

What is Valentine's Day?



Doug Gale, 11

Valentine's Day is the day to show people you really care for them. My mom is my favorite valentine. She takes care of me and helps me through the hard times. She's the person I trust most. I can tell her anything and not worry about her getting mad. I wish I could give her a new home, a nice car and some extra money to pay bills. I hope everyone has someone to love and has a happy Valentine's Day.



Nicole Sanders, 9

Valentine's Day is the day to share your love. My special valentines are my family. We do a lot of things together. We love each other and help each other. If you're happy at home, you'll treat others nice. You will also do better in school. If you're sad, it's hard to do good school work. Then the teacher gets upset, then your parents and on and on. I hope on Valentine's Day everyone makes an effort to be nice to each other. It's not hard to do, and it is important.

How do you feel about drinking?



Shannon Niccolai, 13

Kids get into drinking because of peer pressure. Before they realize it, they have a real problem. Kids who lack confidence or have problems at home are more likely to have problems with drugs or alcohol. I feel safer in a car because of the tougher laws on drinking and driving. The ads about it are great. Now people think before they drink and drive. I'm worried about little kids watching beer commercials, thinking that to be a tough guy you have to drink. That's wrong!



Matt Bower, 12

Alcohol in large doses is dangerous for anyone, especially kids. If we don't do well now, we pay the consequences later. A kid's life could be ruined by alcohol or drugs. Beer commercials on TV make it look like drinking is the thing to do. Athletes endorsing beer make kids think, "If they can do it, so can we." It's easy for kids that don't have drug or alcohol problems to give advice. But it's hard for kids who have a problem to recognize it and do anything about it.



Kiki's Korner

Dear KiKi,

I love basketball, but I'm not too good at it. I don't know if I want to be a drummer in a rock band or a pro basketball player. How can I get better at basketball?

Blazers' biggest fan,
Ty

Dear Ty,

When trying to decide what you want to be when you grow up, you should think of things you enjoy. You enjoy basketball and playing drums. Remember, there are a lot of jobs related to those activities. There are players, coaches, sportscasters and coliseum workers, just to mention a few. Whatever you choose, work to do your best.

Good luck,
KiKi

Dear KiKi,

A lot of teenagers like me read your column. Please tell them how to say "no thanks" to drugs and how important it is not to take drugs while playing sports.

Thanks,
Catherine

Dear Catherine,

Sometimes it's not so easy to say "no thanks" to drugs. Other kids might put a lot of pressure on you to try them. But drugs really effect how you perform, especially in sports. Making a good pass to a teammate or running the last lap depends on you being your best mentally and physically. Say "no thanks" to drugs.

Your friend,
KiKi

Writers whose letters appear in the Young American receive an autographed basketball and a free lunch with Kiki. Write Kiki, c/o Young American, P.O. Box 12409, Portland, OR 97212.

Where do the nation's heroes come from?

By Matthew Prophet, Superintendent of Portland Public Schools

While millions of Americans watched, the Challenger 7 space shuttle exploded.

And inside the spacecraft were its seven crew members. One crew member was a school teacher from New Hampshire. Some of the nation's best and brightest teachers had applied to be the "first civilian in space." Christa McAuliffe had won the honor.

If you read the background of each of the seven members on this mission, you would find a rich array. They were not an "elite" crew. They came from diverse routes — poor working class, wealthy, city, country, privileged and underprivileged. One common ground they seemed to have was a striving for high goals and a dedication to their own education.

Where do these heroic people come from? Where will we get more like them? They came from Akron, Ohio, from Lake City, South Carolina, from Concord, New Hampshire. And they will come from Portland, Beaverton, Tigard, Sherwood and Pilot Rock, Oregon — every place where there are young people who strive for high goals, who are dedicated to becoming educated people.

All of the nation's brave and dedicated people are not famous. Their contributions are more often quiet.



They are gently molding the conscience of communities through civic organizations and active church work; they are prompting local governments to care for the needy and to provide justice for all; they are staying informed and participating in elections. And some are hidden in classrooms, teaching young people.

Christa McAuliffe was such a "hidden" teacher until her striving for the next higher goal took her to Challenger 7. The nation needs people like her.

Where will the next heroic people come from? Where will we get more like Christa McAuliffe? How many of the readers of *Young American* can the United States count on?

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