LIONS CLUBS OF TEXAS MD-2

OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH CONTESTS

2027 OUTSTANDING YOUTH AWARD

Contest Rules

"Can AI Technology Make Us More Human?"

1. Topic Description

Artificial intelligence is changing how we learn, communicate, work, and solve problems. Could AI strengthen the qualities that make us human—compassion, creativity, understanding, and service—or might over-reliance on it weaken human connection? Consider how AI can improve lives and communities, as well as concerns such as misinformation, privacy, unequal access, and the loss of independent thought.

Using research, examples, or personal observations, explain how youth and community leaders can use AI responsibly while protecting human dignity and empathy. Ultimately, answer: **Can AI make us more human, and what choices must we make to ensure that it does?** Responses should demonstrate critical thinking, originality, leadership, and commitment to service.

2. Contest Rules

Contestants will be evaluated based on a 750- to 1,000-word essay, a biographical information statement, community service experience, leadership experience and participation information, three letters of recommendation, their high school GPA, and an interview.

Contestants should present thoughtful, well-researched perspectives, demonstrating both knowledge and integrity in their submissions. In addition to the essay, participants must provide supporting documentation that highlights personal achievements, leadership experiences, and a commitment to community service. The judging process emphasizes not only academic merit but also qualities of character and citizenship.

a. All MD-2 contests will be conducted in English via Zoom.
b. The title of an essay cannot be changed or modified.
c. The order of appearance shall be determined by the State Opportunities for Youth Chair.
d. Contestants are not required to provide a self-introduction. Instead, they should simply state their name, and the interview can proceed.
e. Judges shall be persons who are knowledgeable about community service and high-school-level leadership and have expertise in a relevant field (such as IT).
f. The following criteria shall be used for judging the contestant:
    A. Fifteen percent (15%) – A 750- to 1,000-word essay and speech presentation on "**Can AI Technology Make Us More Human?**" The essay should include a bibliography (not part of the essay's word count).
    ii. Five percent (5%) — Grade point average from school transcript.
    iii. Fifteen percent (15%) — Three letters of recommendation.

iv. Thirty-five percent (35%) — Biographical information statement, community service, leadership experience/participation information.
v. Thirty percent (30%) — Personal interview. The personal interview may include matters on current local, state, national, or worldwide events.

3. Awards

a. The first-place winner will receive a $3,000.00 scholarship.
b. The second-place winner will receive a $2,000.00 scholarship.
c. The third-place winner will receive a $1,000.00 scholarship.
d. To collect the scholarship award, the contestant must complete the following process:
    i. The contestant must complete the "Scholarship Request Form" along with proof of registration information from a university, college, junior college, or vocational school.
    ii. The contestant must send the payment request form to the State Office along with any supplemental information needed by the institution (i.e., scholarship forms, etc.) to:

Lions of Texas
3301 Legion Dr.
Kerrville, TX 78028
(830) 257-6557
lionsstateoffice@texaslions.org

e. The scholarship award disbursement will be made directly to the scholarship/financial aid office of the designated school.
f. The scholarship awards must be collected no later than two years following the recipient's graduation from high school.

4. Rules of Eligibility for Contestants

a. A district may sponsor no more than one contestant in each contest by submitting a completed entry application (containing all requested signatures), associated documents, and the entry fee to the MD-2 Contest Chairperson prior to the entry deadline.
b. A false statement on the entry application or associated documents, or any violation of contest rules, shall result in the contestant's disqualification and forfeiture of the entry fee.
c. There shall be no refund of any entry fee.
d. Each contestant shall be the first-place winner in the district contest during the current Lions' year.
    i. If a district's first-place winner cannot compete in the MD-2 contest, the first alternate may take their place. Once approved by the MD-2 State Contest Chair, the alternate can enter using the original contestant's paid application fee.
    ii. If a district has only one contestant, the district may sponsor the contestant in the MD-2 Opportunities for Youth Contest.
e. Each contestant must be, or must have been, regularly enrolled in a Texas public high school or a comparable educational program.
f. Each contestant must be a junior or senior at the time of the MD-2 contest.

5. Basic Guidelines for Virtual Speech Contest

Contestants must participate in the **Orientation** session and the contest using **online** live audio and video communication tools.

a. Contestants must have a computer or access to one with a Wi-Fi connection, a webcam, and a microphone to ensure that their gestures and facial expressions are captured by the camera and their voice is clearly recorded by the microphone while they deliver their speech.
b. Contestants will be sent an email invitation by the State Contest Chair to participate in the contest and be ready at their designated time.
c. Contestants must wear business attire for the online contest.
d. Contestants' speaking areas must be free of distractions and noise. If necessary, the State Contest Chair will advise contestants about additional lighting needs.
e. Each contestant's speaking area should provide an unobstructed view of the contestant while ensuring high-quality audio during the presentation.
f. Once contestants present their essay or speech, they will be placed in a waiting room until the conclusion of the contest.
g. If technology fails during the contest and the State Contest Chair determines that the contest can no longer continue, the State Contest Chair may pause the contest until the technology issue is resolved. A contestant may resume his or her speech or essay at the point at which the technology failed.
h. After the contest has concluded and the results have been determined, all contestants will be invited to rejoin the online contest room, at which time the first-, second-, and third-place winners will be announced by the State Contest Coordinator.

