

Character Celebration

To Advance Ethics in Action

Wednesday, May 4, 2016



SEE, 326 West Main St., Suite 204, Milford, CT 06460 www.ethicsed.org

The School for Ethical Education

Vision

The School for Ethical Education (SEE) teaches strategies to (K-16) educators to put *ethics in action* for positive character formation of students.

Mission

The School for Ethical Education (SEE) recognizes the need for an increased focus on ethical behavior within human interactions. We also affirm the contribution of sound ethical reasoning in the advancement of ethical behavior. To promote our vision, SEE uses a variety of methods to provide educators strategies to support positive character formation in their students.

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Our Celebration Includes

Recognizing Connecticut students for their inspiring Laws of Life essays and Public Service Announcement (P.S.A.) videos in support of academic integrity. The Laws of Life essay program provides students with an excellent opportunity to reflect, write and discuss with their teachers, peers and parents the values or character goals that can help them live a successful life.

Honoring Marna Borgstrom, President and CEO of Yale New Haven Health System, recipient of the 2016 John Winthrop Wright *Ethics in Action* Award. The *Ethics in Action* Award honors a Connecticut leader who has authentically demonstrated ethical business or leadership practices.

Fundraising for The School for Ethical Education (SEE). SEE teaches strategies to put *ethics in action*. We encourage learning experiences that foster positive character and responsible and caring communities.

Celebration Program

Reception

WelcomeDr. David B. Wangaard
President/Director, The School for Ethical Education

Dinner Service

Presentation of Laws of Life Awards...Deni Nakonecni, *SEE Laws of Life Program Coordinator*

Essay Reading: "Family".....Jessica Lawlor, Christian Heritage High School

Presentation of Integrity PSA AwardsDaniel Kiley, *SEE PSA Program Coordinator*

Recognition for Academic Integrity

Public Service AnnouncementsWeston High School, Jonathan Law High School,
Wilbur Cross High School, University of New Haven

John Winthrop Wright *Ethics in Action* Award

PresentationIntroduction by Oz Griebel
President & CEO at MetroHartford Alliance and 2015 Ethics in Action Awardee

***Ethics in Action* Awardee and Keynote Speaker**Marna Borgstrom
President & CEO of Yale New Haven Health System

ClosingDr. David B. Wangaard

Laws of Life

The School for Ethical Education has been administering the *Laws of Life* Essay Writing Program in the state of Connecticut since 2000. Over 50,000 students have taken the challenge to reflect and write about the values that help people live successful lives. *Laws of Life* provides students with an opportunity to discuss important personal values and publish those personal beliefs within their community, family, peers and school. Evaluators of this contest have noted that *Laws of Life* students gain an appreciation of their own personal values and how those values can provide strength, especially when life becomes challenging. The following ten Connecticut essayists were chosen for recognition at the Character Celebration.

Connecticut's *Laws of Life* 2015-2016 Essay Finalists

Sophia Anastasio , North Branford Intermediate <i>A Spark of Determination</i>	7
Alexis Gonzalez , Waltersville Middle School <i>Making the World a Better Place: Be Kind!</i>	9
Christy Jean , Flood Middle School <i>Together We Can Do So Much: How the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti Changed my Life Forever</i>	10
Jessica Lawlor , Christian Heritage High School <i>Family</i>	12
Berlove Lelain , Ansonia High School <i>Not Defined By the Physical</i>	14
Meghan Montanaro , North Branford Intermediate <i>Always Be Honest</i>	15
Darby Pethrick , Flood Middle School <i>Living a Life Free of Others' Expectations – My Mom's Influence on my Law of Life</i>	16
Keya Saxena , Griswold Middle School <i>An Act of Kindness</i>	17
Stephanie Sudusky , North Branford Intermediate <i>Giving Hope</i>	19
Caileigh Treash , Christian Heritage High School <i>Everyday Courage</i>	21

Connecticut's *Laws of Life* 2015-2016 Essay Judges

Albert Perry, New Canaan, CT	Barbara Liu, Willimantic, CT	Cristi Alberino, Hartford, CT	David Simon, New Haven, CT	Doug Ficek, New Haven, CT
Ellen Jarus Hanley, Hartford, CT	Gilbert Gigliotti, New Britain, CT	Joe Amarante, New Haven, CT	Nancy Nicolescu, Hartford, CT	Robert Rattner, New Haven, CT
Sara Gerhold, Canton, CT	Travis Tucker, Hartford, CT	Mike Flament, Shelton, CT	Enza Richards, Milford, CT	

Academic Integrity PSA Contest

The Academic Integrity Public Service Announcement (PSA) Contest is a character-education program that gives students in high school and college the unique opportunity to reflect and create a video about the values that support academic integrity (honesty, integrity, responsibility, fairness, and perseverance). The PSA contest encourages a dialogue between students and their instructors and community members to advance academic integrity. The following four schools and students were selected as the winning PSAs for this year's *Academic Integrity* Public Service Announcement Contest.

