

In 1987, Sir John Templeton initiated the Laws of Life essay contest in his hometown of Winchester, TN. His vision was to encourage young people to write about their own "Laws of Life." Contests now take place in communities and schools throughout the United States and worldwide. Each contest is sponsored by an individual or organization concerned with the moral ideals of our youth.

Spotlight

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Dear Friends,

For the first time, we are dedicating an entire issue to the efforts of one organization that is working to initiate and coordinate the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest in schools throughout the United States. The Center for Youth Issues (CYI), in Chattanooga, TN, has a network of 17,000 schools and, with the help of *Spotlight*, is seeking to share information and promote the essay contest throughout its vast network. We hope you will enjoy learning about CYI, and hearing from some of the individuals involved in contests that exist because of the Center's initiative and resources.

The Center for Youth Issues

Respect for oneself and others, respect for authority and property, responsibility, honesty, traditional values of right and wrong... these good character traits create the foundation of the work of the Center for Youth Issues (CYI). This non-profit organization has developed a winning formula for taking timeless principles and incorporating them into easy-to-use tools that help public school students to develop good character.



Center for Youth Issues President Robert Rabon (middle) with Assistant Marketing Director Tom Yates and Essay Contest Project Manager June Poole.

CYI develops and distributes character education materials, videos, storybooks and training modules for use in grades K-12. In addition to promoting the teaching of good character in public schools, CYI addresses student intervention needs such as anger management, bullying, substance abuse, and crisis counseling. Their products are in more than 17,000 schools across the country, and approximately 6,500,000 children benefit from the programs.

More information about CYI and its programs can be found on the Internet at www.cyi-stars.org or by calling toll free (800) 477-8277.

Visit
www.cyi-stars.org

Laws of Life

essay contest

To learn more about the *Laws of Life* essay contest, call the John Templeton Foundation at 800-245-1285 or access our website at www.templeton.org/character/lol-essay.asp

CYI and the Laws of Life Essay Contest: A Natural Fit

It is easy to see why the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest is a natural fit for Center for Youth Issues. During a child's early grades, awareness of good character develops and he or she begins to learn how to practice good life skills. Positive reinforcement, coupled with repetition and practice in subsequent grades, continues to foster good character traits. By middle and high school, the student internalizes these character traits and continues to develop a value system to live by. The *Laws of Life* Essay Contest tests the student's knowledge of character traits and the degree to which they have been internalized. Because the essay process requires the student to examine his or her own values, it functions as a self assessment. It also demonstrates skills that the student has, or needs to develop, in order to deal with life events.

CYI promotes the Essay Contest concept through direct mail, conference exhibitions, incentive programs and telephone contact. The vast number of schools served by CYI's character education products and services makes CYI an ideal promoter of the contest.

Center for Youth Issues has identified and is working with several key constituent schools that will make excellent pilot sites for the contest. To encourage school participation, CYI offers monetary and product discount incentives, as well as specific assistance in conducting the contest. The goal is to have the participating schools recognize the benefits of creating a long-term plan for making the contest an integral part of their school activities.

CYI Initiated Contest: Carlyle Junior High School, IL

Carlyle Junior High School's entire eighth grade class was offered the opportunity to write *Laws of Life* essays. Of the entries, a total of six were selected for awards.

The school was able to gain community support through a number of avenues. Judge Mittendorf of the Fourth Judicial Circuit Court, publicly stated his support for the contest in *The Union Banner*, the local newspaper, and the Carlyle Rotary Club voiced their approval and support for the contest, as well as assured its future support.

Hardee's Restaurant, managed by Rodell Weh, showed its support by displaying a message on its marquis. Mr. Weh posed with the winners under the message, and gave every contestant a coupon for a free meal. *The Union Banner* has written a number of articles and has focused on information about the contest and Carlyle Junior High School's quest for support. In addition, the newspaper committed to a piece focusing on the winners, including interviews and their photographs, as well as the winning essay.



Carlyle Junior High School contest winners with
Hardee's Restaurant Manager Rodell Weh.

One Carlyle eighth grade teacher commented that, "This is the first essay contest to come across my desk in a while that promises to have a long-lasting effect on children. . . Maybe we, as a community, can learn something from this experience and help carry it beyond the parameters of the contest."

