

THE COURAGE OF
BOSTON'S CHILDREN



2012

VOLUME XXI

Award-winning essays on courage
written by sixth-grade students participating in
The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's *Courage in My Life* program

The Board of Trustees and staff of The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, Inc. would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to those individuals and organizations that gave so generously of their time, talent and energy to *The Courage of Boston's Children: Volume XXI*.

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Stacey Bakaj, Senior Designer and Project Manager

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	VII
THE MAX WARBURG COURAGE CURRICULUM, INC.	VIII
BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS	IX
2012 ESSAY JUDGES	X
PREFACE BY ALEXANDRA MARSHALL	XI
COURAGE IN MY LIFE	XII
MAX'S STORY BY STEPHANIE WARBURG AND CHARLOTTE HARRIS	1
<i>Courage Essays</i>	
MYLES HAYNES, JR. • MICHELE SPRATLING, TEACHER <i>Martin Luther King, Jr. K-8 School</i>	12
JORDAN SHEFFERMAN • MEG WHITE, TEACHER <i>Holten Richmond Middle School</i>	14
TANISHA ANDRADE • ELIZABETH DEON AND PHYLLIS FEASTER, TEACHERS <i>Franklin D. Roosevelt K-8 School</i>	16
KLAUDIA DOKO • DONKOR MINORS, TEACHER <i>Maurice J. Tobin K-8 School</i>	18
JOHAN ARIAS • JOANNA PRINCIPE-ZESK, TEACHER <i>William B. Rogers Middle School</i>	20
JENNIFER GARCIA • CELESTE HENRY-WILLIAMS, TEACHER <i>James P. Timilty Middle School</i>	22

ZOWY HIDALGO • JESSICA TANG, TEACHER <i>Young Achievers Science and Mathematics Pilot K-8 School</i>	24	TYERAY WILLIAMS • TED DOOLIN, TEACHER <i>James P. Timilty Middle School</i>	50
GLORIA BERGANZA • REBECCA FISCHER, TEACHER <i>John W. McCormack Middle School</i>	26	MAEVE COLLINS • MELISSA HEATH, TEACHER <i>Boston Collegiate Charter Public School</i>	52
MANU GUNNALA • JAIME GOLDSTEIN, TEACHER <i>Buckingham Browne and Nichols School</i>	28	ISABELLA RIZZO • MARJORIE SARZANA, TEACHER <i>Saint John School</i>	54
STEPHANIE NKWAH • REGINA JONES, TEACHER <i>William B. Rogers Middle School</i>	30	DANIEL O'TOOLE • TRICIA POLES AND CAROLA TABELA, TEACHERS <i>Saint Brendan School</i>	56
PABLO A. RODRIGUEZ • JENNA WILSEY, TEACHER <i>James P. Timilty Middle School</i>	32	GUSTAVO NOVELLE-RUDDY • AMBER MALM, TEACHER <i>Patrick Lyndon K-8 School</i>	58
ANA PATRICIA MORALES • ROBIN ROBERTO HORGAN, TEACHER <i>Esperanza Academy</i>	34	CHRISTOPHER LACOMBE • GREGORY JOHNSON, TEACHER <i>McKinley South End Academy</i>	60
TAHJE HOWARD • OLIVIA PETERS, TEACHER <i>William McKinley Middle School</i>	36	STEPHANIE GONZALEZ • NATASHA EVITTS, TEACHER <i>Mario Umana Middle School Academy</i>	62
JALINA ROACHFORD • DAN CESARIO, TEACHER <i>Sarah Greenwood K-8 School</i>	38	KOREDE OYENUGA • MELISSA HEATH, TEACHER <i>Boston Collegiate Charter Public School</i>	64
PRESTLY YVES GETANT • ZAKIA DILDAY, TEACHER <i>Neighborhood House Charter School</i>	40	MOHAMMED SALIH • REBECCA FISCHER, TEACHER <i>John W. McCormack Middle School</i>	66
JOCELYN PROPHETE • AARON KESLER AND MICHELE KNOEBEL, TEACHERS <i>Boston Renaissance Charter Public School</i>	42	ISMAEL MEDINA • WILLIAM GOULD, TEACHER <i>Joseph J. Hurley K-8 School</i>	68
YUSUF BADRELDIN • AYESHA OSMANY, TEACHER <i>Alhuda Academy</i>	44	KEANNA MACDONALD COAKLEY • DAN CESARIO, TEACHER <i>Sarah Greenwood K-8 School</i>	70
MALITEY AMARCHUKWU MULLINGS • ASHLEY JOHNSON, TEACHER <i>Parkside Christian Academy</i>	46	LINDSAY LECLAIRE • DEBBIE AUDAY, TEACHER <i>Holten Richmond Middle School</i>	72
NUJAT CHOWDHURY • SCOTT LARIVEE, TEACHER <i>Mary Lyon K-8 School</i>	48	JERRELYNN PEREZ • EMILY TRONO, TEACHER <i>Rafael Hernández K-8 School</i>	74

BRIANNA RIVERA • DEBBIE AUDAY, TEACHER <i>Holten Richmond Middle School</i>	76
DJ DASILVA • AARON COHEN, TEACHER <i>Jackson Mann K-8 School</i>	78
ESTHER JOSEPH • JACQUELYN WESNER, TEACHER <i>Saint Columbkille Partnership School</i>	80
LAURA CLABAUGH • JEANINE PENNUCCI, TEACHER <i>Warren-Prescott K-8 School</i>	82
CATHERINE HART WOODS • JAMIE RICHARDSON, TEACHER <i>South Boston Catholic Academy</i>	84
CYAN O'GARRO • MICHELE SPRATLING, TEACHER <i>Martin Luther King, Jr. K-8 School</i>	86
KEVIN UMANZOR TORRES • NATASHA EVITTS, TEACHER <i>Mario Umana Middle School Academy</i>	88
KAMAN HAU • JESSICA TSAI, TEACHER <i>Josiah Quincy Upper School</i>	90
DANIELA FUENTES • AARON COHEN, TEACHER <i>Jackson Mann K-8 School</i>	92
JULIANA WOLFE • ERIN GOLDEN, TEACHER <i>Saint Patrick School</i>	94
JEFFREY OSAYANDE • DAWN AVERY, TEACHER <i>James M. Curley K-8 School</i>	96
STERLING MENTOR • AMY HIGGINBOTHAM, TEACHER <i>William B. Rogers Middle School</i>	98
ZACHARY MARTINS • SARA SABINS, TEACHER <i>Boston Renaissance Charter Public School</i>	100

THE COURAGE OF BOSTON'S CHILDREN:
VOLUME XXI IS DEDICATED TO

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THREE INDIVIDUALS WHO CONTINUE TO *"Take it to the Max"*

Joan Kennedy has supported The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum for over twenty years. Her service as a member of the Board of Trustees and a classroom volunteer has been invaluable. Her devotion to children and education has touched the lives of so many in Boston. We are truly grateful for her continued work on behalf of the Courage Curriculum.

Alex Saltonstall, through his work at Cambium Learning Technologies and as a member of The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum's Advisory Board, has helped "The Max" grow on a national level, reaching new classrooms across the United States. We are most thankful for Alex's leadership, vision, and strong belief in the universal nature of courage.

Paul Reville, Secretary of Education for the State of Massachusetts, has been a great ally of educators, students, and families. With experience as a teacher, administrator, business leader and policy maker, Paul has worked tirelessly to ensure the highest quality of education possible for the children of our state.

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PREFACE

BY ALEXANDRA MARSHALL

In this 21st edition of *The Courage of Boston's Children*, you will be introduced to 45 sixth-grade students whose vivid examples of courage powerfully embody the values and goals of The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum. The essays in this collection speak of personal struggles confronted and overcome, as these children demonstrate with their own stories how to change, and sometimes reverse, even the most difficult of challenges. With an inspiring awareness, they engage with their lives in mature ways. And yet, when you see the beautiful portraits that accompany these essays, you will also see how young they are to be so wise.

The purpose of the writing assignment that culminates in the publication of this book is that all of the students and teachers in the Curriculum's 91 participating classrooms might recognize and share – and thereby honor – the individual acts of courage that can build and enrich school communities. These essays were carefully selected from among the more than 2,500 submissions that were read by the 145 volunteers who assembled at the Boston Public Library, in an evaluation process that is both an affirmation of the entire effort and an opportunity to celebrate the exceptional writing that you will experience in these pages.

Leading off this year's volume is a remarkable essay by Myles Haynes, Jr., who invites us to witness not only the difficulty of his daily experience, but the breakthrough it is for him to have written about it, rather than continuing to conceal his condition even from his friends. Instead he writes, "I really hope other children with Tourette's Syndrome get to read this so they know they are not alone. I'm hoping to meet another child with this same disorder so we would be able to support each other. We would be able to demonstrate bold courage together."

Here is a striking and important example of the universal function of individual courage: when a child can locate the transforming bravery that already exists within, and then extend that impulse toward the creation of a larger connection. By our embracing each of these "Courage in My Life" essays, the courage of these children can offer bold and empowering lessons for all.

Alexandra Marshall has published five novels and a work of nonfiction. She has coordinated the selection of Max Warburg Fellows since the introduction of the Courage Curriculum.

COURAGE IN MY LIFE

The mission of The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, Inc. is to strengthen the character development and literacy skills of students. The program empowers children to discover, then recognize, the role of courage in the characters they read about, in the lives of those around them, and in their own lives: past, present and future.

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum is a year-long language arts program dedicated to strengthening the character development and literacy skills of students in Boston and beyond. The organization was founded to honor the life of Max Warburg, a courageous sixth-grader whose steadfast determination and heartfelt hope in the face of his battle with leukemia continues to inspire our work.

Since the program's inception in 1991, the Courage Curriculum has positively impacted the academic performance and increased the essential knowledge of over 100,000 sixth and ninth grade students in Boston Public Schools and surrounding charter, pilot, public and parochial schools. By connecting with Max's story and with award-winning literature featuring courageous young people, students come to recognize and celebrate the role that courage plays in their own lives. Our work with talented classroom teachers allows us to empower young people to continue to act courageously, to the benefit of their classmates, families, communities and themselves.

Through two school-based programs, *Courage in My Life* and *The Courage of My Convictions*, The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum works to improve the reading, writing and critical thinking skills of students; to inspire participants to celebrate acts of moral courage in their own lives and the lives of others; and to train and support teachers in the use of the Courage Curriculum to improve their own instruction and to engage and inspire their students to make meaningful connections to literature. The success of the program is evidenced by the resulting quality of students' writing and individual pride in their work, and the direct correlation between its emphasis on literature content and writing competency.

Both programs use a layered approach that reinforces classroom work; individual reading, writing and critical thinking skills; professional development and training opportunities for teachers; and draws families and the larger community together for a culminating event to celebrate the outcomes of the program and the students' efforts. Although it is intensely focused on classroom practice and teacher instruction, The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum also disseminates this work on its website; in training institutes for teachers; in this annual publication of essays and at an annual awards luncheon for Max Warburg Fellows. The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum has been featured in academic journals and other publications positioning the program as a national model for character education programs and excellence in school and community partnerships.

Our sixth grade program, *Courage in My Life*, focuses on exploring and understanding the nature of courage, while our ninth grade program, *The Courage of My Convictions*, emphasizes the importance of putting courage into action. *The Courage in My Life* curriculum features the following novels: *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Patterson; *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli; *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry; *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor; *So Far From the Bamboo Grove* by Yoko Kawashima Watkins; and *Taking Sides* by Gary Soto.

Today, nearly 100% of Boston Public Schools' sixth-grade classrooms benefit from this curriculum, reaching more than 3,500 students and their families annually. The curriculum is also taught in classrooms across the country and as far away as Thailand, Cambodia, and the United Kingdom. The Courage Curriculum's sixth and ninth grade programs continue to grow on a local, national and global scale. Max Warburg's legacy continues to inspire young people to recognize and celebrate the courage in their lives.

MAX'S STORY

BY STEPHANIE WARBURG AND CHARLOTTE HARRIS

Max Warburg was born and brought up in Boston, Massachusetts. Not long ago, Max lived in an apartment near the center of the city with his parents and his brother, Fred. Max was two and a half years older than Fred. Max had wavy light brown hair and bright brown eyes, and Fred had straight black hair and hazel eyes, but when they smiled, they looked a lot alike even though Max was much bigger.

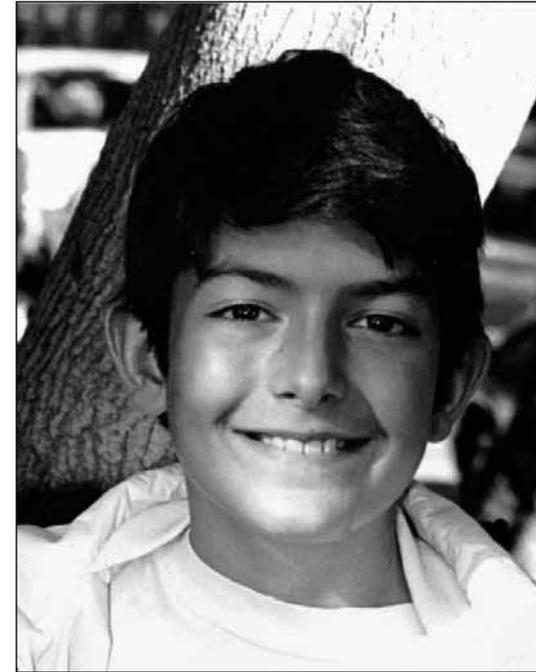
The boys liked sports. They liked to swim in the summer, ski in the winter, and sail whenever they got a chance. Mostly, their father, who was an architect, had to work, but as often as he could he took the boys sailing, teaching them to tie lines, trim sails, and steer a course.

“Here,” he would say, “Max, you take the wheel. Fred, you hold this line tight and Max will sail us out of the harbor.”

And Max would. He'd stand at the helm the way he thought his father stood. Eyes on the sail to be sure it didn't spill its wind, both hands on the big wheel, and feet spread apart, wind blowing his hair and puffing out his jacket, Max would play the part of the captain, dreaming of the day he would have his own boat. He knew exactly what he wanted. A sixteen-foot, drop-centerboard boat called a 420, just the right size for a twelve-year-old, which he figured he would be before he would ever get his 420. Then he could take Fred on some great sails, even on the days his dad was too busy. Better yet, then he could race and maybe win.

He knew what he'd call his boat, too. Take It To The Max, he'd call it, not just because it had his name in it, but because it sounded like the sky was the limit and that's how Max felt.

Max had other dreams. Ever since he was little, Max had been good at imitating people. His mom would talk to someone on the phone, and when she hung up, Max could imitate her 'talking to a stranger' voice or 'talking to her best friend' voice perfectly. He could hear an accent once and reproduce it exactly. He could mimic actors and other kids, making his friends laugh and fascinating everyone with this ability.



“You ought to be an actor when you grow up,” people would tell him. So he started looking at the actors on TV with his mind on learning acting skills and camera angles.

“Mom,” Max said one day, “Do you think I could ever be on TV?”

“Well, I don't see why not if you work at it,” she told him. Max's mom was an artist, and it pleased her to see her son interested in growing up to be in one of the arts. Max joined a children's theater group and went for acting lessons. He started to gain the confidence an actor needs, and signed up with an agency that looks for children to act and model. One day a call came.

“Max, do you think you're ready to act in a television commercial?” the agency representative asked. “Sure I am. Will my friends be able to see me?” he replied.

“Not this time. This commercial is going to run in New Jersey, but maybe next time. Will you do it anyway? Right away?”

“Oh, yes! This is my first chance!” Max ran to get his mom, and, alive with anticipation, Max, Fred, and their mom drove to the studio. They parked and went inside to spend a day taping and re-taping. Max watched the

professionals, followed directions intently, and caught on quickly to what was expected of him. When the long day was done, Max tried to guess when the next time would be that he would get a chance in front of the cameras. He couldn't have guessed then that six short months later he would be a frequent talk show guest, but not for a reason anyone would want.

For Max, acting was fun and easy, and so was schoolwork. He loved to be with his friends in school, and he loved to read and figure things out. He loved to laugh and play jokes. At school, they called Max the peacemaker. Kids would argue or get to fighting, but Max would get into the middle and try to calm things down. Being a good sport and thinking of the other guy were Max's way. In tense situations, Max would be the one to lighten things up with a joke.

Not everything came easy. Living in the city surrounded by buildings and pavement, Max didn't have much chance to play ball, but he wanted to. As soon as he was old enough, Max joined a baseball league. They played on the Boston Common. Max was the youngest player and afraid of the fast balls coming straight at him over home plate. A couple of times he didn't get out of the way of the ball and it hit him, but he didn't let it get him down. For one thing, he knew Fred was watching and he knew as the big brother he'd better get right back up. Max was philosophical about his shortcomings. "I'll be better next time," he would say, and then he'd work at it. He never missed a practice. Even though he never got to be the best player on his team, by his third season his teammates knew they could count on him for a solid performance.

During the summers, Max and his family left the city for the seashore.

One morning in July 1990, when Max was eleven, Max's mom needed something at the hardware store, and Max was looking for something to do. "I'll go. Let me do it," he said, and he got on his bike and pedaled off toward town. About a mile from the house his front tire hit a pocket of sand the wrong way. The wheel skewed around sideways and Max fell the short distance to the ground. He landed on his shoulder, the breath knocked out of him. Hot burning pain filled his stomach and chest, making him curl in a ball and squeeze his eyes shut.