Academic Integrity PSA Contest 2015-2016 Winners

Eric Benninghoff and Seth Woodhouse

Weston High School

Academic Integrity 1st place

Ian Hugo and Leslie Terres

Jonathan Law High School

Cheating Is Not Your Friend 1st place

Denisel Cerda, Jesmarie Hernandez, Noel Mitchell, Karla Montoya, and Frances Rosario

Wilbur Cross High School

Think Ahead 3rd place

Veronica Bitz and Alexandra Halfinger

University of New Haven

Follow the Signs to Academic Integrity 3rd place

Academic Integrity PSA Contest 2015-2016 Video Judges

Frank Borres,
Bridgeport, CT

Johnny Perez,
New Haven, CT

Matthew Hallock,
Fairfield, CT

Lydia LaPlante,
Berlin, CT

Richard Falco,
Fairfield, CT

Michael
Graziano,
North Haven, CT

Dennis Blader,
West Haven, CT

Steven Fowler,
East Windsor, CT

Anne Craig,
Hartford, CT

Brian Spyros,
Hartford, CT

Rebecca Abbott,
Hamden, CT

David Wangaard,
Milford, CT

Daniel Kiley,
Milford, CT

John Winthrop Wright Ethics in Action Award

The *Ethics in Action* Award honors a Connecticut leader who has authentically demonstrated ethical business or leadership practices. John Winthrop Wright founded SEE in 1995 and left a major donation from his estate to perpetuate SEE's mission. Mr. Wright desired to promote internationally respected values such as-- fairness, respect, responsibility, caring, justice, honesty, courtesy, citizenship, and the principles of the Golden Rule. The *Ethics in Action* award is given in Mr. Wright's name to recognize a business or community leader that demonstrates a commitment to ethics and character.

Marna P. Borgstrom

President and CEO of Yale-New Haven Health System



Marna Borgstrom is the recipient of the 2016 John Winthrop Wright *Ethics in Action* award as presented by The School for Ethical Education (SEE). The *Ethics in Action* award is given in Mr. Wright's name to honor Ms. Borgstrom, who is widely respected for her commitment to ethics in her personal and business life and for supporting Yale-New Haven Health's values of respect, quality and compassion.

Marna Borgstrom began her career at Yale-New Haven Hospital more than 30 years ago. Her varied roles have taken her from a post-graduate fellowship, to various staff and management roles, to her 1994 promotion to the position of Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer. In 2005, she was appointed President and CEO of both Yale-New Haven Hospital and Yale New Haven Health System.

The Yale New Haven Health System, which has \$3.6 billion in revenues and employs 21,000 people in Connecticut, includes Bridgeport and Greenwich Hospitals as well. She serves on several national boards, including Vizient, Inc. in Dallas, and the Coalition to Protect America's Healthcare in Washington, D.C. She also serves on the boards of the Healthcare Institute, and the Connecticut Hospital Association.

Ms. Borgstrom has been the recipient of several awards recognizing her advocacy and community involvement including the AHA Grassroots Champion Award, the Anti-Defamation League Torch of Liberty Award, The Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce Community Leadership Award and Business New Haven Business Person of the Year. She was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by Quinnipiac University and a Doctor of Business Administration by the University of New Haven. She and her husband have raised two sons in Connecticut and in her free time she enjoys cooking, reading and time with her Swiss Mountain dog, Ripley.

Ethics in Action Creates Character

A Spark of Determination by Sophia Anastasio

Sometimes, all you need is a spark of determination to overcome obstacles. You need a little push to change things. You need something that has dramatically affected you in order to move on. Determination is not a feeling that comes frequently. Often, it is tough to get motivated to be determined because it can be challenging. Being determined is being ready to get something done and to be eager to change something. It is like saying, "I can and I will." It is being driven to go the distance no matter what. Determination will get you through tough things if you apply it with effort. It consists of being persistent, strong, courageous, focused, and purposeful. My grandma faced some difficult and life alarming challenges that only determination would get her through. She knew that things in her life had to change, so she put her determined face on and got to work.

When my mom was younger, her father was an alcoholic. She didn't really see him as a good father. She didn't see him as someone to rely on and always be there for her. My grandma also felt this way about her husband, my mom's father. He never gave my mom and her two brothers the childhood that kids should remember. One day, when my mom's dad was really drunk, he punched my grandma in the nose and broke it. He was not safe to be around that day so my grandma told my mom and her brothers to run to the car outside and lock it. She told them to wait there for her so that they could get away from her unsafe husband. That was the day that my grandma knew that she had to change things. She had to get a divorce because it would be safer without her husband for her kids and herself. She was determined to get a divorce and have her children with her. She was determined to keep her children safe.

When my grandma was able to get divorced, she had to work three jobs to provide the proper food and shelter for her family. That was not an easy task. Days were so long and tiring. My grandma was so exhausted by the time every day was over. She put forth a strong work ethic to make sure that her kids got to live a normal life. She was determined to let her kids have what they needed. My grandma would always say, "If it's meant to be, it's meant to be." My grandma was greatly impacted by this. No matter how unattainable or impossible something may feel like, it will work out if it's meant to happen. My grandma felt like nothing was going to get better, but she always kept this reminder in her head. She realized that even if you can't explain it or figure out why, everything happens for a reason. Life chooses your path and you can't control all of it. She discovered that determination can drive you to figure out what's meant to be and what is not. Working three jobs was not easy at all, so when a moment that was meant to be approached, it truly was meant to be. While my grandma was working one day, she met someone very special. He was so special that he turned into my grandma's new husband and my mom's step-father. I call him Grandpa Mike and he couldn't be any more amazing. Grandpa Mike brightened everyone in the family's lives.

