

# Laws of Life



THE GEORGIA  
ROTARY CLUBS  
LAWS OF LIFE  
ESSAY CONTEST

2020 - 2021

Georgia  
Laws of Life  
Essay  
Contest



# Georgia Rotary Clubs Laws of Life Essay Contest Facts and Impact

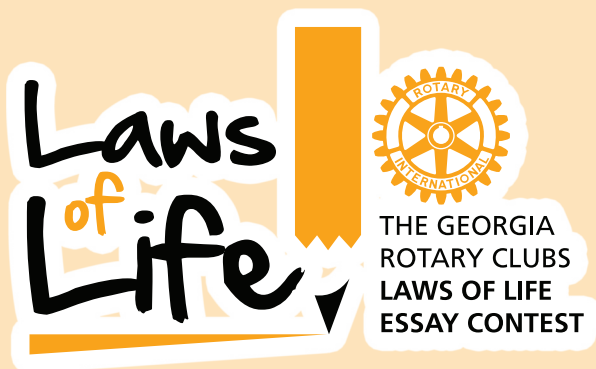
This year, **25,112** students wrote essays for the 2020-2021 Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest from **49** participating schools.

The contest named **135** School-Level Winners and **7** State Winners, and it presented **\$17,200** in cash awards to students and teachers.

A signature program of the Rotary Clubs of Georgia, the contest takes Rotary's emphasis on ethics, education, peace, and literacy into schools and classrooms. **112** volunteer Rotarians from 59 sponsoring Rotary Clubs read and reviewed essays to select the student winners.

As a social and emotional learning tool, the contest fulfills the state-mandated character education requirement and is offered free of charge to high schools. The contest encourages students to select a "law of life" or motto, reflect upon their lives, and express their personal beliefs through writing.

Modeled after the original Laws of Life Essay Contest started by the late Sir John Templeton, a noted philanthropist and pioneer in financial investments, the contest encourages young people to reflect on what is truly important in life. This reflection is essential to building a foundation for students to live their best lives.



*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 vision is to transform lives by engaging students to reflect upon their lives, express personal beliefs and affirm strong character values through writing.*

*"We are very, very small,  
but we are profoundly  
capable of very,  
very big things."*

– Stephen Hawking

Love of family, navigating loss, helping others, self-fulfillment. In this year of change and uncertainty, it would be logical that negativity, skepticism, and judgment would be at the forefront of the mind of a high school student. Yet thousands of students throughout Georgia chose to share messages of compassion, courage, love, hope, and generosity when asked to write an essay about a Law of Life.

Every year, the Georgia Laws of Life Essay contest encourages students to reflect upon their lives and express their personal beliefs. In reflecting on their lives and writing their essays, students find hope in situations that are full of despair, discover triumph in the midst of tragedy, or find beauty in a simple smile. In doing so, they also discover the power of the written word.

While this year several of our partner schools were unable to participate, we are thankful to the thousands of students and teachers who embraced this year's contest, and the sponsors and Rotarians who made the contest come alive. We missed those that could not participate and welcome you back in the fall!

We particularly thank and congratulate the seven student winners whose essays are showcased in this publication. As you read these essays, we hope you too will be inspired and encouraged by their words. Each and every student who wrote a Laws of Life essay this year is to be congratulated for sharing their heartfelt story.

Sincerely,

Beth McIntyre  
Board Chair, Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc.  
Member, Rotary Club of Winder

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



# Corbin Austin

Bainbridge High School – 12th Grade

## The Dog, the Old Lady, and the Boy

In the spring of 10th grade, my teacher asked if I would walk her grandmother's dog. She informed me that she would be unable to due to her increasing age and leg injury. I happily agreed and walked to her house later that day to meet them. I knocked on the door and was greeted by a black and white fluffy little beast with a distinctive sneeze, and a 5-foot old woman with a frail body, a head of angel's silk, and piercing pale blue eyes. I arrived at her house with the impression that I would just be helping a sweet elderly lady walk her dog, but over the course of a year and a half, I would come to find that they would be my daily dose of joy.

