

2019 - 2020
Georgia
Laws of Life
Essay Contest

Words of Wisdom by Georgia Youth

**Laws
of
Life**



**THE GEORGIA
ROTARY CLUBS
LAWS OF LIFE
ESSAY CONTEST**

The Contest

The original Laws of Life Essay Contest was started by the late Sir John Templeton, a distinguished philanthropist who was also a pioneer in financial investments. Templeton believed in the power of simple ideals, rules and principles, or "laws of life," that should guide one in living a full and joyous existence. He created the program to encourage young people to reflect on these principles.

Templeton's philosophy is relevant still today. The Georgia Rotary Clubs Laws of Life Essay Contest is a leader of character education and ethical literacy for students throughout the state. The contest encourages students to see themselves and others in a new perspective so that they may live their best, most compassionate, and most courageous lives. It allows students to reveal their unique qualities and articulate how they demonstrate them in their lives.

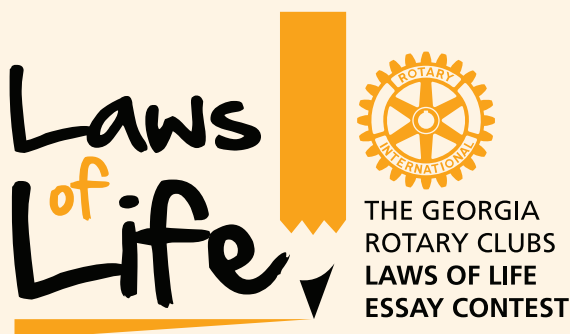
As a signature program of the Rotary Clubs of Georgia, the contest takes Rotary's emphasis on ethics, education, and literacy into schools and classrooms. A social and emotional learning tool, the contest fulfills the state of Georgia's mandated character education requirements and is offered free to high schools. Since 1998, close to 719,000 essays have been written making the contest the largest essay contest of its type in North America.

Facts and Impact

For the 2019-2020 contest, **43,506** students from **72** high schools wrote a Laws of Life essay partnering with **48** local Rotary Clubs. More than **110** community volunteers selected the **177** school and state-level student winners, and the contest presented **\$21,100** in student awards and teacher honoraria.

Looking beyond the numbers, research shows character development is most successful when it is repeated, wide-ranging, emotional, and reinforced by a network of family, community, and social connections. Today's youth make tough decisions every day. Positive personal character traits, empathy for others, and self-awareness provide the strong ethical foundation to make the best decisions.

The Georgia Rotary Clubs Laws of Life Essay Contest helps to build this foundation.



The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest is an outreach program of the Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc. (GRDCEP), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to transform lives by promoting positive values and by building ethical literacy in students.

"Happiness comes from giving, not getting. If we try hard to bring happiness to others, we cannot stop it from coming to us also. To get joy, we must give it, and to keep joy, we must scatter it."

—Sir John Templeton

Choosing seven state winning essays from the 72 participating schools was a difficult task. Especially considering the 43,000 plus essays written statewide, these are truly the "cream of the crop."

Each year the success of the Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest depends on so many individuals and organizations, and we are grateful for everyone's efforts. We thank the students who shared personal stories. We are thankful for the teachers who went above and beyond to guide their pupils. We thank the Rotarians who also value this mission and all who volunteered their time. We thank the Rotary clubs, foundations, corporations, and individual donors whose generous financial support made it all possible.

Particularly, in this year of uncertainty and change, we are honored to be referred to as "good news" by students and teachers. Time and time again, we are reminded why we do this when we hear and see the positive effects this exercise of self-exploration and validation has on young lives. Visit our YouTube page to listen to students read their essays.

To assure future students are given the opportunity to write their Law of Life Essay, we've planned strategically to expand our school and Rotary club partnerships, making it easier for both to participate. We welcome you too; please reach out to let us know if you want to help in this meaningful endeavor.

We sincerely congratulate our winners and every student who wrote an essay – your heartfelt reflections reveal hope within hopelessness, compassion within pain, and life lessons in our everyday lives. We believe every student that wrote an essay is a winner. We hope you enjoy reading these inspirational state winning essays.

