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For Immediate Release

Brisbane 8th Grader, Joshua Wood, Takes Home the Grand Prize in Lions Clubs International Peace Essay Contest

(Oak Brook, Ill.) – Joshua Wood, a 13-year-old boy from Brisbane, Australia, has an idea of what peace should mean to the world. Joshua brought that idea to life through a powerful essay earning him the grand prize in the Lions Clubs International Peace Essay Contest.

“The Lions International Peace Essay Contest lifts the voices of incredible young people who have powerful ideas of how we can bring about a kinder and more peaceful world,” says Lions Clubs International President, Dr. Jung-Yul Choi. “We are proud to support the creative process of children around the globe. It is through humbly serving our communities that we can achieve peace.”

Created to give an opportunity for young people with visual impairments to express their feelings of peace, the International Essay Contest is a staple of Lions clubs around the world. Lions work with local schools and area families to identify young people who are interested in participating and who could benefit from this program.

“I was born with a rare retinal condition and use braille to read,” said Joshua. “I would like others to know that even if you have a disability, you can still achieve great things and be a positive influence on other people.”

The winning essay, titled "Peace and Service Go Hand-in-Hand," was selected for its originality, organization merit and portrayal of the contest theme, "Peace Through Service." The Brisbane Camp Hill Carindale Lions Club sponsored the local contest that gave this 8th grader the opportunity to participate in this global event and share his words of peace with the world.

"Brisbane Camp Hill Carindale Lions Club members are so happy for Joshua Wood's achievement in winning the Major Award for Lions International Peace Essay competition," said club president, Bill Dahl. "Joshua has displayed determination with entering and humility in this success. The support from his whole family has been superb."

Through his essay, Joshua explores the idea of peace through the eyes of his grandfather and the stories his grandfather told Joshua about what it means to serve others. Joshua hopes his essay encourages others to help people despite any disabilities or difficulties they face.

"The Peace Essay is important because it encourages people to not only think about peace but also how to achieve it," said Joshua. "I would love to live in a more peaceful world and for people to find inner peace. I believe many problems and disputes can be solved with a more peaceful approach, whereby people think of others as well as themselves. With more patience, kindness and a willingness to help others, I believe we can achieve a more peaceful society."

As the contest winner, Joshua will receive a US\$5,000 cash prize. Visit the Lions Clubs International website, lionsclubs.org/peace-essay, to read Wood's essay and learn more about the contest.

Lions Clubs International, the world's largest service club organization, is made up of more than 1.4 million men and women in over 200 countries and geographical areas throughout the world. Lions created the Peace Essay Contest

to foster a spirit of peace and international understanding in young people worldwide.

Peace and Service Go Hand-In-Hand
By: Joshua Wood

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.