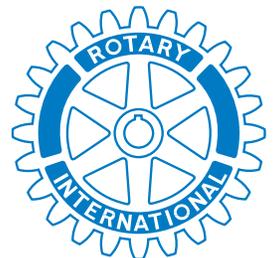
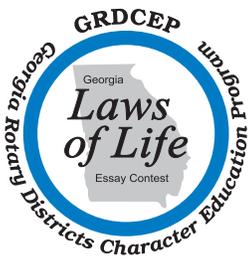


GEORGIA ROTARY DISTRICTS CHARACTER EDUCATION PROGRAM'S

2011-2012

GEORGIA LAWS OF LIFE ESSAY CONTEST



Lessons Learned From Life

U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan recently said, "**Ultimately, we're trying to teach life lessons.... What are the lessons? Integrity matters. Honesty matters.**" For thirteen years, the Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest has successfully been in the vanguard of character education and ethical literacy for Georgia high school students. The contest asks students to select a saying that is a "Law of Life" (for example, "Don't judge a book by its cover" or "Adversity makes a person stronger") and to use that saying to reflect upon and write about key life lessons and core character values such as honesty, generosity, courage, compassion, and perseverance.

In reflecting on their lives and writing their essays, students often find hope in situations that seem full of despair, discern triumph in the midst of tragedy, or find pyrotechnics in a simple smile. In doing so, they also discover the power of the written word.

The Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest thanks the thousands of students and teachers who embraced this year's contest, and the sponsors and Rotarians who made the contest come alive. We particularly thank the seven state winners whose essays are showcased in this publication. Their stories—sometimes tinged with sadness, often graced by humor, and always full of keen observations—are inspiring.

Sincerely,



George Stewart
Chair, Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc. (GRDCEP)



Susan G. Mason
Executive Director, Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc. (GRDCEP) and Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest

GEORGIA

LAWS OF LIFE

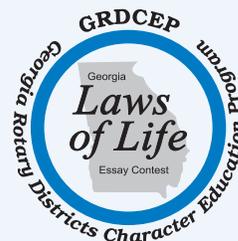
ESSAY CONTEST
2011-2012

Facts and Benefits

- More than 40,500 students wrote essays for the 2011-2012 Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest.
- The contest named 142 school-level winners and seven state winners, and it distributed \$17,000 in cash awards to students and teachers.
- Forty-seven high schools across the state participated in this year's contest.
- The Georgia contest is the largest *Laws of Life* contest in North America, and the second largest in the world. More than 365,000 *Laws of Life* essays have been written by Georgia students since the contest began in 1999.
- The contest is a character values competition based on a model created by the late Sir John Templeton, who was a pioneer in global investments and the founder of The John Templeton Foundation.
- The contest is made possible by our sponsors, including this year's Presenting Sponsors, the John Templeton Foundation, the Waterfall Foundation, the John and Mary Franklin Foundation, and Outlaw Consulting, Inc., as well as 37 sponsoring Rotary clubs from across the state, and dozens of additional corporate and individual sponsors who believe in the importance of character and integrity.

The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest is a program of the Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc. (GRDCEP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

www.georgialawsoflife.org



Anna Riordan

9th Grade

Alpharetta High School, Alpharetta Georgia



I still go back to that hot summer day every once in a while; back to the hustling crowds, the planes coming and going in the distance, and the hot sweat running down my neck and arms. My family and I were flying out of state for a vacation. I do not remember exactly where we were going, but I do remember the odd chill down my spine, the feeling that I was being watched.

Goosebumps broke out over the back of my neck and down my forearms, while my heart clamored inside my chest like a scared animal attempting to escape a cage. I was suddenly acutely aware of every pair of eyes, and just waiting for them to turn and stare.

I was afraid; afraid of the torments I may receive or the feeling that I wasn't like anybody else. Every time a nearby adult opened their mouth or a child pointed, I would cringe, waiting for the dreaded mention of my left cheek, the one that had been covered in a port-wine stain since birth.

