



AMERICA & ME ESSAY BOOKLET

Featuring the top 10 winning essays from the 2022-'23 statewide contest, and a list of all participating schools and their local winners.





For Michigan 8th Grade Students







A TRIBUTE TO MICHIGAN HEROES

As we have since 1968, Farm Bureau sponsored the America and Me Essay Contest. When the contest began 54 years ago, students were asked to write about their roles in America's future. Over time, the contest evolved, and writers now create an essay focused on "My Personal Michigan Hero."

This booklet highlights the 175 schools that participated in the 2022-'23 contest. Inside, we celebrate the work of these young authors by collecting the top 10 essays in the state, a list of the schools that participated, along with the names of each local student winner from their respective schools.

The students listed within, as well as the thousands around the state who submitted essays, provided a powerful reminder again this year: There are thousands of creative students across Michigan and countless heroes making a lasting difference in their communities.

While the entries each of the past 54 years have been unique, the 10 essays this year were particularly moving. I was impressed with the perseverance students showed as they and their heroes successfully overcame the personal, and sometimes harrowing, challenges they faced every day. I invite you to read the essays in this booklet. I bet they'll inspire you as they inspired me.

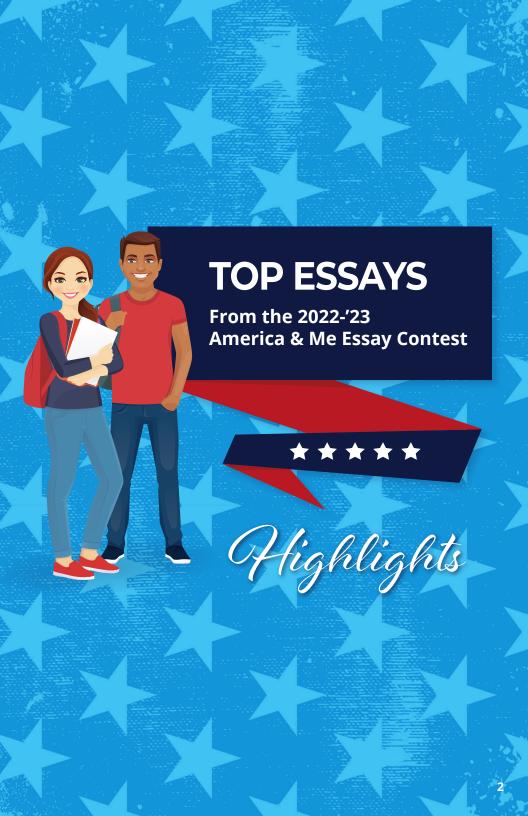
Finally, I want to also congratulate the teachers, parents, and Farm Bureau Insurance agents who help ensure the contest successfully endures. It remains the longest-running essay contest of its kind in Michigan.

Farm Bureau Insurance proudly sponsors America & Me because it honors these Michigan heroes and the students who recognized them. I hope you enjoy this booklet commemorating them both.

Sincerely,

Donall E. Simon

Don SimonChief Executive Officer,
Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan



2022-'23 AMERICA & ME ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS



FIRST PLACE: TARYN BOSMAN Gaylord Middle School, Gaylord

SECOND PLACE: ELISA LOPEZNorth Huron Schools, Kinde

THIRD PLACE: CHRISTINA STARR

St. Gerard School, Lansing Agent Sponsor Tim Barry

FOURTH PLACE: KLARA MCARTHUR Lakewood Middle School, Woodland

FIFTH PLACE: MEMPHIS RICKARD

Hartland Middle School at Ore Creek, Hartland

SIXTH PLACE: HARRISON SARGENT

Auburn Hills Christian School, Auburn Hills

SEVENTH PLACE: KATIE ALLEN

Oxford Middle School, Oxford Agent Sponsor Melisa Counelis

EIGHTH PLACE: HALLIE VANTUYL

Nellie B. Chisholm Middle School, Montague Agent Sponsor Rachel Levine

NINTH PLACE: RYKER GILL

West Iron County Middle School, Iron River

TENTH PLACE: SIMON KELLY

Holy Trinity Catholic School, Comstock Park



DIFFERENT ROOMS

I don't remember my mother. I don't remember her laugh, her voice, her sense of humor, her death, and that's something I've learned to accept. In many ways, I would consider my mom my hero. Without her, I wouldn't be the person I am today. I used to really struggle with her death, used to resent other children who had their mothers in their life, used to hate hearing stories about her because I'll never be able to tell my own stories about her. My mother is my hero because she made me who I am while also leaving behind a little bit of her.

I talk to my mom sometimes. I know my mother is gone, and I've fully accepted that she'll never be back. I still feel like she is with me. During some of the hardest times, I talked to my mother. I don't know if she's actually with me, but the thought of her being with me gives me comfort. My mom is my hero because I can talk to her.

My mother gave me some of my favorite features about myself. I have her hair, smile, nose, and I'm sure she helped with my awesome personality! Knowing I'm a little bit of my mother gives me peace. I used to hate it. I used to hate the conversations about how much I'm like my mother, how my hair is just like hers, or how my smile reminds everyone so much of her. Now I like it when people point out something my mother used to do. My mother is my hero because I'm a little bit of her.

I know my mother wasn't perfect. I know she had flaws. I know there are people out there who probably didn't like her. I know I'm also not perfect. I have flaws. There are people who don't like me. Not only that, but I know my mother gave me some parts of her she probably considered a flaw of hers. Maybe I think it's one of my flaws, yet I like the fact my mother made me imperfect. I wouldn't be the person I am if I were perfect. No one is perfect. My hero is like a flower. She wasn't perfect, but always stood out and shined.

One of my biggest regrets was trying to forget about my mom's death when I was younger. I would often make jokes or brush it off whenever people said they were sorry. I didn't write this for people to feel sorry for me. I wrote this because my mother is my hero just like your mother might be yours. Even though she is gone, I know she's with me.

"We never lose our loved ones. They accompany us; they don't disappear from our lives. We are merely in different rooms." -Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist. My hero, my mother, left this small town in Michigan while also leaving a little bit of her behind.



