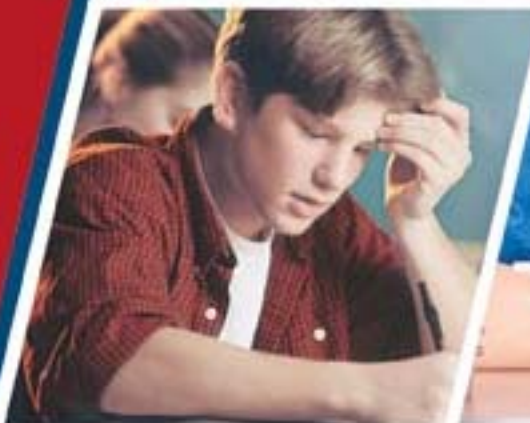
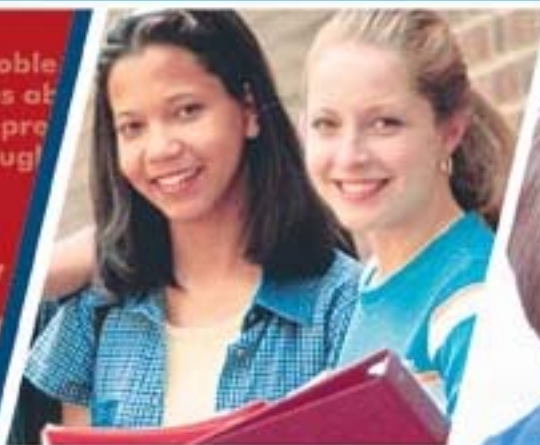




# CONTEST MANUAL

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Foundations for Life* is adapted from the John Templeton Foundation's (JTF) *Laws of Life* Essay Contest. Much of the information in this manual is adapted with permission from original *Laws of Life* materials, of which Arthur J. Schwartz, Ed. D. (vice president, JTF) and Peggy Veljkovic (*Laws of Life* program director) served as editors.

## ABOUT THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

The Josephson Institute of Ethics and its CHARACTER COUNTS! project created *Foundations for Life* with the generous support of the John Templeton Foundation, established by John Marks Templeton.

Sir John, as he is known after being knighted for his widespread charitable works, founded the Templeton Group of mutual funds, a pioneer in promoting widespread stock ownership. Since selling his business in 1992, he has focused full time on stimulating progress through philanthropy.

In 1987 he launched a student essay contest in his hometown of Winchester, Tennessee, to encourage young people to reflect and write about "laws of life," immutable principles that govern morality. The contest has spread to communities and schools around the world.

A graduate of Yale and Oxford (where he was a Rhodes Scholar and has endowed Templeton College), Sir John is also the author or editor of more than a dozen books. These include *Worldwide Laws of Life*, a collection of 200 spiritual principles drawn from the works of essayists and philosophers ranging from Socrates to Benjamin Franklin.

## ABOUT CHARACTER COUNTS! AND THE JOSEPHSON INSTITUTE OF ETHICS

CHARACTER COUNTS!, the national coordinator of *Foundations for Life* (FFL), is the nation's most widely implemented approach to character education, based on a common language of values called the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. The nonpartisan, nonsectarian CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition embraces thousands of schools and human-service agencies reaching more than five million young people.

Involvement with CHARACTER COUNTS! is not required for participation in *Foundations for Life*. FFL stands on its own as a powerful teaching tool available to all.

The Josephson Institute of Ethics, founder of CHARACTER COUNTS!, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation overseen by a volunteer, independent Board of Governors. Its founder, Michael Josephson, serves as president without salary. Through its various programs, projects, and publications, the Institute teaches people to make principled decisions and fully consider the effects of their choices.

# Foundations for Life

## CONTEST MANUAL

Produced by the Department of Publications and Communications  
Josephson Institute of Ethics

**[www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org)**

Foundations for Life  
National Office  
9841 Airport Blvd., Suite 300  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
(310) 846-4800 • (800) 711-2670  
fax (310) 846-4858





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the "Pursuing Victory With Honor" sportsmanship campaign, and the "Honor  
Above All" academic integrity campaign are service marks of the CHARACTER  
COUNTS! Coalition, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics.

Manufactured in the United States of America  
Second Edition

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**We encourage you to reproduce the information found in this manual. You can also download these materials for free at [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org), or order them from the national office by calling (800) 711-2670.**

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# What Is *Foundations for Life*?

*Foundations for Life* is a quotation-based program that promotes reading, critical thinking, and writing skills while simultaneously introducing or reinforcing character education.

*Foundations for Life* is adapted from the *Laws of Life* Essay Contest established by the John Templeton Foundation and is endorsed by the

American Association of School Administrators (AASA),  
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), and  
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP).

*Foundations for Life* has many benefits for youths and teachers. The program:

- engages students intellectually and emotionally
- integrates easily into existing curricula and activities
- provides excellent practice for state testing and SAT or ACT exams
- advances NCLB standards-based goals
- offers prestigious national recognition, including *National Scholarship Award* opportunities

*Foundations for Life* provides students with opportunities to:

**Reflect** – Choose a maxim (quotation) that they find meaningful and reflect on how that maxim applies to their lives and/or the world around them.

**Express** – Write an essay or participate in a discussion that demonstrates an understanding of the underlying wisdom of the quotation.

**Commit** – Integrate the maxim’s message and the insight derived from it into a long-term life strategy that reinforces good character.

## What’s in This Contest Manual?

This *Contest Manual* offers helpful suggestions and ideas to teachers, administrators, and community leaders interested in establishing contests at school, district, community, county, or state levels. Contests add incentive for students to reflect, express, and commit and are an excellent way for organizations to engage their communities.

We encourage contests at various levels to be as creative as possible and to provide a fun and rewarding experience for participants. The only requests we make are that all contest titles include the name *Foundations for Life* and that the essays relate to the maxims provided.

Directions and specifications for submitting essays to the **National *Foundations for Life* Essay Contest** are on the following page.

For more information about *Foundations for Life* (FFL) or to download free, color versions of all FFL materials, go to [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org) or call our national office at (800) 711-2670.

# How Do You Participate in the *Foundations for Life* National Contest?

*Foundations for Life* offers a national recognition program to further encourage students to write essays. There are several benefits to participating in our National Contest, including:

- opportunities for **National Scholarship Awards**
- recognition certificates in **Summa Cum Laude**, **Magna Cum Laude**, and **Cum Laude** categories
- commendations for participation
- enhancement of college applications and student resumes
- potential media recognition for students and schools

*Foundations for Life* essays submitted for consideration at the national level are judged primarily on *compelling content*. **We strongly recommend that teachers or administrators allow students to choose their own personally meaningful maxim (quotation) from the handouts provided.** This will facilitate more insightful essays that truly reflect students' experiences in life and their understanding of character.

