



Young Man's Essay Inspires Pentagon Repair Crews

continued from page 1

working on Pentagon renovations when the terrorist attack occurred and is now working to rebuild the Phoenix, the name given to the portion that was destroyed.

Gallagher's parents sent him Teman's winning *laws of life* essay after it appeared in the *Lima News*. His essay talked about the time he spent with his grandfather learning about what was inside his "big red toolbox."

The essay talked about the instruments in the toolbox and compared them to building pieces needed for a happy life. For example, wood represented Teman's faith in God, and the chisel represented his need to leave his mark on the world.

Teman recently received a letter from Gallagher saying that his essay had been distributed to subcontractors and placed on the bulletin board. Gallagher told Teman in the letter that as soon as he read the essay, he knew he had to share it with others.

"Your essay was enjoyed and appreciated by all who have read it here at the Phoenix Project," the letter read. "I am positive you have only begun to leave your mark on the world."

Gallagher also sent Teman a hard hat, a "Pentagon Attack" patch, a September 11 bumper sticker, and several pictures, including some of the limestone and of crews working on the project. Teman said he was shocked to receive the letter and memorabilia.

"I was shocked that a guy I had never met or even talked to would go through all this," he said. "I couldn't believe that someone working on something so important would think something I have done was so important."

"I never thought the essay would mean that much to anyone except my grandpa."

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Gallagher, who has lived in the Washington, D.C. area for twenty years, said the toolbox and carpentry analogy was something he and



Above: Aerial view of the Pentagon showing the Phoenix, the collapsed section of the building. Photo taken on September 14, 2001 by the Department of Defense.

others on the site could relate to, adding that the inspirational message has really helped them.

"They have been working around the clock, and the essay makes them reflect that there is a bigger purpose in life and that you have to make your mark, and maybe that mark is rebuilding the Pentagon," Gallagher said.

The project is expected to be done by this September 11. Teman and his family are hoping to visit Washington, D.C. to see the project and hopefully meet Gallagher. Teman is hoping his essay helps to let those working on the project know that people care about what they are doing.

"I'm sure it is crazy for them right now and I want them to see that there are still people out there who care," he said.

Ed.'s note: This year, more than 2,900 young people participated in the Lima Contest

happenings



In the first Uganda Contest sponsored by High Hope International, top finalist Diana Nsiimenta Bacwa, age sixteen, is awarded a bicycle as the prize for her essay entitled, "I used to boast"

Calling all US contests!

Do you know of a school or district where you live that demonstrates outstanding character education initiatives (like the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest)? If so, you may want to encourage the school/district to apply for the 2003 National Schools of Character award, a program of the Character Education Partnership (CEP) in Washington, D.C. Selected schools and districts receive a cash award of \$2,000, national recognition, and a featured position in CEP's National Schools of Character publication. Applications are due on December 9, 2002. For more information, call CEP at 800-988-8081 or 202-296-7743, ext. 10 or visit the CEP website at www.character.org.



New Contests In the works

Lexington County, South Carolina.

This fall South Carolina will officially become the 29th US state to launch the essay contest. *South Carolina Voyager*, a character education, language arts, and social studies magazine for middle school and high school students, will pilot the program in ten high schools in and around metro-Columbia. Organizers hope to involve 5,000 South Carolina students in the first year of the contest, and the winning essays will be published in the summer 2003 issue of the *South Carolina Voyager*, which is distributed to 30,000 teachers and students across the state.

Monterrey, Mexico.

This past spring the Jesse Helms Center Foundation piloted the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest at the Catarina Campus of Prepa-Tec High School in Monterrey. It was the first time that Mexican youth had an opportunity to take part in the program. The contest was a great success, and beginning in the fall of 2002, the Foundation will launch a significant *laws of life* initiative in Mexico. During the first year, four public and private high schools in Monterrey will start their own contests. In future years, the program will expand to all major cities across the country. ¡Bienvenido *Laws of Life* al México!

Palm Desert, California.