MOTHER

The world was ending and, like any great story, this one called for a hero. I looked and looked, but there seemed to be none. Until one morning I opened my eyes and began to realize maybe there was. There was no cape, no shining lights, no fireworks, and no audience giving loud applause. But there was someone taking ordinary, mundane tasks and making them extraordinary. Things like bus rides, sports games, the gesture of a simple hug, and the steady knowing that I was not alone. Yes! There indeed was a hero. You could call that someone superwoman or maybe supermom, but the reality was this superhero did not only save the day but gave birth to a new generation of superheroes. Could it be? This Michigan hero I'd found in my mom was who I'd been searching for all along.

It felt like an explosion. My brother and I looked at each other as we tossed the last bags on the trailer. How many times had we been here before? Too many to count. But this time something was different. No words were needed as mom's usual steady nod assured us we'd be okay. But would we? How could we? Aren't families supposed to have a mom and a dad? Mine were officially divorced. And we had no place to call home.

It wasn't long before mom was gone working long hours on a dairy farm. Some days she came home so tired you could see bags under her eyes. Yet she always had a smile and time for a hug or a simple good morning and goodnight. Things got so bad we were separated for a while, and my siblings and I went to live at my dad's until my mom could find us a house. There were days my mom looked so exhausted I thought she might give up.

But she did not give up. In fact, she would say crazy things like, "You just have to have faith." or "God will always take care of his children." I wasn't so sure. I mean, we were homeless. How does God let that happen? Mom said sometimes things like this happen to make our faith stronger, that if you believe until you think you just can't anymore but make the choice to just keep getting up every day and trying your best anyway. Eventually, at just the right moment, everything falls into place just like God said it would. And you realize, at that moment, that all the waiting and working was worth it after all. Because we made it! And today I'm sitting in my really cool room in our new house, writing this.

I would say, just like Superwoman saves the world, my mom also can do anything to save her world—known as her family. The world looks at Superwoman and becomes inspired to do bigger and brighter things the same way I have watched my mom overcome obstacles to achieve her goals for our family. I, too, become inspired knowing that if Superwoman and my mom can achieve impossible, even ridiculous goals, then I must be capable of overcoming seemingly impossible tasks in my own life for the greater good of myself and those around me. After all, that's what heroes do, right? They motivate and inspire. My Michigan hero does just that for me!



CREATIVITY MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER

Once upon a time, there was a teacher, a teacher with a dream.

Don't picture a typical teacher, with plaid skirts, and a button up white shirt, an apple in her hand.

Picture someone with a mind bigger than the classroom, where pencils and books went to play.

Picture someone with glasses tucked up in her hair, and pulling them down frequently to read a student's work or maybe even the students themselves.

Picture someone with the care of a kangaroo for her joey and the alertness like an owl.

If you envisioned that, you would see Mrs. Jowett.

I remember...

We had to write about our religious journey.

A few days later, Mrs. Jowett stopped me from going out to recess and asked, "Are you doing okay?"
"Huh? Yeah." I said awkwardly.
I saw worry and care in her eyes.

I looked away. Eye contact scared me.

"Okay, well I was just reading your letter. Are you having judgmental, bad thoughts or ideas?" "Um sorta, but it's gotten better." I was hesitant.

I wanted to be outside.

I wanted to blend in with the colors of everyone else.

I didn't want this awkward conversation, but I needed it.

"Okay, well one thing that helps me is seeing the good in all things and people." I nod.

"Well, that's all I wanted to say. If you ever want to talk, you can come to me or someone else." "Okay," I nod along. "Have a good recess." "Have a good lunch!"

And that was that. Seems like nothing, huh?

But it was so much.

I walked out to recess, and something was different.
There was an opening

in my heart.

As I walked to my friends, I started thinking... I was cared for. I told them what happened, and I even opened up a little, just like my heart did.

CHRISTINA STARR

St. Gerard School Lansing

CREATIVITY MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER (CONTINUED)

That was just the beginning of my growth.

And Mrs. Jowett knows it, too.

Mrs. Jowett is a Johnny Appleseed, A legend.

A planter, with seeds in her pockets, and they seem to spill onto her students like a fresh rain, Sprinkling them with ideas and the

courage to take hold of them.

Mrs. Jowett is a Thomas Edison,

An inventor.

A thinker, with thoughts to lighten up a whole world to students that knew nothing of the light.

Mrs. Jowett is an Abraham Lincoln, A leader.

A mentor, admired by all, and yet, opening doors for her students. She has keys to unlock the unknown. Mrs. Jowett is a Betsy Ross, A sower. Her hands bloodied with the sting of needles hitting her skin, but still sewing stars in our minds.

Mrs. Jowett is a teacher a writer, a painter, a genius,

Mrs. Jowett is my hero.
And like all heroes in history,
She doesn't wear a cape.
She wears her heart on her sleeve,
Words in her smile,
And inspiration in her mind.



AUNT SHERRI DAVIS

When we entered the house, noises quickly filled the air—the laughter and joy of family members talking about their adventures. The addicting smell of the food in the kitchen as everyone rushed around grabbing ingredients. The snicker from behind me as my brother snuck an Oreo from the cookie jar and the gaze of disapproval from my mom. You emerged from the overcrowded room to give warm and affectionate hugs. You'd spend time making these memories special. We'd peruse "A Christmas Story" together, share stories, and you'd express your love as you did in your heart-warming way. Every year, the Christmases are just as special, and we will never forget how special you were.

When I think of you, memories and love fill me like rain feeding a river. You'd been through so much, yet lived so light. Nothing could impede you. Every time I'm weak, I'm reminded of you. You were supportive through thick and thin, and your love poured down on us.

When I think of you, I think of the birthday I spent at your house. You stayed up to decorate the room and were quiet as a mouse. I woke up to balloons on the floor, streamers on the door, and an exhausted dog and aunt on the bed. These memories are never forgotten and we will always remember them. You were like a mother to us. We love you, Aunt Mom.

When I think of you, I think about the various Halloweens. You helped us dress up and joined us on our adventures. You made us goodie bags with treats, pictures, and love. We relished the conversation about what we should eat first. Once, we even went trick-or-treating in your neighborhood. We got to know your neighbors, and I could see how happy they were when we showed up at their door.

When I think of you, I'm reminded of how caring and connecting you were. When you'd see anyone, you could spark up any conversation and put a smile on their face.

When I think of you, I remember one special night I spent at your house. We collected items for the Christmas Shoe Box donations for your church. We chose which items got to go in which box and thought about the children who would open them with joyful faces. That night, I pondered the thought of how caring you were. You would help people no matter how it affected you, and it inspires me to be like that. You would watch the neighbor's dogs and go over with your dog, Chloe, to say hi. When the church needed something, you would go and help. We met new people and made connections that could only happen with you there.

