

## 2023-24 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Essay Contest Winners

The League's Annual 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Essay Contest award winners were honored in Topeka at the League's building on Friday, May 3, 2024. The essay contest invited 7<sup>th</sup> grade students to write about what they believe are the most important roles and responsibilities of local governments in their city and why they are important for their community.



The League received almost 400 entries from throughout the state. Out of these entries, five regional winners were chosen, and the overall state prize was awarded to Elliana Kufahl of Rock Creek Middle School. Elliana read her award-winning essay to the audience, pictured below.



[www.lkm.org/YouthCivicEducation](http://www.lkm.org/YouthCivicEducation)



**Overall Winner**  
**North East Regional Winner**

**Elliana Kufahl**

Rock Creek Middle School • St. George, Kansas

Many people go about their days without any idea where the places they go and the things they enjoy come from. Lots of people in their communities overlook the important role their local government plays in their safety and enjoyment. Kids overlook public parks, adults overlook the importance of police officers. No matter who you are, you have probably overlooked things your local government does for you. The important roles of a local government can include providing law enforcement, recreational services, and emergency medical services.

Law enforcement is a crucial part of a community that the local government needs to provide for their community. While some may claim that laws are restricting, these laws keep communities safe from threats and potential dangers. People can feel unsafe in their environment, "without law enforcement and our criminal justice system, there is a possibility of rampant havoc, violence, theft, and danger" ("What is the Importance of Law Enforcement?"). An absence of law enforcement can make communities unsafe for residents. Lawless environments have risks, these risks can include theft, assault, and even murder.

Recreational services are beneficial and important to communities, and it is important that a local government provides these services for people of all ages and categories. People often find it easier to bond with people that share interests or hobbies with them, this can happen in many different ways, "communities that participate in sport and recreation develop strong social bonds" ("Benefits to the Community"). Communities with a variety of recreational activities can often form a stronger communal bond through shared interests. Closely knit communities can have an easier time overcoming hardships and can make a community more enjoyable to be in. If a community has a higher moral, it's more likely to feel more welcoming to new members.

Emergency Medical Services are crucial to a community and need to be provided by the local government. Accidents occur all the time, and all communities have emergencies that need intervention as fast as possible. "Quality emergency medical care prevents or reduces the otherwise devastating impacts of road trauma, sepsis, stroke, heart attack ... " ("The Importance of Emergency Care"). Emergency medical services can prevent potential deaths and devastating injuries to members of a community. Many deaths around the world could easily be prevented if people had the appropriate medical services near them.

Law enforcement, recreational services, and emergency medical services are all important necessities local governments provide their communities. Law enforcement keeps communities safe and free from potential threats. Recreational services keep morale up and provide social bonding opportunities in a community, and emergency medical services can prevent many possible deaths by treating wounded and injured people, or people involved in accidents. No matter what community you're in, your local government provides many things you may consider daily life. The next time you're out in public, remind yourself what your local community does for you.



## North Central Regional Winner

Alison Rosebrook

Lincoln Jr/Sr High School • Lincoln, Kansas



## North West Regional Winner

Hazel Breeden

Quinter Junior High School • Quinter, Kansas

Fires destroy acres upon acres. Kids run wild. People are barely scraping by. The world has collapsed. A local government is the administration of a particular town, county, or district, with the representatives elected by those who live there. Vital roles and responsibilities in my community can range from pest control to police. In my community there are essential roles and responsibilities of the local government.

The most imperative role and responsibility in my local government is the fire department. Statistics indicate that 10 civilians are rescued from residential fires through direct actions of firefighters every day. The Firefight Rescue Survey reports 71% of civilians survive. My community has been in a drought the past couple of years. If a fire got out of control it would be devastating. Lots of houses and farmland would be gone. People's livelihood would be destroyed. So firefighters prevent this tragedy. In a community with 1,153 people our fire department responds to 353 calls. Firefighters also respond to medical emergencies and wrecks. In fact they respond to more medical emergencies than fires. 77% of emergencies are medical. They respond to water rescues, hazardous materials incidents, vehicle accidents, people trapped in buildings and so much more. So whatever the emergency firefighters are prepared to respond. They get out of bed at 3:00 in the morning so we can stay safe.

In my local government schools play a major role and responsibility for kids. Research confirms, education provides stability in life. 61% of children say they very much enjoy going to school. Schools help children develop communication skills and connectedness to others. They teach kids critical life lessons. Schools teach children how to problem solve, and communicate. Most of the kids in my school go out for sports. Sports and PE have lots of health benefits. It strengthens bones, muscles, and joints. It helps maintain your body weight by reducing body fat. These skills prepare children for college and life. Sports and PE lowers the risk of developing osteoporosis or joint problems such as arthritis. It helps to stabilize blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol levels.

Social care is a crucial role and responsibility in my community. Experts agree 21.6 million households received social care benefits this year. That translates to 12.5% of the total U.S. population. Social care provides support to people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities/illnesses, and mental illnesses. Social care gives everyone the opportunity to live with dignity and where possible, as much independence as they can.