It felt like decades since I hadn't cared about the red drops dribbling down my face. As I grew older, the stain had become my whole life; an obsession that constantly had me watching other people to see their reactions to my deformity. And now, in the airport, I was calculating every look, every passing glance, as something negative.

We walked slowly along amongst the masses of people towards our terminal, my eyes darting to every sweaty creature we were close to. But then, in the midst of distractions and hurried movements, I first saw the soldier. He was tall and slim, yet well built. His outgrown hair fell below his damp cap, and one of his pant legs was rolled up to reveal empty space where the rest of his leg should have been.

I stared at him as we passed, unable to take my eyes off him. But it wasn't his leg that I was fixated on; it was his open, smiling expression and the way he was shaking hands with a group of travelers surrounding him. He was acting completely and utterly normal, a feat I was never able to even imagine myself doing. I watched as a man gestured to his stump, an action that should have surely resulted in tension with the soldier, but he just shrugged his shoulders and kept smiling as if to say, "It just happened."

I must have been gaping by that time. For once in my life I wasn't preoccupied with how people were seeing me, but with how this man dealt with how people saw him. And then he looked up, and he saw me. I stiffened and my eyes were itching to look away, to not attract any more attention to myself, but then he smiled. He smiled so warmly that I had a feeling that I should check to see if he was looking at me or at someone else. I gave a tiny smile, and to my surprise, he nodded at me, and for once in my life, I didn't feel alone.

And as I continued walking past the soldier, I couldn't help but think about his perspective and actions. Even though in appearance he was handicapped and far from perfect, he still gave life the best he could without missing a beat. Suddenly, the crowds of passengers hustling by weren't so important anymore, and their opinions on what I looked like were even less important. A weight had been lifted off my shoulders, and as I smiled to myself, a simple whisper caressed my mind: *It's what's on the inside that counts.* I am so lucky to have all that I have and the people that I love, and it only took a nod of acceptance from a soldier in the middle of a crowd on a hot summer's day.

LAW OF LIFE:

"It's what's on the inside that counts."

Marissa McKee

11th grade

Eagle's Landing High School, McDonough, Georgia



A black cloud of dust and debris rose up before me in front of the backdrop of a blue sky and open highway. Confusion struck as my brain tried to process what I was seeing. Everything, except for a black SUV, froze. Fellow travelers and I watched in paralyzing horror as the car spun out of control, faster and faster, until it finally slammed against the guard rail. We watched as three bodies were ejected from their open windows, almost as if yanked back by some invisible harness. The driver was flung over the median and across three lanes of opposing traffic into the ditch. I can remember watching and trying to make sense of why a human was flying because that was what it looked like; gravity and force treated a full grown man as though he was a weightless doll, a toy and not a precious life. The two passengers, mother and older son, flew in the air and were quickly and mercilessly spit onto the scorching black road where they laid like two, unmoving crumpled heaps.

Silence. For one moment, we stared with disbelief; surely what we saw was not real but it was. Then, as if awoken from our trance, motion and chaos. Everyone on that busy interstate threw their cars into park and ran. They fearlessly and immediately approached the mutilated forms; they did not hesitate. Blankets, water, bandages, jackets, food, and medicine were produced from what seemed like thin air. Men and women guarded and cared for each of the three battered forms that had yet to stir.

I sat in the passenger seat telling my little brother and cousin to close their eyes and to not look at the forms that were just a few feet away while my father ran out to help. He melded into the thick crowd, and I watched men pull a small four-year-old blond boy out from his car seat in the rubble that was once his family's car. Women quickly led him away, sat him on a bright red picnic blanket, gave him food and water, and just held him.

Time passed and cars that had not witnessed the accident began driving by. Yet, even though they were not witnesses, they still knew that something significant and horrible happened. They drove by, holding out bottles of water and blankets, anything they had handy, and passed it to the people who were fiercely protecting the injured. Finally, the squeals and lights of ambulances were heard and seen, and relief washed through this impromptu community. The medics were able to give the injured the medical attention they needed.