## National Contest Rules:

- Up to five essays per grade/per school can be submitted.
- Each essay must have a completed and signed *National Contest Entry Form* attached (Appendix A, located on page 29 or available at [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org)).
- Essays must relate to one of the ***Foundations for Life*** maxims.
- Maximum length of essays is:
  - 500 words for 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades
  - 1000 words for 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades
- The **DEADLINE** for postmarking submissions to the 2006 National Contest is

**MARCH 16, 2007.**

All essays submitted are divided by grade for judging purposes. The top 10 percent of essays per grade receive **Summa Cum Laude** certificates of recognition, the next 15 percent receive **Magna Cum Laude** certificates of recognition, and the next 25 percent receive **Cum Laude** certificates of recognition. **One essay per grade** from the top 10 percent receives a **National Scholarship Award** (*in the form of an interest-bearing U.S. Savings Bond*):

- \$1,000 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades
- \$ 500 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades
- \$ 200 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades



All other participants will receive certificates of commendation. If you have any questions about our **National Foundations for Life Contest**, don't hesitate to call our office at (800) 711-2670.



# The National *Foundations for Life* Office Is Ready to Help You

How you choose to get involved with *Foundations for Life* and how you run your program or activity (whether discussion, classroom assignment, and/or local contest) is up to you. The national office provides additional copies of free materials by request. Call (800) 711-2670 or visit [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org) for yours!

Other services from the national office:

- **Help with fundraising and promotion.** We can help you determine the most effective ways to secure the funds for a contest, and we can offer suggestions for promoting the contest to schools, the general community, and the local media.
- **Assistance with on-site presentations.** We can guide you in how to make an effective presentation to local community groups, individuals, and businesses that are interested in sponsoring the contest. We can also assist you in consulting with teachers and school officials about the benefits and impact of a contest.
- **Information from other contests.** We are happy to share examples of what has worked for sponsors and organizers in other schools and communities, as well as those materials that they have developed for their contests.
- **Online discussion forum.** You will be able to ask questions and get or give answers in this virtual bulletin board community for *Foundations for Life* coordinators across the country. The message boards are at [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org).
- **Newsletter.** While at our website, you can also sign up for our electronic *Foundations for Life* newsletter published twice a year (in the spring and fall).

# How Do You Conduct a Contest?

Contests can be established at many levels through **schools, school districts, character education organizations, community and private foundations, youth-serving organizations (e.g., YMCA's, Boys & Girls Clubs), civic groups (e.g., Kiwanis, Lions, Rotary), or state departments of education.**

Regardless of who initiates and facilitates the contest, the basic components are the same:

- securing the necessary *free materials* from the national *Foundations for Life* office for distribution to participating teachers and schools
- developing a plan for the contest that includes timeframes and budgets
- securing funding for contest prizes and/or ceremonies
- recruiting volunteers to help plan and promote the contest
- recruiting judges to impartially read and rank essays
- working with school administrators and teachers to encourage student participation
- ensuring that administrators and teachers are aware of the contest requirements and deadlines
- recognizing participating students and prize winners
- recognizing teachers and youth leaders responsible for encouraging students to participate
- communicating the number of participating students to the national *Foundations for Life* office

# The Six Pillars of Character

Contest organizers have the option of directing students to integrate into their essays the Six Pillars of Character: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship. These values are representational, meaning they are flexible and not exclusive of other values. They also provide everyone with a ready vocabulary to facilitate discussion, especially with youth. They are a convenient way to give individuals and diverse groups a common language.

## Trustworthiness

- Be honest.
- Don't deceive, cheat or steal.
- Be reliable — do what you say you'll do.
- Have the courage to do the right thing.
- Build a good reputation.
- Be loyal — stand by your family, friends and country.

## Respect

- Treat others with respect; follow the Golden Rule.
- Be tolerant of differences.
- Use good manners, not bad language.
- Be considerate of the feelings of others.
- Don't threaten, hit, or hurt anyone.
- Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements.

## Responsibility

- Do what you are supposed to do.
- Persevere: keep on trying!
- Always do your best.
- Use self-control.
- Be self-disciplined.
- Think before you act — consider the consequences.
- Be accountable for your choices.

## Fairness

- Play by the rules.
- Take turns and share.
- Be open-minded; listen to others.
- Don't take advantage of others.
- Don't blame others carelessly.

## Caring

- Be kind.
- Be compassionate; show you care.
- Express gratitude.
- Forgive others.
- Help people in need.

## Citizenship

- Do your share to make your school and community better.
- Cooperate.
- Stay informed; vote.
- Be a good neighbor.
- Obey laws and rules.
- Respect authority.
- Protect the environment.

# Your Contest Checklist

Consider using this checklist as you organize your *Foundations for Life* contest. More detailed information regarding each component appears on the following pages.

## Getting Started

- ☐ Assemble a Contest Committee
- ☐ Establish the Levels of Awards
- ☐ Determine the Awards and Prizes
- ☐ Decide Where and When to Present Awards and Prizes
- ☐ Construct a Timeline
- ☐ Develop a Budget
- ☐ Secure Funding or In-Kind Donations

## Promoting the Contest

- ☐ Introduce the Contest to Schools and/or Youth-Serving Organizations
- ☐ Identify an On-Site Coordinator
- ☐ Hold an “Introduction to *Foundations for Life*” Meeting
- ☐ Distribute the *Teacher’s Resource*
- ☐ Distribute Posters, Fliers, and Contest Materials

## Coordinating an Awards Event

- ☐ Organize an Awards Banquet or Reception
- ☐ Design and Mail Invitations
- ☐ Design and Print Programs
- ☐ Determine Refreshments
- ☐ Identify Presenters
- ☐ Arrange for a Photographer

## Judging the Essays

- ☐ Select a Panel of Judges
- ☐ Secure Essay Screeners (optional)
- ☐ Distribute Instructions and Forms to Judges
- ☐ Forward Essays to Judges
- ☐ Receive Essays Back and Tabulate Results
- ☐ Prepare Certificates and Awards

## Publicizing the Contest Results

- ☐ Write a Press Release
- ☐ Contact the Media
- ☐ Publish and Distribute Award-Winning Essays

## Assessing the Contest

- ☐ Meet With the Contest Committee to Review the Process and Plan for Next Year

# Getting Started

- ✓ Assemble a Contest Committee
- ✓ Establish the Levels of Awards
- ✓ Determine the Awards and Prizes
- ✓ Decide Where and When to Present Awards and Prizes
- ✓ Construct a Timeline
- ✓ Develop a Budget
- ✓ Secure Funding or In-Kind Donations

## ✓ Assemble a Contest Committee

A Contest Committee can help your *Foundations for Life* contest in many ways. Committee members bring experience and ideas, as well as connections to additional resources such as corporate sponsors, potential contest judges, award ceremony venues, and prize donors. Consider including individuals in your school, community, or state who will bring enthusiasm, time, and financial resources to the process.

Remember, planning and implementing a *Foundations for Life* contest takes leadership and teamwork. Committee members who will be dedicated to the ideals of the contest, willing to pitch in, and enthusiastic about making a difference in their community will be the most successful.

