

**What
Are
Your
LAWS
of
LIFE?**

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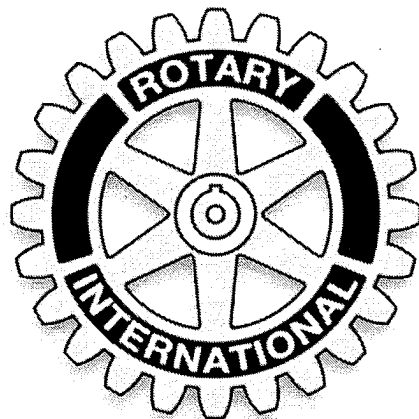


**WINNING
ESSAYS!**

**2013 - 2014
J.C. BOOTH
MIDDLE SCHOOL
LAWS OF LIFE
ESSAY CONTEST**

"CHARACTER COUNTS"

“LAWS OF LIFE”
Essay Contest Winners
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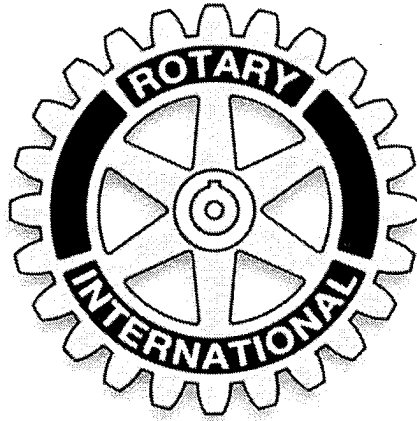


Rotary Club of Peachtree City

J. C. Booth Middle School
250 Peachtree Parkway
Peachtree City, GA 30269

Ted Lombard, Principal
Molly Mendenhall, Teacher / Coordinator

**“LAWS OF LIFE”
Essay Contest
Sponsored
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Rotary Club of Peachtree City

SIXTH GRADE

| | |
|---------------|----------------|
| First Place: | Cailey Hardman |
| Second Place: | Dane Kinamon |
| Third Place: | Jacob Brachey |

SEVENTH GRADE

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| First Place: | Alisha Zamore |
| Second Place: | Kenna Barkoot |
| Third Place: | Nicole Turner |

EIGHTH GRADE

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| First Place: | Gabe Cherniske |
| Second Place: | Chandler Witucki |
| Third Place tie: | Abby Burke |

6th Grade

Cailey Hardman

Fritsche

English 1

27 February 2013

Never Give Up!

"Never give up or lose faith in someone that you love; God has placed them in your life. Be patient, and remember there is a time for everything." - Author Unknown.

My law of life is to never give up no matter what happens to you. In the past few years, my family and I have been going through a rough time. I've learned to never give up on anything or anyone. My mother was and is addicted to alcohol. Her problems has taught us to stick together with as a family through all of the rough times. No matter how difficult our lives have become because of my mother's drinking problem, we have supported her and will never give up on her.

Initially, my mother stayed at home during the days when my brother and I were at school, My dad would be at work so she would be at home alone. To handle her stress, my mother began to drink alcohol. Her problem became worse whenever my family had to move into my grandmothers house. Previously, we had lived in a beautiful house in Newnan, Georgia, but eventually we had to move in with my

grandmother. My mom was not so thrilled about losing her home and having to live with her mother. Also, a couple of years ago, Nonnie, my great grandmother, died. She was my mom's grandmother, and she was very close with Nonnie. After she passed away, my mom became very depressed and upset; she no longer wanted to live with her mother.

Being at my grandmother's house didn't help Mom's problem because my grandmother drinks also. She would come home from her job and would have a couple of drinks with my mom. Drinking had never that bad of a problem for my mom before, but eventually, she was drinking more and more as time went on. Before my mom started to drink so much, she had always done the housework chores like doing our laundry, washing our dishes, cooking our meals just like "normal" moms would do for their families. However, when she started drinking, it affected her daily life and our lives too. . Whenever my brother and I would come home from school, we would sometimes find her asleep and so my grandmother would have to step in and do what my mom wasn't able to do because of her drinking problem. At first, we weren't so worried about the drinking, but then she started drinking more heavily and started to drink stronger drinks.

