

## **An Essay of Sincere Gratitude for the Fred Malek Scholarship Award**

When I turned 14 years old, I was a struggling artist and kid who felt I was a victim because of the ridicule and bullying I was experiencing. At my lowest point, I was fortunate to be introduced to the **Best Friends Foundation**.

I found the Best Friends Foundation to be a caring and compassionate support system when I needed them. The Best Friends Foundation provided a safe space for me to perform in front of my peers, and allowed me to perform with older performers and constantly encouraged me to practice and perfect my craft. My experience has raised my aspirations and my outlook is much more positive than when they found me. As a witness and a performer with the Foundation, I have also watched other kids learn self-respect, accountability, and responsibility through the practice of self-control in the most creative yet fun ways, and that "it's not cool to be mean".

My participation in the Kindness is Cooler Seminar last year was an incredible experience. Around 200 third, fourth, and fifth graders were at the Marriott Wardman Park Hotel. Me and the rest of the BFF creative team performed for the students. Some of the songs performed include "Make Music, not Madness," "It's not Cool to be Mean," and a song I wrote and performed called "Better as One". All of these songs have a common theme, which is to spread a positive message to the youth.

My song, "Better as one" is about Hurricane Harvey, a category four hurricane that made landfall in Texas and Louisiana in August 2017, and how I wanted to bring everyone together in such a tragic time. I asked myself, in what way could I possibly help the hurricane victims? "I don't have money like these big time celebrities," I said. So, I asked my father and he knew I wrote songs so he suggested that I'd write a song about unity and peace and release it and have all of the proceeds go to the victims of the hurricane. So, that's what I did, and in doing so I was able to help many victims.

At an early age, I have learned the value of helping others in need. This is why I am so grateful to have been nominated for the **Fred Malek Scholarship Award**. I am honored and I humbly accept the scholarship named after this great business man and philanthropist.

I plan to use these funds to the best of my ability and I promise to take advantage of this scholarship to assist in travel, equipment, and voice lessons. I will continue the legacy of Mr. Malek by managing my businesses wisely and supporting philanthropic causes that help those in need.

In conclusion, I am sincerely grateful to The Best Friends Foundation for their support in making me a better performer and more importantly a better person. I accept the Fred Malek Scholarship Award with sincere gratitude.