The most effective committees work together to make broad decisions regarding:

- levels of awards
- potential awards and prizes
- when and where to present awards
- timeline
- budget

Then they delegate the following tasks to specific individuals (who can develop subcommittees if they choose):

- identifying and pursuing funding or prize donations
- working directly with schools and/or teachers
- producing contest materials (fliers, posters, award certificates, essay publication)
- recruiting judges and coordinating the judging process
- coordinating the awards ceremony
- publicizing the contest

## ✓ Establish the Levels of Awards

The number of awards is up to you and may ultimately depend on the amount of funding secured or the number of prizes donated. However, it is helpful when approaching potential sponsors to have levels of awards defined and amounts or prizes that correspond with the levels identified. Most contests offer First, Second, and Third Places, as well as Honorable Mentions. Some organizations also offer a Fourth Place.

Awards can be determined by grade levels or by grade ranges (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school).

### ✓ **Determine the Awards and Prizes**

Once you've established which awards the contest will distribute, the committee can assign prizes to the them. Prize options include:

- money or a scholarship to the top essayists
- a special item or trophy
- a donation to the essay winner's charity of choice
- a gift certificate from a local business

### ✓ **Decide Where and When to Present Awards and Prizes**

While a special luncheon or reception specific to the *Foundations for Life* contest is a wonderful way of recognizing winning essayists, participating students, teachers, and sponsors, organizations may have limited budgets or time. Consider the following alternatives:

- existing annual awards ceremonies (such as at schools)
- graduation ceremonies
- holiday events (if your contest takes place in the Fall)
- political events (politicians often look for community-related opportunities to include in their events)

### ✓ **Construct a Timeline**

The timeframe for your *Foundations for Life* contest may depend on your organization's curriculum schedule or student calendar of events. However, if you plan to submit your students' essays to the **2006 National Foundations for Life Essay Contest**, remember to include the **postmark deadline of March 17, 2006** in your timeline!

**Remember to include teachers and school officials in the design of your process and timeline!** Teachers often manage a variety of required activities throughout the school year including standardized testing for students. They will greatly appreciate a timeline that is school-friendly.

In addition, some schools follow block scheduling for their classes. If this is the case for your school, allow students in both blocks to participate by scheduling judging and recognition in the Spring.

**Also, remember to be consistent in the time allowed for students to write essays.** If two or more classes/schools are participating, it is critical that all students have the same amount of time to write the essays (e.g., two weeks) rather than one class/school having a month and another only two weeks.

At the top of the next page is a sample timeline which you can easily edit to incorporate your dates and deadlines.



### Sample Timeline

	<u>Fall 2005</u>	<u>Spring 2006</u>
• Announce Contest	September 16	January 20
• Distribute Maxim Handouts/Contest Rules and Begin Essay Writing in Classrooms	September 23	January 27
• Essay Contest Entry Deadline	October 21	February 24
• Judging Deadline	November 4	March 10
• <b>National Foundations for Life Entry Deadline</b>	→	<b>March 16</b>
• Awards Ceremony	December 2	April 7
• Presentation of National <i>Foundations for Life</i> Recognition Certificates	→	May 5

#### ✓ Develop a Budget

Budgets will vary based on what your organization wants to incorporate into the contest. Usually the primary expenses will include:

- Cash Awards or Scholarships
- Awards Banquet or Reception
- Printing of Marketing Materials

The more time, items, and activities that area businesses, civic groups, community organizations, and local foundations **DONATE**, the better! Consider asking for in-kind sponsorships in the form of photocopying, postage, graphic design, public relations and promotions, catering, and prizes. Perhaps you can find a business leader in the community to chair the contest and his/her staff will offer administrative support. The possibilities for creative funding are endless, so don't let a lack of actual money get in the way of putting on a fun and rewarding event!

Regardless of the end results of your efforts, it is always helpful to approach potential sponsors in an organized manner. The key ingredients are an established (yet flexible) timeline and a proposed budget that is fiscally prudent and cost effective.

On the following pages are two sample budgets that offer an overview of what your proposed budget could include. Note: *Sample Budget A includes monetary awards to teachers while Sample Budget B does not.*

## Sample Budget A

### Assumptions:

- one school participating with school-wide prizes
- in-kind donations such as graphic design, photocopying/printing, promotion, and facility for reception
- awards reception (as opposed to a banquet)
- first year of contest

### Student Prizes

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	\$ 300	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	200	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	150	
4 <sup>th</sup> Place	100	
Honorable Mentions	400	(8 students @ \$50 each)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$1150</i>	

### Teacher Prizes

Teacher of 1 <sup>st</sup> Place Student	\$ 100
Teacher of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Place Student	50
Teacher of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Place Student	25
Teacher of 4 <sup>th</sup> Place Student	25
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$ 200</i>

### Awards Reception

Postage for Invitations	\$ 50	(135 invitations @ .37 each)
Certificates	100	
Refreshments	200	
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$ 350</i>	

### Publication of Winning Essays

Production	\$ 100	
Postage	200	(125 publications to students, teachers, current sponsors, and potential sponsors for next year's contest)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$ 300</i>	

**TOTAL EXPENSES                      \$2000**

## Sample Budget B

### Assumptions:

- numerous schools participating with elementary, middle, and high school level prizes
- in-kind donations such as graphic design, photocopying/printing, promotions and facility for banquet
- awards banquet (as opposed to a reception)

### High School Student Prizes

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	\$ 500	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	400	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	300	
4 <sup>th</sup> Place	200	
Honorable Mentions	800	(8 students @ \$100 each)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$2200</i>	

### Middle School Student Prizes

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	\$ 300	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	200	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	100	
4 <sup>th</sup> Place	50	
Honorable Mentions	200	(8 students @ \$25 each)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$ 850</i>	

### Elementary School Student Prizes

1 <sup>st</sup> Place	\$ 200	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Place	100	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Place	75	
4 <sup>th</sup> Place	25	
Honorable Mentions	120	(8 students @ \$15 each)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$ 520</i>	

### Awards Banquet

Postage for Invitations	\$ 102	(275 invitations @ \$.37 each)
Certificates	250	
Luncheon Banquet	3000	(\$30/meal x 100 attendees)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$3352</i>	

### Publication of Winning Essays

Production	\$1000	
Postage	400	(250 publications to students, teachers, current sponsors, and potential sponsors for next year's contest)
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>\$1400</i>	

**TOTAL EXPENSES** **\$8322**

## ✓ Secure Funding or In-Kind Donations

(A portion of the following is adapted from material prepared by Amy Butler, volunteer director of the Georgia *Laws of Life* Essay Contest, and Arthur C. Franzreh, fundraising consultant, McLean, Virginia.)

Raising funds or securing in-kind donations for your *Foundations for Life* contest doesn't have to be intimidating. In fact, it is a perfect way to promote the contest, encourage community involvement, and create long-term partnerships! Remember to incorporate creative ideas into the process and remain open to sponsors' suggestions and requests.

*Funding can come to you in a variety of ways:*

- An individual learns about the contest and offers to personally sponsor it.
- An individual or group learns about the contest and decides to champion the process ... recruiting friends, business associates, and civic group members to help secure sponsors or donors.
- A local business learns about the contest and offers to be a primary sponsor for the contest, underwriting a large portion of the expenses (through either a donation of money or through in-kind donations of time or resources).
- Various organizations or businesses participate as co-sponsors with a mix of funding and in-kind donations. (Pages 13-14 provide a list of organization types that you can easily approach as sponsors, while Appendix H provides a sample flier for businesses.)