In conclusion, my community has essential roles and responsibilities in the local government that allows civilians to thrive. Firefighters are extremely important. Thanks to schools, the kids in my community will grow up to be better adults. Without social care people in my community wouldn't be as prosperous. So next time you see a firefighter, teacher, or social care worker, thank them.

My hometown of Quinter is much like a puzzle, where every piece plays a role in creating a complete picture of this wonderful community. The roles and responsibilities of our community members represent puzzle pieces, each one contributing to our community. In making the method in putting together Quinter's puzzle, I believe three aspects are important in shaping the leaders and community of Quinter: volunteering, the dedicated efforts of our city council, and the foundation laid by our education system.

The city council is one of the most important pieces in creating the border in our community puzzle. The leader of our first puzzle piece is the mayor of our town, Jeremy Blackwill, he is a wonderful and critical first part of this puzzle; he also serves as the assistant fire chief in addition to helping run a business fixing diesel engines in and around the community. Our city council has recently added another puzzle piece to our park. The city park recently added on to create two city parks. Moreover, the city council helps maintain public facilities like our pool as well as help promote different businesses in the community. The city council helps keep our town in order, much like the outside border helps maintain the structure of the puzzle.

Much like the city council forms the boundary of the puzzle, this one is just as important. Our community's second puzzle piece is volunteering, helping to build the entire puzzle of our community. There are different ways of volunteering, but one of my favorites is when the local 4-h club volunteers in different places. Volunteer firefighters are very important because they help our community be safe. Another way of volunteering is our REC program, our rec program has many volunteers including the people that ref the games to just the coaches. Anyone can volunteer and if you do that's so important in any community.

Even though volunteering plays an important role in our town, the puzzle of Quinter would be lacking without education as the critical final puzzle pieces. Our school district serves our community in so many roles, and we are blessed to have a school that remains so active in the community. In fact, our community and businesses are directly tied to the school through athletics and community events as well. Moreover, our principal noted, "We have very highly qualified teachers." The education of our students is truly what our community values most, providing the final yet vital puzzle pieces that complete our small town.

Now that our puzzle is complete, we are able to have a wonderful community and people. Our community's main three puzzle pieces are the city council, our volunteering, and our education. Even though the last piece may feel very satisfying, the entire puzzle is just as important, just like the pieces in our community are all important.





## South East Regional Winner

Ella Sherpy

Ottawa Middle School • Ottawa, Kansas

Think about the community members who make a big difference in your daily life. I have three very important individuals who are great at making our environment a better place. Three important entities in my town are the mayor, school board, and police and fire department. I got the opportunity to listen to them and how they explain their job. Now let me tell you all about them!

In our town, the mayor holds a very important role as the primary leader. Mike Skidmore, our current mayor, is highly regarded for his ability to make sound decisions and provide guidance to the community. His responsibilities include appointing and supervising city managers and employees and ensuring a well-run and secure town. He also makes sure that our water stays clean and that our electricity is running. Mayor Skidmore is a crucial person in maintaining the order and safety of our community.

Another significant entity in Ottawa, Kansas, is the school board. The school board holds a large responsibility to make decisions to facilitate our learning and ensure our safety at school. It maintains a secure environment by establishing and enforcing appropriate rules. The school board also helps fund the schools so that the students can go on field trips and attend certain places to learn about their future. Additionally, the school board makes sure that our schools align with the principles and customs of our respective districts.

One more important entity in Ottawa Kansas is the police and fire department. We owe gratitude to its vigilant and efficient police and fire department. They are not only essential but also indispensable to the town's safety and well-being. They work tirelessly to ensure that the town remains free from any harm or danger. Their prompt response and quick actions in times of crisis are commendable. The fire department, in particular, deserves special recognition for its unwavering commitment to protecting the town from fire hazards. Their dedication is invaluable, and the town is fortunate to have such selfless and brave first responders.

I believe it's important to recognize and appreciate the hard work and commitment of those who serve our community. The mayor, school board, and police and fire departments help make our environment awesome. I'm appreciative of the individuals in my town who make an effort to maintain its cleanliness and safety. Are there any significant individuals in your community who actively contribute to the improvement of your community every day?



## South Central Regional Winner

Abrianna Goodrum

Eisenhower Middle School • Goddard, Kansas

The local government of Kansas serves as one of the most essential parts to providing a safe, flourishing community. The diverse ranges of responsibility greatly impacts citizens like myself. All the way from ensuring the safety of our lives, to growing our economy, the local government is a crucial part of the community that we greatly undervalue. From the mayor to medics and police, they help us all on a day to day basis.

To assure that we are safe, the police enforce laws, manage investigations, and quickly respond to emergencies to maintain public order. With 911 lines available, and hospitals close by, our medics can make sure everyone stays safe in case of small to life-threatening emergencies.