He is such a great person and the best part was that he treated my mom and her brothers as if they were his actual own. He is so humorous and he just makes you laugh all the time. He helped out my grandma and her children so much. My grandma no longer had to work three jobs and life was a great deal better. My mom's brothers got to play their favorite sport; hockey and they were so happy. They were able to play on travel teams and they became very good. My mom got to play softball and join girl scouts. These were all activities that my mom and her siblings were not able to play before grandpa Mike was there because they were too expensive. Grandpa Mike allowed the kids to live the childhood that they should remember. My mom also got to enjoy how happy her mom was. My grandma felt like she had a weight lifted off her shoulders when Grandpa Mike came. He was the biggest help. Grandpa Mike brought joy and happiness to the family and nobody could be more thankful.

When my grandma smacked on her determined face in a tough situation, it paid off. She was able to achieve the goals of overall having a better life. She made her family's life so much better by working hard. That just goes to show you that when you put your mind to something and are determined to do it, you can accomplish it. My grandma's determination led her to discover what was meant to be, so she just had to be patient and wait for her time to come. All she needed was that spark of determination.

Through my Grandma's journey, I have found moments where determination has risen up and out of me. I have incorporated being determined in my life. In fourth grade, we had to do a contest called the Invention Convention, where you had to invent something. I wasn't very thrilled about having to do this and I got pretty frustrated. I could not think of something to invent and I wanted to give up. But my parents explained to me how this was a great opportunity to share my ideas with the world. That talk with my parents was a little push to get me determined, and that spark of determination led me to success. I continuously kept thinking of ideas and when I finally thought of one, I got to work. My final product was a winner for the school and I got to go to the state competition. I got a small award at the state competition, but I didn't stop there. Later I was asked to send a video of my invention to the Jimmy Fallon show and the Ellen show. Although I didn't make it on either, I was grateful for the opportunities. If I didn't get determined to create this invention, I would have never had these opportunities. Although this was a minor struggle to overcome compared to my grandma's, it proved that if you are eager and determined to get something accomplished, most times it will pay off. All my grandma and I needed was that spark of determination.

Make the World a Better Place: Be Kind!

by Alexis Gonzales

Our world is made up of so much negativity and this reminds me of a lesson I learned as a young girl, if you don't have something nice to say don't say anything at all. Being kind can really make the world a better place. Instead of focusing on all of the bad things in the world or making rude, disrespectful comments, just be nice. Look for all of the positive things in the world. Strive to be like the people you admire and never give up hope.

Be kind and don't judge others based on what you see. Give people a chance. Don't judge someone because you think of them differently than you. No one is perfect. Being kind to others can brighten peoples' days and can make them happy. Give them a moment to remember. Lucius Annaeus Seneca said, "Wherever there is a human being, there is an opportunity for a kindness." I really like this quote because it shows that anyone can be nice. It isn't hard to be nice. You may be dealing with challenges, but you shouldn't take it out on others because everyone has struggles. One way to show kindness to others is to help people. It shouldn't matter if the person in need is your friend or a stranger. It shouldn't matter if the person is young or elderly. It shouldn't matter if you agree with everything the person believes...still help them if they are in need! If you help someone in need, whether it is with something big or small, you have made a difference. In the future, you might need support and would want others to demonstrate the same kindness.

I remember one time I was really upset and I yelled at my friends because I was angry. Later I realized that I wasn't mad at my friends at all, but because I felt comfortable around them and I was mad, I took my anger out on them. I apologized for my actions and I was forgiven. This experience taught me to think before I act, but more importantly it taught me to take a step back and focus on the positive. My friends showed me great kindness even after I screamed at them. This is the same kindness I want to show to others because there is never a reason to be rude or mean to others. These bad behaviors will become your character if you continue behaving this way. Trust me, you will regret being negative, just like I regretted yelling at my friends. I have a very big heart and was lucky that I was forgiven and learned my lesson.

Being kind doesn't cost anything. A simple smile or holding the door for someone can make a difference for someone having a tough day. Don't let anyone one bring you down, but work hard to build others up. Being kind can change the world. Picture living in a world where a helping hand is an arm's length away. Now, understand that we do live in this world. All you need to do is reach out!

Together We Can Do So Much: How the 2010 Earthquake in Haiti Changed my Life Forever by Christy Jean

When I was just a little boy, my mom had told me that when people do things together, they can achieve goals and win against any challenge. I listened to my mother, but I didn't pay much attention, "I know, ma," I replied automatically. But after a tragedy one day, I learned that working together with other people would actually keep me alive. My Law of Life is when people work together, any challenge can be overcome.

It was the year 2010, the twelfth of January. It was a normal day at first; my brothers, sister, and I went to school, we ate, we did our homework. Everything was business as usual. My two brothers and my grandma stayed inside the house to take a quick nap. Meanwhile, I was playing with our neighbors' kids, and my mom was doing my sister's hair. All of a sudden, the ground started to shake so much we weren't able to stand right. My mom grabbed my sister's arm and dragged her to where I was playing with the other kids away from our house. She covered us and started to scream, "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus! Jesus!" I tried to open my eyes, but I couldn't even see my own arm. It was so dark and we were covered in dust. The sound the ground made was like a gun going off multiplied by one hundred. It was so painful. After a couple of more seconds, the ground started to settle. When we all opened our eyes, our apartment was flat to the ground and my brothers and grandma were underneath all the rubble. My sister and my mom were crying, along with the other kids. The neighbors came from somewhere. A woman was hysterical because her newborn baby just died. I was crying, too. While I was crying, in my mind I said, *what will I be without my brothers and grandma? Who will I look up to? What will I do?* My mind was going crazy. My mom sent us to a friend's house for help because she thought the tragedy only happened where we lived, but it wasn't localized. The earthquake had happened everywhere. When my sister and I walked to our friend's house about ten minutes away, we noticed that the street was cracked. When we got there, there were people everywhere on the street gathered. My sister and I looked for our friend, and after a couple of minutes we found her. She didn't even say a word to us. She just grabbed our arms and dragged us to an area in the middle of the street so we could sleep. I looked up at a full, bright moon and shooting stars. I prayed, "God, please do not let my brothers die. I beg of you." Then, I fell asleep.

