



Do the Write Thing *Springfield*

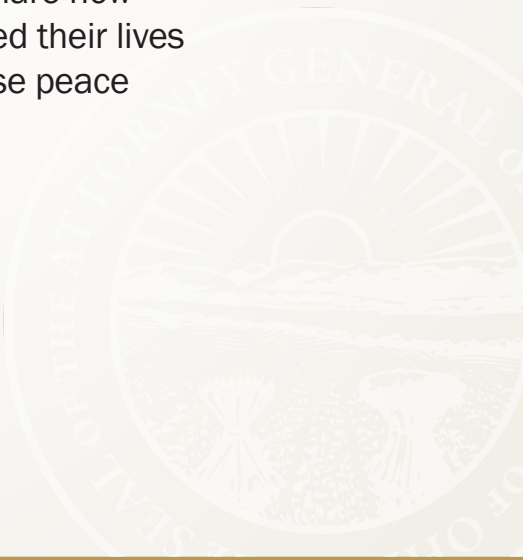


2023

Springfield City School District
middle schoolers share how
violence has touched their lives
and how they choose peace



DAVE YOST
OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL



FROM THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

As Ohio's Attorney General, I am so pleased to have partnered with the Springfield City School District in the *Do the Write Thing* program for the third year in a row. Springfield was our first school district in Ohio to participate in this national program, and has led the way for four more school districts to join the effort.

The students of Springfield continue to amaze me with their honesty, compassion and critical insight into the violence of their time. These essays most certainly were not easy to write, and often tough to read, but the impact of their words is invaluable to our search for understanding and a more peaceful society.

Do the Write Thing provides students the opportunity to speak their own minds and share their thoughts about how to address the violence they have experienced or witnessed. There is true treasure in these writings.

I commend these young people for the courage it took to share their thoughts and ideas, and I hope they continue to look for opportunities to improve their school and community.

I encourage everyone to take time to read the essays in this book. You may be surprised by what you learn, but I know it will leave you proud and optimistic about the generations to come.



Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dave Yost". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

DAVE YOST
Ohio Attorney General

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Each year, I am blown away by our students who choose to participate in the *Do the Write Thing* Challenge. Their levels of courage, self-awareness and solution-based thinking are well beyond their middle school years — and I am so proud to call each one of them Springfield City School District students.

When Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost asked the SCSD to be the pilot district for this program three years ago, I can admit that I was hesitant — as I did not want any trauma that our students may have faced to be on public display. I didn't want any wounds that they may have had to be reopened by sharing something potentially painful. However, I do think that taking that leap three years ago was absolutely the right decision for our district and our students.

Do the Write Thing provides students with space and an outlet to tell their own story with room to express something heavy and unspoken in today's society: how violence has and is actively affecting their life and those around them. But what I believe to be truly beneficial about this program is that it pushes students a step further and asks them to think critically: What can be done to solve the problem? How can you be part of the solution? It makes real for our students the notion that we are all interconnected and have the capacity to influence change within our schools, our families and our communities. Even though they are just coming into their teenage years, they possess real power to make their voices heard, and I hope that sharing their essays in this program is just the beginning of their positive impact.

I have had the privilege of watching this program blossom and become bigger and better every year. Along with that, I've had the even greater pleasure of watching some of our students who have gone through the DtWT program go on to even larger, nonviolence activism platforms and advocate for a better world for all of us. That has been one of the greatest joys of this program, and I look for many more to follow.

Students: Whether or not you are selected as a DtWT Ambassador, please know that your potential as a leader does not end at the final ceremony. A true leader doesn't only set the example on their best days. It is a full time job that requires a dedication to a cause larger than oneself. As you know, and many of you have written about, the world is filled with too much hate already. So each morning when you wake up, purposefully choose peace. It is my hope that you become the generation that finally stands up to violence and says, 'Enough.'

I am so proud of all of you. Congratulations and Go Wildcats!

Sincerely,



Bob

ROBERT F. HILL, Ed.D.
Superintendent and CEO
Springfield City School District



ABOUT THE PROGRAM

This book contains a compilation of writings by middle-school students who were selected as the top 10 finalists of the 2023 *Do the Write Thing* program. This book will be shared across the community in recognition of all the students who accepted the challenge to share their voices and help create a safer, more peaceful society.