No matter where we are or what we do, we will always remember how you were with us. Many memories will flourish as the days go on, and you will always be remembered. We love you, Aunt Sherri Davis.



HERO ESSAY

"A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself." -Joseph Campbell

It's mid-March, 2020. I'm on my way back from 5th grade camp, in the big banana colored box that is your bus. My class has to depart two days earlier than scheduled due to a new rapidly spreading virus...the Coronavirus.

I'm holding back tears. Some are screaming; others worriedly texting their loved ones.

"See you in a couple of weeks."

"This won't last long."

That was the last time I saw my friends that year.

My Michigan hero is my next-door neighbor, Kevin Popp. During quarantine, Mr. Popp had a grand idea. Healthcare workers were all over the news, working hard to provide for their families, and care for many in their darkest hours. Kevin Popp volunteered his free time, making large wooden heart shaped signs, each with a white medical cross with the stenciled words "Thank You." Mr. Popp paid for the wood, the paint, the vinyl letters, and the stakes out of his own pocket. During the first eight months of Covid, he made as many signs as he could, gave them away for free, and enlisted friends to drop them off to homeowners, hospitals, fire stations, and the like.

If you've heard of the phrase "paying it forward," this is an excellent example. In order to receive and display a sign, each recipient was asked to do two favors: buy a gift card from a local restaurant and deliver it to a facility employing frontline workers.

Kevin Popp's initiative accomplished three great goals: The signs created a visual image of appreciation for our front-line workers throughout many communities. The gift cards supported restaurant owners who were struggling to stay in business during COVID. Finally, the gift cards helped ensure that frontline workers felt cared for and had food to eat during long, tiring shifts.

Kevin Popp has taught me a wide variety of skills, including how to harvest pumpkins, clean up our beach, and how to pull nails from boards. Above all else though, through his heroic efforts two years ago, he taught me to be thoughtful and has shown me the importance of caring for others.

Although it was terrible to leave camp, as well as not see my friends for the year forward, there was a silver lining to this pandemic that came in the form of dedicated family time, as well as exploring new hobbies. But above all, spending time with my beloved neighbor, Mr. Popp. Kevin L. Popp, will forever be one of my biggest inspirations. He is my hero.



DARKNESS WON'T OVERCOME LIGHT

Life isn't about how much money you have or how many followers you have, it is about who you help out of the darkness and into the light. Norma Okonski has brought many people out of the darkness by founding and working at Oakland Hope food pantry. Norma has been through people stealing from her, assaulting her, and almost getting killed. Norma has a passion for helping people. Norma Okonski is virtuous and determined to help as many people as she can while inspiring others to do the same.

Norma and a string of churches in Michigan have put together a food pantry and thrift store behind a grocery store in Pontiac, Michigan. Giving 50-60 families food every day. That was until one day when there was a robbery next door to the pantry. During that robbery, two people were killed. That day, Norma knew she could not keep the food pantry at that location. For the safety of others, a decision was made to move the food pantry to a new location. Norma flipped the page and started over again. During Covid, things only got harder, but Norma was determined to help people every day no matter what they had to do. For them, it was putting garbage bags over their clothes, wearing hairnets, two masks, and long latex gloves. Being the only food pantry open in Oakland County wasn't easy. They were giving 40-50 thousand pounds of food away every month, and those numbers have only increased over the last two years. Since food prices have skyrocketed due to war, it has been difficult to give away so much food.

Norma has also been assaulted and robbed because, as she put it, some people are hurting and stuck in a place of darkness. But no matter what, Norma has always shown light and love to those who have hurt her or stolen from her. Norma knows that people go through hardships and just need kindness. The first time I volunteered, the food pantry had been open all day. But after closing, a woman came to the door and was visibly upset. The woman screamed at us because we could not give her food after we closed, but Norma still showed her kindness and told her we are open every day so she could come back tomorrow. Norma kept trying to get her to calm down until the lady punched her. Unfortunately, she was banned from the store. My hero is a person who puts their blood, sweat, and tears into helping other people.

Norma's favorite quote is from Nelson Mandela, and it says: "Poverty is not an accident like slavery or apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings." This quote not only depicts her life, but the image she puts on others that follow her. Norma has helped me become a better person, and I am grateful for everything she does. Norma is my Michigan hero.



MY PERSONAL MICHIGAN HERO

Siblings. The one person you would throw under the bus in a heartbeat. The one person you would also sacrifice everything for, faster than the speed of light. This is typically how it goes for most families: You only have to act like you love them when company is over or when they are taking family pictures. That practically summed up our relationship. We'd smile and hug for the camera, but when we were off-screen, we would fight as though we were cats and dogs. Being the younger sister, I adored my older sister, Heidi, and wanted to be just like her. No matter how much we would fight, I wanted to be her. She was perfect in my eyes, but I would still tease her, and we would fight. As we grew up more, I started to realize that she was just human, and I didn't want to be like her. Why be your sister when you could be a millionaire entrepreneur like Kylie Jenner? Heidi was just an average teen in my eyes now.

Christopher Reeve once said: "A hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles." This quote is why my sister, Heidi, is my hero. It was November 30th in Oxford, Michigan. While all of us were in lockdown at the middle school, my sister was staring harm in the face. She was right there when the first horrific shots went off. She saw him and all the pain he was causing. Heidi dropped to the floor and didn't move; in fear he might hurt her. Despite her shaking so much, he walked right past her. When he rounded the corner, she sprang into action. Heidi began to call out to see who was still conscious. Only one girl answered. Heidi ran to the girl and carried her over to an open classroom. When in the classroom, she locked the door down and started to apply pressure to the girl's wound. Heidi was the reason the girl survived. When I was eventually picked up from school, Heidi embraced me and held me tight. That was when I knew something terrible had happened.

Ever since November 30th, I've begun to think about how Heidi has been my hero all these years. We've grown closer throughout the nation's dark times. When I was down, she would pick me up and care for me. Whenever I needed help with friend or boy drama, she would give me some of the best advice I could ask for. Heidi is my hero not because of one event, she has proved herself time and time again. The way she makes you smile when you are mad, the help she gives on stubborn algebra homework, and the comforting presence she has when words are no use. Just because we are related doesn't mean we treat each other perfectly all the time. Again, Heidi is still my sister. So we fight over petty things, but we still love each other. She saved someone's life, and I think that's more than Kylie Jenner can say. I'm just glad I didn't have to lose her to realize it.