The next morning, I woke up to find my voice gone. I was crying so much the other day that I had lost my voice. I tried to talk to my sister but she looked like she couldn't even hear me. I guess we were so shocked that communication was a challenge. So we walked back to our destroyed house and we saw my mom with my brothers and my grandma. My sister and I ran to them and hugged them. I said to myself, "God listened to me," and I smiled. My brothers told us how they found a way out underneath all the rubble with grandma. One of the sad things is that an old man who lived in the bottom apartment was crushed to death. But luckily, his grandson lived. Then we just sat there in silence. *So what are we going to do now?* We started to think: we have no house, no food, and no water. It was the same for our neighbors. They also had nothing.

So my mom and our neighbors took some robes and some sticks to make a big tent. We became a family. We did everything together: we cooked, we talked, and we played together. Since we didn't have water, an old man who owned a well gave us some every two days or three. People who I saw that used to fight against each other were working together everywhere. It was a beautiful sight watching everyone work together even though the place wasn't beautiful at all. After a couple of weeks or so, construction crews were working all over Haiti and building big wooden houses for everyone. They built my family one and one for our neighbors in about two weeks. It felt so good having a home again even though it wasn't much. Even after getting our separate houses, my family and our neighbors still did a lot of things together.

It's been six years since the earthquake had happened in Haiti. Everyone has almost forgotten about it, but the lessons taught will never be forgotten. Some of my emotional wounds have been healed but the scars remain. Now, whenever I hear a kid saying that he doesn't want to work with someone else because he doesn't like him, it reminds me of who I used to be when I was a boy. I was someone who noticed differences more than focusing on similarities and common goals. But now, I am different. My Law of Life is to always work with people, not against them. I also encourage people to work with others because when you learn something valuable, you don't keep it to yourself, but spread the lesson.



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GatewayCT.edu



Congratulations

Marna P. Borgstrom

John Winthrop Wright
Ethics in Action Honoree

Family by Jessica Lawlor

I entered the Cuban restaurant after a long, cramped car ride to New Jersey. Immediately, I was enveloped in the arms of my tiny Hispanic relatives. "Hey, *Linda*, when did you get taller than me?" they demanded to know. I smiled, glad to see my entire family together for the first time in years. It was a very special occasion--my abuelita's 75th birthday. She sat at the head of the table in a birthday crown with a jovial grin. She had not expected the extravagant party my family had thrown for her. Her relatives in Florida and Colombia, whom she had not seen in years, had flown up for the weekend to celebrate with her. A banner had been made in her honor, the restaurant had been reserved just for her, and the menus had been tailored to her liking. Weeks of planning had gone into making her birthday special. After dinner and opening presents, I saw my grandmother cry tears of happiness as she embraced her family. I could see how much it meant to her to have her loved ones with her, appreciating her.

A week later, I was searching through college pamphlets, trying to decide what major and career path to follow. I had taken a liking to premed, hoping to eventually become a neurosurgeon. It was interesting, I thought, and certainly paid well. Despite requiring over a decade of additional schooling, I was convinced that the almost-guaranteed monetary success would be worth sacrificing my twenties and early thirties. I blew off the thought of having a family; I figured I could always adopt children if I felt so inclined, and that there was no need to sacrifice success for sentimental things like family.

I asked my father what he thought of my neurosurgeon idea, which he considered carefully. As a man who had been encouraging me from a young age to work hard and "crush all" and be my absolute best, I thought he would be in favor of my plan. Instead, I got a rather surprising answer. He asked me if I thought having a lot of money would make me happy. Not inherently, I answered, but being wealthy would allow me to buy things and experiences that would. My father asked me what fulfillment came from a life such as this. "Knowing that I had helped make a difference, that I had saved lives," was my quick reply. My father shook his head. He told me to remember my abuelita's birthday, then left.

It took me a while to realize what he meant, but I finally understand what my father was trying to say about the value of family. Almost all of the people in that restaurant would not be alive and in the United States if my grandmother had not given up her financial security and interests in order to raise a family. This sacrifice was especially significant for her, as she left her life in Colombia behind so that her children could have success in the United States. She may not have had an easy life, but looking at her teary smile that night, I could tell that she thought those hardships were well worth the reward. This, her family, was her true legacy, and no dollar amount could replace that. As far as *my* future legacy, well, I would have money and possibly some thank-you notes from patients who would soon forget my name. Suddenly, "the good life" did not look so appealing.

Even after this realization, I was hesitant to give up my dream so quickly. I went to my mother, hoping to gain some clarity. She told me that she understood my dilemma, as she too had struggled with choosing between a successful career and an active role in her children's lives. "I had it all," she told me, "I was making great money in a consulting business, working with my best friend, and traveling all around the world. But I would miss you guys so much while I was gone, and I realized that being with my family was worth more than making a lot of money. A job is replaceable, but my memories with you are not."