I remember watching this scene unfold before me. I was struck then, not by the tragedy of the situation, though that has stuck with me, but by the beautiful example of the goodness in people's hearts. When the crisis occurred, the witnesses did not hesitate. Most were average humans, traveling like myself, but some were EMTs or firefighters and they quickly directed. I was awestruck how these people immediately organized themselves around the needs of this broken family. From this horrible incident, I found good. I witnessed humanity and compassion in its most raw and instinctual form. It reminded me that each and every human being has goodness inside them. In an age defined as selfish and callous, I witnessed a moment that reflected the very opposite.

The capability for complete abandonment of personal desires for the needs of others is what truly defines humankind. The Dalai Lama once said, "Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive." A human's ability to love and show kindness and mercy is what makes us different from animals or machines. Some question the integrity left in today's society, but I, for one, was blessed with the chance to witness love and compassion, as well as selflessness. If that was shown in just a mere fraction of the human race on one random tragedy, imagine how wonderful a place the world could be if we truly made an effort and all showed as much compassion as that which was shown on one hot and dusty highway road.

LAW OF LIFE:

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive."

– Dalai Lama

Kristen Hopper

11th grade

South Forsyth High School, Cumming, Georgia



Perhaps the most important ability for a person to possess is the ability to try one's best even when apprehensive and unconfident—the ability to face the fear of failure head on. Until recently, that was not an easy thing for me to do. When placed under extensive pressure, my resolve would often give way to fear, causing me not to reach my full potential. In the last months, however, I have been exposed to true courage, the kind that allows a person to succeed no matter how fearful he or she is. I have been taught to have that courage myself, and as a result, I have been able to achieve so much more than I ever have before.

LAW OF LIFE:

"I did it!"

It all began last winter, when my friend and I made the decision to start a special needs competition cheerleading program to begin the following August for girls of all ages afflicted with any kind of disability. We made all the preparations that we could in the following months to guarantee that the team would be a success. We distributed flyers advertising the team. We came up with a plan for practices to ensure that we could teach them as much as possible. But nothing that we did could have prepared us for the amazing lesson that our cheerleaders would inevitably teach us.

On the first day of practice, they traipsed in, ready to try their hardest. They showed us what skills they already had and worked tirelessly towards gaining skills they did not yet have. They were so proud of themselves for doing things that they never thought they would be able to do, and it showed in their eyes at practices. They oozed confidence. When our first competition rolled around, however, the girls began to get nervous, especially one named Elaine.* While we were backstage, she begged to be held, and while her eyes still showed her pride, they also revealed her apprehension. When the announcer called us out onto the competition floor, Elaine was so afraid that she hid where she could not be caught in order to avoid having to face her fears. We had to go on without her.

Luckily, that day we were scheduled to perform twice. We had a talk with Elaine about being brave and about showing everyone how amazing she was, and she agreed to go out and perform, provided someone carried her out. When we went out the second time, Elaine put all her effort into it. She smiled beautifully, cheered as loud as she could, danced her heart out, and executed her stunts perfectly. After it was over, she ran off the floor to hug her mother, and exclaimed, "I did it!"

That day, Elaine did what was possibly the scariest thing she had ever done, and she did it to the best of her abilities. She was able to push her fears aside and summon her self-confidence. That day, I resolved that I, too, would not allow my anxieties to hinder me any longer. I may have taught Elaine how to do cheerleading, and I may have helped to encourage her to work past her apprehension, but Elaine is the one who had the courage that she needed. She showed me that overcoming fears leads to success and to happiness. Because of the lesson she taught me, I will one day be able to look back on my life and see that, like Elaine, I mustered up the courage to do things that I was afraid to do. I will be able to say, "I did it!"

*Name has been changed.