My family knew that my mom needed to get some professional help. Drinking problems never go completely away; it is a constant struggle. A person has to

make the decision to take it out of his or her life or possibly ruin his or her life. My family and I will never lose hope in my mother. I will never lose faith in her. Never give up on anything or anyone. Today, my mom is still recovering from her addiction. She has been sober for 19 months. I am very proud of her!

Throughout all of our ordeals, my mom has taught me to believe in myself and never to give up on anything. She wanted to be a better person, so she asked for help. My mom wants to be home with her family. Never giving up is having courage, It is doing something about the negatives in your life and moving forward. Not giving up makes us all stronger. My family will always support each other no matter how bad the rough times seem. Knowing how badly alcohol can ruin a life has taught me to never go anywhere near it.

Finders Keepers?

What would you do if you found a one hundred dollar bill lying on the floor? Would you tuck it in your pocket and look around to make sure no one noticed you? Or, would you search the area looking for the money's owner? Many people would pick it up quickly and walk away trying to convince themselves that no one would notice. However, on the day that this happened to me, I did just the opposite. Integrity and honesty are what helped me make this decision.

One afternoon, my mother and I went into Sport's Authority to do some shopping. As we were looking through the pile of shoes stacked on the clearance table, I looked at the floor and spotted a \$100 bill lying inches from my foot. It was crisp, folded and very flat. It almost looked like a folded piece of paper. I reached down to pick it up and smiled when I realized my prize. There was no one around and very few people in the store at all. I thought long and hard about what I should do. I did not want to ask everyone because everyone would say it was his or hers even if it was not, and I would have no way of knowing who was telling the truth. If I gave it to the cashiers' they might put it in the cash register or take it for themselves. I could not be sure. I also thought about keeping the money for myself and buying the Nike shoes I was hoping to get. I decided to be patient and to keep it, while I looked around for someone in distress or looking for something. There was no one in the entire store that seemed to be missing anything.

I continued to walk around the store and observed everyone down every aisle, but I did not find any clues anywhere. I started to walk towards the door when I saw the one who lost the money. He was about twenty years old and had a crushed look on his face. He had a very nice

pair of basketball shoes in his hand and I could tell that he was very frustrated. I heard his mom yelling at him about his irresponsibility and carelessness with his own money that he had earned. He looked very sad. At that moment, I could have kept walking out the door with \$100 in my hand and really, no one would have known. I would be able to buy the shoes I wanted. I started to wonder what I should do with the money. Should I give this guy his money or keep it for myself? I knew I had to do the right thing so I went up to him and asked him if he had lost anything. He said, "I am looking for my lost one hundred dollar bill." I reached in my pocket, pulled out his \$100, and put it in his hand. I instantly saw the relief on his face.

He shook my hand and kept thanking me over and over again. He told me he would not have done that if he found the money and he went on to buy a new pair of shoes. Even though, I wanted to keep the money and I was tempted to buy something I wanted, in the end I was very glad that I gave him the money and I was glad that I made the right decision.

I learned that doing the right thing is not always the easy decision, and that sometimes it takes awhile to figure out what to do and how to act. However, when you make the right choice and do the right thing, you will always be glad you did. You might just make someone else's day!

Jacob N. Brachey

Mrs.Burrell

English

12 February 2013

Laws of Life

It is a cool Saturday in Alabama. I am at my mom's parent's house, roomy and fun, at the beginning of Thanksgiving Break. We all just finished watching Alabama win a football game, like they always do. My grandpa has a big smile on his face and simply says, "Roll Tide." Strangely, I do not like to call him grandpa, for we all call him E.O. I know you have what-is-he-talking-about thoughts going through your head, but it is a long story how he got his name, interesting and different. E.O. has season tickets to Alabama games, but he would rather watch the game with us, his children and his grandchildren. How we got to this point, one will have to wait and see. His story is inspiring; it taught me the values of integrity, perseverance, and kindness.