Anyone who truly knows me knows I am not too fond of dogs. It's practically embedded in my DNA that animals are not my thing. So why did I accept this job? That question still befuddles me today. Was it that I couldn't say no to my teacher, or was it written in the stars that the old lady and I were supposed to meet? When her dog Hercules scampered out to meet his new walking mate, I internally panicked but refused to show it. I bent down, implanted my hand in his fur, and stroked back and forth. Everything seemed to be going well, especially with the affirmations coming from the old woman watching us. "Oh, he's such a good boy." "He really likes you," she croaked in her distinctive voice that reminds me of a cartoon character. "I got this in the bag," I thought. And I did have it in the bag. Hercules and I walked the neighborhood every weekday. I got someone to unpack my innermost thoughts to, and he got exercise – it was a win-win!

The old woman never ceased to put a smile on my face. She was a little forgetful, which only added to her charm. Every day she would compliment me on how white my shoes were and ask if they were new, then show me her squirrels and tell me about how they would tap on her window for food, and if she had some peanuts, they would eat directly from her hand like she was incarnate of Mother Nature herself. I insisted that she need not pay me, but she insisted harder that she must because I was "the most special boy in the world." Those words were payment enough and combined with the excitement she would get

## State Winner

### Law of Life

"True happiness comes from making others happy."

-David O. McKay

seeing me walk up the driveway every afternoon made me feel like the richest man in the world.

Months passed. I could see her memory lapses increase and Hercules changing. He wouldn't stray far from his home and looked longingly at the old woman before leaving. The situation worsened, and Hercules would not even leave the house. He knew something was wrong and did not want to leave her side. I did not want to take him away from her even for those 10 minutes. It felt wrong taking her money because I wasn't there for a job anymore. I was there because I loved being there and helping her, being the highlight of her day, and her mine. Her generous spirit partnered with her rather terrible memory made her pay me double and sometimes even triple. I informed my teacher about this because it did not settle right in my soul, but she told me that right now more than ever her grandmother needs a purpose, and her feeling like she is helping me is her purpose. In those moments I realized something I had been feeling all along – that her happiness was contagious. Her jovial smile and attitude would creep into the deepest recesses of your mind and soul and change you; make you see the sun shine brighter, make the flowers smell sweeter, and the breezes feel more enlivening as they danced upon your skin. I realized that day, that true happiness comes from making others happy. So, I continued as if nothing changed and it didn't. Every day I saw her, she still had her smile and I mine, and I felt like the richest boy in the world.

...my teacher asked if I would walk her grandmother's dog.

# 1st Runner-Up

## Law of Life

"If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours."

—Dolly Parton

"If you see someone without a smile, give them one of yours." I never fully understood what this saying meant until I experienced it. About a year ago, I decided to get my first job as a cashier. I automatically got along with all of my coworkers except this one particular employee. She had never spoken to me and always gave me a side eye. She was around the same age as me, maybe a year older, so I thought that we would get along perfectly since we were the closest in age. My other coworkers warned me to keep my distance from her because she had a nasty attitude and didn't talk to others with a nice tone. The information I was hearing gave me every reason that I should try to get along with her because I like to change people for the better. One day I had no customers in my line, so I walked over to her register, greeted her, and tried to get to know her more within the time that I had. She was not as rude as people said, but it was very noticeable that she did not want to talk. So, I left it alone and went back to my register. When it was time for our break, I saw that it was the first time since I started that we would be going on break together. I thought that was the perfect chance. During our break I tried talking to her again. She was different and talked differently when there were not many people around. As we were having a good conversation, she apologized to me.