Patrick Oney

11th grade

Ola High School, McDonough, Georgia



Anxiety, muscle aches, nausea, insomnia, vomiting, panic, convulsions: withdrawal symptoms of heroin. I experienced these all shortly after being born. Why? Because my biological mother chose her addiction over the son she was pregnant with. This is why I lived with my cousin for the first three months of my life. My "mom" was a strung-out addict stuck in prison. After my cousin became pregnant, I became the responsibility of DFACS, winding up in a temporary foster home before I was taken in at age three by a couple wanting to adopt, a couple who became my parents.

LAW OF LIFE:

***"Resentment hurts;
forgiveness heals."***

-Larry James

Early on in my life, I never gave much thought to the fact that the people I lived with weren't really my biological parents. At about age four, however, I began to feel like my birth mother had never wanted me; in my mind I had simply been "given up." I didn't understand how someone could just abandon her child. I always loved my adoptive parents, but I just felt that something was wrong.

Eventually, my mom met enough of DFACS's qualifications that she could visit me. So we would have visits at a building. Behind one of those glass windows that only the workers could see through, it was basically an observed visit. I don't remember much about the visits, but I can recall some things: the sadness of my adoptive mom as she dropped me off at the visiting center, the feeling that I had to go visit even though I didn't want to, and the statement that my biological mother made to me. I remember it clearly: "They don't love you as much as I do. You know that, right?" I was only five years old, and here she was, telling me that the people I lived with didn't love me as much as she did; the thing is, I wondered if it was true at the time.

After a while, my biological mom slipped back into old habits and lost visitation rights; however, she continued to fight against the adoption. It took a six year fight before my parents could formalize the adoption. Six years of court meetings, DFACS classes, paperwork, and caseworker visits. Six years of me not knowing what my fate would be. Needless to say, I was extremely confused at the time.

Finally, in the third grade, at the age of nine, I was formally adopted. I was overjoyed and relieved; I was officially an Oney. However, part of me was angry. I couldn't stand my biological mom. After all, she had stayed addicted to heroin while she was pregnant, she had been an unfit mother in every way, she had left me confused about my family, she had fought for rights even though she didn't deserve them, she had made my family go through hell. I literally hated her. When I was about thirteen, we received a letter from her apologizing for all she had done and stating that she had recently recovered from breast cancer and wished she could see a picture of me. My response was instant: I threw the letter away and refused to allow my mom to send her a picture. I was almost sad that the breast cancer hadn't killed her. In my mind, I was okay; in reality, my hate towards her was out of control.

At about fourteen, I really started to come to terms with how serious my hate towards her was. When I recalled how I had wanted her dead, I realized that I was being eaten alive by my hate. In the end, I matured enough to forgive her, and I noticed that things changed. I wasn't embarrassed about being adopted anymore; I could talk to anyone about it. The fact that the person who had given birth to me was a criminal didn't matter; that was a thing of the past. I really grew as a person after I forgave her. That's why I live by a life-changing law of life. "Resentment hurts; forgiveness heals."

Michael Deep

9th grade

Cherokee High School, Canton, Georgia



Ever since I was little, I have always wanted to become a Marine. Two years ago, I was given the opportunity to visit Parris Island, where Marines are trained. It was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity. But one thing still made me quiver: a forty-seven-foot rappel tower that I was told we must go down. Ever since I was little, the Parris Island rappel tower was not something I took lightly. My dad, a Marine himself, told me about the fear he felt when he went down it. I had always figured that by the time I was able to join the Marines I would have miraculously gained courage that I didn't possess then.

But now here I stood; 14 years old, yet still so much a child inside. I could hear my boots clattering off the grated metal steps as I slowly made my way towards the top of the tower. With every step I took, I saw the safety of the ground slipping away from me. My stomach began to tie itself in knots, and my mind began to think of everything that could go wrong and send me plummeting forty-seven feet to the ground. I remembered what the drill instructor told us before we began to walk up the stairs, "Once you put your foot on that first step, there's only one way you are coming back to the ground," he said, as he pointed up at the ominous looking wall.

