

# SPRING VIEWS

Spring International Language Center, Littleton, Colorado

July 21, 2010

## Writing Contest Encourages Students to Share Experiences

Spring International's annual summer 2010 writing competition produced a number of excellent essays from the beginning through advanced levels. Instructors judged the writing and chose the best from each level to receive prizes.



River Rafting was an exciting activity for Vacation English and intensive program students July 14 at Idaho Springs.

Criteria for judging included creativity, organization, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Winners were Saad Al-Qahtani, Saudi Arabia, level one; Molly Wu, China, level two; Alice Villacorta, El Salvador, level three; Joseph Musumbu, Congo, tied with Husain Alfagee, Libya, for level four, and Saleh Al-Ghams, Saudi Arabia, level six. Each of the winners will receive \$50 and publication in *Spring Views* and on the Spring International website.

*Spring Views* is published each nine week term to give students an audience for their writing. Writing is recognized as the most difficult skill are in a curriculum that includes grammar, reading, and listening/speaking classes in addition to classes such as research paper, conversation, and modules based on student needs and preferences.

### Level Four Winner

#### ***Struggle for Life...by Joseph Musumbu, Congo***

There are people from all over the world, especially students from different countries, such as China, Libya, Japan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Congo, my own country, who are looking for ways to get happiness and success in the United States of America.

Each of us has a plan of how to succeed in life and get ahead in the U.S.A. First, it is important to learn English and choose an ESL program to help understand the American system of education, sports, laws, and customs because each student comes with his own customs. My fundamental question is: How can international students easily mix their customs with the new culture and become a part of the unity of the U.S.?

My experience is based on a struggle for life. Each student has a choice and plan to succeed in life. That's why our first choice is to study English at Spring International Language Center, which has a special mission to teach English to students from different countries so they become fluent in the language and pursue excellence. This is a very ingenious plan for all of us who have chosen the U.S.A. as our new land.

Finally, it is not easy to understand each other because of our differences based on cultural customs and language. I have three friends from different countries. The first one comes from Saudi Arabia, the second from China, and the third friend is from Belgium. All of my friends are students at Spring International Language Center. We are learning English, so our conversations are just made in English, but when each of my friends meets a brother student from his own country, he always changes his attitude and they speak directly to each other in their own language, such as Arabic, Chinese, and so on. This is a difficult situation I have had with my three friends and, at that moment, I can't tell them to stop speaking in their own language and to try to speak in English.

My question is: Which attitude can I take when I'm left outside of the conversation, and what solution is there to the problem? For me, I love my friends, and I'm flexible. I understand them, and I try to make an effort to control my behavior in public without forgetting my special mission or plan to succeed in life.

## Level One Winner

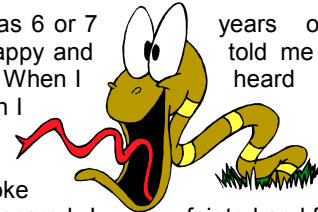
### **What Makes a Happy Life...by Saad Al-Qahtani, Saudi Arabia**

I have a very happy life. I'm a student and married. I go to school from Monday to Friday because I am learning English. My classes are from 9:00 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. After class, I go to my apartment with my friend by his car. At 4:00 p.m., I sometimes sleep until 5:30 p.m. After this, I swim in the pool or go to the gym. I study and finish my homework from 6:30 to 10:30 p.m. I search the internet until 11:30 p.m. to look for an acceptance to one of the good schools. On the weekend, I meet with my friend and I go to the mall with my wife. I think my life is very good and exciting.

## Level Two Winner

### **A Fake Snake...by Molly Wu, China**

A fake snake scared me in my childhood. It was many years ago. When I was 6 or 7 years old, one summer weekend, my father came home from his trip to Russia. He was very happy and told me to open his bag. He said he bought some chocolates, cookies, and very cute toys for me. When I heard "toys," I was very excited and wanted to know what kind of toys my father bought me. Then I opened my father's bag very quickly, and I put my hand in. I felt something moving, and then I saw a green colored snake moving towards me.



When I opened my eyes, I felt faint and I didn't know what happened or why I woke up in a hospital bed. When I felt better, my father told me what happened. I was so scared, I fainted and fell down. I had bad dreams about snakes for a very, very long time, and to this day. I can't see snakes on TV, in the movies, or in person. My Dad was a bad boy.

