



## Celebrating 19 years of Character Education and Ethical Literacy

Dear Educator:

The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest is a statewide writing and 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 maxim applies to the students’ lives.

The essay contest, which fits easily into Core Curriculum Standards, gives students an opportunity to reflect on important life lessons while working on critical writing skills. The contest also allows schools to easily implement state-mandated character education requirements.

Last year, 64 high schools participated in the contest, 48,836 Georgia students wrote a Laws of Life essay, and more than \$22,000 was awarded to students and teachers. For 2017-2018,

- **Two top state winners will each receive a \$1,000 cash prize.** Additional state cash awards of more than \$2,000 will be presented to state runners-up.
- Each school that meets the minimum participation requirement of 200 essays will have 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 meets the minimum participation requirements (see FAQ Sheet for details.)

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. Two educators from of each registered school will be invited to a teacher’s workshop and luncheon in Atlanta on Friday, August 25, at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center. Attendance is encouraged but is not required, and schools that cannot send an educator to the workshop because of distance are still heartily encouraged to participate in the essay program.

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

We hope you will join us in the contest. If you have any questions, please visit our website [www.georgialawsoflife.org](http://www.georgialawsoflife.org) or email us at [lawsoflife@georgialawsoflife.org](mailto:lawsoflife@georgialawsoflife.org).

Best regards,

The Laws of Life Essay Contest Team  
[lawsoflife@georgialawsoflife.org](mailto:lawsoflife@georgialawsoflife.org); 404.590.8039

*The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest is operated by the Georgia Rotary Districts Character Education Program, Inc., a 501(c)(3) non-profit organized exclusively for charitable and educational purposes.*



## Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest FAQ Sheet

### 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.

### How does the Laws of Life contest meet the state mandated character education requirement?

Passed in 1999, House Bill 605 created an unfunded mandate that all Georgia schools provide character education. The Georgia Laws of Life Essay Contest is a free, easy-to-implement way for high schools to both meet the mandate and support the school's language arts curriculum.

### 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 2017, with the essay deadline in February 2018.

### 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.

### What is the minimum participation requirement for cash awards?

To register for the contest, a school must have an enrollment of at least 100 students in grades 9-12. Entrants from registered schools that generate at least 100 essays are eligible for state awards of up to **\$1,000**. Schools that generate 200 or more essays are also guaranteed a **\$100** school level student award. Three additional **\$50** grade level awards are given for schools that generate a minimum of 100 essays per grade or 80% of the grade level enrollment, whichever is smaller. For schools with enrollments of 400 students or more, a **\$100 teacher honorarium** is presented to the school's contest chair if at least 25 percent or more of the students write a Laws of Life essay. For schools with enrollments below 400 students, 200 essays are required for a \$100 teacher honorarium.

## 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 foundation 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."

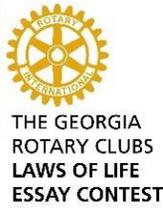
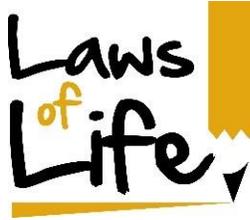
*Jennifer Gray, teacher, Columbus,*

"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*



# Georgia Rotary Clubs Laws of Life Essay Contest

## 2017 – 2018 School Registration Form

WE ARE MOVING!  
 THIS YEAR IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMAIL YOUR COMPLETED REGISTRATION FORM TO:  
[lawsolife@georgialawsolife.org](mailto:lawsolife@georgialawsolife.org)  
 OR if you prefer send picture via text to 404.590.8039

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: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name & 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**WWW.GEORGIALAWSOFLIFE.ORG**