

My Personal **MICHIGAN HERO**



55th
Contest
Final

AMERICA & ME ESSAY BOOKLET

*Featuring the top 10 winning essays
from the 2023-'24 statewide contest,
and a list of all participating schools
and their local winners.*



America & Me
Essay Contest

For Michigan 8th Grade Students

Sponsored by



A TRIBUTE TO MICHIGAN HEROES

As we have since 1968, Farm Bureau sponsored the America and Me Essay Contest. When the contest began 55 years ago, students were asked to write about their roles in America's future. Over time, the contest evolved, and now features essays focused on "My Personal Michigan Hero."

This booklet includes the nearly 200 schools that participated in the 2023-'24 contest. Inside, we celebrate the work of these young authors by collecting the top 10 essays in the state, a list of participating schools, 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 to us all again this year: There are thousands of creative students across Michigan and countless heroes making a lasting difference in their communities.

While the entries in each of the past 55 years have been unique, the 10 essays this year were particularly moving. I was impressed with the empathy and insight students showed as they described heroes within their families, at Michigan hospitals, or even a fellow classmate who made a lasting impact. I invite you to read these essays. I bet they'll inspire you as they inspired me.

Lastly, I also want to thank the teachers, parents, and Farm Bureau Insurance agents who help ensure the continued success of our contest. 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,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donall E. Simon". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Don Simon
Chief Executive Officer,
Farm Bureau Insurance of Michigan



TOP ESSAYS

From the 2023-'24
America & Me Essay Contest



Highlights

2023-'24 AMERICA & ME ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

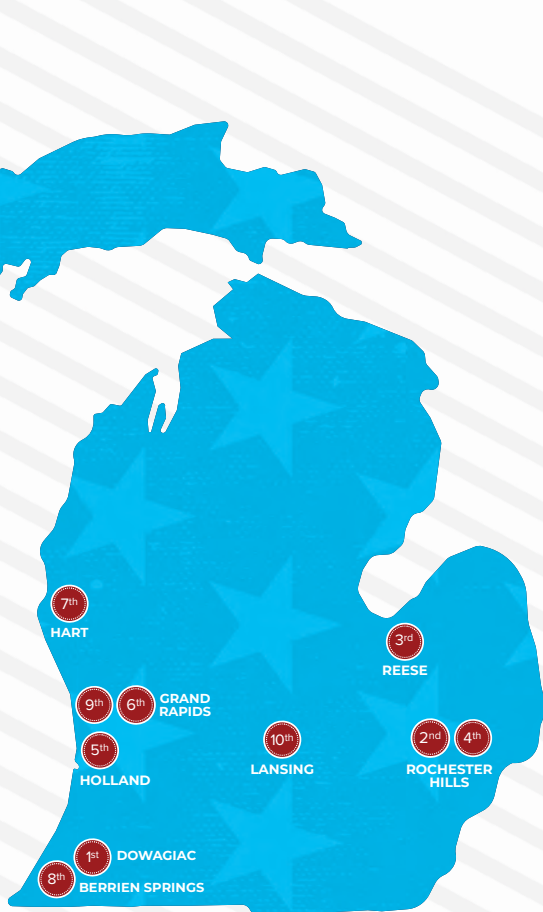
55th

2023-'24 America & Me Essay Contest

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FIRST PLACE: SAVANNAH KURZHAL

Dowagiac Middle School, Dowagiac
Agent Sponsor Jeff Neumann

SECOND PLACE: CATHERINE BALLOR

Holy Family Regional School, Rochester Hills

THIRD PLACE: BROOKE BENSON

St. Elizabeth Area Catholic School, Reese

FOURTH PLACE: HALEYMARIE PARKER

Reuther Middle School, Rochester Hills
Agent Sponsor Merrick Maris

FIFTH PLACE: FINLEY BERGMAN

Holland Adventist Academy, Holland

SIXTH PLACE: CONNOR LUTTRELL

St. Anthony of Padua School, Grand Rapids

SEVENTH PLACE: GRACE TUCKER

Hart Middle School, Hart
Agent Sponsor Kaleb Klotz

EIGHTH PLACE: MOLLY BOVEN

Berrien Springs Middle School, Berrien Springs
Agent Sponsor Marty Rudloff

NINTH PLACE: RILEY NEILSON

Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Grand Rapids
Agent Sponsor Tony Beachler

TENTH PLACE: ADA ALLSTOTT

Resurrection School, Lansing



MY MICHIGAN HERO

Life is a fragile thing; a person can spend their whole life working to be someone great, some illustrious figure, or maybe they only get to dream of such a life, and then they're gone. A mere blip in the vastness of human history. But they still lived. They made an impact on a person's life, just how my Michigan hero has done. My Michigan hero is Wyatt James Edward Finn. Wyatt was an amazing person who dreamed big, and although he may have passed on in this life, he made an impact on my life that I will forever remember.

Wyatt died too young, but he left me with memories and lessons impossible to forget. Wyatt was kind, kind in ways you don't see often enough. Wyatt had grown up around horses and other animals, always showing compassion to even the smallest of creatures. He never looked down on others unless they deserved it. He wanted nothing but the best for everyone around him.

He was a devoted Christian; he went to Sunday school every week. Wyatt was active in the church, always giving back to the community. I always admired how faithful he remained, even in the darkest points of his life. He believed that everybody deserved to be loved and treated with respect.

Wyatt had a golden heart. I had never seen him judge anybody. In his eyes, everyone had potential to do good. He was an active team player on his baseball team, and even though I was the only girl on the team, he had more faith in me than anybody else.

To Wyatt, people didn't deserve to be excluded. Everybody deserved the right to prove themselves. As a girl in a male-dominated sport, sometimes I was not treated fairly, but Wyatt made sure I got to earn my right on the team. He didn't let people judge others.

Sadly, Wyatt took his own life at 12 years old on September 1st, 2023. Wyatt was a light in my life and the same to many others. He was full of life, kind-hearted, and knew no stranger. He had a passion for music and had learned to play violin. He was an outspoken boy who aspired to become president when he grew up. He cut his life short, but even in death he inspires me to be a better person. That is why Wyatt Finn is my Michigan hero.