The first *Laws of Life* Essay contest in California's Coachella Valley will be launched this fall by the non-profit organization Valley Partnership through their Odyssey program. Odyssey is a structured character development curriculum that fosters social and emotional learning using a format of student dialogue and engaging writing activities. It is expected that up to four hundred ninth and twelfth grade students, who will be referred to Odyssey by Desert Sands Unified School District's Student Assistance Program, will participate in the contest.

Laws of Life on the Internet.

If you visit www.teenink.org, a popular website for young people, you can check out a brand new *Laws of Life* Essay Contest on the Internet called, "What Matters." The essay contest was developed by the Young Authors Foundation, publisher of the magazine Teen Ink, which is written entirely by young people. The contest is held on a monthly basis, and the final contest each year determines the year's best entry (and the author wins a \$1,000 prize). If you know a young person age twelve to nineteen who would like to participate in the essay contest online, send him or her to Teen Ink!

What Are the *Laws of Life*? What Are the *Laws of life*? What Are the *Laws of life*? What Are the *Laws of life*?

With the start of a new school year many of you are already planning for your essay contests, so we thought it would be interesting to take a look at how different contests interpret the "laws of life" concept. This summer we sent an email to the *Laws of Life* Listserv asking teachers, organizers, and sponsors, "What are the laws of life?" On these two pages you will find their answers, and you will also hear from Sir John's son, Dr. John M. Templeton, Jr., who shares with us his father's vision.

The *laws of life* are actually guidelines for living and as such must be stated specifically in sentence form: "Love thy neighbor," "Don't judge another man until you have walked three moons in his moccasins." Because there are thousands of ideas surrounding any single concept like love, those ideas must be delineated. What is it specifically about love that is a guideline for living? In order to guide, a course of action must be suggested. That requires more than a mere statement of a concept. To say "love" is a *law of life* gives no guidance. To say "Love thy neighbor" tells us exactly what to do.

—Rhonda Wilson directs the Palm Beach County, FL Contest

When I was very young, I had a fight with a neighbor boy. I went into my house and asked my father to come outside and help me deal with him. My father said, "No, you have to fight your own battles." Since then, I have trained myself to make my own decisions and solve my own problems after gathering all the facts I can. As the above story illustrates, the *laws of life* are the rules, the dos and don'ts, the Right and Wrong that our mothers and fathers taught us when we were growing up. It's that simple and basic.

—Neil Sawyer directs the Winona, MN Contest

When faced with a hard decision, what determines your reactions? What guidelines, standards, or laws determine your personal "line in the sand"? (Do you know where your line in the sand is?) What *laws of life* do you have in place that establish and guard your boundaries of integrity?

—DeAnna Russelle coordinates the Southridge High School Contest in Beaverton, OR

In Connecticut we define *laws of life* as the values and ethics that young people believe will help them live successful and productive lives. Among the *laws of life* students wrote about this year in our contest were caring, citizenship, responsibility, love, perseverance, friendship, and respect.

—Sandi Warren, School for Ethical Education, directs the Connecticut Statewide Contest

The *laws of life* are the internalization of universal rules that live through people's actions and consciences. They are often expressed in words, but they can be recognized in feelings: there is a timeless, spiritual essence to doing what is right and true that differs from self-gratification or compliance to temporal values.

—Nan Starling is the coordinator for the Cooperating School Districts Contest in St. Louis, MO

Our contest asks students to reflect upon and write about a value or ethic they have learned and adopted. We emphasize the six pillars of the national Character Counts! program—trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship—and Rotary International's four way test, "Of the things we think, say or do: Is it the truth? Is it fair to all concerned? Will it build goodwill and better friendships?"

—C. R. Carder IV is chairman of the Ethics/Laws of Life Committee at the Montgomery Village Rotary Club, which sponsors the Gaithersburg, MD Contest

The *laws of life* are simply a set of rules by which you live. There are literally hundreds of these laws. Some *laws of life* are so clear that almost all people can agree that they are true. For example, The Golden Rule is a universal *law of life*. They are those principles that, if practiced by everyone, would benefit all of us and improve the world in which we live.

