was sponsored by the Sylvania Sunrise Lions Club in Sylvania, Ohio. The president of the club also attended the U.N. event.

Lions Clubs International is the largest service club organization in the world. Its 1.35 million members in more than 46,000 clubs are serving communities in more than 200 countries and geographical areas around the globe. Since 1917, Lions clubs have aided the blind and visually impaired, championed youth initiatives and strengthened local communities through hands-on service and humanitarian projects. For more information about Lions Clubs International, visit lionsclubs.org.

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