

1st Place

7th-8th Grade

23rd Annual Student Essay Contest | Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

Our Loving Community: The Oklahoma Standard

“You and I don’t know each other,” says Victor Chavez, uncle of Zachary Taylor Chavez, a three-year-old boy at America’s Kids Daycare on that sunny day in April 1995, “but in the time of need, we would help each other.” Since that day, our Oklahoman community lives by the Oklahoma Standard—promoting service, honor, and kindness. Often, we remember that day with solemnity and sorrow, wondering why it had to happen. We ask: why did it have to happen to people we love?

But, strangely and beautifully, it gives a lot of people, including myself, hope. Seeing our community band together after a day of tragedy and supporting one another is the most inspiring and amazing thing to me. Out of despair emerged hope. Out of tragedy emerged love and kindness. Out of fear emerged courage.

My second cousin, Blake Ryan Kennedy, was at America’s Kids Daycare that day. He was 18 months old. He never got to graduate high school, get married, have children of his own—monumental moments in the life of an average American. That was what made us want to do whatever we could for those affected by the bombing. The realization of how innocent people didn’t get to experience monumental moments that we consider so important in our daily lives. So, we joined together and helped as much as we could, and from that comes what we know as the Oklahoma Standard.

There are three aspects of the Oklahoma Standard. Service: being overcome with a spirit that only helping others can satisfy. Honor: thinking about your life and thus, honoring the lives that ended too soon. And, kindness: love for those you don’t even know. Oklahomans took people into their homes and helped them heal. Survivors and family members were given food, clothing, and shelter. They were comforted by total strangers. This is how Oklahoma has always been to me. Therefore, I am extremely proud to be an Oklahoman. We as a state stepped up to the plate when others were in need of assistance. I swell with pride every time someone mentions my state’s amiability towards visitors. On that fateful day and every day since, we as Oklahomans have been an inspiration to the rest of the world in how we deal with times of crisis.