

# STRONG MEN & WOMEN



IN VIRGINIA HISTORY

## 2014 STUDENT WRITING CONTEST

Western Region Essay Winner

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No parent should have to be told that their child is not coming home, but last year the parents of two friends got that phone call. As a volunteer firefighter and emergency medical technician, the worst traffic accidents I've seen are those where individuals are hurt or killed as a result of distracted driving. I believe that distracted driving is keeping my local community from reaching its full potential.

I became a volunteer emergency services provider to give back to my neighbors and to make an influential difference within my community. I had no idea how these experiences would impact my perception of the world.

A year ago I was on the responding unit to a traffic crash that would result in the death of two friends. I had been on traffic accidents before, but none of this nature. I had witnessed the devastating loss of two peers, experienced the disbelief of friends and family members, and grieved with my community. When the tears dried, I became determined that a loss of this nature was unacceptable. I realized that I must advocate against distracted driving to prevent future tragedies from occurring within my community.

After this experience, I have sought to inform community members that anytime we get behind the wheel of a vehicle, it could be our last time if we are distracted while driving. Within my volunteer agency, I would like to begin a public outreach campaign to share the devastating story of my two friends and discuss how we can all take steps to eliminate distractions. This accident robbed my neighborhood of two young lives, crippling the potential of the community. I believe that placing increased emphasis on potential dangers could save many lives in my community. The loss of my friends will never go in vain, as my goal is to help others so that they never have to go through what my community experienced.

Like the "fighting editor," John Mitchell, Jr., I want to better my community by actively promoting practices that fail to be commonplace. This will help my community to reach its full potential. I hope that no other parents in my community will ever have to hear that their child is not coming home.