SURGICAL MIRACLE WORKER

Heroes impact lives in meaningful ways. They receive admiration for their selfless character and strive to make a difference in one's world. Although most people can vividly recall meeting a hero for the first time, I have no recollection of that. Whereas many people's heroes may have changed their lives mentally or emotionally, my hero actually changed my life physically. Doctor Steven Ham, now retired, worked as one of the very few pediatric neurosurgeons in Michigan. He significantly helped me become a person of strength and perseverance.

My parents discovered Dr. Ham after medical tests revealed that I had a tethered spinal cord, and I am extremely grateful for my parents' swift and thorough response to it. Tethered Cord Syndrome occurs when extra tissue connected to the spinal cord limits the movement of the spinal cord. After interviewing the two pediatric neurosurgeons available in Michigan, my parents selected Dr. Ham to perform the surgery to release my tethered cord in the hopes that I would not have any limitation of movement as I grew taller. They told me, "Dr. Ham prepared us every step of the way," and he continued to monitor my progress in the years following. At the age of three months, Dr. Ham performed surgery on me to untether the tissue from the cord, allowing my spinal cord to float freely. The surgery took place in 2010 at the Children's Hospital of Michigan. Dr. Ham continued to collaborate with my parents and me to monitor my progress until he retired. He truly was almost part of my family through this time to strengthen me, and we will never forget his dedication toward his patients.

Dr. Ham has improved my quality of life immensely. The surgery annulled my back pain, and I am significantly blessed. I balance well, in addition to walking and running correctly, all of which a tethered cord could incapacitate if not properly repaired. Sports play a significant role in my everyday life, and I would be a different person if I did not participate in them. My main sports - cross country, basketball, and track - all involve running. These sports have helped me maintain my mental and physical health. Additionally, reflecting on the miracle of my surgery has kept me in a constant state of appreciation for that which many simply take for granted. When I set a season best time in a recent cross country race, a tear even rolled down my mom's face to see my success because she knows the struggle I endured to reach my current level of competition. I recently received a scholar athlete award, and I am overjoyed. Dr. Ham has enabled me to excel as an active participant in life instead of sitting on the sidelines.

3rd



Brooke Benson

*St. Elizabeth Area Catholic School
Reese*

A LIFE OF SERVICE

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well."
Ralph Waldo Emerson

This quote reminds me of my Aunt Vikki, who is my Michigan Hero. She has used her life to do good for others. She inspires me to do acts of service just like her.

One of the many organizations where she volunteers is the Kids' Food Basket in Western Michigan. She got involved after hearing a student give a presentation about the Food Basket mission. This organization provides sack meals to over 6,000 kids every day. These kids don't always have access to food at home and this group of volunteers makes sure they are fed.

My Aunt Vikki told me about this group and how she finds happiness in spreading joy to these children. She asked me to help decorate brown paper bags that could be given to the kids to add extra color to their day. I was more than happy to help since art is one of my favorite things to do. It gave me the opportunity to make someone smile by using my creativity.

I was inspired to bring the idea to my school to get as much help as possible. The entire school got involved. The staff provided designated times for students to work on the project. I then gave the bags to my Aunt Vikki to take to the Food Basket. She taught me that it can be very fulfilling to give and help others. I also learned from her that no matter your age, you can make your community a better place.

Another way my Aunt Vikki helps others is the Children's Advocacy Center in Grand Rapids. She read about the organization and got very sad about the sexual abuse happening to children in her area. She then felt that God prompted her to do something about it. My aunt donates items to help these children while they recover from the abuse. They went through a lot, and they are given gifts such as blankets and teddy bears to help them feel secure.

My Aunt Vikki wants to help people and make a difference in her community. She does charitable acts and doesn't expect any recognition in return. She does it from the goodness of her heart to bring faith and love into children's lives. Her work has helped thousands of children.

My Aunt Vikki creates awareness for these organizations and encourages others to do acts of service for a greater cause. She displays compassion to those in need and lets them know they are loved. She has helped change the lives of those in her community. I hope hearing her story can inspire you to do good for others too. All you need is a little faith, love, and trust in God and you too can make a difference.



REMEMBERING LOVE BEYOND TIME

Throughout our lives, we encounter various individuals who leave an indelible mark on our hearts. For me, that person was my dad, my Michigan hero. Although our time together was cut short, the memories we shared are a constant reminder of the strength he had. He always told me how dark and scary the world was, and when I was born, I became his joy. The reason why my dad continues to be my hero is how he influenced my perspective on life.

He was a loving presence despite the shortness of our time together. The love my dad showered on me was profound. He always put others before himself. His warm hugs and comforting words made even the darkest days bearable. I recall his smile, which could forever light up a room, and the way he would listen attentively to my stories. These memories serve as a reminder of the unconditional love that exists within my family.

Beyond being a loving presence, my dad taught me valuable life lessons that continue to make me the person I am today. He instilled in me the importance of respect, teaching me that challenges are not setbacks, but opportunities for growth. His beliefs in my abilities push me every day for success. My dad emphasized the significance of kindness, always reminding me to lend a hand to those in need.

These lessons have become part of my character. The strength my dad had was and always will be an inspiration. Although I will never really fully comprehend the challenges he faced, I admired his resilience. He fought unseen battles, showing true strength lies not on the outside, but also on the inside. He had a great spirit, and his courage inspires me to confront obstacles and never lose hope. Our time together may have been short, but the bond between my father and I will be forever present. I will carry his legacy within me for as long as I live and pass it on to my children someday.

My father's morals and values serve as my compass guiding me through life. The cherished memories we shared give me moments of sadness, but it reminds me how much I love him. My dad stands tall as my Michigan hero in my heart despite our limited time together. The impact he has made on my life is immeasurable. Though his life was shortened, his strength continues to shape the person I am today. Whether it is heartfelt memories, or the lessons learned, his presence will forever linger with me. I remain grateful for the hero he was and for the hero he continues to be.



WISDOM IS NOT JUST FOR THE GREY-HAIRED...

