

The Community Page



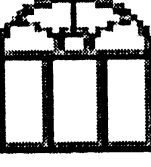
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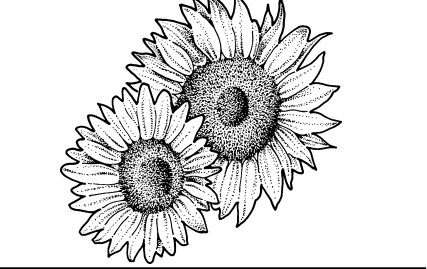
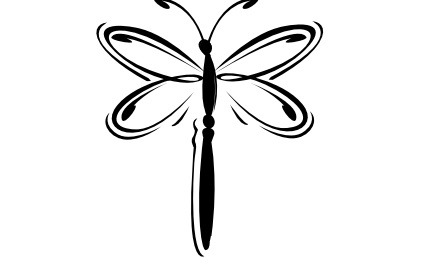
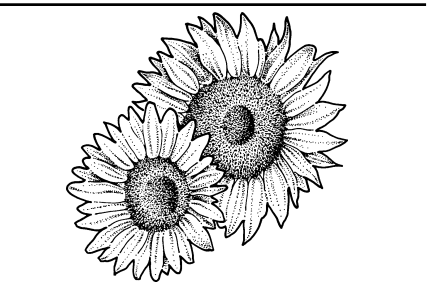
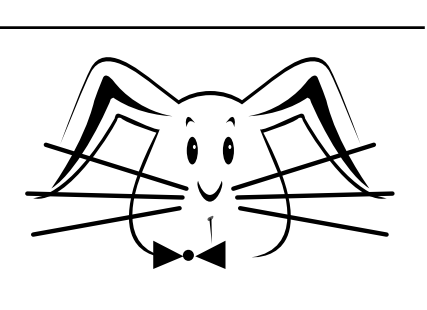
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Goodland girl wins essay contest

A Goodland girl won the grade-school division of the Goodland and the Northwest Kansas District Elks Americanism Essay Contest, and with it, a chance to compete for state and national awards.

Taking first place in Division I (fifth and sixth graders) was Fionna Cruz, daughter of Florida and Leandro Cruz. Milan Brannick, daughter of Mike and Tia Brannick, placed second, while Berkley White, daughter of Brandon and Denise White, was third. All are fifth graders at North Elementary School.

There were 38 essays in Division II (seventh and eighth grade), first place went to Mikaela Grace, an eighth grader at St. Francis Junior High. Alexis Hinkhouse won second and Jennifer Palkowitsh third. Both are students at Burlington Middle School.

First-place winners received a \$50 savings bond and went on to compete at the district level. Cruz's essay also was first in the Northwest Kansas District. At district the essay was judged against the top three essays from other lodges in the district. There were 128 essays in Division I and 38 in Division II at the district level. District winners go to the state contest, where the winners move on to national competition.

The Elks reported 111 essays from Goodland, St. Francis, Burlington and Cheylin schools. The essays, judged by former teachers Linda Knott and Margaret Waugh, had to be typed or printed in ink, not longer than 250 words and written by students in the fifth through eighth grades.

The theme was "Why I am proud to be an American?" Here are the winning essays:

By FIONNA CRUZ
North Elementary School

Being an American is something to be proud of. I can give you several reasons why I am proud to be a citizen of this great country.

America is the land of the free. It is the very symbol of democracy. Young as I am, I am enjoying this freedom. I can speak my mind without fear. I have a voice at home, at school and in the community. This is a stark contrast in some countries, where rulers never listen to the people they govern.

Secondly, America is the land of opportunities. As long as a person has the courage and patience to try something new, there are lots of venues to



Cruz

explore. There are numerous schools and universities to choose from to get the education one desires. There are plenty of job openings to apply for and earn a decent living.

Lastly, America is the land of security and protection. The government is doing its best to provide security and protection to its citizens. With the rise in terrorism, new measures were adopted to prevent these people from entering the country. The law enforcers have linked up their counterparts in other countries so that the terrorists can be caught. The military men and women are risking their lives to make this country a safe place to live in. Who could ever ask for more?

By MIKAELA GRACE
St. Francis Junior High

What does it mean to be an American? When I first sat down to write, I wasn't sure. I pondered the idea for awhile, and now I have a much clearer picture.

To be an American means to be proud — proud to live in the greatest country on Earth. It means to be proud to fight for our beliefs, and proud of those who presented their lives as payment for our freedom. Yes, Americans have many reasons to be proud.

To be an American means to be strong. It means to stand up for our beliefs and fight for our rights, but also to accept that everyone is different. We all have different languages, beliefs, and cultures, but we are still Americans.

Most importantly, though, to be American is to be free. We have freedoms most people can only dream of. We are free to love one another, because as great as our differences may be, we are all equal. We are all Americans, and that's what truly matters.

So why am I proud to be an American? Because being American gives me the freedom not only to believe, but to act on those beliefs. America gives everyone the chance not only to live, but to thrive.

By MILAN BRANNICK
North Elementary School

Have you ever stopped to think what it would have been like back when there were slaves and over in Iraq right now? Have you ever thought about now lucky we are right here in America? We have about everything and we are still greedy.

We have a free country. We can go to

school wherever we want. We have freedom of speech. We don't have some big fat ruler standing over us telling us what to do. We aren't slaves that have to do back breaking work. We are free. Free people of this wonderful country and I'm really proud of that.

People should feel safe because we have armed forces that protect us day and night. We have teachers that watch over us. We have police, mom's and dad's. Over in Iraq they have armed forces that kill the nice people. We are one of the luckiest countries in the world to have armed forces.

We have freedom of religion. We can worship whoever we want. We are free to pray. We don't have to worship kings or whose the king says and if we don't we will get killed. Were not slaves who leaders won't let them pray. You aren't in Iraq right now. Were free. Shout to the heavens, let it be heard that we are free people of the United States. WE ARE FREE, FREE, FREE!!

ALEXIS HINKHOUSE
Burlington Middle School

The United States of America is a country of choice and freedom. Here, we are allowed the freedom to worship as we please, speak our minds, and follow whatever career path we choose. In addition, we are given a much higher quality education, so that we'll have the opportunity to follow the paths we choose.

One very important reason I am so proud to be an American is the freedom of religion. The very people who set out to American first and arrived at Plymouth Rock came to escape religious persecution. This right is part of the basis of American life.

Another equally important quality that sets America apart from other nations is the freedom of speech expressed through words or the press. It's important for people to be able to voice their opinions without fear of arrest or other charges often applied by other countries. To take this right away is, by American standards, wrong.

A third offering of the United States is the education system. In order to fulfill all the potential we have the education we receive as a child can't be anything less than the best. In America, the best isn't offered, it's required. Because it is the American belief that an individual has the right to follow whatever career they may choose, all subjects are taught to keep students' options open should they change their minds.

From excellent education systems, to the right to your opinions and religion, America is the land of opportunity.



Grace



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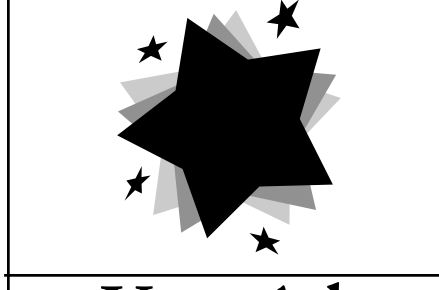


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