

RJW Scholarship Essay by Lukas Rother

The question is “When faced with peer pressure, how can you and why should you make good decisions for yourself and your community?”

When I saw the announcement for this scholarship, it really caught my eye. The reason is that it reminded me of a project that is pretty important to me: I am collecting material for a book that I want to write. It is about the lives of people who have their crosses put up next to the road (that is where they died) in our neighborhood. For example, there are two crosses on Jones Bridge Road. The accident had happened on January 1, 2012 early in the morning when a young driver lost control of his car. This was probably because he had drunk alcohol at the New Year’s party. Five people were in the SUV when it hit a tree and two died – actually three. The driver survived with dangerous injuries. How must he feel now? I learned more about the victims when I searched on the computer about this accident. Both Kaitlin (18 years old) and Nicholas (20 years old) had a lot of difficulties in their lives. In fact, Kaitlin was pregnant when she died.

The idea for this project came not only from me, but my mom was also behind it. I guess she wants me to learn something from the experience of others and prepare me for a situation similar to the one in which the driver of the SUV had been (to drive or to call a cab, though he would have had to pay, or to call his parents or a friend, though that would have been potentially very embarrassing). One good thing is that I am not a group person, but more of a loner. It makes it more difficult for me to work in a group and even harder to make new friends, but those obstacles can be overcome. And it is always good to overcome them because sometimes all you need is a really good friend to help you out. So, peer pressure doesn’t affect me as much, but I realize that I am not completely immune. Some small and maybe ridiculous sounding things, like

eating a banana at school, can get you made fun of. Even with the largest peer pressure, in my opinion, the best thing is to be true to yourself, do what you want to do and if that isn't an option, move on.

The answer to what should you do may seem as obvious as an elephant in your fridge but are you really able to make the right choice? It could be as hard as pulling that elephant out of your fridge. This is because peer pressure is in the way, and one of the ways to overcome it if being true to yourself doesn't work is being true to the community. You should always think about what the right thing to do is and why you should do it. It is possible that by doing the right thing you could save someone's life (like not DUI) or maybe you could be sparing someone a lot of grief. Maybe you have to kill their dog, ruin their car or spray-paint their house to look cool, and of course right now it may seem obvious why you shouldn't do those things. But at that moment you may really have to think about it and that may be the difference between a really bad decision and good one. Not only will your actions affect others but they might get you thrown in jail or maybe get you kicked out school if it's bad enough. So why should you make good decisions when it comes to peer pressure? Because that one little act of doing something potentially "bad" could ruin your whole future. In general, I believe that I am a responsible person, but I know it's a good thing to think about options and to be prepared.

I would be honored if I got the scholarship as it would definitely help me with my project. I need some money to interview/visit the people who have made bad decisions, hear them out and learn from them. I also need some support for the publication costs. But I think it's a worthwhile project, because not only do I learn from it, but others may do so, too, plus the people who were killed stay alive in our memory.