—Debbie and Stuart Irby sponsor the Mississippi Statewide Contest

The *laws of life* are character precepts that influence our everyday actions. They act as a moral compass, guiding our lives in positive directions.

—Pat Barras, Pope High School, participates in the Georgia Statewide Contest

The *laws of life* are the character traits which bring joy and success to the one who embodies them as well as to those whose lives are touched by them...all in due time.

—Warren Romaine sponsors the contest in Montgomery County, NC and Bocas del Toro, Panama

Having received essays from five years of students, in my mind the *laws of life* are simple. Because we are all parts of connected communities, we are compelled to be honest in all actions and caring in all relations. It is a tall order, but to do less cheats us out of future possibilities.

—Bob Vitalo is the headmaster and director of the Fairfield Country Day School Contest, CT

The *laws of life* are ideals and principles by which we guide our life and add richness to that life. The laws we set for ourselves are personal and establish an inner strength that allows us to do the right thing in times of adversity. We grow as we establish and reestablish our laws and do not inflict them on others; but by our modeling of these ideals, others may follow. It is not a preaching, but a living that is important.

—Carol Reed, Easton High School, participates in the Mid-Shore, MD Contest



AS WE APPROACH Sir John Templeton's 90th birthday this November, and as many of you prepare for the new year of your essay contest, I wanted to share with you my father's vision for the *Laws of Life* program that he created in his hometown of Winchester, Tennessee back in 1987.

Sir John has said the following about the *laws of life*: "To be a happy and useful person, we

must understand and practice the *laws of life*. The world operates on moral and spiritual principles just as it does on the laws of physics and gravity. It is up to us to learn what those principles are and then live by them." But what exactly does my father mean when he refers to the *laws of life*?

Before I answer, let us take a look at where the contest is today. The *Laws of Life* Essay Contest has witnessed an extraordinary expansion over the past five years: there are currently ninety-seven contests in more than thirty countries. This dramatic expansion is due in no small measure to the growth of the character education movement in the United States and around the world. When my father created the essay contest, the term "character education" was all but unknown in K-12 education. Nevertheless, the essay contest has proven to be an effective character education program. These days, more and more schools, community organizations, youth groups, and even colleges and universities are adopting the contest as an important addition to their character development programs.

While the alignment of the contest with character education is logical and has brought the contest to the attention of many new organizations and schools, I have observed over the years a slight shift in the focus of students' essays away from my father's original vision for the *Laws of Life* program. I believe this trend represents a change in the way that local contests interpret the term "laws of life."

Many contests ask young people to discuss in their essay a value, principle, or character trait that matters most to them, such as honesty, friendship, integrity, or perseverance. This is a wonderful endeavor. However, the concept of a *laws of life* essay provides an added dimension; namely, the identification of a maxim or wise saying

capturing their value or belief system which might guide young people now or in the future as they encounter new and challenging situations. In some cases a specific *law of life* might encapsulate a specific value such as honesty, compassion, etc. For example, instead of writing about compassion in general, the *laws of life* writer might discuss how a particular experience taught him or her the importance of the saying, "As you give, so shall you receive." Other specific *laws of life* might address a person's current situation or future guidelines for their life such as:

1. The importance of self-control and planning: "When you rule your mind, you rule your world." —Bill Provost or "Failing to plan is planning to fail." —Ben Franklin;
2. The importance of integrity: "A good reputation is more valuable than money." —Publilius Syrus; and
3. The importance of gratitude: "When you drink from a stream, remember the stream."

By memorizing and internalizing specific *laws of life*, the wisdom within them may come back to one again and again in times of questioning or difficulty. Of course, the public recognition and prizes that young people receive at the awards ceremony for their essays are also important incentives for them to explore and embrace their own *laws of life*.