Overview of Do the Write Thing

Do the Write Thing is a unique national program designed to give middle-school students an outlet to communicate in classroom discussions and then in writing how violence impacts their daily lives. In addition to exposing the causes and effects of violence, students are asked to share their ideas on reducing violence in their community.

The program asks students to express in stories, poems and songs, or in any other written forms, the violence they've faced, with an emphasis on exploring these key questions:

- How does violence affect your daily life?
- What are some of the causes of youth violence in your community?
- What can you as an individual do to reduce youth violence in your community?

The benefits of the challenge are many. Students gain a greater empathy and understanding for victims of violence and realize that their positive actions can make a difference in their own home, schools and neighborhoods. Teachers gain a better awareness of what is happening in their students' lives and in the school culture. Community leaders benefit from greater understanding of the impact that violence has on youth and learn from the students' stories and ideas for reducing violence.

Do the Write Thing in Springfield

During the 2022-23 school year, Ohio Attorney General Dave Yost partnered with the Springfield City School District for the *Do the Write Thing* program.

The program was well received, with more than 500 seventh- and eighth-grade students submitting essays.

Springfield community and business leaders volunteered their time to read each essay and choose the 10 submissions most responsive to the key questions. From the top 10, two students were selected to become Ohio ambassadors to the national *Do the Write Thing* conference in Washington, D.C.

A special thank you to all of the community volunteers, teachers, principals and school administrators who helped make *Do the Write Thing* such a great success in Springfield.



Do the Write Thing is the flagship program of the National Campaign to Stop Violence and has been in existence for 28 years. It operates programs in 28 cities in 14 states. Over the past 28 years, more than 1.5 million middle school students have participated in the program.

The national sponsor for the Do the Write Thing program is the Kuwait America Foundation.



ESSAY 1

LILLEYAYNNA BOWSHIER

Roosevelt Middle School

Youth violence needs to stop

Violence can come across in many ways. Mentally, physically, emotionally, sexually and more. Did you know around 63% of people don't report their abuse?

When people don't report their abuse it could be because of the fear of the abuser, they don't understand that it's abuse, or they are too young to speak. Most abusers know their victims. Meaning it could be someone of any age. Did you know that among all the types of abuse "rape" or "sexual assault" is the most common? It could be man to woman, OR woman to man. Though most people do find "man to woman" more common. If you've ever been a victim of abuse, have you ever reported it?

There are many, many reasons why someone can be violent. It could be because of bottled up emotions, another person could be abusing them, or mental illnesses. But honestly, there should be no excuse for such a thing. When people abuse their victims, they normally do it out of fun, fear, or even popularity. Violence doesn't always happen just at home or within the neighborhood, it can be found at school as well. When children or teenagers are abusing or also known as bullying their victim at school, they could either not be getting enough attention at home or insecure about themselves. But those are not the only reasons, as I have told you before. Now normally people see a popular kid bullying a little, skinny or oversized kid. But I've seen some skinny and oversized kids bully people. So really, anyone can be a bully, small or big!

Now personally, I have experienced multiple types of abuse and the one that has affected my life the most is sexual Assault. I was 8 years old when it happened and it was one of the most traumatic experiences of my life. I was in my bedroom, while my mom and brothers were asleep in theirs. My mom's friend had come over that night and decided it was basically his time to "shine". I was asleep in my bed when he came in. Now at first, he came into my room and woke me up, then left, then came back, then left. And this repeated constantly until I asked who he was and he said he is my mom's friend. Then he proceeded to try and bribe me with his crumbled up, stinky, dirty money to have sex with him. I was feeling confused, scared, and

