



**Girls Coalition of Southwestern Pennsylvania's
5th Annual Be Inspired Essay Contest**
Presented by UPMC

The Fifth Annual BE INSPIRED Essay Contest, presented by UPMC, provides regional youth with an opportunity to consider the legacy of **female changemakers past and present**. Kicking off at the end of Women's History Month, this year's contest honors the work of Maya Angelou, and encourages reflection on her work, words, and legacy by highlighting those who demonstrate the qualities of a strong leader and advocate for equality and social justice.

CONTEST GUIDELINES:

- Open to all students in southwest PA, grades 6-12
- Submissions must include: first & last name, age, grade, school, and the contact name, phone number, and email for one parent or guardian
- Essays must be typed and no more than 1,000 words
- **Submit all essays by Friday, May 12, at 5:00 p.m. to info@girlscoalitionswpa.org**

DEADLINE: May 12
**Cash prizes will be awarded
by age group**

1st place: \$100
2nd place: \$50
3rd place: \$25

ESSAY PROMPT:

Maya Angelou (1928-2014) was a poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist who broke new ground as an African-American, female author. Angelou was committed to sharing her personal life experiences and has been revered as a voice for African-American women and men across the nation. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and was credited with plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. In 2013, Angelou spoke to the *Harvard Business Review*, where she was asked to reflect on what would be her last memoir, *Mom & Me & Mom*, detailing what she learned from her mother and grandmother about leadership and collaboration. Angelou said:

That it's wise to be fair, and it's unwise to lie. That doesn't mean tell everything you know. Just make sure that what you do say is the truth. There are people who say I'm brutally frank, but one doesn't have to be brutal; one can tell the truth in such a way that the listener really welcomes it.

Using Maya Angelou's successes, stories, and the above quote for inspiration, select a girl or woman—past or present—who demonstrates the qualities of a strong leader and has advocated for equality and social justice. Use these questions as a guide:

- Like Angelou, how has this person worked with courage and passion to make a difference?
- How has she persevered even when things were difficult?
- What qualities do she and Angelou share? Why are these qualities important?
- How has this person lived out the qualities of character, courage, and commitment?
- What have you learned from Angelou and your chosen leader?
- How are you inspired to work towards equality and justice?