*When approaching potential sponsors, understand that they:*

- look for opportunities that will **positively highlight their involvement** in the community, especially in the media.
- may want their donations to be **tax-deductible**, so consider having a local civic group, school or district, or nonprofit organization serve as the **fiscal agent** for the contest.
- will need confidence in the contest's leaders.
- will be most interested in a contest that has longevity and plans to build upon its success in supporting students and the community.

*Additional suggestions for securing sponsors:*

- Pursue sponsorship from a single individual or family with philanthropic involvement in your community. Compared to most philanthropic opportunities, the contest offers a significant impact for a nominal investment.
- When seeking sponsors in the areas of finance, banking, philanthropy, or business, mention that the *Foundations for Life* contest is adapted from Sir John Templeton's *Laws of Life* contest. Sir John is a legendary investment counselor and is well-known and respected among business professionals seeking to improve their communities.
- Pursue sponsors that might have interest in specific contest activities. For example, a local newspaper may want to sponsor the publication of the essays; a local bank may want to sponsor the reception or banquet.
- Provide potential sponsors with professional-looking materials illustrating the benefits of *Foundations for Life*. The national office can provide you with brochures at no additional cost if you contact us at (800) 711-2670, or you can download the brochures for free from the website, [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org).

# Potential Contest Sponsors

Although approaching potential sponsors for financial support or in-kind donations can be intimidating, *it can also be rewarding* – for you, your contest, and the sponsors!

Below is a list of potential sponsors. This list is not comprehensive but rather a resource to help stimulate thought on the subject. When trying to identify likely sponsors, **think creatively** and **remember to consider sponsors that will be consistent in size and scope with your contest**. For example, if you are conducting a statewide contest, you might want to approach banks or restaurants that have branches or franchises throughout your state.

## Businesses

- Banks
- Newspapers (may write articles on essay winners)
- Radio and Television Stations (may air public service announcements about the contest and/or may highlight or interview essay winners)
- Printers (may donate printing of promotional fliers, certificates, etc.)
- Graphic Design Firms (may donate design services for certificates, invitations, promotional materials, etc.)
- Restaurants (may host an awards banquet or donate gift certificates to use as student or teacher awards)
- Bakeries (may donate refreshments for an awards reception)
- Trophy or Awards Stores (may donate awards)
- Retail Stores ... bookstores, gift shops, department stores (may donate gift certificates)

## Foundations

- Family Foundations
- Private Foundations
- Community Foundations
- Educational Foundations
- Corporate Giving Programs

## Education-Based Organizations

- Local School Boards
- Parent Teacher Associations
- School Associations
- School Districts
- University Character Education Centers
- State, Community, County, and District Character Education Councils/Coordinators

### Faith-Based Organizations

- Churches, Temples, Synagogues, or Mosques
- Local Religious Orders
- Sunday School Classes
- Independent Faith-Based Schools

### Service Clubs/Civic Groups/Community Organizations

- Alumni Groups
- Bar Associations
- Chambers of Commerce
- Community Centers
- Fraternity/Sorority Service Clubs
- Government Offices or Officials
- Honor Society Service Clubs at Colleges or Universities
- Jaycees
- Junto
- Kiwanis
- Lions
- Merchant, Business, or Professional Associations
- Optimist
- Public Libraries
- Rotary
- Soroptomists
- United Way
- YMCA or YWCA

Also, don't forget to consider partnering with local CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition members. There are more than 3,500 schools and 500 nonprofit organizations involved with CHARACTER COUNTS!. Following is the list of national Coalition members, some of whose state or local chapters may be perfect collaborators for your *Foundations for Life* contest:

Alpha Xi Delta Women's Fraternity ♦ American Association of Community Colleges  
American Association of School Administrators ♦ American Camping Association  
American Federation of Teachers ♦ American Red Cross ♦ American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO)  
Babe Ruth League ♦ Big Brothers/Big Sisters ♦ Boys & Girls Clubs of America ♦ Camp Fire USA  
Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America ♦ Girls and Boys Town  
International Association of Chiefs of Police ♦ International Order of Job's Daughters (IOJD)  
Jewish Community Centers' Association of North America ♦ Little League Baseball ♦ National 4-H  
National Abstinence Clearinghouse ♦ National Association for Family and Community Education  
National Association of Catholic School Teachers ♦ National Association of Elementary School Principals  
National Association of Secondary School Principals ♦ National Association of Student Councils  
National Congress of State Games ♦ National Council of Youth Sports  
National Education Association ♦ National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry  
National Honor Society ♦ National PTA ♦ Points of Light Foundation ♦ Primary Focus  
Sigma Nu Fraternity ♦ United States Army Child & Youth Services  
United States Youth Soccer Association ♦ United Way of America  
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States ♦ YMCA of the USA  
Youth Volunteer Corps of America



# Promoting the Contest

- ✓ **Introduce the Contest to Schools and/or Youth-Serving Organizations**
- ✓ **Identify an On-Site Coordinator**
- ✓ **Hold an “Introduction to *Foundations for Life*” Meeting**
- ✓ **Distribute the *Teacher’s Resource***
- ✓ **Distribute Posters, Fliers, and Contest Materials**

## ✓ **Introduce the Contest to Schools and/or Youth-Serving Organizations**

Schools and youth-serving organizations (YSOs) are the best sites for promoting the contest if you’re implementing at the community, city, or state level. The most effective way to promote the contest in schools or YSOs is by developing positive working relationships with superintendents, principals, department heads, and teachers. Many school districts and schools have a curriculum director or coordinator who suggests curriculum options. Building rapport with curriculum directors will go far in promoting your contest. Also, if a superintendent or principal embraces the program, he or she is likely to encourage the schools and teachers in their areas to implement *Foundations for Life*.

When introducing the contest it is helpful to present quality materials and information. The national *Foundations for Life* office will be happy to send you as many free, color brochures as you need ... just give us a call at (800) 711-2670 or download your free copy at [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org). Another excellent resource when meeting with school or YSO leaders is the *Teacher’s Resource*. If you need additional copies, don’t hesitate to contact us.

## ✓ **Identify an On-Site Coordinator**

An on-site school or organization coordinator is a wonderful resource for both promoting your contest and coordinating the transfer of essays for judging. This individual can be anyone who is willing to: 1) encourage teachers to implement the program in their classrooms; 2) serve as liaison between administrators, teachers, and the contest committee; and 3) promote the contest among students (e.g., distributing fliers, placing contest notices in school papers, or displaying contest posters).

In many instances, the on-site coordinator will be a department head or a teacher within the organization; however it can also be a member of the PTA, a library or classroom volunteer, or an interested parent. The key to a successful relationship with your on-site coordinator is communication. Remember to be clear and succinct regarding expectations and timelines.