I have great respect for those who have come before me. For those who have seen more suns and moons pass over the sky greater times than myself. For those who have gray hairs dotting their diminishing locks. If only we knew how much wisdom and knowledge is held in those gray hairs, nurtured by time. These gray hairs that stand out are a symbol of insight, experience, and many years of learning. But not all heroic figures have these gray hairs, and they don't need them. At least, my mom doesn't.

My mom is by no means a fictional superhero; the courageous warrior standing firm on top of a cliff's rigid edge, chin lifted high in the air as her cape flaps in the ferocious wind, showing everyone that she's there for them. Instead, my mom is a quiet hero, someone who has left little footprints of kindness wherever she has stepped that will stay behind her as she continues walking forward in life. And because of her steady, modest, everyday activities, I have found that she has impacted me in more ways than I can count — cooking a sick friend's dinner, smiling at people when gloom hangs in the air, being brave in times of fear, comforting me when I'm afraid, and being a person anyone can talk to. Over the years, as she has done these quiet tasks, they have shown me what a self-sacrificing person she really is. My mom is my Michigan Hero because her example has made an impact on me that will continue blossoming throughout my life.

My mom is also like a mother bear, very protective of her children. I respect that about her. I am eternally grateful for her watchful eyes, keeping my brother and I protected in this world of unknown dangers. I don't have to be afraid because I know my mom has my back and will always support me when I need her encouraging words of advice to keep me safe and guide my decisions. It is not that I am bound to her suggestions in a rigid way with no space for the freedom of change, but more of a whisper of what wisdom's knowledge suggests. And through life's course of failing and prospering, I have learned to listen to her counsel, for she has seen more suns and moons pass over the sky greater times than myself. My mom is my Michigan Hero because she has dedicated her life to helping me grow safely and successfully.

My mom doesn't need gray hairs to portray her ever growing wisdom; the wisdom that has counseled me throughout my years. And I know as life goes on before us and as time slips away from underneath our feet, she will still be there, sharing essential information with me that I can pass down to my own children someday. And maybe, just maybe, I can become a little bit like her: weaving in the different threads of truth and love that has made up the fabric of my childhood to those who will come after me.



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF A HERO

Imagine yourself as a teen boy. Now, imagine yourself with any problem you can and can't imagine trapped in a giant world grasping at insane concepts to explain it all. You've just become me. And, as me, I have a hero. He's not a cape-wearing, sky-soaring, bus-saving Marvel hero, but a modest Michigan man. He wears no cape; but at this point, he should. In fact, he's possibly the closest to a hero I've ever gotten in my life; a therapist.

His name is not Superman or Spiderman, but Greg. He is my therapist whom I see bi-weekly and have seen for almost two years. As my heroic therapist, Greg helps me with mental health struggles and counsels me through challenging times. He helps me repair bad thoughts and guide me to establishing good choices in life. Greg has impacted my life in a positive way that I am eternally grateful for. He has bestowed upon me healthy coping mechanisms to use in challenging times and has also allowed me to vent my problems in a safe, healthy, and collected manner.

I think it's commendable, really; spending your formative years training to become a therapist. Therapists, like Greg, are underappreciated. They dedicate their lives to helping others but don't get featured in movies or become world famous. I aim to shine a little bit of light on a real life hero, one who has helped me my entire life. When I sit in that counseling office, I look around the room. Mismatched ceiling lights hover above the warmly toned room, and the couches sit snugly on the ocean blue carpet with a table in between. You'd be tempted to think I'm nervous from how I can describe the room, but when I'm in that room, I'm never nervous. I know Greg has my back. I sit in that room, and I tell him about all my problems, my complications at school with ADHD (Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder) and such. He smiles and tells me it'll be okay. I sit in that room for about 45 minutes, but it's calming, and time goes by fast when you're enjoying it. I have a deep conversation as the clock ticks down further and further until it's time to finish. At the end of the day, I feel entirely relaxed and refreshed; collected and renewed.

As Maya Angelou, the respected poet and activist said, "I think a hero is any person really intent on making this world a better place for all people." In the end, Greg is a real life hero. He has dedicated his one life on this Earth toward an utmost amazing cause. He has pulled countless people from the pits of emotional distress other than me. He has lived a beautiful life constructed of helping others, constructed artistically like a beautiful church's stained-glass window, and I am absolutely, 100 percent grateful to be able to say...

Greg, my therapist, is my Michigan Hero.



FOLLOW YOUR DREAMS

Detroit, Michigan: a city filled with baseball games, concerts, and huge corporate buildings. Yet this was not true of the city 30 years ago. My dad, who was born and raised in Detroit, didn't grow up in the bustling city of today. He grew up in a neighborhood where a person could not walk down the street without being stunned by the sound of gunshots or being asked for money. His parents were avid smokers and didn't care much about what accomplishments their kids made. So, he really didn't have the best of role models. But he still became my role model.

My dad started working at age 10, which is a very young age to start a job, but he worked hard because he wanted to live a better life than his parents. He spray-painted addresses on the driveways of homes for five dollars per house. At such a young age, my dad had an obvious entrepreneurial streak. He had a unique drive and passion to do everything with excellence. Following high school, he attended college and paid for his bills and tuition completely by himself. He majored in marketing and advertising and graduated with a degree. A couple of years later, advertising became a lackluster job for him. He quit advertising and moved on in search of a new opportunity.

After marrying my mom, he wanted to start a campground, just like her parents had done. They found one, but it was run down and looked like it had been deserted. No grass grew, and there was little greenery. It had one rustic cabin and no play structures. But, where other people saw nothing at all, my dad saw an opportunity. Taking a chance, he bought the campground on a loan. Multiple people told him that his dream was pointless or stupid. More people told him that his business would never be successful, and that it would fail quickly. My dad didn't listen and pressed on.

One of my dad's biggest supporters in his life was his dad. Even though he wasn't around for much of my dad's childhood, he always told my dad to follow his dreams. Sadly, in 2018, his dad died of a seven-year long fight to cancer. My dad was grieving a lot over the loss and eventually consulted a therapist, which was hard for him to do. He still gets sad about it every so often, but he has learned how to remember him with happiness. I could never imagine losing a parent or trying to come to terms with their death. With a newfound determination, he worked to make the campground better than ever. Years later, he and my mom now own a successful business together.

