

Acton teen wins top place in Optimists' essay contest

By **FRANCES NIBLOCK**
The New Tanner

An Acton teen's essay on her unconditional love for her late, alcoholic father is the first place winner in the senior division of the

Georgetown Optimist's Laws of Life contest.

The contest, based on a character building program of the U.S. - based Templeton Foundation, recognizes the importance of personal moral values by awarding prizes to high school students for writing 500 -word essays on the spiritual "laws of life" they have identified through religious teachings or their own personal experience.

Although a scheduling problem prevented Georgetown students from taking part in this year's event, 153 Acton area students entered essays which Optimist past-president Rick Chambers said were judged

on the impact of their message.

"The contest is to get the kids discussing with themselves and hopefully their parents, which ideals are important to them," Chambers, who said it was "fascinating and heart-warming" to read through the submissions which highlighted values like optimism, self-control, humility and forgiveness.

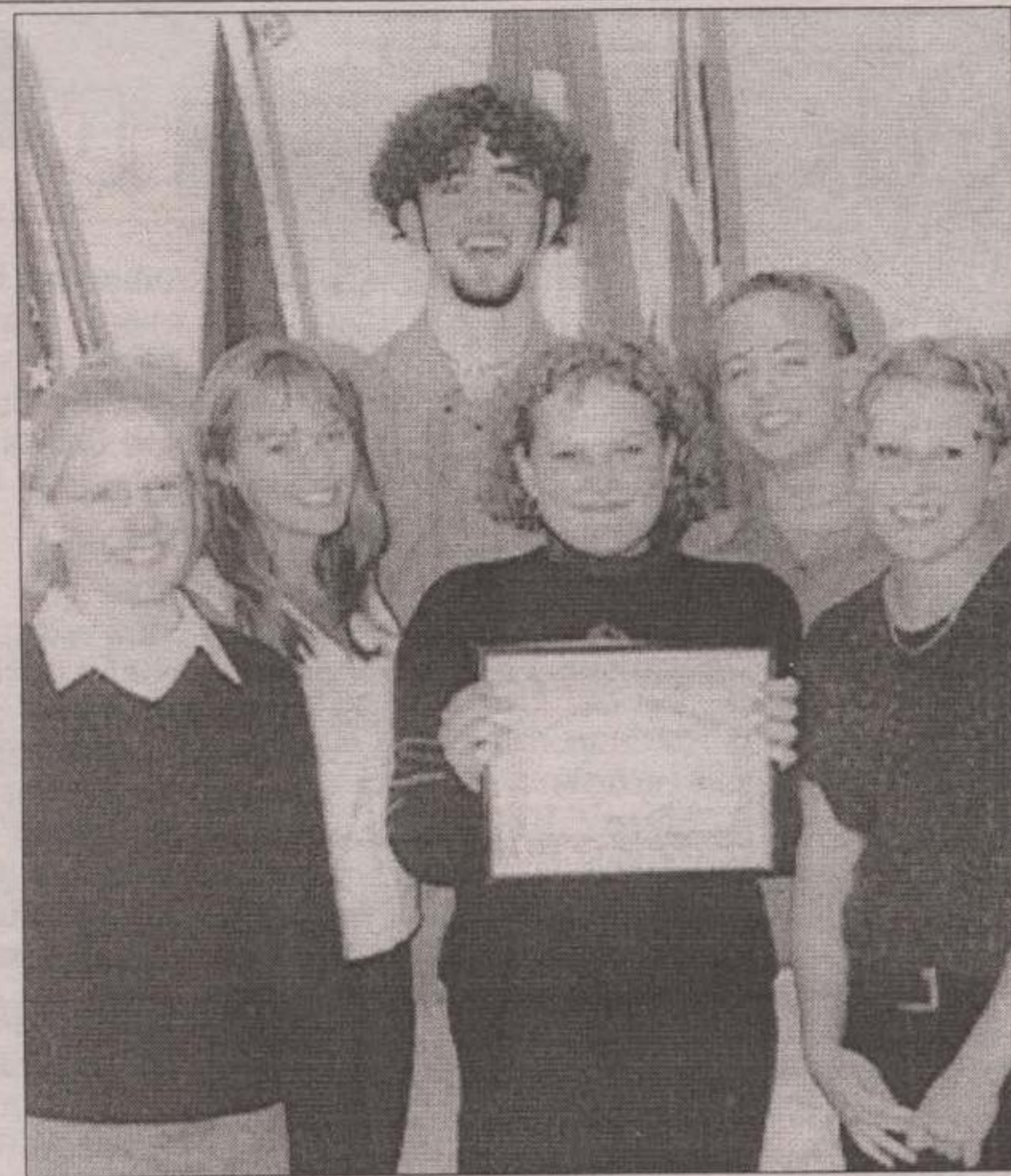
Melissa Young, a 17-year-old OAC student at Acton High, was surprised that her essay won. The project was an English class assignment that the students could submit, if they wished.