Max knew something was wrong, more wrong than just a fall from his bike. Max's mother knew something was really wrong as soon as she saw him walking beside his bike, steps slow and head down. Before he could get

in the house she had him in the car and on the way to the local hospital emergency room.

"Max fell off his bike and he doesn't feel right," Max's mom told the doctor.

The doctor felt Max's back and side and the smile left her face. "What's this here? His side is all swollen. I think he's ruptured his spleen. Max is in trouble."

"What kind of trouble?" Max and his mom said, almost at the same time.

"I'm not sure, but we need to find out fast," said the doctor, frowning with concern.

She called an ambulance to take Max to Children's Hospital back in the city. Siren and lights clearing a path, the ambulance rushed up the highway to Boston, barely slowing down for the tight corners near the entrance to the hospital. Max was wheeled straight into the emergency room.

"This doesn't look good," the emergency room doctor said.

"If my spleen is split, why don't you operate on me and sew it up?" Max wanted to know.

"Can you sew Jell-O? That's what a spleen looks like. Not much to look at, but good to have because that's what your body uses to clean your blood. Mrs. Warburg, this boy is going to be here for at least ten days."

Sad and frightened, Mr. and Mrs. Warburg made their plans. Max's mom would stay with him, and his dad would take Fred back to the shore to keep things as normal as possible for him. The news from the hospital wasn't good. It looked as if Max had leukemia, a dangerous cancer in his bone marrow, but the doctors weren't sure which kind of leukemia he had. Some kinds were less difficult to cure, and some were easier to bear than others. Hoping their son had the commonest kind that could be cured, the Warburgs started to learn about leukemia.

The results of the blood tests came back. Max had a rare form of leukemia, found in one in a million children. The lab doctor told Max's parents, "Now that we've seen these results, I wonder how Max ever got himself off the ground and back to the house the day he fell off his bike. He must be a very determined boy."

“Yes, he is,” Max’s father said. “He is going to need to be.”

It was Dr. Susan Parsons who told Max what he had. “Leukemia is hard to beat. You’ll have to have chemotherapy and radiation stronger than one hundred thousand X-rays. In order to test your blood and feed you, we’re going to have to make an incision near your heart and insert a tube. You can’t play ball and you can’t play soccer or ride your bike. If your spleen gets hit again, it will kill you.”

Max thought a bit. “Tell me what is going to happen.”

“Statistically, I think you’ll be okay, but you have to have a bone marrow transplant. Do you know what that is, Max? That means taking the fluid out of the middle of all your bones and then putting in the fluid from someone else’s bones in its place. We can’t do it unless we can find the right donor—someone whose bone and blood type match yours almost exactly. Often, not even members of your own family are a close enough match. Right now, there are about six thousand people out there looking for the one perfect match to save their lives. You’ll be joining them, Max. Your chance of finding a match is about one in twenty thousand.”

Again, Max thought a minute. “So, there are six thousand others. Okay, I’ll be six thousand plus one. I’ll be one of the lucky ones.”

“You already have been. Because you fell off your bike, we were able to catch your disease early, before there were other symptoms. If we get a donor fast, time will be on your side.”

After ten days of testing, they let Max come home to the apartment in Boston. Every week, in order to adjust his medicine, he had to go to the hospital for blood tests, which meant a little needle, and for blood samples, which meant a big needle and a tube. Max hated needles. His mother knew he hated needles and wondered when she didn’t see him flinch each week as the nurse aimed the needle toward his arm. Even the nurse, who had seen so many different kinds of reactions to needles over the years, was surprised by Max’s calm.

“What are you thinking about, young man?” she said to him on one of his visits to the blood lab, not really expecting a reply.

Max answered very seriously, “First, I wait and prepare myself. Then I put all my energy where the needle is going to go, then I make fun of the needle.”

On his own, Max had found a way to conquer a fear that, if he did not get the best of it, could make it harder for him to get well.

No sports for at least six months, he’d been told, so he found a calendar, tacked it up, and drew a smiling face on the date six months away. Max had a goal. He knew he’d be sick for a while but he knew when it would be over. On the space for February 6, 1991, beside the smile he wrote, “Cured” and underlined it in red.

In September, Max went back to school. When he told Nurse Hoolihan at the hospital that the kids didn’t seem to understand what was wrong with him, she said she’d come to his school and explain. The kids listened carefully to Nurse Hoolihan, but it was Max they wanted to hear the answers from.

“How did you catch leukemia?” asked someone, saying out loud the big question in everyone’s mind.

“I didn’t just catch it,” Max said matter-of-factly. “First, I had to have inherited a particular gene and then I had to have what my doctor said was an accident in my blood cells. One cell went crazy. It started making the other cells produce too many white cells and platelets. My white cells are crowding out my red cells, and that’s not good for me. But, listen; no one can catch this from me.”

You could see the kids were relieved. They stopped sitting so stiffly and acting so polite. Even Max’s teacher and the other grownups in the room seemed to relax a little.

“What can we do for you?” Max’s best friend wanted to know.

“Don’t treat me funny. I’m not supposed to bump my spleen but I’m the same old Max.”

There were reminders at home, too, that his life had changed. Max had to choose whether to give up his kitten, Fantasy, or have her claws out so that she couldn’t scratch him and start an infection. Max couldn’t bring himself to hurt Fantasy that way, so he found her another home. He missed his kitten. “Be careful, Max. Be careful,” it seemed to him his mother kept saying. He missed hearing her say, “Off you go and have a good time,” without a worried look.

The hospital did what it could to find a donor for Max so he could have the transplant that could save his life. His parents were tested and Fred was tested, but no perfect match was found. Close relatives were tested and then friends of the family, and still no match. Wait, the hospital told them, a match might be found in the new national marrow donor registry.

His parents were troubled by waiting. The registry had too few matches and too many other people who were counting on the registry but hadn't been helped. "We can help. We can learn how to do donor drives." It was going to be hard, but they knew they had to try. What they didn't realize at first was that Max would make the donor drive succeed. At first, only the family worked on the drives. Then they were joined by many of their friends, and soon, old friends were joined by the hundreds of new friends Max found through television and radio.

Max's campaign for a donor was called the "Max + 6,000." Always, Max wanted people to remember that this wasn't just for him. It was for Max and all the others in America who needed the one perfect donor. Many people didn't really know what leukemia was all about or about bone marrow transplants, or how to help even if they wanted to help. One morning, figuring he had nothing to lose and plenty to gain, Max called a radio station to see if he could make his appeal on the air. He spoke on local radio shows. He was invited to talk on Channel 4 and then Channel 7 and then Channel 2. Smiling into the camera, Max would say, "Leukemia is a blood disease that starts in the marrow of bones. I need new bone marrow in order to get better. Come have a simple blood test and see if you can be my donor. Perhaps you will be my MUD, my matched unrelated donor."

Tom Bergeron, one talk show host, said to Max, "You're good at this. You look as if you're enjoying yourself."

"I am, sir. I wanted to be on TV and here I am. Maybe this is what I was getting ready for. Even if no donor turns up for me, I can help someone else."

For the people watching Max, it wasn't pity that moved them; it was Max's cheerful way of thinking of others before himself. The stations asked him back again and again. Hundreds and eventually thousands of people came to give a sample of their blood and promised to be a bone marrow donor if their type matched the type of anyone in need.

The Boston Globe and The Boston Herald picked up Max's story. "Max waits for his rescue," said one headline. "Max leads charge against disease." The reporters who met him liked Max and wanted to help him. Their stories reassured people and gave them practical information about when and how to become a bone marrow donor.

At every donor meeting, there was Max wearing a "Max + 6,000" button and a red carnation. Red for blood, he said, and laughed when people asked how he could joke about something so serious. Max would shake each donor's hand and say thank you. "You may not help me but you probably will help somebody," he'd say.

Every week, Max's white cell count got higher. Every week, the need to find a donor got more acute. "It may be getting too late," Dr. Parsons worried. "We have to find a donor soon."

Days slipped by. Weeks slipped by. Leaves on the trees outside Max's window turned red and orange and then brown and fell away in the winds of early winter. Max, Fred, and their mom and dad talked about the little events of each day and about the distant future but not often about the immediate future. They talked about missing the rest of the summer at the shore and about Take It to the Max, the dreamboat. The boat came to mean so much. It meant another summer growing up. It meant having a future. By mid-October, nearly three months after Max's leukemia was discovered, there still was no donor. "I'm going to order the 420 for Max," his father said. "It will mean a lot to him knowing the boat is started." He called the boat builder, who said yes, he could have the boat ready by spring. By the time Max was well; his 420 would be ready to put into the water.

With no donor found, surgery went forward to improve Max's chances later on, just in case a donor could be found. On November 15, Max's spleen was removed. He recovered for a week in the hospital and for six days at home. Then, on November 28, the hospital called. The lab had found the miracle match among the last batch of samples.

"Who is it?" Max asked.

"We don't know, but it's a perfect match!" the nurse said. Later, during long December days in the hospital, Max and his dad sent the anonymous benefactor a picture of the intravenous bag that held the life-giving bone marrow with a letter that said, "This is all we know of you but we want to thank you!" Much later, Mr. and Mrs. Warburg learned that the donor was a

doctor in Seattle, Washington, whose great-, great-, great-, great-grandfather all the way back to the 1800s in Europe was the same as Max's.

Now, with marrow from the donor, treatment could begin to pave the way for the transplant that might save Max. Chemotherapy would be the worst part. "Your hair is going to fall out, Max," Dr. Parsons told him. Max could see that other kids in the cancer ward had little or no hair. "It's part of getting better," he told Fred. But he wasn't sure he would be brave enough. He had seen others going for their treatment and returning exhausted and in tears. He was determined he wouldn't let the treatment sink his spirits.

First Max had a tube planted in his chest, as the doctor told him would happen, for giving medicine, taking blood samples, and for feeding him because he wouldn't be able to eat normally. He would have to be almost in isolation in a special environment called the Laminar Flow Room. In the sealed room, ducts brought a steady, moving stream of oxygen down and away from the bed, blowing foreign substances away from Max as his system tried to accept the strange marrow and begin making its own blood.

Except for daily trips to the Total Body Irradiation room—the hospital people called it the TBI—Max had to stay in the isolated room and could see few visitors. When his mom and Fred visited each day and his dad came in the evening, they had to scrub like doctors and wear cover-up coats and hairnets. Even a touch could harm, so there could be no hugs to give comfort and love. Each morning the halls were cleared of contaminating strangers so Max, inside a tent, could be wheeled through the empty halls to the treatment room.

Knowing he'd be lonely and expecting he'd be scared, Dr. Parsons had given Max a tape recorder so he could make a record of what was happening to him. Max told his tape recorder, "Going to TBI is really cool, like being in a space ship. The air coming in from the top of my oxygen tent is exhilarating. I feel like a great explorer from the next century gliding in on his chair."

The experience in the room wasn't exhilarating. The drugs made Max sick. He had to stay on a metal table, head on blocks, neck stiff and body sore, for a long time. When finally he sat up, he threw up. The vomiting meant he was done for the day. On his tape Max said, "The table is real hard and it makes my head so stiff, but it's fun because I can blast my music as loud as I want so it reminds me of home."

The first seven treatment days were chemotherapy and irradiation. The eighth day, the transplant itself, wasn't at all what Max expected. Instead of an operation with doctors cutting him open, Max lay on his bed all alone while the new marrow flowed into his body from a transparent bag of clear fluid suspended over his head and connected to him by a clear slender tube.

"How is that going to get into my bones?" he wondered while he watched, then later heard the doctors themselves marveling that the marrow sought its way to the right places once it was safely in his system.

The blood count was critical. After the transplant, Max's white cell count was zero. They wouldn't let him out of the Laminar Flow Room until his count was 3,000. One day after the transplant, his count was 20. The next day it was 100, then 150, then 300. Max had a long way to go, but he was making it. His body was rebuilding. Slowly the days passed.

Max knew these days would be hard. The pains doctors had warned about became the pains he felt. Max didn't complain. Instead, he tried to cheer up other patients stuck, as he was, in the hospital for Christmas. He got his parents to help. Max's mom and dad brought in a whole Christmas dinner for all the kids and their families in the Jimmy Fund wing, the part of the hospital where Max and the other children with cancer were staying. Teddy Kennedy, Jr., who had cancer when he was thirteen and was now all grown up, brought presents for the kids, along with living proof that they could get better.

Max yearned for breakout day, the day the doctors would let him go out of his room. Finally, early in the New Year, on January 2, Max woke to see balloons on the isolation room door and crepe-paper streamers overhead. The nurses, especially Nurse Rohan, his favorite, were celebrating for him. This was it; he was out! He went by wheelchair to the hospital door, then into the fresh air for the first time in 35 days, and then home. He loved the smell, he loved the look, and he loved the feel of home! Everyone in the hospital had been great to Max and he was grateful, but home was where he wanted to be. Back in his own room, Max saw again the calendar with the smile marking February 6. It was still almost a month away. "Not quite cured," thought Max. "But maybe I'll be better by then. February 6 will be a happy day."

But it wasn't. Before long Max was back in the hospital with a high fever. Dr. Parsons sent him home again, uncertain what was wrong. Back he went again for ten days and again he came home no better. Still he had a fever and still he threw up. On February 6, he went back to the hospital again. The smile he was now famous for was still there, but it seemed to waver at the corners of his mouth. Max went back to his isolation room and this time he would have an oxygen mask, the sign of mortal struggle.

Max's mom and dad and Fred were at the hospital every day, staying with him until the evening when Max, heavy with drugs, fell asleep. The long days in the hospital were hard on Fred. He played with Max, but it wasn't like the last time Max was in the hospital. One day, sick and exhausted after a treatment, Max was being pushed back to his room in the wheelchair. Fred had had it. Right on the edge of crying, he pulled hard on his mother's arm, making it difficult for her to push Max's chair. "Come on, Fred. Max needs you to help out," she said.

Max was used to being the helper himself. Knowing he was needed, he said, "I can cheer Fred up. Put him here in my lap."

Fred went into his older brother's lap, glad to be riding the long corridor and glad to have Max acting like his old self. The two rolled along, Max's head hidden and arms waving out from under Fred's armpits, a four-armed, laughing pair all the way from Pulmonary to the Transplant floor. Hearing them, the nurses couldn't tell that one of the laughing boys was perilously ill until, rounding the corner; they recognized Max and his family.

"That's like Max," they told his mother. "At night on the transplant floor, the younger kids cry. They're in pain and they miss their families. I hear Max call to them, 'Don't cry. I'm here. You've got a friend!' You have an unusually brave son, Mrs. Warburg."

"I'm not sure he realizes," his mother said. "He says to me, 'Mommy, do you think I'm brave?' I don't know why he doubts."

"How does he keep his laughter? How can he keep on smiling?"

"That's Max," said his mom. "That's the way Max is."

On March first Dr. Parsons told Max his life was threatened. The blood transfusions and medicines pumped into him weren't working well enough. The doctors' skills and the hospitals' resources and Max's own incredible will were losing against the disease. Max saw the solemn faces around him. His body swollen in places, emaciated in places, spotted with sores in places, Max looked Dr. Parsons straight in the eyes and said, "Well, okay, so what's the plan? How are you going to get me well?" They looked at Max in disbelief, to see his conviction so strong despite his ordeal, and took heart themselves.

"Come here to the window, Max, come look," said his father.

There in the hospital driveway below, high on a truck and with mainsail flying, was Take It to the Max. Max's eyes widened in pleasure, his delight was evident in every gesture of his excitement. He glowed, knowing the care and love that brought his boat to him at this place at this time. Nurses and doctors all came to exclaim about Max's treasure and enjoy his infectious happiness.

That night, Max stayed up until close to midnight working on a project with his dad. When he was ready to put out the light, Max and his mom and dad prayed together and thanked God for all the help He had given and all the people who had been so kind to him. Then Max went to sleep.

Max died in his mother's arms, holding his father's hand, at 6:55a.m. on March 5, 1991.

In the days that followed there was a terrible silence. The silence swelled and roared, because silences can do that if what you want to hear isn't there and what you don't want to hear is everywhere. Then stories started to fill the empty spaces, stories about Max.

Many stories ended with a shake of the head, a glance away, and the simple statement, "Max amazed me then. He was so brave. Children amaze me. I am amazed by the courage of children."

MYLES HAYNES, JR.

MICHELE SPRATLING, TEACHER

Martin Luther King, Jr. K-8 School

Courage to me is being bold enough to go to school and go out in public, knowing that I'm going to make a weird noise or movement and people will look at me strange. I have disorder called Tourette's Syndrome. This is a brain disorder in the center of my brain that causes me to have vocal or physical twitches. It's a glitch in my brain. I was diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome at the age of seven, and then diagnosed with ADHD and epilepsy at ten years old.

I get up every morning without any complaints, knowing that I have to hold in my twitches, and fearing someone will see me. A handful of people know about my disorder, but not my friends, so whenever I'm with my friends I focus really hard not to twitch. I don't always enjoy being with my friends because of what I have to do not to twitch. It doesn't always work. It also affects my attention span in class because I'm focusing on not twitching, rather than paying attention to learning.

