

Rutherford Civil Rights Commission Annual Essay Contest – **1st Place Winner**

Student Name: **Daniel Jin**

Teacher Name: **Mrs. Nicole Bowden**

School Name: **Rutherford High School**

How would you recognize the contribution of those that we consider essential to the working of our lifestyle, but go unnoticed (janitors, police office, sanitation works, receptionists, teachers, etc.)?

My father had always told me when I was growing up that the smallest acts make the biggest change. While this may sound cliché, he has preached this maxim to me ever since I was 5 years old. As a young child growing up in the restaurant industry, my dad would always have me pick up the trash if we were walking in the street because he told me that I was helping the garbage men who do this job every day. So, as the innocent child that I was, I would always pick up trash everywhere I went because I knew that I was helping the grown-ups who were doing their jobs. But as I grew older, I began to notice why my father told me this at such a young age. He wanted to make sure that I respected and gave back to the workers who were overlooked in society. As my father worked in the restaurant industry for over two decades, he understood the struggles of working late nights bussing tables, and cleaning the floors while the people around them ignored him like he was invisible. However, as I grew even older and began to work in these restaurants myself, I began to notice that many people did not take these hard-working individuals who did all the dirty work as seriously as I thought. It really hit home to see that some people would rudely talk back to a waiter or throw trash around the streets like it was their living room floor. There are an overwhelming amount of workers in society whose efforts go unnoticed. There must be a better way to somehow acknowledge even for a day these workers for their courageous and selfless actions. Thus, going back to what my father told me when I was 5 years old, I believe that the smallest acts make the biggest

change. I propose that on the respective National Recognition Day of these workers, like National Custodian Appreciation Day, we should write small messages filled with words of kindness. These messages would be collected and distributed amongst many workers to show recognition for all that they do. Even the smallest words like, "Thank you for cleaning the boys' bathrooms every day" or "Thank you for protecting my family every day" can move a person. Despite the publicity that some jobs may get (like professional athletes or politicians), I feel as though the work that these deserving individuals do on a daily basis should be recognized. Through these small messages, I hope that it brings a smile to the typically unnoticed worker's face. From one small act of kindness at a time, I hope that this brings awareness and recognition to many of the heroes out there. Without them, there were be no community that we are surrounded by.

Rutherford Civil Rights Commission Annual Essay Contest – **2nd Place Winner**

Student Name: **Edel Barcnas**

Teacher Name: **Mr. Brian Ersalesi and Mrs. Grace Lutwyler**

School Name: **Rutherford High School**

How would you recognize the contribution of those that we consider essential to the working of our lifestyle, but go unnoticed (janitors, police office, sanitation works, receptionists, teachers, etc.)?

Hundreds of people and workers affect our everyday lives without anyone thanking them or even noticing. Although it can be hard to thank someone you never see, I assure you it is possible. It isn't necessary to throw your janitors a party, or give your sanitation workers a bouquet of flowers; I propose a much subtler approach to thanking them. Everyone has the power to make their lives a little easier with the small tasks they participate in every day. Giving them a party would last one day, but helping these workers by thinning out the unnecessary parts of their job could be unmatched. If you put yourself in their shoes throughout the day you may see and make some new choices: more beneficial choices. For example, when you shoot your garbage at the trash can, (like I know you do) and miss, just pick it up and throw it out so that a janitor doesn't have to. Call out someone who is making a mess in the bathroom. Act responsibly with your friends so that you do not need to waste a policeman's time by having them lecture you. Pay attention to your teachers so that they do not have to repeat themselves more than they already have to. Do not overstuff your trashcan to make difficult for your sanitation workers to lift. All of these tasks may seem insignificant on their own, but if more people committed these deeds, then these workers' lives would be noticeably easier. One final task that I do to subtly show my appreciation for these workers is by simply saying "hello" to them if I see them. It may not seem like a lot, but after constantly being ignored by ignorant people all day, a hello or

two may just remind them that they exist and some people notice and appreciate what they do.

Rutherford Civil Rights Commission Annual Essay Contest – **3rd Place Winner**

Student Name: **Mansi Mangukiya**

Teacher Name: **Mrs. Nicole Bowden**

School Name: **Rutherford High School**

How would you recognize the contribution of those that we consider essential to the working of our lifestyle, but go unnoticed (janitors, police office, sanitation works, receptionists, teachers, etc.)?

How often do the contributions of those that we consider essential in our lifestyles, such as janitors, sanitation workers, receptionists, crossing guards, and teachers, go unnoticed? Teachers, who are known for having one of the toughest jobs of all, equip young students with helpful information without hinting at any weariness. They are one of the main guidelines of student's lives. But what have we as students done to recognize them? Let's step in and give appreciation to all the teachers who have pushed their students in the right direction. In order to put this forth, let's start giving them awards like the ones that students receive. We should have a "Teacher of the Month" ceremony. This would allow students to encourage their teachers to win and exemplify their hard work.

Janitors are never fully appreciated for the hard work they do every day. They pick up our gum wrappers, rotten food on the floor in the lunch room, and all kinds of trash. But have we cared enough for them to even say a small thank you? We have never put ourselves in their shoes and we have never understood the difficulty of their labor. People should step forward and help these workers to recognize their contributions in all of our lives. Places that employ janitors should offer them a free meal once a week, or perhaps once a month. These small actions can make them feel appreciated and valued.

Another overlooked job is a crossing guard, the man or woman who stands outside in various temperatures to help children safely cross the road. They often receive negative comments and criticism from drivers, have to put up with people not listening to them, and

working in dangerous conditions. To help them deal with different types of weather, we should offer them a small shelter similar to a bus stop. It should be transparent so they can view their surroundings, and that small shelter should be customized according to the needs of the crossing guard. If they need heat in the winter, they could turn on the heater in that shelter; if in the summer they need cooling, then they could turn on the air conditioner. Even if this appears to be a small change, it's a big deal for the crossing guard and it could impact his or her life in a positive way. They do significantly more than just simply crossing the kids; they keep everyone safe.

It would be easy enough for our society to show appreciation to people who have "invisible" jobs. Their contributions are very effective, but people don't know how to properly value them. In order to change this, we should start by saying thank you. Even a little change can have huge impact on their lives. They will feel acknowledged for all the hard work they have put forth, which is how everyone should feel when they help their community grow.