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NEWS RELEASE

FROM JIMMY CARTER TO BOB DYLAN, HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WRITE ABOUT LEADERS WITH VIRTUE

DAYTON, Ohio — Jimmy Carter, Gandhi, Elizabeth Dole — even Bob Dylan — inspired area high school students to write about leaders with virtue.

But it was a simple, moving essay by a Vandalia-Butler High School student about her father as “a leader in everyday life” that captured top honors in the University of Dayton’s first Leadership with Virtue essay contest, which attracted more than 100 entries.

“When I was in high school, I wouldn’t have written about my parents. Now, of course, I would, but high school students are full of rebellion. The judges were surprised at the number of essays that described parents or other relatives,” said contest coordinator Laura Elizabeth, instructor of English at UD and an Oakwood High School English teacher.

Elizabeth Davis, a senior at Vandalia-Butler High School, won \$500 for a piece about how her father, Tim Davis, leads through example. “In the world today, numerous people are identified as leaders through elections, economic success, tyranny or some other means,” she wrote. “There are many more who are deemed leaders through their lifestyle. It is not through flamboyance or flaunting that this role is achieved, but rather through the character and integrity they demonstrate.”

The essay, which Elizabeth described as having “the right balance of emotion, detail and good organization,” described how Davis’ father effectively manages a diverse workplace at Montgomery County Printing Services, “transforms himself into an eager and attentive listener” when he teaches children about religion and instills strong values in his own children.

“I was very surprised and thrilled to win,” Davis said. “I chose my dad because I really respect him as a leader and my father. He has very strong moral values. He tries to lead by example and is consistent and fair in everything he does.”

Rajeev K. Sinha, a senior at West Carrollton High School, took second-place honors and a

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\$250 prize for an essay about Mohandas Gandhi, India's "passionate advocate of civil rights." Emily Green, a freshman at Oakwood High School, captured third place and won \$100 for an essay about Civil War general Robert E. Lee. "I admire Lee the most because of his strength in character, his ability to inspire loyalty and his capability to accept defeat with dignity and grace," she wrote.

One other essay moved Elizabeth so much that the University of Dayton has given it an honorable mention. Danijela Tomic, a sophomore at Oakwood High School who emigrated to the U.S. from a refugee camp in the former Yugoslavia before Thanksgiving, wrote in broken English about how the Rev. David Frazer at Normandy United Methodist Church helps people who need a helping hand — whether it's money, dinner or a place to live. The church sponsored the Serbian family's move to the U.S. Elizabeth assigned the paper to Tomic and her classmates as an English class project.

"I asked my students not to write papers about well-known leaders like the Pope. He's already passed the selection process for leadership with virtue. I encouraged them to pick someone unusual and be persuasive in their arguments," Elizabeth said. "A lot of them wrote about a priest, a youth leader, a teacher or a coach — someone who reached out to them.

"There were so many essays that were so full of heart that it was hard for the judges to decide," she said. "Many of the students had not thought about people in their lives who lead with virtue. We got discussion going on the topic."

The essay contest was sponsored by the University of Dayton's National Alumni Association in conjunction with its first Leadership with Virtue Award and Symposium. Elizabeth Dole, known for her extensive public service that has included heading the American Red Cross, will be in Dayton at 7 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 10, at the University of Dayton's Kennedy Union to accept the school's first Leadership with Virtue award. The essay winners will be recognized at the dinner honoring Dole. A daylong symposium for business leaders will be held in conjunction with the banquet on Friday, Feb. 11, in Kennedy Union.

Both events are part of a series of events celebrating UD's sesquicentennial. For more information, visit www.udayton.edu/leadershipwithvirtue/ or call (937) 229-3299. A limited number of tickets are still available for the dinner honoring Dole and the symposium.

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For media interviews or copies of the essays, contact **Laura Elizabeth** at (937) 229-3423 or (937) 298-5266 and **Joan Swedlund**, project director for the Leadership with Virtue events, at (937) 229-3262. **Elizabeth Davis** can be reached at (937) 898-1217.