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Young Illness Survivors' Essay Submissions Sought for André Sobel Award

February 1, 2010

Los Angeles--The André Sobel River of Life Foundation is seeking submissions for the ninth annual André Sobel Award, an essay contest for survivors of pediatric cancer or other serious illnesses. A \$5,000 cash award will be presented to the first place winner, with additional prizes going to second and third place winners. Participants must be between the ages of 12 and 21. This year, participants are asked to respond to the topic:

“Things I’ve needed to tell you: My experience facing illness and how it has changed me.”

Writers also have the option to submit an essay in conjunction with a companion essay, written by a close friend or relative.

The André Sobel award was established to honor young survivors of a catastrophic illness and to enable them to fulfill a cherished desire as they proceed with their lives in a way that was not possible for André. The award is in celebration of André’s life that ended prematurely, one year after being diagnosed with a brain tumor at 17 years old. Shortly after his death, the family established the André Sobel River of Life Foundation to honor him through the work of the foundation. His mother, Valerie, serves as the Foundation’s president. About the essay contest, Ms. Sobel says, “This award celebrates survivors and the courage of those who speak openly about their journey.”

Submissions will be accepted until April 1 and winners will be notified by July, 1 2010. Information and guidelines are available online at: <http://andriveroflife.org/participate/award/>. Last year’s winning essays were chosen by a panel that included Dr. Deepak Chopra, adolescent/teenage psychiatrist Dr. Esteban Furtés, author Lisa See, filmmaker Tatiana von Furstenberg, and artist Patience Brewster. The 2010 award is sponsored by Varian Medical Systems.

About the Andre Sobel River of Life Foundation

The Andre Sobel River of Life Foundation (a 501(c)(3) public charity) provides emergency assistance within 24 hours to single caregivers of children with catastrophic or life threatening illnesses who face financial crises. Working in partnership with 12 pediatric hospitals nationally, ASRL has helped over 10,300 family members. Without ASRL’s support, many children with life threatening illnesses would be facing pain, treatments, fear, and at times, even their death, without a parent by their side.

“When Compassion can’t wait.”

www.andriveroflife.org

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ABOUT

Andre Sobel was a remarkable young man who had natural dignity, a promising future and an unconventional sense of humor. Andre's young life ended just one year after he was diagnosed with a brain tumor. He was 19. He was the beloved son of Erwin and Valerie Sobel and brother to Simone.

Andre was well traveled, often seeking destinations that were frequented by his favorite authors, like Samuel Beckett, St. Augustine and Franz Kafka. The books Andre treasured were filled with his margin comments, underlinings and asterisks, the stamp of his rich intellectual curiosity. But the finest of all his gifts were his qualities of mercy and compassion.

To honor Andre, and out of their deep love and respect for him, his family established the Andre Sobel River of Life Foundation and shortly thereafter the Andre Sobel Essay Award. The purpose of this competition is to honor the young survivors of a catastrophic illness. If you consider yourself to be a "survivor," we celebrate with you and look forward to your submission.

This year, several cash awards will be granted; the first place winner will receive a \$5,000 cash prize. Smaller cash prizes will be awarded to the runner-ups, and to a participating Companion Writer of any of these winners. The cash award can be used in any way the recipient chooses.

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TOPIC

**“Things I’ve needed to tell you:
My experience facing illness and how it has changed me.”**

Ideas to stimulate your thinking:

- ✓ Write about how a relationship was challenged, changed or improved by your experience facing a life-threatening illness.
- ✓ What did you find hardest to talk about during your illness and why? What was left unsaid that you wish you could have discussed with a family member or friend during that time? What could others have said or done that would have helped you?
- ✓ Do you live your life differently now that you have experienced your illness? Do you think, behave, act and interact differently? How so?
- ✓ What did you learn about relationships from your journey that could help others who have been newly diagnosed with a life-threatening illness?

Be as serious, humorous, chatty or formal as you want. Be comfortable and “real.” It is a guarantee that YOUR TRUTH is exactly what someone else is craving to hear!

*If you are a participating “companion writer”, the above essay dialogue ideas still apply, except tell us about how YOU experienced the relationship. Of course, you will be referring to “my friend’s illness” and what your struggles and insights were.

For the Survivor’s Companion if the applicant opts to participate in the Companion Writer Option:

“Things I’ve needed to tell you: Your experience facing illness and how it has changed me.”