Both my abuelita and my mother showed me the incredible value of family. Prior to these experiences, I was haughty; money and prestige seemed much more important than my loved ones. The quiet example that had been shown to me by two women I respect greatly, my grandmother and my mother, opened my eyes to a new way of measuring value that has nothing to do with money. While I am still not sure what career path is in store for me, I do know now not to disregard the value of relationships, as I had in the past. Through these ladies, I am now able to recognize that some things are more fulfilling in life than being wealthy, and that a family is the greatest legacy I could ever leave.

Not Defined By the Physical by Berlove Lelain

Sometimes, when I walk down the hallways at school, I wonder what people think of me. Do they notice me? When I walk away from them, do they turn around and watch me leave? In the hallways and in the classroom, do they think I am nice, funny, or smart? Do my classmates think I am weird because of the way I walk? I often wonder if they talk or laugh at me, but today I will not allow my physical disabilities to define me.

My parents knew before I was even born that I was not going to be a healthy baby. When given the option and suggestion to terminate the pregnancy, my parents refused. They knew they would love me unconditionally. I was born prematurely on May 24th, 1999 at six and a half months. My mother had many complications during her pregnancy besides the usual nausea and pain. My mother took a major risk having me, and she had to go to the hospital every day for checkups to make sure I was growing and developing normally. Due to these complications, my mother remained in the hospital for days, often being transported from hospital to hospital as her health declined before finally giving birth to me through C-section. I weighed only two and a half pounds and was able to fit into my father's hand. It was only a short two to three weeks later that the doctors diagnosed me with cerebral palsy, specifically spastic hemiplegia cerebral palsy. This disorder causes damage to the brain before, after, or during birth and affects the ability of the nerves to send messages through the body to control muscle movements. Spastic hemiplegia cerebral palsy only affects one side of the body causing increased tone or tension in the muscles. In my case, it affects my left side and causes me to walk with a slight limp and the inability to straighten out my left arm fully.

When I finally started walking, I walked on the tips of my toes. After two surgeries, I could comfortably place my feet flat on the ground and learned to walk properly. I endured years of physical therapy, wearing leg braces, and even spending a short period of time walking around the house with a walker. Ultimately, the therapy improved my walking skills and flexibility.

Now, I do not notice that I am different compared to everyone else around me, unless I think about it. However, looking back on my younger years, and occasionally now, I remember moments when I did feel different and times that I did feel frustrated. I also remember the hurt I felt. For example, I joined dance when I was younger, but after many tears and complaints, I quit because I could not dance like everyone else in the class. Then I discovered piano, but it was difficult for me to work with my left hand. In public, I find myself getting nervous to do certain activities, because I am afraid of how I might look, like running in gym class or standing in front of a crowd of people. I sometimes feel insecure and frustrated, because I have to struggle to do the mundane things that other people take for granted such as shoe shopping; for me, the shoes I like may fit, but I may not walk properly in them. I am especially cautious when walking, because I am afraid that I might trip and fall, thus embarrassing myself in front of the people around me.

Surprisingly, I have learned through living my life that I like who I am and have embraced my uniqueness. I am happy with myself, happy with my life, happy with the things I do, and I want to continue to be that kind of happy. I do not want my disability or how others perceive me to stop me from achieving my goals. I know I will still have moments or even days when I feel insecure and sad about myself. I know I might find myself walking down the hallways wondering yet again what people think of me. However, I am not going to let my physical disabilities stop me from living the life that I am fully designed to live. When I am older and successful, I will be completely confident and content with the person I have become; I know this because I love myself. I have found the strength to overcome my weaknesses and the determination to accomplish my aspirations and dreams; therefore, I will not allow myself to be defined by the physical.

Always be Honest by Meghan Montanaro

My *Law of Life*, which I consider the most important, is to always be honest. I believe people should live in a world of honesty. Friendships and families would improve and life would become easier. There may be bumps in the road at points but honesty will always be on your side. Honesty is the best policy!

Friendships improve in many ways when you base your friendship off of honesty. If anything is going on that you need to talk about, your friends are always there. You don't need a cover story to hide the truth. If you aren't comfortable with sharing something you shouldn't make up excuses. I have learned that from previous teachers. One time a girl was making mean and hurtful comments to me. Instead of pretending it wasn't happening, I was honest with her and said that the comments were hurting my feelings. Due to my honesty we are now closer friends. Maybe if I wasn't so honest with her our friendship could have ended or it could not have been as tight as it is now. Honesty is great because it decreases the percentage of fights and disagreements between friends. I know that I would only tell the truth to my friends. Also you know you did a good thing by being honest. At night you can sleep peacefully knowing that you aren't hiding anything from your friends. The definition to honesty is "truthfulness, sincerity, or frankness." All of these characteristics of honesty are required in your friendships with others. Nothing is worse than finding out that someone had lied to you. Honesty is your friend and it is a part of growing up. Nobody's perfect and you shouldn't try to hide it. Chances are they will have some advice for you. Honesty is the Law of Life not just for me but also in many friendships.