Growing up, E.O. was the youngest of thirteen kids which would be hard to go through. His family was also very poor. Their family had a three bedroom house that was as crowded as an amusement park! The girls had one room, the boys had one room, and the parents had one room. He had to share everything, food, clothes, toys, and even attention! At Christmas, he would be excited to

get fruit and nuts in his stocking that he did not have to share. Most of his clothes were hand-me-downs, old and worn, from his older brothers. A lot of the toys that he had were homemade toys because his family could not afford new ones. With such a big family, he also had to share attention. Fortunately, with such a caring family, there was plenty of love to be shared.

Not only is E.O. loving and caring, he is also very intelligent. Sometimes, in elementary school, he would have to ride on a trolley to a different school with more advanced classes. He was always very smart all the way through grade school. After high school, he enlisted in the army and served in the Korean War as a radar man. That was a job for smarter people. Because he was in the military, he received a G.I. bill, which was money to help him pay for college. When he went into college at Howard College (which is now Samford University), he went into pharmacy. That is where he met his soon-to-be wife. He graduated from the school of pharmacy a few years later. He was the only child in his family that graduated college. That says a lot about how smart he was and still is.

In 1960, a new chapter of E.O.'s life began as he founded a drug store. When he opened the shop, he was the only pharmacist there. His hours working were long and plentiful. Every Monday through Saturday, he worked from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and on Sundays, he worked from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. He almost never had a break! His success came to him at the drugstore because he knew and cared about all of his customers. Although it was not always financially profitable, he was very nice to them and helped them. He also had loyal employees that liked him because he was so kind to them. His great personality and love has always led the way to his success.

If you asked my grandpa his secret of success, he would probably say, "I have been blessed." He has been blessed, but I know that without his perseverance, kindness, and integrity, he would not

have gotten nearly as far in life as he has. Through him, I have learned the importance of kindness, perseverance, and integrity, my laws of life.

7th Grade

Alisha Zamore

Lambert

English 7th

The single most important character trait in life is courage. This character trait is defined as being able to go through an event with obstacles or hurdles in the way. Many tasks are difficult, and they sometimes demand a lot of courage to get through them. Playing professional sports, mastering a musical instrument, reciting poetry, or diving off a spring board are among some of the activities that require an enormous and intense dose of courage. My dad's friend, Eric, is the one that inspires me to keep going in life when things are tough and to pursue my dreams when the urge to quit looms in my mind.

Eric and my dad have been friends since they were about three years old. They grew up together going to the same rustic school, playing sports together, and being great companions. Life was all fun, games and of course, much learning since expectations were high. It was not long after Eric began to complain of bodily pains and aches. Then he started having unusual symptoms and had to be taken to the hospital where he was admitted for more than a year. His disease was rare and unusual. The medical community had already stamped this illness as a thing of the distant past. Eric was diagnosed with polio and soon his legs shrank to the point where he would never again regain the ability to walk. He would be crippled for the rest of life. Unfortunately, his tiny island of birth was poor, and medicine of any type was a rarity. Eric was forced

to maneuver his way around and fend for himself like most kids did. His family could not afford a wheelchair or a house equipped for a handicapped child and so he used his hands to walk around wherever he needed to go. He would only make it to short distances because it was a tiring experience or way of life. Other kids made fun of him by calling him unpleasant names or making sarcastic gestures to tease him. However, my dad had the courage to tell other people to leave him alone, and assume the role of advocate as best friends do.

