

*The Class of 2026 would like to dedicate this volume to
Mrs. Kathy Curto*

*We thank Mrs. Curto for helping us to pause and
reflect on our strengths, joys, and struggles after such a
demanding year. We have had to adapt to many
challenges during this pandemic, but reconnecting with
our values and each other helps to keep us grounded
and open to finding new meanings.*

*In Gratitude,
Mrs. Danielle Pece and Ms. Perrone's Seventh Grade
Class
June 2021*

I Believe in the Power of Music

By: Carly Suessenbach

I believe in the power of music. Music can help people in so many ways like when you are sad you can listen to happy music, if you can't sleep you can turn on calming music that doesn't have any lyrics, or you can put on sad music if you just want to let out a cry. Music can also motivate you or inspire you to do something. Music helps me by calming me down when I'm stressed, makes me happy when I am sad or angry, or sometimes I just listen to sad music because I just feel like it. Music also helps me fall asleep faster. When I listen to music I feel like I'm in a whole different world and in that world all my worries, problems and stress goes away and I feel happy. Music is important to me because a lot of songs have really deep meanings to them. Music inspires me to make my own music or learn to play the piano or guitar.

The type of music I like to listen to is instrumental and pop music. Every night before I go to bed I tell my Alexa to play Reflections by Toshifumi Hinata and it helps me sleep better because it has no lyrics, and it sounds like you're in a ballroom on a late night. When I listen to this song it makes me feel calm and it adds more comfort to the comfort I have at home. Here is another song I listen to when I go to bed: Nobody by Mitski. When I listen to this song it makes me feel calm. Some other songs I like to listen to are Good Old Fashioned Lover Boy by Queen, and I Bet on Losing Dogs by Mitski. I believe in the power of music.

I Believe in Hope

By: Gio Siciliano

When I was about seven years old I was sitting on my black leather couch playing Injustice(a video game) by myself. I stayed up all night and still wasn't very tired. Although I did feel an urge for food, I went to my kitchen. I made myself a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. I went back to my couch and continued to play Injustice. My dad walks in a few minutes later and said he was going to take a walk with his friend Jeff and asked if I wanted to come.

"I'm fine," I said, just because I was mid battle in my game. I kept staring at my game.

When he left I started to remember that I asked about a week ago for a dog and never really got an official answer.

I Believe in the Power of Mistakes

By, John Ormiston

The power of mistakes can lead you to a whole new path in your life. We can always learn from our mistakes, like if we get a question wrong on a test we can learn from those mistakes and remember what we might do better in the future.

When I was in 6th grade in the boys' locker room, after a game we played, I was told by some of my friends and classmates that I would never be good at any sport. That really hurt me so I listened to what they said and I decided to work on my real passion. I believed in art the most because it was something for me to release pain or emotions and make what you are thinking of. It was a mistake to think that sports was what I believed in. If I had a bad day at school I would use my anger or sadness on my clay and make something out of it. It would make me feel better because I'm able to create something that happened to me and see what I thought it would look like in my vision. I was in my room one day and I couldn't think of anything and I was a little frustrated. I thought of a movie and a few monsters I would use to create what I'm thinking of, but I tried to think of what emotion I would use. I thought long and hard and one popped from my mind and what I thought was "evil," so I started to make a monster that was evil looking. I wanted to make it as scary as possible. I did a few mistakes but I knew how to fix them because it's happened before so I knew how to make it better. Then, I put scar marks and blood stains on it's teeth, and scared lips and sharp spikes on his head and gave deep red eyes.

Ever since I have been using the same emotion and art style for my work. The point of making mistakes in life is that you will remember it and think about that mistake and take what you did wrong and make it better just like if I get a wrong answer on a test or don't listen carefully. If you just listen and remember what you did wrong you could do better. That's the reason that makes you what you are today.

That's the power of mistakes.

This I Believe

By: Kai Ietaka

It was my first day back to in-person school after being virtual the whole year. It was a great day, and I had lots of fun running around during recess and doing relatively simple work in my classes. But when I got home, my mom seemed nervous. "You're free to do whatever you want, but not totally; There's a frog on the loose." I let out a groan and lowered my head.

I have had 2 pet frogs since the beginning of quarantine, and they have kept me company. I helped take care of them, and they provided emotional support. My mom explained everything that had happened. "Me and your dad woke up, and saw that the door to the frog tank was wide open. We had searched all around the place, including the tank." I had the idea of playing their calls like they always did when loud noise played, so they would come or call back, but to no avail. "We already tried that," My mom said.

All the way until 12:00 AM, I was very alert to every noise in the house, going there and playing the call. I had even left my cat outside the whole time just so there wasn't a chance of him eating the frog. I felt guilty all night until the next day, when I had accepted that he was gone.

Believing in Basil

By: Lucia Petty

I grew up before a lot of my friends. I've always tried my best to protect my them in a way that I would protect my own "real" family. But alas, we're still children. So why are we suddenly called women as soon as a traumatic experience, such as cat calling? Why is this the deciding factor in how society perceives us? And why, even though we're just kids, suddenly expected to handle everything like adults? I couldn't explain my reason why I so desperately wanted to be seen as something out of the public eye.

I always had the first experience, but this made me able to help them through it. But no episode of Sam and Cat ever showed them being harassed, yet we were expected to know how to handle it. It wasn't the first time it had happened to me, but it was never a thing that one particularly enjoys. It was always scary, it's scary to everyone, no matter the age. I find myself remembering the thoughts after my first time being cat called. Society has a way of showcasing women as beings of only innocence, and once anything happens to them they're tarnished, dirty, and "should know better." Ever since kindergarten we've been told that "he's only teasing you because he likes you, don't be so sensitive." So when I had first been cat called, I couldn't stop my brain from thinking about how now I must have done something. It had to be my fault, and it had to be normal, because when I told someone, they just brushed it off like nothing.

Was I no longer worried about now that I had experienced this? Was I no longer labeled as a child? Was I ever seen as one ever since it happened? I had one, singular thought; will I ever be the same?

We were walking down the street, only 11 or so at the time. My friend and I had just gone to the corner store for soda because it was so hot out. We're walking, just talking about life's complaints when two men, probably about 16-17 year olds, decided it would be a great idea to roll down their window and harass us. They said things I purely cannot say. My friend was stunned. Frozen, filled with blinding rage, I screamed from the sidewalk using language that probably also wouldn't be good to use in school. They drove away, laughing. I still remember the utter shock of how disgusting it was, how raw and gross it felt. Did they not realize we were just kids? Did they not care?

We walked home, as it was summer and it was gorgeous out. Flowers blooming, us holding our cokes in silence as we walked down the road to the house. No one said a word. A good 15 minutes of silence, both of us stunned by what we had just experienced. Me, filled with rage and disappointment. Them, filled with pure shock. Finally, we sat down on the curb of my block to talk about what had happened, little plants sprouting around us. My friend had always loved plants, herbs, and any living thing. But their favorite was always basil. The smell, shape, and general aesthetic was something they loved. There were tiny herb plants, just sprouting as we sat. A fancy china planter sat next to us, it's soil spilling out as it had been chipped. Tiny basil plants sprouted through the soil in the concrete, baking in the sun.

Were the plants any less perfect now that they had spilled? Were they no longer worth caring for? Can it be seen as something beautiful? Was it going to be able to ever regrow?

They were always an anxious kid, but the whole situation had taken a toll on their idea of the summer. It was supposed to be a place for us to be kids, to just be us.. Their hands nervously played with the leaves while we talked. They couldn't stop but to question whether or not it was a compliment. Was it something we were supposed to take pride in? Were we supposed to know how to handle it, supposed to understand why and what and how? Could we ever go back to being "innocent"? The more we talked, we started to realize how what had happened to us doesn't deserve to be normalized.