Sincerely,

Ed Outlaw
Board Chair, Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc., Member, Rotary Club of Peachtree City

Carol J. Gray
Executive Director, Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc. & Georgia Rotary Clubs Laws of Life Essay Contest, Member, Midtown Atlanta Rotary Club



Cindy Huynh

Brookwood High School – 11th Grade

The sun filtered through the shaky window panes of the school bus as we rode home. It was sometime back in middle school, a time when I still kept quiet at the lunch tables and stared at my feet as I shuffled through the hallways. There were these two boys who sat in the seat in front of me. They were unapologetically loud and blunt: everything that I wasn't. My friend had just left for her bus stop, so I sat alone, minding my business and shrinking behind a pair of earbuds.

"You know what's funny?" sneered one of the boys. "Everyone knows that Asians have no eyes, but you ever notice how tiny their ears are?"

I froze. The other boy erupted with a harsh wave of laughter and hastily agreed, the two practically causing the bus to shudder as they clapped each other on the back. I had never talked to these boys before. Looking back, I'm certain that they weren't even aware of my existence. I gingerly paused my music and sank further down the seat, listening to the boys gleefully entertain themselves in a battle to see who could conceive the most amusing stereotype: ridiculous accents, dog-based diets, and the classic slanted eyes.

It wasn't anything I hadn't heard before. My instinct at the time was to remain ghostly silent until I could slip past them at my bus stop. There were two more stops. I just had to hold my breath for two more stops.

I knew that the jeers were just a result of shallow ignorance in a bout of humor. This was far from the severity of inherent racism seen in modern systematic oppression. The boys were just joking. It was always just a joke: "Of course you get good grades with a last name like yours," "I bet dog tastes like chicken," "Do you see in widescreen? How many fingers am I holding?" The seemingly innocuous banter had become so banal that it was almost boring. I had grown up glossing over such petty remarks, and admittingly, even laughing along and echoing them myself. This bus ride was no different.

There was just one more stop now. The clash of insults had grown impossible not to overhear now, and I was certain that there were other Asian kids on the bus. ***Is no one going to say anything? Why isn't anyone stopping them?*** I found myself speculating with frustration. It was then that I discerned my glaring hypocrisy.

"Silence encourages the tormentor, never

State Winner

Law of Life

"Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented."

-Elie Wiesel

the tormented," Elie Wiesel once highlighted. The sole reason that the boys found their egregious taunts acceptable was because no one had ever told them otherwise. In retrospect, their jokes were rooted in the same racist thought that brings about discrimination, and I had unfortunately become desensitized to recognizing it. My meek inaction only fostered the growth of such prejudices; I had permitted the boys to continue their torment, permitting myself to be tormented. I made a decision.

The bus sighed to a stop. My scrawny legs towed me out of my seat and down the aisle to a halt next to the two boys. I made a big show of yanking my earbuds out of my apparently tiny ears, so there was no mistaking my intention. The boys fell deadly silent as they took in my obviously Asian appearance. Our confrontation was a stage, and the front half of the bus was its eager audience.

"Sorry, what were you saying? Say that again," I challenged. I had never seen two faces flush so quickly, and I could sense the rounded mouths around me, agape from dropping jaws.

I wish I had pointed out their racism. I wish I had said that their jokes were derogatory, intolerable, and frankly unoriginal, that society had grown numb to these seemingly minor instances. I wish I hadn't remained silent for so long.

Yet that was enough for my pounding heart to handle that day, and I turned on my heel behind a facade of sanctimonious confidence. Though mortified from the weight of stares, I had finally leaped the hurdle of fear keeping me from advocacy with my small victory.



1st Runner-Up

Savannah Johnson

Lafayette High School – 11th Grade

Law of Life

**“My command is this:
Love each other as
I have loved you.”**

–Jesus Christ, John 15:12

Learning to Love Unconditionally

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.” Growing up in church, this was a Bible verse that I was very familiar with. I never really understood the true meaning of these words until I was in the second grade. At the start of my second grade year, my mom and dad felt as though they should start fostering and adopting kids. I already had three other siblings, and I wasn't sure how adding more kids would work. Nevertheless, my parents started to spend their days taking the training needed to begin fostering, and before long we got our first call. It was for two little boys, two and three years old, that were being removed from an abusive foster home. My parents had to go and pick up the kids. They were gone until well after five in the afternoon. My siblings and I spent that time cleaning the house and getting ready for the new kids to arrive. I had heard plenty of things about kids in foster care. I had heard about how they were often-times disturbed and angry at the world, and how they refused to be loved. I didn't know much about who they would be, except that they were two young boys.

