

THIRTY-EIGHTH "CELEBRATION OF YOUTH" ESSAY CONTEST
CONTEST ANNOUNCEMENT 2026

SPONSOR: **Global Harmony Through Personal Excellence, Inc.**
Our web site is: globalharmonyexcellence.org

THEME: Speaking up can be difficult. Write an essay about a time when you spoke up, or didn't speak up, to right a wrong for yourself or for another person. Share your thoughts and feelings. What happened? What did you learn about yourself?

RESPONSE DATE: Essays must be received by **Tuesday, May 12, 2026.**

ELIGIBILITY: Students in grades 4-9 in a DC Public or Public Charter School.

GUIDELINES: * 300 - 500 words (grades 4-6). Typed or neatly handwritten in the student's own handwriting. (If typed, we prefer Word or google doc.)
* 500 - 750 words (grades 7-9). Must be typed in easy-to-read font.
* **Each entry is required to have the following information:**
 student's name, grade level, and the name of the school;
 student's or parent's telephone number and email;
 the name and email or phone number of a teacher to contact.
 New: Signed statement by the student verifying authorship of the essay. We want the students' own words, not AI.
* Essayists must address the theme using their own true experience.
* All entries become the permanent property of the sponsor.
* Entries may be submitted by email (preferred), regular mail, or hand delivery. Email entries must be sent to the correct grade level address given below and received by the due date above.

PRIZES: Winners in each category (grades 4-6 & 7-9) will receive the following cash awards:

First Place - \$400 and certificate
Second Place - \$375 and certificate
Third Place - \$350 and certificate
Fourth Place - \$325 and certificate
Fifth Place - \$300 and certificate
Honorable Mention - \$150 and certificate

Winners will be announced by June 1, 2026.

Winners will be required to submit a video of themselves reading their prize-winning essay aloud. A current picture and a video reading of the contest essay will be

requested from all awardees. Details will come when the finalists are announced. Prizes will be mailed after June 12. Awardees and their essays may be publicized and may be published in a forthcoming book. Pictures, essays, and videos of the students reading their prize-winning essays may be posted on our website and other places to honor the students and their success. (Do not enter, please, if you are not willing to make a video of yourself reading your essay aloud, submit a picture, and have your essay showcased.)

JUDGING: This contest values thoughtful reflection and honest self-expression about oneself and one's life. Entries will be judged on personal writing skills, originality of example, genuineness, clarity, adherence to guidelines, spelling, and neatness. Essays found to be written by AI will be disqualified. Spell check and editing tools are permissible, but we require that your story, experience, and reflection come from you.

ADDITIONAL AWARDS: In addition to the prizes listed above, a minimum of twenty-five students will receive an **Award of Special Mention (\$45)** mid-to-late June. Priority will be given to students from schools not represented in the winner and honorable mention categories.

QUESTIONS CONTESTANTS CAN ASK THEMSELVES BEFORE SUBMITTING:

Did I sign a statement stating I wrote my essay? Does the length of my essay follow the guidelines? Have I included my name, grade level, and all other required information?

COACHING SUPPORT: Alpha Epsilon Rho, the UDC Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society, provides coaching support for this essay contest to students who request it. Contact Dr. Krauthamer at (202) 274-5626 or hkrauthamer@udc.edu.

TO SUBMIT your essay by email: Use the emails below ONLY to submit your essays. Teachers submitting essays for their students, please submit essays individually or in groups of no more than 6 essays. Put the name of the student in the subject line of the email or on each attachment. (We prefer essays in Word or Google Doc. format in final form rather than PDF. Essays become the property of the organization.)

Grades 4 to 6, use this email: grades4to6.38@globalharmonyexcellence.org

Grades 7 to 9, use this email: grades7to9.38@globalharmonyexcellence.org

SUBMIT by mail or in person: Dorothea and Jim Brady, Global Harmony Through Personal Excellence, 3925 Livingston Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20015-2921

To contact Dorothea or Jim Brady, call (202) 244-1682 between 8:00am and 8:30pm or use Dorothea's email dorotheabrady@globalharmonyexcellence.org.

THIRTY-EIGHTH "CELEBRATION OF YOUTH" ESSAY CONTEST

March 18, 2026

Dear Principals, Teachers, and all Dedicated Supporters of DC students,

We would be honored to have your students participate in the thirty-eighth "*Celebration of Youth*" essay contest. **Our tradition is also our goal: to recognize winners from schools across the city.** The heart and wisdom in the stories of young people help us better support them. Through personal reflection, students can see themselves in a new light. This writing competition is **open to all young people in grades 4-9 who attend a DC public school or public charter school.** Please let eligible students know about the opportunity.

We are proud that students from all sections of the city have been past winners, and that so many schools have participated over the years. Good writing skills are important, but **our contest highly values authentic expression. Winning essays show** self-reflection; they express emotional depth or reveal humor. They are rich in detail and personal examples from the student's own life. A personal experience written in an honest, clear, and heartfelt style, can advance in this contest.

To encourage participation, **teachers might make the contest an "extra credit" opportunity.** They can assist with brainstorming and suggest final edits. Or they can direct students to coaches at the UDC chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society. In partnership with UDC, coaching assistance is offered to participants who may want help with ideas, clarity, grammar, or overall guidance. UDC's **Quality Coaches** are eager to help young people and can also support teachers who may not have the time themselves to assist students in this contest. **Students may also enter the contest independently.**

The essay contest due date is Tuesday, May 12th, 2026. Winners will be announced by June 1. Please read the **Contest Announcement** for contest requirements; this is also posted on our web site. (globalharmonyexcellence.org) **To be competitive, essays must adhere to the guidelines.**

A NEW requirement this year is a simple honor statement from each student verifying authorship of the essay. We want their own words and their true experiences in the essay. Essays found to be written by AI will be disqualified. Spell check and editing tools are permissible. The **author's verification statement can be short. An example is: I, their name, give my word that I wrote this essay myself and did not use AI or other unauthorized assistance. Sign and give a date.** It can go after or before the essay. It is not included in the word limit count.

The younger generations are amazing and can use support. We hope that your students will participate in the 38th "*Celebration of Youth*" essay contest. The contest volunteers, coaches, and judges contribute their time and talents to support the children. There are respect and support for DCPS/DCPCS children. **Thank you, educators, for the inspiring work you do every day. You are exceptional human beings. We wish you and your students much success and well-being in all you do.**

With respect, thankfulness, and anticipation,

Dorothea and Jim Brady, Rebecca Carroll, Neena Read, and Molly Sloss

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