# Eriyel Fisher

Lovejoy High School – 11th Grade

She was saying that she didn't mean to come at me the wrong way and that she's been through a lot. I've barely known her for a month, but you could tell that something was causing her to act the way she did towards others. I didn't want to be the person that gets in other people's business, so I simply told her it was okay and we could move on from it. As months went by, me and my coworker became extremely close and even exchanged numbers. We had small conversations here and there, but it meant something to me. Her attitude had gotten way better, and she started to talk to more people. One day at work, my coworker and I asked if we could go on break together. My manager agreed and looked very happy to see her getting along with people. When we sat down in the breakroom, my coworker broke down crying. She sat there and thanked me for being her friend. She started telling me that life has been hard for her. She was working two jobs nonstop to provide for her 1-year-old son. All her money was going to daycare and to find a place to stay because her mom was kicking her out.

I knew I had to do something due to the fact that I felt as if we were friends. I offered to watch her child with no pay for as much as she needed, as well as offered her to stay at my house until she was financially stable. I told my parents about her situation, and they agreed that she should stay with us for as long as possible. She looked at me with the biggest smile ever and said you're an angel sent from heaven. She only stayed with us for four months and then found her own apartment, which my parents helped out with by purchasing her furniture and agreeing to help watch her son.

I was so excited to be able to make a change for somebody in a positive way. Seeing her smile made me smile even more as the days went by. I will forever live by the saying, "If you see someone without a smile, give them yours." I'm very grateful that I was put in that situation because it taught me how much you can change a person's life.

I knew I had to do something due to the fact that we were friends.

# Ian Klígora

Rome High School – 12th Grade

## Jamie's Life Lesson

I will never forget the day I found out that my best friend Jamie had osteosarcoma. I was playing a video game when I noticed my phone lighting up way more than usual, so I decided to take a look. "I love you, Jamie." Those four words spread through the town faster than any high school drama ever had. I didn't know what to think, or even how to think. Time slowed down as I tried to call him, but there was no one to pick up on the other side. My parents told me it was going to be fine, that he had an 80% chance of survival at the time. Unfortunately, the osteosarcoma had spread much more than Jamie or I knew at the time.

I went over to Jamie's house the weekend after he was diagnosed. He couldn't stop joking about his cancer! It made me smile. I was amazed at how calm he was and how good it made me feel. Except for the pain in his leg, he felt fine, until he started chemotherapy. Chemotherapy for osteosarcoma can be brutal, and Jamie was no exception. Some days Jamie and I would be eating and playing games, then he would go throw up all the food he just ate. When he'd come back, he would act like nothing happened, and we'd go right back to playing video games. He was tough, rarely complained, and always had a good attitude. Unfortunately, despite the multiple rounds of chemotherapy, the cancer continued to spread. It had gone from his knee to his spine and throughout his lungs. I didn't find out until later on, because Jamie would hide the truth so that I wouldn't worry about it, and we could just keep hanging out without more cancer looming over our heads. That's how great of a guy he was. Countless good times were had in that room just watching TV and chatting. We talked about so many things together, even death. Jamie told me he was scared about dying and not getting to live his best life. He knew he didn't have much time left, and him being open about his struggles and his fears to me were life changing moments. Those moments with Jamie made me start to really think about the

## 2nd Runner-Up

### Law of Life

"Don't sweat  
the small  
stuff."

meaning of life, and how a person's attitude can really be a game changer. I got to watch Jamie make every attempt possible to keep living his life to the fullest.

The day he passed, I sat in my bed staring at the ground, knowing I was never going to speak to him again. Like most kids my age, I only had personal experiences with people much older than me passing away. I was very sad, but I was also able to think about all the things that I learned from him. Watching Jamie fight his cancer and deal with his chemotherapy with bravado taught me to fight the path of least resistance, because you never know when your time is up. Even in his darkest days, he managed to produce a smile. Now whenever I'm going through a tough week or a stressful moment, I think back at how Jamie handled his battle with such incredible grace. There is no reset button, no additional lives in a round of this game. One day I'm skiing with my best friend having the time of my life, and a year later I'm carrying him to his grave. In that short but incredible last year of Jamie's life, I learned not to stress too much over the insignificant things in life, to "not sweat the small stuff." Jamie taught me how to take tough moments in stride, to live in the moment, and to make the most out of the time we have.

*Even in his darkest days, he managed to produce a smile.*

## 3rd Runner-Up

### Law of Life

"The hardest thing in life is choosing what matters."