my heart was racing drastically. He asked me if I wanted to watch something and I said Peppa Pig. He let me watch for a second or two then continued to try and convince me that having sex with him was a good thing. He said my mother did it all the time when she was younger and proceeded to show me false photos of my mother having sex in a laundry room and bedroom. I was disgusted and wanted to scream for help but at that moment I felt frozen. I really did think I was screaming for help, but it was all in my head. He then pulled his pants down and you could probably guess what happened after that. A little while later, I finally screamed for help and my aunt came into the room. I told her what happened and my mom came in not too much later. My aunt told me to tell her what happened but I was too shy and embarrassed. I asked if she could tell her but she said no. I then proceeded to try my best to also explain to her how it happened. When I was being SA'd it was around 6:30-7am and I told them (my aunt and my mom) what happened around 8-8:30am. My mom called the cops and that's when my mind kinda goes blank for a minute. After regaining some memory I remember seeing a cop come to the front door asking questions about what happened. I was hiding behind my mom peeking out. My mom was mad and angry at the guy and answered all the questions the cop asked. This man is still on the loose.

There was this other time where I felt most scared and angry in every way possible. We had just picked my biological father up from jail, again and we were in a Golden Honda just driving our way home. He (my biological Dad) got into an argument with my mom and he threw his drink all over the car and all over us. He got out of the car and walked away while threatening us. My mom got out to argue back and they got to his friend's house, which was basically right in front of us. He pulled a gun out and held it against my mom while my brothers and I were screaming and shouting at him out of frustration and worriedness. My mom yelled at us repeatedly to stay in the car. She eventually comes back to the car and we drive off. He took pictures of our license plate like it did anything too.

At school, the most recent type of violence has been physical. For example, let's go back to a couple weeks ago.



This person wasn't that much bigger than me. And I've done nothing wrong to this person, he was just someone who didn't like me and they took their anger out by violently pushing my head against the wall, causing me to blackout for a minute. As I ran to the bathroom crying, my friend had seen me and followed me in there. She came in there to check if I was okay and was very concerned and was insisting that we go tell the principal. I said no because at the time I felt it wasn't abuse and it was unnecessary. A little while later, we ended up telling an adult and I then learned it was considered abuse and it was not okay what he had done to me.

By telling you some small, and some big stories of mine, I want to make it clear that what has previously happened to me was not okay and I wish I would have said something the moment it had happened. As I have explained before, anybody can be abusive to someone



else no matter their size, sex(gender), or age. And after doing extensive research on abuse and violence I now want to help others understand that any type of abuse is not okay and you should always speak up and tell somebody.



ESSAY 2

ELISE BROWN

Roosevelt Middle School

There's No Escape

Once you're in there's no way out,
we're influenced by our surroundings
Swimming with the sharks,
Maybe they'll keep us from drowning

But the second we bleed they attack us,
Like bait,
So we do what they say
So well live another day

We hurt others to keep from dying
But now there's so many crying

Maybe I should just stop lying...
Just tell them.
Be the rat.
But now I gotta watch my back.

Author's Note: Panel speaker Cameron in “Community Conversation seek solutions to Springfield, Clark County gun violence” says, “We have an opportunity to speak to, encourage kids in our neighborhood. If you see them going in that path, tell them they're better than that, please.” We need to help our youth instead of just watching everything unfold. Nowadays nobody feels safe at school because of bullying, but it doesn't have to be that way. If you are being bullied you should start with attempting to talk it out because maybe the bully is having problems of their own and they just don't know how to deal with it appropriately, if that doesn't work try ignoring the bullying because eventually the bully will get bored, and if all fails go to an adult or someone with authority because a lot of time they will be able to help you and the bully.



ESSAY 3 | AMBASSADOR

JUELZ CLARK

Roosevelt Middle School

We need to stop the violence it's not just the kids it's the adults to kids and adults are dying from drugs/overdose, gun violence, domestic violence, rape All of the above and where just sitting here not doing nothing we need to help the community kids shooting at each other kids having guns in pictures pointing guns at people we just need to stop this.

When kids go to juvenile center there parents wanna help now but the parents are the ones to blame they should've kept there kids busy instead of just working all the time there kids are feeling invisible. I had a family member is in jail or is deceased I got tired of the pain and my family crying everyday that pain right there sitting there and watching your family members cry that hurts the most.

I had to play football to get my mind off my dad I'll admit when my dad was in prison I cried almost everyday but that ain't stop me from playing football when i scored a touchdown I'll go on the sideline and my cousin was my couch and i said, "cus that touchdown was for him" then i started crying then when i went home I cried and cried and then i went to sleep but let's get back to the violence.