STEPMOMS

Stepmoms. As soon as people hear the word, their minds go straight to Cinderella. They think mean, greedy, selfish. On the contrary, my stepmom is one of the most selfless people I know and one of the most enjoyable people to be around. She always makes me laugh and cheers me up when I'm sad. My stepmom is the best I could ever ask for. Stephanie inspires me every time I'm with her.

I don't have a big moment to share. It's all the little moments that make her special.

She's shown horses since she was little. One time she had a baby horse whose mom had passed. She had to bottle-feed Brookie, and Brookie is still living today. During the day she would feed her, but at night her parents had to because of school. This took a lot of effort for her and her parents. She inspires me with everything she does with horses.

I have a horse at her house. She has helped me grow into an amazing rider. She always puts effort into me and my horses. Recently, I got a new horse. He is a bay with a white snip and a white pastern. He is very new to showing, and it's been really tough training a horse by myself. But she has always been there to support me and help me learn with my horse. She has helped me teach him how to slow down, how to make him collect, to pivot, to go over obstacles, and she has helped me get him ready for shows. She is also an amazing rider. My stepmom has trained some of her horses. She's done incredible things like jumping, reining, and competitive trail. I really hope to accomplish things like that with my horse.

I enjoy laughing about things with her. One thing we laugh about is current fashion. She thinks that it is a bit silly. So, every time I wear something trendy, she thinks it's hilarious. Every time she sees them in stores, she always points them out to me so we can laugh about them. She says stuff about it so much that now her friend laughs about it too.

We enjoy many other things as well, such as getting White Lake Nutrition Tea, going thrift shopping, going to horse stores and horse shows. When we go thrift shopping, we buy random things for fun. We go places together whenever we can. I really enjoy spending time with her because we always do something fun, whether it's something big or something little.

My stepmom is one of a kind and continues to inspire me every day. She is not a Cinderella stepmom stereotype. My stepmom is amazing, and I could have never asked for a better stepmom. I hope she knows how much I appreciate her.



MY MICHIGAN HERO

Who is my Michigan hero? Well, first of all, I want to be more specific. Who is my Upper Peninsula hero? That would be my grandfather, Larry Pifke.

He has been a role model for not only me, but my family, community, and country. He started out in life working hard on his family farm, learning about hard work and responsibility. His father (my great grandfather) passed away when he was just 19, leaving him the head of the household for his mom and siblings. He took on that role with great pride and honor. Once his youngest brother was graduating high school, he signed up for the military and served his country, leaving behind his new bride and first born son to ensure our country was safe.

After his return, with just a high school diploma, he began working two and three jobs to make ends meet while providing the means to remodel a 100-year-old farm house that they still own to this day. He grew up in this community, so it made sense to plant his roots here as well.

Jump forward to three children and in his mid-forties, he took what he knew about logging and opened up his own shop to help other loggers fix and maintain their equipment at an affordable price. This business blossomed over the next few years. This high school graduate just became an entrepreneur.

My grandfather loves this community and has always been involved. He has been on the board of the Wildlife Unlimited for the last 25 years. One of his favorite parts is passing his hunting and fishing skills on to the youth. The mentor programs involve everything from hunter safety to guiding youth on their first hunts. One of my favorite memories is sitting in the deer blind with my grandpa (he always had snacks in his jacket pocket). He also is part of the disabled hunters. They have established a fully equipped trailer for children that have physical disabilities to still enjoy the outdoors. He has always donated his time and land to make sure all children can get out and learn the sport. I used to sit on his lap and drive the big blue tractor, and by six he had me in the skid steer loader. My mom still likes to remind me that I would always tear up the driveway and make big ruts. My grandfather would just laugh and say she will "get over it". He is always there for everyone, including an old farmer friend that he now is taking care of.

My grandfather is so important to me, my family, and my community that I would be lucky to even walk in his shadow. To me he is a hero. He has lived his life to the fullest and with honor, and he is loved for it. That is what I am inspired to become.



MY GRANDPA

Someone who is very inspiring in my life is my grandpa. He takes me hunting and out for walks in the woods and does whatever I want to do. But what sticks out to me a lot is that he never puts himself first. He always helps with my grandma, who is in a wheelchair, and that is a lot of work. He and my grandma have started a nonprofit organization called Lori's Voice. What it is, is an organization that covers all the bills and medical equipment for children with disabilities. They have done it for 10 or 11 years now and just retired. However, what is most important is his love for God and others. He goes to church every Sunday, and if my grandma can't go (mainly in the winter), he will always bring back the Host for her.

If I ever ask my grandpa to spend the night, he always says yes, even if he is busy, He can always make time for everybody, but my mom usually says no. I have so many memories of riding the golf cart or 4-wheeler down to the farm. He would let me drive at the age of around four or five. I have shot three deer, and all of them have been with my grandpa. My grandpa gets sick really easily because he has Multiple Sclerosis (MS). But whenever we are sick, he will bring us popsicles and Gatorade and other good snacks. He just got a new gas station by his house, and whenever we go over there, he lets us get whatever we want. He lives in Coopersville, Michigan, in the country and owns a lot of land. He and my grandma host a "camp" every year called Camp David. It started off with just my brother and me. We made popcorn over the fire and made root beer floats and hot dogs. After that, we went to my grandpa's screen porch and watched Lightning McQueen and slept under the stars.

It is a tradition that my grandpa takes his kids/grandkids on a vacation when they are 12. So, last year, when I was 12, he took my brother and me up to Lewis Farms. It is a "zoo" up north that has paintball, exotic animals, and a huge slide that you go down on a carpet on, and a lot of other things. We also went to Mac Woods Dune Rides and jumped the dunes. We went to a farm called Country Dairy that has the best chocolate milk in the world! We got bottomless cups of milk for \$1.

He always makes our birthdays the most important day of the year for us. He will come pick us up, take us wherever we want, and then take us to our favorite store to pick out a gift. If we are lucky, and it's a weekend, we might spend the night and have never-ending root beer floats. For these reasons, and countless more, my grandpa is very inspiring in my life. He is my Michigan hero.