Families also improve by following one easy step. That one step is honesty. By telling the truth to your parents they will gain trust in you. Whenever my parents ask for the truth I tell them it. I shouldn't have to deal with the stress lying brings especially at this young of an age. Honesty will bring more privileges in the future. You might be at the age where you get to stay home alone or maybe even a special reward. Due to my honesty and the trust I have earned my mother has allowed me to get a cellphone. My mom believes I will use it appropriately and that I will use it for its purpose. Honesty has also allowed me to get a cat. My dad believes that I will be responsible and take care of it.

In my school life, I know that I can be honest with my teachers and my parents about what is going on at school. For example, if one of us has a bad day and gets a low score on something my parents trust that I gave my best effort. My teachers also know that I take my schoolwork seriously. If I misplaced something or forgot to bring something in, my teachers trust that if I said I did it, I did. An example of this, in fifth grade, I forgot to bring in a signed form for reading. Because I was honest with her, and I said it was my fault, she told me it wasn't a big deal.

The world can also use more honesty. For example, some dishonest businesses try to cheat people by charging more money for things such as food or supplies. They take advantage of their customers' needs. Furthermore, many people use social media, like Instagram, to spread rumors about other people. This causes problems inside and outside of school. In addition, in school, students may cheat or try to use other people's answers for their homework. These actions can make our society a dishonest place. If more people were honest, our school, our community and our world would not have so many problems.

Honesty is very important. As Abraham Lincoln, my favorite president once said, "Resolve to be honest at all events." He wants us to be honest at all times. Remember, he was known as "Honest Abe!" If more people were like him, the world would become a better place. Honesty is the solution to many problems which is why honesty is my Law of Life!

Living a Life Free of Others' Expectation My Mom's Influence on my Law of Life by Darby Pethrick

Imagine living in a way that you believe is the only the way society will accept you. You limit your personality, style, and opinions to conform. How would it feel living with the fear of being judged every time you express yourself? My Law of Life is “to live free.” It means to live my life on my own terms without giving in to the pressures of others. My mother has taught me this Law of Life since I was a little girl. When I was born she had a goal: to have me grow up to be free and independent.

This Law of Life, to live free of others' expectations really relates to me because it is the meaning of my name. When choosing my name, my parents were looking for a name that would shape my approach in life. My mom told me, “We chose your name when we saw the meaning 'free' because it was our hope for you that you would grow into a strong, independent woman, free of any limitations put on you because you are a girl.”

In today's society, females are sometimes categorized as being weak or having less power than males. My mom believes females should be treated equally and free of judgment. I have always been encouraged to pursue any career. I set high goals for myself and am content with my success. Right now I am very interested in biotechnology which, like most of the sciences, has been a male-dominated field. I feel that times are slowly changing and that as more girls choose these types of jobs, attitudes will change.

Girls are often burdened with unnecessary expectations. When they feel that they are not good enough without makeup, are wearing the wrong clothes, or are judged for their size, it is very hard to stay happy and accept themselves. It's only when girls are freed from these false messages about their appearances that they can express their true selves.

One time that I lived this law was when I decided to cut my hair. This was no trim. I was going to chop about 4-5 inches off. At school I had heard a few comments that short-haired girls were “weird.” Despite hearing these opinions my mom reassured me that it wouldn't matter what everyone else thought; it was *my* hair and *my* choice. I felt this was a good opportunity to show that I had the confidence and freedom to make this change. I thought, *I can be who I want to be, look how I want to look, and dress how I want to dress.* I walked into the salon room in our friend's house, sat in the chair, and showed her my reference pictures. SNIP SNIP SNIP! About 20 minutes later it was done. The finished product was just what I wanted.

I was pleasantly surprised at people's reactions. I was told I looked pretty, that the cut only suited someone like me, and that I had so much courage for cutting it. It showed me that being different is a positive thing.

I am learning every day to live my life free of others' expectations. I strive to encourage other girls to be their true selves by accepting them for who they are and valuing what makes them unique. I find relating with people easier and more rewarding if there is no judgment. With the noise of messages that surrounds us, this is a challenge. I'm glad that my name is a constant reminder of my Law of Life to “live free.” It will be an important law of my life for years to come.

An Act of Kindness by Keya Saxena

“I’m ready! I’m ready!” I yelled as I jumped out of the room struggling to get my left shoe on. I was really excited but also very, very tired. I mean, it was 6 am.

“Okay. I’m waiting outside,” responded my grandmother, patiently waiting for me outside the thick metal door.

We were going on an early morning walk, just as my grandmother did every single day. I decided to join her. We took the old, squeaky elevator to the bottom of the building and stepped outside. The air was fresh and cool, which was rare for a morning in India. I could smell happiness dancing in the wind. It was a good day to be outdoors.

We began our walk with my grandmother telling me about what she sees on a typical day. She told me that she sometimes spots peacocks and which flowers remind her of her childhood. She told me about the people she meets and animals she sees. It felt nice to hear her talk about herself. She started to ask me about my friends back in America. I told her about life at school and at home. We talked for what seemed like forever.

We turned onto a dirt path just as we heard a faint cry. It was a baby, who seemed to have frustration buried in his voice. We saw a mother, frail and poor, helping the baby up off the ground. She placed him up again on his tiny feet. She let go and the baby stood only for about three seconds and then stumbled down again. He cried out once again. We noticed that there were several tiny rocks and pebbles lying out beneath them. The baby winced and kept crying.

My grandmother and I looked at each other, then at the baby, then back at each other. My grandmother walked over to the mother and baby who were sitting on the side of the road.

“Why are you forcing him to walk?” My grandmother asked softly. I walked up behind her and looked at the baby.