We need to change the community we need a Youth Center for kids who are on the streets with guns and

do you know why they do this it's because they feel invisible or there love one has died to gun violence and i can understand that but put the guns down and get a education and go to college go play ball somewhere get married have kids that's the real dream right there.

Violence is hurting our community we need to stop the violence we need to help these kids and adults we need to put a stop to violence. The police are victims to let's talk about George Floyd that cop had no reason to do that to Floyd all the cop had to do is ask what happen and go ahead on about his day but no the cop at throw Floyd on the ground and pout his knee on his neck and Floyd clearly said i can't breathe i can't breathe but the cop didn't care about Floyd's breath then when the cop got up Floyd was already then when we protest it's a problem.

when my aunt Nell's son died my whole family was crying i was thinking like dang this is really happening he was a Steelers fan so then i became a Steelers fan we got shirts made before his funeral it has the Steelers on them and it has the lakers with Kobe and him with wings. all i have to say is that we need to stop the violence people we need to help the youth be visible we need to put the guns down and help the young people feel visible. thank you all



ESSAY 4

TA'RIYAH DOTTS-BEAL

Schaefer Middle School

Gun Violence has impacted my life so badly to the point we're i lost myself, it was September 2020 I lost my aunty. Not only was she my aunt, she was also my best friend. I lost my aunty from gun violence it has impacted my life so badly by taking my innocent aunt. I just think the community needs a change. The gun violence needs to stop!! I am only 12 years old and experiencing this not only that people are dying at the age of 5 and up from gun violence. The children in the community are so scared to go Anywhere without their parents because of so much that is going on in their community, not only that these gang bangers are thinking its alright to kill innocent people not knowing this is affecting children's life. People are out here committing suicide from losing family members from gun violence. I just don't feel safe in are community so much den happened to me less than 3 years me losing my aunt,my best friend, my cousin all these things in the community has infected my life i am scared to even go anywhere with my friends because of how people on the streets act toward innocent people not even just that people in the communities think they can just pull out guns on people for no reason just to be famous and get posted saying FREE THEM it's not okay it needs to stop!!!

We have so much youth violence going on in our community because men think it's okay to put their hands on women. Not only that people like to start drama, that's what causes youth violence. By beating on people talking about skin color i just don't think its fear for kids to experience this i look into other kids eyes and i can tell when a kids not okay, I was outside one day starting my moms car so she can take me to school and i look up and i see a 10 year old girl and 8 year old boy walking to school and i looked into his eyes and i felt something in my heart saying they are not okay so i ask and said "are you guys okay" they gave me a response and said no my dad is at home beating on my mom and i just gave both of them a hug and told them everything going to be okay just keep your mom safe and call 911 and after that i had my mom give them a ride to school. People like to a seen and brag

about how they beat someone up, i don't find that no were funny or to brag about that's how people are committing suicide, you making bad post about someone hair, shoes, cloths, teeth anything that's what wanting people to committe suicide. Everytime i feel like it's a good day for me to go outside and play with friends and family, I always hear gunshots or someone getting killed. like I can't even go outside and play wit family cause all i see outside is violence i sit in my room in the dark and think how can i change are community and god always give me a sign and says " i need to get up and pick my head up and stop being sad and make a video, a post, a ceremonie and tell your community how you feel". Like everyone walking out this world, like everyone dying everyday, children are crying everyday because they are losing their parents. All i know is ima put stop on the violence sense everyone thinks its okay ima come out my shell and tell everyone how i feel.

My heart feel so cold like my brother is only 8 years old and he seeing all this stuff going on i try my hardest to tell him everything going to be okay turns around another person gets killed what they don't know is this is scary for people like my brother is so scared to go anywhere without my grandma because he feel like something going to happen to her he feels that way because of how much violence is going on in are community!! I always tell my brother " we are going to make it out here. I am trying my hardest to get us out of here". In my eyes 232,000,000 people have died from gun violence are world is not safe. I just feel like for us to stop youth violence we will have to make a world change by picking up trash, putting signs up,and going to building and clearing it out but for us to do that we will have to make a fier and poster boards saying "stop the violence kids don't even feel safe to be at home with their family because you gang members are taking everything even there home". This world needs to change i walk outside everyday and I just breath and I still don't feel safe, I am hurt deep inside cause I don't know what to do I am only 12 years old I can't do much but tell the world how I feel.