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Essay Excerpts

“There is strength of the body, but there is also strength of the mind.”

“Listening to what your parents say is important even if you think they are crazy for making you do the dishes or clean your room when your favorite television show is on. They have lived longer than you and really do know what is best for you. When they tell you to do something you don't want to do, they are only trying to teach you values that will be very important later in life. The famous ‘I'm only doing this because I love you’ line is true. Even though it gets old after the fiftieth time they've said it...they really say it to teach you a lesson. So listening to your parents can teach you important lessons that you will thank them for later.”

— Third Place Winner
Hixson High School

“... ‘Be yourself’ is my own personal ideal. Being a teenager, I am living in a period of my life where social status is important. Everybody wants to be in the ‘popular group’ and to get into this group people wear cloths that are in style or use slang that everyone else is using. They drop their own personality just to be accepted. With this going on, nobody is being unique or original except for the trend-setters and the people who try to be themselves.

Trying to be myself is very important to me. For that reason, I dress how I want to dress, talk how I want to talk, and act how I want to act. In the process, I might hit upon some things that are ‘in style,’ but I use them because I think they are neat. If someone else shares my opinion, I think that is fine with me.

There are many quotes having to do with being yourself and one of them I think is really true. Said by Janis Joplin, *Don't compromise yourself. You are all you've got.*”

— First Place Winner
Carlyle Junior High School

“When someone mentions strength, most people think about weight lifting or endurance. There is strength of the body, but there is also strength of the mind. It can be divided into three categories that I find most important: will-power, determination, and being able to stand for what I believe in. Even failing has strength in it; it takes strength to try in the first place, and even more to stand back up after failing. We should all have the strength to do what is right and stand tall and proud.”

— Second Place Winner
Hixson High School

“One principle that I always try to apply in my life is the Golden Rule which states that you should do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I think many people should apply this rule to their own lives. If they do so, they might actually stop and think before they act.

The Golden Rule is connected to so many things but mostly I feel we should have respect and consideration for others. The world may not be fair but a little kindness shown to others goes a long way, and it spreads to others. That's why the Golden Rule rules in my life.”

— Third Place Winner
Carlyle Junior High School

“... ‘Be yourself’ is my own personal ideal.”

Letter to CYI

Dear Center for Youth Issues:

The faculty at Hixson High School (TN) would like to thank you for offering to our students the opportunity to participate in the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest. So many of our teachers remarked what a worthwhile activity this contest afforded our students.

We had 507 participants through certain English and Social Studies classes. After teachers read and graded individual essays, 103 were considered as "tops" and were turned over to a panel of out-of-school judges: Colonel Brad Johnson (retired Air Force/retired ROTC instructor), Emily McDonald (journalist with the *Chattanooga Times*), Sandy Steele (President, Hixson Chamber of Commerce), and Wilbourne Markham (retired HHS assistant principal). These judges gave of their time to come and sit in our library to read and make their

selections. They, like our teachers, were impressed that students had given such serious and responsible comments on what is really important in their lives.

"We thank you for this opportunity to encourage our students to think with their heads and their hearts."

We recognized three winners in each grade level and were able to provide monetary prizes and an Awards Dinner in the students' honor. At the dinner the first-place winners in each grade level read their essays to an audience which included

Angelo Napolitano (principal), Senator David Fowler, Everett Fairchild (Hamilton County School Board), Robert Rabon (president, CYI), each of whom had very positive comments for the students.

It became evident that the entire community supported the contest when several local businesses announced they would provide prizes for use in drawings that took place the week prior to the Awards Dinner. The names of the 103 students whose essays were considered in the final judging were entered in that drawing.

We thank you and the John Templeton Foundation for this opportunity to encourage our students to think with their heads *and* their hearts.

Regina Smith
Character Education Team,
Hixson High School



Hixson High School's Angelo Napolitano (principal), Regina Smith (teacher), and Jack Currier (CYI); and first place winners (from left to right) Aubree Sullivan, Rebekah Simmerman, Suzanne Schumann, Amber Osborne.

Spotlight

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