

*Founders of the
Rotary Ethics Essay Contest*
Garbis Der-Yeghiayan
George R. Hensel

George Hensel and PDG Garbis Der-Yeghian exemplify the spirit of Rotary through their unwavering commitment to ethics, education, and community service.

George, the founder of California Driving School, embodied the Horatio Alger myth, rising from hardship during the Great Depression—when he slept on park benches—to achieving a Ph.D. in business and becoming a renowned philanthropist. His dedication to Rotary was unparalleled, with a 45-year record of perfect attendance and a legacy of giving millions to his community and Rotary causes. His vision for fostering ethical leadership lives on through the Rotary’s George Hensel Ethics Essay Contest, inspiring young people to reflect on the importance of integrity and moral decision-making.

PDG Garbis Der-Yeghian, a Rotarian of action and a champion of international peacebuilding, further enriched this legacy. Following his passing in January 2021 due to complications from COVID-19, an endowment was established to honor his contributions to peace and education. This endowment supports diverse peace-related initiatives, including scholarships, exchange programs, and contests such as Art for Peace, benefiting students, Interactors, Rotaractors, and Rotarians in District 5300 and beyond. Together, George and Garbis symbolize the transformative power of service, leaving an indelible mark on Rotary and the next generation of leaders worldwide.

**Rotary
Ethics Essay Contest**

\$2,000

to student with winning essay
\$300 *to teacher of winning student*

\$500

to 2 Runner-Up
\$100 *to teacher of runner-up*

PURPOSE

To demonstrate Rotary’s commitment to youth mental health by providing students with a platform to share their perspectives on the ethical issues shaping our world.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES online

- Template letter to HS Principal
- Student Flyer/Poster
- Brochure
- Club Student entry form
- District Entry Form
- Scorecards
- Club Certificate of Recognition

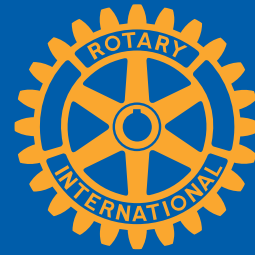
**Club's top winning essay to
districtessaycontest@mtbrotary.org,
only one essay per club**

**Essay must be submitted to District
no later than March 30, 2026**

CONTEST DISTRICT CHAIR

Manuel “Manny” Franco
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Rotary
District 5300



**Ethics
Essay
Contest**

UNITE FOR GOOD

For All High School Students in RI District 5300

PURPOSE

This contest promotes the importance of ethics among today's youth and encourages them to express their views. We hope that each student will consult with their parents and teachers for this essay in an effort to build communication between young people and adults regarding ethics. We also wish to enhance Rotary's presence in schools and in the community.

PROCESS

1. Select Club member to chair contest.
2. Contact local high school counselors to promote student participation in the contest.
3. Ask that the essay become a class project and submit essays to the Club for local judging.
4. Schedule a program in which the winner and runners'-up of your local contest are recognized. Your Club can award scholarships to the Club winner and runners'-up with club funds in addition to the district prize.
5. Submit the winning Club essay to the District Chair for District-level judging at districtessaycontest@mtbrotary.org



ESSAY TOPIC

- Write on an ethical dilemma that has touched your life.
- Include your view of the importance of ethics in this particular situation.
- You must include your personal definition of ethics.

RULES

- You must be enrolled in a high school or live in District 5300. And, you must be in the 9-12 grade on March 31, 2026.
- The essay must be no more than 1,000 or less than 800 words.
- The essay must be the original, unpublished work of the student, and only one essay per student may be submitted.
- The essay must be submitted to your local Rotary Club in late February.

JUDGING CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES

Only those essays that have followed the "Topics and Rules" may be judged.

1. Clarity of message and presentation of idea (40%)
2. Style and originality (40%)
3. Grammar, spelling, and structure (20%)

NOTE: If your Club's entry is named winner or runner-up at the District level, be prepared to sponsor your student and parent or mentor to District Conference to receive an award and scholarship.