Even though Eric grew up in poverty, he still had a very successful life. Since jobs were scarce and mobility was an issue, Eric soon realized that his survival depended on some type of trade or skill that many people overlooked. Hence, he bought a barbers set which included razors, scissors, an average sized mirror and some clips. With that he set out to work. He was diligent in what he did and took pride in giving the best haircuts. Soon, everyone one in the small village gravitated toward him whether out of sympathy or concern. With his small but steady earnings he was able to purchase his first wheelchair. Additionally, Eric was able to have a servant in his home to help with daily tasks such as cooking and cleaning that he could not perform. The maid would help him get out of bed and down the stairs. This hero tries to live his life as if he were not paralyzed. Unlike some who seek special privileges, Eric wants to be treated as a normal human being. When we visited him last year, he rarely ever complained that he was paralyzed. Eric even explained to us that he sometimes does not remember that he is disabled. He actually does more work than an average person would do.

This hero inspires me to keep going in life even with a disability. For example, my mom runs many races, marathons and half marathons. It seems as if she just keeps on going. Recently, she ran a marathon and completed it with zest and pride. My mom had agonizing pain in her toe, but she still kept going. She came down the finish line pacing very slowly, but she at least finished unlike other people. Also, another example is in sports games. When one knows that their team is losing and the score seems to indicate absolute defeat, you keep trying to get the score higher than the opposing team, but you don't give up but rather you put your best foot forward. Whether it is on the way to victory or imminent defeat one makes his or her best effort.

As a musician I work hard at mastering the clarinet and piano. My favorite songs to are usually fast paced, and they tire my hands and fingers very quickly. Sometimes, my fingers hurt extremely badly, but I always remember Eric and how his conditions are more severe compared to mine. That thought keeps me striving and charging ahead to do my very best.

Going back to visit Eric was a life changing event for me. I had always heard my dad talk about him and he showed me pictures of him, but I was finally able to see and talk to him. We would go to the island of Dominica for a week or so and spend time with him. I remember asking him many questions about how he lives his life. It brought tears to my eyes when I had to say goodbye to him. We had a great time doing things together. Even though he had a servant during the day time, Eric would confess that he was often very lonely. His relationship with the servant was of a work relationship then one of friendship.

Barkoot, Kenna

Johnson, Loree

English 6

February 12, 2013

Laws of Life

A few weekends ago, I went on a day trip with my church to the Special Winter Olympics. The Special Olympics is an event where mentally challenged people of all ages compete against each other in various athletic games. They win medals which makes them feel good about themselves. It took place near downtown, Marietta, Georgia. Our church group worked in the recreation center. This area was designed for the athletes to play and relax in between their games. My friend Lou and I worked at the arts and crafts table. We helped the participants make tool boxes, bookmarks, and crowns.

Originally, I just went to the Special Olympics to get volunteer hours for Beta Club, but I came home learning a very important life lesson. The quote, "Don't judge a book by its cover," explains the Laws of Life lesson that I learned. This quote means that you should get to know somebody before you start talking about them and judging them behind their backs.

While I was at the craft table preparing materials and making sure we had enough supplies, a young girl who looked about my age (13) approached the table. I asked her if she wanted to make a bookmark. She said yes and sat down with a big grin on her face. To me it was strange that a girl my age was so excited about making a bookmark. After she finished making her bookmark, I saw how proud she was of her

creation. It made me think that even little activities can give someone great joy. It was eye-opening to see how that young girl with a disability could smile over something that to me was so ordinary. It made me smile too. I realized that kids who are different from me can still have fun doing commonplace activities.

Another person that stood out that day at the Special Olympics was an older gentleman. He looked about the age of my grandpa. At first, it seemed really uncomfortable to talk to someone so much older because he acted so much younger. However, after helping both of them create their special bookmark and seeing their large smile of satisfaction, I once again understood that looking different or acting different doesn't always mean we are different. Seeing his smile brought back good memories of the times when I had fun making crafts.