The line pushed me forward, and I was forced to climb higher towards the top of the tower. As I approached the hatch at the top, I bit my lip to keep from shaking violently. My boots rang out against the thin steel planking as I took a few steps out on to the top of the tower. I could see the tops of pine trees reaching mere feet above the top of the tower. I watched as my fellow cadets went down the tower, either by choice or shoved over the side in tears. "I'm going to do this," I thought, "because this is who I want to be."

As I looked up, I realized I was at the head of the line now, and I spotted a grouchy looking Marine looking at me. I stepped forward towards the edge of the tower where he stood. "Put your left hand on the yellow!" he barked. "Aye sir," I said quietly. "AH YEA RIGHT! PUT YOUR LEFT HAND ON THE YELLOW!" "AYE SIR!" "Alright," he said, calming down a little now. "Repeat after me. One down!" he said as he slid the rope into the carabineer. "One down," I replied. "One around!" he said. "One around," I replied. "Two down!" "Two down." "Lock the gate!" "Lock the gate." "Gate is locked!" "Gate is locked." Then he looked up at me with a bit of a knowing, compassionate look. "You ready kid?" he said quietly. I gulped and held tightly to my rope, "Yes sir."

"Grip the rope, I'm lowering you over!" His compassionate manner had disappeared as quickly as it came. "Shoot your hand out 3 o'clock!" "Aye sir!" "LOOK OVER YOUR RIGHT SHOULDER!" I turned my head to the side to catch a fleeting image of the hot, sticky ground below. "GO! GET OFF MY TOWER!" I rushed backwards towards the ground and, just moments later, my feet impacted softly on the rubber sawdust at the bottom.

As Brendan Francis, an Irish poet from the mid-20th century, once said, "Many of our fears are tissue paper thin, and a single courageous step would carry us clear through them." For years and years, I had feared heights of all kinds, from sleeping on the top bunk to walking up stairs at amusement parks. I had never faced my fear; I had never even ripped the delicate veil that held me back. I had been running for years, but now it was finally time to stop running. I had taken many steps in my life—I had walked steps, crawled steps, and marched steps. However, one of the biggest, most courageous steps I have ever taken weren't really even steps at all; they were just two simple words: "Yes sir."

LAW OF LIFE:

"Many of our fears are tissue paper thin, and a single courageous step would carry us clear through them."

—Brendan Francis

Jennie Pless

12th Grade Winner
Lambert High School, Cumming, Georgia



My mom has been a teacher for almost thirty years. In fact, the 2011 school year would have been her 30th year. Teaching is her passion and what she had consistently devoted much of her time and energy to. Unfortunately, the 30-year milestone wasn't reached this year as planned. In July of 2011, my mom was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Mantle Cell Lymphoma. Our whole family was blindsided by the news, but after the initial shock, we began planning our new life as we gradually accepted our new relationship with cancer.

Initially we all felt the anger and hurt that comes along with any life altering news. Everything about the life we had always known was flipped upside down. But soon enough we found a new sense of normal inside the constant phone calls from friends and relatives, and frequent hospital visits. At first, it was weird seeing my mom losing her hair, and most of her strength along with it. But, after time, we grew accustomed to it, so much so that it seems stranger to imagine a time when she did have hair than to picture her now without it.

While we struggled with the emotions and the adjustments of our new life, my mom's main concern was when she could go back to school. Her goal was to go back in the spring, as soon as she had completed her mandatory days of isolation. But a respiratory complication and sedation in ICU put that plan on hold. In ICU, there were days where doctors weren't sure if she would pull through. Much to our relief, she came out of her sedation after 19 days. Some of her nurses began calling her a Christmas miracle when she was finally woken up. Despite the overwhelming obstacles, she never gave up.