## ✓ **Hold an “Introduction to *Foundations for Life*” Meeting**

An excellent way to encourage participation within a school or organization is to hold a program introduction meeting. Encourage attendance at the meeting by serving refreshments and offering a prize to the person who brings the most colleagues. Once you have a captive audience, it’s fairly easy to introduce the program. We strongly suggest that you prepare for the meeting by having enough *Teacher’s Resource* manuals and *Maxim Handouts* for all attending. Remember, the national *Foundations for Life* staff is available to lend support or suggest someone close to your area who might be able to attend and discuss the benefits of the program.

### ✓ Distribute the *Teacher's Resource*

The *Teacher's Resource* is the best tool for “selling” the program. Once educators see the materials, they are usually inclined to at least try the program in their classrooms. As we mentioned previously, a Teacher Meeting is an excellent venue for distributing the manuals; however, if a meeting is not possible, your on-site coordinator can distribute them. Another alternative is to send out an e-mail asking those interested to sign up to receive the materials. Again, your on-site coordinator or a school administrator can help you obtain e-mail addresses.

### ✓ Distribute Posters, Fliers, and Contest Materials

The level and scale of your contest will dictate the type of promotional materials you develop and where you distribute them. If you are conducting a statewide contest, then you may send promotional materials to on-site coordinators who will display posters, send out fliers, and distribute contest entry forms, rules, and permission forms (see the Appendix). A community contest may advertise through local media and send promotional materials to school administrators. If the contest is at the district level, the contest committee may hold student rallies where fliers are distributed. If you are conducting a contest in a school, you may have students pass out fliers during lunch and place posters in common areas (like halls and the cafeteria). Need help determining the best way to promote your contest? Call the national *Foundations for Life* office for suggestions and examples of what other contests have found helpful.

# Coordinating an Awards Event

- ✓ Organize an Awards Banquet or Reception
- ✓ Design and Mail Invitations
- ✓ Design and Print Programs
- ✓ Determine Refreshments
- ✓ Identify Presenters
- ✓ Arrange for a Photographer

## ✓ Organize an Awards Banquet or Reception

### *Why host a banquet or reception?*

A banquet or reception for a *Foundations for Life* essay contest can enhance the cachet of the contest and further motivate students to participate. It also provides a memorable venue to honor the students whose essays are recognized and the volunteers, teachers, school officials, youth leaders, and sponsors who made the contest possible.

### *What's the difference between them?*

An *awards banquet* can be a breakfast, luncheon, or dinner and is a sit-down event with a more formal atmosphere. An *awards reception* usually features light refreshments such as hors d'oeuvres, pastries, punch, and soft drinks ... it takes place in a more casual, interactive atmosphere and is less expensive than a banquet.

### *Where and when should the event occur?*

Determining the *best place to hold your event* will depend on the number of essay contest participants, sponsors, volunteers, teachers, etc. you anticipate will attend. Banquets and receptions can take place in a public location or a private home. Many restaurants have private rooms you can reserve and most hotels have a range of conference rooms or ballrooms available. Other possibilities include country clubs, space belonging to civic groups, conference rooms in businesses, community rooms in nonprofit organizations or churches, and recreation rooms through area community centers.

Private homes can provide an intimate, warm feeling for your banquet or reception. Perhaps one of your volunteers or sponsors has a home with a large backyard or family room and would be willing to host a reception.

The *timeframe for your event* will depend on when your contest ends, your school or organization's schedule, and other scheduled community events. Some contest organizers have held banquets/receptions in conjunction with school board meetings, school assemblies, political events, civic group lunches, and community celebrations. If possible we recommend that you hold your awards event within two to three months of the essay judging so that there is a strong connection between participating in the contest and receiving recognition for the results.

### ***Whom do you invite?***

The guest list will depend on your budget. However, when determining whether to host a banquet or a reception, consider that the more current and potential sponsors that you include the better! An awards event is an excellent way to promote the contest for future years, and prospective sponsors are often so moved that they offer to help support the following year's contest before the event is over! Following is a recommended list of individuals to invite:

- students who will be receiving recognition (including honorable mentions)
- parents of the honorees (remember some students may have blended families and therefore more than two parents)
- teachers of honorees
- principals and superintendents
- contest judges
- contest committee members
- current sponsors
- potential sponsors
- community leaders
- political leaders
- members of the media

### ***Should you charge for the event?***

No... this is a celebration and all attendees are guests.

### ***What occurs during the awards ceremony?***

The key to a successful awards ceremony is to make the event fun and rewarding for the attendees. Be creative in planning the event. Consider starting the ceremony with:

- music performed by student quartets or vocal groups.
- distinguished guest speakers (local celebrities, politicians, school board members, superintendents, or principals) making a keynote address or distributing the certificates and prizes.

**Recognize the students**, both the winners and those not present who participated. There are two schools of thought regarding when to announce the names of winning essayists. One suggests holding off until the ceremony. This builds suspense and encourages the attendance of finalists who want to find out if they won. The other school of thought suggests announcing the winning essayists prior to the event and utilizing the event to honor their efforts. Regardless of which way you choose, it's important to reveal the winning essays in reverse order, culminating with the first place winner. If your contest includes various grades or grade ranges, begin with the youngest group and work up.

**Recognize the teachers, youth leaders, and school officials** whose efforts were instrumental in the contest's success. If you are presenting teachers or on-site coordinators with prizes, certificates, or simply verbal acknowledgment, this is the time to do so.

**Recognize the sponsors**, without whom the contest and awards event would not have been possible.

**Recognize the parents and the community** for supporting the kids and the contest and for *reinforcing the importance of character*.

**Recognize the media**, if they are present, for realizing the importance of promoting character in our youth.

### ✓ Design and Mail Invitations

Invitations set the stage for your event. If your budget is limited, design and print a simple, elegant one-color invitation. If you have more flexibility, have art students at a local university create a four-color invitation. Remember to include the *who, what, why, where, and when* in the copy for the invitation and to insert an *RSVP* card or include a telephone number for RSVPs. If you have contest or event sponsors, include their names as well. Also, consider postage costs when designing the invitation. The larger or bulkier the invitation, the more expensive it will be to mail.

### ✓ Design and Print Programs

If possible, use the invitation design for your program. This creates a more consistent theme for the event and appears more professional to potential sponsors. Event programs usually include background on the *Foundations for Life* contest, a list of sponsors, the agenda for the event, a list of the awards along with their respective winners (*if they've already been announced*), a list of contest committee members, volunteers, judges, and if possible copies of the top winning essays. Depending on your budget, program covers can be in full color like the invitation or you can choose a single complementary color. Office supply stores also have colorful sheets with borders that work nicely for programs.

### ✓ Determine Refreshments

If you are hosting a banquet, you will probably have a choice of complete meals to offer. Remember that some people have special dietary restrictions, so choose meals that will work for and appeal to the majority and have a vegetarian option as well. If you are hosting a reception, decide on what type of reception you want. Receptions can offer appetizers, pasta bar, desserts, etc. Your budget will ultimately determine what you can offer.

