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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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# **Six Young Artists Speak Up About Kinship Care!**

**(Editor's Note: The six children winning the awards are from Yakima, Lake Tapps, Port Townsend, Olympia, Naches, and Roy Washington. To interview a winner, contact Lynn Urvina at 360-754-7629 or email [Lynn@FamilyESS.org](mailto:Lynn@FamilyESS.org))**

OLYMPIA – Families from across Washington gathered on **Tuesday, July 24, 2018, at 11:00 am** in the Governor's Mansion located near our State Capitol Building to honor six children who submitted winning essays for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual Voices of Children contest. Each of these young children and youth, ages 5 - 19 years old, created inspirational pieces of written and/or visual art about their experiences being raised by a relative caregiver. Each child submitting a winning entry will be awarded with a signed certificate, a \$100 check donated by Twin Star Credit Union, and an overnight stay at the Great Wolf Lodge for their family. Also honored this year was Mary Pleger, Kinship Navigator for South West Washington.

Most children find safety and comfort in the arms and care of their family, including grandparents and other relatives. For more than 2 million children in the USA, living with a grandparent, aunt, uncle, or other family member has become a permanent or long-term arrangement. When parents are unable or unwilling to care for their children, placing them with a relative caregiver can have some advantages. Kinship care reduces the trauma children experience when placed with strangers. It enhances children's sense of identity and self-esteem, continues connections children have to their siblings and other relatives, and strengthens the family's ability to give children the support they need. Kinship care often comes as a surprise to both the child and the relative caregiver.

What does it mean to a child who can't live with their parents to know he or she is safe, loved, and has a place to belong? Some answers to this question are offered in the winning entries submitted to the Kinship Voices of Children Contest. The contest was originally initiated by the Statewide Kinship Oversight Coalition, and is coordinated by Family Education and Support Services in collaboration with Aging and Long Term Support Administration/DSHS, Lewis-Mason-Thurston Area Agency on Aging, and Kinship Navigators and advocates across Washington State. The event is sponsored by TwinStar Credit Union in collaboration with the Great Wolf Lodge. Judges included Senator Curtis King, Cheryl Strange, Dana Phelps, Bill Moss, David Stillman, Sandi Davis, Amanda Stevens, Carrie Petit, Shelley Arneson, Olivia Zhou, and Bob Partlow.

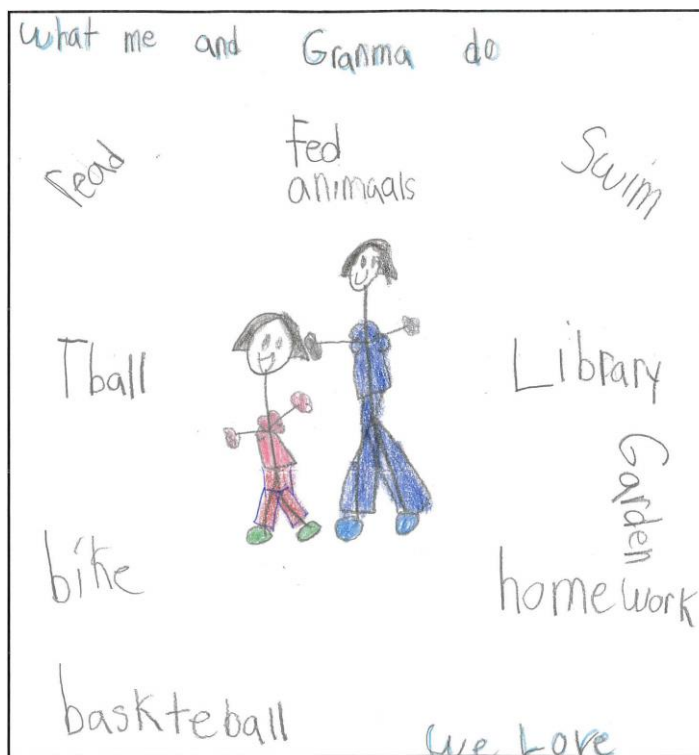
This year 42 entries were received. Some are funny, some serious or even sad, but all are sincere and offer testimony to the value, sense of family, and love each young artist experienced in living with a relative caregiver. The winning entries are:

- Kinsley, age 6 – Cusick, WA
- Izzy, age 7 -Yakima, WA
- Gracie, age 10 – Zillah, WA
- Ayzha, age 11 – Lake Tapps, WA
- Kemiya, age 13 - Richland, WA
- Xzavia, age 18 - Shelton, WA

You will find the winning entries listed below. For more information about this contest or to learn about Kinship Care Resources contact Lynn Urvin at 1-877-813-2828 or e-mail [Lynn@FamilyESS.org](mailto:Lynn@FamilyESS.org).