There are many words you could use to describe my relationship with my father. I'm partial to the term "complex." Please don't misinterpret that statement – I love my dad with all of my heart. He truly does his best to be a good father. The issue lies in the fact that while I hold all of this love for him, sometimes I really don't really like him all that much.

My dad tries with every fiber of his being to be objective on all accounts. The man practically worships the creator of the podcast. His Bible is *Consumer Reports* magazine. However, this line of thinking often leads him to try and use logic in personal, emotionally charged situations – combine that with the fact that I inherited his stubbornness, and you get a thousand petty but potentially explosive fights waiting to happen.

We never talk about the arguments after they happen. The routine typically goes like this: normal day, petty fight, a few hours of silent avoidance, and pretending it never happened the next day. We both know this wedge between us exists. It has since I was 12 years old. Somewhere between then and now, we came to the silent, mutual understanding that it wasn't worth talking about. At some point, I just accepted that we didn't understand each other and never would.

That reality was shattered when my grandmother died in her sleep on August 15, 2020. His mother.

We all knew it was coming – the bright, bubbly, sometimes embarrassingly loud woman I was

## Adrian Whitlock

Heritage High School – 11th Grade

honored enough to call Grandma had spent months being worn to a shell of her true self by Alzheimer's disease. It's almost sickeningly ironic that her mind and her wit, the things she prided herself on most, were what degraded to the point they took her away. Seeing a woman you could only describe as the life of the party lay unconscious in a hospital bed (through a phone screen no less; only Grandpa and her children were even allowed in the room with her due to COVID) just doesn't feel right and never will.

Suddenly the wedge between my dad and I, every fight we'd ever had, seemed pathetically insignificant in comparison to this huge, scary, massive thing neither of us had dealt with before. I'd never lost a grandparent and he'd never lost a parent – neither of us had any idea what to do. I expected him to throw himself into work and projects, to hold in his sadness and anger until the sun went down and he was safe in the nest of his bed. Instead, something unpredicted and incredible happened: we clung to each other.

Rather than retreat like I thought he would, my dad leaned on his family, the people he loved. And in response, I leaned back. Over the course of just one or two weeks, I came to realize many things, one of them being very close to a quote by Sue Monk Kidd: "The hardest thing in life is choosing what matters." Instead of choosing to hold on to four years of tension and quarrels, we both chose family. We chose to be the things that kept each other from falling apart. We chose to grip each other's hands during Grandma's service, while our masks absorbed our tears and our family members sat a mandated minimum of 6 feet away. Even tonight, as I was writing this very essay, I had to take a break upon mentioning Grandma's death – which I spent with my dad, letting out tears of grief and he ran his hands soothingly through my hair. We're closer than we've been in a long while, and I think that would make Grandma proud.

Sometimes you don't even realize what matters until it knocks you down and steals the breath from your lungs. Until something kicks your off your boat and you're bobbing helplessly at sea. Those moments, those dark, terrifying moments when you're on the ground, are when you define what you believe in. I believe in togetherness.

Instead, something unpredicted and incredible happened...

# Lily Griner

Colquitt County High School – 10th Grade

## 4th Runner-Up

### Being Kind Even When No One Is Watching

There were many things I found strange, yet fascinating about my grandma. The fact that she could snore as loud as a deaf pig or be so bad at driving that she constantly drove over a curb, were some of the things I found strange. But if there was one thing about her that would always fascinate me the most was her overwhelming kindness. She perfectly embodied the quote "Be kind, even when no one is looking." One time, when we went to Chick-fil-A, she paid for the customer behind us even though she didn't know who they were or even how much it would cost to pay for their food. At the time, I found the small act of kindness to be weird and even unnecessary. Sure, it was a nice gesture, but what if they had bought something really expensive and she ended up wasting a lot of money on complete strangers?