My parents pulled into our driveway and began to unload the boys. I remember the moment the two blonde haired boys stepped foot into my house. Everyone was fascinated with these two tiny toddlers. However, no matter how sweetly we spoke

to the boys, they wouldn't say anymore than a simple yes or no. They were terrified. We soon discovered that the oldest of the two was a target child. The previous family had gone as far as smashing all of his toes as punishment. They would flinch and pull away. Eventually, over the span of a week, these boys began to be the funniest, smartest, most caring boys I had ever met. I started to get attached to them. They threw horrendous tantrums at times, but I understood it was a product of their past. I knew all of their favorite toys, shows, and foods. I knew what would get them to sleep at night. They were my brothers, and I loved them.

All of this was soon called to an end when we learned they would be going back home to their parents. We all spent the weekend packing up their clothes, toys, and movies. The day they left came and went, and we said our goodbyes. I spent many nights crying and worrying about where they were and if they were safe. I never wanted to take in another child. It was the worst heartbreak I had ever felt.

One evening as we were cleaning our rooms we made a bittersweet discovery. The oldest of the boys had stashed his favorite toy train beneath my brother's bed. The caseworkers told us foster kids would leave toys behind as a way of saying they'll be back to get it. I started to reflect on this moment. The little boy that wanted nothing to do with the love we had to offer him was now leaving behind his toys so that he could come back to us.

This discovery made me change my entire outlook on why we were fostering. My family wasn't fostering only to make our family grow, or to have a chance to hold a little baby for a little while. We were fostering to give love to the kids that had no idea what love even looked like. We were fostering to give love to the kids that didn't want our love. After the two boys, we had roughly ten more placements. Of those ten placements, we've adopted five. If we would've had the choice we would've adopted them all. Many of the kids that were placed in our home were always harder than the last. However, all of them deserved love. These experiences with fostering have brought new light to my favorite Bible verse. “My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.”



Faith Fitzgerald

Thomasville High School – 9th Grade

Lou Holtz once said, “Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it.” This quote shows great meaning and shares a powerful message in my life.

Matthew Swatzell was a firefighter in Dacula, Georgia, at the time. He was excited to help people, make a positive impact on others’ lives, and start his career. Little did I know, he would change not only his life but mine. Matthew had just gotten off a twenty-four-hour shift and was extremely tired. He fell asleep at the wheel about three to four miles away from his house and hit an oncoming car head-on. It just so happens that the car that was hit was my mom’s car. I was about nineteen months old at the time, and my mom, June, was seven months pregnant with my baby brother. Because Matthew hit the car head-on, the steering wheel was pushed into my mom’s stomach and caused her to immediately go into cardiac arrest; luckily, I had no serious injuries. She was rushed to the nearest hospital along with me.

That morning my dad had heard a banging on the door by the pastor at our local church telling him that my mom and I were in a car accident and that he needed to go to the hospital immediately. Once they got there, they were informed that my mom didn’t make it, and my baby brother didn’t make it either. In the sentencing process, my dad forgave Matthew and opted for the lesser charge. Because of legal issues, the two were advised not to see each other.

On the two year anniversary of the accident, Matthew was walking up to Publix to get a card to share his condolences, and as he was walking up, he saw my dad by coincidence; the two talked in the parking lot for hours. The next day they went out to get some lunch to talk, and they both agreed that they should stay connected somehow. Because of them staying connected, my family and I still visit him to this day. Over time, my dad and Matthew have a brotherly relationship because of his response to the tragedy.

2nd Runner-Up

Law of Life

“Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it.”

-Lou Holtz

I think Lou Holtz’s quote – “Life is ten percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it” – goes along with my life perfectly. The fact that my mom passed away hurts greatly to me and my dad, but because of how my dad responded to the situation, Matthew’s life is well. He is married to a loving wife, with three amazing kids. If my dad had not chosen the lesser charge, it could have meant serious fines and even jail time. This also shows me the importance of how you respond to situations because it can change someone’s life. Not only has his decision made an impact on Matthew’s life and mine, but it has also made an impact on others’ lives. “The Today Show” invited them to be on the show. The episode aired in 2019, and there are multiple videos sharing this story on YouTube and Vimeo with over fifty thousand views. Through this story, God has shown how he can turn the worst situations into a positive influence on others.



