

## MY GRANDPA

My grandpa was a very nice man. He would take the leftover food from his work and give it to the families who needed it. He mowed lawns for neighbors. He donated food, made blankets, helped fix things. He was a very hard worker. He helped others a lot. He showed love by helping others. He was busy all day doing those things. I wish I got to see my grandpa. I want to be like my grandpa. I love my grandpa.

This is student work, transcribed as the student presented it.



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**2026 Arizona State University  
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration**

**Evelyn Pitney**

**1st Place - Essay Primary  
2nd Grade**

**Franklin Accelerated Academy Brimhall Campus  
Mesa Public Schools**

## MY MOM KELSEY'S GOOD LEADERSHIP

A good example of leadership is my mom Kelsey. She looks out for people. It was the one year mark when someone lost there husband and my mom gave them dinner. She's always working hard. One time she was busy and was still willing to pick up people for my practice. She is always caring for strangers. Once we were going to a waterpark and we saw a man on the sidewalk with no water and my mom gave him water. That's why Kelsey is good at leadership.

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**James Jackson**

**2nd Place - Essay Primary  
2nd Grade**

**Franklin Accelerated Academy Brimhall Campus  
Mesa Public Schools**

## ANGELS ON EARTH

When my baby brother Bodi got his angels wings, ladies in church ward brought us food and flowers. They brought dinners to help my mom so she did not have to cook when she was sad. The ladies broght us dinners every night for three weeks to help my mom. I could tell it meat a lot to my mom. My mom and dad told me there kinds acts of service are very important and help peapole when they need it. My mom said that she has angel babies in Heaven but those ladies are angels on earth.

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**2026 Arizona State University  
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**Kira Crosby**

**3rd Place - Essay Primary  
2nd Grade**

**Franklin Accelerated Academy Brimhall Campus  
Mesa Public Schools**

## LEADERSHIP

Leadership is about demonstrating something to someone. Leadership is also about being able to guide, influence and motivate others. The pillars of leadership are trust, consistency, vision, determination, courage, humility, confidence, and gratitude. The community needs leadership, without it our world as we know it would not be the same. I learned from my martial arts teacher Mr. Desmith, who has tons of leadership. I know for a fact that Mr. Desmith has the pillars of leadership. For example, he goes to schools and tells kids how they can help the community. Mr. Desmith raises money for awareness for people who are in wheelchairs and don't have enough strength to stand up, and he gives the money to the family for support. Also a tiny thing in class is he helps kids to have courage to tell the class what they learned. Another thing he does to help the community is hold toy drives, food drives and clothing drives. Mr. Desmith always shows everyone respect. Clearly, he is a perfect example of being a good guide in the learning path. He is the best one I know. This shows he's kind, trustworthy, has humility, gratitude, and is an amazing leader for the world everyday.

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**Piper Garrison**

**1st Place - Essay Intermediate  
5th Grade**

**Mesa Academy for Advanced Studies  
Mesa Public Schools**

## MY AMAZING AUNT

My Aunt Allysa is kind every day, maybe that means helping someone cross the road or helping the homeless. There are so many ways my aunt is kind and I am going to tell you about how she can demonstrate leadership through kindness.

During Christmas time usually me, my brother, my cousin, and my aunt go make care packages for the homeless. We go to the store and pick out some stuff we think they would need and would want we get stuff like water, toothbrushes, canned food, snacks and any other things we think we might need. Then we usually go to Burger King or McDonalds and get some burgers to give them too!

Whenever we do this it always makes me feel so happy cause it gives us a chance to make someone else happy too! Maybe someone who really needed that boost of joy! Also around Christmas time me and my aunt go to somewhere that does this thing called an Angel Tree we get to pick out an ornament and it says stuff about the kid we picked. It usually says their gender, their favorite color, stuff they want, and stuff that they need. We usually pick out one or two of the ornaments and it just makes me so happy to pick out things for someone who really needs it.

Me and my aunt haven't done this yet but we are planning on maybe in summer or winter we want to go outside and make a lemonade stand or hot cocoa stand and sell it and then donate the money that we make to a homeless shelter. I am extremely excited about getting to do that!

