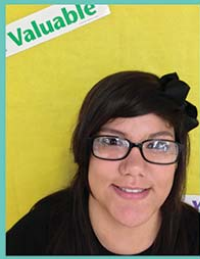


IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Congratulations to our 2014 Essay Contest Winners!



Valuable

High School First Place

MICHAELA VALDEZ

9TH GRADE • SOUTH SAN ANTONIO HIGH SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS

"Because of my tutees looking up to me, I wanted to change for them. I went from the girl with depression who was alone and wore all black every day, to someone who is happy, social with friends and wears more color. I used to hide the real me from the world because I feared being judged. But spending so much time with my tutees, they taught me that it's okay to be myself. So now, because of them, the real me is here. I'm not trying to be someone else anymore... I have gained my self-confidence back. I used to never have faith in myself, until now. Now that I have hope and faith, my grades have gone up dramatically."



Valuable

High School Second Place

NICHOLAS ALDERETE

9TH GRADE • SOUTH SAN ANTONIO HIGH SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO

"The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has helped me see people different. In this program, I have seen that they actually care for me... These third graders have made me feel special. They welcome me every day I go tutor with a jump of cheer and scream my name "Nicholas!" It's amazing how they do that and make me feel important... I have tutored them in math, reading and spelling. They have learned a lot and come to school every day. Attendance was a problem with them, but now they show up every day. I am so proud of them. My attendance used to be off. I never wanted to come to school, but those kids made me come to school every day. They are also the reason my grades are up, so that they can look up to me and say "He is really smart"... My life has completely changed since I have started the program, and nothing will make me go back to the way I was."



You Are Unique

High School Third Place

MELINA MARTINEZ

9TH GRADE • DR. JAVIER SAENZ MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

"The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program really is life changing. It has given me a different perspective on what I want to do with my life... Before I was introduced to the program, I was a girl who would walk the halls of my school and feel so small and invisible. I was struggling with my classes... I feel not only did the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program change my life, it has changed my tutees' lives too... My tutees are very bright young students, and I am happy to have the privilege to work with them. Knowing that I am helping better someone's future brings a warm feeling to my heart."

High School Honorable Mentions

BROOKE JOHNSTON – 12TH GRADE
ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL • ODESSA, TEXAS

LUVIA MANCHA – 9TH GRADE
SOUTH SAN ANTONIO HIGH SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO

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Middle School First Place

CHRISTIAN ORTIZ

7TH GRADE • DOMINGO TREVIÑO MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

"That first day was when my whole world changed immensely. I never thought that three little 9 year olds could inspire and motivate me in so many ways. That day, I went home and apologized to my mother, told her from now on would do my homework and chores without having to be told twice, and I also told her about my first day with the tutees. I told her I would give her \$50 from my first paycheck for the bills. She told me she was so proud of me... To this day, I thank my tutees for being my inspiration, and I no longer do it for the money. I do it for the tutees and me."



Middle School Second Place

GISELA SALINAS

7TH GRADE • DR. JAVIER SAENZ MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

"The first day of attending our elementary for tutoring, I was very scared yet excited to start... As the months have gone by, the things these kids have learned have shocked me. I never thought I could make that much of a difference in the life of another student. When I am at home, I try and make little awards for my tutees so they know that I appreciate everything they are learning from me...The reward I have had from the experience in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has resulted in my confidence going up. I now feel more secure knowing that I am capable of one day being a teacher in life."



Middle School Third Place

JOHAN SERVONES

7TH GRADE • CAPTAIN MANUEL RIVERA, JR. PS/MS279 • NEW YORK CITY

"In this tutoring program, I want my tutees to be inspired and start to think about what they want to be in the future, just like my teacher has inspired me... When I was given the opportunity to teach tutees from kindergarten, I realized that I was taking some important steps toward reaching my dream of becoming a teacher because I was practicing...I love being in this program and spending time with my three tutees. Being in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has helped me think more about my own dream and has helped me realize that I know it will come true."

Middle School Honorable Mentions

- JESUS CARRASCO** – 7TH GRADE • MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS
- SHAILA GALLEGOS** – 7TH GRADE • J.D. SALINAS MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS
- MELISSA GARCIA** – 7TH GRADE • DOMINGO TREVIÑO MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS
- Jackie Garza** – 7TH GRADE • LORENZO DE ZAVALA MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS
- BRIANNA NICOLE GUSTAMANTE** – 8TH GRADE • DWIGHT MIDDLE SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO
- PARIS ISAAC** – 8TH GRADE • ROBERT C. ZAMORA MIDDLE SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO
- ADIAMOND MCGREACHY** – 8TH GRADE • CAPTAIN MANUEL RIVERA JR. SCHOOL PS/MS 279 • NEW YORK
- AYSHA MELENDEZ** – 7TH GRADE • DR. JAVIER SAENZ MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS
- IMELDA MONTELONGO** – 7TH GRADE • CESAR CHAVEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS
- KENIA PEREZ** – 7TH GRADE • ANN RICHARDS MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS
- PAULA SALGADO** – 8TH GRADE • NEW OPEN WORLD ACADEMY • LOS ANGELES
- JATOYA THIGPEN** – 8TH GRADE • MANIERRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL • CHICAGO

Scan this code to see the full essays and learn more about the IDRA's Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program!

