



2015-2016

Orange County Human Relations Month

Student Essay Contest

BACKGROUND:

The Orange County Human Relations Commission (HRC) offers students in Orange County an opportunity to get involved in Human Relations Month, recognized annually in February. Students are asked to write essays that explore a topic of equality and social justice. The HRC defines social justice as efforts that actively seek to eliminate oppression and create equal opportunity; where individuals may sufficiently provide for their physical and mental needs and the needs of their dependents; where individuals live in physically and mentally safe communities; where the environment and economy are sustainable and where all are able to participate civically.

ELIGIBILITY:

The essay contest is open to all students in grades 6 – 12 who are residents of Orange County. Each entry must be an original work and must be accompanied by an official entry form.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES:

All entries must be 500 – 600 words in length, and must be typed using on 12-point font (Times New Roman or Arial), with one (1) inch margins. Mailed entries must be post-marked by Tuesday, December 8, 2015. Electronic and hand-delivered entries must be received by Friday, December 11, 2015 by 4:00 p.m.

JUDGING:

The Human Relations Commission will assemble a panel of judges who will score each essay independently using a point system. Essays will be evaluated on organizational structure, content and topic relevance, creativity, and grammar. Submissions that do not follow the SUBMISSION GUIDELINES may be disqualified or receive a reduced score.

PRIZES:

The HRC will award the winning essays for the categories of Middle School entries and High School entries:

First Prize: \$100
Second Prize: \$50
Third Prize: \$25

Additionally, winners will be invited to read their essay aloud at the annual Pauli Murray Awards ceremony in February. Winners must sign a release form granting the HRC permission to publish their photos and essays on the Orange County website and in the local newspapers.

2015/2016 ESSAY TOPIC:

Middle School Essay Prompt:

If you could change one thing in your community that would be helpful to people with particular disabilities, what would that be and how do you think it would benefit them?

High School Essay Prompt:

What if your school were offered a gift of \$25,000 to make the school more welcoming and inclusive for **all** students? Write an essay proposing how you would use those funds and persuade the donor that your project is worthy of funding.