They exclaimed **"Why do they get to choose when we become THEIR idea of women? When it matters, we're women, when we're trying to voice our opinion, we're children."** We settled on the simple idea that as long as we say that we are, what does it matter how society is thinking of us? The "loss of our innocence" was a concept created by men to infantilize women. ADULT, women. But when you pressure that idea onto a child, it forces the narrative that they should know how to react and act like an adult in these types of situations, which is just purely impossible. Loss of innocence feeds the idea that just because something we purely cannot control happened, *that's* what makes us women? It was all messed up. We talked to some other girls in the neighborhood, and they had shared experiences. **"I saw him too! It was so disgusting- I hope someone tells his mom about what he's doing."**

I believe in sports

By: Megan Powell

“Keep your eye on the ball!”

“2 strikes one ball,” the ump yells.

3...2...1. He sent the pitch. As I'm swinging I hit the white baseball! My team yells “RUN RUN”! I'm running to first as I hit the ball to shortstop. I'm safe when I go back to the base. The next girl hits. I know it's a home run so I take my lead and run. We both got home that day and my team and she won the game.

The whole reason I got started with t-ball was because of my boredom. When I went to sign up with my grandma, I was a bit nervous. It was my first time playing, and there was only one other girl on the team. Her name was Jessica. Jessica and I always partnered up because we didn't know anyone on the team.

The next game we went to we sadly didn't win but I'll never forget it. We walked on the field. I can feel the sun scorching on my back and I can smell the dirt from the field. I'm at second base. Jessica is shortstop. There's a runner on first and I can smell the victory from a mile away. The ball was hit to third. I ran to second and got the ball. UMP yells “OUT!” We were screaming with joy then the unexpected happened. THUNDER. The worst thing possible when playing. The game was cut short and we could not continue so we lost at the time. The feeling of the loss hurt the team but we kept our heads up strong and all went home.

That day we all learned that just because you lose a few games doesn't mean you quit. Now I'm still playing in seventh grade. It's one of the best times of my life.

My Stage, My World

By: Molly Bernstein

Any Stage. Anything. Anywhere, anytime, I was present. Besides rock climbing, acting is my favorite thing. I always valued attention as a little kid, and part of me still does. Whenever my parents took me somewhere with a stage and a performance, I wanted to be a part of it. I would feel the yearning flow all through me, like a tiny voice gradually getting louder and louder, until eventually, the energy started to scream at me and I felt myself running to the stage. The audience and performers often thought it was adorable to see a little girl there up on stage, dancing around and singing, and they frequently encouraged me.

From then on, being on stage felt right. I have a common condition called ADHD. This stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. It causes my hyper energy, and can be a real struggle for me. It sometimes makes me act hyper around others, and at times I can be perceived as annoying because of it. It can be very hard to make friends when you have ADHD. People might consider you weird, or different. As I was writing this essay, I was scared to share about my ADHD. But I realized maybe it would be helpful for me to do so. ADHD can sometimes cause me to act in ways that can be distracting for others, but it also has given me so much power for acting! I have the ability to be very animated on stage. But that hasn't always been the case.

Every summer, I go to Eisner sleep-away camp in Massachusetts. I love going there, seeing all my friends, and being away for a month, in a new place. Every year, the camp holds a play for each unit. This particular year, it was the Lion King. I had always wanted to participate, but I was very shy, unlike when I was little. All my friends told me I should do it. "Molly, you're the best actor I know! You should try out for the play," they said. And suddenly, I started to feel that strange energy and wanting. The feeling filled me from the tips of my toes to the top of my head. I *wanted* to do it. So, I decided to audition. In the week that followed, I built up a trepidatious feeling. The day of the audition, my stomach was in knots. I had a hard time breathing. As kid after kid did their audition, I grew more nervous. Then the director said, "Okay who's next, uh... Molly Bernstein! You're up." I clutched my script so tightly it crumpled a little. The massive stage was a gazillion miles away. I slowly climbed the steps and stood in the middle of the stage. "Whenever you're ready," said the director. I froze. I wanted to do my audition, and blow everyone away! But I just couldn't. My heart surged and my eyes welled with tears. My legs began to shake. "I... I'm a little nervous..." I said in a quavery voice. "It's okay!" said the director. "Whenever you feel comfortable."

The stares of the kids made me tremble. At this point, I was in tears. Then, the director said something that seized any feeling inside me, leaving me numb. "I'm sorry, but your time is up." The world shattered. The world was destroyed. The world was angry at me. I realized the world was right. The next day, when parts were handed out, I only got a part in the ensemble. And on the night of the play, though I sang and danced to "The Circle of Life," "Hakkuna Matata," and all the other numbers with passion, I didn't feel happy. And just like that, a week later, camp was done, and I was driving home with my parents. Looking out the window, seeing the lush green grass and sloping mountains of Massachusetts, I remembered the play. My stomach curled again, and I felt angry at myself, remembering. My anger burned inside me, deep and haunting, seeming to blame me. Then, I did a strange thing. I strangled the anger by the neck. And I shooed away the red, seething monster. I could NOT let it consume me.

Later in the fall, at The Depot, our local theatre, there was a play too. I remembered camp, and told myself that this was a way to fully kill the monster. "Elf" was the play. I auditioned for the part of Mr. Greenway, and though I was nervous at first, I killed my audition! I used my funny Brooklyn accent, which I mastered by listening to my grandparents talking to each other. So, on the day of casting, I was confident. I felt the adrenaline rushing through me. The casting was outside, and from where I stood waiting, I could see the wet, dew covered grass of St. Mary's Church lawn. It seemed as if the grass was as tense as I was, with each blade entangled in the radiant sun. I took a deep breath and went to look at the cast list. At that moment, I remembered the terrible time last summer, when I only got ensemble. My eyes searched the words. Then, I found "Mr. Greenway." I gingerly looked beside it to see who had the part, my hands quivering. Molly Bernstein! My world was lit up with the joy of 1,000 lights. My world was proud of me for killing the red monster. My world was complete again. I learned that my energy is what makes me who I am, and rather than being a burden, it can be a positive force in my life.

I Believe In Swimming

By: Philip Cappello

I believe in swimming. Walking deeper and deeper into the water, feeling the sand against my feet. Swimming Lessons. I went for swimming lessons at East Hampton Albert's Landing Beach. It was a small beach no bigger than the school playground. It was in the bay, perfect and easy for new swimmers. I was there for swimming lessons with my older sister Lili and about ten other kids all 4-6 years old.

We all went in the water to get a feel of what we were going to be learning next time. The instructor was named Matt. He had long blonde hair that he put up in a ponytail which sat above his waist. He would be teaching us basic swimming. After we got out of the water each kid went back to our families' towels to dry off and have some snacks.

My sister Lili and I both came back to our beach setup talking with other kids. I was talking with a boy named Alex. He was the same age as me. He had short blonde hair and we were planning a sand castle set-up. My sister Lili walked back with a girl named Sophia. She was the same age as my sister. She was joking around and laughing with my sister. We started to build sand castles and pretend they were bird nests. We would use white rocks as our eggs. Then after a few minutes of playing in the sand and sharing snacks with them, their mom Michelle came over too. She started talking with my mom then they exchanged phone numbers.

Note To Reader: When moms exchange phone numbers it means they will keep in touch. Which could be the start of a long friendship.

Summer after summer we would meet them at the beach. Then we went to their house, then we had a sleepover, a beach bonfire. To this day we still see each other every summer and for each other's birthdays.

I believe in friendship and that it can last as long as you keep it.

I believe in swimming.

I Believe in Digital Art

By: Yasmine

Digital art was my favorite hobby. I have always practiced my drawing skills for a couple of years now and I have made good progress. I also started by organizing my digital art palette. It was messy at first but then I got used to making it organized.

Sometimes when I draw I use a certain tool everytime I try to draw something specific. Doing digital art is very important because I usually even draw when it's peaceful and calming. Even though days can turn awful.

My favorite piece of art I made was this fictional character that was a cat and an angel with brown, dark pink hair, yellow t-shirt and purple skirt, so then I had to add the details plus edit the hair and eyes. That piece of art was my favorite because it actually describes how I'm feeling and how hard I worked on that piece. I even put stars and hearts because I like them. Well when I draw them it's for the games I use and I will get some ideas of what to put on or use for backgrounds but I create it because it represents my characters in games. Some of my teachers got to see it and even my one friend Lyla. She is very nice and always hangs out with me. She always liked the drawings I made and I appreciate that. I'm proud of what I made because my friends and family say it's good and all I wanted was them to tell me that it was good and that they are proud of me.