There is no limit to the number of *laws of life* that a young person can discuss in his or her essay. My father cataloged just two hundred of them in his book *Worldwide Laws of Life* and, more recently, in *Wisdom From World Religions*. Most of the *laws of life* my father holds dear are those that he encountered as a young boy growing up in rural Tennessee.

These days, young people are overwhelmed with messages about "the right way" to act, from all directions, not just from their family and friends but also from the media, television, movies, and the Internet. My father's hope, and mine as well, is that providing young people with the opportunity to reflect and write about the *laws of life* will help them to focus on what really matters and to live a happy and purposeful life.

Thank you for all that you are doing to encourage youth to identify and follow the individual *laws of life* that reflect the values they cherish.

How will you describe the laws of life to your contest participants?



laws of life

the **BLOCK** writer's



Plainfield, New Jersey: Laws of Life Day

THIS SPRING the Mayor of Plainfield, New Jersey declared April 25 *Laws of Life* Day in honor of the second annual Plainfield Contest. Five hundred fifth graders and three hundred eighth graders took part in the 2002 contest.

June 8, 2002

Dear Wilcox Foundation,

Thank you so much for reading my essay and for deciding it should be first place. It was very kind of all the judges for their decision. I thank you for sponsoring the contest and for donating all of the money. I really appreciate your generosity and your effort to encourage teenagers like me to write essays, which come from our hearts...

If you're curious as to what I will do with my money, I have a plan. Even though I won this money, I can't keep it because it does not belong to me. The award belongs to God because without him, I wouldn't have won the money. You might think my decision to give the money away is strange or something that I am forced to do from someone else, but in truth, this is what I have to do....

Sincerely,

Ricky Sablan

Carlsbad, California: Young prizewinner gives his money away

THIS SPRING Ricky Sablan, a tenth grader at Carlsbad High School, won \$1,000 in his local contest sponsored by the Wilcox Foundation. In a thank-you letter to the Foundation Ricky describes how he intends to use his prize money.

Toronto, Canada: Writing conference organized for contest participants

THE LEARNING PARTNERSHIP, which administers "Turning Points," the Toronto version of the essay contest, recently held the first writing conference for teachers and students participating in this year's contest.

Called "Express Yourself," the conference began with a keynote address by Rona Maynard, Editor in Chief of *Chatelaine Magazine*, who shared with the audience, "...In a world of hype and information overload, readers are hungry for authenticity. In a supposedly cynical age, they're looking for meaning. They're drawn to stories in which people not so different from themselves reveal discoveries that become their own. There's a wellspring of

knowledge in our memories, and as you return to them through the years, you'll know more. Those of you who continue to write will find your writing informed by this knowledge."

The writing conference was a unique opportunity for teachers and students to attend interactive workshops with eight distinguished Canadian writers, learn from their experiences, receive feedback on their own writing, and build a network of writing colleagues. Based on the enthusiastic response from all delegates, plans are already underway for next year's Express Yourself conference to be held on February 21, 2003.



Josefina Nolasco Astacio autographs her prize-winning essay on the importance of humility at a book signing for the publication "Leyes de Vida," a volume of the best submissions to the first annual Dominican Republic Contest sponsored by Compassion International



Cody Teman was a junior at Delphos Jefferson High School in Delphos, Ohio when he wrote his grand prizewinning essay for the Lima Laws of Life Essay Contest this spring.

Big Red Toolbox

By Cody Teman

As a little boy, I used to go to my grandparents' house. Each visit I'd look forward to my trips out to my grandfather's workshop where I'd get to see his "pride and joy," his big red toolbox. He told me how he had started with a little hand-held container. He explained how over the course of several years he had added to his collection of tools and increased the size of his toolbox to what now stands over five feet tall. It was big, red, and shiny.

"It's not the size of the box that matters," Grandpa would say, "It's the tools inside that get the job done. It's how you use them."

