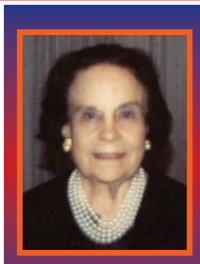

VIP

Gloria Starr Kins

Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics Award

By Henry Levy
Photos by Gloria Starr Kins

What an honor it must be to win a prize in an ethics contest from Elie Wiesel. Each year the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity presents such an opportunity. The Prize in Ethics Essay Contest is an annual competition that challenges college students in the US to submit essays on the urgent and complex ethical issues that confront us in the modern world. Since the contest's inception in 1989, thousands of young people have composed essay for consideration.

This year's first prize winner was Alexandra Stewart from the University of New Mexico for "The Ethics of Transcendence". In her essay, Allix discusses a personal encounter with familial sexual violence as a teenager. This experience changed her perceptions of cross-cultural interactions, leading her to believe that ethics must transcend cultural traditions. She said that the experience "made me think about right vs. wrong but goodness is fixed, an ideal, a virtue."

Andrew Mueller of the US Merchant Marine Academy was the second prize winner for "The Ethics of Giving: Lessons from the Ship and the City". In his essay Ensign Mueller illustrates a developed framework for ethical giving after witnessing acts of inhumanity firsthand during his time at sea visiting the port of Djibouti. He remarked, "It is amazing what starvation can do to people's actions. The biggest thing that I could give is service to my country."

Andrew King of the University of California, Berkeley won the third prize for "Humans, Animals and the Kingdom of Ends". In his essay, Andrew considers and defends reasons for understanding the lives of animals to be analogous to our own through a combination of philosophy and personal essay. He suggested that among the claims of animals on us is that animals may be entitled to more respect.

Past prize winner Magogodi Makhene Soweto spoke of what the award meant to her and that the reason we write is "to find meaning in life. It is a form of witness and testimony."

Dov Seidman, CEO of LRN, Exclusive Corporate Partners of the Elie Wiesel Prize in Ethics and host of the annual event said, "The mission in life is to help people do the right thing. The faster the world gets the deeper we must go. We must pause because in the pause we think harder and deeper." Dov shared that we are entering the Human Economy which is based on not doing the next thing right but the next right thing.

Dov then introduced Elie Wiesel who he called a paragon of moral authority in whose presence people feel blessed.

Elie Wiesel told those present to do something with our lives. We are here to go beyond ourselves, to be with one another. That God alone is alone. There is more in life then just words. It's up to us to make poetry. He said, "I've been a teacher all my life. I've been a student all my life. I love learning more than studying. My wish and Marion's wish is to continue. Don't stop. Always ask more questions, read more books and look at mankind with a smile. Smiling is still a gift we can share with each other and for each other."

The Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity's mission, rooted in the memory of the Holocaust, is to combat indifference, intolerance and injustice through international dialogue and youth-focused programs that promote acceptance, understanding and equality.

From l: Captain *Reed Baradonna*, US Merchant Marine Academy; Ensign *Andrew Mueller*; and Prize Winner, *Henry Knight*, Professor of Holocaust & Genocide Studies, Keene State College.

Elie and *Marion Wiesel*.

Andrew King, Prize Winner (left) with *Elie Wiesel*.

Alexandra Stewart, Prize Winner (far right) with family members, *Madalaine* and *Mark Stewart*, and *Mandi Quiros*.

Elie Wiesel (right) and *Dov Seidman* (left) with Award Winners, *Andrew Mueller* (2nd from left), *Andrew King* (center) and *Alexandra Stewart* (2nd from right).