TOP 10 WINNERS CELEBRATING AT OUR 2022-'23 EVENT





















A SALUTE TO EACH OF OUR PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AND LOCAL WINNERS

Aside from the statewide winners whose essays appear in this book, we want to recognize this year's local winners from each school.

On the next several pages, you will find a listing of all the schools that participated in the 2022-'23

America & Me Essay Contest and the local winners from each school.

The first place essay from each school went on to the statewide competition from which the top 10 essays in the state were selected.

We want to thank all the participating schools and their winners. Thank you for participating, thank you for your excellent essays, and thank you for telling us about your Michigan heroes. We wish you continued success and a great future.

Farm Bureau Insurance A Michigan Company

A.D. Johnston Junior High School, Bessemer

1st place - Claire Pionk 2nd place - Marissa Renaud 3rd place - Katie Talaska

A.G. Schmidt Middle School, Fenton

1st place - Destiny Kilpela 2nd place - Madison Bono 3rd place - Hailey Denison

AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School, Southfield

1st place - Kyaneh Karapetian 2nd place - Jad Khalife 3rd place - Jurius Azar

Akron-Fairgrove Junior/Senior High School, Fairgrove

1st place - Jonathan Prince 2nd place - Sienna Sherd 3rd place - Chase Van Horn

Assumption School, Belmont

1st place - Zach Chase 2nd place - Owen Hunter 3rd place - Olivia Pohl

Athens Jr./Sr. High School, Athens

1st place - Emma Roe 2nd place - Sarah Stemaly 3rd place - Gabrielle Hunt

Auburn Hills Christian School, Auburn Hills

1st place - Harrison Sargent 2nd place - Esmeralda Escalante

3rd place - Margarita Sanchez

Avondale Middle School, Rochester Hills

1st place - Maggie Kennedy 2nd place - Laila Walker 3rd place - Austin Bittick

Baraga Area Schools, Baraga

1st place - Landon Smith 2nd place - Ladyn Chaudier 3rd place - Bella Taisto

Bath Middle School, Bath

1st place - Paige Hubbell 2nd place - Aubrey Wykes 3rd place - Emily Schneider

Beal City Junior High School, Mt. Pleasant

1st place - Emma Block 2nd place - Carter Wixson 3rd place - Madisyn Onstott

Berrien Springs Middle School, Berrien Springs

1st place - A'Noah Hamilton 2nd place - Noah Villwock 3rd place - Rana Mbwambo

Beverly Hills Academy, Beverly Hills

1st place - Malak Alosman 2nd place - Lara Magid 3rd place - Aleena Sattar

Big Rapids Middle School, Big Rapids

1st place - Jazzlyn Sawyer-Ocasio 2nd place - Allana Elliott 3rd place - Amelia Shearer

Bishop Baraga Catholic School, Iron Mountain

1st place - Gabriella Theisen 2nd place - Jerzy Raiche 3rd place - Tessa Vicenzi

Boulan Park Middle School, Troy

1st place - Suha Gill 2nd place - Nishitha Kalapuram 3rd place - Elina Song

Britton Macon School. Britton

1st place - Mariah Ontiveros 2nd place - Kaylynn Sneed 3rd place - Bradley Sharp

Brown City Jr./Sr. High School, Brown City

1st place - Ariel Henderson 2nd place - Isabella Siracki 3rd place - Rebecca Rickman

Byron Center Christian School, Byron Center

1st place - Katelyn Alles 2nd place - Inazetta Leedy 3rd place - Joseph Gritter

Calhoun Christian School, Battle Creek

1st place - Lidiya Lapratt 2nd place - Ruth Liant 3rd place - Levi Bennett

Capac Junior-Senior High School, Capac

1st place - Albert Chapa 2nd place - Leah Escobar 3rd place - Shaylynne Schaefer

Carrollton Middle School, Carrollton

1st place - Lindsey Elizalde 2nd place - Jacob Wesolek 3rd place - Mackenzie Wangler

Cassopolis Middle School, Cassopolis

1st place - Khloe Mcgrew 2nd place - Brylee Jones 3rd place - Aaron Anderson

Central Academy, Ann Arbor

1st place - Ayah Hammoudeh 2nd place - Ibtisam Issa 3rd place - Leyana Nemar

Charlevoix Middle School, Charlevoix

1st place - Ayla Kemp 2nd place - Zane Parish 3rd place - Landen Whisler

Chesaning Middle School, Chesaning

1st place - Luke Skaryd 2nd place - Alycea Stilson 3rd place - ClairaBelle Bonner

Chippewa Middle School, Okemos

1st place - Michaela Perdikakis 2nd place - Syeda Zehra 3rd place - Liam Alic-Tracy

Christ Lutheran School, Stevensville

1st place - Logan Arnt

Christ the King Lutheran School, Sebewaing

1st place - Amelia Reinbold 2nd place - Hannah VanTol 3rd place - Treston Kuhl

Coleman Community Jr./Sr. High School, Coleman

1st place - Haydn Naylor 2nd place - Danica Sabat 3rd place - Imani Davis

Colon Jr./Sr. High School, Colon

1st place - Samantha Davis 2nd place - Tessa Bienz 3rd place - Michael House

Columbia Central Middle School, Brooklyn

1st place - Kai Robertson 2nd place - Chloe Test

Concordia Lutheran School, Redford

1st place - Sophie Fremder 2nd place - Keira Fontaine 3rd place - JC Zimmerman

Cramer Junior High, Essexville

1st place - Levi Socier 2nd place - Lily Dorion 3rd place - Emily Ruple

Cranbrook Boys Middle School, Bloomfield Hills

1st place - Dorian Dubose 2nd place - Travis Effinger 3rd place - Shayan Siddiqui

Crescent Academy International, Canton

1st place - Nasr Abdul Mujeeb 2nd place - Nour Kaouk 3rd place - Rayanne Hafeez

Davis Middle School, Hillsdale

1st place - Ava Gonzales 2nd place - Ava Olmstead 3rd place - Allison Butler

Detroit Country Day School, Beverly Hills

1st place - Alina Younes 2nd place - Yashvini Goddla 3rd place - Isha Ummadi

Detroit Waldorf School, Detroit

1st place - Aniela Howard 2nd place - Annabel Tomezak 3rd place - Noelle Bojaj

Dowagiac Middle School, Dowagiac

1st place - Alex Mauai 2nd place - Alan Wegner 3rd place - Emily Jenkins

Dundee Middle School, Dundee

1st place - Scarlett Trame 2nd place - Payton Spaulding 3rd place - Ashton Marshall