His eyes glistened with the tears. His face was red as well as his tiny, soft, delicate feet. The mother looked up at my grandmother solemnly. She did not respond but helplessness reflected from her eyes.

“Why don’t you put shoes on him?” I asked the mother, once again looking at the baby’s swollen feet.

“Of course, I would have put shoes on him, if I could afford them.” The mother looked down at the baby and picked him up again. Once again the baby sustained himself for a couple seconds and back fell down.

“Alright, Keya, you wait right here,” said my grandmother before continuing down the street.

“Where are you-” I started, but she was already gone.

The mother kept helping the child up, and the child continued falling. The sun was beating down on us and the baby, now sweating, continued to cry.

Ten minutes had passed, and still no sign of my grandmother. I was getting worried. Just then, I saw her walking towards us. However, this time she had something in her hand. As she approached us; I saw what it was.

“Here you are,” said my grandmother, handing a small pair of shoes and a pair of socks to the mother, “Now this should solve your problem.” The mother took the shoes and put them on her son’s feet.

“Thank you so much. You have done us a huge favor,” said the mother, smiling from ear to ear. My grandmother smiled and we walked away, continuing our walk.

I will never forget that day. I learned to never take things for granted. Everything we have is a gift from God and many people aren’t as fortunate. I also learned that a little act of kindness can change a person’s life. My grandmother didn’t have to buy that child shoes. She could’ve just walked away. But she did it for that child and her mother. She also did it for herself. Knowing that you helped someone and made them smile is a very good feeling that I felt that day. My grandmother always told me to look at everything in a positive manner. If there was a problem, find a solution. She told me that keeping others happy is one of the best ways for me to stay happy.

Giving Hope by Stephanie Sudusky

[An essay written from the imagined perspective of a homeless person.]

I woke up to the sounds of cars honking and people chatting. The sun wasn't too high in the sky yet, and I figured it was about 8:00. I propped myself up on my elbow and sat up against the side of the wall. My back ached from sleeping on concrete. I yawned as I unzipped my coat. I looked around, and just like every morning, people were walking down the crowded sidewalks. Some were rushing, some were taking their time and enjoying the sights of all the buildings. New York City was busy all of the time. They were all happy, wearing designer coats and boots carrying shopping bags from Fenti and Louis Vuitton, Nordstrom and Chanel. I wondered if they knew how lucky they were.

My stomach started to rumble. I'd have to wait a little longer to eat, but I knew I had to find a way to pass the time. I remembered my book and picked it up from beside me. It was an adventure book called "Jungle Joe." I know it's meant for little kids, but there's no way I can read ones for adults. I couldn't finish high school. My mom was having a lot of trouble at the time, so she drank, and that really messed her up. I had to work part time jobs or else we wouldn't be able to eat. After a while, I wasn't able to take care of her anymore, not even myself.

So there I was, reading my adventure book. It let me escape from the realities of my life, and live as another person, at least for a little while. I was reading this part where Jungle Joe saved his pet monkey from being attacked by evil vines. He swings to him, chops the vines down with his machete, and they walk back home to their treehouse. It would be great if someone could save me too. I put the book down and looked up at everyone walking by. It was super crowded now. This was a good time to ask people for money.

I picked up my cardboard sign. It pained me to hold it out in front of me, because it made me feel too desperate and less important than other people. I used to feel just as good as everyone else, but living on the streets had changed that. People continued to walk by, and a few glared at me. Some didn't even dare to look. I sat quietly, not wanting to bother anyone. An hour passed before a lady walked straight up to me. I was hopeful. "Seriously?" she screamed. I looked at her, and she seemed furious. "What's wrong?" I asked. "Why don't you go find a job! Don't just sit here to make others feel bad! People like you disgust me." She screamed. I didn't know what to say to that. She was going to continue, but she stormed off. Gee, that hurt. Some people don't understand me. I can't find a job, I've got to find myself first. I rarely get hired anyway- and she thinks I wanted to sit there? That's the last thing I wanted. The people behind her hurried along and tried not to look at me. Does anyone even think of me as a person? Everyday I feel like less and less like a person, and more like the street everyone else walks on. I held my sign a little lower.

It was about 3:00. I had given up on getting any donations that day. I had been looking up at the tops of the buildings while I waited and thought about my life. I didn't understand why people came up to me just to insult me. Why was that lady so angry? I just needed a little help getting back on my feet. I see a mom walking by with her two kids. She reminded me of my mom a little. She didn't notice me for a moment and then saw my sign, turned back, and took her kids by their hands. She was walking towards me. I hoped she wasn't going to yell at me.

“Hi how are you?” she asked once she reached me. I couldn’t believe it. “Oh I’m fine, thanks” I replied. “Is it alright if we sit here?” She pointed to my blanket, ignoring how dirty and ripped up it was. “If you want” I said. I was kind of embarrassed. Why did she want to sit with me? How could she trust me not to hurt her or her kids? They sat down beside me. They’re not scared of me. The lady had straight blonde hair that was chopped off at her shoulders and dark brown eyes. She was wearing a pink wool coat with shiny black buttons, and her kids had blue ones to match. They looked like twins. “So, is there anything that I can do to help you out?” she asked me. I had to think for a moment. What did I need most right then? Some money would be helpful, or some food. I realized that I hadn’t eaten all day. A new jacket could help too- oh, I was getting too carried away. How could I be so greedy? I didn’t deserve this. “Anything will help ma’am, some money or food would be best.” I told her. I hoped I didn’t come off as needy. “Yes that’s no problem,” she said. “Is 50 dollars enough?” I was shocked. That was enough food for two weeks, and maybe even a new blanket! “Oh thank you so much! That’s plenty!” I told her. She took the money out of her purse and handed it to me.

