**2018-19 TASSP Academic Excellence Award Application Essay**

(Essay is proctored, timed and written in ink pen.)

*Simon Sinek, quoting Malcolm Forbes, recently brought back to life the timeless quote: “You can easily judge the character of a man by how he treats those who can do nothing for him.” Explain how this idea impacts your generation in relation to our society whether past, present or future.*

We live in a cutthroat society. One if the most respectable attributes of an individual is their ability to successfully compete and reap the benefits of their efforts. Compassion and service often fall off the priority list as they do not lead to the monetary success people desire. However, I firmly believe that acting out in compassion and service is beneficial for a healthy and productive society.

I am a firm proponent of the “American Dream”, because I know it is a large reason why the United States is so unique and special. Yet, I believe that the unseen characteristics of our society, namely our treatment of those who cannot benefit us, truly holds merit. I recently had the blessing of volunteering for the Special Olympics event that recently occurred where I live. I had the chance to play basketball with several special needs students that attend my high school. It was a blast! In a world so focused on outcompeting each other, it was refreshing to witness a group of kids who simply radiated joy. Rather than worry about the score – which I found myself doing at times – the special needs kids were just excited to be there. I recall a specific instance where a student lost control of the ball, only to have a student on the opposite team grab the loose ball and hand it back. That moment was the icing on the cake for me in that experience. I was speaking to my sister after the fact and she noticed the instance as well. We both began asking the same question: what if we as a generation treated others like the special needs kids treated each other? The answer, I am convinced, is that instead of putting so much stock in the material aspects of this world, such as money, cars, houses, and possessions, we as a generation would focus on the intangible things in life that actually hold value eternally. One example of this is relationships. I forged new relationships with each and every one of those special needs students. Now, when they see me at school, I can talk with them and laugh with them because we have built a relationship that holds more merit than winning.

A more historical example of the idea that the character of a man is based on his treatment of those who offer him nothing in return comes almost 2000 years ago. Jesus, regardless of your belief, is considered to be one of the most influential leaders to ever live. He claimed many things, and regardless if you believe them or not, you cannot argue that he wasn’t a good man. He is, in fact, the epitome of a great man. He lived with and taught to rotten scoundrels, dirty fishermen, and corrupt tax collectors, but he loved them all the same. Even when one of his closest, most trusted followers betrayed him, he still loved him. To the day of his death, he was serving those all over the class system. He is the reason for the expression, “leadership begins with service.” My generation, and society in general, needs to look to Jesus’ example and implement his lifestyle in regard to service. The people he served gave him no compensation in return for his efforts. However, this did not stop him from serving the majority of his life.

Jesus’ life, displays for me and my generation, that there is no excuse to not love and serve those around you with no expectation of reward. Those around Jesus benefitted from him, and if my generation took this to heart, the pain and suffering in this world would become less potent.

Through my experience volunteering on the Special Olympics team, as well as the analyzation of Jesus’ life and testimony, it is evident that my generation has the potential to impact our society for the better. By disregarding material possessions and a life of comfort, Generation Z’s character will grown into a force that combats the narcissistic and selfish attitudes society is plagued with today. I would even make the argument that those who treat others who offer nothing in return with compassion and service indirectly receive a reward. I gained joy from volunteering with those special needs kids, Jesus gained the respect and love of his followers, and Generation Z has the capability to gain honor and admiration of future generations. This should motivate everyone to work a bit harder to positively influence everyone they come into contact with.