In the end, my dad is my hero because no matter how many challenges he has faced, he has always found a way to persevere and work hard. He is an amazing entrepreneur, and he always inspires me to follow my dreams.



MY MICHIGAN HERO

Maya Angelou once said, "I think a hero is any person really intent on making this a better place for all people." My grandpa is my Michigan hero because he makes Michigan better for many people, myself included. He has served his community as a firefighter, supported agricultural research, and been a part of conservation efforts. Not only does he always help others, but he is always there for me. For all these reasons and more, he is a hero.

After living and working in my hometown of Berrien Springs, my grandpa decided that he wanted to give back. So, he became a firefighter at the age of 38. He helped with many rescues. Once, he had to quickly design a harness to lift an unconscious man out of a tunnel. From car accidents to house fires, he was always ready to lend a helping hand. My grandpa has also helped train other people to be firefighters. He worked as a firefighter for many years, risking his life to serve his community. While he isn't a firefighter right now, he is on our township's fire board, where he helps make decisions about how resources are used. He has given his time and effort to make the community better.

My grandfather also worked as a farm manager for Michigan State University at SWMREC (Southwest Michigan Research and Extension Center.) His main job was to help researchers with projects that were designed to improve Michigan's agriculture.

One thing they do is help determine what varieties of fruits and vegetables grow best in our state. Also, they work on controlling pests and invasive species. If that isn't making Michigan a better place, I don't know what is.

My grandpa's parents bought 58 acres of land around Selkirk Lake in Kalkaska, Michigan. The land there is very special. There are five to six distinct ecosystems, and there are several types of rare plants, such as pitcher plants and lady slipper orchids. After their parents passed away, my grandpa and his siblings decided to enroll that land in a conservation easement. That means the land cannot be developed or farmed; it is preserved. Those rare species will always have a habitat and will still be there for future generations to enjoy.

My grandpa has come to almost all of my home volleyball and softball games, and that is no small feat. He has taught me how to make maple syrup and taken me on countless golf cart rides. Most importantly, he is always there to listen to me. He is there for me in so many ways, and that is something that I am very grateful for.

My grandpa's efforts have spread from the bottom of the mitten to the top. His life has improved the people of my community, the products of my state, and the future of my planet. He has helped make me into the person I am today. My grandpa makes the world around him better, and he is my hero.



MY MICHIGAN HERO

My soccer coach is more than just a coach. He's a happy person who helps make my life simpler and more efficient. My coach's name is George Moni. He is an amazing person with tremendous knowledge for the game and for helping us as players become better people. He knows how important our growth as young athletes is but, even more, he knows how important we are as people. He has taught me how to remain calm in tight situations on the field and in real life. He gives me the mental strength to get through those struggles. George Moni is my hero because he makes the game of soccer and my life more simple.

My coach has been in pro soccer and has been involved in Europe where things aren't handed to you. When he was a young man, he had to work for recognition by his coaches and his teammates. He has told us that if you want to continue to play this beautiful game, then you are going to have to put in more work than your other teammates who are competing for the starting spot on the team.

When my team lost a game that we were dominating, my coach told us that in America we focus on the result of the game, when we should be focusing on the quality of us as players and as a team. We should focus more on whether we were better than the last time we stepped onto the field. We can also use this advice for our daily lives by treating others the right way and not worrying about what other people think about us. I think this is how we should think and not overthink what we are called to do by God. My coach is my hero because he is one of the reasons for who I am today.

A hero is someone who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities. I would say George Moni fits those qualities because of the work he has put in when he was in Europe playing soccer and when he was in Michigan teaching it. He told us that he has been coaching many generations of soccer, and he notices when a soccer player has a strong mentality and a willingness to learn and become a better soccer player. He coaches us and tells us to "play simple," meaning don't overthink the situation, play the way you face, and have trust in your teammates. I like this advice because it teaches me not to overthink life and the struggles it provides, but to do things the right way. If that's treating people with respect or giving someone a compliment; it all has a good effect. As a player on his team, I have realized how much I have learned from him on the field and in my life. This is why George Moni is my hero.



LOIS

I was running through wet grass barefoot, holding my backpack in one hand and my socks and shoes in the other, when I stopped to smile and wave to my neighbor. It was early in the morning, and we were late again, but it was impossible for me to be upset when such a joyful old lady waved to me.

Lois is one of those people who can make your day with just one wave. She is always so consistent and hard working. Every morning she wakes up, probably just before the sun, and walks down our road. Most of the time she's with her friend (whose name also happens to be Lois) and comes out even in the cold. If we don't make it out of the driveway before she walks past our house, we know that we're late. Lois never seems rushed; she always has time to look at the new flowers we plant and to say good morning to our dogs. The sight of Lois walking along the road makes me slow down and appreciate the little things in life.

Lois, being about 90, still has a garden, but to make it easier for her to care for, she has her plants each in their own little bucket. Her garden is always tidy, and I wonder how much time it takes her to water all her plants. She is so industrious and when you look at her garden you can see that. Lois's love for plants also extends to animals. She has a bird feeder which is never empty and is always surrounded by birds. We've heard her tell us stories of the different birds that she has seen in her yard, and the different types of food that she has set out to get them to come. When you see how much she cares about birds, you can assume how much more she must care about people. Another great thing about Lois is that though she's consistent, she is also unexpected. One time the sole of her shoe was starting to fall off and she was explaining how she was going to fix it with Super Glue, when this old lady bent over and touched her toes to show us where her shoes were damaged. It completely shocked me that Lois could touch her toes because very athletic people I know can't! Another thing is that I assumed that Lois no longer drove, but one day I saw her drive down our road! And not only was she driving, but she was driving a big, old, tan pick-up truck!

My favorite thing about Lois is her attitude toward life. The way she always has the time to see everything and smile at all. My hero is always around when I need her to show me how to slow my life down and take the time to notice all the good.