6. Responsibilities of Contestants

a. Each contestant shall be required to submit the following to his or her sponsoring Lions Club and/or district by **email**:
    i. Complete and sign the *State Contest Application* (no handwritten applications will be accepted) and pay any applicable application fee.
    ii. Provide a color, high-quality, wallet- or passport-size photo. Photos that do not meet this requirement will not be included in the contest souvenir booklet.
    iii. A 750- to 1,000-word essay with the word count on the last page, typed in Times New Roman, 12-point size, double-spaced. Include a bibliography, formatted in APA style, that is not part of the essay's word count. The essay may be used for judging, publications, and contest promotion. Essay changes are **not permitted** once received by the State Contest Coordinator.
    iv. Provide a biographical information statement describing community service and leadership experience/participation, typed in the same style as the essay.

    Send these documents by mail to the sponsoring Lions club and/or district:
    v. Three (3) letters of recommendation.
    vi. One (1) certified high school transcript and 3 copies.

b. It is mandatory for all contestants to attend the **Orientation** session via Zoom on **Saturday, May 1, 2027.**

c. The **contest** will be held on **Saturday, May 8, 2027, at times set forth by the** State Contest Chair.
d. Contestants, parents, and sponsoring Lions club contact persons will receive instructions for the online contest by email.
e. After the contest has concluded and the results have been determined, all contestants will be invited to rejoin the online contest room, at which time the first-, second-, and third-place winners will be announced by the State Contest Coordinator.
f. Note for the first-place winner:
    i. All first-place winners must attend the Opportunities for Youth Luncheon at **Lions Clubs of Texas MD-2 State Convention on May 22, 2027, in Beaumont, Texas, and must present their winning entry, except** as provided in Item **6.f.iii**. Additionally, upon request, the first-place winner must participate in Lions MD-2 events and activities during the period from immediately after the contest until the end of the following year's contest.
    ii. Send the following forms by **mail** to the State Contest Coordinator, **as soon as the contest winner is announced and at least one week before attending the convention:**
        1. Completed and signed "*Contestant Code of Conduct*" and "*Chaperone Guidelines*" forms.
        2. A completed and signed "*Medical Power of Attorney*" designating the contestant's chaperone as the Primary Responsible Party and the State Contest Chair as the Secondary Responsible Party.
    iii. A first-place winner who is unable to attend due to a medical or family emergency, graduation, school-related conflict, or other circumstance approved by the State Contest Coordinator may request an alternative presentation method. The request must be submitted in writing to the State Contest Coordinator at least 10 days before the luncheon and must receive written approval before the luncheon. Failure to attend or obtain approval for an alternative presentation shall result in **forfeiture** of the scholarship award.
g. All contestants will be recognized and receive a certificate of participation.
h. In addition to scholarship awards, winning contestants will receive an award and a winner's certificate.

7. Responsibilities of the Sponsoring District

a. The $250 contest application fee per contestant shall be paid by check (payable to '**Texas State Convention Fund**') or electronically via PayPal before submitting the application packet.
    i. If the application fee is paid electronically, a copy of the PayPal payment receipt shall be included in the application packet.
    ii. If paying by check, make the check payable to the "**Texas State Convention Fund**." Include a copy of the check in the application packet, and mail the original check to the State Contest Coordinator.
b. The sponsoring district must complete the "*District Responsibilities Checklist*" form and include it with the final contestant's application packet and all signed forms.

c. The sponsoring district must ensure that all documents listed on **6.a.i. to iv.** are completed and signed. **Email** the application packet along with proof of payment and the form on **7.b.** to the State Contest Coordinator. The **deadline** to send these documents is **Monday, April 19, 2027.**

d. The sponsoring district must ensure that all documents listed on **6.a.v.** and **vi.** and a completed form on **7.b.** are sent by **mail** to the State Contest Coordinator. These documents must be **postmarked by Monday, April 19, 2027.**

e. The sponsoring district **must promptly** send by **mail** the winning contestant's completed and signed "*Contestant Code of Conduct*," "*Chaperone Guidelines,*" and "*Medical Power of Attorney*" forms identified in **6.f.ii.1 and 2** to the State Contest Coordinator **as soon as** the contest winners are announced before the State Convention.

8. Chaperone/Sponsoring Club and/or District Responsibilities

a. All first-place winners **must** attend the **Opportunities for Youth Luncheon** at the **Lions Clubs of Texas MD-2 Convention, Saturday, May 22, 2027, in Beaumont, Texas, and must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or designated chaperone from their sponsoring club or district to the convention.**

b. The sponsoring club or district shall be responsible for all contestant expenses.

c. Parents, guardians, or designated chaperones must adhere to the requirements outlined in the Texas Lions Clubs MD-2 Opportunities for Youth contests' *'Contestant Code of Conduct'* and '*Chaperone Guidelines*.*'*

9. State Contest Coordinator Contact Information:

IPDG Dr. Aaron Urias
aaron.urias@yahoo.com
(832) 444-2220
5009 Shadybrook Rd.
Midland, TX79705

MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR PAYMENT RECEIPT/COPY WITH YOUR PACKET

Tap each line to get the document:

Contest Application and District Responsibilities Checklist
Contestant Code of Conduct
Chaperone Guidelines
Medical Power of Attorney