

# Award Winners 2022

Essay  
Contest



Creative  
Arts  
Competition



# 2022 Contest Theme: Community

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[www.palmbeachfellowship.net](http://www.palmbeachfellowship.net),  
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on upcoming programs and events,  
including the 2023 Essay Contest  
& Creative Arts Competition!

## About the Contest

All Palm Beach County students are invited to participate in the annual contest in the categories of art, writing, music, and videos. Art submissions include drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, posters, and collage. The writing category includes poetry and essays, while music covers songs with lyrics as well as instrumental compositions. Often the entries received create an expansion of a category, as happened this year with videos that included spoken word performances.

Cash prizes are awarded to the winning students. In addition to first, second, and third place, other good work is acknowledged with honorable mentions and special judges awards. Many teachers find that the inspiring topics selected each year such as Advocacy, Hope, Liberty, Courage, and the 2022 theme, Community, often make good starting points for class assignments and discussions, and they encourage their students to explore and interpret the concepts through artistic expression.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Students' schools and grade levels in this booklet reflect what they were at the time of the contest deadline in spring 2022, not what they are for the current 2022-2023 school year.

## About the Fellowship

Founded in 1993 by a handful of interfaith friends concerned about the religious discrimination in the area, the Palm Beach Fellowship of Christians & Jews is dedicated to promoting fellowship, understanding, and respect among all religions and cultures; to bringing people together through education, dialogue, and interaction; and to addressing issues rooted in intolerance, anti-Semitism, and unjust discrimination. The Fellowship aims to encourage kindness, civility, and seek common ground in our dealings with each other and the world around us.

## Thank you, supervising teachers!

We appreciate the guidance and encouragement given by all the teachers to all the students who participated throughout Palm Beach County, not just for the contest, but throughout the year!

The following teachers of winning students received a small cash prize for classroom supplies:

Chrissie Ferguson, *The Benjamin School*  
Francesca Coniglio Finck, *Rosarian Academy*  
Anne Franzen, *The Benjamin School*  
Megan Gilmore, *St. Mark's Episcopal School*  
Steve Gordon, *Western Pines Middle School*  
Hannah Harris, *Suncoast High School*  
Mary Judith, *Oxbridge Academy*  
Flint Keller, *Rosarian Academy*  
Sarah Knudtson, *Jupiter High School*  
Allison Mair, *Pine Crest*  
Bonnie McCarthy, *Bak Middle School of the Arts*  
Ashley Monastra, *Bak Middle School of the Arts*

Kerry Mulligan, *William T. Dwyer High School*  
Leanne Pietrangolare, *Woodlands Middle School*  
Taylor Schneider, *Rosarian Academy*  
Kimberly St. John, *Rosarian Academy*  
Jonathan Stellman, *Oxbridge Academy*  
Denise Thompson, *Wellington High School*  
Chrisianthy Vargo, *Olympic Heights High School*  
Ray White, *Glade View Elementary School*

*"It was really kind of you to give to teachers as well. I am starting a new class this year for our autistic students, I am so happy to put this money towards my classroom. Thank you for all you do."* - Chrisianthy Vargo, Olympic Heights High

▼ 1st Place – Essay (grade 6)

**Liv Heurich**

*The Benjamin School*

A community is a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals, according to merriam-webster.com. Communities are people you can relate to and rely on through thick and thin. An unknown author once said, "Family is like music, some high notes, some low notes, but always a beautiful song." This quote reminds me how my parents and family support me. Family will always be there for you, no matter any situation.

Communities make us feel good and give us a sense of belonging. I felt belonging when my family celebrated my accomplishments. Two years ago, I testified to pass a bill for an organization called Girls Who Code. Girls Who Code is an organization to try to close the gender gap in technology and coding. I was only ten years old at the time and I was very nervous to speak before lots of people. I remember it was my turn and I felt like I was going to throw up. I looked at my mom and she gave me a smile. She reassured me that everything was going to be great. I spoke my speech and they even complimented me on how I spoke to them. After, my mom hugged me and we met my dad outside and we talked about how it went. I felt loved in that moment.

After we left, my dad took me to get ice cream and my mom went home. I was confused why my mom did not come with us since she had nothing to do that day. By then it was almost dark so my dad and I drove home. When I got to my neighborhood I saw lots of cars in the road. We pulled into my driveway and walked inside. It was unusually quiet in my house. Suddenly, lots of people jumped out of their hiding spots and revealed themselves. It was my family members, friends, neighbors and loved ones. I was so surprised that my mom planned this for me. I had so much fun that night hanging out with my cousins and friends. My family has always been there for me, and this was one example.

During the party, my loved ones supported me after one of my biggest accomplishments. I saw many of my family members I have not seen in a long time. I could not believe that everyone came to celebrate with me. I have learned many things from my family and one of them is selflessness. Sometimes I have trouble showing it, but I always try to be kind. Being with family teaches one life skills and unconditional love.

Family is one of the most important things in life. One can rely on your family for everything. Family is a source of strength. They help us to learn how to create meaningful relationships with others. They influence good behavior and friendships. Family members help one become a better person and friend. Communities will always be there for you, the good and the bad.

▼ 2nd Place – Essay (grade 6)

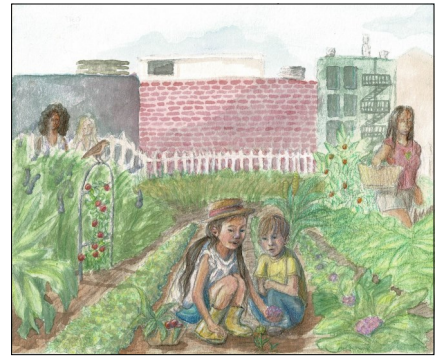
**Chessa Sponsky**

Imagine being sick or alone, and someone gives you aid. Helen Keller, a disability rights advocate, discusses the importance of community when she states, "Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much." In other words, when people work together, they can accomplish more than when they are alone. For example, we can better aid others by working together. By coming together as a community, individuals can better help others, like when my sixth grade class came together to help the people of South Sudan.

