

ACHMI Awards & Recognition

"Best Marriage I Know" Eighth Grade Essay Contest Winners

Winners listed by congressional districts:

District 1 - Eric Gist

Teacher: Sequau Malone • **School:** Calloway Smith Middle School

Principal: Dorothy H. Robinson-Walton • **Featured Couple:** Louis & Earnestine Rivers (Grandparents)

"I have learned so many things from them [my grandparents]...I learned by example that you have to make time for your husband or wife. You have to do nice things and say nice things to them. You have to be respectful...I also know that humor is important in keeping a marriage strong...My grandmother said, "Eric, Jehovah God forgives me for my mistakes, so I might as well forgive your granddad."

District 2 - Katie Clark • **Teacher:** April Wells • **School:** Marbury High School • **Principal:** Billy Hollon • **Featured Couple:** Bill & Cindy Walker (Neighbors)

"My parents are divorced, but by watching this family I've learned what a strong marriage looks like. It isn't always pretty. Families fight (or as the Walkers say, 'have colorful discussions') but fighting isn't always bad. Sometimes everyone needs to have a chance to voice their opinion and then good families, like the Walkers, listen to each other and work out a solution to the problem."

District 3 - Luke Holt • **Teacher:** Barbara Wynn • **School:** Clay County School • **Principal:** Billy Walker • **Featured Couple:** Coy & Sybil Bolton (Grandparents)

"My PawPaw took care of MawMaw for the next five and a half months but it wasn't unusual for him because he had always taken good care of her. When MawMaw was on her deathbed, my PawPaw asked her to re-marry him as a vow to love her forever. He bought her a new wedding ring and she accepted his proposal. It was a great example to me of loving someone 'in sickness and in health.'"

District 4 - Hunter Cunningham • **Teacher:** Rhonda Lindley • **School:** Vernon Intermediate School

Principal: Vance Herron • **Featured Couple:** Tommy & Jennifer Cunningham (Parents)

"The love and compassion that my parents have for each other play an important role in keeping their marriage strong, and the special time that they set aside for each other helps them to keep the romance alive. ...Not only do my parents think it is important to do things as a couple, they also feel that it is essential to do things as individuals and as a family. ...Knowing that my mom and dad care so much for each other makes my siblings and me feel loved and safe."

District 5 - Corey Collier • **Teacher:** Jennifer Talton • **Guidance Teacher:** Betsy Koger • **School:** Madison County Elementary

Principal: Lizabeth Meador • **Featured Couple:** Corey & Patty Collier (Parents)

"Their lives have never been easy nor one of luxury, but none of that matters. All that seems to matter is that they have each other's love. They have worked hard to create a home with two loving parents for me and my brother. Everything they do, they do for each other and for us to make our lives better. I can't think of any better way to honor their sixteenth wedding anniversary than by telling everyone that they definitely have the 'best marriage that I know.'"

District 6 - Hannah Huguley • **Teacher:** Sheryl Spivey • **School:** Clay-Chalkville Middle School

Principal: Maurice Williams • **Featured Couple:** Phil & Lou Neel (Grandparents)

"What I see the most from my grandparents is that they try to love each other with all their hearts, 100%. They don't just give 50/50 and meet in the middle. They each put the other one first. Phil and Lou Neel may have started out as an ordinary couple, but now they have an extraordinary marriage."

District 7 - Candice Elliott • **Teacher:** Mashad Kimber • **School:** Carver Middle School

Principal: Garry Rice • **Featured Couple:** Joe & Mary Hall (Aunt and Uncle)

"What makes this marriage great is that I often see my Uncle Joe and Aunt Mary communicating about things that need to be done, things that should have been done, how they feel about certain things, and about how to take care of and provide a good life for me since the death of both my mother and grandmother, whom I loved dearly. A husband and wife should be able to peacefully discuss how they are feeling, especially about important things, and things that will have an affect on all of us."

To read each winner's full essay, visit the ACHMI Web site at www.alabamamarriage.org/contest.php

State Award Winners



Marian Loftin Alabama Child Champion Lifetime Achievement Award

Marian Loftin is the former Director of the Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention, which oversees the Children's Trust Fund, funding 200 community-based prevention programs. After 17 years as an

elementary classroom teacher, Mrs. Loftin worked in government relations for the University of Alabama for 13 years. She served on the founding boards of the Alfred Saliba Family Services Center of Dothan, the first "one stop" for human services in Alabama, and the Southeast Alabama Child Advocacy Center. Ms. Loftin received the National Health and Human Services Commissioners Award in 2007 for her work in Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention for Alabama. In 2008 the National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds recognized her with the Commitment to Service Award. Marian Loftin has 4 children and 6 Grandchildren. Her husband of 46 years, Jim Loftin, is deceased.



Ed Brown Alabama Community Impact Award

Ed Brown is a prior Air Force commander, an instructor of Business and Economics, and a doctoral student at Alabama State University, soon to complete his dissertation in Education, Leadership, Policy and Law. He is the Chair of the

100 Black Men of America National Educational Committee, an active Board member of Partners In Education, the CEO of the 100 Black Men of Montgomery Chapter and a National Evaluator for the 100 and other non-profit organizations. He is the 2006 recipient of the National 100 Black Men Mentor of the Year award, the 2007 recipient of The Emancipation Association Exemplary Service award, Chairman of the Parent, Youth, Couples, and Family Training Institute, a certified family and parent educator, member of the National Effective Parenting Initiative, a Grandfather of 6, the father of two young ladies and two young men, and the husband of one beautiful wife.