TOP 10 WINNERS CELEBRATING AT OUR 2023-'24 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 the 172 schools that participated in the **2023-'24 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

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

AGBU Alex & Marie Manoogian School, Southfield

1st place - Lorin Dakessian
2nd place - Lavan Yatooma
3rd place - Tanya Bahnam

Akron-Fairgrove Junior/Senior High School, Fairgrove

1st place - Mary Potter
2nd place - Sophia Harmon
3rd place - Jaya Terbush

All Saints Central Middle School, Bay City

1st place - Arabella Dengler
2nd place - Nickolas Potvin
3rd place - Brenner Gansser

Aspen Ridge Middle School, Ishpeming

1st place - Riley Hietikko
2nd place - Jeremiah Tobias
3rd place - Cliona Solomon-Lundwall

Assumption School, Belmont

1st place - Avery Clark
2nd place - Cecelia Rybicki
3rd place - Elise Savickas

Athens Jr./Sr. High School, Athens

1st place - Aayla Chivis
2nd place - Michael Corbin
3rd place - Rahnae Casamassina

Auburn Hills Christian School, Auburn Hills

1st place - Aiden Abernathy
2nd place - Faith Morgan
3rd place - Alyssa Ledbetter

AuGres-Sims Jr/Sr High School, AuGres

1st place - Charlotte Ming
2nd place - Wayne Freeman
3rd place - Elizabeth Bennett

Avondale Middle School, Rochester Hills

1st place - Marco Tremonti
2nd place - Kelsey Peterson
3rd place - Jersey May

Bangor Middle School, Bangor

1st place - MyLi Griego-Carter

Bath Middle School, Bath

1st place - Calvin Gunn
2nd place - Antonio Romero
3rd place - Kalyne Proctor

Bay City Academy, Bay City

1st place - Zoey Kuras
2nd place - Desiree Schuetz
3rd place - Tyce Lee

Bedford Jr. High School, Temperance

1st place - Owen Straub
2nd place - Nolan Gambino
3rd place - Kennedy Varner

Berrien Springs Middle School, Berrien Springs

1st place - Molly Boven
2nd place - Persephone Tusciuk
3rd place - Westin Harmon



Bethany Christian School, Troy

1st place - Savana McCallister
2nd place - Jonathan Shamoon
3rd place - Micah Florendo

Beverly Hills Academy, Beverly Hills

1st place - Jena Mabrouk
2nd place - Perla Harati
3rd place - Aya Alhousseini

Big Rapids Middle School, Big Rapids

1st place - Tasia Dombak
2nd place - Krew Bowlby

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Boulan Park Middle School, Troy

1st place - Alex Smith
2nd place - Kashvi Prabhakar

Britton Macon School, Britton

1st place - Lillian Cockrell
2nd place - Jayda Risek
3rd place - Tristin Gillentine

Byron Center Christian School, Byron Center

1st place - Allison Spaak
2nd place - Jill Zondervan
3rd place - Jonathan Youngs

Capac Junior-Senior High School, Capac

1st place - Camilla Dobbyn
2nd place - Olivia Williams
3rd place - Deiny Luz Morales
Montoya

Carman-Ainsworth Junior High School, Flint

1st place - Delaney Robins
2nd place - Jessie Hahn
3rd place - Landon Loewen

Carrollton Middle School, Carrollton

1st place - Aiden Brobecker
2nd place - Jayden Howey
3rd place - Melody Hall

Cedar Springs Middle School, Cedar Springs

1st place - Morgan Marshall
2nd place - Catriona Van Sweden
3rd place - Camryn Miller

Central Academy, Ann Arbor

1st place - Yusra Ebrahim
2nd place - Anhar Kehla
3rd place - Farida Kahla

Charlevoix Middle School, Charlevoix

1st place - Ella Boss
2nd place - Breanna Forrester
3rd place - Greyson Olsen

Chesaning Middle School, Chesaning

1st place - Fiona Monroe
2nd place - Bella James
3rd place - Alexis Theile

Chippewa Middle School, Okemos

1st place - Catherine Colby
2nd place - Lillian Klomp
3rd place - Isla Koehler

Christ Lutheran School, Stevensville

1st place - Brennan Koehn
2nd place - Karissa Measel
3rd place - Paul Liebich

Christ the King Lutheran School, Sebewaing

1st place - Easton Ryan Newmann
2nd place - Ally Jane Sweetman
3rd place - Paige Rebecca Fiebig

Coleman Community Jr/Sr High School, Coleman

1st place - Kendall Allen
2nd place - Parker Klopff
3rd place - Sara Husted

Columbia Central Middle School, Brooklyn

1st place - Makenna Denney
2nd place - Miranda Goings

Cramer Junior High, Essexville

1st place - Carissa Rondeau
2nd place - Alexis Sayers
3rd place - Gavin Brey

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Crescent Academy International, Canton

1st place - Yusra Farha
2nd place - Nora Khuja
3rd place - Jenna Abu-Zama

Davis Middle School, Hillsdale

1st place - Alivia Martin
2nd place - Jaiden Fisher
3rd place - Ellie Griffiths

Dowagiac Middle School, Dowagiac

1st place - Savannah Kurzhal
2nd place - Riley Huff
3rd place - Gabriella Graham



Dutton Christian Middle School, Caledonia

1st place - Liz Alferink
2nd place - Malachi Vande Streek
3rd place - Olivia Teipel

Dwight Beach Middle School, Chelsea

1st place - Madison McGregor
2nd place - Emma Busch
3rd place - Anastasia Moser

E.F. Rittmueller Middle School, Frankenmuth

1st place - London Jaco
2nd place - Anna E. Wenburg
3rd place - Jadyne Young

Eagle Crest Charter Academy, Holland

1st place - Abigail Seanthaveesouk
2nd place - Alisa Chung

East Jordan Middle School, East Jordan

1st place - Sienna McLeod
2nd place - Caris McKinnon
3rd place - Roen Olson

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

1st place - Olivia Brown
2nd place - Trever Woodchisky
3rd place - Leah Fisher

Edenville SDA School, Edenville

1st place - Micah Warner

Emmanuel Lutheran School, Dearborn

1st place - LaKura Jackson
2nd place - Aleiza Rice

Engadine Consolidated Schools, Engadine

1st place - Emmi Hatch
2nd place - Edward Franckowiak
3rd place - Cassidy Russell

