



JUNIOR YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL

WINNER

WHY JOY ANNA LOVES ARIZONA

WRITTEN BY JOY ANNA, A JUNIOR AT ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

I'm a grandchild of migrant grandfathers who worked the fields throughout Arizona that helped to put food on our tables, in restaurants, grocery stores, and our Arizona community. My family assists in keeping the agricultural engine moving along. Arizona gave my family the opportunity to work hard for a better life so we wouldn't have to suffer. We didn't have a lot of money, but we had strong values and spirituality.

We always go to Mission San Xavier del Bac as a family, which is the oldest European structure in Arizona, and one of the most stunning illustrations of Spanish architecture in the country. There are more than 300 natural trails across Arizona with several different climates; you can always find a trail to take no matter which temperature you prefer. As a family, we would explore one of my favorite places, which is the Grand Canyon. The Grand Canyon is home to one of the seven natural wonders of the world. The Grand Canyon shows off one of the many beautiful sights Arizona has to offer and a multitude of geologic features and rich archeological history. My family and I love traveling around Arizona and admiring the beautiful scenery. While on these trips, I love hearing my grandparents tell stories about our culture and how they grew up in Arizona.

As a child, I remember my Nana Velia singing in Spanish and cooking my meals while making homemade tortillas, beans and chorizo; with all the different spices; her house always smelled of love. Arizona ranks the highest in the nation for love of Mexican food. Walking into any Arizona Mexican restaurant brings to mind a memory of my family culture. Arizona has several huge salsa festivals each year where you can eat anything from exceptionally mild corn salsa to a mouth-burning, pure Chile salsa while raising money for local charities which we, as a family, love to be a part of. The salsa festival is such a joy to go to because we can socialize, dance and play games. As a family, we always make great memories together and I hope I can bring my future kids to this festival.

My father's work ethic and dedication to the ones he loves inspires me today in everything I do. Being an Arizona native means having a deep appreciation of your background and understanding the great importance of family and values. Being native to Arizona means being proud of your culture and continuing to pass your values on to the next generation. By being empowering I can also reach out to my community; in doing so, I am becoming more aware of their existence and the importance of these associations. Their voice is valuable and will make a difference for the common good in our community. I believe what really matters is being a good and noble person, no matter what your heritage is. Why I love Arizona is because to me, it is all about family, values, and culture.