

## Why I am Proud to be an American

Tyler Bivins – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place – Division I

I am so proud to be an American because we have the freedom of choice. When I watch the television I see that other countries do not have the choices that we have as Americans and it makes me feel special.

I have the choice of what President I like and no matter what color I am or what I believe in, it is okay. I can decide what type of clothes I want to wear, food I like to eat, and places I like to travel. I go to school for free and I can speak what I feel as long as I am respectful. When I grow up it is all up to me and the choices I make to decide what I will be. I can have a big or small family and I can have whatever pets I like. I am sure there are more choices that I will have being a grown up but I am still young and have a lot to learn.

I am proud to be an American because we have brave soldiers and police officers that help keep us safe. I know our brave soldiers and officers will put their life on the line to protect me, my friends, my family and neighbors even if I am a stranger because they love us all.

I stand with my chest out, a smile on my face when I pledge to the American Flag because I am so proud to be an American.



## Essay Contest

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The United States of America

Michael Middleton – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

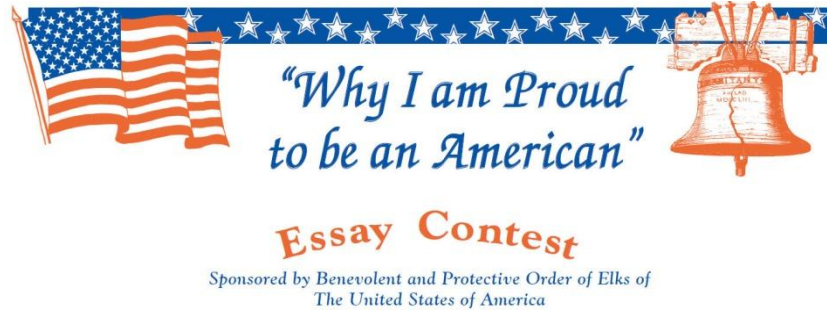
2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Division I

Were you alive on 9.11.01? Well, my Dad is a Virginia State Trooper and he was just finishing a traffic stop when he saw a plane flying low. Then he heard that the Pentagon was struck by a plane. When he got to the Pentagon, he went inside the flaming building. While inside, he directed several people out. On the fourth floor, after searching for a while, he saw firefighters who said, “get out of the building as soon as possible.”

When he got out, he collapsed. The ambulance took him to Alexandria Hospital. In the hospital, the doctors found out he had first and second degree internal burns in his throat and lungs. He was in a coma for five days. By the fourth day, he was having organ failure and almost died. One of the doctors was aware of an experimental drug he wanted to try. Luckily my Mom signed off on it and let them use it! The next morning, it started to make him better and they brought him out of the coma and took the tubes out.

We are so happy that he is still alive. We are very proud of his efforts in trying to help at the Pentagon on that horrific day. He has received many awards, including the very first Virginia Governor’s Medal of Valor, from former Governor James Gilmore.

Having a Dad who serves and protects, and risks his life every day, makes me proud to be an American.



Matthew Davison – 5<sup>th</sup> Grade

3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Division I

America, what's so great about that country? Is it the fact that it is a free place, where decisions are made by the people? Maybe it's the fact that a vote is a vote that decides what happens. I think I know why... it's all of the above.

I am proud to be American; I am proud that my country helps other countries. I am proud that every vote counts. I am proud that the people get to decide what happens. Most of all, I am proud that my country, the country of the people, is a democracy!

Our way of life may be somewhat smooth, but in some countries it is not. Some countries are on the brink of war or dealing with a devastating earthquake. I am proud about being an American because America is the land of the people. No matter what happens America was and always will be "the land of the free and the home of the brave."



## Essay Contest

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The United States of America

Danielle Matta – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place – Division II

Forty-two years ago, my grandfather and his family boarded a boat and traveled on a very long journey. He left his small village in northern Greece for a place where he knew he could find opportunities for him and his family. A place where a man could bring his wife and two little girls to create a better life. This place is America.

Today, my mother, one of those two little girls long ago, has her own family. The same reasons that convinced her father to bring her family here still exist, plus more. We are so fortunate to have many wonderful opportunities and choices here in the U.S., whether it's about the religion we follow or the college we wish to attend. We have an abundance of options, all at our fingertips.

I am happy to know that my brother and I grow up in a society where we are taught to express ourselves and follow our dreams, as well as to accept and respect others. We are both blessed with the opportunity for education and freedom of speech. Unfortunately, this is not the case for some other countries. So many Americans take for granted the rights we were given since birth, the rights that give us the freedom to choose our futures.

To be allowed such freedom throughout my life, and even my own children's lives, is a privilege not all young people have. And that is why I am proud to be an American.



## Essay Contest

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Katherine Avdellas – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

2<sup>nd</sup> Place – Division II

I am proud to be an American for many reasons. The first amendment represents several of these reasons and stands out to me as a very powerful expression of the opportunities we enjoy in our nation. It contains and describes many freedoms that other countries are not fortunate enough to enjoy. The freedoms that are addressed are religion, assembly, petition, press, and speech.

These freedoms are essential to our ability to participate effectively in a democracy. I most appreciate the freedom of speech because it gives us all a chance to speak our minds on matters that are important to us. I am also thankful for freedom of religion because in many other countries, practicing your own religion can result in persecution and sometimes death.

I have also come to appreciate the importance of freedom of the press as I have been reading newspapers and books that deal with topics such as campaign financing and tax reform. I have realized how important it is to have competent news organizations that provide different perspectives. These institutions are able to report freely on topics that they think are important, without fear of punishment from the government. I believe that as I continue my education I will even appreciate this freedom more because I am always interested in learning about topics from different points of view.

In conclusion, the fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the first amendment are what makes our country unique and are what make me proud to be an American.



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Katy Hooper – 8<sup>th</sup> Grade

3<sup>rd</sup> Place – Division II

I am proud to be an American because of all of our scientific and innovative achievements. From America came all sorts of inventions that have really changed our lives – electricity, telephones, TVs, light bulbs, and airplanes, to name a few. Trying to imagine life without any of these things shows you just how important these things are to our lifestyle, and they all came from the USA.

Not only is America already full of great minds, like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Edison, it attracts even more. Alexander Graham Bell and Albert Einstein moved to America from other countries, and so did many other brilliant inventors and scientists.

Americans were the first ones to get men on the moon because they were the ones who had enough inspiration to make a dream that sounded crazy to others to into a reality. Others may soon follow in our footsteps, but the US was first, and people will remember that.

America's free nature attracts immigrants and inspires innovation. People feel free to be creative and make crazy inventions, making the US a place full of patents that sometimes aren't worth much, but sometimes are some of the most brilliant ideas in the world.

The United States of America is a country full of brilliant minds, full of ideas to share with the world. This is why I am proud to be an American.