Aside from the delirious ramblings in her first few days awake, one of the first things I remember her saying was that she wouldn't be able to go back to teaching this year. While she realized the severity of her situation and the extreme risk of her returning to school, having been stripped of most of her muscle, and all of her immunizations, she is still disappointed that she won't be able to teach this year. After going through what her nurse calls a near-death experience, she still just wants to get back to doing what she loves most. But what she doesn't realize is that she has done just as much teaching this year as she has for the past 29.

"More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching and the spirit in which the teaching is given." My mom still taught this year. She had a classroom, students, and a curriculum, like every other year. She wasn't teaching science at Riverwatch Middle School as planned, but she was still just as much of a teacher. Her classroom was Room 456 in the bone marrow unit of Northside Hospital. She taught her family, her friends, and her nurses alike. She didn't teach about Pangaea or the moving of tectonic plates, but she did teach something. Through her courage and determination, she taught all of us how to appreciate life. She showed us that the hardships life throws at you on a seemingly ordinary Thursday in July don't have to tear you down.

Even though my mom wasn't able to reach her 30th year of teaching in school, she still taught with as much passion as always. She may not realize it, but even cancer couldn't keep her from teaching and doing what she loves more than anything. In my mind, this was her 30th year of teaching. She enriched the minds of everyone she taught this year, and as she does every year, she changed the lives of her students forever.

LAW OF LIFE:

"More important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching and the spirit in which the teaching is given."

–Bertrand Russell

Cade Walker

12th grade

Adairsville High School, Adairsville, Georgia



There are several quotes that I could live by; one is "If it's meant to be, it's up to me." My grandpa gave me that one; that's the one he lives by. My personal favorite is, "If you ever reach the end of your rope, just tie a knot and hold on." That's the one that has made the biggest impact in my life. It symbolizes what I went through last year. At that point I had definitely hit the bottom of my rope, but with the help of my friends and family, I just tied the knot and held on. This quote could also help other people because there are so many people struggling with depression in our time. They could use this philosophy to help them hold on through their struggle, knowing that things will be better.

LAW OF LIFE:

"If you ever reach the end of your rope, just tie a knot and hold on."

During the fall last year, usually the perfect time of year for me because I am an avid hunter and enjoy watching the leaves turn as I spend lazy afternoons in my tree stand, I learned that I had an inoperable brain tumor. All I could really do was just hold on until it was over. I went through six chemotherapy sessions and six weeks of radiation. The first three chemo sessions were extremely rough and knocked me way down, and that was when I definitely found myself at the bottom of my rope. I managed to hold on during this time, but only through the outpouring of love and support from my family and friends. The doctors finally found a medicine that worked for me, and if it wasn't for this change in medicine, it would've been a whole lot harder to pull through. The radiation was also rough, and I kept getting dehydrated and was having to get fluids once a week at least. The doctors came to my rescue by continually working to find the exact drug that I needed to balance the side effects of chemo, which made the radiation a whole lot easier to take.

I am much better now; I've finished treatment, and I'm in remission. My battle with cancer wasn't as bad as most people may think, but it still wasn't fun. I believe that it wouldn't have been as easy to endure all of the pain, sickness, and treatments if it were not for the love and support of my family and friends. I am thrilled that I am in remission and done with treatment, but I will live with the fear of it coming back for the rest of my life. The doctors feel pretty confident that they got it the first time. If the cancer does return, however, I'll just grit my teeth and hold on until my treatment is over. I know that my family and friends will be there for me and will help me tie the knot in my rope once again.

I believe that God has a plan for everyone. People just need to stop getting caught up in the small issues in life and look at the bigger picture. Hanging there at the end of my rope, I could see the entire world, and I learned to appreciate the view more than most people. I keep a small knotted piece of rope hanging on my bedpost now to remind me of that view and the precious people in my life who helped me tie that knot and hang on. Life lived; lessons learned; may they continue so.