Oxygen

By: Zack Michalek

I believe in oxygen. My first breath inflated my small lungs, bringing me life. The first time you go underwater and you attempt to breathe but you get a small mouthful of water. Going outside breathing the intense summer oxygen. When venturing into the brisk air of winter. Growing up you soon figure out you need air to survive. You go on a summer car ride with the windows open and the warm wind in your face. The first time you belly flop in a pool and you get the wind knocked out of you and you try to get your breath back. The air feels thick and hard to breathe. Appreciate that there is clean air to breathe because the air is getting polluted quickly.

When you belly flop off the high diving board “yelling “Subscribe to Logan Paul” and the line of people wait to go. They all stop to look at a child hit the water with a smack like the sound of a gunshot. The air leaves you and the people watching wonder if you need to be saved. Then you float to the surface and try to play it off and walk back to your towel to try to hide your bright red belly that looks like sunburn. The wind feels like snow landing on your red belly. The regret of belly-flopping. The lifeguard said that you can't bellyflop. As you jump, your cousin who is a lifeguard looks up at you and is disappointed.

Taking A Chance

By: Dylan Ambrose

Three summers ago, in 2018 I went to sleep away camp for the first time. My cousin and I arrived at Camp Kinderland in late July. It was humid and the sun was blazing. I remember sitting on my bunk watching everyone seeing their friends again. My parents hugged me and waved goodbye. They got into our old silver Subaru and drove off, making the dirt from the wheels fly into the air.

I felt immediate regret. My bunk was small and uncomfortable, the mattress felt hard and the cabin had holes in the walls and dirt on the floor. I knew nobody and wasn't exactly a social butterfly back then. It seemed like all of my bunkmates already had their friends and I didn't fit into their groups. It was my first time away from my parents for longer than a week.

The first couple days were long and tiring. I hadn't fully adjusted to the humidness and heat. During the night the temperature would drop like 30 degrees. So I would go to sleep in 80 degree humid, sticky, weather and wake up in 50 degree weather, curled up under my blankets trying to stay warm.

By the end of the first week I adjusted to the weather and had made friends with my bunkmates. My bunkmates and I stayed up late whispering to each other about our friends back home and general gossip, hoping not to get caught. We would play cards for three hours a day, and never got bored. I remember sitting on the hardwood, dusty, floor of my cabin playing spit, and Uno over and over again.

Around the last week of Kinderland the whole camp piled into four buses and drove to an amusement and water park. My age group got split up into four groups with one counselor and they let us do whatever we wanted. I remember running around the park in soaking wet bathing suits splashing water on each other. The sun was so bright and running around with my friends felt like the best day of my life.

By the end of the camp I was so disappointed I had to leave; I wanted to stay at Kinderland forever. I had made a bunch of friends and I felt like I was part of a community. I remembered the first day when I was sitting on the porch of the cabin watching my parents driving away and feeling lonely. But staying at camp ended up being a great time.

I believe in taking a chance. I was so scared to be away from my house and family for two weeks, but it turned out to be one of the best experiences of my life, and I still go back every year. Taking a chance and trying something you might be scared of can turn out to be one of the best things to do.

I believe it takes failure to make a successful person

By: Jenny Knox

I believe in failure. Not everyone is perfect, and we all make mistakes and that's ok. We can all look back at times where we failed at something. And if you're saying to yourself "i've never failed before" then congratulations but for me, I've failed tests, failed at taking risks, failed at saving my money. I've failed a lot of stuff in my life but that doesn't stop me.

One of the times I failed was when me and my sisters were in the Hamptons. It was a hot summer day. We were bored, so my sister said we should try surfing. As crazy as it sounded, we thought it would be fun and easy. We convinced my mom and booked the lessons for this surf camp. We got ready to go. We got into the car and took off the roof and doors, the sun hitting our faces, Taylor Swift 1989 album blasting out of the jeep. You could hear it from miles away. As we pull up to the surf camp, we get into wet suits and grab surfboards. I grabbed the surfboard with neon colors and a wacky design. The instructors told us how to stand up and paddle. I didn't understand what they were saying since they were using such fancy terms. However, I hoped for the best and just went with the flow, thinking to myself that this seemed easy enough. We went out to the frigid water, barely able to hold the surfboard. I realized that this was going to be harder than I thought. I wanted to quit right as I felt the water touch me. I got into the water just trying to ignore the temperature. I placed the board in the water and tried standing up, but the wave knocked me right down. I kept trying, but I kept getting knocked down and wasn't even able to stand up. About 20 minutes passed and I was just sitting on the board, not able to stand up, I was about to get out of the water until the surf instructor told me to just go for it. I didn't understand what just go for it meant. I didn't even know how to stand up on a board, how would I able to go for it? I tried one more time and I fell again.

Wanting to cry since it was so hard, my sister came up to me and tried to help me. She seemed so calm when helping me. I remember her trying to be nice about it since she knew I was frustrated. She helped me a little bit, but still, I was just frustrated and wanted to go home. We were about to go until this perfect-sized wave came up. I gave it one more shot. I remembered the steps the instructors said. I got up and balanced. Shocked I didn't fall yet. I hear my sisters clapping as I did it. I was finally able to stand up and ride the wave! I jumped off the board with a smile on my face. My arms are sore and my ribs are hurting. However, I was happy since after an hour and thirty minutes I finally got it.

At this moment I learned to not give up on myself. If I gave up I would not have stood up, and I would never have wanted to go surfing again. Even though I didn't get it the first time, I eventually got it and it doesn't matter. Even if it takes you a day a week or even a few minutes to get it, everyone has a different learning pace. So just because you didn't get it the first time... just keep trying since to succeed you have to fail first.

I believe in the power of change

By: Josie O'brien

I believe in change. I believe one big or small change can change yourself and how you see others. Back in 2019 I was living in a small town, Wanaka, New Zealand. Then I heard I was moving to NYC in a week. I didn't know what to think. Soon I was already on the plane and didn't think to really say goodbye to my friends and family, thinking I was coming back in a month or less. Finally I arrived after 18 or more long hours of flying by myself. I arrived at my dad's little apartment in Manhattan. The city was like a huge castle compared to my small town in the mountains. I couldn't count how many times I got lost in it trying to find my destination, I was terrified.

“In this city you can't be shy and hide away” that's what my dad constantly told me the first couple weeks I lived there. Moving to America changed how I see things, and it made it harder for me to connect with people. In my new school I had no one to relate to because no one in my grade knew what it felt like to have a big change, to move. It was hard to make friends and I never did in that school.

The first day at school. It was a hot summer day when my dad walked me to the bus. The bus ride was about an hour long but it could be only a 10 min train ride, but I was too scared to go on a train. I finally arrived at school. It was crowded with students and parents. Students shout over each other. The smell of rubbish surrounds the street and steam is rushing out from under the ground. I was unsure exactly what the steam was. It was just me now and I could be shy and get help from my dad. I had no idea where to go, so I hesitantly walked into the school. I followed the crowd of people going through the school out back into the recess area where everyone was getting into their age groups. It was so loud I couldn't hear my own thoughts. I couldn't figure out where the 6th grade group was, and soon it was me and the 8th grade group and they started to walk inside. I started to panic and I remembered what my dad told me to not be shy, so I asked a teacher in a whisper. She happily showed me where to go, but now I was late and everyone was already in their seats talking to each other. I held my breath and walked in; everyone stopped and looked at me. It felt like a movie where a new girl was introduced in front of the whole class. I slowly sat down in the seat nearest to me.

I believe in change because it can make you braver and more independent. After a few months at the school, I was less shy and more independent in school and around the city. I didn't ask my dad for help, I just figured it out on my own. I adapted to city life. I started to do more hobbies like art and skateboarding.