Dutton Christian Middle School, Caledonia

1st place - Nathaniel Godfrey 2nd place - Meredith Helmus 3rd place - Jayden Langschied

Dwight Beach Middle School, Chelsea

1st place - Aleeah Wells 2nd place - Dante Costanzo 3rd place - Rose Ramos

E.F. Rittmueller Middle School, Frankenmuth

1st place - Izzabel Daenzer 2nd place - Brendan Derocher 3rd place - Alivia Gale

East Jordan Middle School, East Jordan

1st place - Bryan Peck 2nd place - Kaylee Colvin 3rd place - William Webb

East Rockford Middle School, Rockford

1st place - Sean Bostwick 2nd place - Adeline Curtis 3rd place - Grace Czarnopis

Eccles School - Sigel Township S.D. #4, Harbor Beach

1st place - Connor Woodchisky

Engadine Consolidated Schools, Engadine

1st place - Sophia Stephenson 2nd place - Kali Santimaw 3rd place - Kate Kovar

Evart Middle School, Evart

1st place - Alexandra Mosher-Kunin 2nd place - Meliah Dean 3rd place - Natalie Wood

F.C. Reed Middle School, Bridgman

1st place - Kate Starbuck

Gaylord Middle School, Gaylord 1st place - Taryn Bosman

2nd place - Wyatt Metzger 3rd place - Kenzie Weiss

Glen Lake Middle School, Maple City

1st place - Robin Lane 2nd place - Madeline Diehl 3rd place - Saige Schopieray

Goodrich Middle School, Goodrich

1st place - Ava Schroeder 2nd place - Lila Nardizzi 3rd place - Emerson Kenworthy

Grace Christian Academy, Grand Rapids

1st place - Eden Gruswitz 2nd place - Justin McKendrick 3rd place - Rebekah VanderBoon

Grass Lake Jr./Sr. High School, Grass Lake

1st place - Madison Smith 2nd place - Makenzie Hilberer 3rd place - Oscar Knutson-Skidmore

Grosse Pointe Academy, Grosse Pointe

1st place - Lindsay Darke 2nd place - Penny Martin 3rd place - Kelly Ford

Guardian Lutheran School, Dearborn

1st place - Lily Farley 2nd place - Hailey Faith 3rd place - Lily Ponto

Hanover-Horton Middle School, Horton

1st place - Trinity Buckingham 2nd place - Brynlee Swihart 3rd place - Halee Krage

Harbor Springs Middle School, Harbor Springs

1st place - Riley Kring 2nd place - Steven Ozenberger 3rd place - Victor Chmielewski

Hart Middle School, Hart

1st place - Jillabelle Hession 2nd place - Caden Van Gelderen 3rd place - Cali Eisenhlohr

Hartland Middle School at Ore Creek, Hartland

1st place - Memphis Rickard 2nd place - Ella Zaborowski 3rd place - Gustaf Ludwigsen

Hemlock Middle School, Hemlock

1st place - Isabelle Hutfliz 2nd place - Colton Siler 3rd place - Ryleigh Bain

Heritage Christian Academy, Kalamazoo

1st place - Nolan Sempert 2nd place - Hunter Belden 3rd place - Xander Mills

Holland SDA School, Holland

1st place - Korinne Shepard 2nd place - Gracie Slikkers 3rd place - Cierra Johnson

Holy Family South Campus, Rochester Hills

1st place - Ruthmary Girgis 2nd place - Joshua Lupinski 3rd place - Audrey Helms

Holy Ghost Lutheran School, Monroe

1st place - Airyanna Marie Pogarch 2nd place - Chase Bonk

Holy Name School, Birmingham

1st place - Luke Walton 2nd place - Lucy Janus 3rd place - Avery Tack

Holy Trinity School, Comstock Park 1st place - Simon Kelly

2nd place - Luke Momber 3rd place - Carter Jonkman

Howardsville Christian School, Marcellus

1st place - Abigail Wright 2nd place - Aiden Vlug 3rd place - Emma Fankhauser

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Grand Rapids

1st place - Ameryne Stoney 2nd place - Kayla Perry 3rd place - Mitchell Dunlap

Immanuel St. James Lutheran School, Grand Rapids

1st place - Aydin Truong 2nd place - Jude Silvey 3rd place - Alieda Burns

Iroquois Middle School, Macomb

1st place - Cara Brown 2nd place - Alaina Ball 3rd place - Savannah Silage

Island City Academy, Eaton Rapids

1st place - Myleigh Covello 2nd place - Kaelin Krupa 3rd place - Ryann Watkins

Juniata Christian School, Mayville

1st place - Carson Smith 2nd place - Alayna Coulter 3rd place - Ethan Meyer

Lakewood Middle School, Woodland

1st place - Klara McArthur

2nd place - Emmi Bellin 3rd place - Ryleigh Martin



Lenawee Christian School, Adrian

1st place - Emilia Parker 2nd place - Drew Kirkendall 3rd place - Judah Penney

Lowell Middle School, Lowell

1st place - Marshall Huhn 2nd place - Mikena Ismail 3rd place - Elizabeth Repp

Ludington Area Catholic School, Ludington

1st place - Sam Reisterer 2nd place - Addison Torres 3rd place - Matt Odegaard

Manton Middle School, Manton

1st place - Isabelle Little 2nd place - Kiah Gilbert 3rd place - Connor Kreamer

Maple Valley Jr. High School, Vermontville

1st place - Kaylee Williams 2nd place - Presley Hricovsky 3rd place - Annabelle Staley

Mar Lee School, Marshall

1st place - Autumn Jaynes 2nd place - Brendan Parks 3rd place - Carson Crisp

Marlette Jr./Sr. High School, Marlette

1st place - Owen Anderson 2nd place - Olivia Varey 3rd place - Tilli Ruggles

Marysville Middle School, Marysville

1st place - Kenzie Le Vey 2nd place - Korey Le Vey 3rd place - Danielle Wilton

Mason County Eastern Junior/Senior High, Custer

1st place - Kayleigh Corbin 2nd place - Bryanna Hasenbank 3rd place - Brailyn Johnson

McBain Rural Agricultural Schools, McBain

1st place - Kaiden Cooper 2nd place - Kate Quist 3rd place - Keagan Christie

Middle School at Parkside, Jackson

1st place - Isabella McClain Van Fleet 2nd place - Hareem Khan 3rd place - Henry Themm

