

IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Congratulations to our 2016 Essay Contest Winners!



High School First Place
STEFAN GARCÍA

12TH GRADE • ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL • ODESSA, TEXAS

"The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program has been mainly about being a leader. To be a leader you must guide, care and nurture the people you are leading... Some people just understand that being lost is so close to being found. The night is darkest just before the dawn. So when everything seems hopeless, faith is an essence. The level of faith in a leader will show just how much they are willing to do for the people they are guiding... Another point I wanted to make about being a great leader is that you not only help others with problems, you help build their courage, confidence, intelligence, and as a human being overall. The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program opened my mind to better thinking. Also the program reminded me every day that time is limited, not only in class, but in life. I have been given a higher sense of purpose, to that I cannot ignore."



High School Second Place
IRMA TINOCO

11TH GRADE • ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL • ODESSA, TEXAS

"The first day I met my kids [tutees], I was pretty excited. As the days went on, I started to get closer to them, and then I realized that I didn't want to be a failure. These kids motivated me to push further in my education. When you have little ones who look up to you like you're some kind of super hero, you don't want to let them down. So every time I think about skipping, I think of how much I struggle in school, and I don't want that for them."



High School Third Place
APRIL BERMEA

11TH GRADE • SOUTH SAN ANTONIO HIGH SCHOOL,
SAN ANTONIO

"The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program really made a difference in me because, ever since I started high school, I never wanted to come to school. I would always tell myself: 'Man, I just want to drop out. When can school end already?' But look here, I am going to graduate next year, and I feel better about myself knowing I will walk the stage with my friends and graduate. I never felt so proud of myself and hearing my mom say, 'Wow, my daughter is going to graduate!' That makes me the happiest person. I wouldn't change any of this experience. I just want to make my family proud of me."

High School Honorable Mention

ISABEL MARTÍNEZ – 10TH GRADE • SOUTH SAN ANTONIO
HIGH SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO

JESSICA SUCHIL – 12TH GRADE • ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL •
SAN ANTONIO

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Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program!



www.idra.org



Middle School First Place

ALEXANDRA SÁNCHEZ

8TH GRADE • MS 331 THE BRONX SCHOOL OF YOUNG LEADERS •
NEW YORK

"Everyone needs that person who supports them no matter what, no matter the circumstances. That supporter builds a confidence in a person. After a while, a person starts doing the stuff on their own. My tutees at first called me all the time to help them with questions. After a while of motivating them and telling them they could do it, they started believing they could too... I felt like I accomplished something... When I look back at this job, it won't just be that I helped them with work, I helped them find the capability in themselves, even if they don't fully understand it themselves."



Middle School Second Place

MYKEL JONES

8TH GRADE • JOHN STILL K-8 SCHOOL • SACRAMENTO

"When I began middle school, I didn't worry about much. It was okay to have one F and average grades. Most of the time, I wouldn't participate in school... Without this job, I would have not gotten the inspiration to do great things. Now I am passing all my classes with A's and B's. I help my mom with anything she needs help with, and I am a more patient and understanding person. Also, I'm showing up to work right on time. I'm grateful to have this opportunity to be in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program."



Middle School Third Place

MELAKII URIBE

7TH GRADE • ROBERT C. ZAMORA MIDDLE SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO

"This program changed my attitude because my attitude was negative in the beginning. I've started to respect people more. The students [tutees] taught me how to have confidence and how to make other people happy too. It also has helped me to be more respectful to my family and teachers and classmates. The Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program is a great program for kids who get in trouble, like me. I've been getting into trouble ever since I can remember. I am a different person when I am in class with my tutees. I am the one setting the example and helping them with work. I thought I wasn't smart enough to help them, but now I know I am. In the end, I'm proud of what I've accomplished through this program. I thought I was tutoring and helping [my tutee], but, really, he was helping me."

Middle School Honorable Mentions

SABRINA ALEMÁN – 8TH GRADE • DWIGHT MIDDLE SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO

LESLEY BARBA – 7TH GRADE • CÉSAR CHÁVEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

MITZI CANTÚ – 7TH GRADE • DR. JAVIER SÁENZ MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

MARIAH DE LUNA – 8TH GRADE • ZAMORA MIDDLE SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO

BRITTNEY FERNÁNDEZ – 7TH GRADE • IRENE M. GARCÍA MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

SHANNON HOLMES – 7TH GRADE • CARSTENS ELEMENTARY-MIDDLE SCHOOL • DETROIT

JEFFREY RIOS – 8TH GRADE • NEW OPEN WORLD ACADEMY • LOS ANGELES

MABEL RIVERA – 8TH GRADE • MS 331 THE BRONX SCHOOL OF YOUNG LEADERS • NEW YORK CITY

ARIA RUSSELL – 8TH GRADE • JOHN STILL K-8 SCHOOL • SACRAMENTO

NIKAULIS TAVERAS – 8TH GRADE • CAPTAIN MANUEL RIVERA, JR. PS/MS279 • NEW YORK CITY

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