3rd Runner-Up

Reagan Beach

North Cobb High School – 12th Grade

Law of Life

“Disability is a matter of perception.”

–Martina Navratilova

Growing up, I thought I was like every other kid. I played outside, ate lots of ice cream, and watched Disney movies. When I started going to elementary school, my whole life was turned around when I had the shocking realization that I was different from everyone else.

When I was a toddler, I got a cochlear implant, a device that helps provide a sense of sound to people with profound hearing loss. However, since I was so young, I never fully grasped the concept that having hearing loss is not an experience that other children my age could share. When I entered elementary school, my peers began asking questions and making comments. It was around this time that I realized that I was an alien on earth in the minds of my classmates. Shortly after, I made the decision that I was not going to let my hearing ability define my life. Since others began to view me as different and less competent, I made a conscious decision to prove everyone wrong. Disability is a matter of perception, and as long as I believed in myself, I knew I could do anything I put my mind to.

To begin my journey of improved self-perception, I told my mom that I wanted to learn to play the piano. By the end of the next week, I had begun lessons at our local music store. Every day after school I came home and practiced and practiced until I perfected every last note. Though piano was difficult for me since I was unable to hear pitch as well as other people, I continued practicing because I knew that I was capable of just as much as anyone else.

Nearly a decade later, I entered high school and was introduced to the sports medicine program at school. I was so excited to work in the training room and become more involved with sports at my school. While assisting our school's athletic trainer I discovered a love for medicine. After helping out many injured athletes, I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in the medical field. At first I felt that my dreams would be impossible. How would I understand my patients? Am I even able to use a stethoscope? What happens if I mishear lifesaving information? After a few weeks of doubting myself, I finally remembered the promise I made to myself many years before. I scrambled to do as much research as possible about deaf nurses and, to my delight, discovered that it was not impossible for me to achieve my dreams of becoming a nurse. Discovering the abundance of opportunities for me helped me remember my roots and my law about never letting my disability define me.

Since I have made the decision to perceive my disability as an irrelevant factor of my success, I have continued to do all the things that people have told me I would never be able to do. Since I never viewed my disability as an inhibition to my goals, I have never been unsuccessful at anything I have been told would be impossible for me. My life goes to show that disability truly is a matter of perception and that anything is possible if you believe you can do it.



Wade Chappell

North Springs High School – 10th Grade

Occasionally, something will happen that really alters your view on both your environment and the people around you. This happens when you least expect it: at a friend's party, high school football game, or in my case, a fast-food restaurant. Little did I know, this diner would show me a new perspective and teach me that a little act of kindness can go a long way.

It was the winter of my Freshman year, and I was travelling with my church's Youth Group back from a retreat in Northern Georgia. Coming off of what might have been the best weekend of my life, I was absolutely ecstatic, yet with a tinge of remorse as it ended. Our church had rented a cabin in the mountains, where we spent three days swimming in frigid water, playing basketball, and just having a blast. It was a lengthy drive back, and after being on the road for almost three hours, our leader decided that it would be a good time to break for lunch. However, the place we stopped in was a rural area, so where we usually would have settled on a more mainstream Chick-Fil-A, the smaller fast-food chain "Cookout" was our only option.

Walking into the restaurant, I didn't heed much attention to my surroundings, as I was too busy messing around with my friends that had gone on the trip with me. Blindly, I stumbled into line, and before I knew I was up to order. That was when I first locked eyes with my server. I was about a head taller than her, and she looked about in her mid-forties, yet her small stature did not stave her off from wearing the biggest smile I had ever seen. As I ordered, one thing that stuck out was how amicable she was to me. So, against my usual judgement in a fast-food restaurant, I laid a couple dollars on the counter that I had left from the trip. To my surprise, she was incredibly grateful, mentioning that it was the first tip she had ever received, and as I walked away that smile seemed to change into a friendlier, more personal expression. A bit disoriented, I headed to the restroom to wash my hands.