Monroe Middle School, Monroe

1st place - Xadrian D.J. Chase 2nd place - Carleigh Martin 3rd place - Jayce Hay

Montabella Middle School, Blanchard

1st place - Raelynn Baez 2nd place - Emma Peterson 3rd place - Joslynn Smith

Muskegon Catholic Central Middle School, Muskegon

1st place - Bridget Bingham 2nd place - Caleb Smith 3rd place - Khylee Dial

Negaunee Middle School, Negaunee

1st place - Noelle Brown

Nellie B. Chisholm Middle School, Montague

1st place - Hallie VanTuyl 2nd place - Addison Smith 3rd place - Molly Mulder



New Morning School, Plymouth

1st place - Alexander Vondracek 2nd place - Charlie Johnson 3rd place - Madelyn Pappas

North Huron Schools, Kinde 1st place - Elisa Lopez

2nd place - Maya Leadingham 3rd place - Wesley Kosinoski



North Pointe Christian Middle School, Grand Rapids

1st place - Asher Mennega 2nd place - Addison Rogers 3rd place - Janae Brogel

North Rockford Middle School, Rockford

1st place - Autumn Jones 2nd place - Madisyn Martin 3rd place - Sadie Jolliffe

Northern Hills Middle School, Grand Rapids

1st place - DeeDee Cairns 2nd place - Julia Breidestein 3rd place - Sahana Raman

Novi Christian Academy, Novi

1st place - Olivia Dubuc 2nd place - Grace Bell 3rd place - Kyla Gordon

O.J. DeJonge Junior High, Ludington

1st place - Kennedi Christofferson 2nd place - Steele Stowe 3rd place - Sawyer Hendrickson

Our Lady of Sorrows Catholic School, Farmington

1st place - Joelle Mio 2nd place - Alexa Shamoun 3rd place - Anna Kowalyk

Our Lady of the Lake School, Prudenville

1st place - Thomas Janisse 2nd place - Laura Janisse 3rd place - Isaac Neorr

Our Lady of Victory School, Northville

1st place - Anabelle Bednarz 2nd place - Kaisa Nurkala 3rd place - Nahil Fakhoury

Our Lady Star of the Sea School, Grosse Pointe Woods

1st place - Victoria Mangol 2nd place - Johnny Cueter 3rd place - Madeline Ament

Our Savior Lutheran, Lansing

1st place - Joel Schmidt

Our Shepherd Lutheran School, Birmingham

1st place - Owen Hanson 2nd place - Nathanael Siefker 3rd place - Avery Markesic

Owendale-Gagetown Area School, Owendale

1st place - Jessica Bowers 2nd place - Mya McCreedy 3rd place - Steven Hicks

Oxford Middle School, Oxford 1st place - Katie Allen

2nd place - Brady Howell 3rd place - Josephine Delano



Parchment Middle School, Parchment

1st place - Kaitlyn Weber 2nd place - Nykkia Thompson 3rd place - Maddox Greenspoon

Paw Paw Middle School, Paw Paw

1st place - Sophia Lemieux 2nd place - Gracie Eagle 3rd place - Theodor Gehl

Peace Lutheran School, Saginaw

1st place - Sophie Samborn 2nd place - Saeda Holty 3rd place - Camden Richardson

Peck Middle School, Peck

1st place - Rowen Quinlan 2nd place - Blake Trombley 3rd place - Elizabeth Schultz

Petoskey Middle School, Petoskey

1st place - Trevin Boyce 2nd place - Josephine Bielaczyc 3rd place - Jayne Holmes

Pewamo-Westphalia Junior High, Westphalia

1st place - Therese Lyons 2nd place - Hayden Smith 3rd place - Will Pung

Plymouth Christian High School, Grand Rapids

1st place - Anna Bazen 2nd place - Amber VanDyke 3rd place - Kylie DeVisser

Resurrection School, Lansing

1st place - Lionel Koutz 2nd place - Santiago Hennig 3rd place - Aidan Dobrzelewski

Richmond Middle School, Richmond

1st place - Evelynn Barrand 2nd place - Molly Morgan 3rd place - Olivia Guevara

Rogers City Area Schools, Rogers City

1st place - Izabella Hill 2nd place - Alisa Alexander 3rd place - Savannah Reinold

Romeo Middle School, Romeo

1st place - Grace Schildgen 2nd place - Hope Pierfelice 3rd place - Lara Ashbrook

Ruth Fox Middle School, North Branch

1st place - Jocelynn Rushlow 2nd place - Kaylee Pasternak 3rd place - Sophia Vickers

Sacred Heart Academy, Mt. Pleasant

1st place - Polly Taylor 2nd place - Sam Moose 3rd place - Martin He

Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy, Saginaw

1st place - Isabella Monville 2nd place - Aaliyah Welch 3rd place - Landry Mitchell

Salem Lutheran School, Owosso

1st place - Amos Norder 2nd place - Jesse Weiss 3rd place - Lilyana Woodworth

Saline Middle School, Saline

1st place - Melissa Ashby 2nd place - Lin Robb 3rd place - Natalie Mattson

Spring Lake Middle School, Spring Lake

1st place - Benjamin Zimmerman 2nd place - Isla Stewart 3rd place - Alexis Baker

St. Anselm School, Dearborn Heights

1st place - Margaret Jorgensen 2nd place - Tiffany Alvarado 3rd place - Madeline Krucsil