I was so happy that I felt as if I was floating. I expected her to leave, but she remained where she was. “I hope you don’t mind, but please tell me, how did you end up here?” she asked me, being careful not to weird me out. I do admit, it was kind of strange that she wanted to know so much. No one had ever been interested in how I ended up homeless. I was reluctant at first, but then I told her everything. The whole time, she listened. We cried and laughed. It turned out that we shared a lot of the same struggles and fears. It felt good to tell someone about my life, and let out feelings I had kept inside for years. Her kids seemed to like to listen to my stories too, because by the end they were asking for more. “Well, thank you so much for talking to me about this. I hope the money will help,” she smiled at me and left, just like that. It was unreal.

I went to a fast food place to get dinner. I wanted to be careful spending my donation. I was so hungry, and the food looked delicious. I brought my blanket and book to the side the building, and plopped them down on the pavement. Then I gobbled the burger down and drink all of my soda. I was so full. I sat down and watched the city skyline. The sun was setting, and shades of orange were lighting up the sky like a neon sign. I thought about everything that happened that day, and I realized that I had a chance of turning my life around. I smiled at the thought of having a job and people looking up to me, and I thought about one day living in a nice house with heat and furniture, and a fridge filled with food. I realized then why I had so much hope. The lady with the short, choppy hair, even though she talked with me for a brief amount of time, had changed me. I never could have imagined that such a simple gesture such as that could save me.

Everyday Courage by Caileigh Treash

I was in the locker room with the much older, smarter, and cooler members of my basketball team. We had just suffered an embarrassing defeat and we were all in a bad mood. We were packing up for the ride home when it began. “Did you see the way Brianna was playing today? It’s all her fault we lost. Did you see Coach yelling at her? I think she was crying.”

Everyone laughed and continued on the present track of conversation, discussing her lack of skills, her clothes, and her apparent inability to have friends. Meanwhile, an intense struggle was taking place in my head. Brianna was not in the room, but what these girls were saying made me feel like they were insulting her to her face. How could they be so cruel? I was not close to Brianna, but the nasty things that the girls were saying hurt me. Of course, she would never know what they were saying or what I would say. Sweat gathered on my neck. The girls were laughing. What would I want someone to do for me? If I spoke up I could be laughed at, yelled at, or given the same treatment as Brianna. What was the right thing to do? My thoughts whirled around in a panic until I blurted, “Hey you guys, Brianna is my friend. Please stop talking about her that way.”

The older girls froze and turned their perfectly mascaraed eyes toward me. Some of my friends quickly scurried out of the room or pretended not to hear the exchange as the silence stretched on. By identifying myself with Brianna, I had rebuked them for their cruel words and had opened myself up for retaliation. I inwardly cringed and kicked myself for my stupidity, but outwardly I smiled, my braces glittering conspicuously and shrugged. I continued packing, holding back tears of humiliation, as the girls whispered among themselves. I ran to the back of the bus and tried to sink into my chair, attempting invisibility as the older girls got on the bus.

When I got home I collapsed on my bed and, in awe, considered my audacity. I had long been terrified of these popular girls and desperate for their approval. I had thrown all that away when I had opened my stupid mouth. “This is it,” I thought. “They hate me and I can never show my face again. What was I thinking?” In typical middle school fashion, I assumed that my social life was over and I would become a social outcast for correcting girls that were obviously prettier, smarter, and cooler than me.

Accepting my new role as social leper, I came to school the next morning with a bleary eyed, defeated, resignation. I expected to be shunned and rejected, but something different and special happened. A teacher came up to me and explained that her daughter was also on my basketball team and was even younger than I was. This girl had apparently witnessed my exchange with the other girls and thought what I had done was brave. Later, when her friends were bullying someone, she stood up to them because of what I had done. The teacher looked at me seriously and thanked me for teaching her daughter to be brave.

I was completely shocked. Someone thought that what I had done was brave! This changed everything. I hadn't been stupid; I was brave. This caused me to lift my head up and decide that I didn't care what those girls thought. I was brave and I would stand up for anyone who needed protecting.

This event shaped me more than I realized, and it affects me to this day. Even though I was just a silly middle schooler thinking she had committed social suicide, my simple act of bravery had inspired more bravery in others. It caused me to realize that you don't have to be afraid of other people's opinions and that simple acts of courage can make a big difference. My story shows that you do not have to be a hero, a soldier, or even an adult to be brave and to have a lasting impact on other people's lives. Whether laying down your life, or jeopardizing your middle school career, courage is truly a beautiful thing to behold.

Congratulations to
Marna Borgstrom

*Her standards for leadership and integrity
are a model to us all.*

*We thank Marna for her extraordinary commitment
to community, including the
Connecticut Open and Market New Haven.*



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Yale New Haven Health congratulates Marna Borgstrom on receiving the Ethics in Action Award

Yale-New Haven Hospital, Bridgeport Hospital and Greenwich Hospital are happy to support the School of Ethical Education and salute Marna Borgstrom as the recipient of this year's John Winthrop Wright Ethics in Action Award.