Diversity is what the world is made of. Showing compassion and acceptance to all people is important in today's world. In the United States we are not judged by color, culture, or religious backgrounds. There are also many people that suffer with various disabilities such as mental and physical ones. Society needs to show acceptance for these individuals as well. Just as the Civil rights movement changed people's views on diversity, we can also change our views on people who are mentally challenged. Learning to accept others who look, act, or sound different from ourselves will take time, but it is time well spent. Always remember to live by the message of the quote, "Don't judge a book by its cover," the next time you see or visit with someone who may be a little different than you.

Turner, Nicole

Johnson, L.

English 4

February 15, 2013

Laws of Life

Positive thinking is an important law of life. In my life my grandfather is the model of positive thinking. He faced family issues and the loss of a child. Despite these things, he always has a cheery disposition. At age 92, my grandfather reminisces about good memories and hardly thinks or talks about the bad memories.

My grandfather was born in June 1920. In the 1920's, divorce was not as common as it is today. However for my grandfather, this happened in his family. His mother and father divorced when he was 3 years old. His mother went on to marry another man, which also ended in divorce. As for his father, he was remarried 5 times with all marriages ending in divorce. Still, my grandfather always had a bright and cheery point of view.

Since he grew up in the depression, he only lived with his mother when she was working and could support him. He lived with his father when his father was married. If his mother was not working and his father was not married, he was passed around a lot to other relatives. Regardless of all the bad in his youth, though, whenever my grandfather tells stories about his childhood, he always focuses on the happy parts.

In World War II my grandfather was a part of the Navy. He worked in a construction battalion. While my grandfather was away at war, he sent love letters to my

grandmother. He came home on leave and married her. His wife, my grandmother, was pregnant while he was overseas. The baby died soon after birth. My grandfather felt sad, yet rather than feeling bitterness, he looked upon this experience as something that brought him and his wife closer. It brought them closer together because they were each more concerned about the other person than they were about themselves.

Nowadays my grandfather lives in Louisiana in a retirement home. His wife has passed away, but he always talks about the good memories of her and tells funny stories about their life together. My grandfather has slowed down in recent years. His motto is, "This old world's been good to me." This shows that positive thinking has kept him focused on the blessings in his life.

In conclusion, my grandfather has had a big impact on me because he shows me that positive thinking can change your whole perspective on different situations that occur in your life. For instance, whenever I face sad or difficult situations, I always look upon my grandfather's attitude, and I look for the better side of the situation. When my grandmother passed, I used positive thinking just as my grandfather did. Instead of thinking about how I would miss her, I focused on the fact that she was in a better place. What my grandfather has taught me will carry me through the rest of my life. I am likely to face other difficult situations such as job loss or heartache. I will always try to look for the better side of things using positive thinking.

8th Grade

Gabe Cherniske

Mendenhall

Language Arts 2

12 February 2013

Smiles go for Miles

Reflecting upon my childhood, my mind gets engulfed with the memories that have made me who I am today. Included within this library of memories are the recollections of my biological father. "Try to be positive about the situation, Gabe." I can still hear my father's words of wisdom from when I was younger and broke a toy. These words he spoke to me are some of the most inspiring words I have ever heard. If we could all be positive like my dad was, this world would be a much better place. My dad inspires me because of his strength, his idealistic attitude, and his overall amazing example.

When he was my age, my father was diagnosed with Type 2 Diabetes and Heart Disease. At the time, not much was known about these afflictions. Through his daily insulin injections and many amputations, he persevered and would stay strong through it all. When I was a toddler, his kidneys failed and even after a transplant from my uncle, he was given less than five years to live.

Despite this, my father would still continue to make the best out of his life, forging smiles wherever he went. Even if we were out shopping for a day, he would delight each person he met. One time in specific, I recall him purchasing some candy for me at Target. He gave the elderly clerk a ten dollar bill and told her to keep the change. The smile on her face was priceless.