I went through life with this sort of mentality for the longest time. I always questioned why people went out of their way to be generous even though they wouldn't be rewarded for their efforts at all. I wasn't completely against being nice to other people, just not if it was at the expense of yourself or wouldn't come with any sort of benefit. My grandma, however, did not hold beliefs as selfish as mine. Instead, she lived while valuing others above herself and exuding this sort of selfless thinking in all her actions of life. It wasn't until the unfortunate but momentous day when she was no longer with us and I felt utterly crushed and distraught that I really started to take into consideration her selfless way of thinking.

Even in her last days of being with us, she still acted as charitable and exuberant as she always did despite the stress she was going through due to her work. My grandma was a nurse during the Covid-19 pandemic, a very stressful time for everyone, especially medical workers. She was forced to work with Covid patients, but still gave it her all to do her best for them even though it was a job forced upon her. She even would tell us about some of her patients and their miserable circumstances. For one patient she even went as far as to go out and buy them some food that they were craving. She did all of this not because it was required, but because she

### Law of Life

"Being kind  
even when  
no one is  
watching."

truly cherished the happiness of the people around her, and it brought her an overwhelming joy and purpose to be able to spread kindness and love to other people.

Her passing made me truly understand how selfish of a person I was. If someone under so much pressure and who lived surrounded by such misery every day could still be a shining example of the pinnacle of human compassion, then why couldn't I? In comparison to hers, my life is a breeze, so why should I be allowed to wallow in my own selfishness and narcissism? For every tear I shed in mourning, I vowed to improve myself and strive to be just as great as she was, if not better.

It's been plenty of time since her passing, but even now I'm still growing and striving to improve myself. I try to live my life helping others and without being self-centered or temperamental. I try to support the people around me, such as my family who may still be grieving over our loss or my friends who have their own battles to face. I find that I'm the happiest when those around me are happy as well, and it gives my life so much more meaning to be kind to others. Of course, I'm not perfect and I know I never will be. However, I still hope that my grandma is watching me from heaven with a smile as she sees me grow. Even though she can't be here physically to support me through my life, I know that I can count on her to be here in spirit.

*My grandma, however, did not hold beliefs as selfish as mine.*

## 5th Runner-Up

### Law of Life

*"Do not be discouraged."*

All throughout my tenth-grade year, I questioned my future. I was not sure what I wanted to do after high school. It felt as if I was just a living embodiment, with no goals to work toward, no purpose. I sat in my bed countless nights just thinking about it, trying to figure out a plan. College was constantly being pressured, but I was never drawn to the idea. Both of my parents went to college and admired and supported it. I was a smart student and had good grades; however, I knew that college came with a hefty price tag, and I feared being in debt and having to work a job I did not enjoy. After having these thoughts in my head for months, I knew what I needed to work toward – becoming a welder.

The next year of high school, I signed up for welding, and it instantly made my life more interesting. I now looked forward to going to school every day and getting my hands dirty learning a new skill. Welding is a difficult task and can be quite dangerous. To put it simply, welding is basically melting two pieces of metal together, so there is a lot of heat and electricity to be careful of. Luckily, my instructor was a great teacher. He was always making sure the class was working hard and safely, preparing us for all types of different jobs. He taught us all the techniques of different types of welding. I was truly fully immersed in the class, constantly trying to get better every single day.

## Christopher O'Neal

Thomasville High School – 12th Grade

After a few months of learning this new skill of mine, I was challenged to see how well I could perform it. The thing that decides if a person is a welder or not is a bend test. Almost every welding job requires that the person pass a bend test. A bend test is simply the bending of a piece of welded metal, testing the integrity of a weld. If the metal breaks or cracks, the test is failed. I went up to the bending machine, nicknamed "The Heartbreaker," and handed my instructor my welds. I was nervous and my palms were sweating. I had spent an hour and a half producing these welds, and I did not want to be embarrassed. I thought my welds were fine, until I saw my welds crack and break as they bent. I was disappointed and I instantly started questioning why I was taking the whole class in my head. But before I could continue on that depressing train, my welding instructor said, "Don't be discouraged." He had to say it multiple times to make sure I understood what he was saying, a smart move. After that incident, I realized what welding is. It is all about learning, fixing, and performing.

