



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

**“Family Values”
by Kaela Walker
April 30, 2011**

This paper is on family values. Many, many values define my family. I interviewed some family members to find out their values and the values passed down to them by their families.

In my family, one important value is Culture and Food (Tarboot and Ahcheelah). What culture means in our family is museums, art, and music. Florrie, my great-grandmother, loved culture. When she retired, she became an amazing painter (I know, because her paintings hang all over my apartment!) Florrie also loved museums. My grandma Viv is on the culture committee in her community. I also like culture, mostly eating and enjoying amazing food like sushi, Indian food, Chinese food and a lot more! But not really plays and art galleries as I am more of an outdoors crazy person. My mom tells me when she was little, her dad was really into food, and sometimes would drive for hours to just taste excellent food from a new restaurant. I know my Grandma Leni loves museums and art because she always wants to go to them as well. I also heard that Florrie (my great-grandmother) was sitting on a bench one day near Central Park and a famous pianist sat right next to her! His name was Vladimir Horowitz, and they soon became great friends. They would meet at the bench and talk about music and art. But speaking of great friends, that gets us into our next value... friendship!

Friendship, or Chaveyroot in Hebrew, is also important in my family. My great-grandma Florrie was very sociable and probably gave this value to my mom because my mom has a ton of friends. I know for a fact my mom still has friends from middle school, or what people called it back then -- junior high school. My mom says she is loyal and nice to her friends because friends are important to her, and I agree. I have tons of friends I love and care about. For example I have made a lot of great friends at Wagner Middle School, and I have amazing friends from camp. Then of course I have my friends I have known forever who are special to me as well.

My Grandma Viv also agrees the value of friendship is important. For example, when Grandma Viv started working at the age of 16, she was determined to work with her lifelong friend Janet and they remained friends until Janet passed away, just a year or so ago. Actually, my Grandma Viv stayed close friends with many of her childhood friends.

Now, one of *my* favorite values is Humor, or Hu-mor in Hebrew. I guess this value really only works for me, my brother Jesse, and my dad's side of the family, but I know that without being funny and humorous... this family would be downright boring at family dinners. My dad tells me when he was little, he would try to be silly at dinner and his mom would sometimes laugh, but sometimes his parents would not really like it. So, my dad is goofy, too. My mom does tell me that her dad was pretty funny as well. He would make silly jokes and goof around... just like me and Jesse. Humor is important because it shows personality and it is very useful when trying to learn a lesson. For example, when I make a mess in the kitchen, my dad doesn't yell at me; instead he makes a joke about it. I like that better!

Moving on... Determination or Hechlehteyoot in Hebrew is a big value in our family. Let's start from the early people of the family, and then get to the 21st century family members. From my mom's side, my great, great grandparents (Florrie's parents), Fannie and Samuel Smokler, came over from Tarnow, Poland to the United States at the ages of 18; they traveled separately. This is very brave because it must be scary coming to a new country as a teenager.

Then there was Florrie — let me tell you something, this girl had *MAJOR* determination! First of all, Florrie lost her husband Dave when my Grandma Leni was only 2 years old; Florrie had already lost her first child during childbirth, and that's basically very, very hard. But Florrie was determined to move forward. She stayed a single mom and got a job as a teacher while she raised my Grandma Leni. This was rare back in her time. Plus at 85 years old she was hit by a car and shattered the bones in her leg. She was in the hospital for a long time recovering but was determined to get back to her life and eventually did (though she used a cane.)

Now Determination is big, but Honesty (Kenoot) and Respect (Kavode) are important to us too! My Grandpa Jonas was a real honest person. He fixed TVs and would always be respectful to his customers. If he just had to fix an antenna, he would only charge 5 to 20 dollars! He was very, very reasonable and honest. He never over-charged, and he never fixed anything that was not broken. He sometimes convinced customers to dump their T.V.s instead of wasting money to repair them, if the T.V. was in really bad shape. Also, my parents believe that you must be honest and respectful to everyone, and that includes our doormen, our sitters, and Ophelia, who helps clean our apartment.

We also value Independence (Ahtzmahoot) in my family. Of course, you can see that Florrie was independent, but also my Grandma Viv is independent. She comes from a traditional generation yet she doesn't believe in god and has her own political beliefs that differ from most of her friends. My mom and my dad both think independence is important too. For example, when I was in third grade, my mom thought I would be able to go to an after-school program all by myself. At first, I was very scared and cried, but then I got used to it. Plus, today, I walk almost everywhere by myself, not like some other unlucky kids my age.

Last but not least, another very, very important value for our family is... Family, or Meeshpahcha. Now we have my great-great-grandparents Fannie and Samuel. Family was definitely a big value for them because when Florrie's husband died, Fannie and Samuel invited Florrie and her daughter Leni to stay with them. Plus the whole family lived close to each other anyway! The family celebrated Shabbat and had lots of fun together. Fannie and Samuel had six kids, and the boys all worked in dentistry together as adults. Now I also have relatives on my dad's side who think family is very important. These are my ultra-cool cousins Ty, Ian, Katy, James and Meghan. They are always talking and hanging out with each other. They celebrate Hanukkah and Christmas together and are there for each other. Also, my Grandpa Jonas did a very loyal thing for his family — when he was young, he quit college to help make money for his mom and sister who were very poor.

In our family, the value of family means something a little different to us, and I do agree with this. In my family, we consider our close friends as part of our family. Like my mom and dad's college, high school, and junior high school friends are family to us (Leslie, Jenny, Sonja). And I consider my own friends that I've known since I was very little to be family (the Feldmans and the Kreppels)! When we celebrate holidays, we usually invite both family and friends, such as on Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Passover.

These values are all important to me and my family and I hope I will follow them in the future.