The worst part of having Tourette's Syndrome is the episodes. Having episodes means that some days I'll twitch so hard and fast that I hurt my neck and back. Sometimes this prevents me from going to school because of the pain. I've missed a lot of school on account of my disorder, which also affects my grades. I've learned on my own to suppress my twitches in ways that aren't noticeable. This has made it less stressful for me to go to school.

When I think of courage, I think about what I deal with every single day. I must be a brave person because I made the decision to write about my condition. I really hope other children with Tourette's Syndrome get to read this so they know that they are not alone. I'm hoping to meet another child with this same disorder so we would be able to support each other. We would be able to demonstrate bold courage together.



**“WHEN I THINK OF COURAGE, I THINK ABOUT
WHAT I DEAL WITH EVERY SINGLE DAY.
I MUST BE A BRAVE PERSON BECAUSE I MADE
THE DECISION TO WRITE ABOUT MY CONDITION.”**

JORDAN SHEFFERMAN

MEG WHITE, TEACHER

Holten Richmond Middle School

An unknown person once said, “Hard things are put in our way, not to stop us, but to call out our courage and strength.” This quote means that hardships happen without your control. Bad times don’t come to knock you down, they come to call out your strength and courage to fight back. You should not erase the fear, but face it. To me, courage means that when you doubt yourself, you need to get back up, and face the challenge. A time when I had courage was when my parents divorced, and I was in need of help.

After months of trying to heal from this news, I was unsuccessful. I told my mom, “I want to die.” She took it very seriously, like she should have. The next thing I knew, I was in a hospital bed sobbing. I did not think I was going to get better, just worse. I did not know why I could not just pull it together and get back in the game. I was really scared, and I thought I was going to turn into a kid that needs constant attention and is unsafe. I did not know where my life was going. I needed help. I knew I did, and I knew I was not ready to throw my life in the trash. I had courage, and went to a program to get help.

There I learned ways to cope with situations, whether I am throwing a fit or pushing glass in my fingers. I learned life lessons, and I learned about other people’s struggles. I met many new friends. I knew I still had anxiety and depression, so I was afraid to leave the program, get back to school, and start over. I feared going back to my friends at school and facing their constant questions and comments like, “Where were you? Why were you gone for two weeks? I missed you!” I was nervous, but I had courage to be the best I could be.

From this experience, I learned, why give up? Why be doubtful? Why not have strength? Why let your life go? Why not have courage? Instead, I got help. I learned how to deal with my emotions without pushing them away. I learned not to give up when things are hard, but to push myself to face the challenge. Life is good when you live it the right way, with courage.



**“LIFE IS GOOD IF YOU LIVE IT THE RIGHT WAY,
WITH COURAGE.”**

TANISHA ANDRADE

ELIZABETH DEON AND PHYLLIS FEASTER, TEACHERS

Franklin D. Roosevelt K-8 School

I was sitting in our living room with my family watching a television program called, “Switched at Birth,” when all of a sudden my mom felt sharp pains in her stomach. My mom was nine months pregnant. She screamed at me to get clothes for my two little brothers, Jayden and January, and to put food in my dog’s bowl. After that we all went outside, and she told me to go to the neighbor’s house so that the neighbor could drop my brothers and me off at my aunt’s house, and then drive my mother to the hospital. However, my neighbor did not answer the door.

Then, my mom screamed and told my brothers and me to get in the car. She was going to drop us off at my aunt’s house so we could stay with my older cousin while my aunt drove my mom to the hospital. As we were driving to my aunt’s house, my mom’s contractions got worse and she was bouncing in the driver’s seat and screaming, “OOOOHHH!” I asked her if she wanted me to call 911. She said, “No, I can make it to the hospital, I will be alright.” I started to cry because I knew my mom was in a lot of pain, and I was not sure that she would make it to the hospital for the delivery of my baby sister. So I told her, “I am going to call 911 so the ambulance can help us.”

I called 911 and my mom was still driving the car and crying because she was in so much pain, but she was trying to make it to the hospital. When I dialed 911, I got the operator and then my mom grabbed the phone from me because I was so scared and nervous that I could not speak. She told the operator that she had her three children in the car, she was about to have a baby, and asked for an ambulance to catch up to her. The operator said, “No ma’am, you have to pull over.” My mom parked the car, and she was in pain trying to breathe. The operator asked my mom, “What is the age of your oldest child?” My mom said, “My oldest child is 12 years old, and her name is Tanisha.”

The operator told my mom to put me on the phone. My mom handed me the phone. I was crying and so scared. The operator then told me, “Honey, can you please put your hands down there and see if you can feel the baby’s head.” I was screaming and said, “I don’t want to do this.”



Then I thought, I have no choice, I have to do this for my baby sister. So I got up the courage to put my hand down there and felt my baby sister’s head. All of a sudden, I felt something that felt like an ocean of water coming out, and then I heard something fall out. It was my baby sister!

I took my baby sister and put her on my mom’s chest. My baby sister was crying, and then she stopped. My mom was nervous and screamed at me to tell the operator to get the ambulance to us immediately. A few minutes later the ambulance arrived. They cut my baby sister’s umbilical cord, and then they took my mom, my brothers and me to the hospital in the ambulance.

The delivery of my baby sister took a lot of courage for me and my mom. I really did not know how to, or want to, deliver my baby sister, and my mom had no idea that her daughter would deliver her baby in the front seat of a car rather than with a doctor at the hospital. We both had the courage to stay strong and focused during the delivery of my baby sister in my mom’s car.

**“WE BOTH HAD THE COURAGE TO STAY
STRONG AND FOCUSED DURING THE DELIVERY OF
MY BABY SISTER IN MY MOM’S CAR.”**

KLAUDIA DOKO

DONKOR MINORS, TEACHER

Maurice J. Tobin K-8 School

Courage. It brings peace to the world and happiness to the people who need it. Courage is so powerful it can change the world. You'd be surprised at the things courage can do.

It was a normal school morning. I was awake and ready to go to school. My dad was at work so I had to take the public transportation bus. I got on the 39 bus and sat down close to the front door. Stop after stop, people were getting on the bus dressed in fancy business suits and hospital uniforms. This one lady walked in. Everyone was anticipating that she might hold up the bus, and had irritated scowls on their faces. It didn't take long before people started getting aggravated. She was digging in her purse for her Charlie Card, but she couldn't find it. People felt like she was holding up the bus, so they got more anxious because they had places to go, too. I could imagine how she felt. Once when I was getting on the bus I couldn't remember where in my book bag I left my money. In that moment I felt embarrassed because I knew I was holding up the rest of the bus. Now, the look on the lady's face was sad because she was embarrassed for not getting her card out in time. People were rushing her, so I got up and gave her two dollars.

I thought, what if she was late for work and got fired, or what if she had the most important place to go? I was scared people would look at me funny because then I became a part of holding everyone up as well. For a second, none of that mattered as long as I knew I was helping her. This woman deserved the opportunity to reach her destination as much as everyone else. As she walked to the back of the bus with a smile on her face thanking me, I felt really good. I knew I had done something good even though everyone else just wanted to get where they were going. Two dollars was nothing to spare if it would help her to keep her job or get where she wanted to go.

That's the great thing about courage, you never know what it can bring. It's the little things that count in life, even if it's just two dollars.



**“COURAGE IS SO POWERFUL IT CAN
CHANGE THE WORLD. YOU’D BE SURPRISED AT
THE THINGS COURAGE CAN DO.”**

JOHAN ARIAS

JOANNA PRINCIPE-ZESK, TEACHER

William B. Rogers Middle School

What courage means to me is when you are scared to do something but have the ability to gather strength and face your fears. My courage has to do with my family struggling but always having faith that our lives would change one day. Max had cancer, but he never wanted anyone feeling sorry for him because he kept his hopes up. He had faith and courage for things he could not control. Max's story is similar to my story of courage.

I was at my apartment doing my homework when I heard, *boom, boom, boom!* It was a loud knock on the door. I peeked through the peephole and saw a strange man standing there. I asked who it was. The man slipped a paper under the door and left.

I gave my mother the letter and she started to cry. Then I read the letter and it said we were getting evicted because my mom had lost her job. It was hard for her to be a single mom and take care of my siblings and me at the same time. She couldn't afford to pay rent anymore. Because of this we were being evicted.

For many months we lived with family members but had to leave because there were too many of us to stay in one house. After months of being homeless, we were accepted into a shelter. We were far from our family and couldn't visit them because of our curfew. We couldn't go food shopping because we could not store any food, just microwaveable food. We also shared beds, because there were only two beds in the room. It was a very difficult time in my life because I knew how much my mom was suffering. Finally, after many months of struggling, we got our own apartment.

Everyone has a story about courage. It is a time that allows you to be strong and move on without living in fear. It is so important for us to realize that life goes on if we let it. I showed courage throughout this difficult time by not giving up on myself, and not giving up on the people I love. That is courage to me.



**“MY COURAGE HAS TO DO WITH MY FAMILY
STRUGGLING BUT ALWAYS HAVING
FAITH THAT OUR LIVES WOULD CHANGE ONE DAY.”**

JENNIFER GARCIA

CELESTE HENRY-WILLIAMS, TEACHER

James P. Timilty Middle School

To have courage, you have to fight and be brave to face your fears. Courage means that a piece of your spirit changes so you can face danger or pain without showing fear to your enemies or challenges. I showed courage when I had enough guts to walk alone to places.

I walked to the corner store when I lived in public housing. I always walked to the store to buy candy and food. I was always scared and paranoid, so I would walk fast. There was graffiti on my door and all around the projects. There were gunshots from drive-by shootings behind my building. You could hear yelling and screaming from miles away.

Walking alone takes a lot of courage. Sometimes I walked alone to the corner store or to my aunt's house or to my school. It took a long time for me to get used to walking alone because you never know what could happen when you were walking.

In fifth grade, I walked my ten-year-old sister, my six-year-old brother, and myself to school. It was always quiet and mysterious in the projects. There was always a strange feeling when you went outside and started to walk. Helicopters were always in the sky looking for someone, and police were always hunting people down. It was not very fun walking around a bad area in the dark and even in the morning. However, it was worth it to walk and do everyday activities that other people take for granted. Even though I was often afraid to walk around the projects, I had the courage to go to school and the store, visit my aunt, and attend church like a normal kid.

That was something that I had the courage to do, to go outside and walk to places alone.



**“COURAGE MEANS THAT A PIECE OF YOUR SPIRIT
CHANGES SO YOU CAN FACE DANGER OR PAIN
WITHOUT SHOWING FEAR...”**

ZOWY HIDALGO

JESSICA TANG, TEACHER

Young Achievers Science and Mathematics Pilot School

One afternoon in third grade I was on the school bus on my way home. During the ride there was a fifth grader who was the oldest on the bus. He took out his knife. It was a pocket knife. I remember it being silver. When I saw it, I was worried because I didn't know what he was thinking. Why would he bring the knife with him? What was he going to do with it? All of these things were going through my mind quickly. I didn't know what to do.

For the rest of the ride home everyone was acting like nothing happened. I heard people talking loudly like always, saw people playing on their phones, and smelled the old bus smell. I was talking with my friend. I told her that we should tell the principal tomorrow. She said, "What if he finds out that we told on him?"

When I got home I told my dad what happened. He told me to tell the principal the next morning. So I walked into school the next morning ready to tell her. I felt terrified because I didn't know what would happen to me, or if the principal would believe me or not. Still, I had the courage to walk into the principal's office and tell her what had happened. She thanked me for telling her and said she was going to do something about it. I had also given courage to my friend to tell the principal, too. The boy with the knife had to stay home for a week and got the knife taken away. In the end, he didn't get in that much trouble because he told them why he had it. It was because he was scared of where he lived and he had it for protection. He didn't have to take it out on the bus, even though he had a real reason, so he also had to do some community service at school.



**“WHY WOULD HE BRING THE KNIFE WITH HIM?
WHAT WAS HE GOING TO DO WITH IT?
ALL OF THESE THINGS WERE GOING
THROUGH MY MIND QUICKLY.”**

GLORIA BERGANZA

REBECCA FISCHER, TEACHER

John W. McCormack Middle School

“Come on! Hurry! Are you gonna chicken out?” I was just a few steps away from school with a big decision to make. My heart was beating faster than ever. I had so much pressure on me. I was sweating buckets and my so-called friends were staring at me with dirty looks. My head was aching, seconds passed by and my decision wasn’t made. I could either blow off school to go to the mall, or stay in a boring building just learning and learning while hours passed slowly.

That morning my mother had told me to behave and focus at school. She knew that I was a good student with so much potential, but she also knew that there would be bad influences around me everywhere.

The only thing on my mind while those few seconds passed by was, should I do what’s right and show my mother I can make good decisions while she’s not around me? Or should I just have a good time with my friends for the rest of the day?

So there I was with a decision to make. I stepped up to them with a little fear in me and said, “Look, I can’t do this. I just can’t, and you shouldn’t either. Your parents count on you to be good in school for a better future for yourselves. I know I may seem like a goodie-goodie, but I know there will be so many consequences in the end.” Every one of them looked at me with a disgusted face and one of them said, “Hey, look, we get it. Just don’t hang out with us anymore.” The rest of them just laughed and walked away calling me a loser. When they all walked away I thought to myself, “Wow, maybe I did the right thing.” I rushed back to school before I was too late.

I walked into my classroom and felt really proud of myself for noticing that they weren’t my real friends. My real friends were staring at the door just waiting for me to come in. One of my friends hugged me and said, “Finally! We were waiting for you.” After that moment I knew who my real friends were.



The next day I walked into school and saw the parents of my old friends inside the principal’s office, with disappointed looks on their faces. I knew something was wrong, and I thought maybe my old friends got caught and now they have to face their consequences. I was so glad it wasn’t me who was getting in trouble. They never talked to me or teased me again for not doing what they wanted me to do.

I figured out I made the right decision. I know I showed courage by standing up to them.

**“I FIGURED OUT I MADE THE RIGHT DECISION.
I KNOW I SHOWED COURAGE BY
STANDING UP TO THEM.”**

MANU GUNNALA

JAIME GOLDSTEIN, TEACHER

Buckingham Browne and Nichols School

Courage can mean many things. Being courageous doesn't necessarily mean swimming with sharks, hiking Mount Everest, or having no fears at all. Courage is accepting yourself and taking the hard path, even if it will bring more challenges. I discovered my courage in 2005 because of my hurtful kindergarten classmates.

When I was younger, I was very shy and insecure. My parents were both from India, and I hated it. I wished I had lighter skin, an American accent, and a common name. I wished I was a "normal" kid. It didn't help when my classmates started treating me badly because I was different. Things were terrible, until my friends excluded me one too many times. That's when life took a turn.

From the drawing table at free time, I heard the girls in my class talking excitedly about having a doll wedding. I was enthusiastic to join them and be a part of the celebration. Each girl grabbed a doll. I reached for one, but a girl named Eliza stared at me. "Manu!" she snapped at me, "Wait for your turn." I immediately obeyed, because I knew from past experience that it was no fun to get into a mess with these girls. Soon, there were only a few dolls left. Eliza glanced at me just sitting there, and picked up a doll. She tossed me a doll with curly black hair and coffee-colored skin. "Here," she sneered. "She looks *exactly* like you!" The other girls giggled, and I heard someone say, "We don't want that ugly brown doll. Manu can keep it."

I froze, my body quivering with emotion. The anger rushed through me, ready to explode. But that one nagging voice in the back of my head told me that I had gotten in enough trouble with these kids, and that things could never change, no matter what. I was petrified of the possible consequences if I made the wrong move. Battling between fighting and running, I knew I had to make a decision. That moment, the emotions and thoughts erupted. Deep inside, I had found a tiny spark of true courage, and finally, that mere spark burst into a bold fire. I felt my shy, insecure side melt away, and my courageous side shine through like the sun. I rose to my full height,



towering above Eliza and her posse, and glared at her. In a confident voice, I poured out all those thoughts that had been building up for so long. I let them feel what I had felt as the outcast. I told them exactly what I thought about them, without a trace of fear. The girls gaped at me, a new kind of respect shining in their eyes. I felt like the queen of the world. I was so afraid of this kind of thing happening, but I had come out victorious.

With the courage I discovered, my life changed. I have found who I am in this world, and have learned to be proud of that. The true meaning of courage is not fearlessness, but being able to live as who you really are, in spite of the challenges you may face. If you can find the courage that is hidden deep inside of you, you can conquer anything life throws at you.

**“COURAGE IS ACCEPTING YOURSELF AND
TAKING THE HARD PATH,
EVEN IF IT WILL BRING MORE CHALLENGES.”**

STEPHANIE NKWAH

REGINA JONES, TEACHER

William B. Rogers Middle School

To me, courage is something that helps you overcome the obstacles in your life.

Courage makes you feel better about who you are once you use it. Courage also means the ability to stand up to a problem that you were not able to face before. Courage can change your personality, and it can also make you feel better about yourself.

There have been many times in my life when I was courageous. I have had to face the situation and step up and show courage several times. One of the times I had to step up and have courage was in fifth grade when the boys in my class would always call me ugly.

Every day I was afraid to come to my class because of the way I looked. The boys would always try to get the girls to join in by calling me several names. After that day, whenever I came to school I would always feel unwanted and out of place. I felt like I didn't belong to the school. Even though this was last year, I still remember the ordeal.