This experience not only encouraged me to work harder, but to work with even more motivation, and most importantly to not be discouraged when I make a mistake. I find myself bouncing back at every error with more and more drive each time. I'm currently in my second year of welding class, and I have passed countless bend tests and have almost fully prepared myself for a job right out of high school. The availability to have an excellent instructor is something that I'm very much thankful for. Just to think that two years ago, I was heading blindly into the future still startles me. It is comforting to have a skill that I am good at and motivated to perform, with no discouragement.

*"Don't be discouraged." He had to say it multiple times...*



# Jamea Harris

Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts—11th Grade

George A. Stewart, Jr.  
Character in Action Award\*

## Law of Life

"You never know  
what someone else  
is going through.  
Be kind always."

Life can throw many challenges at you. Sometimes, they come unexpectedly. You step into each day blindly, not knowing what's to come. Everyday I wake up with a roof over my head, clothes on my back, and food in the refrigerator. I am greeted by my loving family with warm hugs and affection. As I prepared for school each day, I never worried about what I would eat or where I would sleep. I would get ready for school and head out of the door. I did not know that other people didn't have what I had.

I had known my classmate Maya\* for 7 years. She was often quiet and reserved in school. She had long, black hair and a beautiful smile. At school, the students stopped and taunted her about her clothing. I turned around to see what everyone was laughing at. Her white sneakers were frayed with dust and holes. Her shirt was slightly torn with stains. They laughed and pointed their fingers at her. Maya turned her head in shame and ran down the hallway. I couldn't understand why people treated her so poorly. I wanted to stop her and ask what was wrong, but she was gone when I turned around.

One day after school, I stopped to get a drink from the cafeteria before leaving. I walked in and saw a girl getting a bag full of food from the lunch staff. I peeked around the corner and saw Maya. She noticed me, quickly gathered her things, and stormed out the door. I was so confused. Why was Maya getting food from the lunch staff? Why was she so upset? The next day, I saw her crying on the floor. Confused and nervous, I asked what was wrong. She told me that she was embarrassed of me seeing her get food from the school's pantry. I was shocked by what I heard next. Maya and her family were homeless.

I stood there in disbelief. She looked at me with tears in her eyes. As she spoke, you could sense that she was hurting, trying to find out where she belonged in life. Next, Maya told me how she doesn't feel pretty because people pick on her about her appearance. It broke my heart to hear her say such degrading comments about herself. As I wiped her tears, I told Maya that she was beautiful and that the purpose of her life was beyond anything she could imagine. I had so many questions to ask her, but no words could form. How does she move on with life knowing that she has nowhere to sleep? On that day, I knew my life would never be the same.

I had to face the harsh reality. Everyone does not have the same comforts and luxuries such as shelter and daily meals. I started to defend Maya from everyone that talked about her. I packed extra food in my lunch box to take to her. She sat with me at lunch, and we walked the halls together. For a while, I tried to pretend that everything was normal. As if the news I learned did not change my perspective on my life. The truth is that life isn't fair. It is an uneven playing field.

The story of Maya and her family motivated me to be helpful in my community. I started volunteering at non-profit organizations such as Hosea Feed the Hungry and Safe in His Arms, organizations that aided the homeless people in Atlanta. I believe that God placed me in Maya's path so that I could find a way to help people that are less fortunate. Although it is impossible to help everyone, little acts of selflessness can benefit the people around you. I look at life with a grateful heart. I am thankful for everything I have because I know that there are some that don't have what I am blessed with. "Everyone you know is fighting a battle you know nothing about. Be kind. Always."

\*Name changed

*\* 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.*

It broke my heart to hear her say degrading comments about herself.

