

First Place

Michael Iuorio, 8th grade, Mountainside Middle School, Scottsdale

There are many influential people in my life. Picking one of them however, was quite hard. Out of everyone in my life, I would have to pick my grandmother. My grandmother is a very giving, honest, and influential person. The main reason why I chose her on this essay is because of her generosity. Every week she volunteers at an abused woman's shelter in her town of Sarasota, Florida. She gives the woman clothes, everyday tools, and many more items. My grandmother influenced me in a big way growing up. She taught me that people are people, and that you shouldn't discriminate, hate, or treat people of other religions, nationalities, or races in any different way because of it. She feels very strongly about this because she lived in the time of Martin Luther King Junior, and the discrimination against African Americans. She always felt that they shouldn't be treated differently, even though her peers told her to. This why she taught kids at inner city school. This school had many kids with different religions, races, and amounts of money. She taught all kinds of children. She loves working with them because she feels she influenced them to look at people the same no matter if they are white, African American, Hispanic, Asian, or other nationalities. She always feels strongly about cancer research because she is a survivor of cancer.

From now on I am going to volunteer a lot more and help around my community for everyone.

Second Place

Vanessa Shultz, 8th grade, Mountainside Middle School, Scottsdale

Martin Luther King was an amazing person and led the way to many people who I admire! One person I admire very much is my 15 year old cousin Ryan! I admire Ryan because about a month ago, his youth group decided to go down to Mississippi and help rebuild the houses and buildings destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Instead of playing X-Box at home or even just lying around for ten days, Ryan decided to help out and do something that would make a difference for everyone there. Ryan's youth group had to raise the money to go on the trip, so you can imagine what that would be like! Ryan said that he felt this was a way he could help out and he could go see what it was like in Mississippi. Ryan realized just how much damage there was and how grateful he was that it had not happened to him! Ryan mentioned that if you ever get a chance to go and do something like this you should, because it will make you a better individual. This impacted Ryan because he had fun with his friends, they were able to build many houses, and he came home with bunches of fun stories to tell! I admire Ryan because this was an amazing thing eh did to help others and those in need of a house! If I ever get to do this, I will take the chance! Thank you Ryan for your help and inspiration here!

Third Place

Lauren Gluscic, 8th grade, Mountainside Middle School, Scottsdale

When I was a small girl, my dad was transferred to work at a company branch in Mexico. Upon seeing the devastation in our town, my mom was immediately compelled help poor souls. After seeing the locals snatch away our empty cardboard moving boxes to sleep in, she was motivated even further. My mom joined a group called Newcomers Club. The organization worked with poverty-stricken orphanages. They supplied the children with clothes, blankets, school supplies, and food. All of the food the orphanage could provide by themselves was rotten good out of grocery store dumpsters. These kids, even newborns, had to sleep on the cold, hard concrete floor of the orphanage until my mother's group was able to raise enough money to buy mattresses for them. But material things were not what the orphans cherished most. What they really craved was time and attention spent on them by a loving person, which is something their lives were severely lacking. My mom was one of the volunteers who offered to help throw celebrations and parties for the children on Mexican holidays. Piñatas and games meant as much to the children as their blankets and everyday necessities. This fact can be difficult to believe, but then again, these children were deprived of a person they could look at, and know they care. Children are able to survive because of donations people like my mother make, and I plan on dedicating part of my life to aid this worthy cause.