First of all, community is essential in order to support others. A community is a group of people who share similar characteristics. Communities can assist other people or animals both inside and outside of their community when they need it the most. It can also make people feel happier when they are a part of a community and can better support other people. When someone is going through a difficult time, having the support of one's community can be life-changing. Overall, a community is essential in helping others.

For example, my St. Mark's sixth grade class came together as a community to raise money for the organization, Water for South Sudan. My sixth grade summer reading project was to read the book, *A Long Walk to Water* by Linda Sue Park. This book explained how people in South Sudan are in need of clean water. An organization called Water for South Sudan is raising money in order to build and rehabilitate wells in South Sudan. In order to support this organization, my sixth grade class is selling water and Capri Suns at school. Our goal is to raise 3,000 dollars for a well rehabilitation. We are also raising awareness about this wonderful organization, as well as planning future fund raising events. Overall, our community is raising money to help support another community in need, the people in South Sudan.

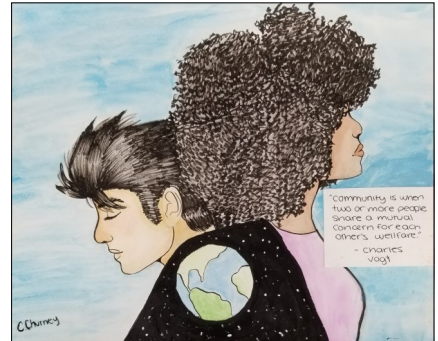
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▲ 1st Place – Art (grades 9-12)

**Sofia Johnson**

*Jupiter High School*



▲ 2nd Place – Art (grades 9-12)

**Cassidy Churney**

*William T. Dwyer High School*



▲ 3rd Place – Art (grades 9-12)

**Mikayla Scott**

*The Benjamin School*



▲ Honorable Mention – Art (grades 9-12)

**Leana Spada**

*The Benjamin School*



▼ 2nd Place—Essay (grade 6)

**Chessa Sponsky**

*Continued from page 3*

To continue, this experience has greatly impacted me. Besides making me feel honored to potentially give the people of South Sudan access to clean water, it has also shown me how when people come together as a community, they can accomplish so much. Furthermore, it has taught me that I am very lucky to have access to clean water and I will always be grateful to have the ability to help others who are less fortunate than we are. This experience has taught me the importance of community, and how serving others can have a life-changing impact.

In conclusion, working together in a community can help many people. The power of community is shown when a group of people with similar characteristics come together to help others. My sixth grade class has shown the importance of community by selling water to support Water for South Sudan. This experience has taught me that the impact of community can have on others and the power of service. The whole world needs to work together as a community to help other people.

▼ 3rd Place—Essay (grade 6)

**Soleil Demers**

*The Benjamin School*

Community makes this world a better, safer, and happier place. Community is a group of people living in a particular local area, according to vocabulary.com. A community is a place where people help one another. Andrew Lutts, the CEO of Net Atlantic, once said, "The community of humanity is actually a support system that secures, reinforces and empowers each person in it." The quote reminds me that the people in your community are there for one another. The West Jupiter Community Group, executive director Edna Runner, is a donation and education center. If a person in your community is struggling, always help them up from their knees when given the opportunity. Communities are meant to bring each other up. To build a strong community can help each other express themselves, feel safe, and feel secure if going through hard times. When going through hard times a community can help make things easier.

Every Christmas, my family and I have a tradition of going to the Edna Runner Tutorial Center and helping out less fortunate families in Jupiter. Edna Runner would give us a family in need to help out. My family and I would receive their Christmas list and go shopping for their family. Sometimes we would personally go to their homes and give them their gifts. But if they were unreachable, or if they were sick, my family would get a big red sack and fill it with presents for the children and adults. Along with the presents my family and I would buy them a Publix gift card. It is an amazing feeling to see the children's faces light up with joy when they see the gifts. The parents or grandparents are always so thankful and blessed for all the gifts. This experience helps my family and I feel more connected to ourselves and families in need. Community is a place where people feel like family, and it makes one feel happy. If one is going through hard times, the people in a community are there for one another and it's a place to talk and express one's feelings.

My family and I became a part of this community because it is a productive and heartwarming experience to see children light up with joy and happiness. It is really an awesome feeling to know that the family we just helped can have an amazing Christmas. The children there can also have a delicious meal because of the Publix gift card. This organization helped me realize how lucky I am to have a great family, food on the table, and clothes on my back. Helping other makes me thankful and grateful for what I have.

Christmas is really just a time for giving and caring. This donation and education center really is just a place for giving and kindness. Edna Runner is an amazing woman and has created such a beautiful community. This community has made me a better person and have a better outlook on life. I am very thankful for this community.

Communities make this world a better place. It just welcomes people in and is a place that expresses oneself. Community is a place where people help each other and help those who are going through hard times in their life. Community is a place to feel safe and welcome.

▼ Honorable Mention—Essay (grade 6)

**Mason Coles**

*The Benjamin School*

A community, as defined on [oxfordlanguages.com](http://oxfordlanguages.com), means a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, or goals. A community can be many things such as a sports team, a club, or one's family. Helen Keller once stated that "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." This quotation reminds me of a community that I was in which was an environmental club in Italy. This community has helped the members and me become better people and learn how, together, we can create change and help others around us.

Every summer, I go to Italy, and my family stays on a beautiful island called Capri. In Capri, the sea is crystal blue. However, there has been a lot of pollution on the island over the past decade, so my friend, Luca, started an environmental club to help stop the pollution. When he told me that he started the club, I instantly wanted to help.

When I joined the club, I did not know how much of a change I would actually make. Luca is from the island, and he cares about it deeply. Once I joined, Luca and I started recruiting others who were interested in joining and were also on the island every July. We would meet three times a week. Then, we would start looking for bottles, bags, and more on the beaches and in the water. After that, we would go into the main town to pick up cigarettes and more trash. This community helped me learn that I can help the environment.

