



Today's Choices *Shape My Future*

The following is the winning essay for the 2007-2008 Essay Contest.

(translated from French)

By Elisabeth Richard, age 15

Sponsored by Club Optimiste d'Iberville
Quebec South District

Have you ever wondered what your life would have been like if you had made different choices? If, at the crossroads, you had chosen to turn right instead of left, or vice versa? There are so many questions and so few answers Quite frankly, as far as the future goes, the only thing we can be sure of is that nothing is assured.

I have always compared my life to a book, not by reason of my unconditional love for words, but because I consider myself to be the author of my own destiny. It is a question of choice, like the writer creating a novel, choosing the words and actions that will give meaning to the story, my story. The story will be tragic at times, amusing at other times. I live to the beat of my choices, and I breathe the necessary outcomes. Even so, how do I know if I make the right decisions? That is where the problem lies.

At 15 years old, I have learned to stop and genuinely think before acting. Nevertheless, I am still a human being, and my choices are often

made on impulse. No matter what the situation is, I have no way of knowing, of understanding what will follow. The future always remains undecided because we live our lives in real time. It is obvious that some choices are good and will have positive outcomes. Attending school and studying, for instance, usually leads to a stable profession and a good salary. I have chosen to outdo myself and study to the best of my abilities. I am therefore assured that a good career is waiting for me ... well, almost assured. Yet again, my future's pages remain to be written.

Another issue does factor in when I make my decisions: wisdom. What is wisdom? For me, it is the art of not taking unnecessary chances without knowing the impacts of my decisions. Wisdom is to learn from my mistakes and never repeat them. What about common sense though? It is not innate. It comes over the years, with life experiences. Does this mean that wisdom comes with age, and that adults can make better-informed decisions? Once again, this is a debate that takes place deep down in ourselves, and which seeks to decide our future.

If one day, you browse through the book of your life, and you are dissatisfied with what you read, do not give up on yourself. Turn to the white pages that are left. There is always time to change the future as it depends on today's choices.

2007-2008 Optimist International Essay Contest Winners

With a writing theme of "Today's Choices Shape My Future," the following individuals are the top three winners of the annual Optimist International Essay Contest.

First Place

Elisabeth Richard, sponsored by Club Optimiste d'Iberville, Quebec
Quebec South District (52)

She receives a \$6,000 college scholarship and a plaque.

Second Place

Sarah McComb, sponsored by the Optimist Club of West Cambridge, Ontario
Midwestern Ontario District (46)

She receives a \$3,750 college scholarship and a plaque.

Third Place

Sarah Rice, sponsored by the Optimist Club of Rockville, Maryland
Maryland—South Delaware District (33)

She receives a \$2,250 college scholarship and a plaque.