Now that I'm in sixth grade and I go to the Rogers Middle School, I have confidence in myself and everything that I do. I met a friend who is in my class and she is a very nice, trustworthy person. I told her about the same exact thing that I'm saying right now. Ever since I told her this story, she makes me feel comfortable every day. I no longer feel unwanted. She encourages me with nice words, and advises me to forget what happened in the past. Now I have moved forward and no longer worry about the past events.

I will never forget that day in fifth grade with those boys, but I have learned to be brave and to ignore the bad words that people say. Every day when I walk into the Rogers, I feel more confident participating in all my school activities such as breakfast, lunch and my class work. I no longer worry about the way I look.



Whoever is reading this story about my courage, if this has ever happened to you, then you will understand how I felt. All you need to do is find a trustworthy friend that you can really trust and be proud of the way you look. Never pay attention to other people's comments if you know it's not true, and you will be successful at being proud of yourself. This is my story about a time in my life when I had to be strong and ignore the mean, hurtful things that someone said about me. Just because someone says something about you that you don't like, it doesn't mean it is true. Always remain strong; never let anybody put you down. This is the story of my courageous life.

**“ALWAYS REMAIN STRONG;
NEVER LET ANYBODY PUT YOU DOWN.”**

PABLO A. RODRIGUEZ

JENNA WILSEY, TEACHER

James P. Timilty Middle School

What is courage? I believe courage is when you stand up for what you believe and when you are courageous enough to speak your mind so people can see your values. If you speak your mind and share your understanding, people will see what you truly stand for, and no one can judge you because that's your own position in life. Every single one of us has different opinions and a different understanding about our personal life.

These days kids don't think back on the values their parents grew up with. They care too much about what others think. It bothers me when all kids my own age talk about is what sneakers they are going to wear tomorrow, when they should worry more about their education. They need to step away from all the material things and think more about their future. I understand the pressure coming from their own friends, but that's not going to help them. I am not a follower, so I keep my beliefs and values because that's what my parents taught me.

There are not many kids my age who think the same way I do. Therefore, I need to understand where every single one of them is coming from. Just because you and I share different opinions doesn't mean we can't be friends. Actually, it's better for everyone to have different opinions. That will help us learn many different sides of everyone. It makes it easy for me to share my beliefs and values and not just say them. That's the real meaning of courage to me: to understand and share with everyone else. If you have learned a great life lesson, don't hesitate to share it with your fellow friends because it might make a difference in their future.



**“THAT’S THE REAL MEANING OF COURAGE TO ME:
TO UNDERSTAND AND SHARE WITH
EVERYONE ELSE.”**

ANA PATRICIA MORALES

ROBIN ROBERTO HORGAN, TEACHER

Esperanza Academy

In my Reading class, we are reading *Stargirl*. Stargirl is the new kid at Mica High. At Mica High, everyone wore, saw, and liked the same things, everyone but Stargirl. She would wear long, flowing skirts while the other kids wore jeans. She would cheer for the other teams when it was game time. That was Stargirl.

Stargirl is different, and being different takes courage. Courage is a good trait to have, but sometimes hard to get. To me, having courage means doing something you might be scared of doing, because if it's a good thing, it's worth trying. Being different by itself doesn't seem hard, but making the choice not to always follow along with everyone else takes courage.

When I was little and came to the USA, I was different. I didn't know English like most of my classmates. I didn't like those shiny jewelry sets that little girls would beg their mothers for. Courage is a quality most people don't always recognize in themselves, and I didn't because I was pretending to be someone else. I didn't even know what courage meant, but what I have come to understand is that it's okay to be different.

What is important is that you need to let all of your creativity out and not let the insults get to you. My English has improved, and I am going to continue to be that different person because I found my courage, and nothing can stop me now.



**“BEING DIFFERENT BY ITSELF DOESN’T SEEM HARD,
BUT MAKING THE CHOICE NOT TO
ALWAYS FOLLOW ALONG WITH
EVERYONE ELSE TAKES COURAGE.”**

TAHJE HOWARD

OLIVIA PETERS, TEACHER

William McKinley Middle School

Courage is something you do when you really don't want to. I'm going to tell you about something that was very courageous for me to do.

One day, my sister, her friends and I were practicing a dance for the neighborhood to see. It was muggy and very overwhelming outside. I remember that it smelled like nice, tasty cheeseburgers from a cookout.

Everybody was dancing except me. It wasn't a real performance, but it was a practice that people were watching. I was very shy, and I was nervous to dance because I was the only boy. I thought if I got up and started to dance everybody would laugh at me.

So I was thinking about a type of dance I could do. My friend named Jamal came over and said, "What are you doing, bro?" I told him that I was trying to figure out a dance to do for the neighborhood to see. Jamal said he would show me a couple of his dance moves.

He taught me a couple of his dance moves, and it turned out well. I was doing a hip-hop dance move called the "Dougie." I was moving my arms back and forth and shaking my leg like a professional dancer! I looked great, I felt great, and I was so proud! Nobody was laughing at me or saying things about me. When we performed everyone was clapping and recording my sister, her friends and me. It was so exciting!

That was the time that I stepped up and did something that I really didn't want to do. I learned that I could be very courageous.



**“THAT WAS THE TIME I STEPPED UP AND DID
SOMETHING THAT I REALLY DIDN’T WANT TO DO.
I LEARNED THAT I COULD BE
VERY COURAGEOUS.”**

JALINA ROACHFORD

DAN CESARIO, TEACHER

Sarah Greenwood K-8 School

“She’s fat.”

“She’s ugly.”

“Eww, you’re nasty.”

That’s what I hear a lot, but I don’t pay attention to anyone who says that. To me, I feel like I’m surrounded by people who don’t care about people’s feelings. They care about weight and how people look. These people make comments about me and my appearance. I used to have low self-esteem, and would start crying when I looked in the mirror. I would think of supermodels and pageant girls. Kids may say I was being a little baby, but they don’t know how it feels. Do they have my life, or have they been in my body? No!

Being courageous means being who you are and not letting anyone make you feel bad about yourself. Having courage has helped me change my attitude about all of this. Now, when I hear the word fat, I think about *PHAT*. That means you’re beautiful the way you are. To me, everyone is beautiful. Now, every time someone judges me, I stand up for myself. “Leave me alone,” I tell the people who say things to me. “I may be big, but I’m lovely. God gave me this body and I love it.”



**“BEING COURAGEOUS MEANS BEING WHO YOU
ARE AND NOT LETTING ANYONE
MAKE YOU FEEL BAD ABOUT YOURSELF.”**

PRESTLY YVES GETANT

ZAKIA DILDAY, TEACHER

Neighborhood House Charter School

My biggest experience of courage was when I stood up to my friends and said, “I don’t want that cigarette.” I think that takes courage because I could have lost a lot of friends. But anyway, it started out like this. We had been playing a decent game of tackle football. There’s nothing better than a game of football with a couple of buddies on a hot summer day.

After all that was done, Travis, Jason, Mickey, Erick, Adam and I headed up to Jason’s tree house. *Cling*, the lighter frightened me. I was wondering why Jason had a lighter. Then he pulled out a cigar. All of them were smoking but me. I kind of felt like a punk, but on the inside I knew I was doing the right thing. I told the guys I had to go.

That night I thought about it a lot. I told my mother what I had done, and she was really proud that I hadn’t smoked. She said she was going to trust me to tell Jason’s mom and do the right thing. I was scared, but I understood where my mom was coming from. It was for Jason’s own health, and for the other guys.

The next day I told Jason’s mother. Surprisingly, Jason said thank you even though there were consequences. I guess he did not have enough courage to tell his mother. I’m just glad I didn’t lose a close friend. Jason’s mom told the other kids’ moms, and since then they haven’t smoked, and neither have I. I never will.



**“MY BIGGEST EXPERIENCE OF COURAGE WAS
WHEN I STOOD UP TO MY FRIENDS AND SAID,
‘I DON’T WANT THAT CIGARETTE.’”**

JOCELYN PROPHETE

AARON KESLER AND MICHELLE KNOEBEL, TEACHERS

Boston Renaissance Charter Public School

One time I showed courage is when my friend, Tarjane, and I did our presentation on hearing loss. The purpose of our presentation was to get everyone familiar with the process of us having an FM system. An FM system is a frequency modulated system. While we worked on the PowerPoint it was difficult because we had to edit and revise our work. We had help from our speech teacher, which helped us a lot. When we finally put all the details and pictures in, we were still not ready because we had to practice who was going to say what, and brainstorm some types of questions students or teachers might ask so we could give the right answers.

After we edited and rehearsed our presentation we had to wait one more day until we presented our PowerPoint. When the day came, I felt weird about explaining my hearing loss and the changes we have made so I can hear. When I got up in front of my class, the nervousness I felt went away. We explained what hearing loss is, the parts of the ear, which parts make us not hear all sounds, and what type of hearing loss we have. I felt so proud of myself because I overcame my nervousness. Then we had a little test drive with the FM system and demonstrated how it works.

I showed courage by having the ability to go in front of my class to tell how I am a little different from everybody else. I define courage as having the ability to do something brave or strong. A courageous person is not afraid, has confidence, and is positive.



**“I DEFINE COURAGE AS HAVING THE ABILITY
TO DO SOMETHING BRAVE OR STRONG.**

**A COURAGEOUS PERSON IS NOT AFRAID,
HAS CONFIDENCE, AND IS POSITIVE.”**

YUSUF BADRELDIN

AYESHA OSMANY, TEACHER

Alhuda Academy

What is courage? For me, courage is doing something unexpected that conquers your fear. Reading about Max, his optimism, and the way he conquered his fear showed me what true courage really is.

Let me tell you a story about one day. The sun was shining and there were no clouds in the sky. All you could see was the blue sky stretching far into the distance.

I was getting ready because my friend and I were going on a trip to Six Flags amusement park with our parents. I was confident in my heart that I was going to ride all the rides, even the terrifying ones. However, when we got to Six Flags, I started to shake with fear and terror. I could already see in my mind the twists and turns of the big rollercoasters that my sister rides.

When I got out of my car, I saw my friend, Ahmed, and I could see that he was ready to ride all the rollercoasters. I was very scared but I didn't want to tell him that. I was afraid he would laugh at me, so I just kept quiet.

When we got into the amusement park, I went on Sky Ride and the Bumper Cars. Soon Ahmed asked me, "Do you want to ride the rollercoasters?" I nervously replied, "Yes."

As we got in line for the Thunderbolt rollercoaster I could see a throng of people waiting to ride it, and I told myself that now I don't have to ride it. But the line passed quicker than I thought, and in fifteen minutes we were on. I buckled my seatbelt nervously. Ahmed said, "Get ready," and off we went. We started to go up the tracks slowly. Then, when we reached the summit of the rollercoaster, it dropped, and down we went 60-70 miles per hour. Since this was my first time, I screamed as loud as a banshee, but when Ahmed asked me, "Having fun yet?" I answered back with a big fat, "YES!"

Thirty seconds later, the ride was finished. I was so relieved that I said to myself, "Thank God it is over."

We spent the whole day at Six Flags, and I hope the next time Ahmed and I go we can ride one of the higher ranked rollercoasters.



**“READING ABOUT MAX, HIS OPTIMISM,
AND THE WAY HE CONQUERED HIS FEAR SHOWED
ME WHAT TRUE COURAGE REALLY IS.”**

MALITEY AMARCHUKWU

MULLINGS

ASHLEY JOHNSON, TEACHER

Parkside Christian Academy

Courage is standing up for people and for what you believe in. It is not letting your feelings get in the way; it's helping other people, and getting over fears. I showed courage in the summer camp at my school when going to a skating rink, The United Skates, by getting over a few fears. One of the main fears was helping and talking to people I didn't know.

During my trip to the skating rink, when I started skating I dragged myself along the rails since it was my first time skating. Whenever I got to an opening I got nervous, but I was determined to learn to skate so I pushed myself off the rail past the opening anyway. I did this for a while, then when I thought I was ready I started skating without the rail. I was glad I finally taught myself to skate. But then a swarm of teenagers came my way and ran me over. When I got up, the teenagers just knocked me over again. Afterwards, when I was tired of getting knocked over, I taught myself how to steer left and right away from people. It felt great to be able to skate by myself without falling onto the floor.

After that I noticed some smaller kids on the rails near the opening. I glided to the side, avoiding the clumsy skaters, and watched the kids for a bit. I soon realized that they weren't going anywhere. My first thought was to help them out, however I did not know them and I wasn't sure if they would appreciate my help. So I thought about what was the right thing to do, pushed past my fears, and went to help the kids.

I asked if they needed help and they said yes, so I helped them. After I helped each kid they either smiled or said thank you. I felt positive and warm inside. It felt good to see them start skating again. I loved the feeling, so I helped all the kids that either needed help going in, out, or across the rink.



When it was time to go I felt so positive about helping people that I did a cartwheel. I thought it was really fun to help other people. You should always help people. Most of the time it's really fun.

**“COURAGE IS STANDING UP FOR PEOPLE
AND FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN.
IT IS NOT LETTING YOUR FEELINGS GET IN THE WAY;
IT'S HELPING OTHER PEOPLE,
AND GETTING OVER FEARS.”**

NUJAT CHOWDHURY

SCOTT LARIVÉE, TEACHER

Mary Lyon K-8 School

Courage is working at and doing something you believe is right. Courage is following your heart, soul, and conscience. Mohammed once said, “A person’s true wealth is the good he or she does in the world.” This quote means wealth is not only monetary gain. True wealth is the good deeds you do. Sometimes to do good, you need courage because the choices you make won’t always please people. I believe the three things that help you gain the courage to do good are your heart, soul, and conscience.

Every Ramadan, my parents and I go to the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center. My friends and I meet at the Common Word Café, which is inside the ISBCC. One of my friends has a niece who was not your average four-year-old. When it comes to language, this little girl could not speak anything but Bengali. She also stuttered at times. My friend told us that she had some sort of speech problem. One day, three of my friends started to jeer at the girl and imitate her. Even though the girl didn’t understand a word they were saying, she knew they were making fun of her. With those tear-streaked cheeks and red eyes staring helplessly at me, my heart shattered. My friends would get in trouble every time, but they just would not stop. I would sit in the corner, watching with sheer horror on my face, but I wouldn’t say anything. I wanted to do something, but I was afraid of losing their friendship.

Weeks went right on by, and things got worse. All six of them started to gang up on her and make an “indestructible” wall. *Ugghh*, I thought. I wasn’t the one acting immaturely, but I felt the disgrace all the same. *I should go and straighten things out*, I thought. *But no*, thought my other half, *are you joking?! Doing that could lose you their friendship*. My heart ached with the agony the little girl went through. One day, I thought that enough was enough. No one should be picked on for something they have no control over, no matter their age. Islam teaches us that we treat each other equally and kindly, no matter our religion, race, or skin. So I went up to them, broke up their little gang-like circle, and gently pushed her back to indicate to her that she was free to go. She screamed out, “Laaaaaaa!!!” and with a pitter-patter of feet she dashed out through the narrow opening in the circle.

My friends were absolutely dumbfounded. When their brains registered what I had done, they reclosed the circle. One of my friends said, “Geez, girl, you just ruined my entertainment!” I responded in a low, harsh voice, “No one deserves what you’re giving that poor little girl. How would you feel if I treated you like that just because you couldn’t speak like I can? You’re just prejudiced, that’s all. Someone needs to give you a nice lesson on respect. Go pick on someone your own size. Better yet, don’t pick on



anyone at all!” All six of them stomped off, each one giving me a dangerous look. I gave a glare and watched them move to a different corner.

With a ferocity I thought she was incapable of, the little girl tugged my sleeve and outstretched her arms, giving me a hug. She was pleased by my act. Over the years, the girl could articulate better and better. I learned her name, and that no one had ever stood up for her like I did. I became her best friend, her older sister, and her role model.

I feel proud of the day I stood up for that little girl, and even more proud to be a positive role model to inspire a girl deprived of hope. I used my heart, soul and conscience to do what I believed was right: stand up to the little girl’s bullies who were also my closest friends. I showed the compassion and love needed to heal the wing of the little girl’s heart. The words of Mohammed ring in my ears like music: “A person’s wealth is the good he or she does in the word.” The penniless yet wise man has millions more than the penny-pinching billionaire who is rich of green papers and yellow metal, but has poor morals. My words will forever inspire me and help me gain the confidence I need to do good in the world.

**“COURAGE IS WORKING AT AND DOING
SOMETHING YOU BELIEVE IS RIGHT. COURAGE IS
FOLLOWING YOUR HEART, SOUL AND CONSCIENCE.”**

TYERAY WILLIAMS

TED DOOLIN, TEACHER

James P. Timilty Middle School

Hi, my name is Tyeray Williams and I am going to tell you how I showed courage in my life. I think courage means to do what's right and never give up. One day I was on a football team and they said, "You're too small and no good. We don't think you should play." So I was like, "Let's see about this." I was only a rookie.

I practiced all week. Let me tell you, I came back with effort, pride, strength, and defense. Everybody's expression said, "WOW!" I was catching interceptions and sacking the quarterback! It was crazy how I thought I would give up, but I didn't. It took a lot of courage to hear all their mean words. I felt like throwing punches, but I held all my strength in. All of our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them.