## Level Three Winner

### **My First Traffic Accident...by Alice Villacorta, El Salvador**

Have you ever had a traffic accident? Some traffic accidents are caused by people who are driving while they also are talking on the phone or sending text messages. The use of the cell phone while you are driving can be troublesome. Some common traffic accidents are caused by distractions while driving. Before my experience I thought that driving and talking on the phone at the same time may not cause you any problems, but then I saw that I was very wrong. I will never forget a dangerous experience in my first car accident.

I had my first car accident when I was driving in my country. This day I had class in the University. I was in the right way and I was not late for my class. Everything was going very well, until 8:00 am on 26<sup>th</sup> May in 2006. After that my best friend called me and I answered his call on my phone. I was talking with Charlie for approximately 4 minutes when suddenly I saw a car in front of me, but I could not brake, so I bumped into another car. My car was damaged in the front. I did not suffer any physical damage myself, and the other person was all right, too. There were only serious material damages to the cars. The police and car insurance representative arrived on the scene. The police determined that it was my fault, and they gave me a ticket for that. Finally, a crane towed my car and the other car, too. My best friend and my grandparents came to help me. I was very nervous and sad. It was a horrible experience.

After this experience, I realized how precious life is and that it can really be taken away in a single minute. This is even easier when you are driving a car and talking on the phone because it can cause an accident any time. This accident changed my way of driving. Now when I am driving I never talk on the phone. My advice is that when you are driving, you should have full attention to what you are doing because driving is a privilege and we need to be responsible to ourselves and also to the other people around us.

## Level Four Winner

### **If I Could Go Back in Time...by Hussain Alfagee, Libya**

Is it possible to go back in time? Many people say, "If I could go back to my childhood then I would be a different person." I have some things that I wish I had done in the past of my life. These things are learning the English language, not studying electrical engineering, and marrying at an earlier age.

One of the most important things I have found these days is the English language. All over the world, people use the English language for communication, particularly between people who speak different languages. In addition, English has become the language of technology. Everywhere new technology is written in English. So to understand new things, it is very important to be familiar with English. For the above reasons, I wish that I could go back to my past and learn English at an early age. That could have made me fluent in English.

I have studied electrical engineering for five years, and now I am an electrical engineer in Libya. I have worked in this field for ten years. After that experience, I think that electrical field is the most dangerous profession in the world. (Cont. p. 3)

## If I Could Go Back in Time (cont. from p. 2)

With electrical equipment, your first mistake is your last mistake in life. In other words, you will lose your life by making the first mistake with electrical equipment. That is why, if I had a chance to go back in time, I would select another course to study, like mechanical engineering. That would be safer than electrical engineering.

The last thing that I wish to change in my past life is my marriage time. When I was thirty years old, I married my wife. Since that time I have lived a very happy life with her. Also that happiness was completed after I had two kids, one daughter and one son. I have learned how to be responsible. I have been married for seven years, but I wish those years were more. This means that I would have married earlier.

These are three things that I think I would like to change in my past. Studying the English language, not being an electrical engineer, and marrying at an early age are the most important changes. In fact, nobody can go back and change his past. The only thing we can do is to wish or write about it.

### Level Six Winner

## Educational Events in My Life...by Saleh AlGhams, Saudi Arabia



Are you interested in getting a scholarship? If this is your goal, education is the path to follow and the goal to achieve. Studying is one of my best habits. I usually spend a long time studying. Therefore, I always get high grades in school. The reason that made me love studying was my parents. My father and my mother are educated people; they have bachelor's degrees. Also, they have always encouraged me to get a higher education. The most important things that have happened to me in my educational life are getting a scholarship, starting my higher education, and changing my choice of universities.

The first important event in my educational life was getting a scholarship. It was my dream to get a scholarship when I was a child. When I was in high school, I went to the Ministry of Higher Education in Saudi Arabia in order to inquire about the conditions required for students to get a scholarship. They said that I had to get a high score in secondary school; therefore, I studied hard and did my best to get high grades. After I finished high school exams, I was so scared about my results. I will never forget the day when I went to school with my father to see the results. I got the score I needed. As a result, I got a scholarship from my government. After that, they asked me to choose a country to study in. I chose the United States because it has the best universities in the world.

The second thing was starting my education in the U.S. It was hard for me to leave my country and my family. I traveled from Riyadh to Washington, D.C. I spent three days in Washington because I had to submit some papers to the Embassy of Saudi Arabia. It was the worst trip I have ever had because I was not able to speak English. Also, it was difficult to communicate with people who work in the immigration office at the airport. In addition, I remember one day in Washington, I slept without eating because I wasn't able to talk with the people who work in the restaurants. After that, I traveled to Bowling Green, Kentucky, in order to start studying English. After a few months, my English improved and I was able to communicate.