Evart Middle School, Evart

1st place - Mallory Miller
2nd place - Sophia Naranjo
3rd place - Bella Riggelman

F.C. Reed Middle School, Bridgman

1st place - Kristyne Schuring
2nd place - Abby Douglass
3rd place - Kaylin Pinkowski

Gaylord Middle School, Gaylord

1st place - Peyton Titus
2nd place - Josie Bensinger
3rd place - Alivia Pineda

Genesee Christian School, Burton

1st place - Alexander Strickert

Gladstone Middle School, Gladstone

1st place - Taylor Plimpton
2nd place - Ava Goodman
3rd place - Caleb Stempki

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Goodrich Middle School, Goodrich

1st place - Ethan Robb
2nd place - Jaxson Iafrate
3rd place - Alisyn Raether

Grace Christian Academy, Grand Rapids

1st place - Fiona McKendrick
2nd place - Esther Theiss
3rd place - Trevor Schipper

Grand Haven Christian School, Grand Haven

1st place - Kristin Schmitt
2nd place - Lucy Ostric
3rd place - Jude Proctor

Grass Lake Jr/Sr. High School, Grass Lake

1st place - Karter Grossman
2nd place - Vivian Vitale
3rd place - Wyatt Sondergeld

Grosse Pointe Academy, Grosse Pointe

1st place - Lexie Donaldson
2nd place - Lillian Henderson
3rd place - Harris Hawkins

Guardian Lutheran School, Dearborn

1st place - Caleb Mangiapane
2nd place - Kennedy Beck
3rd place - Delaney Madigan

Hanover-Horton Middle School, Horton

1st place - Alexis Hunter-Houser
2nd place - Renee Rodriguez
3rd place - Raina Jacobson

Harbor Springs Middle School, Harbor Springs

1st place - Hadley Flynn
2nd place - Lillian McShannock
3rd place - Makayla Jo Beach

Hart Middle School, Hart

1st place - Grace Tucker
2nd place - Ellie Gross
3rd place - Rhezylynn Shafer



Hartland Middle School at Ore Creek, Hartland

1st place - Tily VanderMeulen
2nd place - Amelia Salinas
3rd place - Olivia Kolke

Heritage Christian Academy, Kalamazoo

1st place - Gabriel Conley
2nd place - Sophia Antkoviak
3rd place - Blake Farley

Holland SDA School, Holland

1st place - Finley Bergman



Holt Junior High School, Holt

1st place - Mari Parker
2nd place - Devyn Berg
3rd place - Anabelle Dalton

Holy Family South Campus, Rochester Hills

1st place - Catherine Ballor
2nd place - Anthony Brubaker
3rd place - Ella Szalach



Holy Ghost Lutheran School, Monroe

1st place - Szasha Rose
2nd place - Seth Holliday
3rd place - Joseph Bergmooser

Holy Name Catholic School, Escanaba

1st place - Kyle Smith
2nd place - Emma Parlato
3rd place - Sarah LeMire

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Holy Name School, Birmingham

1st place - Charlotte Parent
2nd place - Molly Conroy
3rd place - Bobby Smith

Holy Trinity School, Comstock Park

1st place - Morgan Willick
2nd place - Adam Antor
3rd place - Sophia Perez

Homer Middle School, Homer

1st place - Jessie Wolf

Howardsville Christian School, Marcellus

1st place - Hadley High
2nd place - Peace Gardner
3rd place - Claire Brewer

Immaculate Conception Catholic School, Ira

1st place - Samantha Winkle
2nd place - Eryka Newcomb
3rd place - Avery Whitenight

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Grand Rapids

1st place - Riley Neilson
2nd place - Reese Tallman
3rd place - Bella Kakaty

Immanuel Lutheran School, Saginaw

1st place - Rowen House
2nd place - Joey Brockett
3rd place - Landon Munger

Island City Academy, Eaton Rapids

1st place - Tiya Feldpausch
2nd place - Gabby Pickworth
3rd place - Elijah Dennis

Jefferson Middle School, Monroe

1st place - Connor Dubke
2nd place - Audrey Camilleri
3rd place - Mikyah Pribyl

John Paul II Catholic School, Lincoln Park

1st place - Sophia Barsodi
2nd place - Kristopher Tran
3rd place - Hayden England

Juniata Christian School, Vassar

1st place - Charlie Loney
2nd place - Devon Childs
3rd place - Caleb Feldman

Lakeville Middle School, Otisville

1st place - Wyatt Roberts
2nd place - Case Fraley
3rd place - Austin Barry

Lakewood Middle School, Woodland

1st place - Evelyn Koets
2nd place - Peyton Schipper
3rd place - Audrina Tobin

Lenawee Christian School, Adrian

1st place - Brecken McCarty
2nd place - Lylah Hassenger
3rd place - Zoe Cherfan

Ludington Area Catholic School, Ludington

1st place - Alexis Kriesel

Mancelona Middle School, Mancelona

1st place - RaeLynn Manning
2nd place - Edryonna Godin-Fowler
3rd place - Jaila Craft



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Maple Valley Jr. High School, Vermontville

1st place - Will Whitford
2nd place - Nolan Hoefler
3rd place - Ron Bracy

Mar Lee School, Marshall

1st place - Jack Warner
2nd place - Makharia Williams
3rd place - Zavire Langston

Marlette Jr./Sr. High School, Marlette

1st place - Ryan Thomas
2nd place - Ely Bell
3rd place - Rihanna Keys

Marysville Middle School, Marysville

1st place - Peyton Simmons
2nd place - Brooklyn Goodin
3rd place - Andrew Cottone

Mason County Eastern Junior/Senior High, Custer

1st place - Lilly O'Connor
2nd place - Dawson White
3rd place - Kyan Leisure

Montabella Middle School, Blanchard

1st place - Kirstyn Cummings
2nd place - Bailey Kauffman
3rd place - Kain Karcher