Courage can come in many different ways. I was very courageous and never gave up. It shows who you are when you put in effort, do the right thing, and don't give up. This is what I think courage is. What do you think courage means?



**“IT SHOWS WHO YOU ARE WHEN YOU PUT
IN EFFORT, DO THE RIGHT THING,
AND DON'T GIVE UP.
THIS IS WHAT I THINK COURAGE IS.”**

MAEVE COLLINS

MELISSA HEATH, TEACHER

Boston Collegiate Charter Public School

Courage can be described in many different ways, but you're never able to understand what it truly means to you until you've lived through a time when you need it. I consider courage to be doing something you don't believe you can do, with pride. Or it can be getting back up once you've fallen down, because you know you have to. But it's how you get up that matters. A difficult experience helped me unlock my courage. After that it became easy to tap into my personal strength.

When I was turning four years old, I was having some problems. Every morning when my feet hit the floor I got sick, even though I hadn't eaten anything. My body also had the problem of not being able to tolerate heat. I wouldn't be able to stay outside on a hot summer day for fifteen minutes without getting overheated. The worst of my problems was kindergarten; it was torture for me. At the time, we didn't know I was sick. Everyone thought I was just being "difficult" or stubborn. My mom had to use sticker charts and prizes to get me through the week. If I went a whole day without having a big problem at school, or asking to go home, I got a sticker. If I got five stickers, I got a prize. One day, my body was done. That's when it happened, the day I fell down the stairs. And that was the day when my world, and the world of everyone who loves me, turned upside down. From that moment forward, nothing in my life was the same. The next thing I remember was the hospital waiting room. My mom wasn't with me and neither was my dad, some doctor took them from my grasp. I was left with my Auntie Lily, a "My Little Pony" coloring book, and an amusing puffer fish in the fish tank. I remember thinking, trying to figure out what was going on with me. I was wishing for someone to fill me in. Looking back on that day, I realize that I was courageous. But at the time I wasn't trying to have courage, it just came automatically.

First, the doctors found what caused me to fall down the stairs-hydrocephalus- or "water on the brain." To fix it, they put a shunt, or water pump, in my head. They shaved off half my hair for that surgery. Then they found what caused the hydrocephalus- tumors in my spinal cord. I remember a lot of discomfort, needles, medication, doctors and nurses coming and going, and starving because of anesthesia that was needed for an operation or an MRI. I remember having to learn how to swallow big chemo pills. It was the worst experience of my life and it seemed like an eternity of torture to my body. For 18 months I went to the hospital every week, but it seemed like ten years. It took courage for my family and me to keep moving.



Today I am doing much better. I still have to rely on my courage, but my tumors are stable and I am no longer set back by cancer. My tumors haven't grown in a long while now, but I still face challenges because of them, like seizures, migraines, and leg pain. I'm still affected by having an MRI on my brain and spine every few months, where I have to lie perfectly still for 2 hours in a noisy tube that my body can barely fit in. I even had a potentially life-threatening reaction to a seizure medication. With courage, support, and a little bit of happiness, I can conquer the challenge and survive.

I got my courage from two main sources. The first was my own spirit. I would never give up in my fight against cancer. I also got my courage from the support of my family. They were constantly supporting me, visiting me, and letting me know that I wasn't alone. They gave me courage to keep moving, and keep fighting. My mom has a saying she got once in a fortune cookie and she keeps it hanging on our refrigerator. It says, "Heroism is endurance, for one moment more." That is what courage can help you do, like it has for me.

**"WITH COURAGE, SUPPORT,
AND A LITTLE BIT OF HAPPINESS,
I CAN CONQUER THE CHALLENGE AND SURVIVE."**

ISABELLA RIZZO

MARJORIE SARZANA, TEACHER

Saint John School

My courage story is about my cousin Caroline. When she was born, she was the size of a stick of butter, and weighed one and a quarter pounds. The doctors, as well as my aunt, were scared. They decided to operate on my cousin to see what was wrong. While they were performing the operation, a doctor accidentally pierced her heart with the operating equipment. She had a heart attack and was rushed into an intensive care unit. She was watched carefully by the doctors and nurses.

Throughout her life, she has had heart, eye, and many leg surgeries. She also had a metal plate placed into her ankle. The scar on her leg is about five inches long. It's faded a bit now, but I will always have the image of that heartbreaking mark. When she was little, most of her friends went to school, but she went to a physical therapist to learn how to walk. If you visited her after a surgery she would say she was okay, but if you saw the scar on her leg you would know she wasn't. Ever since then we call her "Carolion," because she has the heart of a lion.

My cousin has been in the newspaper because of her story of courage and survival. I feel that I should share it again because it's the best story I've ever heard. Courage is being able to do something you may never have thought about doing before, but at the end you become stronger.



**“COURAGE IS BEING ABLE TO DO SOMETHING YOU
MAY NEVER HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT DOING
BEFORE, BUT AT THE END YOU BECOME STRONGER.”**

DANIEL O'TOOLE

TRICIA POLES AND CAROLA TABELA, TEACHERS

Saint Brendan School

A time I had courage was when the best man I knew passed away, my grandfather Kevin O'Toole. He was a Boston firefighter. I loved that guy. He was the best!

Papa came over every Sunday. He brought doughnuts, and maybe something special like a candy bar or money. One time he brought a big killer whale tooth! Drinking tea, laughing, and listening to his stories, it couldn't have been better.

On half days after school he'd pick me up, or I'd run down the hill with my friends to his house. We would eat the best bagels in the world, relax, and watch *Sponge Bob* with him and my grandmother, Ma O'Toole.

Every year my whole family, including my fifteen cousins, would go to the Sea Crest Hotel in Plymouth. The hotel had an arcade where my cousins and I played Man Hunt, and had competitions about who would get the most prizes. My grandfather, my grandmother and I had a secret arrangement where they would give me coins on the sly to put into the machines. My cousins wondered how I got all those pockets full of coins!

Then one day, I was home at my computer. My dad came in the door and called everyone into the living room. He told us that Papa had died from pneumonia. It was the first time I saw my dad cry. He told us that Papa fought very bravely to live, but after a long struggle he passed away.

When I was younger, I asked him questions like, "Have you ever seen this *Sponge Bob* episode?" Now that I am older, there are so many other questions I would like to ask him. Losing Papa was very sad, but he fought a brave battle, just like the fires he fought when he was young. I will never forget him. He is gone, but forever in my heart.



**“LOSING PAPA WAS VERY SAD,
BUT HE FOUGHT A BRAVE BATTLE,
JUST LIKE THE FIRES HE FOUGHT WHEN
HE WAS YOUNG. I WILL NEVER FORGET HIM.”**

GUSTAVO NOVELLE-RUDDY

AMBER MALM, TEACHER

Patrick Lyndon K-8 School

When I first heard this mysterious news, I was thinking, “Aw man, this can’t be happening again.” I was surprised because this was my mom’s third time getting breast cancer. To me, as her son, she didn’t deserve this, and I hoped she wouldn’t die because breast cancer is a hard thing to cure. It’s a powerful disease some women get. I’m lucky to still have a mom because the medication, chemotherapy, might respond and it might not. It is a treatment that kills all of your bad blood cells and your good blood cells. My mom is the air to me. I can breathe when I’m with her, but I can’t breathe when I’m not. Breast cancer can be fatal to some people who have it. I’m so happy for her that she is still living, and unhappy that she has to go through such agony. Courage to me is being brave even if you’re on the verge of dying.

My mom had to be strong and try her hardest to function normally, especially with four young sons, four older daughters, and one son with autism. My whole family was terrified and worried. I was thinking maybe God had a different plan for her, rather than live a happy life like she was supposed to. It was like a living hell for her, and that’s not what she wanted during the time she was having treatment. However, the sun smiled at her every day, and I felt pretty good about that. My mom is an awesome mom, taking care of her nine children with my dad.

My mom had to show more affection than usual for my younger siblings because they didn’t understand what was going on with her. She told me that she didn’t want anyone to help her, and I understood what she was trying to say. All of her friends helped anyway by cooking and coming over to see that everything was fine at our house. She was always- and still is- kind, generous, respectful, and caring. She had to show that she had the courage to be strong and move on with life. My grandparents came over from Tennessee during this time to help out with lots of stuff while she sat on the couch looking pale and bald. She never enjoyed her baldness, and would feel embarrassed for herself out in public, but she shouldn’t because she is like a banana split with a cherry on top.



When we heard that the cancer was slowly going away and the medication was responding, my family and I were so happy. She is still alive today, and though the breast cancer is gone, she might be at risk because unfortunately this is her third time getting it. My family prays and hopes she doesn’t get cancer ever again in her life. Everyone is glad for her. I’m so lucky to have my mom. If I didn’t, a big portion of my heart would be missing, and I think everybody else would really think that way, too. It is a miracle that she survived cancer for the third time in a row and yet she did not give up. I love you, Mom. You’re the best, and I’m so thankful to have you even though we argue sometimes.

During this challenging time my mom didn’t want to let herself or others down, even though from what I could tell, it wasn’t easy for her to do that. Right now she is enjoying life and trying to get the cancer thing off her head and just be happy with her life.

**“COURAGE TO ME IS BEING BRAVE
EVEN IF YOU’RE ON THE VERGE OF DYING.”**

CHRISTOPHER LACOMBE

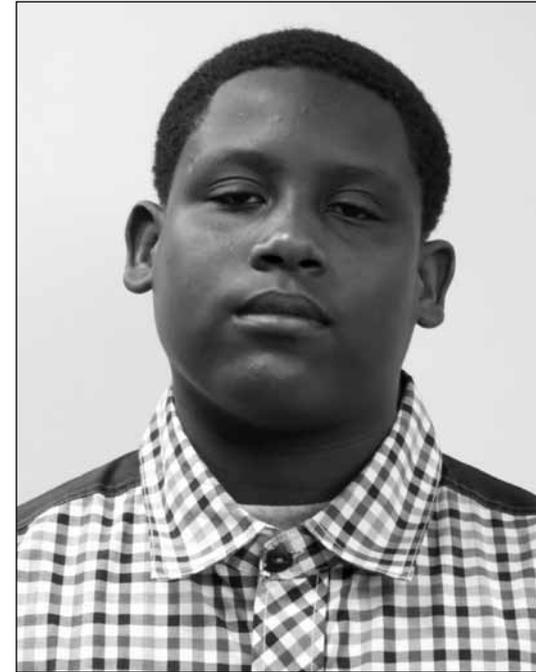
GREGORY JOHNSON, TEACHER

McKinley South End Academy

To me the meaning of courage is to hang in there when you are going through a tough situation. The person that shows courage to me is my mom.

All my life, my mom has shown courage to me. She shows courage by going through a lot with me, my life, and my behavior. My behavior gets me into a lot of trouble when I can't control my anger. Some of the trouble I got into was fighting in school all the time, and getting in trouble almost every day. My mom didn't speak any English. Sometimes she didn't know what to do, so she just cried to get all the frustration out. It made me very sad when I would see my mom crying. Ever since I was five years old my mom has been going through this with me. Now I'm much older, twelve years old, and doing much better with school and my behavior. My mom is very proud of me because I've been doing my homework and my grades are moving up. That's because I know my mom is counting on me and has never given up on me.

I know that my mom showed a lot of courage because she hung in there while going through all of those situations with me, and she never gave up.



**“TO ME THE MEANING OF COURAGE IS TO
HANG IN THERE WHEN YOU ARE GOING
THROUGH A TOUGH SITUATION.”**

STEPHANIE GONZALEZ

NATASHA EVITTS, TEACHER

Mario Umana Middle School Academy

I showed courage by dealing with problems having to do with my dad. When I was a little girl I was always by his side, no matter what. I loved him a lot. As I got older he was never there for me. Instead, he would go out with his friends all night until he got drunk. He didn't know what he was doing, and he started to abuse my mom while I was sleeping. My mom got really scared so she woke me up and left with my aunt. When I got even older, I really felt like I didn't have a dad anymore. He never called or checked up on me. That hurt me a lot, because he would always hang out with other kids instead of his real ones. He would also give money to people that didn't even appreciate him.

One thing I just found out was that when I was born he would always tell my mom I wasn't his daughter. Later on, he would make promises about us going to one place or another, but he only kept those promises sometimes. Then he just started to forget and would tell me that he would make it up to me, but he never did. Whenever I think about these moments I still cry because I love him, but he just doesn't love me back. I have to show so much courage because I have to show my dad that I'm very brave and that I can live without him, even though that is very hard to manage at times. One thing that hurts me a lot is that he always lies to me. He just doesn't see it as lying, so I get really mad. I wish I could forget about everything that has happened between us.

I want to thank God because if it wasn't for my mom, I don't know where I would be. Although we have to face these problems right now, my mom has been working very hard so my little brother and I have a place to live and food to eat. My brother and I are in school right now because of my mom. We always try to get some help from my dad, but he just doesn't want to help us. My dad went to jail for five years and he got out in 2010. Since then, he has never been there for us. When he tells me he is at work, I see him out with his girlfriends. He always has his own little ways of changing stories around so my family will forgive him. When I want to talk and I call him, he never picks up his phone. He tells me that I never want to call him,



but how am I supposed to talk to him if he never answers his phone, or if he is never home? My dad means the world to me, but whenever he acts this way a piece of him in my heart just fades away. To me, the word courage means to be very brave and strong in a tough situation like my family and I are going through with my daddy.

**“TO ME, THE WORD COURAGE MEANS TO BE
VERY BRAVE AND STRONG IN A TOUGH SITUATION
LIKE MY FAMILY AND I ARE GOING THROUGH.”**

KOREDE OYENUGA

MELISSA HEATH, TEACHER

Boston Collegiate Charter Public School

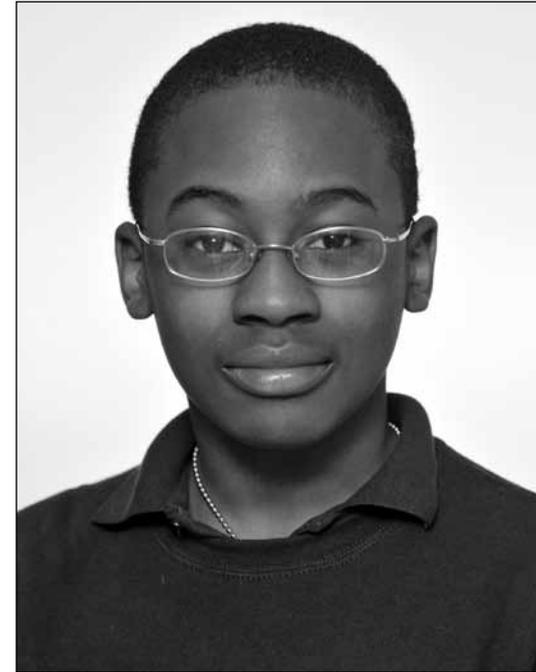
This was a time that wasn't at all easy for me, mainly because this happened on a day I just shut down, the time where I couldn't do it anymore and just gave up on myself, I just lost it.

After a couple of weeks of me acting so down and out of shape in school, my teachers called home and asked my mom if anything was going on. My mom decided it was time for me to go see a doctor.

After asking my mother and me a few questions, the doctor came to the conclusion that I had a type of depression that had to do with anxiety. I was really nervous and needed courage to be sure I would be able to get better, but back then I believed that when someone says they have courage, they're just trying to hide the fact that they're insecure about something. Now I know that courage is being able to look into a mirror and say everything will be ok, and to truly mean it.

I was told that I would take two weeks away from school, and at first I was really happy because I thought that I was going on vacation somewhere. But then the doctor told me that I would be going to a mental health facility where they would help me get better. Since I had a wandering mind, I thought it would be a place where they restrain people and inject them with something to calm them. I really needed courage because I was afraid of something happening to me. When I went inside the facility I had a huge orb of fear surrounding me, but soon I calmed down because the place didn't look like a mental health facility, it looked like a kindergarten!

A woman took me to a room with some other boys. She gave us all paper and asked us to write our name and write why we were there. I thought this really was kindergarten because after we introduced ourselves, we played games, and at lunch we ordered sandwiches from the deli down the street. We were all having a good time. The center smelled like freshly baked cookies that just came out of the oven. We also went on field trips and walked to the park. We all became friends, but some boys got better faster than I did and left.



Sadly, my time at the center ended as well, and it was time for me to go back to school, the place where it all began. I wasn't even sure I would live to see another second after walking into that school, but after all the help the center gave me, and all the fun I had, I felt brave. I felt courageous. I had also started meeting with a mentor who helped me meet Michael, my best friend. School became a breeze and I was better than ever. My grades were rising and I wasn't depressed anymore.

This was a time that I needed a lot of courage because I was afraid that something bad would happen and I would never get better. After getting all the help that I needed, I made it back to school. Now I feel like I can do almost anything.

**“NOW I KNOW THAT COURAGE IS BEING ABLE TO
LOOK INTO A MIRROR AND SAY EVERYTHING
WILL BE OK, AND TO TRULY MEAN IT.”**

MOHAMMED SALIH

REBECCA FISCHER, TEACHER

John W. McCormack Middle School

There was once a cat stuck in a machine. I saw it just looking at me and I knew that the cat wanted help to get out. I felt so bad for it so I thought about what to do. I told myself, "Time to show some courage."