St. Anthony of Padua School, Grand Rapids

1st place - Isabella Wuesten 2nd place - Marisa Barnum 3rd place - Owen Swanson

St. Augustine Catholic School, Kalamazoo

1st place - Yshael Obias 2nd place - Lauren Peot 3rd place - Cynthia Nguyen

St. Charles Borromeo School, Greenville

1st place - Quinn Trechter 2nd place - Jolie Platte 3rd place - Devin Linton

St. Charles School, Newport

1st place - Jenna Flint 2nd place - Blake Lechy 3rd place - Claire Holton

St. Charles School, St. Charles

1st place - Avery Moore 2nd place - Nathan Kutz 3rd place - Kylie Fitting

St. Clare of Montefalco School, Grosse Pointe Park

1st place - Anna Terry 2nd place - William Thomas 3rd place - Braylin Wilson

St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, Petoskey

1st place - Avery Sears 2nd place - Kaden Migda 3rd place - Isabella Wilson

St. Gerard School, Lansing 1st place - Christina Starr

2nd place - Grace Wonch 3rd place - Andrea Rivet

St. Joan of Arc School, St. Clair Shores

1st place - Elizabeth Olson 2nd place - Easton Lamb 3rd place - Brigid Chandler

St. John Lutheran School, Fraser

1st place - Logan Primeau 2nd place - Isabella King 3rd place - David Durquet

St. John Lutheran School, Rochester

1st place - Cam Jones 2nd place - Addison Herman 3rd place - P.J. Thiessen

St. John Vianney Catholic School, Wyoming

1st place - Addison Howard 2nd place - Molly VanderLaan 3rd place - Olivia Russo

St. John's Lutheran School, Bay City

1st place - Emma Faustin 2nd place - Megan Pretzer 3rd place - Evelyn Belleman

St. John's Lutheran School, New Boston

1st place - Samantha Jackson 2nd place - Emilia Tapley 3rd place - Kevin Cruz

St. Joseph School, Lake Orion

1st place - Kylie Weymouth 2nd place - Chloe Smith 3rd place - Annaliese Weber

St. Joseph School, West Branch

1st place - Emma Gilbert 2nd place - Sage Brewer

St. Lorenz Lutheran School, Frankenmuth

1st place - Cambria Weiss 2nd place - Nicklas Parker 3rd place - Luke Grossi

St. Mary Cathedral School, Gaylord

1st place - Maya Dodd 2nd place - Samuel Kuznicki 3rd place - Siaharia Bradfield

St. Mary Catholic School, Pinckney

1st place - Katelyn Sanchez 2nd place - Jack Fill 3rd place - Jimmy Hogan

St. Mary School, Spring Lake

1st place - Adriana Pressey 2nd place - Reagan Mullally 3rd place - Magdalene Cutler

St. Matthew Lutheran School, Walled Lake

1st place - Elodie Breen 2nd place - Tommy Toma 3rd place - Joseph Lancaster

St. Michael School, Livonia

1st place - Brian Hoang 2nd place - Julienne Manansala 3rd place - Liam Conde

St. Patrick School, Ada

1st place - Lila Kelly Schwartz 2nd place - Colin Dye 3rd place - Jackson Tessmer

St. Patrick School, White Lake

1st place - Brock Slifko 2nd place - Jillian Jackson 3rd place - Alexander Karibian

St. Paul Catholic Elementary School, Grosse Pointe Farms

1st place - Athena Findeis 2nd place - Catie Juip 3rd place - Abigail Kenyon-Guevara

St. Paul Lutheran School, Stevensville

1st place - Riley Daugherty 2nd place - Andrew Abele 3rd place - Adelynn Huff

St. Paul's Lutheran, Ann Arbor

1st place - James Chou 2nd place - Megan Welch 3rd place - Breanna Justavino

St. Peter Lutheran School, Macomb

1st place - Evalena Witkow 2nd place - Emma McGrath 3rd place - Brooke Bednick

St. Pius X School, Southgate

1st place - Maggie McMullen 2nd place - Austin Owens 3rd place - Zak Bergeron

St. Stephen School, New Boston

1st place - Madelyn Collins 2nd place - Katie Fritz 3rd place - Natalia Shadik

Sturgis Middle School, Sturgis

1st place - Tiahnah Jay Hardy 2nd place - Sophie Toward 3rd place - Alexia Baker

Swan Valley Middle School, Saginaw

1st place - MaryGrace Luplow 2nd place - Aubrey Hare 3rd place - Trenton McDonald

The Chatfield School, Lapeer

1st place - Mckenna Brady 2nd place - Emily Carney 3rd place - Hunter Hall

Trinity Lutheran School, Bay City

1st place - Luke Bourdan 2nd place - Brady Allan Pertimoulx 3rd place - Cullan John Burke

Trinity Lutheran School, Berrien Springs

1st place - Payton Horthon 2nd place - Layla Nearpass 3rd place - Diana McLauchlin

Trinity Lutheran School, Clinton Township

1st place - Gino Parisi 2nd place - Camryn Bonaventura 3rd place - Mychala Penn

Trinity Lutheran School, Reed City

1st place - Ashlyn Chatel 2nd place - Alainee Harrison 3rd place - Emma Davis

Trinity Lutheran School, Reese

1st place - Brooklyn Pike 2nd place - Blayke Weiss 3rd place - Jacob Grimpo

Trinity Lutheran School, St. Joseph

1st place - Daniel VanderLugt 2nd place - Kasen Steele 3rd place - Luke Olohan

Trinity Lutheran School, Utica

1st place - Anthony Kouzy 2nd place - Alyssa Hewson 3rd place - Mia DeGregory

Union City Middle School, Union City

1st place - Allison Gautsche 2nd place - Attica Hoath 3rd place - Lydia Goodwin

Unionville-Sebewaing Area Middle School, Sebewaing

1st place - Jamey Lintner 2nd place - Logan Findlay 3rd place - Beyancka Adkins

University of Detroit Jesuit Academy & High School, Detroit

1st place - Andrew Fritz 2nd place - Israel Ali 3rd place - Rohen Rigoni

West Iron County Middle School, Iron River

1st place - Ryker Gill

2nd place - Lacey Mattson 3rd place - Avery Osterlund

Weston Preparatory Academy, Detroit

1st place - Damia Williams 2nd place - Asia Smith

White Middle School, Allegan

1st place - Kennedy Gillies 2nd place - Quinn Turpin 3rd place - Wyatt Spicer

Whitehall Middle School, Whitehall

1st place - Annie Muller 2nd place - Hadleigh VanAmberg 3rd place - Jones McDowell

Whittemore-Prescott Junior High School, Whittemore

1st place - JorJa Garno 2nd place - Noah Ritter 3rd place - Alexis Fischer

Wise Academy, Dearborn Heights

1st place - Aya Benkatta 2nd place - Hanan Boussi 3rd place - Fatima Sobh

Woodland School, Traverse City

1st place - Vanessa Hoppe 2nd place - Natalie Burpee 3rd place - Madeline Miller

Zion Christian School, Byron Center

1st place - Brianna Runner 2nd place - Kyle Rozema 3rd place - Maggie Botsko

Zion Lutheran School, Auburn

1st place - Blake Pomaville 2nd place - Hannah Hemme 3rd place - Simon Hurst

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