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**2026 Arizona State University  
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**Riley Bogert**

**2nd Place - Essay Intermediate  
5th Grade**

**Franklin Accelerated Academy Brimhall Campus  
Mesa Public Schools**

## THE RIGHT THING

There are many ways to do the right thing. Whether it's helping someone up when they fall, or it's helping someone in need, there are many ways to do the right thing. My mom is an amazing example of this. She did the right thing.

My mom loves to help out. But one thing that she has done definitely helped out. She volunteered at a homeless shelter (many times). No pay, but there definitely was a reward, the best feeling in the world. You get this feeling when you do the right thing. So, my mom helped out. She went through all of our stuff and found things that could be useful to people that might not have the privilege of getting these things. Also, she asked others if they had anything to donate. She mainly wanted to get shoes so people could protect their feet, jackets for the cold months, and tank tops for the summer months. She also did this every time she volunteered. At the homeless shelter showers, food, clothes and anything else was provided. When she was there she helped people find the right clothes and stuff like that.

Clearly, my mom changed lives, she didn't have to but she did, she did the right thing. There are so many ways to help and you might not know it yet, but one person helping you up when you fall might just make your whole entire day. So do the right thing.

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**Cameron Johnson**

**3rd Place - Essay Intermediate  
5th Grade**

**Mesa Academy for Advanced Studies  
Mesa Public Schools**



## LARRY

My Uncle Larry was a role model and mentor for many young people. He coached both football and Varsity track for a high school. One thing my uncles always said was “Iron sharpens Iron.” Those words inspired me to play football like he did and when I want to give up I think about him. He coordinated dropout prevention programs for the schools where he worked. He was a good person with a great heart.

My uncle was a Marine. He helped win the Persian Gulf War and the Somalia Conflict. He had a heart for troubled youth and Co-Founded a place for the troubled youth in Arizona.

He inspired the youth to keep working and never give up. He was the best person to talk to and he could be a great counselor. My Uncle left a long and great legacy that will last a lifetime. My mom, his sister Jocelyn, loved him the most and he made her feel special throughout her life. Jocelyn was taught to be the best person she could be and to never give up when times are hard.

Larry and Jocelyn are both great people with good hearts. They both will forever be the most important people in my heart. Sadly this world is without him but he will always be remembered and he left a great legacy.

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**2026 Arizona State University  
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**Josiah Mitchell**

**1st Place - Essay Middle  
7th Grade**

**Andersen Junior High School  
Chandler Unified School District**

## PICTURING PROGRESS

I picture progress as a journey down road,  
And hardships are a heavy load.  
So turn each hardship to a stepping stone,  
Each one leads you further into the great unknown.

The stepping stones may begin to shake,  
As your greatness begins to wake.  
Your hands link with those beside you,  
Creating a light that will guide you.

Progress is built when we come together as one,  
Our teamwork shines brighter than the sun.  
With each other hand in hand,  
We rise together and make a stand.

We'll face challenges that never seem to stop,  
But when we work together, we come out on top.  
Though the journeys end is far from near,  
When we work together it's all so clear.

I picture progress as the road to our dream,  
Love guides us, a radiant beam.  
I picture progress without a doubt,  
Knowing together we will make it out.

Picture progress as an opportunity worth taking,  
Because you are a masterpiece in the making.

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# Picturing Progress

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Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

# Cadence Thompson

## 2nd Place - Essay Middle 7th Grade

Franklin Junior High School  
Mesa Public Schools



## LEADER

Uncle Patrick is a strong yet caring person. He is a devoted husband and father and is the type of person who will not leave anyone behind. He shows leadership as a Pastor, entrepreneur, and mentor. The church's mission statement is to teach and preach the word of God, to save the lost, and to edify those who are saved. Leading his church, they built a 55,000 sq ft building called the Vital Link center in 2019. Uncle Patrick believes the community center is leading others to become a "vital link" in the community. This center is a place for the community to have access to exercise classes, equipment, and provides a space for large gatherings. He is also the director of the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment Program. This program rehabilitates young men who have been to jail and shows them how to learn from their mistakes. He helps them get a high school diploma or GED and provides career services. He is also an entrepreneur who owns Van Nick's Fine Clothing Boutique. His business gives back to the community by providing work experience for people. He speaks at school career fairs and advises kids on how to become entrepreneurs. Uncle Patrick believes giving back is his purpose in life. He wants to motivate and inspire others to be the best they can be and do the right thing. Uncle Patrick demonstrates leadership through service by setting a good example, sharing his gifts, and building others up.