I know what you're thinking, "A cat stuck in a machine?" Well this machine is dangerous and it powers houses in Harbor Point. Cats love that place and kids do, too. Anyway, the cat was stuck and there was a big fence blocking the way to get in. So I got over the fence, got to the cat, and tried to pull it out. The cat started yelling, not talking, and throwing hits because I think the cat thought I was trying to hurt it. But also the pulling just made it worse somehow.

I was about to give up when I realized that it was a hot day and the machine was giving off heat as well. The heat and the cat's fur made it way too hot for the cat. So I got over the fence, got water, and went back over the fence. When I returned, I saw the cat with its tongue out because it was so hot. I put water on the cat to get the cat cool and slippery so I could get it out. Soon the cat was slipping and I was pulling, not too hard to hurt it, and what do you know? The cat came out.

Now the cat lives with me. His name is Bombu because he's fat. I will never forget how I found him and got him to safety. The cat was saved last summer and the vet says he has a long life ahead of him. That was the time I showed courage, but it will not be the last, there are still many stories to come.



**“THAT WAS THE TIME I SHOWED COURAGE,
BUT IT WILL NOT BE THE LAST,
THERE ARE STILL MANY STORIES TO COME.”**

ISMAEL MEDINA

WILLIAM GOULD, TEACHER

Joseph J. Hurley K-8 School

In my life, I've had courage growing up. I never had a father to teach me right from wrong. I always had to depend on my mom.

In 2005, my mom, my little sister, and I moved to an apartment in Roxbury. While we lived there I joined a baseball team in the South End. Before the first game of the season, I started to notice that the other kids were just like me. The only thing that was different was that they had their parents there to support them. My mother couldn't come to my games because she was always working so that my two younger siblings and I could eat and have a roof over our heads. One thing that made me sad was that when all the other kids came up to bat, they had their dugout cheering and their parents cheering from the bleachers. When I came up to bat my teammates were cheering from the dugout, but when I looked at the bleachers I had no one cheering for me.

I remember when I was about seven years old I asked my mom if I had a father. She said, "Yes," but after she said yes, I noticed a sudden change in my mom's emotion. I can still remember her sad face today. After I experienced my mom like that, I told myself that I would never ask her again. I didn't mention my father to my mom for a while, but one day it was killing me. I was determined to find out about my biological father. My mom made that face again, but this time I wasn't going to let it ruin my question. I said, "Please, mom. I really need to know." She told me that my father left and found a new girlfriend. She said that he almost hit her.

I regretted asking about him, and I was proud that my mom stayed up on her two feet and didn't give up on me, like my father did. That's why every Father's Day I say, "Happy Father's Day," to my mom, because she plays both parts in my life.



**“IN MY LIFE, I’VE HAD COURAGE GROWING UP.
I NEVER HAD A FATHER TO TEACH ME RIGHT
FROM WRONG. I ALWAYS HAD TO
DEPEND ON MY MOM.”**

KEANNA MACDONALD-COAKLEY

DAN CESARIO, TEACHER

Sarah Greenwood K-8 School

Everyone has their own meaning of courage. It can mean different things to different people. Somehow everyone shows courage at some point in their life. When I was seven, I lived with my grandmother. I really never knew my mother that well. My grandmother would say, “You look just like your mother.” That made me happy inside because it gave me an idea about what she looked like. I didn’t know what my mom looked like. I had never even seen a picture of her. That’s when I grew a lot more determined to find out more about my mother.

One day, I asked my grandma what she knew about my mother. She told me some stories about how she lived with her for a while, and how my sister and I would always bother her when she was trying to sleep. My grandmother’s stories made me laugh. Later that day, I asked her if she knew my mom’s phone number. She went into her room where she kept her things. She gave me the number and handed me the phone. When I got the number I was excited, but I was scared to call. I did not know what to do. My grandmother told me I didn’t have to call right then.

That night, I told my grandma that I would call my mom tomorrow. The next day came and went. I didn’t make the call. Every day I would tell myself, “I will call her tomorrow.” I was too scared to call. I didn’t know what to say to my mom. I didn’t know what her reaction would be.

A week later, I was determined to call. Early one morning I picked up the phone and dialed the number. My mom answered the phone with surprise. She asked me who I was and I said, “It’s Keanna, your daughter.” She sounded very happy to hear my voice, but I was still scared to say anything. Finally, I warmed up and started to ask all sorts of questions. I knew she would have to hang up soon, so I asked her if she could come pick me up on the weekend and visit. “That sounds great!” she told me.

After that day, my mom started to pick up my sister and me for visits. I am glad I had the courage to pick up the phone and call my mom. Without courage I wouldn’t be close to my mom.



**“I AM GLAD I HAD THE COURAGE
TO PICK UP THE PHONE AND CALL MY MOM.
WITHOUT COURAGE I WOULDN’T BE
CLOSE TO MY MOM.”**

LINDSAY LECLAIRE

DEBBIE AUDAY, TEACHER

Holten Richmond Middle School

“When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves,” said author Victor Frankl. This quote played a big part in my life when I was younger. It says to me that even if you make a mistake in life that you cannot change, you still have the ability to change yourself. Courage, to me, is making a mistake and finding your will to make a new beginning.

When I was a young child, around the age of three, I was always smiling, happy and energetic because I had my uncle around me all the time. I knew I could always look up to him throughout my life. Then he came to a fork in the road and his life changed forever. He started using drugs and alcohol. He grew violent and mean, strong and powerful. He was breaking into people’s houses looking for money to buy these horrible things. He then went to jail for four years and broke my family’s heart. I was asking where he went, what happened to him. As I grew older, I started to realize the things he had done. He made bad decisions and he knew he had taken the wrong path. When he got out of jail, he came to my house to say hello and find out how things were going. I was confused because I didn’t remember who this person was.

Then it all started coming back to me. He was my uncle who I loved and cared for, who put a big smile on my face every time I saw him. I was happy to see my uncle, but sad at the same time. It took courage for me to see my uncle after everything he had done. My uncle then began to change. He found his courage and started believing in himself and believing in God. He knew what he had done was wrong and irresponsible. I saw my uncle changing and becoming the best person he could be. I started to follow my uncle again and he told me, “Lindsay, you can be a leader. You have the strength and power to do anything you put your mind to.” I have always remembered what he said, and I have kept his words with me forever. I know just how important it was for him to change, because he changed me too.



This situation had a big impact on my life because my uncle taught me a lesson through his example. I would have never been the person I am today without this situation. My uncle taught me that it’s not okay to take drugs and break into homes for money, but it *is* okay to make mistakes and learn from them. My uncle made me the person I am today because he made me find my courage. Courage comes with new possibilities, new problems to solve, and new fears to overcome.

**MY UNCLE TAUGHT ME THAT IT’S NOT OKAY TO
TAKE DRUGS AND BREAK INTO PEOPLE’S HOMES
FOR MONEY, BUT IT *is* OKAY TO
MAKE MISTAKES AND LEARN FROM THEM.”**

JERRELYNN PEREZ

EMILY TRONO, TEACHER

Rafael Hernández K-8 School

Growing up I was the biggest daddy's girl you could ever imagine. My father and I were inseparable. I could be having the worst day ever, but when I was with my dad, everything would be okay again. When I was sick or scared, his hugs would make me feel a whole lot better. But most of all, his presence made me feel like I had the best dad in the world, and I was proud to be his daughter! Most of this changed about five years ago. Eventually, my mom and father got a divorce. Years passed and I got older. So did he, and so did my intelligence. I understood more about why things happened.

About a year ago, my father was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, and I told him that I'll always be there for him, to guide him. After my parents got a divorce, my dad moved to Providence for a couple of months. My brother, sister and I rarely got to see him, and I could tell that it hurt my sister and brother as much as it hurt me. But don't think that after getting diabetes he stopped his partying ways. Knowing his condition very well, he still had an unhealthy diet, went to parties almost every two weeks, and got drunk. This frustrated plenty of people, including me! One drink would turn into two, then two drinks into ten bottles if you let him. He would start talking nonsense, and sometimes even get physical. He would apologize to whoever was affected by his actions, and we would always forgive him. But personally, I was fed up with the same thing happening over and over.

As a daughter, I would try and help, but he would either not listen, or insist there was nothing wrong with him, and that frustrated me even more. I talked to my mom about it and we both decided that the best thing to do at this point was to plan an intervention. This was the first time someone actually listened and took action to solve this problem and I was relieved. We simply stated that he had a drinking problem and that he needed to stop. As I expected, he got a little angry, because my father's the type of person who doesn't like hearing the truth. Soon enough, he got over his anger and finally admitted that he did have a drinking problem, and that he'd try to stop.



I think it takes a lot of courage to help someone with an issue, because as much as you don't want to face the fact that that person does have a problem, you have to. Eventually, my father got over his drinking habit. He has a couple of drinks here and there, but he knows his boundaries and the consequences that he'll suffer if he drinks too much. Although he isn't the best role model in the world, or the best father there is out there, he has learned from his actions. I'm extremely proud to say that the mistakes he's made have taught him how to be a better person.

**“I THINK IT TAKES A LOT OF COURAGE
TO HELP SOMEONE WITH AN ISSUE,
BECAUSE AS MUCH AS YOU DON'T WANT
TO FACE THE FACT THAT THAT PERSON
DOES HAVE A PROBLEM, YOU HAVE TO.”**

BRIANNA RIVERA

DEBBIE AUDAY, TEACHER

Holten Richmond Middle School

A wise person once said, “Hard things are put in our way, not to stop us, but to call out our courage and strength.” Courage is not only being brave, but being a strong person and facing things in your life that are difficult to handle. This quote connects to my life and inspires me because I’ve had difficulties in my life and they just make me stronger. I have a health issue called ADD. This means Attention Deficit Disorder. Having ADD is a struggle for me every day because while other kids in school are doing their work fast and finishing quickly, I’m still behind and having trouble. ADD is hard to deal with.

Everyday ADD affects me. During class while the teacher is talking, I’m thinking about other things. Sometimes I cannot get comfortable in my seat and I keep moving around. This situation is difficult for me because I feel different from everybody else. I was afraid I would never be normal. Even though having ADD is hard, I have learned to deal with my difficulty and work with it. I overcome my difficulty by trying my best and paying attention. For me to be able to do my homework fast, I have to be alone and there can’t be any distractions. I show courage every day because living with something a person doesn’t want to handle is courageous.

This experience has impacted my life because I’ve learned so much. I’ve learned to face problems and not run away from them. This experience has given me courage in new situations by facing my problems and having faith that I can do whatever I set my heart and mind to. Having ADD has made me the person I am today. Sure, it causes me to have trouble in school, but sometimes I like a good challenge. I am almost thankful to have ADD because it has changed my life completely, and my parents, brother, and sister have helped me and taught me not to walk away from problems, but to face them. I am thankful for ADD because it has brought out the courage in me.



“I AM THANKFUL FOR ADD BECAUSE IT HAS BROUGHT OUT THE COURAGE IN ME.”

DJ DASILVA

AARON COHEN, TEACHER

Jackson Mann K-8

It started when I was only eight years old. I used to like stealing money from my father, and not a little bit of money. I used to steal \$20-\$40 every two days. He thought it was my mom taking money from him so he didn't say anything. I didn't want him to keep thinking it was my mom, but I just couldn't tell him it was me. I didn't have the courage to do it, so I waited.

A few weeks later I felt the courage to go to my father and tell him that I had been stealing money from him. Not a little money, a lot of it. He was mad, but after an hour passed he was happy that I had the courage to tell him.

The next day, I told myself that stealing money is bad and I would never do it again. I learned that if I didn't have courage to tell my dad I was stealing money, I might have kept doing it in the future.

**“I LEARNED THAT IF I DIDN'T HAVE
COURAGE TO TELL MY DAD I WAS STEALING...
I MIGHT HAVE KEPT DOING IT IN THE FUTURE.”**

ESTHER JOSEPH

JACQUELYN WESNER, TEACHER

Saint Columbkille Partnership School

Courage is the quality of mind or spirit that enables a person to face difficulty, danger, or pain without fear.

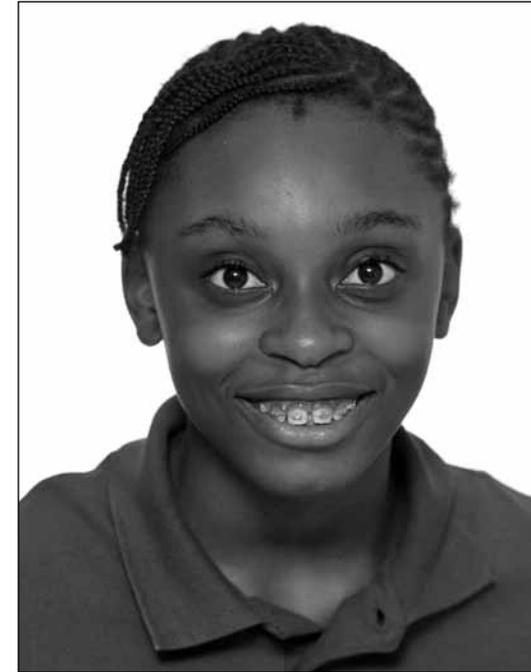
I have shown courage in many ways throughout my life, but I think that the story of me facing other people to stand up for a friend, is the best story of all. I was only in first grade and we were coming back from a field trip of pumpkin picking in a pumpkin patch. We were on the bus and were having a great time... until the drama started. I remember it like it was yesterday.

My friend and I were on the bus laughing and playing games. The whole bus was very loud and the driver seemed lost, though we were unaware of that at the time. Then all of a sudden my friend started to get fidgety. I asked her if she was okay and she said she had to use the bathroom, but then added she could hold it. She could not.

After an hour or so she was getting really squirmy and the driver was speaking into his walkie-talkie, probably because we were still lost. My friend said she was fine and that she was just really excited to show her ginormous pumpkin to everyone in her family. I asked her if she really had to use the bathroom, and she said it was an emergency, but I should not tell anyone.

About ten minutes after that, the bus driver had to get out of the bus to ask people for directions. The parent chaperones tried to keep everyone relaxed. My friend whispered in my ear telling me that she really had to go and she could not wait anymore. She asked me if I could tell the chaperones that she really needed to use the restroom so they could take her to a nearby store. I tried to do exactly what she said, but the chaperones would not listen to me because of all the ruckus that was going on. When I went back to our seat to tell my friend the news, she was just sitting there crying. And the seat was wet.

When the other kids saw what happened they just howled with laughter. The chaperones and I were trying to comfort her as best we could. The others were just calling her cruel names that had to do with her accident. She was so full of woe, and I was so fuming that I just stood up from my seat and said, "You people are so mean to be doing this to her. What if you were



in this situation and everyone else just laughed at you, like your misery was the funniest thing in the world? If you know what's good for you, you would stop hurting her feelings because maybe tomorrow you will go through something just as terrible as her situation."

After I said those words I sunk back into my seat, surprised about what I had just done. I had never spoken in front of people like that before in my life. After that, the whole bus was silent for about two minutes. Then another girl broke the silence and said, "I think I have a spare pair of pants in my backpack. You can borrow them if you would like." Once everyone heard that they all started to comfort my friend.

After that our class never laughed at another person's misfortune ever again. I was glad that I showed true courage to help out a good friend in need. I loved the feeling of courage in me when that moment happened. I know that that was the best thing to do and I did it. And it was the greatest feeling ever to me.

**"I SHOWED TRUE COURAGE TO HELP OUT
A GOOD FRIEND IN NEED...
IT WAS THE GREATEST FEELING EVER TO ME."**

LAURA CLABAUGH

JEANINE PENNUCCI, TEACHER

Warren-Prescott K-8 School

For me, courage is standing up for yourself no matter what the cost. It is more important to be true to yourself than to be popular. This can be a hard lesson to learn, especially in school when there is so much pressure to fit in with the cool kids, and drama if you do not. For people like me, who are different and proud to be an individual, this can be difficult.

I learned a hard lesson last year, in fifth grade, when I was bullied by another girl in my class. She was popular, everyone thought she was funny, and she was loud and dramatic, so people paid a lot of positive attention to her. I, on the other hand, was left out of almost everything and am anxious a lot. I suppose she saw me as an easy target because of this. She started to taunt me with words, making fun of my appearance, and my family. She did this in front of other kids, but so that teachers would not hear.

When she realized I would not tell on her, the bullying got worse. She wrote me a mean note using my name in an acrostic poem with mean words next to each letter. I was crying in the hall when Jodi, a favorite teacher and an adult that I trusted, noticed how upset I was. Sad and frustrated by the whole situation, I gave her the note. She spoke to Mrs. Carter, my fifth grade teacher, who brought the situation to the attention of the principal.

The principal spoke to both of us at one time and indicated that he did not know what to do, and nobody else seemed to either. This is when I knew I had to demonstrate exceptional courage. Even though I hated this girl for how she treated me, I suggested that we each leave his office and write three nice things about each other as a way to get past the situation.

After this happened, my mom learned from talking to other parents that my bully had shown the horrible note to other kids in the class before she gave it to me. I wish that they had been courageous enough to tell an adult before I had to go through this experience. This is when I showed courage.



