



SisterCities
INTERNATIONAL

2014 Young Authors Showcase

***Connect Globally.
Thrive Locally.***

Sister city relationships foster partnerships within the community and between international cities, counties, and states. Whether in person, online, or through the mail, exchanges of people and ideas facilitate community development and educational opportunities. The 2014 theme is an opportunity for youth to use artwork, poems, and essays to highlight the important role that exchanges play in connecting people, cultures, and ideas.

Made possible through the generous support from
THE CARVEY FAMILY

2014 Grand Prize, Poetry

Exhilarating Emotions

Amanda Corona

Phoenix, AZ

Culture,
a feeling, a mood, a state of mind
a world
a smell
carried Miles away or,
carried Minutes away
and all of it, is ours to seek

Experience, merging minutes
weaving seconds upon seconds together
a string of motions to create
Magnificence

Together. An exhilarating emotion stirs deep within our Souls
A single word, pouring out from each of our selves,
Perspective
An Understanding, greater than the very mountains that may separate us
A compassion that touches each person she meets regardless of where they come from
A vision into a world more complex than ever
Imagined

Imagination, a dream
Is all it takes to
See for the first time
To
Understand
It all.

2014 Finalist, Poetry

Me.
Cole Dignard
Suffolk, VA

Me.
One of
the seven billion,
miniscule to the world.
What difference can I make?
Small, unknown, yet not without power
possessing the ability to question and to dream,
to imagine, invent, revolutionize and to bring about change.
Ideas, like snowflakes accumulating on the world
created by the power of the individual,
starting locally, starting with
one of the seven billion
in my town, here it
starts with
Me.

2014 Finalist, Poetry

Puzzle Pieces
Stephanie Avalos
Columbia Heights, MN

The world is like a puzzle
All the pieces scattered around the world
Trying to connect with each other
Physically, mentally, and socially
We all need each other
To be complete
We all form a piece
With the greatest of ease
Finding where we fit in this puzzle
We don't need glue or tape
We stick together
Like a school of fish
This puzzle represents how we connect
With one another
We may need to be flipped
Or turned right side up
But we'll always find a way
To fit in with the world

2014 Grand Prize, Essay

UNITY

Brandon Thornton
Chandler, AZ

In a culture often dominated by self-improvement, one of the most coercive unifying forces is a commonality, whether it is an interest, station in life, far-reaching goal, or important task in need of completion. These likenesses lay the basis for cooperation and conversation, but there is potential for something much richer when the groundwork for a community is laid. Respect and trust are bred through collaboration, while comfort and social fulfillment grow through positive interaction and the outpouring of conversational trivialities. A wholesome connectedness nestles within ourselves, and we form a web of interdependence and interrelation, linking those in our respective communities together with ties of friendship. Through it, we can rejoice together when spirits are high, support one another when they are low, and expedite group as well as individual improvement. Small and large manifestations of thoughtful kindness and communication, from students helping each other understand a concept, to volunteer firemen rushing to extinguish life-threatening flames, can both arise from and further strengthen a sense of unity. A few personal relationships, a common cause, or a willing heart can spark transcendence from just making it through life on one's own to thriving in a constructive community.

Even though our focuses may often narrow to those within our smaller social spheres, we all are most fundamentally connected through our humanity. The mantra of the current day is far from the one of isolation held in the past. As a nation and as a world, we set up extensive education and nourishment programs to assist those in third world countries, draft legislation to protect the welfare of entire nations of people, and seek to understand the complexities of various altruism-an underlying and perhaps growing passion for others ingrained in the human spirit that unifies us with those around the world. It is what allows us to commiserate with and unselfishly aid victims of poverty, starvation, natural disaster, and any of the tragically diverse woes thrust upon the mortal kind, while the bonds of respect for man and friendship forged during the course of a life open our hearts to communities of any scale.

2014 Finalist, Essay

Connect Globally, Thrive Locally.

Steven Sawtelle

Phoenix, AZ

As technology has marched on through the years, our range of communication as a species has increased with it. This newfound global connectivity has had an effect that no one could've predicted: by reaching out across the world, our local communities have bonded more than ever before.

When Samuel F. B. Morse invented the telegraph in 1844, the first message, taken from the Bible, was the exasperated cry of "What hath God wrought!" This cry has been echoed countless times since that monumental day, as the ever-turning cogs of technological innovation have produced machines and devices that no human of the time could possibly conceive. As a species, we have gone from The Pony Express to instant communication in merely two centuries, and the effects of this are truly staggering.

The struggle of communication tormented pre-modern age humans relentlessly. In a tragic incident, an extra battle occurred with hundreds of lives lost in the War of 1812, just because the message containing news of the armistice didn't reach General Andrew Jackson before the battle started. Now that we have a way of reaching each other instantly from all over the world, a situation like this will never occur again and the relief this brings is immense.

In recent news, Chile has been struck by a terrible earthquake. 150 years ago, we would have no idea this was happening, but now we have social media and online news sources to inform us. As such, we can join together as a community and work as a unit to help the people of that country. We organize food donations, send doctors and other volunteers, and give money for the reconstruction of their cities. None of this would have been possible had it not been possible without the connections we have globally, and the friendships we build at the local level in our united effort are invaluable.

When I take a step back and look at the marvel that is our current global spider web of communication, I can't help but be absolutely stunned. From the comfort of my home, I can donate to a charity of any cause that I choose or call a friend in Australia. In a world where people want less and less to do with anything other than themselves, it is imperative that we embrace our global community and contribute to it in whatever ways we can, both as individuals and communities.

2014 Finalist, Essay

The Power of Language

Tessa Solee

Hampton, VA

Ever since I was ten years old, language classes have been a constant. The language has changed from year to year, but invariably, part of my day is always spent thinking left brained, abstract concepts, not in English. I love it. I have always loved it. And when I wake from a dream in Spanish or find a German word springs to mind faster than an English one, I know that I always will love it.

Learning about culture came later, and I found out the world was so much more vast and interesting than I could have ever imagined. Foods and holidays and day-to-day lives differed from my own, and all I wanted to do was experience it. The world, I learned is huge and exciting and different and wonderful and the more words you know, the more you can understand. It all came back to words.

Everyone I know came from somewhere, and often I never learned where until they picked up a cell phone and started conversing in rapid Arabic, Tagalog, and Croatian. Everyone falls silent and turns with wonder to the blushing classmate who wraps up with a final parting word no one comprehends. The questions start - "Where are you from?" "Do you speak English at home?" "What language is that?"

And I always ask, "Can you teach me?"

A native word is a slice of home, and its effect is powerful. It can be seen in the smile on the face of my best friend's grandmother when we sat down in a coffee shop to converse in German. It can be felt while learning 'thank you' in as many languages as possible so you can always start with manners. It is best heard learning how to pronounce the Cyrillic alphabet in order to read a classmate's art.

I can't always travel and go experience culture, but it is encapsulated in people and every so often, those people end up in my hometown. Perhaps if I can learn to speak their language, I can come to understand their culture. These people - with their words and their diversity - comprise a big part of the community here, and I would be remiss not to learn how to greet them in their native tongue. In this way, with this learning, I will experience diversity even if I never leave the state of Virginia.