However, immediately as I stepped back into the restaurant, I realized that the environment had changed completely. Everyone was gathered around the counter, and with the cashier that had taken my order, crying? Confused, I looked around to see what the problem might be, only to see my good friend

4th Runner-Up

Law of Life

"A little act of kindness can go a long way."

approaching me with an equally surprised expression. I asked what was up, and apparently, after I had tipped the lady, the rest of our Youth Group began to chip in and do the same. Eventually, after my Youth Leader himself had given her a whopping twenty dollars, she began to tear up and tell us about the struggles she was going through. Apparently, her father had been diagnosed with skin cancer, and she was in a tight spot in providing for her family.

Although the experience was very moving for each one of us, it was clear we had to hit the road. Upon getting back on the bus, several of my companions gave me plaudits for beginning the encounter. It felt wrong, as I hadn't done much, but it had made a huge impact on both the cashier and our group as a whole. But if there was one moral I learned from that event, it was that a good deed can leave a huge impact.

This experience, in which an act of courtesy helped out a struggling woman, taught me that a little kindness can go a long way. Just a couple dollars, a simple appreciation of good service, significantly benefited a person in need. Without that event, I would be a very different person in the way I view the world around me. So, remember, "a small act of kindness can go a long way," as you never know what others are going through. Do your best to provide support to those around you, because a tiny act of courtesy could be deeply moving for both you and others.



5th Runner-Up

Law of Life

**“It is better in prayer
to have a heart without
words than words
without a heart.”**

–Mahatma Gandhi

5'8". Hardened face. Jet black hair with a compact physique. A gaze that can break even the strongest man. This is the person that has influenced me the most in life. My dad. Having been a gang member as well as a Recon soldier for the Korean Marine Corps, my father has never been good at expressing his emotions, let alone his love for me. He is incredibly blunt, unsympathetic, and insensitive at times, making me wish when I was younger that I never had a dad in the first place.

However, as I have grown older, I realized that my dad does, in fact, love me and that he shows his love in different, subtle ways. Ever since I was a child, my dad has given up everything to take care of me. His work, English classes, gym sessions...all gone. He became the caretaker of the house, a role that is rare for men in American culture and almost unheard of in Korean culture.

Looking back, I realize that this was a job he never complained about but received much scrutiny for. He was always there, sitting solemnly on the couch when I returned from school. He always prepared healthy home-cooked meals by himself for the family. He always tried to help with my robot, hacking pieces of it in half and giving obvious advice whenever the robot malfunctioned. He always drove me to Taekwondo workouts, baseball games, and robotics competitions in complete silence. He did all of this for me without the smallest of smiles or the slightest grumble, even though the glances of the

Hyuk Lee

Lambert High School – 12th Grade

moms waiting for Taekwondo sessions to finish and whispers of the baseball moms plagued him wherever he went. He ignored all of the social pressures against him, paving his own path.

But the one memory of my father that will remain etched in my mind is one that brings back bittersweet memories. Throughout my childhood, my dad would take me to Sharon Springs Park to practice baseball, and before long, the clanking of chain-linked batting cages and the satisfying thump of the bat became ingrained in my memories. Rain or shine, my dad threw pitch after pitch, making harsh, straightforward comments about my game and never expressing his pain, even though the physical strain was too much for his worn-down 55-year-old body. Eventually, he began suffering from lower back and foot pain and had to give up the things he loved. Because of baseball. Because of me.

Sure, my dad may have never verbally told me that he loved me. Sure, he never laughed or conveyed his emotions like other parents. However, he made me realize that I want to be closer and kinder with my children in the future. My experience hurt me as a child, but he still captured my respect, my admiration, and my love, and as a result, he made an impact on my life.

Through our time together, I learned not only negative lessons, but also positive ones: to show rather than tell, make sacrifices for loved ones, and stand up for my own beliefs. Seeing my dad surpass the scrutiny that follows him has provided me with the strength to pursue my dreams, even if the whole world is against me. Inspired by his resolve, I started my school's robotics program from scratch, overcoming budget issues and lack of members. Because of his silence, I completed menial community service tasks of trash cleanup without a complaint.

However, showing me these lessons took a heavy toll on him, and as a result, I have received something else from my father: a goal for my future – to study prosthetics and exoskeletons in hopes of helping my father and others like him. My dad sacrificed everything that he had and pushed me to become who I am today. Now, it is my time to do the same for him.