Over the past months, Luca and I have been planning on how we can recruit more members to our club by texting and calling each other. Although this club is only composed of Luca, myself, and a few others, we will try to recruit more people this summer. We are planning to make signs this summer, and we are also going to explain to people about our purpose. So far, we have already collected 350 pounds of trash! This summer, we plan to collect even more! I learned that it can help anyone greatly if they join a community. It is important for one to join a community so that one can learn important lessons that will help them forever. This club has taught not only the members and me but also my family, that anyone can make a change.

This community has impacted me greatly, and it also showed me that anyone can help others or the environment around them. This community has also taught me the important traits of compassion, kindness, and responsibility. I have learned that communities help one another every day. Even though communities can be any different size, any community can make a difference.

▼ 1st Place—Poetry (grades 5-7)

**Cecelia Hansen**

*Rosarian Academy*

The black bird's feathers glisten,  
His wings sway with the wind,  
He calls,  
Long and steady,  
He waits,  
As if expecting someone,  
They come by the hundreds,  
Different sizes,  
Different shapes,  
Different colors,  
But the same,  
The same,  
They fly together,  
Helping one another,  
They hear a call in the distance,  
Their community has grown.



▲ Honorable Mention—Collage

**Audrey Thompson**

*Wellington High School*

▼ Special Judges Award—Collage

**Jaxson Brucker**

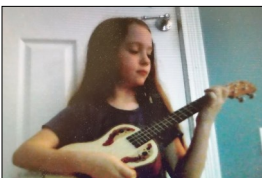
*Rosarian Academy*



► 1st Place—Music (Song with Lyrics)

**Orion Vincent**

*Rosarian Academy*



◀ Honorable Mention—Music (Song with Lyrics)

**Megan Stetson**

*Rosarian Academy*

▼ 2nd Place—Poetry (grades 5-7)

**Grace Bischoff**

*Rosarian Academy*

Support and safety  
Giving us a light of hope we can see faintly  
A sense of connection  
Bringing us together and growing our affection  
We have an influence on each other  
To look out for each other and to always do better  
As we build connections, we are willing to grow our unity  
Community  
Sharing what we love  
While listening to God above  
We are learning each day  
To better our ways.  
From Environmental issues to Discrimination,  
To our brothers and sisters crying out in Ukraine,  
Seeing each other and our world with the eyes of God,  
Always creates solutions.  
As we build connections, we are willing to grow our unity  
Community  
Through our experiences with COVID for many days,  
We understood our need for each other and did not delay.  
Prayers, donations, and service abounded,  
While compassion and unity evidently surmounted.  
As we build connections, we are willing to grow our unity  
Community  
Accepting people who we might not know  
Because they are the ones we should love the most  
Side by side, hand in hand,  
Individuals change the world  
When they take a stand.  
As we build connections, we are willing to grow our unity  
Community  
What's the point of a community  
If we can't live together in unity?  
We are meant to build each other up  
Not break each other down  
Then rise together after each up and down  
I have my voice  
And I will use it  
To stand up for what is right  
We are all part of something bigger than ourselves  
We have the ability to build something that compels  
Create a place where we love can delve  
As we build connections, we are willing to grow our unity  
Community!



▲ Special Judges Award—3-D Art

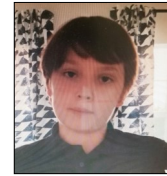
**Charlotte Bischoff**

*Rosarian Academy*

► 1st Place—Music (Instrumental)

**Caleigh Little**

*Suncoast High School*



▲ Special Judges Award—Video (individual)

**Jack Freitas**

*Rosarian Academy*

▼ Honorable Mention—Poetry (grades 5-7)

**Emma Han**

*BAK Middle School of the Arts*

A community is a place  
Where people play and live  
A community  
Is a place  
Where people take and give  
Our community  
Is a place  
Where joy is spread with love  
And expanded as we grow  
And grow  
Our community  
Is a place  
That everyone cares  
It is a place  
That we all share  
This community  
Was made for us  
We strive as a group  
We never give up  
Nor ever lose  
No matter who we are  
No matter how we strive  
We are who we are  
And we always strive  
Together



▲ Special Judges Award—Video (group)

**Nick Ferik**

**Liam Hardyman**

**Dane Campbell**

*Rosarian Academy*





▲ 1st Place – Art (grades 5-8)  
**Ethan Forman**  
*Oxbridge Academy*



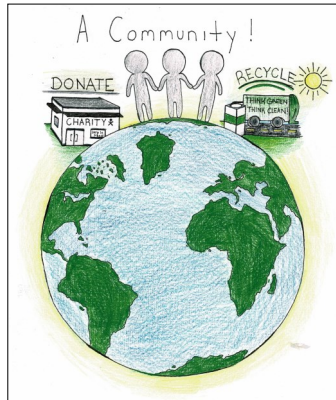
▲ 2nd Place (tie) – Art (grades 5-8)  
**Angela Pereira**  
*BAK Middle School of the Arts*



▲ 2nd Place (tie) – Art (grades 5-8)  
**Mia Chaves**  
*Rosarian Academy*



▲ 3rd Place – Art (grades 5-8)  
**Aiden Vega**  
*Woodlands Middle School*



▲ Honorable Mention – Art (grades 5-8)  
**Stephanie Ni**  
*BAK Middle School of the Arts*



▲ Honorable Mention – Art (grades 5-8)  
**Selena Cacamese**  
*Woodlands Middle School*

▼ 3rd Place – Poetry (grades 5-7)  
**Benjamin Bagatell**  
*BAK Middle School of the Arts*

Pride, Power,  
 Manifestation,  
 Our community is our home,  
 Our town,  
 Our nation,  
 In times of peril, we look unto thee,  
 That is the power of community.  
 The tyrant moving ever closer,  
 The tempest swells,  
 And then takes over  
 The masses quake, the end is near,  
 Now hope is gone, too faint to appear.  
 But rising up from the ashes, gray,  
 We live to see another day,  
 Some have so much, some so little,  
 No one should play second fiddle,  
 Protest  
 A small price to pay,  
 To ensure our safety, in every way,  
 We seek to form a perfect union,  
 Whether you keep kosher, halal,  
 Or take communion.  
 The strength of our community,  
 we can clearly see,  
 From each citizen,  
 denomination,  
 in every creed,  
 We strive to find value,  
 But if one thing is true,  
 There is value,  
 in me and in you.

