

# The Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest

## A Character Education and Literacy Program

*"To give is better than to receive."*

*"No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted."*

*"When the world says, 'Give up,' Hope whispers, 'Try it one more time.'"*

The Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest asks high school students across the state to write an essay about their own *Law of Life*. By encouraging students to reflect on traits such as perseverance, generosity and compassion, the *Laws of Life* contest promotes and rewards the development of important character values.

The contest also promotes advanced literacy skills. According to the United Nations, literacy doesn't stop with the ABCs, but "involves a continuum of learning to help an individual achieve his or her goals, to develop his or his knowledge and potential, and to participate fully in the wider society." The *Laws of Life* contest encourages high school students to develop essential writing and analytical skills, and assists teens in making articulate arguments for their beliefs.

### **Rotary and *Laws of Life*: A Dynamic Duo!**

Rotary clubs and the Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest have been partners since 2002. Thanks in large part to Rotary clubs, 50 Georgia high schools participated in last year's contest, more than 44,000 essays were written, and more than \$23,000 was awarded in student and teacher prize money.

By sponsoring a local high school, your Rotary club can:

- **Introduce** an effective character education and literacy program in local high schools;
- **Encourage** your community's youth to reflect on values such as those in the 4-Way Test;
- **Connect** with local educators, students and parents in a positive, values-affirming program.
- **Have a memorable program** each spring as winning students read their essays and receive recognition at a club meeting or special event.

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***"The Laws of Life Essay Contest is one of the easiest and yet most meaningful ways for a Rotary Club to establish a strong community-school tie. By sponsoring the contest, a Rotary Club can reach out to the next generation of young people, support its local educators, and make a valuable contribution to character education within its community."***

— George Stewart, Dunwoody Rotary Club, District 6900 Character Education Chair

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Contact Contest Director Susan G. Mason (404.367.9453; [georgialawsoflife@gmail.com](mailto:georgialawsoflife@gmail.com)) for more information.

## **WHAT ROTARIANS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE GEORGIA LAWS OF LIFE ESSAY CONTEST...**

“Working with the *Laws of Life* essay contest is an incredibly meaningful experience. Oftentimes, students who are facing challenging experiences in their personal lives or who are overcoming adversity are recognized as winners.

The fact that these students are honored as winners gives them encouragement to succeed, which in the end creates a more successful community.

As Rotarians who are dedicated to creating better communities, we believe that this contest is a means to that end.”

*Beth McIntyre, Lawrenceville Rotary Club*

“When a Rotary club sponsors a *Laws of Life* contest, everyone benefits ... the students, the school, and the sponsoring Rotary club. We are so proud to be a part of this great effort!”

*Mary Chapman, Peachtree City Rotary Club*

“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 leaders at a Rotary Club meeting. The Laws of Life Essay Contest is truly a program that all Rotary clubs should participate in.”

*Mark Ellis, North Columbus Rotary Club*

“The Laws of Life Essay Contest is one of the easiest and yet most meaningful ways for a Rotary Club to establish a strong community-school tie. By sponsoring the contest, a Rotary Club can reach out to the next generation of young people, support its local educators, and make a valuable contribution to character education within its community.”

*George Stewart, Dunwoody Rotary Club, District 6900 Character Education Chair*

“Thank you again for allowing me to be a part of the Laws of Life Essay Contest. It is truly a blessing.”

*Glenda Snyder, Dahlonega Sunrise Rotary Club*

## **WHAT TEACHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE GEORGIA LAWS OF LIFE ESSAY CONTEST...**

“Thank you again for sponsoring this contest. It is a wonderful way for our students to express themselves and to see that anyone can succeed, no matter the obstacles that have been placed before him.”

*Susan Buice, 2007-2008 Cherokee High School Contest Chair*

“I want to thank you for the opportunity to participate in a contest of this magnitude. How exciting it is for the students' talents and life stories to be recognized in this special way!”

*Dr. Cassandra Harrington, Norcross High School*

“I find this contest to be invaluable in assisting our young adults in their own "heroic journeys". As I read many of this year's papers, tears were streaming. ....Thank you for your continued support of young adults.”

*Alan Ritchey, Dunwoody High School English Department Chair*

“...I would like to thank you ... for the positive influence you have had on our community. Last year I became involved with the Laws of Life Essay Contest. ... I remember one struggling student who approached me and said he could not think of anything about which to write, but we continued to brainstorm together. The student was not a great student; as a matter of fact, he was a student who needed learning support. He did not make good grades and school was not at the forefront of his mind. After pouring over maxims and quotations, I finally printed some words of wisdom from the basketball player Michael Jordan. The student smiled and said, “Perfect!” He finished his assignment, and to be honest, after reading hundreds of essays, I do not recall his in particular. The essay was sent off, and that was the end of it. Or so I thought.