Think, First, Now, and Then

By: Kayena Pierre

I don't Know. I don't know why, when, or how I felt this way. I always felt different. I was always the daughter who was smart, loud, strong, and stupid. I was raised to be a woman who can cook, clean, and be strong. I had to learn different skills every year. While all my friends were playing, I was learning to iron, clean, cook, socialize, and most of all be a black Haitian American. I was always taught about my heritage and why my skin color was making me a victim of the dangers to the world. My mother always told me "You have a brain, think"! Out of everything in the world the oldest thing I remember is "think". What is "think"? Is it a two-second thing or is it a long process? As I'm writing this, I know what "think" is. Thinking is not a small thing. It is a long process depending on what you are doing. And telling people what you think, or, doing what you think is right, can even put you in jeopardy. But at the same time, thinking can solve problems.

Throughout my whole life, I always put people before me. I never thought about what I did and what I said could affect my future. I always wanted people to like me. I never wanted enemies. Through the years I grew the number of lost friends and dumped friends because I think. I am an insecure/organized person and I know that because every day I organize, make routines, and so on. I never trust people. But now I know I don't care about anyone except myself, my friends, and my family. Now I put myself first.

When I came to Haldane, for the first year I put people before me because a bull has to know its territory. Because it's the animal kingdom out there. You have to know where you stand. But on the last day of school, I was called the N-word. And I didn't understand.

"Cinderella, dressed in yellow, went upstairs to kiss a fellow, by mistake. She kissed a snake. How many doctors will it take! 1 doctor! 2 doctors! 3 doctors! 4!"

We stopped. Sam and Fiona had tripped. And 5 seconds later, a couple of 5th-grade boys started to approach me and my friends. They walked in front of us like they were trying to intimidate us. "N***!" One boy called out. I never heard that word before. I heard the term negro, but never that word. Then all of a sudden my friends surrounded me. "Hey!" Hannah called out. "That is so offensive! Apologize". The boys turned their back and kept walking

"No!" One boy said. My friends came together and started to talk about what happened. "What are we going to do!" I said. "Let's go tell the aides," Said Fiona. We told the aides and we heard they got suspended.

Ever since that day I knew that more things would happen to me. Every day I understand more and more that it's not just one race. It's history, and everyday history repeats itself even if you don't want it to. So I don't care about anyone except for myself and my loved ones. I believe it now and then. I try to be a better person and a better version of myself every day. But it's hard. Most people I'm close to, know that I used to not express myself. But now I can because I think "if food has no flavor add some spice". And my school life definitely needs some spice. It took me a long time to get this far. I believe in now and, then. Because everyone has a version of them now and then. And that is wonderful.

I Believe in Hot Summer Nights

By: Maxwell Sanders

I believe in hot summer nights. The hot breeze of air grazed my shoulders. My friends were screaming with excitement, splashing waves in the pool. It is now 11:30 at night, closer to midnight. We were blooming with happiness, wrestling on floaties. Earlier that night we ate a feast, not a crumb left. We all were super full but couldn't wait patiently for what would happen next. It was now midnight. We jumped out of the pool one after another racing to the parents.

I went inside and started to count. 30... 29... on and on after that till I got to zero. I rushed outside, ran down the street and started to hunt for my friends. "Found you," I said. First one found, five left to go. In the corner of my eye another ran to the base. "Ugh I missed him" I thought to myself. On and on I find people and run. My turn is now up. My brother goes to count. I saw his right eye peering under his hand, but I didn't say anything. On and on we keep playing rounds till we were out of breath.

I suggested we cool down in the pool, they agree. It is now one in the morning, but no one seems to be getting tired. We continued swimming and relaxing in the pool until we heard a howl. The littlest one of us ran to the adults but didn't say a word. My mind was racing with thoughts and worries. I ignored the urge to be scared and continued on with my night. We went inside and watched a movie. The urge to keep my eyes open faded and I drifted off to a dark sleep.

A hot summer night may not sound important to a lot of people and it isn't. But the memories I associate with these types of nights will live on forever. I will always remember that night and it will always hold a special place in my heart. The fun times I had that night will always be with me. The excitement and happiness that I felt was extraordinary and that was the first time I've ever felt that way. So for me I believe in hot summer nights.

I Believe in the Power of Healing

By: Mikey Phillips

When I was nine years old, I was at my cousin's house. We were on the top of a big hill with a toy car that was red, but you move with your feet. Of course I got in it. I wasn't going to go down the hill, but my cousin pushed it down the hill and it was bumpy and the wind felt nice because it was a hot summer day. I was going so fast and hit a fence and it fell over. I was laying there in excruciating pain, and my cousin pulled the car off of me. And I knew I broke my arm because it hurt so bad. But then my mom and dad came outside and saw what happened and then brought me to their car and went to the hospital.

When I got there, they put us in a room for a while and it was boring but we had to wait. Finally, a doctor came in and we scanned my arm. And it broke really bad. It broke so badly that they were going to do surgery. Thankfully, they didn't and after that they sent me home for like three to four days. But then they wanted us to go to a hospital in New York City. When I walked in it was all white walls and it had that hospital smell and it was loud because kids were crying and nurses were walking.

When I got home, my mom and dad would get me whatever I wanted. When I got the cast off the doctor said I can play football again so I did but I don't play football anymore. I believe in broken bones because you get what you want.

I believe in Minecraft

By: Andres Lopez

It was just supposed to be a normal day of the week, a fun day that would just let me be in peace and quiet. Turning on the game minecraft and playing on my world was pretty nice. It was just passing time building with endless possibilities, not paying attention to anything. Three messages pop up of a couple friends joining my world. I remembered that none of these friends had joined until now. They started typing messages, random words as I was confused why they were here. I turned around to look for things to give them in my skybase. A minute passes by and while I'm looking through my storage room, I get knocked down with a hit of a sword taking health away. I saw all of them going towards me and they started damaging me while I had nothing except my sword. I killed them all off and gathered my armour getting ready to fight. I was taking damage through the fight and I was getting low on health. They kept on coming. I knew I couldn't fight this alone. With my blocks that I had in my inventory I blocked off a path so I could quickly alert a friend and not die. With this I quickly called my friend. First ring: no answer, try again: no answer. Finally, the third time my good friend picked up and I told him to get on minecraft and that I needed help. He agreed to help me win this fight. After a couple minutes of fighting back and finally kicking them off the server, I thanked him for all his help, and realized that sometimes battles can't be fought by yourself and friends are needed.

The server went on at peace and fixes were needed, but that would be handled easily as me and my friend Cooper know one thing now we can use: teamwork. After the chaos of the day happened, I felt comfortable knowing that I had a friend that helped me save the day. I've gone by helping friends and using teamwork in online games with friends. This game helped me build a relationship with Cooper.

A couple weeks ago me and my Cooper were exploring the end dimension looking down in terror trying not to die from the enderman that would kill you if you glared them in the eyes. I died when I heard the noise of a hostile enderman and all my supplies splat out of my body. I ran back and Cooper waited for me looking out and scouting for more enderman so I wouldn't die. After, we were teleporting around and checking for end cities while exploring this dangerous dimension. Then I saw Cooper's death message. I gathered his supplies and looted the city in his honor in his failed final attempt of trying to get to me. He said I needed to die to respawn back to the over world. I gathered my supplies, put them in an ender chest and jumped into the dark void as I saw nothing but blackness and void. I gave him his supplies and supplies I looted and gave him his stuff back plus supplies I found in the end as well. I helped him and started growing farms. With both of our supplies, we successfully made a farm of teleporting fruits and nether wart. When the sun set and the day was over on minecraft, I watched as the sunset grew down and monsters would take over. After it became night, I slept in a bed and continued building the next day in the breeze of the blocky game called minecraft which I play and cherish.

!!! I believe in Soccer !!!

By: Cooper Maletz

Soccer has always been a way for me to cope with life. I play soccer with friends and sometimes family. I first learnt to play soccer when I was 3 here in North America right here in Cold spring, but I only played here for a while because I had to move to Germany because of my dad's job in the car company Volkswagen and that was hard really hard. I missed my friends when I left and then the time had come to go to school in Germany.

