



## "How to Conduct... Program & Project" Series It's as Easy as 1, 2, 3!

Number 2

Adapted from Eastern Cobb County Council of PTAs

Honoring Our Heroes

# How to Conduct an Honoring Our Heroes Program



### *Step 1: Learn about the program.*

#### **What is the Honoring Our Heroes Program?**

*Honoring Our Heroes* is a writing contest that was developed in 1995 by the Eastern Cobb County Council of PTAs to cele-

brate Founders Day and to honor the Founding Heroines of PTA, Alice McLellan Birney, Phoebe Apperson Hearst, and Selena Sloan Butler. The program was designed to encourage children to discover "real life" heroes who have shown generosity, trust, persistence, dedication, leadership, creativity, caring, bravery, imagination, service, gentleness, courage or compassion. The creators of the program wanted the children to redefine the heroes they saw portrayed in the media – cartoon characters, superstar athletes, rock musicians, etc. – and to instead recognize the true heroes in their lives. These heroes might be a parent, grandparent, doctor, policeman, fireman, relative, teacher, or anyone else that has had an impact on the student's life, either directly or indirectly.

Students are encouraged to select a **Real Life Hero** who has shown one or more of the characteristics listed above. They are to write about their selected heroes according to the provided rules. Each PTA sets its own deadline and judges its own entries. The council then recognizes winners from each school at a reception. The winners, their heroes, and their parents are invited to the reception.

#### **The first Honoring Our Heroes reception**

It was cold, it was a Friday night and the creators of the program wondered if anyone would show up. They didn't need to worry ... heroes always show up. The council president was especially concerned about one of the principals who had been nominated by a student. This principal had had the worse week any principal could have. He probably wanted to go home this rainy miserable night ... but he came and stood with his student to be honored ... because he knew it was important to the child.

The winners, their heroes and the winners' parents were special guests at the reception. Principals, PTA/PTSA presidents, Cobb County administrators, past Eastern Cobb County Council presidents, and the state PTA president were invited to the reception. The program was also a celebration of our own founders. Alice McLellan Birney, Phoebe Apperson Hearst and Selena Sloan Butler were brought back from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to participate in the program. These great ladies introduced themselves to the audience and told everyone their dreams for children. A past ECCC president presented a Founders Day program highlighting memorable events from 1897 through 1995. The Sprayberry High School Show Choir performed a "Salute to Heroes" program and Mr. Mike Landess, news anchor for WXIA-TV was a guest speaker. Our three distinguished founders presented the winners with a blue button ribbon, a certificate of participation, two pizza coupons and an invitation to tour the Carter Center on a weekend in March. The heroes of our winners were invited to join them on the stage. The winners told the audience who their heroes were. Some of the heroes named by our winners were moms and dads, siblings, teachers, a few doctors, and a vet. Several best friends were also mentioned. One child thanked God for the adoptive parents who wanted him when no one else did. Others mentioned brothers or sisters who had struggled through serious illnesses. Light refreshments were served following the program. There were 70 winning entries that were displayed on two tables for our guests to read while they were enjoying the treats. Our program was mentioned on the 11:00 evening news on WXIA.

#### **More about the program**

One of the goals of Eastern Cobb County Council was to make the program easy to implement at the local level. They provided each local unit with a cover letter that explained the program and designed the rules sheet in an easy to read format. An entry form was included and certificate of participation was given for their use. Packages were sent to both PTA/PTSA presidents and principals. Each school was in charge of selecting winners of the writing contest (elementary schools – three entries, one for K-1, one for 2-3, and one for 4-5; middle schools – two entries; and high schools – two entries, one for 9-10 and one for 11-12). The winning entries were sent to council and were bound in a book. Copies went to all participating schools.

## Step 2: Plan and publicize the program.



### Organizing an Honoring Our Heroes Program

If your local unit is a member of a council, find out if the council plans to have a council-wide Honoring Our Heroes program. If so, follow their directions and rules.

If your local unit is not a member of a council or if your council does not plan to participate in the program, your local unit can still conduct the program. Either the regular program chairperson and committee or a special committee formed for that purpose can plan the Honoring Our Heroes program. If you choose a special committee, be sure they coordinate efforts with the regular program committee.

#### If conducting your own program:

- Decide how many winners you will have and how they will be honored.
- Choose a date and location for your recognition reception. If done at the local unit level, you may want to do this at your February meeting for your Founders Day program.
- Involve your principal/superintendent in the planning of your program. He/she may have resources available to assist you.
- Set the deadline date for entry submissions.
- Prepare a cover letter and rules/entry form. See sample rules below.
- Prepare judging criteria and select judges.
- Publicize the program in your newsletter, at PTA meetings, on bulletin boards, and in local newspapers. Ask your local newspaper to do a story on the winners and their real life heroes.
- Consider publishing the winning entries. If you have a large number of winners, you may want to publish their entries in bound books and give them to the winners and their heroes. If you have just a few winners, you may want to publish their entries in your newsletter – one per month.
- Plan your reception/program. Do you want to have entertainment? Who will provide it? Who will you invite to the program?
- What will be your budget for the program? Will you purchase awards or will donations be solicited? Will certificates be presented to winners and/or to all participants? Will refreshments be served? Will you need funds to publish the winning entries?