Excerpts from the winning entries are below:

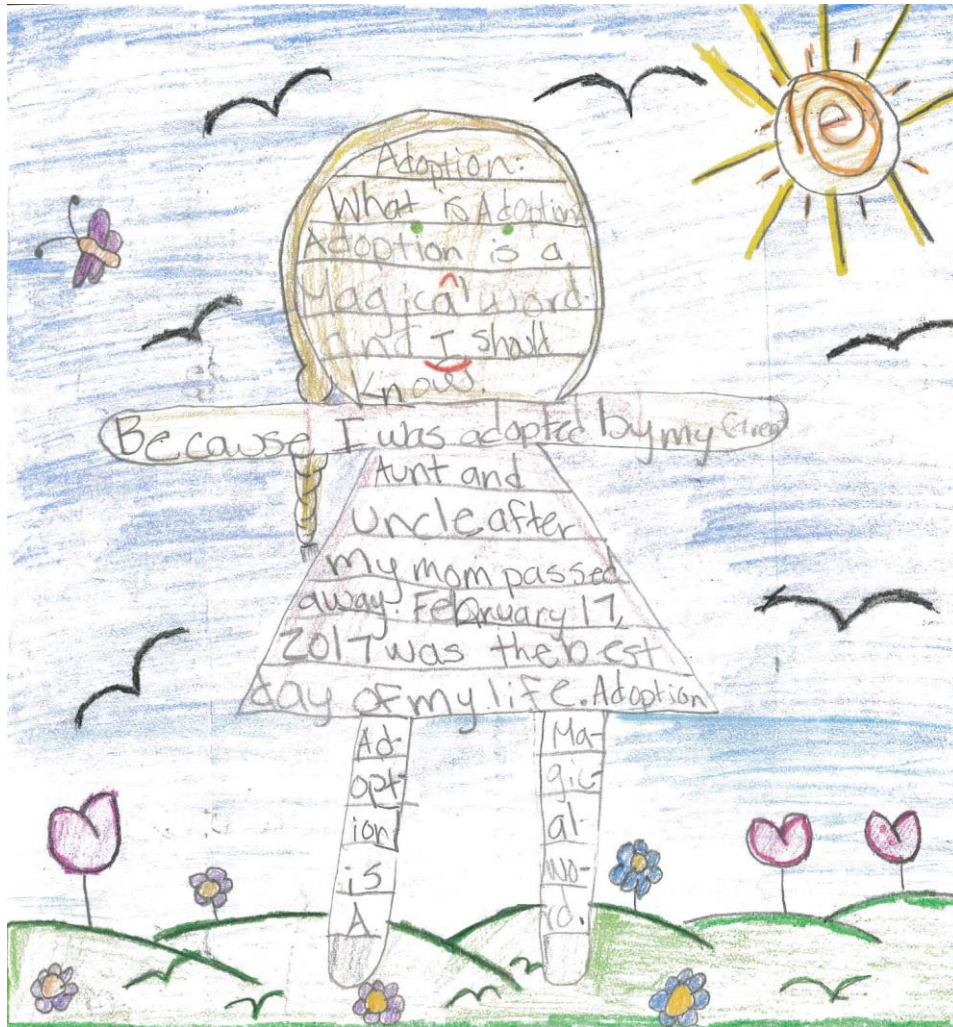


Kinsley, age 6

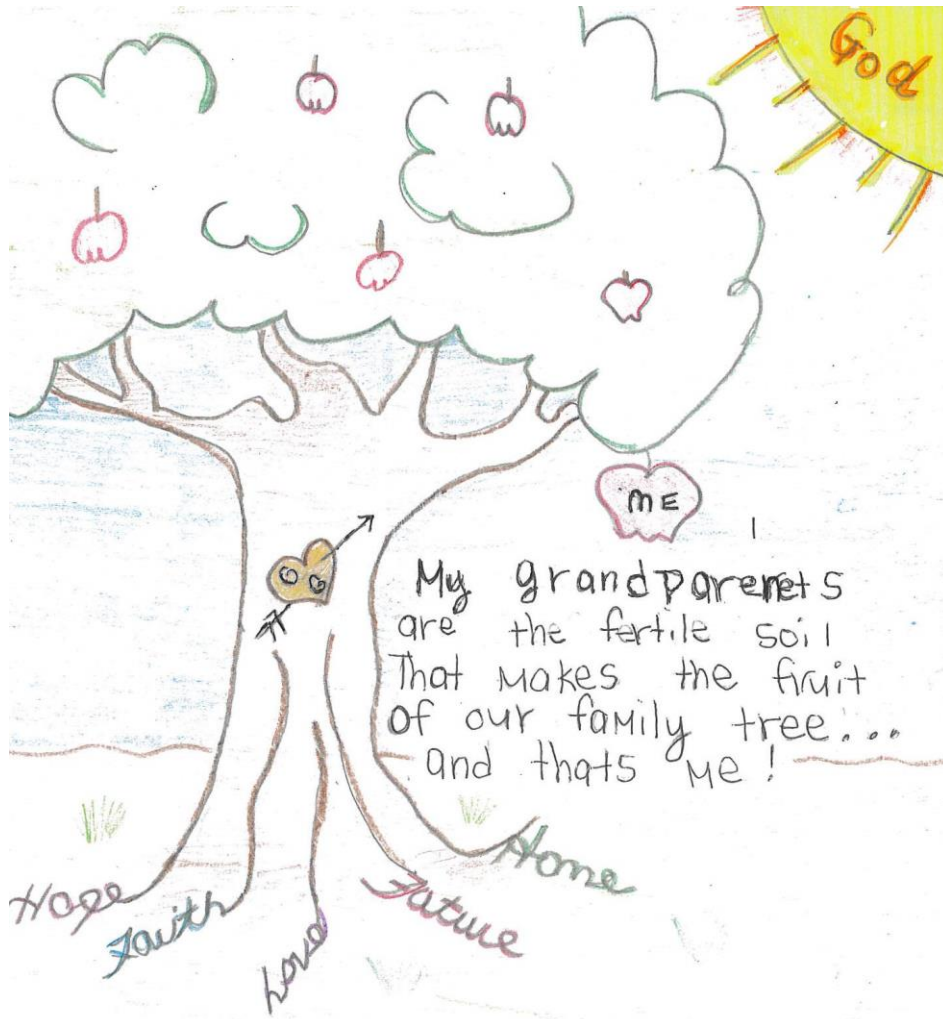
I love my family they  
gave me a home. They  
take good care of us  
like feeding us. I love  
my Grandma, Grandpa.



Izzy, age 7



Gracie, age 10



Ayzha, age 11

Living with a Grandparent is hard because you don't get to see your parents often. When you live with a grandparent you get to experience more on life skills. They help you with things just like parents do. They never leave your side and always make you happy when your sad. Grandparents are just like as if your living with your regular parents.

I still love my parents even tho thoughts happen in life that y our parents might regret. Life as a kid is hard even tho you know your parents aren't here to guid you through life as you go and at least I have someone who reminds me of my mom and not have her forgotten. The main person who has been here for me my who life is my Grandma Joanne. I appreciate and love her and she provides for us even if she don't have the money.

Kemiya, age 13

From the age of 3 to now 18 my grandma has been the one there for me when my parents were too unstable to do their job. She raised me on her own, which I admire. At first yes I was sad that my parents were not around but I soon realized that where I was, was best for me. My grandma has taught me many things such as responsibilities. I was taught to write with good handwriting and to turn everything in and ask when I needed help. She has taught me to cook and bake. I mean I'm not gourmet chef but I know the essentials which is very helpful. My grandma has impacted my life because she wanted to and because of that I am still in high school, graduating this year on time first in the family and attending college. I plan on being successful and being the best I can possibly be so, thank you grandma.

Xzavia, age 18

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