Grandpa taught me a lot about tools and how to use them. As I list some of the tools and what they are used for, I think of how God has given me tools to use in my everyday life. Here is my list:

- 1) Wood—a hard substance used for building. Wood represents my faith, my belief in God. My faith is the foundation on which I build my life.
- 2) Nails—slender pieces of metal having a point and a head, used for fastening pieces together. Nails represent the small pieces of knowledge and intellect I acquire from all walks of life. It is all these different thoughts and ideas that give me my individuality.
- 3) Hammer—a hand implement used for driving nails, striking, or pounding. The hammer represents in me a strength, a strong inner strength that allows me to form my own opinions and stand my ground.
- 4) Saw—a cutting instrument with pointed teeth used to cut or divide. The saw has an angry look. Its sharp teeth compare to the evils of the world. There are many temptations awaiting me. I must use common sense and make good, smart decisions to divide myself from these evils.
- 5) Chisel—a cutting tool with a beveled edge used for cutting, engraving, or chipping away at wood or metal. I have set goals for myself. I must use the chisel to chip away at any obstacles that may get in

my way. I will use the chisel to engrave my name and leave my mark on the world.

6) Screwdriver—a tool used to turn or change. Like the screwdriver, I too can turn. I can change. I must always keep an open mind and be open to change.

7) Level—A device for adjusting something to a horizontal line by noting the position of a bubble contained in a sealed tube. I, like the level, must maintain a balance in my life. I realize I am created equal to all others, none of us being more important than another. While I believe each of us is put on this Earth for a reason, it is my desire to find my purpose in life and to play my role, to the best of my ability.

8) Flashlight—a small portable light used for seeing in the dark. My flashlight—my eyes—are my windows to the world. May I wake up each morning eager to learn. May I always hunger to make new friends, and may I enjoy the smiles of others I bestow acts of kindness on.

Individually, each of these tools can serve a purpose; they can get the job done. Together, however, they can build a mansion, perhaps even a city. Together they can bring a lifetime of peace, love, and happiness.

You know, looking back on all those trips to Grandpa's workshop, I realize he wasn't just teaching me about toolboxes and tools, he was teaching lessons far more valuable. I hope the next time he tells his story his "pride and joy" will be over six feet tall, and I won't be red and shiny.

"While I believe each of us is put on this Earth for a reason, it is my desire to find my purpose in life and to play my role, to the best of my ability."





The Teacher's Lounge

In this issue Mitch Eden joins us in the Teacher's Lounge and shares his thoughts on the laws of life and Sir John Templeton's vision for the essay contest. Mitch teaches students journalism at Oakville Senior High School in St. Louis, Missouri; he and his students currently participate in the essay contest.



When Sir John Templeton set down the guidelines for the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest, I believe he had a simple goal—to encourage kids to live by the values and characteristics

that make us good people. The *laws of life* ultimately help us address how to bring out the very best in ourselves and others in all areas of life.

Sir John's vision brought to the forefront a message and philosophy that is greatly needed in today's world. And while he used aphorisms as the vehicle to build the guideposts of his life, his vision goes to the very core of timeless and universal ideals, principles, and virtues.

The *laws of life* are really about mastering the art of living by practicing simple wisdom in all situations and never veering from those life priorities and values, being a person who is pure of heart, modest, trusting, humble, understated, serene, without pretense or hidden agenda, sincere, straightforward, intelligent, confident, and filled with a profound decency and tremendous

inner strength that is humbling. These are some of the characteristics the *laws of life* help us to recognize in our daily lives. And whether your personal guideposts are a collection of aphorisms or not, it is Sir John's vision of having thoughts and actions guided by these characteristics that is important.

Some people think they'll do what they need to do when it matters, but it *always* matters. You see, you're telling yourself and those around you who you are every day. With every action, you're revealing your character. The *laws of life* help to remind us what a person of character is all about. They remind us to be more concerned with our character than our reputation.

I believe Sir John Templeton's vision for the program was a simple one. It was to do the kinds of things that come from your heart. Because when you do you won't be dissatisfied. In fact, you'll probably be overwhelmed with what comes back. As legendary college basketball coach John Wooden said, "I believe you can do more good by being good than in any other way." I think Sir John would agree.