Sha'niya Rogers

Westover High School – 9th Grade

I remember the day like it was yesterday when my mom was evicted from her home. She started living at a hotel and was strung out on drugs. My siblings and I thought it was temporary until weeks turned into months. Time flew by faster, but I couldn't help to think of it being my first year of middle school. Everything was normal. It was like I was staying in an apartment. I would've never thought I would be cooking a full course meal on a hot plate.

My mom said, "Don't become me; be a better me."

"I can't promise to not be like you because you are the best mother anyone could have. I promise to never become what you are," I replied.

I walked from the hotel to school every day. A book bag full of supplies and a brain full of thoughts. My mom bought me a pink coat with tiny crème spots. I would wear it to school every day like a cape. It made me feel invisible like I was shielded from the world. I knew at home my mom was rolling joint after joint, but I had dreams to accomplish and places to go. No one knew what was going on, but to me that was okay. I went to school, did my work, and came back home. I stumbled a little bit in classes because I started lacking things I needed to achieve. Every five dollars went on the next fix from the man downstairs selling illegal drugs out of his hotel room. I started to get disrespectful at school to draw attention from myself to not look like a cry for help. I didn't want the teachers to have sympathy for me and treat me like a homeless person. I knew I needed all the help I can get, but I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it on my own.

Months passed, I started cleaning up around the hotel for a few dollars for school supplies. I would walk to Roses to buy a few pencils, a notebook, and a drawing pad. A store employee politely asked, "Hey! May I help you in any way possible." Inside I felt like she understood me, but she really meant it as in supplies. "No, ma'am, I think I got it. Thank you," I said with a crackle in my voice.

I would buy my siblings clothes to satisfy the pain inside with the extra couple dollars I had. I would doodle the thoughts that floated in my head on the drawing pad. Some days I would be terrified that the door would be kicked in, and we would get separated

George A. Stewart Jr. Character in Action Award*

Law of Life

**"What doesn't
kill you
makes you
stronger."**

-Friedrich Nietzsche

forever. Therefore, I had to become stronger than I'd ever been. School started coming along better, and I received all A's. I should've been running away, but that would have been selfish. I had to take care of two kids, a woman, and myself.

Honor's Day would be tomorrow, and I had nothing to wear. I put my siblings to sleep, so I could pull an all nighter around the hotel doing work. It paid off and I walked to Roses before they closed to buy a black dress. I sat in the dressing room with the dress judging myself. *"Who am I? What are you doing? Is this really necessary?"* The next morning, I got up and got ready. I put on the flats my grandma bought me a year ago. Furthermore, I sat in that cold chair in the auditorium praying I am one of the most called names, and there I was barely even taking a seat after receiving awards.

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger," once said Friedrich Nietzsche. This quote is generally used for an affirmation of resilience. This represents my quote because regardless of all the difficulties that brought me down, I kept my head held high.

* The George A. Stewart Jr. Character in Action Award, which carries a \$1,000 prize, is presented in conjunction with the Dunwoody Rotary Club to honor Dunwoody Rotarian George Stewart for his dedication to student character education and for his long-time service to the Georgia Rotary Clubs Laws of Life Essay Contest.



Congratulations School Winners 2019-2020

Allatoona High School

Patrick Malone, 10th Grade

Alpharetta High School

Rachel Firestone, 9th Grade

Apalachee High School

Jhonley Cadet, 10th Grade

Arabia Mountain High School

Isaiah Fleming, 9th Grade

Bainbridge High School

Mackenzie Pickle, 12th Grade

Bremen High School

Heyden Shaw Morris, 10th Grade

Brookwood High School

Cindy Huynh, 11th Grade

Brunswick High School

Abby Sykes, 9th Grade

Carrollton High School

Madison Bush, 12th Grade

Carver STEAM Academy

Justice Jones, 10th Grade

Central High School (Carrollton)

