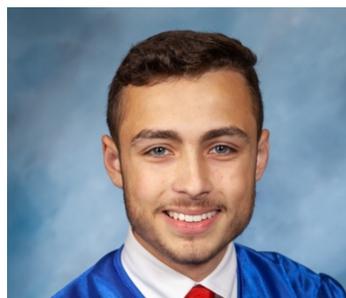




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Maryland Teen Named Humane Student of the Year for Advocating on Dissection Choice Legislation



Pictured: Aaron Ness with his dogs, Harley and Tucker.

Jenkintown, PA (December 2018)—Animalearn has selected Maryland high school student Aaron Ness as its 2018 Humane Student of the Year for his work to provide written testimony in support of statewide Maryland dissection choice legislation.

Aaron was inspired to fight for dissection choice legislation as a consequence of his and his three older siblings' requests to opt out of animal dissections in school. Each of them faced difficulties. Despite repeated attempts to substitute a more humane assignment, one of his brothers was told to stand outside the classroom door while his classmates dissected pregnant cats, causing him to feel disrespected and excluded. Rather than be stigmatized in that way, he decided to attend the class and watch students dissect cats.

When Aaron himself faced dissection, he approached his teacher and asked for an alternate method to complete the assignment and was told to write a two-page essay, restating what he learned in class lectures. At this point, Aaron realized that, without statewide student dissection choice legislation, teachers had no incentive to utilize existing dissection alternatives and would continue to respond to students' objections with inconsistency.

In his testimony to Maryland legislators earlier this year, Aaron stated, "If there was consistency across the state on this issue [dissection choice], it would lend a lot more weight to the value of dissection alternatives, it would educate the teachers on the availability and quality of these alternatives, and would force teachers who are still using archaic methods to teach students to acknowledge and learn more about these alternatives."

Currently, only 18 states and Washington D.C. have enacted dissection choice laws or policies. Because Maryland only has a state policy that is not legally binding, only a handful of public school districts offer humane alternatives. This is despite the fact that there are hundreds of advanced, comprehensive dissection alternatives available to educators. Further, over 50 studies have shown these alternatives to have equal, if not better, learning outcomes when compared to real animal dissection.

“I believe that ‘life science’ should study animals while they are alive and in their natural environment” said Aaron. “The overwhelming evidence shows that by not having dissection alternatives at least available to students, students are being deprived of the best education available. I believe that providing students with a humane education will translate into a more humane society.”

“We are proud to honor Aaron Ness as our Humane Student of the Year. His compassion and commitment to animals is inspirational and I hope that he continues to use his voice to advocate for animals,” said Director of Animalearn, Nicole Green.

As a part of the award, Animalearn will donate \$1,000 worth of dissection alternatives for Ness to present to his school, providing resources for other compassionate students who want humane methods to learn anatomy in science class.

Aaron is grateful for the award and prize donation, as he says it will give him the support he needs to continue with student choice advocacy, citing his belief that humane education is the core of building a humane society.

Animalearn, a division of the American Anti -Vivisection Society, works with educators, students, policy makers and others to achieve quality humane science education without the harmful use of animals. Animalearn’s free loan program, The Science Bank, is the largest lending program in the U.S. and offers humane science products that enable educators to teach and students to learn anatomy, physiology, and psychology lessons without harming animals. For more information visit Animalearn.org.

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