I made a friend a day before I had to go to school and he ended up being in his class!! At that point in time I was making friends but missed my parents whenever I left for school. At school I played soccer with all my friends and over the years some friends left the school and new friends joined. It was always so sad when a friend left, especially when my best friend did. Even to this day I still play soccer with my new friends and keep in touch with the old ones.

Recently I played in a team with my new friends. We won some and lost some games but always were happy when we played. Until it closed due to the rise in covid cases!!! One of my most treasured memories was some of my last days in my old school where I played soccer with my friends Shardul and Uluc. They were great friends, my best friends. We have been friends for quite a few years now. When we would practice soccer, we would kick the soccer ball up in the air and do long passes, or we would have a goalkeeper and when someone would score they would become the new goalkeeper. We even played a lot of soccer in PE (although it was not called PE in that school). My friends were from all over the world because I was in an international school. Shardul is from India and Uluc is from Turkey. Even today I still play soccer with my new friends and it is still my favorite sport and always will be. And that is why I BELIEVE IN SOCCER!!!

I Believe in Getting Bodied

By: Dominik Kulan

I believe in getting bodied, this may seem funny at first glance but it's true! It all started at my first hockey game that had contact being allowed. We were in Pittsburgh which was five and a half hours from home. We started the game with a draw. The team I was on had won the draw and we got the puck and that's when it happened, BOOM! My ears ringing and my head in pain, I didn't know what happened my whole body was in pain. I was in shock. It felt like a flash bang went off. I slowly stumbled to my feet. I looked around and I started to skate. My coach yelled suck it up and that's when I figured it out I need to get stronger, way stronger. I played the rest of the game, and then the tournament.

Once I got home, I found out I need to work out more. I started to go to the gym more and more. I had to get stronger, faster, better, and hey it's working. I get better and better. It is visible at practice.

Upside Down Hearts

By: Ellie Mahoney

When I was little, I thought that having pets and being able to love and care for another life was exciting, and boy was I right. I believe in upside down hearts. I know it seems that pets and upside down hearts have absolutely nothing to do with each other, but in my case, they do.

I still remember the smell of peppermint and excitement trickling through the quiet halls of my dark home. A warm glow bouncing off the ornaments. It was Christmas. Even though there was no snow that Christmas, it still felt magical. By the time we opened all our presents, wrapping paper covered the floor. Little did we know, we still had one more present coming. My step mom's parents walked in with a somewhat small box wrapped in blue wrapping paper. "One more present, guys!" I had already gotten all that I wanted (or so I thought) what else could we be getting? They put the box on the coffee table, anxious for us to open it. We started unwrapping the paper not realizing it had a lid for us to open up. "Paper?" I asked. It was a paper company box that they had wrapped. "No guys, take off the lid." We started to take it off when we saw... "A puppy!" I screamed. It was a tiny brown boxer with big paws. "His name is Luke." My dad said. As I held him, I saw he had a little upside down heart on the bridge of his nose. At that moment, I was in complete euphoria. This was my absolute state of happiness. In my mind, the little heart on his nose represented my euphoria, as a sign.

Looking back now, I am so grateful for all of the things my dog got me through, and what he will get me through later in life. So I believe in upside down hearts because even though I was only seven at the time, I knew that this dog was gonna be mine, and that little heart was proof.

King of the Monsters

By: Kaito Kester

I believe in the importance of an iconic franchise known as Godzilla. Godzilla is one of the most well known franchises in movie history from a dormant dinosaur under the bottom of the ocean unseen to the human eye, to a terrifying beast destroying everything in its path. With every booming sound of its feet and the screams of citizens running from the beam of atomic energy destroying every single thing it encounters with. But nobody even thinks about asking why he is doing this?

I remember the time I first got into Godzilla, watching the first ever movie I watched in the franchise, Godzilla 2014. As I watched the entire movie, my obsession with the franchise was slowly increasing as if there was adrenaline coursing through my veins, every single piece of it full of excitement. The audio was not as loud when watching it at my home. But it was just enough to have a very enjoyable experience, watching monsters throwing each other from building to building, explosions and blasts of missiles tearing down the entire city of San Francisco, and watching Godzilla going head-to-head with two giant monsters. Both of them have a dark and gray exoskeleton covering their entire body with weird spider-like legs starting from big in the front to small at the rear. Oddly shaped heads with glowing orange eyes in a narrow shape. A mouth with triangular jaws that take the form of a hooked shape and a flat triangular-shaped head that extends out backwards. They both look the same except one of them is bigger than the other and the smaller one has pterosaur-like wings. They both looked very odd and looked as if they were alien. The movie was entertaining and most importantly, told us why he was doing all this destruction against us.

Nature is a very beautiful, fascinating and amazing thing if you look at it very carefully. Many creatures from small insects scouring around the forest floor to birds with colorful patterns and singing sweet songs, chirping from tree to tree. Maybe life in the sea where you can see many schools of fish with many designs and colors swimming from many parts of a coral reef. But what if all those beautiful things were gone? Well that's because of pollution, war, climate change and many more, because of humanity itself. We as a whole had changed many things due to these problems, such as the deforestation of the Amazon Rainforest, glaciers collapsing and rising sea levels little by little, extinctions of many animals like the Dodo bird, nuclear weapons that turned a peaceful place into a barren wasteland uninhabitable for almost an eternity. Which is why Godzilla's here, to stop what we're doing, to avenge what has fallen to the hands of mankind, to let Humanity know that they are not the apex predators... but under the apex predator.

I remember after I finished watching Godzilla 2014, I said to myself these five words, "I want to watch more!" And I was true to my word. One by one, I watched every Godzilla movie out there. Some were good and some were bad. But what impressed me the most, was the first movie that started the entire franchise, Godzilla 1954. I got a little bored of the movie, but when I watched the end of it, there was only one quote that stuck with me, "If we detonate another Nuclear Weapon, then maybe we will awaken another Godzilla", and that quote will stick with me forever. But all in all, his importance will always be with him, to make the world a better place and teach humanity that nothing can stop him. All hail to Godzilla, the King of the Monsters.

I Believe in Christmas

By: Luke Bozsik

Christmas has to be the most exciting day of the year, right? Christmas is a great way to end the year! This holiday can bring lots of families and friends together. From going to a friend's house to play with your new toys, to going to visit your family, they're both very enjoyable.

It was the Christmas morning of 2013. It was snowing outside earlier but still very bright and happy. My brother and I were so excited to wake up to so many presents that it would take hours to count. Just like every other Christmas, we had woken up very early and had to wait for our parents to get up so that we could finally open our presents. Wouldn't you also be so excited to wake up to a Christmas tree with a lot of presents under it?

It was around 8 A.M and our parents had finally woken up. We had no idea where to start! I remember opening my first present and it was a "Star Wars" themed bike. I was so excited to start learning how to ride a bike so I could ride with my big brother! I was so happy with the bike that I wasn't even worried about the other presents.

After checking out the bike for a bit, I finally moved on to the other presents. I had fun opening up the rest of them and I was so excited to start playing... Until, our parents said "there's one more present for you guys". My brother and I had no idea what it could be! Our parents said that we have to find it first. We were looking all around the house until we looked in our parent's room. We saw a little black puppy with fur as shiny as a diamond. She was sleeping in our parent's bed and she was snoring very loudly. We ended up naming her "Bella" and to this day we still have her. She is now 8 years old and she sleeps like a bear that is in hibernation.

That one Christmas has changed my life forever. She was the first dog I've ever had and she has definitely brought our family closer together. Isn't it crazy how just one holiday can change somebody's life? That Christmas can compare to other Christmases because as we get older we don't get excited about getting toys anymore, but there is always something that is important about the holiday which was Bella for that Christmas. Just having one more family member can make each Christmas better by bringing us together.