### ✓ Identify Presenters

An important part of creating a memorable event is having meaningful people present the awards to winning essayists. Following is list of potential presenters:

- community leaders
- key sponsors
- local politicians
- local celebrities or media personalities
- school principals or district superintendents

### ✓ Arrange for a Photographer

Don't forget to hire a professional photographer or arrange for a capable person to take quality photos of the event either digitally or on film. *Don't forget to send the best photos to the national Foundations for Life office (FFL@jiethics.org) so that we can post them on our website!*

# Judging the Essays

- ✓ **Select a Panel of Judges**
- ✓ **Secure Essay Screeners (optional)**
- ✓ **Distribute Instructions and Forms to Judges**
- ✓ **Forward Essays to Judges**
- ✓ **Receive Essays Back and Tabulate Results**
- ✓ **Prepare Certificates and Awards**

## ✓ **Select a Panel of Judges**

*Foundations for Life* judges have stated how honored they were to be given the opportunity to read and evaluate the essays. The process truly reflects what's happening in the lives of students from your area and the essays can be endearing and eye-opening. This is especially true considering that the focus for judging is on *compelling content*. When considering potential judges for your contest, keep in mind:

- the geographic scope of the contest ... if the contest is statewide then you want to approach individuals from various areas across the state...if the contest is community-focused then your judges will come from within your community.
- possible conflicts of interest. Choose judges who are *principled* and *will remain unbiased and objective* in their evaluations of the essays.
- character. Pick judges who *will embrace the ideals of Foundations for Life* when evaluating the essays and *will be open to the broad spectrum of values and beliefs* that essayists will share.

Judges can include political leaders, business leaders, retired professionals, newspaper editors, media personalities, nonprofit and community leaders, local celebrities or sports figures, or volunteers who are deeply committed to ensuring a fair and fun result for the students.

Select a number of judges that will best serve your process. One suggestion is to have one (or two) judges per grade level (depending on the number of potential essays). Another suggestion is to have multiple judges (two or three) evaluate the same group of essays; you can then determine a median score or ranking for each essay. Your contest's anticipated number of essays, along with your available number of judges, will help you determine the best judging process. Sample forms for both processes are available in the Appendix.

Essays will average between 500 and 1000 words, and you want to ensure that judges have enough time to read and rate each one. You also want to try to achieve as much consistency as possible in the judging process. It's reasonable to expect a judge to read and evaluate between 20 and 30 essays for middle and high school participants and up to 50 for elementary participants. However, we suggest checking with your judges to determine the number of essays they feel most comfortable evaluating.

Also, select a "tie-breaking judge" who can be available to independently read and rate tied essays.

## ✓ **Secure Essay Screeners (optional)**

In most instances the schools will have already vetted their essays prior to submitting them, thereby reducing the number for evaluation. However, if it appears that the number will still be overwhelming, consider the use of screeners as the first step in the judging process. Identify unbiased individuals to screen the essays and determine which are most appropriate for judging. If your community has a college or university nearby, consider recruiting students from Greek service clubs or honor societies. Most are required to participate in community service and can accumulate hours through the essay screening process.



### ✓ Distribute Instructions and Forms to Judges

One of the most important aspects of having a fair and fun contest is providing judges with clear and concise instructions. You can photocopy the *Note to Judges* (Appendix D) or develop your own set of instructions. You can also adapt the *Judge's Review Form* (Appendix E) that we use at the national level for use in your own contest, or you may choose to use the *Judge's Tally Form* (Appendix F).

Forward the instructions and forms to the judges along with photocopies of the essays (never send out the originals) and attach a *Judge's Review Form* or *Judge's Tally Form* to each essay. **To further ensure anonymity among the essayists and fairness in judging, assign a number to each essay and block out the essayist's name from the copy forwarded to the judge.** Write the assigned number on the original essay so that you can easily match the evaluated version with the original.

### ✓ Forward Essays to Judges

Once you have received all of the essays for judging, divide them according to levels of recognition (by grade or grade range) and then divide them among the judges. Place a cover form in each judge's packet that includes:

- the number of essays forwarded
- telephone numbers of committee members (or an assigned individual) who can answer any questions that judges may have during the evaluation process
- **the judging deadline** (in a large, bold font)
- how you would prefer judges return the essays (e.g., through the mail or by courier)
- several extra *Judge's Review Forms*, just in case
- any other pertinent information

Place the cover sheet, the Note to Judges, extra forms, and the essays in one packet for mailing or hand delivery. If mailing the packet, **follow up** with each judge to ensure that he or she has received the packet.

Give the judges sufficient time to evaluate the essays. On average it takes one week to review 25 essays.

### ✓ Receive Essays Back and Tabulate Results

Once the judges return the essays, the committee can determine whether there are any ties; this is when the "tie-breaking" judge comes into play. Forward the tied essays with clean rating forms and all other materials (including a deadline) to this judge. Again, if you mail the essays, follow up with the judge to ensure that he or she receives the essays.

Once all of the essays have come back with final scores or rankings, the committee can tabulate the results and determine the winners.

### ✓ Prepare Certificates and Awards

Remember to give your committee plenty of time between the judging process and the presentation of awards for personalizing certificates and engraving awards. You can download free certificates from the *Foundations for Life* website, [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org), and formatting to print essayists' names and recognition levels is easy. If you are presenting personalized trophies or awards, keep in mind that many trophy shops take one to two weeks to produce a finished product.

# Publicizing the Contest Results

- ✓ **Write a Press Release**
- ✓ **Contact the Media**
- ✓ **Publish and Distribute Award-Winning Essays**

## ✓ **Write a Press Release**

A first step in publicizing your contest results is writing a press release. It's easy, and we make it even easier by including *suggestions on the following page*. Remember to put the national *Foundations for Life* office contact information in your press release so that we can answer questions at the national level and potentially enhance the media's interest in covering your contest results.

## ✓ **Contact the Media**

The second step in publicizing your contest is to identify a media list for distribution of the press release. This list usually contains fax numbers or e-mail addresses of local or major newspapers, radio stations, television and cable stations, and relevant magazines or journals. Once your press release and media list are complete, have a volunteer fax or e-mail the press release to every media outlet on the list. This should be done one week prior to your awards ceremony and then again the day before the event. If you will not be announcing the winning essayists until the ceremony, send out the press releases prior to the event, and prepare a follow-up release announcing the winners to be sent out the day after the ceremony.

Another important step is a "press kit" which can include:

- a copy of the press release
- a contest "fact sheet" (feel free to adapt yours from the one on page 37)
- previous articles about the contest (you are welcome to download articles about the national contest from the *Foundations for Life* website)
- a list of committee members, sponsors, judges, and volunteers
- contest brochures
- a synopsis of the *Teacher's Resource* that provides an overview of the program

You can distribute press kits to key media contacts in your community, as well as have some available to hand out to media attending your awards ceremony.

## ✓ **Publish and Distribute Award-Winning Essays**

One of the best methods for publicizing the event — and increasing student, school, district, and community participation in future years — is through the publication of winning student essays. Once the essays have been published, send copies to essayists, sponsors, judges, teachers, principals, and any others who may be instrumental in spreading the word about *Foundations for Life*!

