

First Place

**Katherine Macdonough, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Chaparral High School, Scottsdale**

When people think of leaders who work to make the world a better place, many images come to mind, but not many people think of a 17-year-old high school student. If someone were to meet my older sister for the first time they would probably assume that she was just like every other teenager. However, Elizabeth Macdonough isn't like every other teenager because not every teenager devotes a lot of his or her time to helping the community

Elizabeth has spent a lot of time helping others; her longest ongoing community service project involves helping underprivileged kids. After spending a summer as a counselor at Camp Swift, a camp that pays for the disadvantaged campers' fees, she decided that she wanted to take her role as counselor there one step further. Throughout her junior year of high school, Elizabeth tutored many of the same kids that attend Camp Swift every Wednesday after school. Also through the same program, Elizabeth would visit the same kids every Friday afternoon for what they called Salsa Camp, where she would help run sports games and other fun activities for the kids before they had to go home. After visiting and working with the kids for a year, Elizabeth decided that she wanted to do something else for the children, so she applied for a grant for Camp Swift from an endowment board, and succeeded in convincing the board why Camp Swift deserves the grant. I think her inspiration came from some of the kids who would save their milk cartons and snacks from Salsa Camp to take home because they were never sure if they would be having another meal that day.

Elizabeth continues to do community service and help people, and probably will continue to do so for the rest of her life. She is even thinking about becoming a doctor. It seems like everything that she does involves helping other people.

She might not make public speeches, but Elizabeth is similar to Martin Luther King Jr. because she motivates and gives hope to people to help make their lives better. .

Second Place

**Becky Steffens, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Chaparral High School, Scottsdale**

Dedication to Others

When I first passed through the iron gates and into Rancho Feliz, the feeling that overcame me was one of safety. After driving through the dusty streets of Agua Prieta, a grungy, dilapidated Mexican border-town, entering this place felt like entering a safe haven. It was well off the beaten road and far away from the musty smells and discordant noises of the town. I can only imagine the protection that the 15 orphan girls and 20 elderly people who make their homes there must feel. Located only about 10 miles south of the Arizona border, Rancho Feliz provides a refuge for girls who have been abandoned and seniors who have nowhere else to go. The foundation is kept up and running almost exclusively by one man named Alejandro Laureano.

I have been to Rancho Feliz twice and both times I have been stunned by the amount of work that Alejandro puts into the establishment. Not only is he in charge of keeping the orphanage and senior home running smoothly, but he most also oversee the many volunteers that pass through every week to build houses for the poverty-stricken residents of Agua Prieta. In addition to all of this, Alejandro teaches high school. Although he is not as destitute as many of the people who live in Agua Prieta, he is definitely not wealthy. While procuring scholarships for his orphan girls, he has to worry about putting his own son through school.

Many people in the town depend on Alejandro and Rancho Feliz every week for food staples such as flour, oil, beans, and rice. We had the opportunity to distribute this food to the people, and it was an incredible experience. There were literally hundreds of them lined up to receive their tiny shopping bags of food. It is so amazing to think about how one man's dedication can spread hope throughout a whole town. Alejandro is a remarkable person, and his commitment to service motivates and inspires.

Third Place

**Maria Vintilescu, 10<sup>th</sup> grade, Chaparral High School, Scottsdale**

“Strength in Kindness”

I don't know your name  
But I remember your kind face  
Such a tender and warm stranger  
In such a hot and angry place

I was sitting at a table outside, the smell of seafood so fragrant  
My family and I were eating lunch  
When she walked next to my chair  
With soda cans all in a bunch

The gentle dragging of her feet  
The quiet click of the zippers on her coat  
As she shuffled beside me  
Next to that San Francisco pier boat

A poor homeless woman  
So unfortunate in life  
Yet when I looked at her  
I saw such a strange and beautiful light

She asked if we had spare food or change  
And told us her life as we gave her what we had  
She was collecting soda cans to sell  
So that she and her family wouldn't have it so bad

As I was leaving the table  
I saw her push in my chair  
She cleaned up all the trash  
And then left; I'd never seen her again there

Her browned hands as she cleaned  
The oily luster of her hair  
The black stains on her boat  
Her feet were almost bare

You helped your community and me when we weren't in much need  
You helped me when you were struggling to survive  
You pushed in chair and picked up trash, even the smallest deed

ASU Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration  
2007 Student Essay Winners  
Secondary

When you barely had the energy to keep alive

Oh how I wish you knew the love and hope that you showed me  
The most precious gift of all  
You are now an angel to my eyes  
So lovely and so tall

I hope you live life with all your might  
I pray you never say that you left  
I pray you live the longest of all  
You are a hero in life, a hero in death