Unfortunately, one day when I was seven years old, I was having a conversation with my father in our kitchen. He was talking about how he was sore, though he made sure to mention that it was not a big deal compared to pain he had suffered from previously. Immediately afterwards, he fell over. He was frigid, still, and deceased. Through the tears and melancholy, my family tried to explain to my juvenile mind about death. Little did I know that I would never see him again.

Even though he had been through many hardships, my father would make sure to remain positive through it all. He would make jokes about his many amputations and prosthetic limbs, and could care less if anybody thought that he was strange because of them. My cousin, Alex, especially looked up to him and would imitate him whenever they were together. Everybody who met my dad would respect him as much as Alex, but I do not think he realized that throughout his life.

My father's wholesome example is one of the principal stepping stones of my life. It guides me to be cheerful and to pull through hard times. His love of everything is inspiring, and if everybody could be just like him, then the universe would be an Eden. His selfless acts of kindness have not only been appreciated by me, but by many other people, too. One of the major things that my dad would do on a daily basis is bring food to my widowed grandmother who had Myasthenia Gravis, a disease that affected the muscles in her arms, legs, and most importantly eyes. Because of this, she was not able to leave her apartment building and was grateful that my father would go the extra step to help her out.

His strength, attitude, and example are only some of the many reasons why my dad inspires me. Even though I have moved on with life and have a wonderful new stepdad who loves me immensely, I know that my biological father's example will inspire me for years to

come. One lesson in particular that everybody could learn from my dad is that a positive attitude can go a long way. So how about it? Let us honor him by incorporating that extra piece of optimism into all of our lives and developing the Earth into a sphere of happiness!

Chandler Witucki

Hossbach

English 2

25 February 2013

There is no way of knowing what people go through every day. The girl that you gossiped about yesterday, her dad could have just died, and the guy that you called stupid, he might work every night to help support his family. You never know what could be going on in someone's life, and that is why my law of life is giving people the benefit of the doubt.

Every person has their own battle, something in their life that they struggle with. No matter how big or small it is, whatever someone might be struggling with, it can affect how they act. I have learned this first hand many times, but one instance stuck with me more than the others. It happened in elementary school, around third grade. There are always those kids that do not really fit in with everyone else, even at a young age. They are the ones that kind of keep to themselves, occasionally trying to make remarks, but not really working in the conversation. Most people just leave them alone, and maybe talk to their friends about how weird they are. That's what I did in the third grade. There was this boy, he was a little different than most other kids at that age. He had a little bit of a lisp, and although most kids in the third grade were awkward, he was more awkward than the rest of us. Mostly he wasn't like the other kids, and we judged him for it. He was the outcast, the one that got teased and picked on. At that young of an age, I did not have the courage to stand up for him, and despite occasionally feeling bad for him, I mostly just went along with what the other kids were doing. I did not even try to be nice to him discreetly, I

mostly left him alone. Little did I know that he had much more going on in his life then we could have ever guessed.

This kid was at the back of my mind for about another year, and I just went through my daily life as a little kid. Until one day, when I called a friend of mine and asked her if she wanted to come over. This friend of mine was so sweet, and she was always nice to everyone. She said that she could not come over to my house, but I was welcome to go to hers. Since she lived in my neighborhood, this was not a big deal and I walked down. When I got there her mom told me they were out back. As I walked into the backyard, I wondered who she meant by "she" I saw my friend on the trampoline, with someone else, whom I thought was her brother. To my surprise it was the kid from third grade, the one that never really fit in. I almost turned and walked out right then, but I got on the trampoline and made the best of it. Later, after he had gone home I asked her why she was hanging out with him. She said to me that it was because she felt bad for him. I told her that I did to, but he had some friends, and kids can be mean, but to my surprise that was not why she felt bad for him. She proceeded to tell me that he lived with his mom and aunt because his dad was in the military. I wondered why this was such a big deal, but she continued her story to say that when he was pretty little, his dad had gone MIA (missing in action). I was surprised, and I did feel really bad, but I did not fully understand how hard that can be. Now, I look back on this story and realize just how much someone can be going through.