ESSAY 5

BRYSON HINSHAW

Roosevelt Middle School

Speak Up

Youth violence has affected my life in many ways, even friends my age in multiple ways. It has been an emotional trauma in not only my life but in my friend's and family's. My best friend lost her brother due to gang violence, which she will never get to see, hug, or hear from him again. No longer will she be able to celebrate or be as joyful on the holidays without him. The person behind the gun never thinks about how the person they're harming's family and friends will feel. Now my best friend is down inside as she feels another part of her is missing. He doesn't know how we wish every second of the day he was still here. With death comes grief but it's even worse knowing he will never be back, even knowing who killed him is worse. But we have to stay humble and strong because life just goes on.

One of the causes of youth violence is gang activities or domestic violence. Gangs spread all through Ohio which is where we live. In order to be in a gang you have to do a dangerous activity like robbing, or even killing someone etcetera. As a child who lives in a state with many shootings I do not feel safe personally. Innocent children are killed because of these foolish activities, all because someone's so selfish they don't care about anyone else's safety, and after someone gets killed that doesn't mean we have to get revenge that doesn't make life any easier.

Another cause of youth violence is also because of the bad environment we live in. If we grow up in a society full of negativity, it tends to neglect our health and our happiness. Some people take what others call "cool" and make it their lifestyle, for "clout" and or "royalty". Which isn't cool at all, killing others because of your society to gain cool points is pathetic. Our generation is mentally sick but they're too overwhelmed to realize that what they're doing has affected all of us very deeply and caused us so much pain.

To prevent youth violence I will no longer stay silent, because if no one will speak up how will anyone feel safe in an environment like ours. Telling someone about something to keep you or even a stranger safe can start by telling a trusted adult like a school counselor or a probation officer. Even if I feel unsafe with a family member I'd leave the situation immediately and tell someone. Just one voice can save so many lives, just do the right thing and speak up. Nearly 800,000 people die by suicide in the world each year, and the causes are likely of trauma in life or depression because they don't SPEAK UP! With courage we can fight for our environment and be great together to end youth violence! I'm ready to speak are you? Will you do the right thing? Your decisions will start here.



ESSAY 6 | AMBASSADOR

CORINNA JACKSON

Schaefer Middle School

Be the change we need

How has violence affected my life? Since I was a little kid my mom has taught me to watch my every movement and that in this world as a growing young woman I needed to be more careful than other kids my age. My father was always trying to take me and so every time he would knock on my front door looking for me I had to hide in the closet. Recently in July we moved to Springfield and I know that I don't have to hide in closets when someone knocks on the door but it's just instinct. I'm still getting used to not being scared when someone knocks on the door and slowly I'm getting there. Mothers nowadays are having to worry for their daughters safety and if they are gonna make it home. They have to teach their children about rape and where people are not allowed to touch them. This is the new normal, but it shouldn't be.

This violence and abuse is partially the fault of parents. Kids from a very young age are very impressionable and seeing adults do things like drink, do drugs, and abuse other people. This shows children and teens that this type of behavior is acceptable and its not. Other causes for violence are peer pressure. Kids see their friends harming people, bullying, or doing a form of drug and they wanna seem cool so they join in. If kids would be more open to just saying no and knowing that its ok to not join in, then it could help lessen some of the violence.

Gun violence is also a major problem in Ohio. Guns have become very easy to get ahold of. Thousands of people a year are killed by gun violence. Just before I moved out of Fairfield there was a shooting. I was home alone and 7 feet away from my window I saw a guy fall to the ground dead. I had never seen someone get shot right in front of me before that day. Ever since then I have gotten really anxious when I hear gunshots and noises similar, like fireworks. As a town Springfield is very prone to gun violence and drug use. We have had assemblies about the matter but it has not seemed to help. Bullying is also a problem at Schaefer middle school. As kids we are told to tell an adult about the problems we are having. Not many kids actually tell an adult because when you do they almost never do anything about it. It's hard to trust an adult that doesn't work hard to protect you.