Most Holy Trinity School, Fowler

1st place - Leah Thelen
2nd place - Marianna Simon
3rd place - Thomas Spitzley

Nellie B. Chisholm Middle School, Montague

1st place - Guy Stadelman
2nd place - Ash Phillips
3rd place - Richard France

New Morning School, Plymouth

1st place - Emma Edwards
2nd place - Zach Johnson
3rd place - Drew Brunskole

Niles SDA School, Niles

1st place - Juliana Payne

North Huron Schools, Kinde

1st place - Parker Delgado
2nd place - Wyatt Kavanagh
3rd place - Jett Zimmerman

Novi Christian Academy, Novi

1st place - Tyson Washington
2nd place - Evan Klish
3rd place - Maximiliano Fritz

O.J. DeJonge Junior High, Ludington

1st place - Scarlett O'Hearn
2nd place - Aletta Weisenreder
3rd place - Ainsley Albrecht

Our Lady of Victory School, Northville

1st place - Brody Craig
2nd place - Nola Parr
3rd place - Lily Zengerle

Our Lady Star of the Sea School, Grosse Pointe Woods

1st place - Benjamin Clor
2nd place - Gavin Hickman
3rd place - Diana Grano

Our Shepherd Lutheran School, Birmingham

1st place - Joshua Orth
2nd place - Kory Wilson
3rd place - Brooklyn Pratt

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Oxford Middle School, Oxford

1st place - Hailey Costigan
2nd place - Gavin Bayes
3rd place - Sophia Novak

Parchment Middle School, Parchment

1st place - Asher Simpson
2nd place - Shangara Bentley
3rd place - Mackenzie Kyles

Peace Lutheran School, Saginaw

1st place - Kayla Radde
2nd place - Natalie Habitz
3rd place - Lillian Cottrell

Petoskey Middle School, Petoskey

1st place - Hannah Begos
2nd place - Alexa Wang
3rd place - Braden Fralick

Pewamo-Westphalia Junior High, Westphalia

1st place - Amelia Winter
2nd place - Lauren Downes
3rd place - Logan Farmer

Plymouth Christian High School, Grand Rapids

1st place - Keenan Klaasen
2nd place - Kaylee VantZelfde
3rd place - Alyssa Sporte

Resurrection School, Lansing

1st place - Ada Allstott
2nd place - Genevieve Gulcok
3rd place - Jack Fountain

Reuther Middle School, Rochester

1st place - Haleymarie Parker
2nd place - Lily Bonscour
3rd place - Safa Khattak

Rockford Christian School, Rockford

1st place - Jack Oostema
2nd place - Natalia Oren
3rd place - Ali Stark

Rogers City Area Schools, Rogers City

1st place - Lucy Haselhuhn
2nd place - Elizabeth Berryman
3rd place - Keri Coolman

Romeo Middle School, Romeo

1st place - Chantal Palazzolo
2nd place - Alyssa Acha
3rd place - Liam Christensen

Ruth Fox Middle School, North Branch

1st place - Grant Caswell
2nd place - Kaydence Bolender
3rd place - Trenton Wierzbicki

Sacred Heart Academy, Mt. Pleasant

1st place - Allie Dejong
2nd place - Rocco Collamati
3rd place - Constantine Collings

Saginaw Arts and Sciences Academy, Saginaw

1st place - Diego Zekpeda Barcenaz
2nd place - Audette Anderson
3rd place - Abigail Unobagha

Saint Thecla Elementary School, Clinton Township

1st place - Cate Booms
2nd place - Novena Sawa
3rd place - Rosalie Warner

Salem Lutheran School, Owosso

1st place - Evee Forkel
2nd place - Nevaeh Rose
3rd place - Meriel Baker



PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Salina Intermediate School, Dearborn

1st place - Yasmeen Altatah
2nd place - Yousuf Abusaleh
3rd place - Laila Naji

Saline Middle School, Saline

1st place - Abigail Cohoon
2nd place - Evalynn Perez
3rd place - Alex Gravatt

Sault Area Middle School, Sault Ste. Marie

1st place - Claire Parks
2nd place - Raylend LaVictor
3rd place - Olivia Obreiter

Spring Lake Middle School, Spring Lake

1st place - Siddalee McMasters
2nd place - McKenzie Pope
3rd place - Charlotte VanHarkin

St. Anselm School, Dearborn Heights

1st place - Precious Mbata
2nd place - Logan Milby
3rd place - Cody Elliott

St. Anthony of Padua School, Grand Rapids

1st place - Connor Luttrell
2nd place - Abigail Worrell
3rd place - Riley McKiever



St. Augustine Catholic School, Kalamazoo

1st place - Dakota DeVito
2nd place - Precious Ongwela
3rd place - Sydney Raseman

St. Charles Borromeo School, Greenville

1st place - Taylor Smith
2nd place - Patrick Amidon

St. Charles School, Newport

1st place - Evan Mullins
2nd place - Kenneth Knudsen
3rd place - Marla Hayden

St. Charles School, St Charles

1st place - Gabriella Frollo
2nd place - Lilly Szappan
3rd place - Parker Crawford

St. Clare of Montefalco School, Grosse Pointe Park

1st place - Shelby Jones
2nd place - Paige Orange
3rd place - Eric Hood III

St. Elizabeth Area Catholic School, Reese

1st place - Brooke Benson
2nd place - Raeleigh Sherman
3rd place - Candence Ellison



