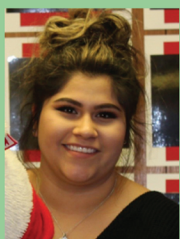


IDRA Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program

Congratulations to our 2017 Essay Contest Winners!



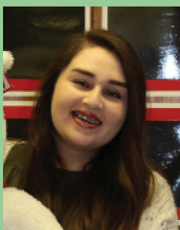
High School First Place
ANA LUISA VALENZUELA
 12TH GRADE • ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL •
 ECTOR COUNTY ISD, TEXAS

"I didn't realize that I would be a role model for these kids... I believe that I learned more from my tutee than he learned from me. He may have learned his ABCs and his numbers, but I learned way more than that. I learned that every child needs a 'backbone' to support him or her... I became that backbone for some of those kids who didn't have anyone. These kids came to me with a smile and a hug every day. And that is something that cost nothing, yet means everything... This world is a very cruel and cold place, and if we do not spread kindness, love and joy, we will become cold too. We must help each other because if not, no one else will."



High School Second Place
ANAHI AYALA
 12TH GRADE • ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL •
 ECTOR COUNTY ISD, TEXAS

"The day I joined the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program was the day my thoughts for my future became clear. It was the day I became a tutor and met my tutee. My tutee struggled through the first semester of school trying his hardest to learn his alphabet and how to sound out words. Toward the last week before break, he did the most amazing thing: he read a sentence all by himself! To anyone else this may seem like it's not a big deal, but to me, it was like climbing to the top of the mountain. The emotions I felt when he was reading filled me with glee. It hit me that I was part of the reason he knows how to read... After all the struggling I put myself through on finding the right career, the Coca-Cola Valued Youth helped me realize that teaching is my future profession."



High School Third Place
ESMERAY OLIVAS
 12TH GRADE • ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL •
 ECTOR COUNTY ISD, TEXAS

"I began to want the best, to strive for more, to practice kindness, to be slow to anger, to experience achievement together – not only for myself but for others... It's when we become a captive audience to our passion that we can become active and volunteer for something else other than ourselves. This is what the definition of true love. I learned patience, kindness and selflessness through the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and working with my tutee. I encourage everyone to create an open mind, helping hands and a willing heart. Together, we can be known as the generation that learned how to love."

High School Honorable Mentions

NOHEMI GAVALDON – 12TH GRADE • ODESSA HIGH SCHOOL • ECTOR COUNTY ISD, TEXAS

BRYANNA MENCHACA – 10TH GRADE • SOUTH SAN ANTONIO HIGH SCHOOL • TEXAS

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



Middle School First Place
JIMENA GUERRERO
 8TH GRADE • ZAMORA MIDDLE SCHOOL • SOUTH SAN ANTONIO ISD, TEXAS

"Ever since I started this Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program, I feel like I am a different person. Last year, I had a rough year: constantly on campus suspension, referrals, verbally disrespecting teachers, and I would go along with my 'friends' making bad choices... I'm trying to teach my first grade tutee reading skills but also life lessons through my experiences. I hope to teach him how to respect teachers and older people and also to treat others the way you would want to be treated. I just wanted to take advantage of the fact that, as a tutor, I can teach him all I can... This program has not only helped me choose what I want to do when I get older, but it also has taught me how to communicate with younger students, and it has taught me many life lessons I will use in the future."



Middle School Second Place
JENNIFER VELA
 7TH GRADE • TREVIÑO MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA ISD, TEXAS

"I was a shy, depressed girl, that didn't talk to a lot of people, and never looked on the good side of things. That all changed when I got in the Coca-Cola Valued Youth Program and started to tutor. I had a reason to laugh, I could finally see the good things and it was all because of my tutees... I then realized I was a role model to my tutees. I was someone they looked up to... I became a better person, more responsible, respectful, passionate, understanding, and my perspective changed... I could not have asked for a better gift than having the ability to change the lives of these children."



Middle School Third Place
LILIBETH BERLANGA
 7TH GRADE • MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA ISD, TEXAS

"Tutoring others is rewarding because someone else is learning from you what has been taught to you. I have had a lot of fun with them. They are good tutees, and I love them. Sometimes they don't pay attention to me, but I know that it is part of my job to be patient and guide them back to listening to me. My mom is very proud of me because I help other kids in need. This alone has made me want to come to school every day. Before, I used to miss a lot of school because I had no motive to go. I would get frustrated by how I was being taught and didn't understand my teachers. Now, that I am in this program, I have valued more the efforts my teachers are making in teaching me."

Middle School Honorable Mentions

DANIELLA MCBRYDE – 8TH GRADE • ZAMORA MIDDLE SCHOOL • SAN ANTONIO

YULIANA CALVILLO – 7TH GRADE • MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

GERARDO RODRÍGUEZ – 7TH GRADE • CÉSAR CHÁVEZ MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

YAHLITZA ROSALES – 8TH GRADE • LORENZO DE ZAVALA MIDDLE SCHOOL • LA JOYA, TEXAS

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

JEFFRY RIOS – 9TH GRADE • NEW OPEN WORLD ACADEMY • LOS ANGELES

MELLEN HEART DEL MUNDO – 8TH GRADE • JOHN STILL MIDDLE SCHOOL • SACRAMENTO

YARMELL RUFFIN – 8TH GRADE • MANIERRE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL • CHICAGO

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

www.idra.org

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