Now as one person there are a lot of things I could do to help stop violence, but if I am the only one doing anything it's not going to help much. My generation as a whole needs to work together to help end violence. One of the ways we could do this is hold fundraisers to support children and families in need. We could also hold more support groups for kids my age. In Springfield we have a lot of homeless people, and nobody tends to help them. We as a town could lend them a hand. We might be able to help them out and get them more places to stay or build more shelters for them to stay in. So let's band together and make a change.



ESSAY 7

TY'SHAWN LONG

Hayward Middle School

When it all happened

Back in January my dad's house got shot up and my dad, my stepmom, and I were all hit and one thing I remember is my clothes being ruptured as well as my bed and I had blood and wounds everywhere my brother took his shoe string out of his new shoes to cut me off blood circulation and I tell my dad call my mom, and I don't wanna die and he starts crying more than he was and from that point on my life changed. Gun violence affected my life because it took me away from the sport I love. Football, and I had multiple hospital

trips back and forth and made my family's anxiety skyrocket and it gave me mental health problems but the doctors suggested therapy but it didn't help. So I turned to fitness and that's another way gun violence has affected me. But I am happy with who I am now. The causes of youth violence in my opinion are lack of positive role models and lack of love at home some parents are too careless to control their teenage children or they are too scared to say something another thing causing Gun violence



ESSAY 8

MIYANAH OWENS

Roosevelt Middle School

Youth violence is all around this world. It's almost just a normal thing. I have seen and experienced youth violence myself. Youth violence can be seen and found anywhere, in your house, school, side of the road, anywhere! Youth violence can also lead to anxiety, depression, and much more.

Bullying can also be caused by things. I have known people that pick on classmates and other people that already have gone through a lot. And so they don't really know how to put that out to the world, so they give back what they have already gone through, by bullying. But that's not always the case. I also believe that everyone should treat people the way they want to be treated.

Not everyone always has someone that will listen to their problems in life. They could be living a bad or violent life outside of school or work or whatever. You just never know. So don't be rude to people or bully people not knowing what they could already be going through.

People ages 10-24, homicide is the leading cause of death for African Americans. The second leading causes of deaths are Hispanics. And the third, is American Indians and Alaska Natives. Among high school youth, in the grades 9-12, report being in a physical fight, and 16.2% being found with a weapon, and 7.8% carrying a weapon on school property. In the community, an estimated 50-60% of youth have been exposed to neighborhood violence by being beaten or mugged,

attacked with a knife, and being shot by another person.

Many famous people have gone through bullying too. Such as Zac Efron, he was being made fun of about his gap in his teeth. And so that made him just not want to smile anymore, but he still did. He was very insecure about his smile and his teeth, but that didn't stop him from smiling. Demi Lovato was also bullied, she was made fun of by other people at her school by calling her fat. And she was already insecure about her own body. This led to her becoming a bully, and at the age of 11 she started cutting herself. The famous rapper Eminem was also bullied, he was punched really badly and got the wind knocked out of him, and he also has scars all around his body from what the bullies did to him.

I feel like bullying should definitely be talked about more. It is something that is not okay and something that is ruining people's lives around the world. And a lot of people don't even deserve to be bullied. But they still are, and it's not their fault. And I also feel like people should be taught at a young age how to stand up for themselves and speak up for themselves. Some people just don't know what other people are going through in life. And they expect it to be "perfect, and amazing with no problems" but that's not always the case. And people are taking advantage of that.

That's what youth violence is. And my opinion on it is not okay.



ESSAY 9

NATALIE ROBINSON

Schaefer Middle School

Violence is typically thought up as fighting, guns or physical, which is true but violence can also include drugs, gangs, bullying, abuse and neglect. Any kind of violence is an intentional use of physical force, to gain power against a group or community, or just to gain power in general against oneself or another person, and it always, usually results in an injury or even death. There have been fights, arguments, family abuse, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, robberies, etc. Robberies are now more common than ever, they mostly occur at gas stations like speedway. One speedway has even resorted to not allowing in store service past a certain time. People have begun to fight in stores, on the streets, etc and most people now don't do the right thing, they don't try to stop the violence, they record it and post it all over social media and it normally starts getting reposted all over. Violence has become very common among the USA. Just in 2021 the CDC had estimated that there were over 20,000 firearm homicides. The firearm homicide rate in 2021 was 8.3% higher than in 2020.

