

# Foundations for Life Essay Contest 2005

**DuPage Character Development Coalition  
The Abraham Lincoln Center for Character Development**

**RUNNER-UP, 10<sup>th</sup> Grade**

## **Character**

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After all Helen Keller had been through, she must have known a little something about what really defines character. Helen Keller was deaf and blind, but that didn't stop her from becoming an author and educator. I believe that someone is not just born with character, but it is achieved through events that come into play in our lives. Helen Keller explained character by saying, "Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired, and success achieved." I can look at my life and see where my weak and smooth sailing moments were. When I look at my weak moments, I remember struggling and trying to work things through for the better. Although I know that my low points are not fun, I can look back and recognize what I learned from them. My smooth sailing moments in my life were definitely more enjoyable, but I realize that my life didn't really change. I never was taught anything or had any ambition to do anything, furthermore build character. It is as almost when everything is perfect I turn into a couch potato and do not do anything for my life.

Over the summer I had an opportunity to go to California with my dad and stay at a father-daughter camp. At the camp there were many activities to do. One of the activities to do was bluff jumping; jumping off a high cliff into water. Before this trip, I had never done anything like bluff jumping, and I was also afraid of heights. As the opportunity to do this with my dad came along, I was definitely questionable about it. I can remember standing at the top of the cliff staring down telling myself that I wanted to jump, but my feet were too scared to move. Finally after thinking about jumping off for the hundredth time, and ignoring the butterflies in my stomach, I made myself take the leap and free fall through the air to the water 25 feet below. This may not be a big suffering experience, but for me it was a little struggle in my life that I wanted to get over. After jumping off the cliff, I felt so good about myself. I felt so good because I wanted to do something really badly, and I did it. I also over came my fear of heights.

Character does not walk right into your smooth sailing life, but it comes with the struggles and difficult times. There may be opportunities to build character that come in different forms.

When the hard times come, look for a way that you can learn from it, or a way to work through it. Sometimes the hard times are character building opportunities in disguise.