

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

First Annual Chinese Speech Contest for High School Chinese Language Program Students in Georgia a Resounding Success

Atlanta, Georgia (April 25, 2011) – With K-12 Chinese language programs in Georgia having grown from just one in 2000, to more than forty today, there is a developing community of students and teachers of Chinese as a second language here in the state.

Last Saturday, April 23, 2011 at Kennesaw State University, 24 high school students from all corners of Georgia competed for prizes and recognition in this first contest of its kind in the state.

Students competed at 4 levels (based on years of Chinese study), and gave 3-5 minute speeches, entirely in Chinese - many of them not using notes, on the topic “Chinese and Me”. After students’ presentations, four judges asked a wide array of questions about the students’ speeches as well as their lives and the study of Chinese.

The organizers were pleased with the results - “This statewide contest is a great opportunity for students studying Chinese from different schools to come together to share their experiences, and learn from one another. It is also a great opportunity for our teachers to assess ourselves by listening to our students’ speeches. It is true collaborative learning,” says the head of the Georgia Chinese Language Educators (GCLE) committee organizing this event, Dr. Zhao Fangxia who teaches Chinese at North Atlanta High School.

Students were also excited to have an opportunity to perform for their peers, teachers and families, and, in some cases, be rewarded.

As it strives to catch up to other states around the nation, Georgia has a growing number of K-12 Chinese language programs, mostly at the high school level. “Students, their parents, and the broader community are starting to focus on the importance of China in the current and future global economy, and realizing that studying Chinese language is a critical window into understanding Chinese culture and society,” says Krista Forsgren, founder of Windows on Asia and a member of the GCLE board.

Students are being inspired to think about learning Chinese as a way to further future college and professional opportunities through programs in their schools: “I study Chinese because I love languages and realize that the ability to speak Chinese is a very valuable skill - China is a rapidly developing country with the largest population of any nation in the world. I plan to continue studying Chinese and to pursue it as a career in the future,” says Claire Beskin, a Junior at The Lovett School, and first prize contest winner (Level 4).

The event was organized by GCLE, a group that was formed by a handful of Chinese teachers in 2008, to bring teachers of this less commonly taught language together, and to create training and networking opportunities for themselves and their students. Now boasting more than seventy members, the organization decided to hold its first statewide contest, with the generous co-sponsorship of The Confucius Institute at Kennesaw State University.

Students who placed in each category include:

LEVEL 1 - 1st place: Yelim Youm (Columbus HS), 2nd place (tie): Joohee Kang (Chattahoochee HS) & April Nguyen (Columbus HS), 3rd place: Garrett McDaniel (Georgia Virtual School).

LEVEL 2 – 1st place (tie): Robert Houghton (The Lovett School) & Youngbum Chaey (Northview HS), 2nd place (tie): Charles Marcus (Woodward Academy) & David Fair (North Atlanta HS), 3rd place: Lily Barret (West Hall HS)

LEVEL 3 – 1st place: Susie Kim (Northview HS), 2nd place: Taehoon Kim (Columbus HS), 3rd place (tie): Makiya Karimbocas (North Atlanta HS) & McKinsey Nguyen (Gainesville HS) & Dalena Tran (Gainesville HS)

LEVEL 4 – 1st place (tie): Claire Beskin (The Lovett School) & Sion Chung (Peachtree Ridge HS)

GCLE is a non-political, non-profit, educational organization for pre-kindergarten through university-level Chinese language and culture educators, in the State of Georgia. Its mission is to promote high-quality Chinese language education, through teacher training programs, administrator information for schools interested in starting Chinese language programs, and teacher and student networking opportunities. See <http://www.gcle.org> for more information.

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TOP LEFT: Lily Barret of West Hall High School – 3rd place winner for Level 2;

TOP RIGHT: Yelim Youm of Columbus HS – 1st place winner for Level 1;
MIDDLE LEFT: Makiya Karimbocas of North Atlanta High School – 3rd place, Level 3;
MIDDLE RIGHT: Robert Houghton of The Lovett School receiving his 1st place award (Level 2) from Dongmei Liao of the KSU Confucius Institute and GCLE board members and event organizers, Dr. Zhao Fangxia and Ms. Betty Hu;
BOTTOM: Group photo of some of the participating students.