I Believe in Thunderstorms

By: Lyla Chandler

.... I believe in Thunderstorms.. My brother and I sat stretched out on the hard leather couch. It was late June, and it had been an unusually hot day. We sat our backs leaning against the cold surface of the freezer door, the unusual feeling like a tingling sensation. My brother and I each held a popsicle in one hand; my brother's was strawberry, and mine was coconut. The melted popsicle slinked down the stick and I constantly had to catch it. My brother and I stood up and flopped down on the hard leather couch. As my brother sat in the cool shade behind the safety off the curtains, I lay in the sun's oppressive heat. A slight buzzing sound of a fly filled the room. It felt like five minutes was an eternity. Suddenly, we heard a muffled banging on the door....

My brother looked up in surprise as I leaned outwards until my face almost pressed up against the glass, I saw a figure of a person... "Hey kids! Could you open the door for me please? This is really heavy!" I realized the figure was my mom, I went and heaved open the door for my mother, the sun shined directly in my eyes as I stumbled back, almost tripping on the couch corner. A massive pile of laundry that looked at least 6 feet wide squeezed through the door. Once my mother was inside and had planted the massive load of laundry next to the washing machine she said, "We are going over to a friend's house for their birthday!" "so get ready we need to be there in 30 minutes"

I was slightly annoyed at my mom for not telling me earlier, but I did as she said. I wore a white top with yellow flowers, pink jean shorts and a shiny blue necklace. "Cmon!" I hear my brother say as I rush out the door and hop into the back of the car...

As my brother played with the rearview mirror, I thought about how much fun it would be when we got there! Their family has a trampoline in the back and I couldn't wait to use it! As we pulled into the driveway, I realized there were alot more kids here than I expected. There were groups of kids running around and I heard loud music...

As I walked in the door the music got louder and louder like it was trying to crush me. People were all around me and I couldn't find the door to the backyard, Then, through the sea of people I saw it. A large glass sliding door, the door was unusually big. it was certainly taller than everyone else there at the time....

I squeezed through the people and slid open the door. As I slammed it shut and stumbled back, the music became just a ring in my ear...

I turn around to look where I was, "Trees, Swingset, a shed...oh!" There in the corner by the woods was the trampoline! I could hear the other kids muffled laughter as they jumped together, I started to sprint towards them, I was so excited! their laughter got louder as I got closer, and then finally stopped as they saw me. "Hi Lyla!" one of the kids said as I crawled onto the trampoline. "What are you guys playing?" "Zombie!" two kids shouted at once, then looked at eachother and giggled. "Zombie..?" I had never heard of that game before and it seemed odd. "Yea! The zombie closes their eyes and chases us around!" "That sounds fun! Can I play?" "Yea! But ur zombie, Tag!" we all laughed and I closed my eyes...

We had been playing for hours, and the sky was getting darker and darker. Suddenly I felt a raindrop, one, two, three, then a whole bunch. "It's raining!" "Yeah?" "Maybe we should go inside.." "a little rain doesn't matter!" "Ok.."

After a few minutes I heard a loud sound like a growl, but different. It was thunder! At this point I was shaking. I hated thunderstorms ever since I was a kid. And the fact we were on a tall, metal trampoline didn't make me feel any better..

"Guys lets just go inside I heard thunder!" "Oh we're fine! Plus, the parents said we were ok soooooo.."

I knew staying out here was a bad idea but I didn't want to be a bummer so I stayed...

When I started to really be scared was when I saw lightning. It was as if the night sky was a broken lightbulb, flickering unexpectedly, and then going dark for a long period of time. It was pouring by now, and I was starting to freak out, I tried to get to the trampoline exit but I just ended up falling. There were too many kids around me and too much noise. I stood up, made my way out of the trampoline best I could and ran through the yard into the house...

It was quieter now. Parents sat at the coffee table and talked to each other in a formal manner. I walked over to my mom, hugged her. "Can we go home please?"

I Believe in Change

By: Nico Lagerman

I believe in change. I never did before, and I still sometimes don't, but it's something that can really change your life for the better, even if it doesn't seem that way at first. Many things that changed for me when I was younger were small things like getting a new bed, or watching a new tv show, but in 5th grade I had a very big change.

I lived in Brooklyn, I always had. We lived in an apartment near our school. But it was kind of small. My brother and I wanted to have our own rooms, and our parents wanted to get out of the city for some fresh air. This, however, meant leaving Brooklyn, the place I was familiar with, the place where I knew all my friends, the place that I called home. But my parents soon decided to move to Cold Spring once I was done with 5th grade, so I could graduate with all my friends. When school came to an end each year, I looked forward to it, because I knew a few months later I would be seeing my friends and having a good time when it started back up. But this year I didn't want to leave, because I knew I would never see some of them ever again.

But that last day came anyway. We all gathered outside the school when school was done, and everyone said their goodbyes. Brooklyn had many middle schools, and it was randomly chosen which one you went to, so many people wouldn't be seeing each other as frequently. I wasn't going to see anyone much at all anymore. But I tried to brush it off. I said goodbye to everybody, told the people who were crying it was going to be okay, and helped get my friend who was hiding from his parents in the playground. It was very hard to say goodbye to my best friend named Gus. We spent lots of time playing tag and videogames, exploring his family's beach house countless times, scaring our neighbors in the parking lot, and so much more. If I had stayed in Brooklyn, I would have been in the same middle school as him. Fortunately, he was able to visit us every now and then and I was able to keep in touch with some of my friends using the internet.

This change really pained me, but has opened a whole new world to me in a whole new place. My brother and I now have separate rooms, a better school with smaller classes, and the ability to go on a hike without having to drive all the way out of the city. And although I left some friends behind, I've met all sorts of new people and friends, so change really can't be that bad.

A New Beginning

By: **Nicolo Masella**

A new beginning, a bland topic to talk about but is a gateway to many places, or even the best thing to happen to you. Personally I haven't had many new beginnings but the some I did get were things that changed me forever.

I was 5 years old and my mom had decided to take me to a fun place. She never told me where we were going though. We had pulled up to a place that looked like a gym called the gravity vault. I had no idea what it was called but it seemed like a lot of people were there, the building towering over me filling my imagination with a million ideas of what it could be, and it was so inviting to just sit in the parking lot. As my family and I walked in, I saw a large crowded area with rock walls up to the ceiling. I had seen two people starting to race up one of the walls. People were cheering around them yelling to their friends about who would win. I had looked back at the front desk and saw my mom had checked me into a lesson about rock climbing.

I would say that I was brave and climbed the whole wall without getting scared, but that would be a lie. As soon as I stepped up to the wall my heart stopped. I had looked up and down and saw this towering wall with holes to hold on to. The instructor had me put a harness on with a rope attached on the back leading to the ceiling. Instantly I wanted to get out of there and be safe at home on the couch. The instructor had told me to start climbing; I had started shaking and almost froze. I slowly started to ascend the wall. It felt as if I was moving in slow motion. As I got to the middle of the wall I looked down and froze in place; at that exact moment all I wanted to do was get down from there. Soon enough I did get down and never wanted to do it again, until I heard from my mom on the way home that my older brother does rock climbing and would do it with me. Years later we went rock climbing and I fell in love with rock climbing. Because of that one day I went rock climbing, I found a hobby I could work on for the rest of my life.

This story was about something that I was so afraid of in the beginning that became something I wanted to improve on for the rest of my life. Doing something new is difficult to do one your own; being able to have support from friends and family can make this new chapter a whole lot easier to start. Sometimes taking the scarier route to what you want can show you a new and brighter path that leads ahead in life. Being able to take the risk and try something new even if it is scary can be the best way to find a brand new chapter in your life.

A whole new beginning.

This I Believe

By: Savannah Duggan

I believe in self-motivation. I believe that if you actually try and put the effort into the task at hand, you can accomplish your goals or any type of challenge.

When I was about eight, I would always ask my parents for help. I would never want to try or do anything by myself. I remember this one specific time. I was sitting down at the kitchen table, where I would normally sit. It was late at night, I could smell dinner, it was almost ready. I was still working on my math homework that I had already been working on for an hour. I was having such a struggle figuring out how to add and subtract fractions. I had already tried to ask my mom two times how to do these problems but she told me to try them on my own. I hated getting that response. I was always scared of getting the answers wrong in front of everyone in my class. I felt that they would be judgmental if I didn't get a question right.