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# Liam Mackey

## 3rd Place - Essay Middle 7th Grade

Franklin Junior High School  
Mesa Public Schools

MY LEADER

My dad, Benjamin Ronald Barnett, is an example of leadership through service. An immigrant from the Philippines, he moved to the United States to provide a better life for his family. Facing the challenges of a new country, he enlisted in the U.S. Army. His decision wasn't just about serving the country; it was about securing a future for me and my mom, ensuring we could build a life of stability and opportunity.

In the military, my dad demonstrated true leadership through his actions. He showed people the value of hard work, sacrifice, and loyalty. No matter the difficulty of the task, he served with dedication for 16 years. He always made sure to put others before himself expecting nothing back. His leadership went beyond the army and into our daily lives teaching me healthy traits.

His commitment to service also extended into the community. He volunteered with local organizations, helping fellow immigrants adapt to a new life in the U.S. My dad believed in giving back. He found ways to make a difference for other families while still supporting our family.

My dad's example has shaped who I am and many more today. Through his leadership, I learned that true leadership isn't about recognition but about serving others. His sacrifices and dedication continue to inspire me, reminding me that leadership is the most powerful trait to have in selflessness and serving others.

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2026 Arizona State University  
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Lara Sophia Barnett

1st Place - Essay Secondary  
10th Grade

Harvest Preparatory Academy  
Harvest Power Community Development Group, Inc.  
School District

## A TRUE LEADER AT HOME AND BEYOND

When I think about leadership through service, my dad is my greatest inspiration.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many families in our community were struggling, and my dad decided to take action. With the help of his friends, he began providing food boxes to people in need.

It started small—just a few boxes each week filled with basics like rice, beans, and canned food. But as word spread, neighbors joined in to help. Soon, the effort grew from helping a few families to supporting dozens. I witnessed firsthand how working together and persevering can turn a small idea into something meaningful.

Through this process, my dad taught me that true leadership is more than giving directions—it is about building something that lifts others up. He never sought recognition; his focus was on creating hope and making sure no one was left behind.

This effort not only provided food but also inspired others in the community to get involved. What began as a small act of kindness grew into a movement that strengthened our neighborhood.

Because of my dad, I learned that helping others brings progress—not just for those receiving support, but for everyone involved. To me, Ebenedel Quiroa is the best example of a leader who shows that real progress begins with kindness.

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**2026 Arizona State University  
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**Elibeth Quiroa Ayala**

**2nd Place - Essay Secondary  
12th Grade**

**Harvest Preparatory Academy  
Harvest Power Community Development Group, Inc.  
School District**

COACH

A coach who has inspired my life through leadership and dedication is Allen Heck. He never gives up and always pushes me to reach my highest potential.

When I first met him at school, I thought he might be a typical coach, less intense in training. But on the field, my perspective changed. His drills and techniques challenged me to push my limits, building both skill and discipline.

Over time, I noticed his dedication. He was not only committed and talented, but also sharp in his teaching and guidance. Beyond sports, he impressed me with this creativity. He collaborated with the marketing team, guiding volunteers to design polished yearbooks, showing that leadership extends beyond the field.

What impacted me most were the stories of his high school struggles. He shared setbacks he had overcome and how persistence allowed him to find new paths forward. Those stories stayed with me and motivated me to keep going, even when challenges seemed too big.

Coach Heck’s leadership combines creativity, discipline, and resilience, inspiring me to excel in every area of life. He became more than just a coach—he is an inspiration. Through him, I learned the importance of discipline, persistence, and gratitude. His guidance has shaped the person I am today and continues to inspire me to strive for progress every day.

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Solomon Kancharla

3rd Place - Essay Secondary  
11th Grade

Harvest Preparatory Academy  
Harvest Power Community Development Group, Inc.  
School District