Another way local governments keep us safe is by building and fixing public works and infrastructure. The Planning and Zoning Department helps manage construction for roads and buildings. Having roads redone makes wrecks less likely to occur, making driving a safe environment. If driving isn't really your thing, the Parks and Rec Department also ensures that bicyclists stay safe by having policies. This includes the "dead red" provision, making bicyclists able to proceed cautiously during red lights, as well as using white headlights and a rear red reflector during the night. With these more efficient roads, goods can be transported from businesses to markets faster, and at a lower cost. With that being said, inflation can reduce, making products more affordable for the community.

As well as the roads being redone the Parks and Rec Department also keeps the public facilities up to date for the community. For example, they are responsible for keeping our community stimulated by creating new buildings and places to explore. Some of these places include parks, athletic facilities, pools, and nature centers.

The local government is also in charge of our utilities, such as water, electricity, and sewage. They are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the infrastructure that supplies each of these utilities. For example if sewage backs up in a neighborhood, the government is responsible for fixing it.

Our government also provides a great education for all students. They support and oversee school districts. Some examples of things they do are funding and creating policies to make sure schools are functioning smoothly within their jurisdiction.

Local governments in Kansas are one of the most important roles in helping our community grow to become a supportive environment where residents can thrive throughout the accessible education, the supportive social services, and the commitment to overall welfare. Our government works tremendously hard to make our lives the best they can be, which is why we should recognize the diligence in what they do for us.



## South West Regional Winner

**Huck Carpenter**

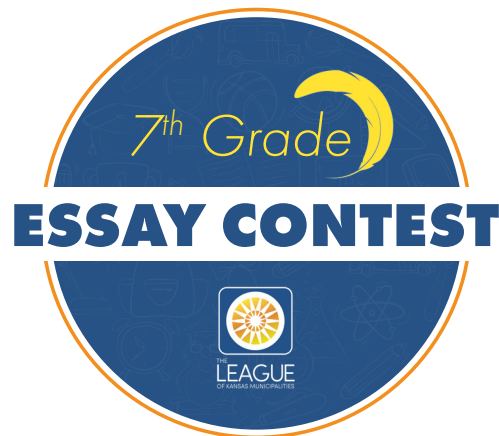
Wichita County Jr./Sr High School • Leoti, Kansas

American author Dean Krootz once said, "Be proud of your hometown, it's a big part of what makes you the person you are." I cannot agree with this quote more because Leoti has such a great community that has made me be the person I am today. Leoti is an impressive town that has a population of around 2,000 remarkable people that want the best for everyone in the community. I am Huck Carpenter, and I work on our family farm. I love to farm, hunt, ride horses, and raise cattle. The outdoors and our small town of Leoti is truly where my heart will always reside. I have our local government to thank for this. Our local government ensures our community is taken care of in an endless amount of ways.

Our local government looks out for our community and its individual needs. For example, with the Home Rule, local people and the local government can make decisions based on their town's individual needs. This is essential because small towns' needs can differ greatly from neighborhood to neighborhood. One way we have used this is to make decisions about animal and livestock ordinances without the state. We did this because backyard chickens have become a very popular trend in our small town. Also, our town is small and can be easily navigated on golf carts or rangers, therefore making it more convenient for short travels. The Home Rule states that our community can enforce, ban, or allow smaller utility vehicles. Our local community also passed a bond issue in which our school district received tax money to build a much needed elementary school. Overall, our local government always looks out for our community and its needs.

Our local government also makes sure that our community is well maintained, so it is inviting to community members and visitors. Well-kept lawns, maintained streets, and an upstanding sanitation department are only a few of the many services our city provides for its people. The local government also provides entertainment to give community members opportunities to connect with one another. Some of these events include the artwalk, summer cinema movies, trunk-or-treat, and a well-maintained park. Through these events and services, our community continues to thrive and grow because the people are personally invested and connected to the community.

Our local government ensures that our community is taken care of in an endless amount of ways. Leoti's local government contributes so much by providing entertainment, maintaining our town, and overseeing policies and decisions to best fit our town's needs. As a city member, I am proud to be part of a community that values its people and wants to help the city and its members to thrive and succeed. As I get older and become more involved, I hope that I can contribute my personal knowledge and efforts to help our city continue to prosper. Leoti's local government is key to our city's continued success.



All Kansas students enrolled in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2024-25 school year are invited to participate in the League's 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Essay Contest. The essays work in conjunction with KSDE curriculum standards, and the contest will re-open for essays in fall of 2024 with a deadline for submissions being in spring of 2025.

For full details, visit our website at [www.lkm.org/essaycontest](http://www.lkm.org/essaycontest).

We encourage local government staff and elected officials to encourage your local schools to participate. This is a great opportunity to connect with the younger generation of your community and get them interested in what a city is, what a city does, and how they can be a part of their city!

**Congratulations to the 2023-24 7<sup>th</sup> Grade Essay Contest winners and thank you to all who participated!**



Left to right: Elliana Kufahl, Abrianna Goodrum, Ella Sherpy, Alison Rosebrook, Hazel Breeden  
\*Not pictured: Huck Carpenter.