

2014-2015 Lions International Essay Contest Grand Prize Winner
Peace, Love and Understanding
By Jalen Ballard, Age 12, Ohio USA
Sponsored by Sylvania Sunrise Lions Club

Peace, love, and understanding are invaluable to mankind. On our delicate planet, the complex processes of evolution, along with God, made our lives possible. To get the greatest potential out of our precious and limited lives on Earth, we must all be peaceful, love each other, and be understanding. Our world will never be perfect, but that doesn't mean we can't strive for the best as a society.

Peace is so standard to some people that it is often taken for granted, while other people's lives are plagued with constant strife and hardship. To truly be peaceful, we must love each other and be understanding. Sometimes, we must set aside our differences from our friends and our so-called enemies and come to compromises. Coming to agreements is a great way to bring people together, to not have enemies, and to help create peace.

When I say we should all love each other, I am referring to both senses of the word. Yes, we should all love our family members. But, when I say that we should "love" everyone, I mean that we should, like friends, look after each other and support each other through the ups and downs of life. When people feel like they are valued and supported, they often have a higher self-esteem and are happier. This, in turn, helps create a more peaceful environment.

To be understanding basically means to be open-minded and empathetic. As humans, we often can't stand being judged, but we are quick to judge others. We must be able to feel the emotions of others and look at things from their perspective. In addition to having empathy, we must also be "open-minded." Open-mindedness allows us to freely accept new ideas, even if they aren't fully understood.

Women, people of certain races, people living through poverty, homosexuals, and even blind people like me face the challenges of adversity and ignorance in our society. Being blind myself, some people may feel sorry for me and think that I can't do basic things on my own such as getting dressed, cutting my own food, opening water bottles, walking from Point A to Point B, and so on. But, very few people realize that I am a fully-functional human being, aside from my limited vision. From my perspective, people that think of me as a helpless person annoy me. They aren't being understanding of differences at all. If we as a society can become understanding of others' differences, everyone will feel more valued, and this will help create a more peaceful world.

Peace, love, and understanding are important to mankind. We as a society should learn how to compromise with our "enemies" and love and support each other. In addition, we should be understanding and open-minded of others' differences and empathetic to their situations. All of these principles will help bring people together so that they can live happy, peaceful, and loving lives.