

3<sup>rd</sup> Place

11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade

23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Student Essay Contest | Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

### Children Have Voices

April 19, 1995, marked a moment in history of one of the deadliest acts of domestic terrorism. The individuals responsible were filled with bias and hate with no regard to other humans. It is important to share the details of this event to learn what can be done to combat these horrific acts in the future. We don't want to memorialize the individuals responsible; we want to celebrate how those affected have healed.

As devastating as this act was, the one consistent thing is the positive impact the children had during the healing process. Children have a way of seeing the good in what most adults would see as a hopeless situation. Children from all over the United States shared their words of encouragement and thanks to all the first responders who worked tirelessly to rescue and recover victims of this horrendous crime.

The perseverance of children is something most adults lose as they age because of the harsh realities' adults are faced with. Having the ability to see through a child's eyes fosters hope, trust, and unbiased feelings towards others. As much as we want to protect our children from the negativity in the world, it is important for them to be involved. They need to know they have a voice and are important. I was inspired during the video hearing the responders share details of letters and pictures they received during this chaotic time. Giving them something positive to see and read helped them persevere to finish their daunting tasks.

During the video, you see that a local Cub Scout troop had set up refreshments. This little clip was important to me and proved that kids can play a role in times of tragedy. I have been in Girl Scouts for the last thirteen years and one of our main goals each year is to give back to our community in some fashion. We have assisted during the holiday season with crafts, cards, and caroling at various retirement communities. Our troop creates a sensory craft during the Buddy Walk fall festival each year which is geared towards those with Autism. We created a fall festival for kids who stay with their moms at a local homeless shelter. These are just a few of the examples our troop has had the opportunity to give back. Giving kids the opportunity to engage with the community even in a time of crises will only provide them with the coping skills they'll need as an adult.

We never want to forget these tragedies, but don't want to stay in a state of hopelessness. There are far more good people in this world compared to those who wish to harm others. Seeing how the community banded together to not only begin their healing process, but also memorialize those who were victims is what is important. Memorials and events to celebrate the memories of those who have fallen and those who survived will create a stronger and healthier bond amongst the community. Having events like these taught in our schools will again allow children to be a part of something bigger. We cannot shelter them from the evil of the world, we owe it to them to arm them with knowledge, compassion, and hope since they are our future.