

2022 International Essay Contest for Young People

[Youth Category – Honorable Mention]

BIG DEEDS OF SMALL PEOPLE

(Original)

Anastasiya Bohomolna

(Age 19, Ukraine)

V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Kirovohradska oblast

I believe that the most fundamental value of humanity is peace. The state of society when you don't need to fear for your loved ones and yourself. When you can breathe in full, living without anger, an acute sense of injustice and misunderstanding. When you don't constantly feel anxiety, pain, panic, and apathy.

They say that we only realize the true value of something when we lose it. Well, that's what happened to me. I hadn't realized how happy I was to live in peace until it was taken away from me and millions of other Ukrainians in February 2022. Life has changed. Most of my friends had to leave their homes and the country, becoming refugees, some with no hope of returning. Every day we spend hours in shelters to the howl of sirens, hiding from a possible attack. Death by missiles and gunfire, as horrible as it sounds, has become an everyday occurrence. It's almost physically painful to think about it, let alone write. However, despite everything, I still believe that this world is worth fighting for.

Peace begins at the level of the individual and then extends to the level of societies, countries, and the world. To achieve this, each of us must do one thing - remain kind.

I believe in kindness. It is my core value, the purpose of my existence, and the mission of my life. As much as I am disgusted by all the evil of this war, I am struck and inspired by the kindness expressed by people all around the world. Ordinary "small" people like you and me are doing incredible "big" deeds for strangers whose fate they care about. Dozens of my friends and acquaintances from different countries have contacted me, offering their support. Faculty members and administration of hundreds of universities around the world open the doors of their schools for Ukrainian students, whose studies have been interrupted by the war, providing youth with access to quality education. Thousands of people globally

are sheltering Ukrainian refugees in their homes. Millions are donating their money, energy, and time to make their considerably small but extremely meaningful contribution to peace.

If the value of humanity, which each of us personally holds dear, were kindness, we would have no trouble reaching the SDGs by 2030. If each of us were brave enough to give in to our egos sometimes, to help those who need it, and to love those who are the hardest to love, we would create a society where there is room for everyone. Of course, such a society would not be perfect, but it would allow people to grow and make themselves and each other a bit happier. If each of us did good deeds without being indifferent to others, we would contribute to the establishment of justice and equity and eventually reduce the level of violence, breaking the endless cycle of conflicts. Perhaps then, the peace would go from an intermediate phase in which humanity does not linger to its natural state. Perhaps the innocent would have stopped dying the way they were not meant to. Because the wars are fought by humans and not the guns. And each of us makes decisions that can tip the scales to one side or another - good or evil. Perhaps the small things we all do can have a big impact and change the world for better or for worse. So what choices should we make?

Each of us, every "small" person who considers their actions to be insignificant, can do "big" deeds, spreading kindness and bringing our societies closer to peace. Let's be brave enough to change the world together putting kindness first.