If I had known what he had been going through, I might have tried to help him more. Now it is too late, I don't know how to contact him, and I have no idea where he moved. As I think about this situation all these years later, I realize that doing something nice for someone just because they are going through a rough patch is not enough. Honestly, if I never found out what was going on in that kids life I would have continued just being a bystander. Now, I know that

that isn't enough. I cannot just stand by because someone has a perfectly fine life at home. If something that is wrong is happening, I need to stop it, no matter what the circumstances. This also taught me to give everyone the benefit of the doubt. I have learned that if I assume that something is going on in a person's life, it is easier for me to do the right thing. For example, if someone is being a jerk to me, instead of doing something mean back to them, I try to handle it in a civilized manner. I find that if I give everyone the benefit of the doubt I make excuses for their actions to help to treat them the way I would want to be treated. It also helps me forgive people, even if they do not apologize. All in all, I believe giving people the benefit of the doubt is the best thing you can do for a person. It helps to forgive, be kind, follow the golden rule, and that is what life is all about.

In life, everything happens for a reason. I have to look back on this situation, and look at it as a lesson learned. Giving people the benefit of the doubt is essential in my life. It helps me have a kinder view for people, and although I fail many times, it assists in my everyday life.

24 February 2013

My Law of Life

"Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around."
– Leo F. Buscaglia.¹ Kindness is a powerful thing; you never know how big of an impact your caring words or actions can have on someone. In my life, countless times have a small compliment or helping hand put me in a good mood for the rest of the day. This is why my law of life is to be kind to everyone.

As a middle school student, I have seen first-hand how cruel teenagers can be. At this age, everyone just wants to fit in and be accepted, to have people like them and be nice to them. At this hard point in our lives, when we're trying to figure out who we are and what we want, our peers can have a huge negative impact on us even if they don't really mean to. Many kids don't realize how their words affect others. Lots of people in my grade like to make fun of others. Although they think they're just having fun and the people they're teasing don't care, I've seen plenty of people really upset. I have had a friend close to tears and very insecure all day because of a mean remark made by some boys in her first period class.

Last year, I was asked to represent my school district at a bullying awareness seminar. I wasn't sure what it was going to be like or if I wanted to go, but I decided I would give it a chance. At the meeting, I got to hear a story that changed my whole perspective on how I treated others. The story was

about a boy named Kyle and how one friend affected his whole life. Although this is not my story, I feel it's a perfect example of how you can impact someone's life with kindness.

"One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class was walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, "Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd." I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends' tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses, I saw a tear in his eye. As I handed him his glasses, I said, "Those guys are jerks. They really should get lives."

He looked at me and said, "Hey thanks!" There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. We talked all the way home, and I carried his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid. I asked him if he wanted to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said yes.

We hung all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him. And my friends thought the same of him. Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books

again. I stopped him and said, "you are gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!" He just laughed and handed me half the books.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown, and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor, and I was going for business on a football scholarship. Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak.

Graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He had more dates than me and all the girls loved him! Boy, sometimes I was jealous. Today was one of those days. I could see that he was nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, "Hey, big guy, you'll be great!" He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful kind) and smiled. "Thanks," he said.

As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began "Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach... but mostly your friends. I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story."

I looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile.

"Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable." I heard the gasp go through

the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize its depth.”²

It is often overlooked how important kindness can be to people who need it. We find it easier to avert our eyes when we see someone being bullied instead of stepping in and standing up for them. We would rather step around the nerdy boy who dropped all his books and keep going then stop and help him. Our acts of kindness can not only change the course of someone’s day but change their perspective on life. Every action you make affects those around you.

As you go about your life, you need to remember that people will forget what you’ve said and done, but they will never forget how you made them feel. I want to be remembered as someone people could count on, that they could go to with anything; someone who brightened their day with kind words and a helping hand. This is why my law of life is to show kindness to everyone.

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