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## Mom Ranks #1 On Teens' Hero List



YORK, Pa., Oct. 14 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Move over Lady Gaga. Gandhi and Nick Jonas, please take a back seat. In fact, Oprah, Michael Jackson, and Coach Nick Saban can take the bench as well. In its national essay contest for high school students, [StageofLife.com](#), a writing resource for teens, discovered that "My Mom" is the number one answer given when teens were asked the question, "Who is your Hero?"



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2,500+ high school and college students visited the writing contest page, and hundreds of students submitted essays describing their hero. The essays nominated a wide variety of people ranging from [Ellen DeGeneres](#) to [Todd Beamer](#) (Flight 93 hero on 9/11) to [Maurice Jones-Drew](#) to [Delta Force Snipers](#) to...[Dobby](#), the House Elf from the Harry Potter Series.

As judges pored over 100,000+ words written about heroes, several insights emerged about today's teens:

**1) Teens are inspired by family:** Whether it was Mom (#1 most named "hero" in the contest), Dad, Grandparents or a variety of other blood relations, nearly *half* of the teen essays named a family member as their personal hero, indicating that those closest to the daily routines and life of a teenager often have the best chance to make a positive impact.

As one of the essay finalists wrote her about mother, *"Some people may look at a famous cartoon character as their hero, but my mother is my own superwoman."*

Another finalist had this to say about her father in her essay entitled, [My Hero is My Knight in Shining Armor](#), *"Of all the superheroes, mythical monsters, and epic warriors of time long past my hero was always right at my side."*

**2) Teens find inspiration from celebrities and athletes:** The second largest group of nominated heroes fell into the "famous person" category. Essays about [Britney Spears](#), [Walt Disney](#), [Bruce Lee](#), [Tyra Banks](#), [Tupac Shakur](#) and dozens of others poured in as many students looked to public figures as their role models.

One student said of rapper, [Eminem](#), *"One of [his] most famous quotes is 'Success is my only option, failure's not'. I live my everyday life from this quote. I will never let anyone bring me down, or say I am not good enough."*

**3) Teens rely on those around them:** While celebrities drew scores of nominations, there was another group nearly just as large – everyday people. These were non-family individuals who come in contact with the student on a regular basis. Teens found heroes in their friends, significant others, coaches, and teachers.

One essay finalists had a creative introduction about a [favorite teacher](#), *"An army of rabid school children stand before him. Fueled by teenage angst and enraged by having last lunch, these monsters are ready to devour all who dare to educate them. But one man, armed only with a tome of infinite knowledge, and the legendary sword of 'Expo', awaits these savages with a wink and a smile. That man is (my) World History teacher and my hero."*

**4) Teens want to change the world:** Some of the essays did not name a specific person, but rather a concept or a larger group of people as their hero. From [lifeguards](#) to [men and women of the armed forces](#) to [anyone with a disability](#), students expressed a need to make a difference in the world, and their heroes reflected that desire. For instance, one student named "Cancer Fighters" as her hero – defined as anyone fighting the battle of cancer.

A blog comment left on the [Cancer Fighter](#) essay read, *"I wanted to say thanks...because it is like you are saying my mom is a hero to you even though you have never meet her...she is a cancer survivor."*

The winning essay, written by homeschool student, Taylor of Putnam, CT, honored [Friedl Dicker-Brandeis](#), a woman who died in a Nazi gas chamber in 1944, but who was better known for spending her time selflessly teaching children art and other forbidden subjects in the Terezin Concentration Camp.

Taylor's essay shared, *"Her story shows that hope can bloom even in the coldest of environments; that creativity can change the world, even if that world is the dream world of a child; and above all that even in the darkest of situations, the kindness and goodness inside of us can find a way to shine."*

In partnership with [StageofLife.com](#), the MY HERO project will also feature Taylor's essay about [Friedl Dicker-Brandeis](#) on [MyHero.com](#).

Margaret Dean, Communications Director for the [My HERO Project](#) comments, *"Her thoughtful reflection on the character*

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qualities that prompted Friedl Dicker-Brandeis to teach art and bring hope to children during the darkest of times, at great risk to her own life, paints a stirring portrait of the best of humanity."

As an extension of the hero essay contest, StageofLife.com released its monthly [free lesson plan for history and language arts teachers](#) on its [education resources](#) section of the website. The lesson plan asks students to define "hero" and leads the class through a series of activities, including a "Hero Walk," that challenges, refines and/or supports their original hero definition.

Rebecca Thiels, M. Ed., [Education Consultant](#) for StageofLife.com and current high school Language Arts teacher at Red Lion Area Senior High School in Red Lion, PA, stated,

"Archetypal theory applies to so much of history and literature. Teachers will find the application of the hero lesson plan flexible for a variety of texts, and the closure/homework section of the lesson supports our core mission of getting students to write and blog more outside of the classroom."

StageofLife.com has consolidated many of the "Who Is Your Hero" essays on a summary page for review at [http://www.stageoflife.com/Who\\_Is\\_Your\\_Hero.aspx](http://www.stageoflife.com/Who_Is_Your_Hero.aspx). When asked why she participated in the writing contest by naming [Ash Ketchum](#), college student and essay finalist, Allison, answered,

"I like Stage of Life because it's a convenient forum to share life experiences with others in similar situations, and give/receive advice from people in all stages of life."

The current [writing contest for high school students](#) asks the question, "What stresses you out?" A resource video about understanding stress from [LearntobeHealthy.org](#) is available for teens to view, and national sponsor, Shutterfly.com, is again providing the monthly prize. StageofLife.com is offering up SWAG and Featured Blogger status on the site to the next student essay winner.

About Stage of Life™: StageofLife.com is a free, non-partisan grassroots project hosting blogs, information and resources for teens, Millennials/Gen Y, Gen X, and Baby Boomer generations. Its specialized content includes [lesson plan ideas and writing prompts for Language Arts teachers](#), monthly [writing contests for high school students](#) and [college students](#), [blogging resources](#), and much more. Its [My Life Rewards®](#) program provides site visitors a wide collection of [in-store coupons](#), [shopping discounts](#) and exclusive cruise and resort offers as StageofLife.com provides "Rewards for Life's Journey®."

If you'd like more information about StageofLife.com or an interview with CEO/Founder, Eric Thiels, please use the [Contact Us](#) form on the website or call 717-650-0699.

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