One morning as the students were working, an announcement came on the intercom. His name was called as the grade level winner, and with that came \$75.00. He looked up at me, smiled, then put his head in his hands. When I spoke to him, he looked at me with tears in his eyes and said, ‘You don’t understand, Mrs. Gray. I’ve never won anything before in my life.’ Twenty minutes later when I looked at him, he was still shaking his head and smiling. The contest changed his life. He comes by to see me from time to time, and the pride he felt is still there in his eyes.

Watching a student change his entire perception of himself is an unforgettable moment in my life and I thank you for giving me that.”

*Jennifer Gray, Hardaway High School*

# Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest Rotary Club Sign-Up Form for 2009 - 2010

Please return by August 10<sup>th</sup> or earlier, by mailing to 840 Woodley Drive, Atlanta, GA, 30318 or scanning & emailing to [georgialawsoflife@gmail.com](mailto:georgialawsoflife@gmail.com).

**Club Information:** Club name: \_\_\_\_\_ Rotary District \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Laws of Life Contest Chair: \_\_\_\_\_  
Contact phone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Back-up contact: \_\_\_\_\_ Back-up's phone or E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**School Information:** High school(s) you would like to sponsor (leave blank if you want to be assigned a school):

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Have you contacted anyone at the school? \_\_ Y \_\_ N  
If yes, please list name of contact person, title, and phone # or email address:

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Have you contacted anyone at the school? \_\_ Y \_\_ N  
If yes, please list name of contact person, title, and phone # or email address:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Financial Support:** All sponsoring Rotary Clubs are asked to provide financial support to the contest at some level, ideally as a Bronze, Silver, or Gold Sponsor, **AND/OR to recruit a local business to sponsor the contest.** For a corporate sponsorship package, contact Susan Mason (404.367.9453, [susangmason@gmail.com](mailto:susangmason@gmail.com)).

Our Rotary club will serve as a (please check one or more of the following):

Bronze Sponsor: \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ Silver Sponsor: \$1,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Gold Sponsor: \$1,500 \_\_\_\_\_

Not sure yet, but the club will provide some financial support: \_\_\_\_\_

Our club cannot provide financial support, but we have recruited a local business to sponsor the contest – see below: \_\_\_\_\_

**IF APPLICABLE:** Our Rotary club has recruited a local business to sponsor the contest:

Name of business: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact person (name, mailing address, phone, email): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Dollar amount of sponsorship: \_\_\_\_\_

The business has turned in a completed corporate sponsorship form: \_\_ Yes \_\_ No

*Questions? Contact Susan Mason, Director, Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest, at 404.367.9453.*

# 2009-2010 Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest

## Rotary Club Sponsorship Guidelines

### GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES:

- 1) Sponsor a local high school.
- 2) Provide financial support to the contest at some level, as a Bronze Sponsor (\$500), Silver Sponsor (\$1,000) or Gold Sponsor (\$1,500) **AND / OR RECRUIT A LOCAL BUSINESS THAT WILL SPONSOR THE CONTEST AT ONE OF THESE LEVELS.**
- 3) Assist in essay judging by having one or two Rotary members read 15 to 20 essays in the spring. (Optional)
- 4) Recognize the club's school winners at a Rotary meeting in the spring, generally by inviting the student winners to read their essays aloud.

### TIMELINE:

#### Spring - Summer, 2009:

- Contact the principal or English Department chairman of the high school you would like to sponsor, after coordinating with Georgia Laws of Life.
  - *Laws of Life* can provide you with a school-oriented information package. (Contact Contest Director, Susan Mason, 404.367.9453; [susangmason@gmail.com](mailto:susangmason@gmail.com).)
- Complete the Rotary club sign-up form and return to the Laws of Life contest.

#### Fall 2009:

- Let the School Contest Chair (usually a teacher in the school's English department) know you are available to help with questions and, if requested, attend an English department meeting to motivate teachers and communicate details of contest.
- Stay in touch with the teacher who is the *Laws of Life* Contest Chairman, to give encouragement or answer any questions.
- Set aside a meeting in late April or May to recognize the school's essay winners

#### January-March, 2009:

- You will receive an email asking for the names of one or Rotarians who are willing to serve as essay semi-finalist judges, which involves reading 15 to 20 essays.

#### April – May, 2009:

- Invite student winners, winners' parents, school principal and School Contest Chairman to a Rotary recognition meeting; ask press to attend, if appropriate.
- At the recognition meeting, recognize school principal and School Contest Chair and have student winners read their essays aloud if they so wish.