**“FOR ME, COURAGE IS STANDING UP
FOR YOURSELF NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.”**

CATHERINE HART WOODS

JAMIE RICHARDSON, TEACHER

South Boston Catholic Academy

Sometimes putting yourself at risk can be dangerous, but you have to do the right thing. My dad is a true example of this. My dad saw a car crash and one of the cars went up in flames. He saw the whole thing and he knew he had to do something. He ran to the car that was in flames and the people inside were unconscious. People were yelling to my dad and telling him, “You’re going to get yourself killed,” but my dad ignored all of the comments.

The windshield was shattered and the dashboard had collapsed on both of the passengers’ legs. The passengers were stuck and my dad was trying and struggling, and pulling and hauling on the woman in the car. My dad was pulling so hard and after a few minutes he managed to get the woman out of the car. Someone brought her to a safe place and then called an ambulance, which took her to the hospital. The fire was rapidly moving towards where the man, who my dad was trying to save, was.

The people who were at the scene kept yelling and screaming, “Stop!” and, “You’re going to die, too!” Again, he did not listen to the remarks because he was busy trying to save a person’s life! My dad continued pulling on the man in the car. He had been pulling for a while and everybody was telling him he was not going to get the man out of the car. My dad did not know what the outcome of this problem was going to be.

After yanking on the man for a while, my dad did not have as much hope but he still tried. He knew he did not deserve to fail after saving one person’s life and almost saving the other person’s life. He finally managed to get the man loose and wiggle the rest of him out. He got the man and himself away from the burning car. My dad went as far away as possible, and that was when the car was completely covered in flames. After my dad got both the passengers out, the car blew up!

My dad was honored and was on the front page of the newspaper. He did not care about the awards or appreciation, he just knew he had done the right thing while his life was also at stake. My dad was pleased to be home



and safe, and to know what courage and bravery he showed in this accident made him feel good about what he had done for the people in the burning car. The people in the car survived but they were at a nearby hospital in critical condition. When they got out of the hospital, they thanked my dad so much. My dad says, “Even though your life can be at risk, sometimes you have to do the right thing, be courageous and help others.”

**“MY DAD SAYS,
‘EVEN THOUGH YOUR LIFE CAN BE AT RISK,
SOMETIMES YOU HAVE TO DO THE RIGHT THING,
BE COURAGEOUS AND HELP OTHERS.’”**

CYAN O'GARRO

MICHELE SPRATLING, TEACHER

Martin Luther King, Jr. K-8 School

Courage is making the right decision and moving forward from your fears, no matter how difficult it may seem. Every night I go to sleep afraid. I'm afraid that when I wake up, my mom won't be alive. My mom has a noncontagious disease called sickle cell. It affects her blood, and the doctors predict she will not live as long as an average human being. Somehow she is able to smile, laugh, clean, and cook. Every day she does more than what she's asked to do, she does more than what she feels like doing, and she does more than what she's able to do, and that takes courage. It takes a lot of courage to move on every day thinking it will be alright, hoping for the best, and not giving up on the dream for a cure.

I take care of my mom when she is really sick. I sometimes make dinner or clean, other times I watch my baby brother and sister (all with the help of my stepfather). Most of the time, I pray. I pray that one day there will be a cure for sickle cell. I pray that one day I will see my wonderful mom run, dance, jump, and truly be happy about her health. I pray that she will be free and not be a slave to this disease anymore. I see my mom being strong on the outside even though she is weak on the inside.

One day I came home and only my stepfather was there. My mom was in the hospital with a blood clot in her lungs. Every day I felt so helpless knowing I could not help her. I began being afraid to come home, not knowing if my mom was going to be in the hospital or worse. I was afraid to have courage. I am always afraid my mom will die. I am scared that I will be the one to have to tell my brothers and sister that our mom has died. It takes a lot of courage to believe that my mom is going to be alright. It also takes a lot of courage for my mom to believe she is going to be alright and that her life is not going to be over. Sometimes it all seems so hopeless.

Courage is a hard thing to have, and I'm thankful I have it. Facing my fears is scary and pretty much impossible. My mom having a blood clot in her lungs was scary and very dangerous. This scared everyone, but we made it through as a family. We have courage. It is important to face your fear



and use the power of belief to have courage. Courage is making the right decision, to move on no matter how difficult it may seem. Together we made it through, and together we will keep moving forward no matter what comes next. Life may be difficult at times, but life without courage is harder.

**“IT TAKES A LOT OF COURAGE TO MOVE ON EVERY
DAY THINKING IT WILL BE ALRIGHT,
HOPING FOR THE BEST,
AND NOT GIVING UP ON THE DREAM FOR A CURE.”**

KEVIN UMANZOR TORRES

NATASHA EVITTS, TEACHER

Mario Umana Middle School Academy

Courage to me is when you are strong during hard times, and when you move forward and don't look back. When I was eight years old, my dad came to El Salvador to visit. This was the best gift for my birthday. At the time, my dad was living in the United States because we didn't have any money and I was sick most of the time. My dad did not have a lot of money to buy my medicine, so he had to make the move when I was only two years old. When my dad came for my birthday I was happy because I did not remember ever seeing him in person, only in pictures. My dad stayed with us for six months before he had to leave. He wasn't making as much money working in El Salvador as he was in the United States, so my mom decided that we were going to leave El Salvador and live with my dad.

The next day I wasn't as happy because I didn't want to leave El Salvador. I was upset about leaving my family and friends. I felt I showed a lot of courage when I had to leave everyone and everything I knew. Our first stop was in Honduras, and we stayed there for a night. The next day we had to go to Chihuahua, Mexico. We stayed there for another night until we left for the desert. We had to walk a lot. We walked for three and a half days to get to a truck. After being in the truck for a few minutes, the truck hit something and flipped. I cried because I didn't know what happened to my mom or dad. Luckily, they were both safe, whereas twenty-five other people were injured. We had to walk for one more night.

After, we arrived at another truck. I began to cry because I feared the same thing was going to happen to this truck. I was extremely excited to finally arrive in Texas. I was happy about finally being in a house and being able to eat and take a bath. We stayed there for two nights, and then headed to New York.

After all these days staying in the desert, as well as leaving El Salvador, I showed a huge amount of courage.



**“COURAGE TO ME IS WHEN YOU ARE
STRONG DURING HARD TIMES,
AND WHEN YOU MOVE FORWARD
AND DON'T LOOK BACK.”**

KAMAN HAU

JESSICA TSAI, TEACHER

Josiah Quincy Upper School

What does courage mean? Courage to me means facing difficult situations. I showed courage when my mom passed away and by going to see her in person for the last time.

On February 8, 2008, I was at the hospital. The birds were chirping happily, but it was a really sad day for my family. My family just found out that my mom had passed away. After my family left the hospital feeling depressed, my mom was taken away in a large, black car that went to a funeral home. About a week later, we went to see my mom for the last time. I had the courage to see her, even though it seemed really creepy.

When I got to the funeral home, I didn't know what was happening. The funeral director told me to go inside the closed door. When I went inside, I saw my mom. I was panicking and scared because it was a surprise to see her; I didn't want to see her dead. However, I knew this was my last chance to see her. I wouldn't see her again after this because she would be buried, and dirt would be separating her from me. I thought of my memories with her. I remember the time when I was little, my mom taught me how to swim. Now I was so sad; she would be missing a lot of events that are happening with my family and me. I finally found the courage to walk to the casket to see my mom with the support of my grandma. She knew how I felt, and that made me feel more comfortable. It was the last time with my mom, so I didn't want to miss it. If you are Chinese, you have to bow to the dead person with wine, honoring them. I honored her by bowing and burning incense for her. In my head I silently said goodbye.

Many people would be sad and depressed to see their mom pass away, but I had hope and courage. When you lose an important person in your life, it feels like you are missing a piece of yourself. Sometimes when I meet a new person or teacher, and they ask me about my mom and dad, I try not to tell them the truth. Then I feel guilty because I lied to them. When they find out, they ask why I didn't tell the truth and I feel very sad. I don't like talking about it, but I still show courage by dealing with it. I have the courage to visit her grave every year to remember and honor her. When I show courage and hope, I make my family and myself proud.



**“WHEN I SHOW COURAGE AND HOPE,
I MAKE MY FAMILY AND MYSELF PROUD.”**

DANIELA FUENTES

AARON COHEN, TEACHER

Jackson Mann K-8

Have you ever celebrated Father's Day without your dad? Well I have, and let me tell you, it doesn't feel good when your school is preparing a Father's Day festival and your dad isn't there.

In Mexico, all the schools have special festivals for all the fathers. They also make the students go to school to celebrate Father's Day. I didn't like to go to school on that day. I didn't like it because my dad was not going to be there.

There was another part of that day that made me feel even worse, when you had to work hard to make a gift to give to your dad. For seven years I had to do that. Every year, I tried to do the best gift for Father's Day. I was making a lot of predictions about what my dad would like. I even learned a poem to say in front of all the fathers. I couldn't give the gift to my dad because he wasn't there with me at the festival.

My dad wasn't there because he wasn't in Mexico. He was here in the United States. He was here because he wanted to give me and my family a better life. At that time, I didn't know that my dad wasn't in Mexico. But I had some memories in my head. And they helped me when I was sad, because those memories made me very happy.

Especially on Father's Day I always remembered all the moments we shared together. For seven years, my mother was both a mom and a dad for me and my sister. A phone call one day made me happy because I heard the voice of my dad. For seven days of seven years it was a test of courage for me.



**“I HAD SOME MEMORIES IN MY HEAD.
AND THEY HELPED ME WHEN I WAS SAD,
BECAUSE THOSE MEMORIES MADE ME VERY HAPPY.”**

JULIANA WOLFE

ERIN GOLDEN, TEACHER

Saint Patrick School

How do you put courage into words? I was born in Voronezh, Russia. I had a mom, but no dad. One day my mother saw people at the door. They came to take me away. They took me into a car that looked like a box. They said it was because there wasn't enough food. *Where are these people taking me?* I started to cry. That night a woman came in and gave me some bread and soup. I cried even more.

While I was in the orphanage, I saw people come and leave. One day I saw a family: a mother and father. *Would my life be any different if I had had a father?* But I was not the one they wanted. They chose someone else. That night a woman came in and picked me up saying, "Don't worry, I will hold you tight." I started to cry, and I cried myself to sleep. *Mommy, I miss you!* When I woke up I felt like my heart was broken even more than before. But after all that crying, I was done.

Then another mother and father came in the door, and I felt the darkness and sadness again. Three of us met them in the large room with a wooden floor. I looked into the women's eyes, and went right over to her. In my eyes I tried to show happiness and love. *I'm afraid.* When they picked me up I felt as if there really were people in my world. I knew these people would be my family, but they had to leave, and I had to wait. They left me a photo book of their family.

When my parents came back to the orphanage a few weeks later, they came straight to me, hugged me, and picked me up. I was going home. I had to leave everything behind, everyone there, and even my clothes. *Can't I take my blue butterfly shoes with me?*

The flight from Russia to Boston was twelve hours. When I arrived at the airport everyone was there. My new sister Marjeta gave me a red balloon. When we got home, everyone was so happy, and so loving, too.



Sometimes I remember what it was like before I had a family. I think about how much courage I needed when I was an orphan, and when I was adopted. And now, when I remember those things, I still need courage. I was almost three when I came home, ten years ago this March. It'll take courage to return to Russia. Someday, I will.

“HOW DO YOU PUT COURAGE INTO WORDS?”

JEFFREY OSAYANDE

DAWN AVERY, TEACHER

James M. Curley K-8 School

To me courage is when you move on with your life no matter what has happened in the past. Have you ever been in a fire accident? In the year 2003, when I was a young boy, my mum and my brother died in a fire accident.

One day, my mum said to my brother, "Go and boil me some water." My brother said, "Okay." In Africa, instead of using a kettle, we use a boiling ring. This is an electric heater that goes inside of a pan of water to heat it up.

After turning on the boiling ring, my brother went to the living room to watch television. Then he fell asleep. The water boiled, and nobody was there to turn off the boiling ring, so the water hit the electrical socket, and it exploded and caught fire. The television was so loud that nobody could hear what was going on. Then my mum woke up and saw smoke. She got up and went to try and put out the fire. My sister and I were trapped in a bedroom full of smoke. My sister was brave enough to save herself and me by breaking down the door, taking my hand, and leading us out of the room.

When we came out, we saw our mum on the living room floor dead, and my brother was dead, too. My oldest sister was already there, and trying to find the key to get us out. Some doors in Nigeria have to be opened on the inside with a key. Our neighbors knocked down the door, and came in to save us. After this, we all went to the hospital, and it was confirmed that my mum and brother were dead.

When they died, it was really sad. It felt like the world was coming to an end. I could smell sorrow in the air for a long time. I could hear people crying. I could see people mourning their deaths for a long time, too. I could taste tears from my eyes in my mouth.

My dad knew that he had to start caring for us. It was also difficult, because my dad was traveling. I couldn't help but think that if he hadn't been traveling, none of this may have happened.



After my mum and brother died, it took us a few years to move on and start a new life. I left to stay with my grand mum in another state in Africa called Lagos. After a few years, my dad got married to my step mum. Three years after that, I moved in with them in the United States.

I have had to deal with so much loss and change in my life. This has taken a lot of courage. I showed courage by moving on with my life after my mother and brother died, but this was really hard. When I stick close to God, it makes it easier to move on with life.

**“I SHOWED COURAGE BY MOVING ON WITH MY LIFE
AFTER MY MOTHER AND BROTHER DIED...
WHEN I STICK CLOSE TO GOD,
IT MAKES IT EASIER TO MOVE ON WITH LIFE.”**

STERLING MENTOR

AMY HIGGINBOTHAM, TEACHER

William B. Rogers Middle School

Courage means to be brave and stand up for yourself. It's like a knight slaying a dragon, standing up to a bully, or facing a fear of heights. There are many different ways to show courage in everyday situations or something scary. I have to show courage every day because I have to face my fear of stuttering.

It all started in elementary school in the third grade, when I started stuttering. I didn't know what was happening or how it started. In school I had to take speech with my teacher, Mrs. Delfocko, and my friend, Luc. Sometimes I stuttered so much that I sounded like Porky Pig from the *Looney Toons* show.

Stuttering really affected my life. I didn't want to talk to anyone, read aloud or answer any questions I knew. We went to Mrs. Delfocko's room almost every day of the week. She taught us "turtle talk" and to take a deep breath when we are about to read or talk out loud. Those strategies really helped me, but I still was very afraid to stutter in front of my classmates. The next year, Mrs. Delfocko had to leave to go to another state, which made me feel like fixing my problem was over. I was devastated. I had a new teacher, Mrs. Hansen, and my stuttering got even worse! Kids would make fun of me and I felt like there was something wrong with me all of the time. Sometimes I didn't even want to read or talk to my friends. It was hard at first having a new and different teacher, but I eventually remembered what Mrs. Delfocko taught me and my stuttering did end up getting a little better.

Luc and I would go to Mrs. Hansen almost every day. We would go online to research some games to help us with our stuttering or play board games to help us. It wasn't always fun but it did end up helping us with our problem. By the next year, fifth grade, my stuttering did get better and some days I wouldn't even stutter. This made me feel like there was hope for my situation. I knew I was a good student and had to work hard, but it always seemed like I had to work even harder than the other students. In some ways I didn't think it was fair. Why did I have to work so much harder than everyone just to talk?



By the time of my fifth grade graduation day, my stuttering had gotten better and Mrs. Hansen was still helping me. I thought I would stop stuttering by this time, but it didn't completely stop. It is something I constantly have to work on, even today, especially in school. It takes courage every day to participate in class, talk to my friends, and read out loud. I hope my stuttering stops soon or when I am older, but for now I try to be brave and work hard so each day I can improve. This affects my life every day and I will continue to use the strategies that were taught to me to stop stuttering.

**“NOW I TRY TO BE BRAVE AND WORK HARD
SO EACH DAY I CAN IMPROVE.”**

ZACHARY MARTINS

SARA SABINS, TEACHER

Boston Renaissance Charter Public School

The dictionary defines courage as the strength to face danger when overwhelmed by fear, but I define it as getting through a hard situation.

Mr. Edwards was loose, he played with us in Saturday School. He made time for us during the school day even though he was so busy. He was the one that you went to when you had a problem in class or anything.

One day, on a typical Monday morning, I was walking through the gate to get into the Pods, where my classroom is. I stopped to talk to Mr. Hendrixson about baseball and a kid came up to us and said, “Mr. Edwards, Mr. Edwards died.”

I looked at Mr. Hendrixson and he said, “It’s true.” I said to him, “Stop kidding. I have his phone number, I’ll call him.”

I started to see people in tears and other people just really sad. Instead of going to choir, I went to class because choir wasn’t that important at that minute. I went in and it seemed normal, but it wasn’t. We talked about it, then we went to morning meeting. Some kids, like me, were crying because we used to go to his office and play and he was really the main person we trusted.

A bunch of adults came in to talk to us about it and people just started crying. I saw Ms. Knoebel, a teacher, crying. I saw my own teacher who I had only known for two months, crying. Right there and then, seeing her cry, I realized it was a big deal to me.

The following Tuesday was the funeral. I couldn’t go because I couldn’t get a ride, but I heard it was emotional. It’s hard to face death because it’s really sad.



