

Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc.'s
Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest

Celebrating 15 years of Character Education and Ethical Literacy

Dear Educator:

The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest is a statewide character education program for students in grades 9–12. Students are asked to select a maxim or “Law of Life” (such as “Honesty is the best policy”), and to write an essay explaining how the character value in the maxim applies to the students’ lives. The contest, which fits easily into Core Curriculum Standards, gives students an opportunity to reflect on important life lessons while working on critical writing skills.

Last year, 52 high schools participated in the contest, and 41,809 Georgia students wrote a Laws of Life essay. More than \$19,000 was awarded to students and teachers.

- The contest’s top state winner receives a **\$1,000 cash prize**, and the George A. Stewart Character in Action Award will also receive a **\$1,000 cash award**. Several additional state awards of \$200 and up will also be presented.
- Each school that meets the minimum participation requirement of 200 essays has a **\$100 school winner**. Schools that also meet the minimum grade level participation requirements will have three additional student winners who will receive **\$50 each**.
- Your school’s Essay Contest Chair will receive a **\$100 honorarium** if your school submits essays from at least 25 percent of the school’s enrollment for schools with 1,000 students or more. For smaller schools, a minimum of 200 essays or 75% of enrollment is typically required.

The contest is free of charge to schools. Schools that register will receive all necessary materials – a Teacher Contest Manual, sample lesson plans, and student hand-outs – in late July or early August. The contest chair of each registered school will be invited to a teacher’s luncheon in Atlanta on Friday, August 15. Attendance is encouraged but is not required.

To participate in the 2014-2015 contest, your school must return the attached registration form. The contest can accept only a limited number of schools per year, and schools will be accepted on a “first-come, first-served” basis.

I hope you will join us in this year’s contest. If you have any questions, please visit our website www.georgialawsoflife.org or contact me directly.

Best regards,

Susan

Susan G. Mason

Director, Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest
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The Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes. The Program conducts the Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest, an annual essay competition designed to promote character development and ethical literacy among high school students.



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FAQS

How does the Laws of Life contest fit in with Core Curriculum standards?

The contest is operated through a school's English or Language Arts department. The essay assignment works well with Core Curriculum and other writing standards, including:

- RC 3 - Acquires new vocabulary in each content area and uses it correctly.
- W 1 - Establishes appropriate organizational structure, sets a context and engages the reader, maintains a coherent focus throughout, and signals closure.
- W 4 - Practices both timed and process writing and, when applicable, uses the writing process to develop, revise, and evaluate writing.
- C 1 - Demonstrates understanding and control of the rules of the English language, realizing that usage involves the appropriate application of conventions and grammar in both written and spoken formats.
- C 2 - Demonstrates understanding of manuscript form, realizing that different forms of writing require different formats.

What is different about this writing contest?

Unlike other writing contests, the Laws of Life's judging focuses more on the thought processes and self-awareness of the writer and less on grammatical ability. The contest allows students of all academic abilities -- straight-A students, C-students, special need students, at-risk students and campus leaders -- to receive recognition for their essays, something that is not possible in typical essay contests.

What is the program's timeline?

Teacher Contest Manuals will be available starting in early August 2014, with the essay deadline in February, 2015.

Is there a cost to participate in the program?

No, there is no cost to a school to participate. The contest is made possible by generous funding from Rotary Clubs of Georgia, the John Templeton Foundation, and other corporate and individual sponsors.

Learn More! Visit us at:

WWW.GEORGIALAWSOFLIFE.ORG

"The Laws of Life Contest makes young people think about their life's values and articulate them in a way that is meaningful to them. It is not just another contest on creativity and essay-writing capabilities. Writing a Laws of Life essay challenges me and makes me realize things about myself that I might never know otherwise.

Thank you, Laws of Life!"

–Maylene Kie, former student at Parkview High School



What Teachers and Students Are Saying About THE GEORGIA LAWS OF LIFE ESSAY CONTEST...

"I love this essay contest! It allows me to see a side of my students that I wouldn't normally see - their successes, their struggles, and their life experiences."

- Woody Van Treek, Teacher, Lambert High School

"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

"The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest has truly helped my students to not only learn something about who they are, but to also understand that the lessons that they have learned in life are a foundations for the future."

Terri Williams, Ph.D., Teacher

"This contest ... 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, Teacher, Cherokee High School

"After twenty-seven years of teaching in public schools and ten years in the United State Marine Corps, I've realized that the Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest is one of the best opportunities for students to express their personal values. In a world that seemingly frowns on individual beliefs, the Laws of Life contest opens an avenue for young people to share and reflect on those core values and experiences."

Lynda Wheeler, Teacher, Bremen High School

"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 received an award]. ... 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, teacher, Hardaway High School

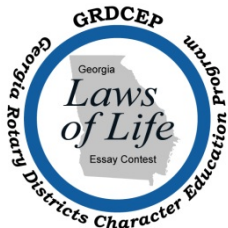
"This essay made me realize I am smart and that I can accomplish anything in life. I hope that this contest will continue and will be a building block for another person to have confidence in themselves and in life!"

Mark Semour, former student, Shiloh High School

"I discovered, while writing my *Law of Life* essay, that writing has an inherent worth, and that discovery was the most valuable prize any contest could ever offer."

Godfrey Ilonzo, student, Westlake High School '08; Harvard '12

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2014 – 2015 School Registration Form

Please scan and e-mail to georgialawsoflife@gmail.com; or mail to 840 Woodley Drive, Atlanta, GA 30318. Questions? Call Susan Mason, Contest Director, at 404.367.9453.

The contest can accept a limited number of schools per year, and schools are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis.

School name: _____

School Address (include city and zip): _____

School phone number: _____

Total Enrollment (grades 9-12): _____

School Principal: _____

Principal's e-mail address: _____

School Essay Contest Chairman (this typically is the English Department Chair or someone appointed by the Dept. Chair):

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Fax: _____

Back-up contact for the contest (another teacher or administrator): _____

Back-up's e-mail address: _____

Does your school have a sponsoring Rotary Club? ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure ☐ Yes

If yes, please provide the name & contact information for your sponsoring Rotary Club:

Club Name: _____

Rotarian contact name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

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