

Cambium Learning Technologies Announces 2010 Winner of Courage in My Community Essay Contest.

Natick, MA

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Cambium Learning Technologies (Natick, MA), in partnership with The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, Inc. (Boston, MA), are proud to announce Maklin Rameriz, a 6th grader from Hartman Middle School in Houston, Texas, as the winning essayist for the 2010 Courage in My Community essay contest. This national essay competition challenged middle school students to reflect on and write about the nature of courage and how it manifests in their community.

“We were thrilled by the number of quality essays we received for the 2nd annual Courage in My Community essay contest. Reading these essays really gives you a grounded perspective on the struggles many of our youth face today. It was hard to pick just one essay, but after multiple rounds of judging, we are proud to have Maklin Ramirez represent the contest as our 2010 winner,” said Alex Saltonstall, General Manager for Cambium Learning Technologies.

The competition was designed to engage middle school students in a deeper understanding of the concept of courage in their community, while reinforcing literacy skills and the writing process. Many of the school districts that participated in this contest chose to integrate the use of technology into the essay writing process, using Kurzweil 3000. Kurzweil 3000 is a suite of tools designed to assist students, from generating ideas with a graphic organizer, to gathering information using the integrated column notes feature, to reviewing and publishing.

Each “Courage in My Community” essay was read by a panel of judges who sought to choose an essay that clearly demonstrated the student’s understanding of the nature of courage in his or her community, and that stood out as being both compelling and true to the student’s voice. Maklin Ramirez wrote about demonstrating the courage to make a difference in his neighborhood, helping to address a significant vandalism problem. “After several rounds of judging, our team of panelists chose Mr. Ramirez’s essay because we felt he really grasped what courage was and was able to articulate his courageous moment in a moving way,” said Mr. Saltonstall.

We are pleased to share an excerpt from Maklin Ramirez’s essay:

“[My mom] said she was proud of me for helping the environment. One week later, I saw that there was no more trash in the abandoned house, or on anyone else’s property. I made my street cleaner. I felt like a hero because I had the courage to go through all that trouble to make my community and environment clean.”

To view the essay in its entirety, please visit our website at www.cambiumtech.com.

Hartman Middle School will receive a Kurzweil 3000 Network license with a full-day of training in addition to a half day training from program staff on The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, valued at over \$3000. Maklin will receive a Kurzweil 3000 Pro Color USB Edition, and an iPod Touch, which will be presented during a special ceremony at his school.

Preparations are underway for the 2011 Courage in My Community essay contest. If you would like to be on the list to receive an official set of guidelines, please email Carrie DeBlasi at clt-marketing@cambiumlearning.com.

For more information about The Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, a language arts and character development program, please visit the organization’s website at www.maxcourage.org.



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Courage in my Community

One early morning, my mom woke me and told me to look for Canela, my dog, who escaped from the backyard. It was dark and windy when I went outside, and I noticed that there was trash all over our front yard and our neighbors, too. I thought to myself, "Did Canela do all of this?" I found Canela, walked her to the doghouse, and then I cleaned up all the trash. Afterwards I went to school.

When I came back from school, more trash was in the front yard. I asked my mom if Canela escaped again. She said no and wondered why I was asking. I replied that it was nothing.

I took Canela for a walk. It was windy, so we just walked through our street. I saw the trash being blown by the wind to other houses, so I curiously followed where the trash was coming from. I saw a pile of trash in the yard of an abandoned house. Canela and I went back to our house and found some of the trash in the front yard. Now we knew where all that trash came from. I asked myself, "But who threw all that trash there if it was abandoned?"

It was Saturday morning when I tried to figure out who threw the trash to the abandoned house. I brought my binoculars and stayed as guard.

No one came until that evening. I saw a red truck with lots of trash inside and two men were throwing the trash to your yard of the abandoned house. I quickly went inside and told my mom about it. I asked her if that was allowed, and she said no. I told her to come with me outside. The truck was not there anymore. My mom asked me, "Why are you lying to me, Maklin?" "I'm not lying, Mom," I responded. My mom asked me if I had picked up all the trash last time Canela escaped. I said the truth, yes. She thought I was lying again, so I told her to just forget it. I needed to get some real evidence.

Next Saturday, I hid in the abandoned house with my camera, a Polaroid. I waited for hours until the red truck came and it had more trash. I took a picture of the truck with the trash, the license plate, and the two men throwing the trash. I also took a picture of them throwing a dead dog and hiding it in the middle of the trash. After I got all the evidence, I went home frightened. The moment I was home I told my mom I was calling the police. I took out the pictures, gave them to her, and called 911. "Where did you get all these pictures?" mom asked. "I got them in the abandoned house," I answered.

The police came and we gave him the pictures. He said, "These two are committing a felony." He talked to us about the crime, said thank you, and left. After he left, my mom apologized to me and said thank you. She said she was proud of, for doing something important by myself.

One week later, there was no more trash in the abandoned house or on anyone else's front yard. I made my street cleaner. I felt like a hero because I had the courage to go through all that trouble just to have my community and environment clean.

Maklin Ramirez
Hartman Middle School