I remember just listening to the raindrops hitting the roof as I tried to concentrate and figure out the math problems.

Soon enough I actually decided to look at the equations instead of just procrastinating. I picked up my pencil and started to work. But all I could think about was the embarrassment of getting all the answers wrong in front of everyone. But I tried to not let that feeling get the best of me like it always did. I remember actually finishing the homework by myself and feeling confident. I was so, so impressed with myself.

After I wrote about this memory, I realised how much I grew as a person and how much my self confidence went up. One thing I would tell my past self is to not let one math problem reflect how other people look at you as a human being. Everyone makes mistakes, that is completely normal! This is why I believe in self-motivation.

Hope

By: Ty

I believe in hope. Hope is what gets you through the bad day and is how you overcome challenges. Hope is to believe in better days when you have a bad one. I believe in hope because if you have a bad day, week, month, or year, hope will bring you to a good day.

It was about mid day when I got home from my trip in South Hampton. South Hampton in the summer was a special place. The hot sun shines on you as you lay on the soft soothing sand and hear the crashing waves. This was always a pleasant experience that I looked forward to in the summer. But that was over and all I cared about was seeing my dog Louise. Every time I get home from an event my dog jumps in excitement like a rabbit, scratching at the door and running around the kitchen counter in excitement. He was only a puppy so he had everlasting energy.

But what made him special was that he was my dog. He would follow me around, he would always want to play with me. Louise was not like my dog Bella, calm, and collected. Louise was a curious, energetic, adventurous, joyful dog. For example, Louise would always love taking walks in the woods and in town. He loved chasing after deer, squirrels, and sniffing the cool fresh air. He loved running to the pool and jumping in the cold water after playing soccer in the backyard. Louise was my perfect dog.

When we got back from South Hampton he was not the curious, energetic dog I knew him as. He was calm like Bella but not in a good way. We had brought Louise to the vet and he had eaten something poisonous.

A few weeks later he died.

Hope can be a desire or a wish. You can only truly understand hope when you experience it. Not everyone has experienced hope but we all have it. Hope is what got me through the unbearable pain.

Covid-19 and Volleyball Do Not Mix

By: Aine Duggan

Everyone says to face your fears but what if you didn't know about a fear you had?

It was the last day of school before spring break. At 2pm, the bell rang ending Spanish and I walked to the cafeteria to wait the hour before volleyball practice started. That hour was always fun, everyone from the team was doing homework, talking, or even getting food in town. I had been talking with my friends when the coach came in to take attendance. We all were there and ready to start practice.

Everyone grabbed their bags and headed towards the gym. As we entered the gym, everyone rushed to get the net set up and bring out all the equipment. The net was set up and everyone warmed up. "Since this is the last day before spring break, we can have a relaxing practice," our coach told us. We got to pick what we did for the hour and a half. "We can either do scrimmage or-". We all rushed to create three teams and were ready to play. After a couple minutes, the other team that wasn't on the court cycled on and this continued for a good twenty minutes.

After those twenty minutes passed, the gym door opened. The team turned to acknowledge the person at the door then went right back to playing. The school secretary was at the door and she called the coach over to talk. When she was finished talking to our coach, she called one of our team members over. I watched as her face went from smiles to tears with the flick of a switch. The game gradually slowed down, not to a complete stop, as everyone started to notice the commotion. When the secretary and the girl left, our coach came over to us. "Ok girls huddle in." We all jogged over hoping for an explanation. "So we all saw her get pulled out of practice but she is not in any trouble at all. She has been *contact traced*." We all stopped motion and our faces went pale like a ghost. That meant that someone in our grade might have Covid and we might have it. "Who has it?" "What class?" "Who else might be contact traced?" Everyone was yelling questions at the same time. "I don't even know who it is. I'm not allowed to be told. If you want to continue with the game, you can but if you want to sit out that is perfectly fine." I sat out for a little while and as my nerves calmed down, I joined the game again.

We heard the door open again and it was the secretary. I knew what was going to happen. She pulled another girl out and we all started to get scared again. Now we knew that it was someone in our school and the only question was who was it? The same little speech was made and more girls sat out this time. The question that kept repeating in my head: *who was going to be called next?* The secretary came back and she called my sister's name. That was when I was the most scared during this. As my sister and I collected our stuff, most of the team started crying. As the door shut, I could hear the same speech being made become fainter and fainter until I just heard my own thoughts. I was brought to the nurse's office and I saw a list of people's parents that needed to be called. My parents were already called and were on their way to pick up my sister and me. I had found out that I wasn't in quarantine but my sister was. When I got home, I went into my mom's room and my sister went into our room. Even though I wasn't in quarantine, I still had to separate from everyone in my house. I just cried for about an hour straight. Everyone was texting each other to make sure that they were ok.

You never really know how scary something is until you are put in that position. I believe if you meet a fear that you never knew existed, you should keep calm and don't get all panicked because when everyone is scared, more commotion is created and more scary thoughts will pop into your head.

Listening the First Time Can Prevent Total Catastrophe

By: Anthony Bailey

Sometimes you are playing outside or inside and one of your parents keep calling dinner or your name for something important or just to say a word or two to you. But if you ignore them or stall like saying 5 more minutes, they will keep and keep and keep on calling you because they want you there for something and you would never know the information that they could give if you didn't go there. My story all starts on a windy, cloudy october day where my parents are dragging me and my siblings into the old volvo we had to go to an adult birthday party. They didn't trust us alone because my oldest brother was 8 or 9 and they werent going to leave a 6 or 7 year old and a 4 or 5 year old in the hands of an 8 or 9 year old. That would be irresponsible so I had to go.

When we got there, there were so many older kids that I didn't know a single kid except for my brothers, so I tried to have fun but ended up in front of a TV. Then an hour or two passed by and I saw kids riding this zipline that was extended from two trees. Both trees had a wooden platform to stand on when you got on and off, and it was a pretty short distance that would probably last about 5-10 seconds. I was also a little to small to reach it so I had to be lifted by an adult. But the second I got on it, you can feel yourself woosh right down it and grabbing onto the handles and feeling your body cut right through the air like a knife and the adrenaline build up until you hit the tree with your feet and drop onto the other wooden platform and got back into the line or did something else. I know I went on the zipline so many times and never got tired of it because even though it was a pretty short distance the experience was incredible and it was the first zipline I went on.

Later when the party ended and my parents were finishing up their conversation I hear my dad's voice echo around the house as he said in a loud tone "BAILEY BOYS TIME TO GO". And after I heard those words I saw my brothers dash in that car as I'm going on platform for the zipline ignoring my fathers wishes. When I was on the platform there was the handles attached to the zip line and before my decision, I heard my father call out again "BAILEY BOYS WE HAVE TO GO, GET IN THE CAR". I thought about it for a second like what am I doing or I should go, but it wouldn't hurt if I quickly did it. So I knew it was too high up to grab so I jumped and with the second in the air reaching for the handle I jumped too far to the right and just slowly watched myself fall right down to the ground.

When I got up from the ground I was checking for injuries but then caught my right hand, and the joint in my right hand had went upwards and a little bit backwards almost overlapping the bone in my right arm. After I saw this I felt some unbelievable, excruciating pain shoot up through the joint in my wrist as I felt my pulse through my arm, quaking my bones. I soon screamed at the unendurable pain got more fierce and every movement I made would sent more shocks of pain as I ran to my parents. I could feel it in every part of my body as I started swelling up and growing numb every heartbeat I had.

That was the most physical pain I felt at one time in my life. As a result, I was not able to do any physical activity for a few months and I developed a phobia of heights. The cast was also very uncomfortable, itchy, and very hot in the spring. So sometimes listening to your parents can change the outcome for the better or the worse. Would you rather listen to your parents the first time and go in the car or ignore them and do something dangerous that could seriously injure yourself and have to spend months with the injury, or just sit in the car and get back to what you were doing?