# Writing a Press Release

*The most efficient and effective way to engage media is through a press release.* Press releases are usually sent out via mass faxes or e-mails and are not very time consuming once the list has been set up and keyed into a fax machine or computer. Even if only one or two media sites pick up on your ***Foundations for Life*** contest event, the coverage can substantially enhance your efforts to secure sponsors and participants in future years.

## *When writing a press release:*

- Be concise. Keep the release to one page and make sure it is well-written.
- Catch the reader's attention with a brief quote or phrase centered at the top of the page.
- Include the event's date, timeframe, and location toward the top of the release.
- Provide all relevant contact information for your appointed media liaison: name, address, telephone number, cell number, fax number, and e-mail address. Appoint a contest committee member to serve in this role.
- List participating schools, sponsors, committee members, and others that are critical to the process.
- If possible, include a quote from a participating student or teacher.
- Provide a brief overview of the purpose of the contest and the value to participants and the community.
- Indicate why the event is media worthy.

Double check your press release to make certain that you've answered the "who, what, when, where, why, and how" of your ***Foundations for Life*** contest and event.

To see an actual press release, go to [www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org) and access national ***Foundations for Life*** press releases under the News section of our website.

# Assessing the Contest

## ✓ **Meet With the Contest Committee to Review the Process and Plan for Next Year**

### ✓ **Meet With the Contest Committee to Review the Process and Plan for Next Year**

Some of the best ideas for future events come directly out of lessons learned from the most recently completed event. With every contest the committee will be able to streamline the process and help future committees implement bigger and better celebrations.

A good idea for maintaining continuity and helping create a smooth process for future years is to keep an annual three-ring binder with category dividers. The “event binder” from the previous year can be passed on to the following year’s committee. Categories might include:

- list of committee members with contact information
- list of participating schools and on-site coordinators
- list of essays submitted by grade for each organization
- list of judges with contact information (and screeners if utilized)
- list of awards, prizes, and winners
- list of sponsors with contact information
- list of presenters with contact information
- list of all event attendees with contact information
- list of individuals/groups invited to the awards event
- copy of the timeline
- copy of the budget (proposed and actual)
- copy of any promotional materials distributed and a list of where they were distributed
- media contact list with fax numbers or e-mail addresses
- copy of the awards banquet/reception invitation
- copy of the awards banquet/reception program
- copies of any contracts with vendors related to the awards or celebration
- copies of any receipts related to the event
- copy of any press releases and materials included in the press kit
- contest information for photographers and entertainers at the event
- copies of any forms or letters distributed during the process
- any other information pertaining to the contest

You can use the *Contest Assessment Questionnaire* on the next page to help you reflect on what went well and how you can improve the process the next time around.

# Contest Assessment Questionnaire

This questionnaire may help you determine what worked for this year's contest and what you can do differently in future years. We encourage you to share your experience with us at the national office. Don't hesitate to contact us at (800) 711-2670 or [FFL@jiethics.org](mailto:FFL@jiethics.org).

## 1. Securing Sponsors

- What strategies worked best for securing sponsors, and why?
- What strategies were not successful? Why not?
- What other sources of funding could you explore for next year's contest?
- How will you approach new sponsors?

## 2. Contest Budget

- How closely did you follow your budget?
- Were there any unforeseen expenses?
- What costs could you reduce (or ask a business or organization to underwrite)?

## 3. Promoting the Contest

- Which strategies best promoted the contest, and why?
- What other organizations (schools, community organizations, and businesses) could you invite?

## 4. Working with Schools

- Did you face any challenges in working with the schools? How could you overcome them?
- Are you planning to include more schools next year? If so, how might this affect your coordination of the contest?
- Are you satisfied with the number of participants? What target might you set for next year? What strategies will help you reach it?

## 5. Judging the Essays

- Did the judging run smoothly? What would you do differently next year?
- Were you able to get prominent members of your community to judge the essays? What distinguished citizens could you ask next year?

## 6. Planning the Awards Event

- Would you hold the event at the same facility next year? If not, where else could you hold it?
- Did you face any challenges in coordinating the event? How could you overcome them?
- Would you change any parts of the awards program (such as ceremony, speakers, or dinner)?

## 7. Publicity

- How could you better publicize the contest and event next year?
- How will you improve media coverage of next year's awards event?

## 8. Publishing the Essays

- Did you get a local business (such as a printer) to underwrite the costs or donate its services for the publication? What businesses could you approach for next year's publication?
- How could you increase the distribution of the essay publication throughout your community?

## 9. Committee Work

- In terms of the division of labor among committee members, what worked best?
- What would you do differently next year?
- Who else could you invite to join your contest committee?





## **Appendix: Useful Forms and Fliers**



# Foundations for Life National Contest Entry Form, 2007

**ESSAYIST:** Please complete the following form and staple it on top of your essay.  
**Incomplete information may disqualify your essay from the contest.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

**FFL** MAXIM: Volume #: \_\_\_\_\_ Issue # \_\_\_\_\_ Maxim # \_\_\_\_\_

ESSAY TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you previously won this contest? (Please circle one.) YES     NO

If so, when and what was your topic? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

By signing this form, you (and your parent or legal guardian if you are under 18) give the local and national **Foundations for Life** contest committees permission to use your name, essay, and likeness at their discretion in print and electronic media to publicize and promote the contest.

Signature(s): Essayist \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you prefer to remain anonymous, check below:  
☐ If you use my essay, please do not include my name or likeness with it.

# Foundations for Life National Contest Submission Cover Sheet, 2007

## NATIONAL CONTEST REQUIREMENTS AND INSTRUCTIONS

- Complete one form for **each grade level** of essay submissions. Please write clearly.
- In addition, each individual essay must have a signed *National Contest Entry Form* attached.
- **All submissions must be postmarked by March 17, 2006.**
- **Up to five essays per grade/per school may be submitted.**
- Submitted essays are not returnable.
- The national office may reproduce submitted essays, in part or in full, on its website and/or in printed materials.
- Maximum length for elementary essays is 500 words; maximum length for middle school/high school essays is 1,000 words.
- Essays must be typed and double spaced.

**CONTACT INFORMATION** We will use this to notify you of results and to send recognition certificates.

NAME (teacher or other adult): \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_ SCHOOL/ORGANIZATION: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL DISTRICT: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT ESSAYISTS** List up to five essayists for one grade level on this sheet. Attach additional copies of this form if you are submitting essays from more than one grade level.

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's use only:  
ASSIGNED NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

# Foundations for Life

## Sample Local or State

## Contest Entry Form

**ESSAYIST:** Please complete the following form and staple it on top of your essay.  
**Incomplete information may disqualify your essay from the contest.**

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

SCHOOL: \_\_\_\_\_

HOME ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: (     ) \_\_\_\_\_

TEACHER: \_\_\_\_\_ GRADE: \_\_\_\_\_

**FFL** MAXIM: Volume #: \_\_\_\_\_ Issue # \_\_\_\_\_ Maxim # \_\_\_\_\_

ESSAY TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you previously won this contest? (Please circle one.) YES     NO

If so, when and what was your topic? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

By signing this form, you (and your parent or legal guardian if you are under 18) give the local and national **Foundations for Life** contest committees permission to use your name, essay, and likeness at their discretion in print and electronic media to publicize and promote the contest.