▼ Honorable Mention – Poetry (grades 5-7)  
**Vivienne Angle**  
*Rosarian Academy*

Today we are faced with a tremendous opportunity  
 To join and support our local and global community  
 Through times of struggle we fight ourselves  
 We must get to where the issues delve  
 Especially with what we are facing globally  
 People need to practice diplomacy  
 War is taking place in the country of Ukraine  
 The nightly news shows fellow humans in pain  
 It is time for serious amounts of unity  
 With everyone in and out of our vicinity  
 Extending outward actions of true compassion  
 Has fallen out of today's latest fashion  
 Our community's real attraction  
 Is that it provides emotional satisfaction  
 We must stop this current trend of inaction  
 It is our duty to take care of everyone's welfare  
 Throughout their times of grief and despair  
 Because a community has tremendous fellowship  
 It can be a powerful bargaining chip  
 Globally we should enforce a peaceful attitude  
 That would create a change of significant magnitude  
 We must dig down deep in our souls  
 And take on significant community roles  
 If we want to achieve our lofty goals

▼ Honorable Mention – Poetry (grades 5-7)  
**Naja Milovanovic**  
*BAK Middle School of the Arts*

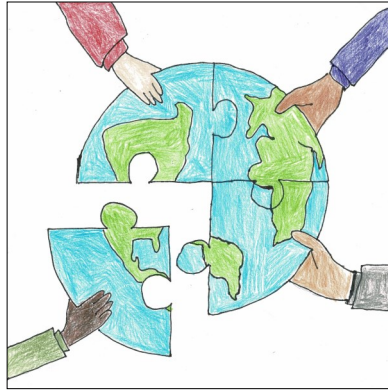
A bond that can only strengthen  
 Together, it leaves evil shaken  
 Allowing the good in people to awaken  
 The power of community  
 A displayance of unity  
 Together, it gives everyone an opportunity,  
 Providing a sense of immunity  
 The power of community  
 This is the way,  
 Together, it greatly outweighs  
 A life of disarray  
 The power of community  
 Glittering with liberty  
 Together, fighting negativity  
 And opening up a path for versatility  
 The power of community  
 It sparkles in the night  
 Together, everyone has the right  
 To have this gracious delight  
 The power of community  
 Bringing together generations  
 Together, it is a celebration  
 Of everyone's participation  
 The power of community  
 Ensuring security and care  
 Together, this force sparks up as a flare  
 We need to make people aware of  
 The power of community





▲ Honorable Mention –  
Art (grades 5-8)

**Aya Jaddaoui**  
*Woodlands Middle School*



▲ Honorable Mention –  
Art (grades 5-8)

**Anthony Prainito**  
*Woodlands Middle School*



▲ Special Judges Award – Art (grades 9-12)

**Delaney Mimick**  
*Olympic Heights High School*



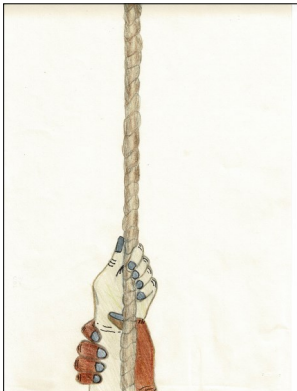
▲ Honorable Mention –  
Art (grades 5-8)

**Ainslie Theiss**  
*Rosarian Academy*



▲ Honorable Mention –  
Art (grades 5-8)

**Mason Beller**  
*Woodlands Middle School*



◀ Honorable Mention –  
Art (grades 5-8)

**Annabella Belraez**  
*Woodlands Middle School*

▼ Special Judges Award –  
Poetry (Haiku)

**Mattias Skantze**  
*The Benjamin School*

We're all together  
Our common community  
No one left alone

▼ 1st Place – Poetry (grades 8-9)

**Dylan Donigan**  
*Oxbridge Academy*

I am the light moving through my community,  
Seeking to touch another soul,  
To make a friend,  
And double our light together,  
Acting as a magnet,  
Creating strength, loyalty, and love,  
Illuminating our human existence,  
The need for connection,  
To see one another,  
No matter our religion, color, or gender.  
Multiplying our light;  
Lets my community shine so bright,  
All darkness fades away  
And we are one.

▼ Honorable Mention – Poetry (grades 8-9)

**Ella-Ross Lang**  
*Rosarian Academy*

A strong community is the only way  
To make best use of every day  
When we connect with people from all around  
We will never feel lost - only feel found

Whether the community is at church, sports, or school  
Mutual respect is the predominant rule  
Shared concern for the welfare of others  
Define this group of sisters and brothers

A church community is a sacred thing,  
That brings people together when they pray and sing  
Everyone has the same goal, of connecting with God  
Bonds begin to form that cannot be flawed

My last major community is my soccer team  
Anytime I see my teammates, I see smiles beam  
At the very first practice, I knew our bond would begin  
Now every game, we work together to win

Our little team community has a strong connection  
Whether we are correcting each other or showing love and affection,  
Each person brings their own contribution to the team  
To make us like patchwork, tied together - no seam

My school community is very close and connected  
Where everyone is respected and protected  
All the teachers and students, big and small  
Can all confide in each other, with just one call

There are so many communities, far and wide  
With people young and old, that stand by your side  
So, open your eyes and you will see  
The importance of building a strong community!



