

Honorable Mention

Annie Giancola

7th grade, Stanton Middle School, Kent City Schools, Kent

Title: *The Compass In My Life*

As human beings, we tend to take the good things in life for granted, myself included. When I was younger, I realized this and did my best to be thankful for everything I had, but I guess I never actually thought about it a whole lot, until I hit middle school. Junior high was sort of a rude awakening for me. It taught me, more than anything else, to be thankful for everything in my life, material and non-material, and it made me realize that life has been very good to me.

A few months into this year, a girl told me about a kid who had tried to commit suicide. I was shocked! How could someone's life be so bad that they would want to do that? Later that week, someone else told me about a girl who was cutting herself. I couldn't believe it! I guess, rather, I didn't want to believe it. I continued to hear more rumors, and, as I did, I started to think more about my own life and how I could be more thankful for all the people and things in it. Thinking about this made me realize that how a person turns out and the decisions he or she makes depends on that person's home life and up-bringing. Having loving parents that will teach you good values is like having a compass that is guaranteed to guide you in the right direction.

Too many kids don't have the structure and love that I have at home. Too many kids don't have a mom that will ask you, "How did school go today?" or have a good, healthy meal ready for dinner. Too many kids have parents that ignore them or get angry at them – or worse- when they come home from school. The whole idea scares me so much. It scares me even more when I realize there is almost nothing I can do for these kids because I don't even know who they are. It could be the person I just sat next to in math class, or just passed in the hall. All I can do is pray for whoever it is, try to be nice to everybody, and be grateful for my strong, caring family.

I have all the things that those other kids don't have – siblings that I get along with and cheer me up if I am unhappy, discipline, structure and other important values, a mother that feeds me and is there for me to talk to, and a father that works to provide for the family. I also have the reassurance that when I come home from school my mom will be there, that my dad will be home from work soon, my brother and sister will be home from school soon, too, and that all of them love me and that won't change. Too many kids in the world don't have that reassurance. A mother isn't just a given, nor is a father. I just never realized that not everybody has things like these. I also have a large group of friends that I know I can trust with anything and I know will let me talk to them. I know I can talk to them because they are going through the same thing I am, and they understand what I am feeling. It didn't take a major event or a life-changing novel or movie to make me step back and look at what I had. All it was was middle school.

Every night before I go to sleep, I lay in my warm, comfortable bed and thank God for our house and all the luck we've had. I pray for everyone in the world that won't sleep in a good bed tonight and that won't wake up happy and ready to face the world the next morning; but most of all.....I thank him for my brother, sister, my friends and for my parents, who I know will be there for me, like a compass, the next morning and the rest of my life.