

First Place Winner of the "This Place Matters" Student Essay Contest

*The Power of the Friendship Tower*

Esther Kuester from Creekside Elementary, Spearfish, SD

'One of my family's favorite places to visit is the Friendship Tower, which is just outside of Deadwood. An easy ten-minute walk leads to an old circular stone tower with an amazing view of the northern Black Hills. The view is definitely worth the climb. You can see for miles in every direction. It is breathtaking! Even the walk itself is so pretty it makes me want to jump and skip. If you ever take a trip I recommend visiting in the fall. That is when the leaves are beautiful with their bright colors.

The intriguing story behind the tower is part of why I like it. Back in 1892 Sheriff Seth Bullock met Theodore Roosevelt and they became fast friends. Mourning Roosevelt's death 27 years later, Mr. Bullock decided to build a tower to commemorate his very close companion. Since so many terrible things are happening right now, it is more important than ever to remember the power of a marvelous friendship. If you are alone in the world you could feel discouraged, but if you have faithful friends by your side it will be easier to live through hard times.

One of my favorite quotes is "kind people are my kind of people". It is a comforting feeling to have kind people around. The Friendship Tower matters to me because whenever I walk up its old steps I can feel the amazing friendship built into the walls. I think it is important to preserve this building because it is a beautiful monument representing the power of friendship.'