▲ Special Judges Award –  
Spoken Word

**Gabby Fulton**  
**Luca Harohilara**  
**Gabriel Pineda**  
*Rosarian Academy*



▲ Special Judges Award –  
Spoken Word

**Tessa Brown**  
**Isla Brawn**  
**Caroline Yone**  
*Rosarian Academy*

▼ 2nd Place – Poetry (grades 8-9)

**Chase Pariseleti**

*Rosarian Academy*

Come together for the greater good  
Raise and unite our neighborhood  
Follow your true and given heart  
Bring neighbors together, no longer apart  
Make a difference where there is no hope  
Communities provide the tools to cope  
Solve problems for those who are alone  
The troubled, the hopeless, and confidence blown

Develop a mutual, common respect  
And find any way to truly connect  
Love and care regardless of nation  
Humility acts as inspiration

No judgment should be had  
Make ways to fight the sad  
Tear down the great divide  
Put our differences aside

All people are created equal  
Our children need a sequel  
This is what our Constitution states  
It is time to care for all our mates

Everyone counts in every case  
We need to stand up for every race  
Politics can change with a shift in the weather  
Communities remind us to come together

▼ Honorable Mention – Poetry (grades 8-9)

**Mercer Ward**

*Rosarian Academy*

Community is not just a place  
Community can simply be a face  
Whether you're tall, short, round or thin  
You can make someone's day,  
Make them happy from within

Anywhere you are  
Wherever you may be  
You can rely on your community  
Everyone can agree

Community can be anything  
Such as a place, a person, or a feeling  
You can count on it when you're down  
To turn your frown upside down

After school one day  
I felt sad and alone  
And I let out a sorrowful moan  
I went to practice and saw my teammates  
And when I saw their faces I was ridden of weight  
My day was bright  
I felt my mood flip  
I can never thank them enough for helping me get a grip

My family is always there for me  
That is something on which my siblings and I agree  
I always feel home when they are around  
Without them I fear I might breakdown

My family's hearts  
And teammates' smarts  
As you can see  
Are the most perfect community to me

All communities are very different  
None are insignificant  
Everyone matters! That's what I was taught  
And at the end of the day  
No one should ever feel as though they want to run away

▼ 1st Place – Essay (grade 7)

**Isabella Day**

*Rosarian Academy*

A humanity without community is like a beaded necklace without string. Without something that connects and unites us, we are just scattered "beads" with no purpose. But once strung, connected together, we are something beautiful and meaningful. "Alone, we can do so little; Together, we can do so much" said Helen Keller, who was an amazing woman and changed this world for the better. She couldn't have done it alone. It is the community that she was a part of that helped her thrive and do great things.

Originally, the word community was used to define a group of people who lived together. That was a community defined by place. Today, community means so much more. Some communities are joined because of shared beliefs, interests, or passions: art, religion, sports. Communities joined by the action of people trying to bring about change: non-profit or political organizations. Communities of practice: various professional organizations. And communities that are brought together by circumstance: refugees of war, natural disaster victims. Some communities are brief and some last a lifetime. But no matter the purpose, community is essential to our well-being. Communities are even more important in challenging times, it is the only way many people can move forward with their lives. When a family loses a loved one, their community comes together to support them through the hard times. But that also goes for times when we celebrate. It's always better to share the joy with someone. Communities give us a sense of belonging, which is something that we all need. It gives us purpose and helps us realize that our world is meaningless without relationships and the ability to help each other and lift each other up. It is a true gift to have found a community where one can feel supported and loved.

As I reflect on what community means to me, I think of all the people I have around me, who help me be better every day: my friends, my family, and especially my teachers. As I reflect on what I've learned from my teacher while writing this essay and working on my art piece, I came to realize that the main understanding behind all of this is that alone we feel empty, but together, we allow ourselves and one another to be the best version of ourselves. A person learns from others in the community and can do a lot more in terms of properly giving back to the community they live in. It is like a circle of life, you get something and you give something and the world becomes better for everyone.

Being a part of a healthy community can genuinely lift a person up and allow them to be their best self. By doing this, our world is improved and bettered - and life is made to be better!

▼ 2nd Place – Essay (grade 7)

**Coley Surovek**

*Rosarian Academy*

Communities provide a sense of belonging, support mental and physical health, and create a powerful network to achieve common goals.

Communities uplift and heal our spirit with friendship and provide a sense of belonging that all humans crave. In the past, people did not have to describe a community because they were living effortlessly in them. They belonged to church groups, knew everyone in their neighborhood, and were active participants in local organizations. The pandemic has made it transparently clear that the virtual communities that social media have created cannot fill the empty space where loneliness dwells. People need face to face human connection and communities provide a safe space where they can share their passions with other like-minded individuals. Communities provide many arms to support and embrace us through times of despair.

Over the years, many studies have proven the health benefits of active involvement in a community. Community members have experienced less stress, memory loss, and quick recovery from illness. Research completed by Brigham Young University suggests that poor social connection can be more harmful than obesity to an individual's overall health. Most people are unaware that we are at the highest "living-alone" rate in an entire century. As a result of this rate researchers predict an epidemic of loneliness.

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▼ 2nd Place – Essay (grade 7)

**Coley Surovek**

*Rosarian Academy*

*Continued from page 8*

A community takes strength and combines it with other's strength to complete the tasks at hand. Margaret Mead, an American Anthropologist, stated that, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has." This quote resonated with me because it inspired me to do something to better my community. Many kids my age are apathetic to their surrounding communities. They get caught up in their own social bubble, and leave the heavy lifting to the adults. It is time that young adults took a vested interest in helping their community achieve a common goal that will improve the livelihood of their community. Some of the ways that kids can make their communities better is to build a sustainable community garden that will make an impact in three significant ways. First, the garden provides produce for the local underserved areas. Next, a garden is a great way to bring people together. A garden needs planting and a consistent weeding, which will organically create meaningful ways that people in the community can work together. After the harvest, the gardeners prepare a meal that the entire community can come together to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

It is time for individuals to get up off their couches, shut the Netflix off, and participate in their communities to create a better environment for future generations. The benefits of being involved in a community provides people with a sense of security, overall well being, and the chance to be a part of something greater than themselves. Community involvement opportunities and health benefits need to be advertised and marketed to the Palm Beach Community.

