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1st Place Essay: The Head of the Body

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The Head of the Body

By Anna Stiker

Stop and think about all the astounding things your body can do. You can feel the first fresh day of spring upon your face, watch the sun drop below the horizon on a back country road, send a basketball sailing through the hoop with a clean “swish,” and leave the ground for a brief exhilarating moment while running across a freshly mown lawn, only to land safely back on your feet. All of this is happening due to the ability of the neurons in your brain to fire correctly. Now, imagine if all of that was taken away. You cannot walk, can hardly swallow food, and have difficulties recognizing even your spouse. Many people know of someone who suffers from this problem with their neurons. Alzheimer’s is the most common form of dementia, and to this day, there are two known reasons as to why this disease occurs: amyloid plaque built up between neurons, and the breaking down of neurofibrillary tangles within the actual neuron itself. When a neuron begins to wear away, the integrity of the structure fails, and the human body slowly starts to become gorgonized to everything surrounding it due to the break down. When the structures of neurons lose their integrity, different parts of the body begin to fail. This can directly be related to leaders and their integrity.

Every part of the body depends on this truthfulness of the neuron, and when it loses its wholeness, the parts of the body become their own separate entities and at some point, lose their ability to function completely. It is imperative for neurons to be able to function to their full potential. Just like neurons, the leaders around us can lose their integrity and sense of self. When they lose the ability to function well and with complete truthfulness, the different parts of a group fall apart. Whether it be the leader of a sports team testing positive for steroid use, or the president of an organization going against the ethical concerns of the group, all of these slips in

integrity have direct impact on the members. The Apostle Paul expressed a similar belief. 1 Corinthians 12:20 says, “As it is, there are many parts, but one body.” We each have our own gifts and abilities, but when the leader or head of the “body” ends up failing, every part of the body is impacted. Integrity is what makes a leader. Whether maintaining their integrity in responding to conflict, taking responsibilities for their actions, or expressing honesty in every situation, leaders are not complete without integrity, just like the body is not complete without working neurons. The integrity of our leaders must remain strong, in order for the body to function well and with a solid mind together.

The pain of watching a loved one suffer from Alzheimer’s disease is one of the most heart-breaking things to witness. I personally have seen a loved one suffer, and this lack of connection with the world is one of the saddest events I have ever seen. This sadness can be seen in the eyes of those who are let down by leaders who are losing their integrity. These leaders can no longer be trusted to lead the group successfully and with completeness. This sadness can be wiped away by taking a look at who you are as a leader. Are you truthful, even in situations when you know no one is looking? Do you confess that you are not perfect and take responsibilities for every action? Leaders, I call you to stay true to yourself and your personal beliefs and to keep your integrity because those around you are impacted and are looking to you to function as the head.