St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, Potoskey

1st place - James Holt
2nd place - Roanna Salmon
3rd place - Lan Tran

St. Gerard School, Lansing

1st place - Jacob Fuller
2nd place - Lincoln Lewis
3rd place - Lydia Marsh

St. Joan of Arc School, St. Clair Shores

1st place - Jasmyn Roberson
2nd place - Kaylee Schaefer
3rd place - Leo Bueti

St. John Lutheran School, Fraser

1st place - Lukas Snell
2nd place - Leah Wulff
3rd place - Caroline Pruzinsky

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

St. John Lutheran School, Rochester

1st place - Grace Zellen
2nd place - Lido Knapp
3rd place - Rosabelle Smith

St. John School, Fenton

1st place - John Boike
2nd place - Taylor Zinn
3rd place - Cole Sawatzki

St. John Vianney Catholic School, Wyoming

1st place - Brissa Olvera
2nd place - Ella Bury
3rd place - Molly Stobierski

St. John's Lutheran School, Bay City

1st place - Olivia Adair
2nd place - Megan Pretzer
3rd place - Joshua Priem

St. John's Lutheran School, Grand Haven

1st place - Oliver Shoemaker
2nd place - Alice Collins
3rd place - Nicole Kaines

St. John's Lutheran School, New Boston

1st place - Evelyn Otter
2nd place - Mykennah Hoppert
3rd place - Sawyer Thompson

St. Joseph School, Lake Orion

1st place - Madeline Sharum
2nd place - Brandon Bieszki
3rd place - Nevaeh Vieira

St. Lorenz Lutheran School, Frankenmuth

1st place - Ethan Tysick
2nd place - Jacob Clark
3rd place - Carter Hecht

St. Mary Catholic School, Pinckney

1st place - Addison Asaro
2nd place - Rylee Burke
3rd place - Charlotte Hays

St. Mary School, Spring Lake

1st place - Jessie Whitmore
2nd place - Skylar Hunt
3rd place - Magnolia Weiss

St. Mary's School, Lake Leelanau

1st place - Lillian Herman

St. Matthew Lutheran School, Walled Lake

1st place - Gavin Trudeau
2nd place - Grace Gammou
3rd place - Gracie Stewart

St. Patrick School, Ada

1st place - Alana Ryan
2nd place - Kieran Albert
3rd place - Kaelum Dial

St. Patrick School, White Lake

1st place - Grant Erickson
2nd place - Evie Doyon
3rd place - Nina Sharrak

St. Paul Catholic Elementary School, Grosse Pointe Farms

1st place - Jackson Miller
2nd place - Preston Simmons
3rd place - Lea Abdul-Nour

St. Paul Lutheran School, Northville

1st place - Gabriel Taverner

St. Paul Lutheran School, Stevensville

1st place - August Steinke
2nd place - Allison Moore
3rd place - Lillian Kramp

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

St. Paul's Lutheran, Ann Arbor

1st place - Jihyun Ko
2nd place - Charlie Holst
3rd place - Amelia Lorch

St. Peter Lutheran School, Macomb

1st place - Raeann Lafave
2nd place - Jayden Frame
3rd place - Giuliana Saputo

St. Peter's Lutheran School, Big Rapids

1st place - Colton Prudhomme

St. Pius X School, Southgate

1st place - Walker Torolski
2nd place - Jacob Borowicz
3rd place - Cierra Soltis

St. Robert School, Flushing

1st place - Jaxson Massimino
2nd place - Cooper Massimino
3rd place - Eden Ralbusky

St. Stanislaus School, Dorr

1st place - Mark Skrycki
2nd place - Claire Fifelski
3rd place - Timmy Clarey

Sturgis Middle School, Sturgis

1st place - Gabriela Huerta
2nd place - Drayk Lampe
3rd place - Paige Miller

Superior Central School, Eben Junction

1st place - Aiyana Taskey

Swan Valley Middle School, Saginaw

1st place - Emily Krantz
2nd place - Jensen Pike
3rd place - Logan Bledsoe

The Chatfield School, Lapeer

1st place - Riley Peters
2nd place - Madison Blitz
3rd place - Rowen Wolinski

Trinity Lutheran School, Bay City

1st place - Breanna Perez
2nd place - Kensington Jammer
3rd place - Brooklyn Sherry

Trinity Lutheran School, Berrien Springs

1st place - Emily Carr
2nd place - Issac Hoover
3rd place - William Chapman

Trinity Lutheran School, Clinton Township

1st place - Lea LoDuca
2nd place - Morgann Leon
3rd place - Alaina Hurley

Trinity Lutheran School, Reese

1st place - Julia Hargash
2nd place - Mia Parks
3rd place - Ella Adair

Trinity Lutheran School, St. Joseph

1st place - Antonio Macerata
2nd place - Victoria Boughner
3rd place - Isla Hendrickson

Trinity Lutheran School, Utica

1st place - Addison Farmer
2nd place - Tegan Krieger
3rd place - Emilaee Kiraly

Union City Middle School, Union City

1st place - Ellie Canniff
2nd place - Jasreman Kaur
3rd place - Renesmee Lincoln

PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS *and* LOCAL WINNERS

Unionville-Sebewaing Area Middle School, Sebewaing

1st place - Ashlynn Arnold
2nd place - Blake Bruce
3rd place - Case Gruehn

University of Detroit Jesuit Academy & High School, Detroit

1st place - Daniel Stella
2nd place - Liam Murphy
3rd place - Alec Wernis

Webberville Middle/High School, Webberville

1st place - Katelyn Kubiak
2nd place - Tayven Bucchanon
3rd place - Nevin Landry

West Iron County Middle School, Iron River

1st place - Nickalas Perlongo
2nd place - Seth Oberlin
3rd place - Kinsley Economy

White Middle School, Allegan

1st place - Jacob Clearwater
2nd place - Alexis McCoy
3rd place - Brayden Sternberg

Whittemore-Prescott Junior High School, Whittemore

1st place - Jessey Obst
2nd place - Hunter Clayton
3rd place - Leia Jarrell

Zion Christian School, Byron Center

1st place - Eliza Bierling
2nd place - Kayla Meeuwse
3rd place - James Lanning

Zion Lutheran School, Auburn

1st place - America Gower
2nd place - Stella Kukla
3rd place - Luke Bright

2023-'24 AGENT SPONSORS

Thanks to the 34 Farm Bureau Insurance agents listed below, 40 Michigan schools had the privilege of being sponsored during the 55th contest year.

Agents who sponsored multiple schools appear in **Red**.

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THANK YOU!

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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(517) 679-5411


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