#### Sample Rules

**Theme:** Select a real life hero who has made a difference, and who has shown one or more of the following characteristics: generosity, trust, persistence, dedication, leadership, creativity, caring, bravery, imagination, service, generosity, courage or

compassion. Describe how this hero has had an impact on your life, directly or indirectly.

**Format:** Entries are limited to ONE 8-1/2 x 11 inch piece of paper. The student may use both sides of the paper. Entries may be handwritten or typed. Pictures drawn by the student may be included as part of the entry, but entries are to be judged primarily on content, not artistic ability.

**Identification:** Each entry must be accompanied by a completed entry form with phone number, grade and school. All entries will become the property of the council PTA.

**Judging:** Entries should be judged on the student's ability to articulate the qualities of the hero and to describe the manner in which the hero affected the student's life, either directly or indirectly. Each PTA will judge its own entries and submit entries as follows: ELEMENTARY – Total of 3 entries, one for K-1, one for 2-3, and one for 4-5; MIDDLE – Total of 2 entries; HIGH – Total of 2 entries, one for 9-10 and one for 11-12.

**Deadline:** Local PTAs will choose their own deadline. The local unit PTA should send winning entries to the council PTA by \_\_\_\_\_(date), *no later please*. Please send entries to \_\_\_\_\_.

The entries submitted will be published in a bound book. We will host an "Honoring Our Heroes" reception at \_\_\_\_\_(location) on \_\_\_\_\_(date). Special recognition will be awarded to students at this reception.

*Note: These are the rules used by the Eastern Cobb County Council PTA for their program. Rules may need to be revised for use at the local level.*

## Step 3: Conduct and evaluate the program.



After you've made your plans, prepare an assignment list and delegate the various tasks to committee members. If you are hosting a recognition reception, remember to invite principals, PTA/PTSA presidents, local administrators, past presidents, and any other special guests.

After the program has been completed, write a report for next year's committee. Be sure to include a timeline for the program, a budget, copies of all forms (rules, entry form, certificates, etc.) and suggestions for improvements.

Remember to send thank you notes to everyone involved – judges, businesses that made donations, etc.

*Special thanks to the Eastern Cobb County Council of PTAs for developing the Honoring Our Heroes program and sharing it with the Georgia PTA!*

## Sample Certificates

Below are samples of certificates for participants and for the winners' heroes. You may also want to produce a winner's certificate, which could be the same as the participant's certificate – just change the word “participant” to “winner”.

<h1>Honoring Our Heroes</h1> <h2>Eastern Cobb County Council PTA</h2>		
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<b>Is hereby recognized as a participant in the “Honoring Our Heroes” Writing Contest for The Eastern Cobb County Council PTA</b>		
February 17, 2002		_____ Council President

<h1>Honoring Our Heroes</h1>		
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<b>Hero</b>		
<b>You are hereby recognized as a winner's hero in the Founders' day “heroes” Essay contest for the Eastern Cobb County Council PTA</b>		
February 17, 2002		_____ Council President

**Heroes**  
*by Mahalo*

They say there are no heroes any more. But they're there. Walk down any street in any town and you will find them. They come in all shapes and sizes from all races and all walks of life. They aren't larger than life, but they are larger than their own lives. Their names aren't famous, but their virtues are. Hard work. Common sense. An unshakeable belief in themselves. Heroes – every one of them.

They're the mothers and fathers who work and strive, in sometimes boring jobs, to provide for their families and keep them headed in the right direction intellectually, spiritually, and physically.

They're parents like mine and the Clarks, Greens, and Purcells who devote countless after work hours to their children's successes (and failures) in sports, dance, scouts and endless other activities – many times to the detriment of their own interests.

They're the handicapped who preserve and smile in the face of unfair stereotypes and unwanted sympathy from strangers (and even well meaning loved ones) when all they want is to be treated as equals.

They're the young and the old fighting serious and painful illnesses with courage and honor when it would be easier to just give up.

They're the doctors and nurses who smile and give encouragement to patients in the face of sometimes unbeatable odds without concerns for themselves.

They're the policemen, firemen, teachers, social workers, and countless others in countless jobs who perform their services everyday without concern for personal recognition – only the satisfaction of doing their jobs well.

They're the children who overcome obstacles of race, poverty, and prejudice to become intelligent, caring individuals and maybe even tomorrow's leaders.

***IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A HERO, JUST LOOK AROUND.***



***BE SOMEBODY'S  
HERO TODAY!***