



## December 2024: The Upcoming PA Farm Show, Essay Contest, and The Litter Hawk Youth Award Program

In December, we hosted the 2024 SAS Institute, where Leon Smith, an educator at Haverford Township School District, was named [Pennsylvania's 2025 Teacher of the Year](#). At the event, several school districts received recognition for their work as a Green Ribbon School, and applications are now being accepted for next year's [Green Ribbon Schools program](#). This month, we also announced 44 colleges, universities, and other postsecondary institutes received more than [\\$1.6 million in It's On Us PA Grants](#) to combat campus sexual assault.

As we approached the winter holidays, PDE would like to extend warm wishes to all across our community. This time of year offers the opportunity for reflection, gratitude and celebration. We appreciate the unwavering dedication of our educators, administrators, and support staff who have worked tirelessly throughout the year to create enriching and nurturing environments for our learners.



## Resources Available for the 2025 PA Farm Show

This year, Pennsylvania's Promise for Children has compiled a list of learning resources for the upcoming 2025 Pennsylvania Farm Show. The PA Farm Show will be held from September 12-14, 2025.

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January 4 until Saturday, January 11. Resources from PA's Promise for Children includes family resources for early learners in both English and in Spanish.

Additionally, the Pennsylvania Farm Show is continuing its AgExplorer program virtually where learners of all ages can explore adventures through the world of Pennsylvania agriculture.



## 2025-2026 FAFSA NOW AVAILABLE

## 2025-2026 FAFSA Form Now Available

In November, the U.S. Department of Education released the **2025-26 FAFSA form**. The online FAFSA form is available to all students and families at [FAFSA.gov](https://fafsa.gov), and the US Department of Education (USDE) is processing submissions and sending them to schools. The paper form is also now available for students to submit.

The USDE has taken steps to modernize and address issues in the FAFSA system and put in place features that further enhance the user experience and improve functionality of the form. In addition, it has released and updated resources and materials to help students and families, as well as counselors and financial aid professionals, to better navigate the FAFSA form and process.

For those who need additional assistance, the USDE has made significant improvements, such as increased staffing and surge period extended hours, at the Federal Student Aid Information Center.

In the coming days and weeks, the USDE will carefully monitor the 2025-26 FAFSA form, as well as the contact center, and make any needed adjustments to improve the experience for students, families, and the financial aid community. In the coming months, the USDE will further enhance the user experience and release additional functionality, including batch corrections and paper corrections, to facilitate a smoother process for students, families, and institutions.

Stay tuned to [StudentAid.gov](https://studentaid.gov), where the USDE will continue to share updates about the 2025-26 FAFSA cycle. We appreciate your partnership to help students and families complete the FAFSA form to access needed financial aid to pursue their higher education goals.

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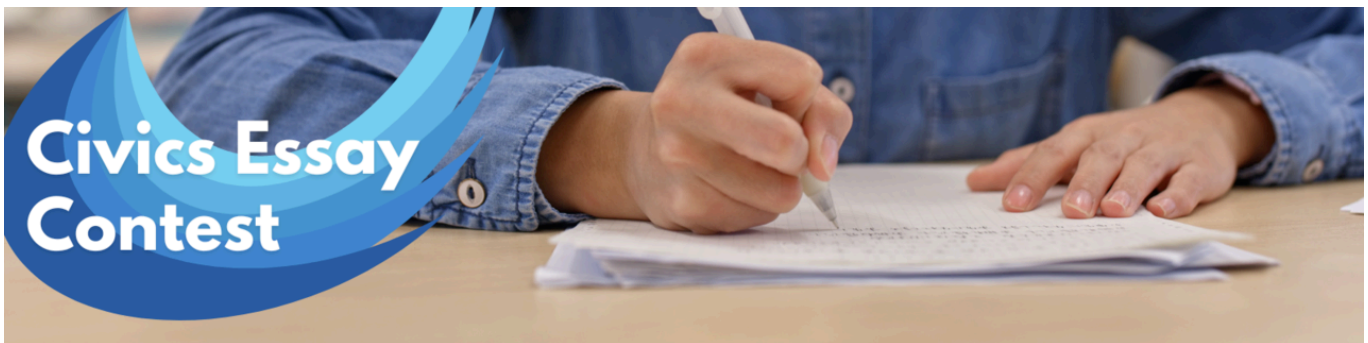


## Final Reminder: PennDot's Innovations Challenge

The Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) announced its eighth annual Innovations Challenge in October, which encourages students to use their problem-solving, creative and strategic-thinking abilities to solve real-world transportation challenges in a competition among their peers. The Innovations Challenge is open to all students in grades 9-12, regardless of their school's learning model.

For this year's challenge, students are asked to develop a cost-effective, innovative solution that can help PennDOT more effectively increase awareness of seatbelt safety and change behavior to improve roadway safety.

For complete Innovations Challenge details, visit the [Innovations Challenge webpage](#). The submission deadline is **January 31, 2025**.



## Third Judicial Circuit Hosting Essay Contest

The Courts, Community, and Rule of Law Committee of the Judicial Council of the Third Circuit announced that it is hosting an essay contest for elementary students focused on civics, citizenship, and the concept of “We the People” – which are the first three words of the Preamble to the United States Constitution. The essay prompt is: How did our Nation’s Founders envision ‘the People’ when they drafted the Constitution, and how should we interpret their vision in our country today?

The essay may be written by either an individual student or by an entire class. If a class essay, students within a participating class should work together to write the essay. That means that only one essay is submitted on behalf of the class. Individual and class essays must be submitted on or before **Monday, March 31, 2025**.

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The best individual and class essays in each district (District of Delaware, District of New Jersey, Eastern District of Pennsylvania, Middle District of Pennsylvania, Western District of Pennsylvania, and the District of the Virgin Islands) of the Third Circuit will be invited to one of the nine courthouses in the Third Circuit to present their essays during the first weeks of May, in celebration of Law Day. The individual and class essays will be judged separately based on focus, content development, organization, and style. Prizes will be awarded.

For more information about the essay contest, please visit the [Third Circuit Court of Appeals website](#) or contact **267-299-4306**.

#### Additional Information Regarding the Essay Contest



## Litter Hawk Youth Award Program

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Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is announcing the [2025 Litter Hawk Youth Award Program](#), a recognition program for students in kindergarten through 6th grade to share how they keep Pennsylvania beautiful through art, words or video. In support of the Greatest American Cleanup, Keep America Beautiful's national three-year campaign to motivate, educate and celebrate communities to clean up and green up ahead of the Country's 250th anniversary on July 4, 2026, this year's Litter Hawk Youth Award theme is: **Join the Greatest American Cleanup! Show us how you can keep your community litter free for America's 250th birthday.**

Two entries will be awarded in each grade level. Projects include:

- Grades kindergarten through 4 – Poster
- Grade 5 – Essay
- Grade 6 – Video

Winners will be announced in April 2025 in coordination with an awards ceremony at the PA State Capitol Building where all winning entries will be on display as part of the 2025 Litter Hawk Youth Exhibit. All winners and their families, guardians and teachers are welcome to attend. Special guests will include representatives from the Department of Environmental Protection and America250PA.

First place and second place will receive a certificate and Litter Hawk sticker. All participants will receive a Litter Hawk sticker. For more information and an application, visit the [Litter Hawk Youth Award Program webpage](#). **The deadline for participating is January 31, 2025.**



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