



# *News Release*

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## **Three Michigan Students Win 2016 Letters about Literature Contest**

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LANSING – Three Michigan students wrote to authors about the challenges of living with disabilities or as a minority, and now all three are 2016 Letters about Literature winners, the Library of Michigan (LM) announced today.

Letters about Literature is an annual contest sponsored by the National Center for the Book at the Library of Congress. Young readers write letters to authors, living or dead, describing how the authors' works changed their lives. Students participate through classroom activities or by writing to an author on their own. Participating schools and libraries encourage students to submit letters.

Letters about Literature winners are:

- State Level I (grades 4-6) winner – Beatrice Mulder, a 6<sup>th</sup>-grader at Holland Christian Schools, who wrote to author Sharon Draper about her book, *Out of My Mind*. She won a reading promotion grant to the Herrick District Library.

In her letter, Mulder tells about how the book encouraged her to reach out to a disabled classmate. "I had to train my brain to think, how's he doing, instead of the usual, can he hear me?"

- State Level II (grades 7-8) winner – Alexis Krumbach, a 7<sup>th</sup>-grade at Williamston Middle School, who wrote to author Joni Eareckson Tada about her book, *Joni, An Unforgettable Story*. She won a reading promotion grant to Williamston Middle School.

Krumbach wrote that Tada's story helped her put her learning disability into a broader context and "to appreciate my strengths and blessings... If you can focus on what is positive in your life, I can focus on positive things in my life, too."

- The State Level III (grades 9-12) winner's name was withheld by request. The Ann Arbor resident wrote to author Maya Angelou about her book, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The student won a reading promotion grant to Skyline High School.

The Level III winner explains in her letter how Angelou's story of growing up a minority was a lesson for her own life: "I'm rediscovering my language, my family, and my culture," the student wrote.

State Finalists were:

- Andrew Ouellette of Beverly Hills – Level I
- Olivia Frye of Grosse Pointe Farms – Level I
- Madeline Gibb of Fenton – Level I
- Trucy Phan of Williamston – Level II
- Zyk Hlavacek of Saginaw – Level II
- Jacqueline Mularoni of Bloomfield Hills – Level II
- Name withheld of Dexter – Level III
- Hannah-Noel Lucas of Perry – Level III
- Molly Hulbert of Middleville – Level III

Michele Ellis of Williamston Middle School was chosen as the 2016 Michigan Letters about Literature Teacher of the Year.

"Literature is a window for children to see and understand other cultures and people through. As readers, they then can understand their own experiences through the characters they connect with," Letters about Literature Coordinator Karren Reish said. "The letters they write in the program help them articulate this. Reading and literature are not just homework, but a way for students to understand their lives and the lives of people around them."

State winners receive a \$50 Schuler Books & Music gift card and \$250 reading promotion grant for the library of their choice. State finalists receive a \$20 gift card to Schuler Books & Music. Gifts cards and grants are courtesy the Library of Congress and the Michigan Center for the Book, a program of the LM and member affiliates.

The winners' complete letters are available at [www.michigan.gov/youthlibraryservices](http://www.michigan.gov/youthlibraryservices).

For more information on the Michigan Center for the Book, visit [www.michigan.gov/mcfb](http://www.michigan.gov/mcfb).

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The Library of Michigan – Michigan's official state library agency for more than 175 years – is part of the Michigan Department of Education. To learn more, visit [www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan](http://www.michigan.gov/libraryofmichigan).