Signature(s):    Essayist \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you prefer to remain anonymous, check below:  
☐ If you use my essay, please do not include my name or likeness with it.

# Note to Judges

Thank you for your commitment to our *Foundations for Life* contest. We feel certain that you will gain as much as you will give during this judging process. The students' essays offer compelling insights into their lives and our world, and they provide opportunity for insight into our own lives as well.

**As you read each essay please keep the following in mind:**

- Essays are submitted from various types of schools and organizations.
- Essayists come from various socioeconomic, religious, family, cultural, and community backgrounds.
- Essayists have differing educational backgrounds.

***This is why the essays are primarily judged on “compelling content.”*** The key components to an effective essay lie in the essayist's ability to:

- move the reader and provide insight into who the essayist is.
- illustrate a clear understanding of a *Foundations for Life* maxim (quote) and how it relates to the essay topic.
- illustrate a clear understanding of the value (or values) that relate to the quote and the essay topic.
- communicate how their lives and/or the world would be better if they and others lived up to the value (or values) identified.
- provide an encouraging and constructive angle to the content of the essay.
- present the essay's message in a universally appealing way.

While presentation is important, it should have less to do with the overall evaluation. Essays that are clearly written, easy to read, and smoothly organized from paragraph to paragraph will naturally carry greater weight in the process. *Remember, however, that the focus of this contest is not on composition skills or spelling/grammar accuracy, but rather on the participants' ability to communicate their own, personal Foundations for Life.* It is our hope that through the process of *reflecting, expressing, and committing*, youth will embrace the values critical to developing into purposeful and fulfilled adults.

Attached to each essay is a review form. Please write any feedback legibly and check to ensure that any numbers that have been assigned are easy to read. Also, please double-check your totals on a calculator. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact us!

**Thank you again, and enjoy the reading!**

# Judge's Review Form

Student Name/School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Essay Title \_\_\_\_\_ Total Points \_\_\_\_\_

Please assign points to each essay in the following categories. (Please do not use “partial points.”) Then add them up below and write the final sum in the Total Points space at the top.

**Compelling Content**

**Scale 1 to 10 pts.**

- is moving and thought provoking \_\_\_\_\_
- directly relates to the maxim chosen \_\_\_\_\_
- clearly illustrates a relationship to a “foundation” or “value” \_\_\_\_\_
- is positive and life-affirming \_\_\_\_\_
- has universal appeal \_\_\_\_\_
- demonstrates that living up to the value(s) would make the world better \_\_\_\_\_
- offers a compelling insight into the essay’s author \_\_\_\_\_

Compelling Content Total

\_\_\_\_\_

**Presentation**

**Scale 1 to 5 pts.**

- is clearly written (grammar and spelling do not impede message) \_\_\_\_\_
- is easy to read \_\_\_\_\_
- clearly conveys what the author intended to share \_\_\_\_\_
- has ideas and paragraphs that flow smoothly \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation Total

\_\_\_\_\_

Total Essay Points

Additional Comments:



# Judge's Tally Form

**Judge's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contest Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

After you have read all the essays and have put them in order (most to least exceptional), enter them below, along with the grade level of each student. Use additional pages if necessary.

<b>Your Score</b> (Rank from most to least exceptional)	<b>Essay I.D.</b>	<b>Maxim #</b>	<b>Student's Grade Level</b>
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
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20.			

# Final Tally Form

Transfer all of the judges' rankings to this table to determine the winners. Use additional pages if necessary.

[illegible]



## *Foundations for Life* In Partnership With Your Business

*“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment  
before starting to improve the world.”*

— Anne Frank

This quote is one of the many *Foundations for Life* maxims that inspire young people to articulate their own values through an exciting **new contest** in your area! We also hope that its meaning will inspire you to “*not wait a single moment*” in helping make a difference in the lives of youth in your community.

*Foundations for Life* is a program that helps enhance reading, critical thinking, and writing skills in 3<sup>rd</sup>- through 12<sup>th</sup>-grade students while simultaneously reinforcing character education efforts. Our *Foundations for Life Contest* will recognize the efforts of our students as they *reflect* on the meaning of the quotations, *express* the values that the quotations bring to mind, and *commit* to living up to those values.

### Consider **SPONSORING** our 2007 *Foundations for Life Contest!*

*For more information on how you and your organization can get involved, contact:*

Mary Smith, Chair  
*Foundations for Life* Contest Committee  
Street Address  
City, State Zip  
Contact Number  
E-mail

*Foundations for Life* is a program of the Josephson Institute of Ethics, a nonprofit, nonsectarian organization.

# Foundations for Life Fact Sheet

## Purpose (as articulated at the 2004 *Foundations for Life* Summit)

- To inspire young people to *reflect* upon, *express*, and *commit* to profound and enduring truths that will guide them to make ethical and effective choices throughout life.

## Strategies

- Provide an essay and/or discussion program that will stimulate students (*3<sup>rd</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades*) to *reflect* on the meaning of profound maxims and how they apply to their own lives and the world, *express* the underlying wisdom of the quotations in their own words, and *commit* to incorporating their new insights into long-term life strategies.
- Provide educators and youth leaders with a free, easy-to-use program that helps them teach young people reading, critical thinking, and writing skills while simultaneously reinforcing character education efforts.

## Benefits

- Enhances analytical writing skills
- Advances standards-based education goals
- Helps prepare students for state standards assessment tests and college entrance exams
- Gives educators an easy, effective way to enhance character education efforts
- Promotes the discovery of core values that move young people toward positive futures

## Facts

- *Foundations for Life* is a nonpartisan, secular program administered by the nonprofit Josephson Institute of Ethics and its CHARACTER COUNTS! Coalition. The program is adapted from the John Templeton Foundation's worldwide *Laws of Life* Essay Contest.
- Program materials are free to participating schools, districts, youth-serving organizations, communities, and states.
- *Foundations for Life* offers an opportunity for students of participating organizations to take part in a **National Essay Contest** (with chances for national recognition and scholarships).
- Educators can creatively incorporate the program into existing English, social studies, history, and character education curricula AND can choose to hold their own essay contests or participate in area contests.
- Involvement with CHARACTER COUNTS! or any other character education program is not required for participation in *Foundations for Life*.









# Foundations for Life

is a maxim-based essay and recognition program that enhances student reading, critical thinking, and composition skills required by the SAT and ACT exams, state and federal standards, and “No Child Left Behind” proficiency testing. The program also provides students with the opportunity to *reflect* upon, *express*, and *commit* to profound and enduring truths that will guide them in making ethical and effective choices throughout life.

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## National Office

9841 Airport Blvd., Suite 300  
Los Angeles, CA 90045  
(800) 711-2670 • (310) 846-4800  
fax (310) 846-4858

[www.FFL-essays.org](http://www.FFL-essays.org)