

2020-2021 Lions International Peace Essay Contest

Grand Prize Winner Joshua Wood, 13 years old

Peace and Service Go Hand in Hand

I remember walking hand in hand with my Grandfather when I was a little boy. He was a very wise man, his grey hair highlighting his wisdom. His hands felt dry and rough, particularly to a child who uses his fingers to read.

It was many years later when I stood at his funeral that I realized the significance of those dry, rough hands. They were the hands that held mine and guided me when I was young. They were the hands of a young man, who went to War, sacrificing his own safety, to preserve freedom in our country. They were the hands of a man who held his dying mate in battle. They were the hands of a man who mowed the lawns of local elderly people. They were the hands of the man that had been awarded medals, yet didn't wear them as he felt he did not need recognition for his service. They were the hands of a man who truly understood what service meant.

My Grandfather planted a seed in my mind many years ago about the importance of service and its huge contribution to not only peace in our communities but providing inner peace as well. I often think about the conflicts, wars and fighting in the world and the sadness in many people's lives. I also often think about how selfless my Grandfather was by helping others without wanting anything in return. My Grandfather would say to me, "you don't have sight, but you have insight and that is much more important."

We can find inspiration from so many who have gone before us. Mother Theresa who served the poor in India. William Booth, Founder of the Salvation Army, who dedicated his life to helping the poor. The most inspiring for me personally, is Helen Keller who herself was blind and deaf, yet lived a life of service. Despite her disabilities she helped veterans blinded in World War 1, founded charities, advocated for the blind and poor and led the American Foundation for the Blind for over forty years. All these incredible people served others, and by doing so brought peace to the poor, wounded and hungry. A quote by Albert Schweitzer resonates with me, "the only really happy people are those who have learned how to serve."

I have made a promise to my Grandfather. That I will spread the word about serving others and how it not only promotes peace for others but also provides an inner peace that so many people are striving for. I can serve others despite my disability. I do not want to be self-focused but focused on others. I hope to inspire others to achieve peace through service. In the words of Mother Theresa, "The fruit of service is peace." I want to plant seeds of peace in my life and encourage others to do so also. Peace and service go hand in hand just like my Grandfather and I walking along many years ago.