▼ 3rd Place – Essay (grade 7)

**Valentina Saenz-Daza**

*BAK Middle School of the Arts*

"A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common" is the definition given when you search up the word, community. Something so simple, yet so complex. In a world and country where diversity makes us special, why do we simplify issues and categorize people? Today, we are going to investigate more and see why we treat each other this way and what we can do about it.

To be frank, it is confusing to think about why we treat others so unfairly. I, along with many of you, have grown up in a two-faced country. A country where we are told that everyone is equal, but we are treated like we are different. Why do we do this? Sometimes people have gone through awful past experiences. They are suffering, and to let all these strong emotions out, they reflect them in the way they treat others. Sometimes, it can also be because others are different compared to us. We have to admit, we are scared of unfamiliar and new things or people. It bothers us not to be in our comfort zone. Therefore, we end up treating people of other races, ethnicities, or beliefs in general, differently. Oftentimes we minimize people, completely ignoring that we are all part of this community. And that, I hope we can all agree, is deplorable.

However, not everything has to be negative. Every problem has a solution, just sometimes it is not as easy to find. It is crucial to understand that we as a community, whether as a country, state, county, city, or family, all work towards a common goal. Living in a place where we are all truly equal, not just because the law says it, but because we understand that we owe that to each other. Another step towards our solution is to put yourself out there more. After all, we are all part of the same community. So do not be scared to talk to people that are different from you. If you disagree with their beliefs, that is okay. Listen, and do not be focused on proving that you are right.

Acceptance is something that we all struggle with. So why not put in a little bit of effort to make the world a better place. The Declaration of Independence says, "We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal." Those words are not there for decoration, but rather to spread a message to our country. Telling us that it is time to put the "unity" in community.

▼ 1st Place – Essay (grade 8)

**Mark Albury II**

*Rosarian Academy*

Building a strong community is extremely, important, and it creates positive changes in people's lives both mentally and physically. Supportive communities promote the growth of positive, personal characteristics, help those inside and outside of the body, and set an example for others to follow.

Members of a thriving community are generally friendly, hard-working, and bond with others both inside and outside the group. These traits promote cooperation, companionship, and respect. Those inside of it will feel compelled to keep it this way due to the positive effects societal involvement has in their lives, such as a better physical appearance of the town and a more supportive and kinder atmosphere. As the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, "Our goal is to create a beloved community and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives." I can even say from my own experience that this is true. I lived in The Bahamas for eleven years of my life, in a small settlement of about three-hundred people on the island of Man-O-War Cay. There, many of its residents exemplified these traits all the time, and it affected all aspects of one another's lives cyclically. As the positives attributes are reinforced, the community itself grows stronger with time.

Healthy communities promote the growth of hospitality, friendship, social skills, and cooperation. These skills allow those living in such places to do tasks, improve their surroundings, and aid others with efficiency and kindness. My own experience in the National Junior Honor Society at Rosarian Academy and contributions to myriad outside-school community projects, prove that everyone has something of value they can share. As an unemployed eighth-grader, I have cleaned up beaches, helped disabled children, and even organized a gleaning event for my school with the help of my administrators. By giving back to the needy, prosperous communities affect opportunities and positive changes, otherwise thought impossible. Strong communities exemplify ideal standards for those outside of it, which in turn causes others to strive for these standards. This is explained by the fact that a thriving body of people sets an example for others. In turn, standards rise, as some groups will meet the new standards of the original.

As Civil Rights activist Coretta Scott King said, "The Greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members." I can say that I have seen the standards of my old school in The Bahamas, Man-O-War Primary, become a robust educational institution due to the standards set by another school called Hope Town School. Altogether, the presence of one flourishing group or place can cause the development, growth, and strengthening of other groups.

Strong communities make a huge difference in the lives of those living in and outside of them. They create positive changes in people's lives by causing exponential growth in people's good character traits, promote betterment of surrounding communities, and set an example for others to follow.

▼ 2nd Place—Essay (grade 8)

**Matthew Linton**

*Western Pines Middle School*

"Some people think they are in community, but they are only in proximity. True community requires commitment and openness. It is a willingness to extend yourself to encounter and know the other."  
- David Spangler

Community would usually mean a group of people in a specific area. However, a community is empty without the connections between people. Community comes alive when the community and its people positively affect each other. The geographical location is not the thing of importance. What matters about community is the meaningful connections between the people.

Firstly, more than proximity, people create community. Community is more than its geographic closeness to people. You can have neighbors be practically strangers to each other but have people across the globe be like siblings because of shared connections. People who enjoy retro Mario video games networking via the internet with other people who share similar gaming interest will build a strong video gaming community. One could grow in similar places from their formative years to adulthood with the same 14 people, yet if they do not have encounters they may never form community.

Next, the community you are in shapes who you are. A person's surroundings often change the way they act and interact. If one did a common activity with someone and years later, they run into each other, that shared experience connects them. People living in a community sharing schools, organized sports or even unexpected tragedy can develop similar strong characteristics that impact how they make life and career decisions. For example, a professional artist was once an amateur musician learning from a local community music teacher who instilled the love of music in them, shaping who they become as a performer. Children grow up to be impactful people because of their positive environment.

In conclusion, community is empty if not for connections. It doesn't matter if an area is densely populated with likeminded people; until they make meaningful connections with each other they aren't a community. Extending resources and sharing similar encounters with each other is how communities are formed, and you can strengthen your community and character by adding value to its members. You might make lasting connections along the way.

▼ Honorable Mention—Essay (grade 8)

**Sophia Santoro**

*Western Pines Middle School*

Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr. and Gandhi, all pretty well-known names. Well if you know who they are you probably also know their stories of how they became so successful. Honestly, it's probably because they knew the truth that they were stronger united rather than divided. The quote I always turn to for this discussion is from the bible, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. The verse says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken."