There will never be a way to fully clear out violence everywhere, but it can be settled. By just talking people out of doing something horrible. Just like how people get talked into doing horrible things like drugs, joining gangs, alcohol, robberies. If you can talk people out of doing bad things as easily as you can talk them into doing those bad things, we could clean up the streets from drugs, guns and anger. Most of the time, Once

people get into drugs and alcohol they become addicted, and to help these addicts and to clean up the streets we can send donations to rehab centers or even posting ads on social media talking about how good rehab centers can be for their mental and physical health. Just being nice to someone would make people not want to do these horrible things.

It has affected me because alcohol, drugs, guns, and gangs have dragged my dad away from me and has pulled him away from reality. He doesn't realize that he isn't just hurting himself but his family, including me. By joining a gang he's hurting himself by putting himself in those terrible situations that could possibly end in death but he's hurting his family by not showing up to family events, by us not knowing when the unknown might just happen. He's putting himself and us in danger. When he does those terrible drugs he puts those damaging substances into his body and just like most people, he does the stuff he does to ignore his problems, to feel good, and to gain power over others. It's been 9 months since my father texted me just a simple "Hi" or "Hello" or "how you been". This is what drugs and gangs can do to someone, it can make them too distracted to focus on what really matters. He keeps pushing the people he loves most, away and it's hurting them. Most of all, drugs and gangs can really impact someone's daily lives and can even interest a father more than taking care and being there for his own daughter.



ESSAY 10

ELIZABETH WHITMORE

Schaefer Middle School

That fight

The baby is so new so young and the fight is happening now, not a day old.

Tears, screams, and scars and lies.

At 2 years old, she almost lost a mother to a war her mother was fighting.

This war was not people but cancer.

4 years old, she is so lost in her head, days she thinks she is a ghost to her family.

1 year later she saw a traumatic event on the tv a month before her birthday, she saw that her father fell into death's hands for a couple minutes but god gave her father a chance to live.

He is not using it as God wanted him. Her father is fighting a war but she thinks he won't win in this war

Then at 7 she doesn't want to grow and is scared of her future.

She thinks she grew too fast like a weed in a garden.

At 8 she is screaming in her head so much she wants to die so much that she is pushing everyone away.

That girl was so lost in "adult" conversation, to the extent she thought like an adult.

At 9 years old, she was sleeping with two hammers in her hands, her house was a living hell in her eyes.

The house was a demon that would eat their happiness day by day.

And not too long it was a living hell to her, her mother, and brother.

She blames herself for the rape of her mother.

11 was the worst years of her life, she dug a hole taller than herself and fell hard in that hole of darkness.

She lost someone so important to her.

She bottled her feelings to the point she doesn't know how to handle them.

When she was 12 years old, she liked a boy that she thought was a good guy.

But lies can be masked by everyone.

And she trusted him with some of her feelings and that ended badly.

She was sexually assaulted and she didn't know what that was so she ignored it but it got worse and worse.

It lasted for half a year.

When she was 13 her mother was scared for her daughter so her mother got her into therapy around 11-13 years old.

At 13-14 she changed her mind, clothes, and etc.

At 14 she has grown and her life has changed so much that you look at her and you say," she probably had a good life."

This girl is so thankful for her family and friends.

The poem I wrote was about some of my traumatic experiences within my childhood, and I have grown to appreciate the people around me. Some of the stories from the youth can make the world cry. These causes can be the start of youth violence, because in this generation most kids were taught to fight if someone did something to you and there is always a reason. Because the youth had a traumatic event or the media, or the community and neighborhood and I mean like an example of having someone shot in front of your home or around your neighborhood and the lack of community support or change etc.



Students from Schaefer Middle School





Students from Roosevelt Middle School



Students from Hayward Middle School



DAVE YOST

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Do the Write Thing 2023

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