The last event was changing schools. When I was in Kentucky, I did not feel comfortable, so I decided to change English language schools and universities. The level of education in the University was not good; also, the city had no places for entertainment. Therefore, I started looking for another university. I saw several universities that were good for me. My choice of university was based on educational level and its location. As a result, I chose the University of Colorado at Denver because its educational level was good and its location was very beautiful. Also, the mountains were one of the main reasons that made me choose Denver because I like the landscape of the mountains.

In conclusion, there have been several important events that happened to me in my educational life, but the most important were getting a scholarship, starting my higher education, and changing my choice of university. I studied hard when I was in high school in order to get a scholarship. Then I chose the United States for higher education. In addition, I chose the University of Colorado at Denver because it is one of the best universities in the United States and its location is very beautiful. As you can see, these were three important educational events in my life.

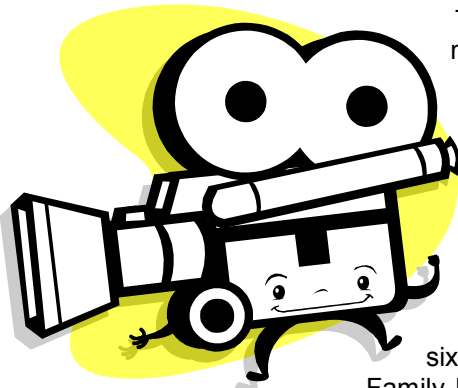
Honorable Mention

## **You Always Get Something from What You Give**

**by Arnold Lantonnois, Belgium**

There are millions of people who need help all around the world. Fortunately, many organizations do their best to provide a little happiness to those people. Anyone can bring light to someone else's dark life. You can, for instance, give money to Amnesty International, Doctors Without Borders, or a foundation fighting against discrimination. I am always wondering why we are more inclined to help people on the other side of the planet than people in; our own town.

That's the reason why I decided to give a little bit of my time to people who need assistance here, in Littleton. I chose to volunteer at The Binning Family Foundation. It is a small foundation with fewer than ten workers. They offer a chance to children who experienced troubles in their lives to come together and learn some important skills to become a mature and responsible adult. A lot of organizations focus on one, and only one, issue. We know some foundations helping violent kids, pregnant teenagers, or lonely children. The Binning Family Foundation doesn't want to offer help to only one kind of lost kid, but to all of them. (Cont. p. 4)



The purpose of the people working there is to give help to every child who needs it, no matter what their problem is. For example, I have met teenagers with a criminal record, some others who live below the poverty line, and others who come from broken families. The point is when you see them, they all seem to be happy and comfortable with their lives. How come? It's because the Binning Family Foundation tries to find a theme that attracts those kids. This summer, an average of thirty teenagers meets each other every day to do something they really like: Movies! That's the moment when I came in.

The first time I went there, I was impressed. The kids are never older than sixteen, but they appear to have a lot of cinematography skills. The Binning Family Foundation hired students from film school to help them and let them use professional material. According to the executive director, everything they do has a purpose. The kids don't always know about it, but nothing is done "just for fun." Renting expensive filming material, for instance, is a way to make teenagers aware of the value of stuff, so that they can treat it with respect.

During the first week, the participants had to make a short movie without dialogue. They were given only one thing, a spatula, and had to make a five minute story around it. Some of them were really good. In each team, there was a director, a camera man, an assistant, actors, and so on. Everyone had a role. Through these activities, the kids could learn some notion of leadership and respect for others.

Over the weeks, the projects intensified. Since they learned to know each other, the kids could make groups to work on a longer movie. They need to act more responsibly, because the material becomes more serious. First of all, they should write a scenario. It is already difficult to listen to everyone's ideas and respect them. After that, they try to find people to be in their movies, if they don't want to act themselves. Finally, they will be on the set to produce an amazing movie.

My experience at the Binning Family Foundation has been really rewarding and full of good moments. I encourage people to look around them and see if they can be helpful. Life is made of balance; you always get something from what you give.

**Note: Arnold was one of several Belgian students who, after they completed their studies at Spring, participated in a special one-month program that included volunteering in the local community. Arnold returned to Belgium before the Spring Views contest.**