Having a strong community is extremely important no matter where it may be found because it makes us stronger as people. As stated on the website, [Dunmorepa.gov](http://Dunmorepa.gov), "We have communities in our friends, our families, our employment, our neighborhoods, and in so many other places. We find community in the sports teams we support, or the artists we enjoy, even the food that we like. Having a sense of community unites us." These places have infiltrated our lives and become a part of our day-to-day life as children and adults. Becoming united through our different communities allows us to become stronger separately from just our community strength. According to [betterup.com](http://betterup.com), "Participating in a community bonded by attitudes, values, and goals is an essential ingredient to enjoying a fulfilling life." As humans we all have a need to feel a part of something bigger than ourselves. Finding a community to help successfully fulfill this need allows us to be stronger as individuals.

Another way that a strong community is beneficial is because it allows for a much more pleasurable atmosphere in the world. Rev. James Bevel is a name that many may be familiar with, he led the children's march in Birmingham, Alabama. The whole purpose of the march was to use his surrounding community to help end racial segregation. Their strength as a community benefited people of color everywhere in getting the civil rights movement to be recognized. Another big use of a community to invoke social change is all the way back from the 1800's. According to [lisbdnet.com](http://lisbdnet.com), "They protested, saying that these taxes violated their rights as British citizens. The colonists started to resist by boycotting, or not buying, British goods." So because the early colonists realized that there was a change that needed to happen, they came together as a country which became their very large community to end it. Using a

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▼ 3rd Place—Essay (grade 8)

**Sebastian Lopez**

*Western Pines Middle School*

Community can mean many things. For one, it could mean a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. It can even mean a group of interdependent organisms of different species growing or living together in a specified habitat. The purpose of this essay is to write about the sense of community that was exhibited during the Holocaust. Despite all the evil that occurred in Europe during those times, the horrific circumstances that brought these people together also helped strengthen a real sense of community.

One great example of community that inspires me every day is the Jewish community during the Holocaust. Despite all the evil and destruction that was caused during the Holocaust the Jewish people still held their sense of community. Hanukkah is an important holiday for the Jewish people. This holiday celebrates the recovery of Jerusalem and rededication of the Holy Temple. During the Holocaust it might have seemed impossible to celebrate this holiday, however the Jewish community, while separated made use of their surroundings and still found a way to improvise. According to the article *Amid the Holocaust's Horrors, Many Jews Found Ways to Mark Hanukkah*, "From carving menorahs on stolen blocks of wood to creating makeshift wicks from scraps of fat and used loose threads, concentration camp inmates devised covert ways to celebrate the holiday." The perseverance of the Jewish community to celebrate Hanukkah in such a dark time is remarkable and incredible. The amount of courage to make light of the darkness is extraordinary. Using everything from animal fat and used threads to a stolen block of wood, the Jewish community persevered through those unprecedented times of the Holocaust and managed to celebrate Hanukkah.

One quote that really defines the Jewish Community was by Ellie Wiesel "Even in darkness it is possible to create light." This quote shows even in the toughest times of all; where a bullet was more valuable than a life. The Jewish community still found ways to unite over the celebration of Hanukkah. Even with the times these people were going through the Jewish community still found ways to survive and celebrate to give hope to each other. This is what community means to me; a group of people helping one another in times of darkness. The Jewish community during the Holocaust exemplifies this. During these grueling times people helped each other keep their faith despite their circumstances.

In conclusion, if there is one group of people that defines community the best it would have to be the Jewish community during the Holocaust. These people had been stripped of their life and freedoms and yet they still managed to lift each other up during these destructive times. This community went through genocide on the biggest scale known to man and yet they still managed to celebrate, lift each other up, and light up the darkness that was in the world. This display of community is one of the best examples in all of mankind.



► Honorable Mention – Essay (grade 8)

**Sophia Santoro**

*Western Pines Middle School*

▼ Honorable Mention – Essay (grade 8)

**Gwenavrye May**

*Western Pines Middle School*

Community: defined by people living in the same space or having certain traits in common. Is there more to the community than just the definition? "Great things are brought about and burdens are lightened through the efforts of many hands anxiously engaged in a good cause" - Elder M. Russell Ballard. What can people truly achieve in communities? Is growth possible in communities? Can tolerance be taught in communities?

To start, let's look at one community's achievements; the community around Shreveport. They realized that the historic features were unmaintained and were not taken care of. So they took the problem into their own hands. They organized people around the community to pick up trash or clean up important features. Through their effort, they are maintaining the beauty of their town (for more information go to Highland Park at reformshreveport.com). Now relatively, this is on a smaller scale. However, can the community work on a larger scale; take the Children's Crusade. Over 1,000 students stood up against racism in the South. Birmingham was one of the most racist places during the 1960s through 1970s. At the time Martin Luther King Jr. wanted to create a peaceful protest, but none of the adults volunteered when Dr. King said there was a chance they could go to jail. Unexpectedly, children volunteered. Dr. King did not want to use children, he feared they would get hurt. However, the children still took part in the march. From May 2-3, 1963, over 1,000 children left school early and ran to [the 16<sup>th</sup>] Street Baptist Church. The police ended up arresting every single child. This caused JFK, the current president, to [publicly support civil rights legislation, which led to] the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These small groups of communities banded together to make a change without violence can make a change. We have seen it happen before; creating a change without violence. Children that volunteered to take part got sprayed with water. Shouldn't this raise the question that the police have to have tolerance as well? When two sides have opposing views, shouldn't each side have tolerance? Communities are a collection of people with different points of view, yet they still get along with their differences. They are tolerant within their own groups. However, should violent actions be tolerated? Viewpoints certainly have been tolerated to an extent, but violence, how should that be handled?

A new definition of a community should be defined. Community: a group of people with common interests or goals who want to make a change by not using violence, but instead teaching tolerance. For the generation that will come after us, tolerance is an essential part of a community. However, keep this question in mind, should everything be tolerated?