Got a question for the Teacher's Lounge? Send it to us at teacher@lawssoflife.org.

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Your comments are most welcome. Please direct them to Peggy Veljkovic.

Visit our website:
www.lawssoflife.org

In 1987, Sir John Templeton created the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest in his hometown of Winchester, Tennessee to encourage young people to reflect and write about their own *laws of life*. At that time, Sir John never imagined that the contest would spread throughout the United States and around the world, that thousands of students would write a *laws of life* essay each year, or that so many individuals, businesses, community organizations, service clubs, foundations, and colleges and universities would sponsor and organize their own contest. We invite you to launch a contest in your community!

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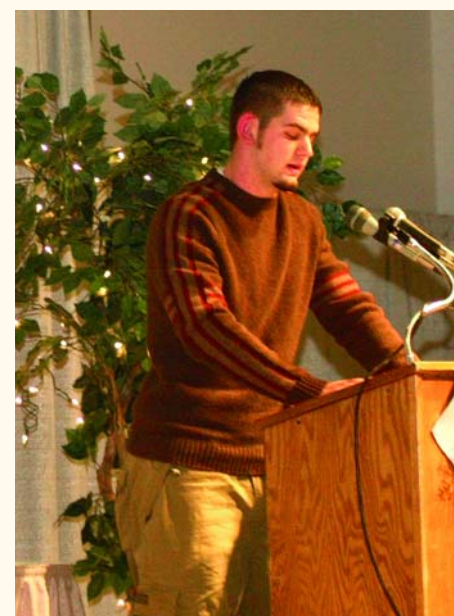
laws of life

FALL
2002

E S S A Y C O N T E S T

Young Man's Essay Inspires Pentagon Repair Crews

By Beth L. Jokinen, Lima News, Lima, Ohio
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Cody Teman, age seventeen, grand prizewinner of the sixth annual Lima, Ohio Laws of Life Essay Contest

A *LAW*S OF LIFE essay written by Cody Teman is inspiring construction crews repairing damage done to the Pentagon in the September 11 terrorist attack.

When the project is complete, the Delphos Jefferson High School junior's name will be included on a piece of limestone that will be placed somewhere on the front of the Pentagon. Teman's name, along with

Dear Friends,

Wherever you are in the world, you have just recognized in some way the first anniversary of 9-11-01. Maybe you paused from the work at hand for a moment of reflection, or read a news report, or participated in a prayer vigil. September 11 has affected all of us in some way, and over the past year there seems to be a general calling for us to get back to basics, to take strength from what matters most in life: family, friends, and the simple values, the *laws of life* that ground us and give us peace of mind in a world that is growing increasingly more complex and frightening at times.

My mom taught me one of the *laws of life* that has most shaped who I am, and over the past year I can't count the number of times it has passed through my mind or been shared with a friend: *Life is too short...* You can fill in the rest of the sentence with whatever worry is at hand, and for me, as an occasional (ahem!) worrier, this one little phrase has served as a reality check, a comfort, an excuse to kick up my heels, and a powerful connection to the person who taught me those four little words which carry so much meaning.

In this issue we get back to basics with the essay contest and take a look at Sir John Templeton's vision for the term "laws of life," shared with us by his son Dr. John M. Templeton, Jr. We also hear from a number of local contests what the concept means to them. As you begin planning for the new year of your contest, you may want to think about how you are communicating the *laws of life* to your young people. What do you want them to take away from the experience of writing a *laws of life* essay? My hope is that all of your young writers have the opportunity to discover their own "few little words" that they can call on in these challenging times, and that help them find their way.

Peggy

the names of those working on the project, will surround a quote by President Bush.

"I'm shocked because this is something that is permanent and my name will be on it. It's something I can show and tell my kids about," Teman said.

A former Lima resident whom Teman does not even know is responsible for including the youth's name. James Gallagher is a vice president with AMEC Construction Management, a general contracting company that was

continued on page 2

Read Cody Teman's grand prizewinning essay, "Big Red Toolbox," on page three of this issue