Katie Williamson, 12th Grade

Cherokee High School

Alex Ramirez, 12th Grade

Columbus High School

Israel J. Todd, 12th Grade

Dawson County High School

Kaycee O'Shields, 10th Grade

Deerfield-Windsor School

McCall Coley, 10th Grade

Dougherty Comprehensive High School

Naudia Benton, 12th Grade

Dunwoody High School

Justin Hurr, 10th Grade

Evans High School

Aleksandra Plagens, 10th Grade

Forest Park High School

Anton Williams, 9th Grade

Forsyth Central High School

Alice Kofman, 9th Grade

Furlow Charter School

Olivia Harper, 9th Grade

George Walton Academy

Katie Austin, 11th Grade

Gilmer High School

Madalyn McMurtry, 9th Grade

Griffin High School

Alondra Garcia, 12th Grade

Haralson County High School

Shane Rodgers, 12th Grade

Hardaway High School

Karelyn Cummings, 11th Grade

Henry Grady High School

Keaton Tsepas Bucclero, 10th Grade

Heritage High School

Wendy Lucero-Salas, 11th Grade

Independence High School

Antonio Davis, 11th Grade

Jackson High School

Savannah Miles, 12th Grade

Lafayette High School

Savannah Johnson, 11th Grade

Lamar County Comprehensive High School

Maggie Calvert, 10th Grade

Lambert High School

Hyuk Lee, 12th Grade

Lassiter High School

Ellen Kim, 10th Grade

Lovejoy High School

Lucero Salas-Lopez, 12th Grade

Marietta High School

Julia DePasquale, 10th Grade

Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts

Jayme Fiedler, 12th Grade

McIntosh High School

Maximilian Roggermeier, 10th Grade

North Cobb High School

Reagan Beach, 12th Grade

North Forsyth High School

Wilson Alldredge, 9th Grade

North Springs Charter High School

Wade Chappell, 10th Grade

Northside High School (Columbus)

Beatrice Brinkley, 10th Grade

Parkview High School

Waleed Mohamed, 11th Grade

Paul Duke STEM High School

Nadia Thompson, 9th Grade

Pickens High School

Emma Long, 11th Grade

Redan High School

Paris-Angeliqua Hau, 10th Grade

Rockdale High School

Tommy Nguyen, 12th Grade

Rome High School

Ashley McNeely, 10th Grade

Roswell High School

Hayden Hoops, 12th Grade

Shaw High School

Bryan Brown, 12th Grade

Shiloh High School

Rebeca Aquino, 9th Grade

South Forsyth High School

Anne-Braxton Smith, 11th Grade

Spalding High School

Kendall A. Merritt, 9th Grade

Thomas County Central High School

Gaelle Gasque, 10th Grade

Thomasville High School

Faith Fitzgerald, 9th Grade

Thomson High School

Chloe Weeks, 12th Grade

West Hall High School

Quincy Holcomb, 12th Grade

Westover High School

Sha'niya Rogers, 9th Grade

Winder-Barrow High School

Alyssa Crowe, 12th Grade

**We would also like to thank
the following schools for
participating:**

Cedar Shoals High School
Clarke Central High School
Clarkston High School
Denmark High School
Georgia Connections Academy
Greenville High School
Habersham Ninth Grade Academy
Lakeview Academy
Morrow High School
Sequoyah High School
West Forsyth High School
Wheeler High School
White County High School

Congratulations!

Teachers of Distinction*

Alpharetta High School
Kimberly Green

Carrollton High School
David Bryson

Dawson County High School
Lindsey Luchansky

Deerfield-Windsor School
Irmgard Schopen-Davis

Forest Park High School
Shellie Taylor-Rogers

Furlow Charter School
Nichole Walker

George Walton Academy
Wrynn Carson

Gilmer High School
Karen Phipps

Haralson County High School
Carol Fasick

Hardaway High School
Laura Clack

Lamar County Comprehensive High School
Carol Parrish

**Schools with 80 percent or higher student participation rate.*

Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts
Andrea Conaway

Northside High School (Columbus)
Sonya Trepp-Fuller

Paul Duke STEM High School
Regina DeBeatham

Rome High School
Amanda Howell

Shaw High School
Parise Bailey

Thomas County Central High School
Kensley D'Souza

English Teacher of the State Winner:

Mr. Dana Kling, Brookwood High School

English Teacher of the George A. Stewart Award Winner:

Mr. Tye Beck, Westover High School

School Contest Chairs with 100% Student Participation:

Mr. David Bryson of Carrollton High School, 1,619 essays

Ms. Wrynn Carson of George Walton Academy, 295 essays

Ms. Irmgard Schopen-Davis of Deerfield-Windsor School, 187 essays

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