GEORGIA
LAWS OF LIFE
ESSAY CONTEST
2011-2012



Adairsville High School

Cade Walker

Alpharetta High School

Anna Riordan

Archer High School

Austin Suggs

Bainbridge High School

Vallory Pinson

Berkmar High School

Elana Do

B.E.S.T. Academy High School

Eric Stokley

Bremen High School

Haley Patterson

Brookwood High School

Laboni Hoque

Brunswick High School

Sarah Ribron

Campbell High School

Oana Beldeanu

Cass High School

Hazel Quick

Centennial High School

Lindsey Graham

Central High School (Carrollton)

Walter Turner

Chamblee Charter High School

Nick Ahern

Cherokee High School

Michael Deep

Cross Keys High School

Thuy Hang Tran

Columbus High School

Kailey Lytle

Dawson County High School

Paige Reeze

Deerfield-Windsor High School

Lexie Harrison

Duluth High School

Sara Murphy

Eagle's Landing High School

Marissa McKee

East Paulding High School

Landi Harding

Flowery Branch High School

Clayton Thayer

Forsyth Central High School

Sarah Gilley

G. W. Carver High School

Sandra Slaughter

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Hardaway High School

Lawrence Gibbs

Heritage High School

Morgan Best

Lakeside High School

Nettie Jester

Lamar County Comprehensive High School

Mackenzie Dyer

Lambert High School

Jennie Pless

McEachern High School

Amber Kitchens

McIntosh High School

Tori Kinamon

Milton High School

Emmanuel O'Andrea

North Gwinnett High School

Kara P. Jones

Northside High School (Columbus)

Arisa Wetherill

Ola High School

Patrick Oney

Peachtree Ridge High School

Ju Sun (Paul) Yoon

Rome High School

Jay Horton

Roswell High School

Candace Jesneck

Shaw High School

Chris Woodrum

South Forsyth High School

Kristen Hopper

Thomas County Central High School

Lauren Rich

Thomasville High School Scholars Academy

Shaniya Williams

Thomson High School

Keilondria Robertson

Westlake High School

Shaquan McDowell

White County Ninth Grade Academy

Sarah Abad

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By making a contribution to the Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest, you will demonstrate your commitment to life-affirming values, such as honesty, courage, compassion, kindness and perseverance.

If you know someone who exemplifies a *Laws of Life*—someone whose courage, perseverance, kindness, or compassion is an inspiration—you can recognize that person in a tangible way by making a donation in his or her honor. The Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest will send a gift acknowledgment to the person you have honored.

As a non-profit charitable organization, the Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest relies on donations from individuals like you. You may donate on-line at www.georgialawsoflife.org, or use the form below.

The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest DONATION FORM

Your Name: _____

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Phone: _____ Email: (optional) _____

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Payment: Please write your check to "The Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program (GRDCEP)," earmarked "Georgia *Laws of Life*," and mail with a completed copy of this form to: Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest, 840 Woodley Drive, Atlanta, GA 30318.

GRDCEP is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Donations to the GRDCEP's *Laws of Life* Essay Contest are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

For information on corporate sponsorships, please contact us at georgialawsoflife@gmail.com or 404-590-8039.

Listen To What People Are Saying

*"I wouldn't have come this far in my life adventure if it weren't for the Laws of Life Essay Contest...
I thank you for the opportunities that you've given me."*

—Kayla Johnson, former *Laws of Life* state finalist

"The Laws of Life contest gave me the opportunity to sit down and work through difficult issues that were affecting my life and the lives of those closest to me. Writing down everything, in a methodical, competition-driven process, made me really pay attention to what I had to say. I solved my problems as I wrote them down."

—Student

"The program is a positive experience—not just for the students who win the contest, but for the many students who are encouraged to explore and write about their beliefs and experiences."

—Lynne B., Teacher

"The Georgia Laws of Life contest encourages young people from all walks of life to reflect on a character-building life experience. It allows students of all academic abilities—from C students to valedictorians—to be recognized together in front of their peers, parents, and community."

—Mark Ellis, Rotarian

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