Now we’re doing well, but we are still repairing from this blow. The school community has shown courage because Mr. Edwards had been in this school for a long time. We had all gotten accustomed to him always being around, always there for you and the teachers. It’s been hard repairing our community because he was a big factor here. I believe everybody has courage because we lost an important person but everyone just keeps going forward because we have no choice. This is how my community—or should I say, my family—showed courage.

**“THIS IS HOW MY COMMUNITY-
OR SHOULD I SAY, MY FAMILY- SHOWED COURAGE.”**

COURAGE BEYOND BOSTON

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT FEATURING ESSAYS

FROM OUR NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

The essays featured in this section were written by students participating in our national and international programs. They represent the true universal nature of courage, and support our strong conviction that all people have the capacity to be courageous.

THE MAX WARBURG COURAGE CURRICULUM'S GLOBAL INITIATIVE

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum began working with international partners in 2007 in response to a growing need for accessible, proven literacy and character development curriculum. To date, “The Max” has worked with schools and communities in Thailand, Cambodia, the United Kingdom, Mozambique and India. This list continues to grow, as our organization seeks to partner with schools and learning communities across the globe to engage students in the reading and writing process, while empowering them to discover, recognize and celebrate the courage in their lives.

We welcome any organization wishing to work with The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum. Recognizing that the stories of courage from children across the globe enrich the educational experience for all students, we seek to share our materials and offer educational opportunities for children outside of Boston.

COURAGE IN MY COMMUNITY

The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum has proudly partnered with Cambium Learning Technologies to host “Courage in My Community,” which includes a nation-wide essay contest open to students in grades 5-8 in the United States. This program engages students in the reading and writing process and integrates technology with our English Language Arts curricula, while encouraging young people to write about personal experiences with courage.

In addition to teaching guides and online resources, participating schools are given access to a searchable database of award-winning essays written by Boston sixth graders. We encourage participating schools to deepen their experience by exploring and implementing our sixth grade curriculum, and continue to offer support and guidance to make this possible.

For more information about The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum and our programs, please visit our website: www.maxcourage.org

VON SREINET

The Cambridge School for Cambodia

Kauk Rovieng village, Kampong Cham province, Cambodia

The word “courage” means correct, brave and proud of what we have done successfully with our own confidence. We should not think we cannot do things.

During the Khmer Rouge time, my parents were forced to work hard days and nights like many other Cambodian people. The Khmer Rouge regime eliminated everything such as schools and hospitals. People had no rights to speak out. They could only work under the regime’s orders. My parents were forced to dig canals and grow vegetables. My parents were separated. Many Cambodian people were killed by the Khmer Rouge soldiers, and others died of starvation and malnutrition. Most of my relatives died during in the regime that ruled Cambodia from 1975 to late 1978.

In 1979, after the Khmer Rouge regime was ousted, my father returned home and looked for my mother and relatives. Finally, they met each other in what we call “the family reunion.”

After the regime, my parents were farmers and they grew rice. Besides growing rice, my father climbed up the palm trees to collect palm juice to make palm sugar to support the family. After that, my father started drinking wine and smoking cigarettes. Every time he was drunk, violence happened in my family. Every time I saw my father, I tried to persuade him to stop drinking. He got very angry with me.

Later, my father became seriously ill. My mother sent him to the hospital and the doctors said that he had liver cancer. He died a few months after he was diagnosed.

After my father passed away, my mother decided to stop my 14-year-old brother from going to school. For my part, my mother asked me to wash clothes for the neighbors and other villagers to get a little money to support the family.



My mother works very hard to earn money to support my siblings and me so we can go to school like other children in the village. My mother and my brother went to the Phnom Penh suburbs and started to collect palm juice to sell for money. The business there is going very well.

My mother sends money home every month. I stay home to look after my brother and sister. My siblings and I go to school every day. The work of my mother and brother makes me love them so much, and I swear that I will study hard until I finish high school.

Photo and translation by Sok Chamroeurm, Program Officer, The American Assistance for Cambodia

**“THE WORD COURAGE MEANS CORRECT,
BRAVE AND PROUD OF WHAT WE HAVE DONE
SUCCESSFULLY WITH OUR OWN CONFIDENCE.”**

LEXI SAWYER

“COURAGE IN MY COMMUNITY”

NATIONAL ESSAY CONTEST WINNER

NICOLE WALKER, TEACHER

Heritage Middle School

It was about one year ago when I heard the news. I was terrified, disappointed and sad. “Your father lost his job, and we are going to have to move,” my mom told me. Boom! One sentence changed our lives forever.

At the time, I only thought of myself. I thought it was only affecting me. I hated the idea of moving. I hated the thought of leaving my life behind. I did not think about my family. I did not wonder if they were sad about the whole situation, too.

Eventually, I saw the way my dad was handling it. He showed courage. He was so positive, and I never knew why because I would have thought he would have been just as sad as I was. He did so much to make our family happy. Every job interview he had was far away, which wasn’t what I wanted, but he looked for things like cheerleading gyms, since I’ve been cheering my whole life. He also looked for good schools and good neighborhoods just to make sure I was happy. He never once got down on himself, and if he did, he never let our family see him down. He did the best to make our family satisfied and happy.

This changed me so much. Seeing how much effort he was putting into making my family happy really showed me something. He was so upbeat. He made the whole “moving” concept seem not so bad.

My dad had courage. He lost his job and had to restart while continuing to be the cornerstone of our family. When he did find a job, it was very far from my old small town. It turned out not to be as bad as I thought. My dad made it a lot easier on me. Seeing the way he handled it showed me what courage truly is. It changed the way I handle situations. One day, I hope to show that much courage and affect someone’s life like my dad’s courage affected me.

Heritage Middle School is located in Ringgold, Georgia

“ONE DAY I HOPE TO SHOW
THAT MUCH COURAGE
AND AFFECT SOMEONE’S LIFE
LIKE MY DAD’S COURAGE AFFECTED ME.”

ELENIO FILIPE EGIDIO

RAFAEL JANE

BROOKE HURLBUT, TEACHER

Chicunque Secondary School

What is courage?

Courage, to me, is to be a warrior and confront whatever we face along the road. To have courage means to not run away or be fearful. To be courageous you have to be strong and have self-esteem.

My name is Elenio and I'm a Mozambican, born in the Province of Inhambane. I'm 16 years old and live with my parents and brothers. Courage came to me when my two older brothers fought and I had the courage to separate the two.

One day my two older brothers were fighting over a piece of land. My oldest brother grabbed a bottle and broke it to use to hurt my other brother. My uncle came to separate the two from fighting, and I found courage in myself to help him. I grabbed the broken bottle from my brother's hand so he couldn't hurt my other brother, but unfortunately the bottle cut my finger when I grabbed it. Even so, I didn't stop trying to separate the two, and in the end we were able to stop the fight.

I tried to calm the two of them, and I told my older brother, "Brother, brother, brother, please stop fighting, because what you two are doing is setting a bad example for us, your younger siblings." After that moment we all thought that the fight was over, but it wasn't over. There was a pot of hot water on the stove, and my oldest brother took the pan of water to throw on my brother. I jumped in front of my brother so that the water wouldn't burn him. I tried to push my brother out of the way, and he tried to push me out of the way, and the water hit him on his chest and on his left leg and arm, and also hit me on my leg. The water burned our skin. That is a story we will never forget.

I have courage inside of me, in my heart, in every moment.

Chicunque Secondary School is located in Chicunque, Mozambique

**“TO BE COURAGEOUS YOU HAVE TO
BE STRONG AND HAVE SELF-ESTEEM.”**

SRENG SOKLAY

The Cambridge School for Cambodia

Kauk Rovieng village, Kampong Cham province, Cambodia

I understand the word “courage.” It means that everything is done through our efforts and difficulties.

After the Khmer Rouge regime, like many people who had survived the genocidal regime, my parents came back home to start a new life with nothing. They grew rice and climbed up palm trees to collect the palm juice for making palm sugar to sell at the local market.

My uncle was a motor bike repairer in the school village. He had five children and his wife was a rice farmer. He earned money by repairing motor bikes to support his family and help his five children to go to school.

One day while my uncle was repairing a motor bike, there was a drunk man driving a motor bike who fell down in front his small shop. He helped the man and took him to the district hospital.

Two years later, in 2005, my uncle got a headache. He took some medicine but it did not help. He lost weight and had other symptoms as well.

Villagers advised him to go to the hospital, so my mother took him there. Doctors asked him to have his blood tested. A few days later the results showed that he was infected with HIV disease. My uncle remembered that he was transmitted the HIV virus by contaminated blood from the drunk man who had the traffic accident a few years ago. The man that my uncle helped and sent to the hospital was an HIV patient and died of AIDS a year later. My uncle became weaker and weaker because he had no money to buy the medicine to treat HIV. He died in the year 2006, and his wife is also now HIV positive.

My aunt had no choice other than to ask her oldest two sons to leave school. These two children have to climb up palm trees to get palm juice to make sugar to support the whole family, especially the younger brother and sister who are going to school. Eventually, two of my cousins also stopped studying because the family is very poor.



Only one brother is still able to go to school, supported by the earnings of his older brother. All of his friends look down on him because his father died of AIDS and his mother is an HIV carrier. Even though they look down on him, he still keeps going to school regularly and studying hard in 7th grade. He gets good results in school every semester because of his courage.

Photo and translation by Sok Chamroeur, Program Officer, The American Assistance for Cambodia

**“I UNDERSTAND THE WORD COURAGE.
IT MEANS THAT EVERYTHING IS DONE
THROUGH OUR EFFORTS AND DIFFICULTIES.”**

JERIMIAS AMILCAR VILANCULOS

BROOKE HURLBUT, TEACHER

Chicunque Secondary School

I was born and grew up in the City of Beira in the neighborhood of the Pioneers. I lived in the city of Beira with my parents and my older brother. My brother is 21 years old and I am 14 years old.

Everything started when my father wanted to go and visit his mother in Zavala far away from our homeland. It was March 7, 2008. Before all of this, in 2004 my father had a stroke, and to stay healthy he had to go get checkups in the central hospital of Beira. When he went to Zavala he stayed there for six months and didn't go to the hospital because he thought he was fine. After a while he started to feel pain and other symptoms of his sickness, but he didn't say anything to anyone. My mother and I were very far from him, and in the 7th month he called us and told us that the sickness had returned with great force and he could no longer walk. This happened on the 27th of July.

My mother went very quickly to Zavala and saw that it was true. She had to stay there take care of him, and two years passed where I didn't see my parents. I went to live with my brother in my grandmother's house. In the beginning of the third year I had to leave my home city because my father couldn't return to Beira, so I was transferred to where I live now, in the Province of Inhambane, in the city of Maxixe. I had to leave everything behind including my friends and family. At the time I was leaving there were many tears...but anything is possible.

In my new city there are many caring people. The biggest happiness of my parents is that I am in a journalism group in my school where we learn new good things about life. One day my parents hope to thank a volunteer named Becky, who initiated the group in my school.

Chicunque Secondary School is located in Chicunque, Mozambique

“AT THE TIME I WAS LEAVING THERE
WERE MANY TEARS...
BUT ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE.”

ALLISON BLANKENSHIP

“COURAGE IN MY COMMUNITY”

NATIONAL ESSAY CONTEST RUNNER-UP

JESSICA ROBESY, TEACHER

Franklin Junior High School

On October 31, 1980, the telephones at the Kettering Medical Center were ringing off the hook. Rumors were flying around the Friday night football game at West Carrollton High School that a student by the name of Steve had been shot in the head the previous night. Everyone was saying he had died and many of his friends urgently called the hospital to either confirm or deny these rumors.

It was a miracle that he didn't die. After two different surgeries to repair the damage, his condition was finally stable, but things weren't looking good. The doctors said it would be at least six months before he could leave. Even worse, upon waking up, it was discovered that Steve could no longer speak, walk, read or write. His right arm and the right side of his face were completely paralyzed.

He could hear the doctor whispering to his family, “He can't read. Don't let him see any newspapers. We don't want to upset him.”

His first thought was that the doctor just didn't know what he was talking about. How could it be possible that he couldn't read? It sounded ridiculous. But he soon found that the doctor was right. A newspaper had been left in his room later that day by a visitor. Determined to prove that he could read, he reached for the newspaper.

He could see the words, but none of them made any sense. The doctor was right.

He could not make any other sound from his mouth aside from, “Aye”. This, in his opinion, was the most frustrating aspect. He would sit for hours trying to figure out how to make some other sound, but no matter how hard he tried, “Aye,” was the only sound he could make.

A speech therapist came to visit him after five days. She told him, “I'm here to teach you how to speak again.” He felt her attempts would be futile. He

felt that he should be smart enough to talk again if it was at all possible. His ship had sailed.

To his surprise, however, he made incredible progress with his speech therapist. His first two words were “Pop” and “Mum”. He also regained movement in his right side with the help of occupational therapy. Slowly, the feeling came back to his arm first, and the use of his fingers came back over several months, one finger at a time. The doctors initially said that he would not be leaving the hospital for at least 6 months, but with his incredible progress, he was released merely thirty days after being shot.

After the injury, however, it was difficult to adapt back to normal life. He struggled in school because he was still relearning how to speak and read. He was in and out of school a few times the next few years before he decided to drop out.

Today he is 48 years old and the father of five children. He returned to school at the age of 24 to get his GED and he received his MCSE several years later. He is now an information technology consultant and has started his own business.

I would not be here today if it weren't for the incredible courage of my dad. He went through a great struggle and pulled through it all despite the odds. His courage and bravery inspire me and assure me that I am on this earth for a reason.

Franklin Junior High School is located in Franklin City, Ohio.

**“HIS COURAGE AND BRAVERY INSPIRE ME
AND ASSURE ME THAT
I AM ON THIS EARTH FOR A REASON.”**

ANITA ESPERANÇA

BROOKE HURLBUT, TEACHER

Chicunque Secondary School

I was still a baby when there were floods in my village in 2000. My father told me that when it started raining he thought that it was normal rain, but he immediately realized he was wrong. A few hours later the land started to be filled with water and it looked like a huge river.

My father also told me that our house flooded and we lost everything that we had. My parents and my brothers took me to a high land area where we settled until present day. The following day my father listened to the radio. He heard that a pregnant woman had climbed a tree to escape the flood and had given birth a few hours later. The woman was rescued by a team that landed from a helicopter from South Africa; the team also helped during the delivery of the baby girl, who was named Rosita.

The floods caused destruction of many things and as a result of that, the government decided to start programs for prevention of natural disasters. These programs help prevent wild fires as well deforestation which is caused by man and is a disturbance to the environment.

The story of the flooding that my parents told me helped me understand what I know about courage. We have to be courageous.



“THE STORY OF THE FLOODING
THAT MY PARENTS TOLD ME HELPED ME
UNDERSTAND WHAT I KNOW ABOUT COURAGE.”

Chicunque Secondary School is located in Chicunque, Mozambique

ELISA SERRANO

“COURAGE IN MY COMMUNITY”

NATIONAL ESSAY CONTEST RUNNER-UP

ELAINE BAILEY, TEACHER

Meadowbrook Middle School

Courageous acts are done every day, by anyone. Some people think to be courageous you need to be outgoing and unafraid, and that they are incapable of having courage because they are shy. That’s what I thought.

A few years ago, in elementary school, I had a friend named Molly. She was nice to me, mostly because we had a lot in common; both of us had older brothers, wore the same shoe size, and even liked the same channels on the television! The only difference was that she had a strong personality and mine was weak.

Amelia was a girl I sat next to in science. She was a girl Molly didn’t like, and because I didn’t know her, I “didn’t like” Amelia either. Sitting next to Amelia meant that we were lab partners and forced to talk to each other by our teacher. At first I would just talk to her in small words like, “Yes,” “No,” or, “Can you get that?” I would groan at the thought of speaking to that “thing” that sat next to me. Later, after getting to know Amelia more, I realized that she was really nice.

As weeks passed, I still sat with Molly at lunch and went along with any gossip she had to say about Amelia. Even though it made me uncomfortable gossiping with Molly, standing up to her was not an option for me. Some days Amelia would come up to us and ask if she could play with Molly and me. Molly would say a random excuse to get out of the situation and run away laughing, pulling me along. Even though on the outside I laughed with Molly, on the inside I truly felt bad for Amelia.

One afternoon at recess, Amelia asked if she could play with us. “Yes, of course,” I said instinctively.

“What are you doing?” Molly said, pulling me aside. Immediately I felt like I had done something wrong, my palms and forehead sweat with fear.

“C-Com’on Molly, she’s really nice, uh... just this once,” I said back, trying to sound as reassuring as possible.

“But she’s fat!” Molly hissed. To that I just shrugged and ran to join Amelia on the playground. Slowly Molly followed, and even though I could tell she wasn’t having the best time, I knew Amelia was.

Later I realized that my action made an impact on Amelia’s life. My mom informed me that Amelia’s mom had called her. The call was to compliment me for how nice I was, and to compliment my mom for good parenting skills. Apparently, Amelia had told her family about what I had done for her. I didn’t think that my deed was worthy of recognition, but after that I was proud.

Having courage doesn’t mean being unafraid, it means doing something despite your fear because you know it is the right thing to do. Courageous acts change lives and give people hope. I know that now.

Meadowbrook Middle School is located in Poway, California

**“COURAGEOUS ACTS CHANGE LIVES
AND GIVE PEOPLE HOPE.
I KNOW THAT NOW.”**