# Congratulations School Winners

**Alpharetta High School**  
Austin White, 9th Grade

**Apalachee High School**  
Audrey Morgan, 10th Grade

**Atlanta Classical Academy**  
Elizabeth Richter, 10th Grade

**Bainbridge High School**  
Corbin Austin, 12th Grade

**Bremen High School**  
Wiley Elias Garner, 12th Grade

**Brookwood High School**  
Alayna Hogard, 12th Grade

**Brunswick High School**  
Caleb Miller, 9th Grade

**Carrollton High School**  
Gregory Slappey, 12th Grade

**Carver STEAM Academy**  
KeAsia Chandler, 11th Grade

**Central High School (Carrollton)**  
Stephen Moye, 11th Grade

**Colquitt County High School**  
Lily Griner, 10th Grade

**Dawson County High School**  
Addison Hoard, 12th Grade

**Deerfield-Windsor School**  
Arwa Kheda, 10th Grade

**Denmark High School**  
Tomas Burdick, 11th Grade

**Dunwoody High School**  
Julia Strickland, 10th Grade

**Evans High School**  
Jasmine Moreno, 12th Grade

**Forest Park High School**  
Monica Trejo-Gonzalez,  
10th Grade

**Forsyth Central High School**  
Seth J. Tracy, 11th Grade

**George Walton Academy**  
Suhani Rami, 12th Grade

**Gilmer High School**  
Isaiah Sharp, 12th Grade

**Greenville High School**  
Audrey Ferrell, 10th Grade

**Haralson County High School**  
Kathleen Robinson, 11th Grade

**Hardaway High School**  
Zyon Whitten, 9th Grade

**Heritage High School**  
Adrian Whitlock, 11th Grade

**Independence High School**  
Felix Fisch, 12th Grade

**Jackson High School**  
Summer Statham, 10th Grade

**Lafayette High School**  
Andrew Lemons, 11th Grade

**Lovejoy High School**  
Eriyel Fisher, 11th Grade

**Martha Ellen Stilwell  
School of the Arts**  
Jamea Harris, 11th Grade

**McIntosh High School**  
Reagan Vetter, 10th Grade

**North Cobb High School**  
Abigail Kratzer, 12th Grade

**North Forsyth High School**  
Rodney Gasana, 12th Grade

**North Springs High School**  
Jacob Mirsky, 11th Grade

**Northside High School (Columbus)**  
Kelsey Amon, 11th Grade

**Paul Duke STEM High School**  
Eleanor Grimes, 9th Grade

**Pickens High School**  
Tempe Solomon, 12th Grade

**Rome High School**  
Ian Kligora, 12th Grade

**Shaw High School**  
Qunasha Daniel, 12th Grade

**South Forsyth High School**  
Morgan Crump, 11th Grade

**Thomas County Central High  
School**  
Laura Hiers, 11th Grade

**Thomasville High School**  
Christopher O'Neal, 12th Grade

**Thomson High School**  
Cammie Jocelyn Anne O'Neal,  
12th Grade

**West Hall High School**  
Mina Fawzi, 9th Grade

**Woodland High School**  
Gabriella Andino, 9th Grade

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

Hapeville Charter Career Academy  
Henry Grady High School  
Lambert High School  
Mill Creek High School  
West Forsyth High School

# Congratulations!

## Teachers of Distinction\*

**Central High School** (Carrollton)  
Megan Wooten

**Haralson County High School**  
Carol Fasick

**Forest Park High School**  
Shellie Taylor-Rogers

**Northside High School** (Columbus)  
Sonya Trepp-Fuller

**George Walton Academy**  
Wrynn Carson

**Shaw High School**  
Parise Bailey

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

## English Teacher of the State Winner:

Heidi Chambers, Bainbridge High School

## English Teacher of the George A. Stewart, Jr. Award Winner:

Pamela White, Martha Ellen Stilwell School of the Arts

## Thank You Essay Judges from Partner Rotary Clubs

Rotary Club of Alpharetta  
Buckhead Rotary Club  
Rotary Club of Canton  
Carrollton Dawnbreakers Rotary Club  
Rotary Club of Columbus  
Rotary Club of Conyers  
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Rotary Club of Lawrenceville  
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Rotary Club of Marietta Metro  
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North Cobb Rotary Club  
North Columbus Rotary Club  
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Roswell Rotary Club  
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