▼ Honorable Mention – Essay (grade 7)

**Halo Felin**

*Western Pines Middle School*

What does community mean to you? What even is community? Community is a group of people that share a common thought of fellowship and goals. Community is everywhere, church, school, and even your own neighborhood. Those are examples of community all around you.

Working as a whole is better than working by yourself. Together you accomplish more rather than working by yourself accomplishing less. Having a powerful sense of community can make us feel like we are a part of something larger than ourselves. Helen Keller once said, "Alone, we can do so little; Together we can do so much." She is saying that as a whole we can accomplish anything. For example, one of today's community, "NOW" (National Organization for Women), takes action through intersectional grassroots activism to promote feminist ideals, lead societal change, eliminate discrimination, and achieve and protect the equal rights of all women and girls in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. The National Organization for Women operations have established the organization as a major force sweeping changes for women. That organization helps women to be equal. They work as a community to ensure that everything gets accomplished easily and simply. A community's goal is to accomplish a goal as a group.

The more creative and effective the community is the more ideas will start rolling in and the more successful the community will be. Ernesto Sirolli once said, "The future of every community lies in capturing the passion, imagination, and resources of its people." For instance, the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) is leading the fight for justice, equality, and equity for people of color. The NAACP is a civil rights organization as an interracial endeavor to advance justice for African Americans which was formed in 1909. The NAACP works hard to fight for justice and equality and so much more. They have been making accomplishments since 1909 and still are working harder to make a greater difference in our society.

Community has many different forms, community can mean different things, community can come in various ways. Community is truly something fantastic when you put your mind to it.

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community to make social change happen is a great example of how a strong community is important.

To sum things up, a strong community is necessary for everyday life. Whether it be a sports team, church, or neighborhood it is of great importance. A strong community allows for stronger individuals and a better social climate to grow up in. So no matter if you're a child or an adult get involved in a community because remember, three strands are always harder to break than one.

▼ Honorable Mention – Essay (grade 7)

**Charlotte Mills**

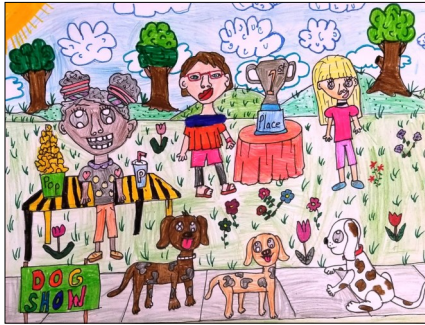
*BAK Middle School of the Arts*

Community is a spectacular thing that links us all together, it's a global force. But with what has recently been going on, today's communities may be a lot weaker than some may have thought. To strengthen a community internationally, one has to begin locally. Personally, I've found that the arts are a great way to connect people. Despite the difference in the type of art it remains a universally creative outlet to let ideas flow out of you and inspire others. Community is a touchy and complicated subject, considering most people scope out differences with others instead of looking for common ground. If the focus is switched to only the shared interests, then they may feel more of a connection. To illustrate, in an art school when students are walking in the hall passing each other the feeling of community is absent or lacking. But when their talents are being displayed the differences are no longer of importance.

Community is not excluding people or favoring one over another. Community is not only for a few. Community is everywhere, one has to look for it. Like the expression "nothing good ever comes easy." For some they may feel instantly accepted into a community, but for others it may be difficult and take a while. The connection and acceptance of multiple people is a natural concept that has been around for centuries. For example, in ancient Rome many people had been persecuted for their belief in a monotheistic religion. While under harsh circumstances those being oppressed had a reason to connect with others experiencing the same hardships. They soon began practicing their religion in secret and developed a symbol. Though some events are utterly catastrophic and horrible, that is usually when the biggest sense of community is felt. Similar to the expression that it is "both a blessing and a curse."

Helping your community isn't as daunting as it may sound. It has sort of a "domino effect" once someone does something to advance their community like starting a neighborhood library exchange or volunteering at a soup kitchen, not only does it help those who eat the soup or read the books, but the bystanders. The people watching from the sidelines may feel compelled or inspired to do something kind for the community as well. In turn, not only does being an active member of one's community aid the people directly affected, but the ones watching from afar. And along the way they may strengthen their own sense of community by being engaged in the community. Community starts when everyone does their share.

▼ Special Judges Award – Art Series  
 Glade View Elementary School



▲ Azza Abdelgader



▲ Audon Benitz, Jr.



▲ Oscar Boatwright



▲ Isaiah Green



▲ Madison Hale



▲ Azarra Otis



▲ Chrislande Savere



▲ Samiya Williams



▲ Samuel Williams, Jr.

▼► 3rd Place – Poetry (grades 8-9)  
**Savanna Osei**  
 Pine Crest School

I stand up  
 Survey the masses  
 As they surround me  
 The spice of culture threatening to drown me  
 in a vibrant wave  
 With stones in our hands  
 We begin paving the way forward  
 To our future  
 But now I realize  
 I begin sinking  
 Lagging behind  
 Rocks weighing me to the ground  
 And I can't help but think  
 Our road heading for a bright future  
 Is not only going forward  
 But  
 Down  
 Down  
 Down  
 Deep  
 Once we reach the light  
 We'll be too far down to see

The world is my community  
 All of its people are my own  
 But I think it is time to rise above  
 And I cannot do it all alone  
 So  
 Like minded people  
 Come, let's build a community of our own  
 Where every voice will be heard  
 Where every light will be shone  
 Because when I think  
 'Community'  
 I think of my voice being heard  
 I think of knowledge being gained  
 I think of culture being learned  
 When paving the way to the future  
 We shouldn't have to dig our way down  
 These words will pave the road instead  
 Joy will reign supreme  
 Pure and loud  
 Find your community amidst the chaos  
 Bask in the glory  
 Of being recognized  
 Being found  
 And when you at last see that luminous future  
 Let your cries of elation be the only sound



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