"It (the essay) was a good way for me to write out my feelings. My essay really wasn't about one law of life, it was about my dad who had died and how I was able to

love and respect him, despite the problems we had to go through," Young said, adding she might not have made the essay so personal if she thought she'd win.

Essay contest winners receive prizes of cash and gift certificates from Maple Lodge Farms and their essays are published in a book that is distributed to local doctors and dentist offices and the libraries. The winners received award certificates from the Optimist Club on Tuesday. The winners include:

Senior
1st - Melissa Young
2nd - Devon Lambert
3rd - Jeff Birrell
Junior
1st - Tom Wilson
2nd - Jackie Christie
3rd - Danielle Jensen



ESSAY WINNERS: The winners of the Georgetown Optimists' Laws of Life essay contest received their awards last Tuesday. The Acton area winners include, (front, left to right): Devon Lambert, Melissa Young, Jackie Christie and Danielle Jensen. Back: Jeff Birrell and Tom Wilson. - Frances Niblock photo

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OSTEOPOROSIS SCREENING: Dr. Barbara Jeans M.Sc. D.C.

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- Family history of osteoporosis?
- Sedentary lifestyle? • Taking medication for thyroid or steroid-based drugs for asthma?

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Daughter learned from father

The following is Melissa Young's winning essay.

By **Melissa Young**

As I sat down to put pen to paper, many ideas rushed through my mind. There are so many events and individuals that shaped the person I am today. Which one do I choose? After much deliberation, I decided to write about my Dad who passed away last year. I thought and thought about two laws of life that he abided by. Thinking about him in this way made me realize how much he changed my life.

My Dad was born into an alcoholic family. Despite his awareness of the problems caused by alcohol, the disease eventually took its toll over him. It was very difficult for me to see my father lost in a world of turmoil. He affected

every aspect of my life from young child to teenager. So many times I sat at his side as he fought for his life in the hospital. He was definitely a fighter, but you can only fight for so long. When he died my life changed so much. How could a father be taken from his family?

From the day he died until now I've tried to put him on a pedestal. I felt I needed to forget the pain he caused me. I wanted to ease the loss by believing he had been perfect. Sitting down and writing my thoughts made me realize I didn't necessarily admire him, I just loved him. I finally allowed myself to understand that what I was feeling was understandable. I no longer had to mask the problems that

had formed between us during his short life. I realized I could just love him, not for the person I wanted him to be but for the father he was. I can now look at the past and remember the good times, but I no longer have to shut out the bad ones.

The struggles that my family faced forced me to learn how to cope with problems. My Dad left me to ponder what life is really about. He taught me how to survive in an often times, cruel world. Somehow he left me with the strength that he never had.

I will always be grateful to him for making me such a strong individual. He was my dad and I have always loved him with all my heart. Even though he has been gone from my life for over a year I'm just realizing what he gave to me. I understand that he was only human, as am I. Despite the flaws that he had, he taught me that inner strength comes with the knowledge that understanding and caring are the unconditional qualities of love.

IODE

By **DOT NORTON**

Rosealea Dawkins hosted the October meeting of the Lakeside Chapter IODE. Regent Helen Jocque opened the meeting with the Order prayer and flag salute. There were 10 members and one guest present for the meeting.

Fergus IODE invited members to tour their Heritage Homes in November. The Legion has invited chapter members to participate in the Remembrance Day parade. Regent Helen Jocque will place the wreath for the chapter.

The group will award the same bursaries to students as last year.

Rosealea Dawkins has heard from the school the chapter supports in Makovic that the toques and mittens sent to them were appreciated but they need even warmer, thermal, items for the really cold weather in January and February.

Joyce Sprowl will attend the Salvation Army's Oct. 14 meeting to learn what is needed for the Christmas hampers.

Ernestine Grammick will be presented with an honorary plaque for all her help in knitting and sewing for the chapter's bale. She is welcomed as an honorary member of IODE.

The chapter's big event of the year, its annual bazaar, will be held Nov. 13 at Knox Presbyterian Church in Acton from 12 noon to 3 p.m. It will be a great Christmas shopping day with a 50-50 draw, bake table, crafts, homeade chili and other goodies from the penny table.

All the members of the chapter's executive have returned to office for another year.

Members are sorry to hear Gladys Davidson has fallen and broken a bone in her wrist. Hope it's well for the next meeting, Gladys.

Ernestine Foster will host the chapter's Nov. 2 meeting at 7:30 p.m. Don't forget to bring grocery supplies for the raffle baskets.

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