Midnight Dinner

By: Daniel Nakabayashi

I have a family of eight, three sisters, two brothers, and a mother and father. Being the youngest of six, you get annoyed with everybody, and kind of wish they would leave your life. You would say somethings that you wish you would never say, and somethings you say can really push somebody's buttons. But one Monday, it was different, no one was fighting at the dinner table, or storming off because they were annoyed at someone. It was unreal, they were all laughing, and the only reason why I can't grasp if it was a dream or an actual memory is because it was at nine or ten when we were eating and eleven when finished. I was still in first grade, staying up till eleven eating dinner, but I didn't say a word about it, because I just never wanted this to end, but it ended sooner than it started.

Next thing I know everything is in pieces: my brother found a home in Delaware, all my sisters were going to college, and my parents got divorced. All that I had left was my brother. In the present day, I still think about that night: now my brother is graduating this year, and my oldest sister is living in Beacon, and my oldest brother is still in Delaware, and my second oldest sister is planning on getting an apartment in the summer, and my brother is planning to travel around the country after he graduates.

I Believe in The Power of Faith

By: Diego Digiglio

There has always been a higher being; yes? There was one being higher than everything else that created the universe and the earth. That being created three places: heaven, purgatory, and hell. Those places are where humans go when they die. Most likely if a human accepts God and the holy spirit and they always try to do better they will go to purgatory and eventually get to heaven. That is what I have always had faith in that one day I could go to heaven and be by God's side. Well that's where I believe my grandfather went when he died. That's where my story begins.

For my whole life my grandfather and I were very close. We called him Abu which was short for abuelo. We also had similar interests and we talked together whenever I was with him. One time when we were in Puerto Rico we were on a small boat that we owned. The boat's name was Wasabi. We were driving the boat out to the mangroves right off the coast of the island. I would be asking him questions about fishing, and the boat, or I would be plainly asking him where we would be going. Most of the time we would go to a mangrove island where there were two small patches of mangroves and down the middle of them was this long and wide stream of caribbean water. There were also other canals I would swim up and down. Though my grandfather would stay on the boat because he didn't like being in the hot sun. So while he was there he would cook us lunch on the mini grill we had on the boat. One day we were driving out on our bigger boat and he looked at me and said, "Come up here I want to show you something" So I walked up to the driver's seat and he pointed towards an island of mangroves and said "You see those mangroves over there?" I shook my head yes innocently like the young child I was. "Those are your mangroves" I looked at him confused and said, "I own those?" He replied "No! Don't be silly, those are **your** mangroves. I named them after you! I also named those two other mangroves after your brother and sister." I sat there astonished. "I have something named after me?" I thought. And after that day I always looked at my mom and asked, "Which Island was mine?" That is one of my favorite memories with him. He has always been my role model and I will always remember him as a funny, smart, and caring person.

A couple years later before I turned ten he was diagnosed with cancer. He had rare stomach cancer that was sending him in and out of the hospital and I never really got to spend much time with him after that. One day we were driving down to my grandparent's house and I asked my mom, "So, what is the news on Abu?" I then saw my mom's expression. It was sad and solemn, and I didn't understand why. When we arrived at their house we caught up with each other and just relaxed. I then asked if we could drive to the hospital to see Abu because he hadn't been at the house. My mom immediately then called my siblings and her sister upstairs to talk with us. I thought that I had done something wrong. But, she wanted to tell us that Abu had died. My face was in total shock, my brain didn't comprehend at the time that I would never see him again and that he was gone forever. I had thought about all the times that I was with him. I never really talked to him out of choice. I talked to him when I was bored or we had to be together like at dinner or on the boat. The only time I really talked to him was when we were in his workshop working together and those were the times I really remember. But, as I progressed in my life I slowly realized that he lived on in my life, in me and my family. And I have faith that one day I'll see him again.

I Believe in...

By: Hannah Sporbert

Family is one of the most important things to someone. Family is there when no one else is; family will always be by your side. Family sticks by your side in the long run. While everyone else leaves they stay; losing friends is hard but losing someone you've called family or consider a family member like a cousin, sister or brother is harder than anything I've ever experienced. When you lose a friend, who do you cry to? Most likely family, When you get hurt, who's there to make you feel better? Most likely family. No matter how much you fight with your mom, dad, or sisters/brothers, they will always have your back when someone or something hurts you.

My family and I were on vacation in Wildwood, NJ. We were on the ferris wheel with me, my mom, my dad, sister and my brother. My dad was on the phone with a friend and they were having a conversation and he randomly said, "Uh I'm on a ferris wheel with my family can I call you later?" and my family and I started laughing so hard, I felt like I couldn't breathe. We thought that was the funniest thing.

Families have great moments but also really tough ones... When my grandma died a couple of years ago, my mom and grandpa had a really hard time. She died of stage four breast cancer that had spread all over. We all were so upset about it. Me and my grandma had an unbreakable bond. We always had these sour gumdrops. I hated the red ones so she had them all the time; I stuck to the green ones. My grandma was the grinch. She hated Christmas so much, she didn't really see the point in giving gifts on a day when you can give it to them any other day. My mom got her a grinch stuffed animal so she kept it out all year round. So whenever it was Christmas she would bring it to the tree and put it next to the tree just sitting there. After her death I got the grinch because I had a bunch of stuffed animals. I still have that grinch. My mom and I put it up every Christmas to have a little piece of her with us on Christmas.

When she died I was in school, so when me and my siblings got home we saw our parents on the couch which is odd cause my dad worked up in Cold Spring while me and my mom, me and my sister and brother lived in Staten Island for some of our life. We knew something was wrong because my grandma was in the hospital for three months prior. Even through this time we had our moments: We had our sad ones, we had our happy ones, and we had our funny ones. We all had each other's back. If someone was upset about grandma we'd go upstairs and talk to each other; to this day we are still upset about it.

Family is always going to be by your side in dark times. They're always gonna have your back no matter what's going on.

The unknown

By: Ivan Reynoso

1000 years ago there was a myth that existed but disappeared into the forgotten. Its name is known as the unknown. But in this timeline no one knows or remembers the legend that existed but it still existed in the books but no one is interested to read it. A lot of children have a lot of good dreams, bad dreams, and sometimes the future.

When you hear the word future a lot of children think of it has to grow up and staying best friends forever, but in reality you will slowly depart away from them. But when some adults hear the word future their answer is quite interesting if you see how is there a huge difference between a child and an adult. Some adults do not want to move forward they want to move backwards. That's right. A lot of adults are stuck in the past. Normally it's because they had amazing childhood and teenagehood. I think that's how you call it, but as soon they become an adult they at the beginning think it's easy but in reality is not. Being an adult means facing "unknowns."

When I was a 10 year old having a normal day as a kid you know. But I get this weird dream that looks unique. It's like I'm in my house on my bed just relaxing but I was feeling some Unknown like a movement and a feeling but I was not sure what kind of feeling it was so I got up from my bed and checked the window to see what's happening outside my house. My body was frozen for a second when I see something terrifying. I look down just see the my house is in a completely different dimension but not only I saw that I also saw a Unknown creatures around the dimension like it was just like oxygen, they were everywhere. They were yellow, purple polka dots, and a size of a great white shark. In the dream I was only focusing the Unknown dream, and the world at that point but I just realised none of my family members are home so I was confused where were they so I called each name but I left the front door opened so I accidentally slipped into the Unknown dimension but when I was falling down I see the Unknown creature eating my limbs so I screamed loud but no one came. But I look down I see an infinite loop of a spiral world so I keep falling, falling, falling thinking I might die but I see this scene where I was in a grave giving my respects to a person. But I couldn't see the name of the person but as soon I was trying to read the name I wake up from my bed confused.

During that day thinking about the Unknown dream I had that night so I couldn't keep my mind away from that but the next day I ignore it but 2 years later the same dream came up but when I saw it I remember the dream. I said to myself, this look familiar but what is it?

Something I believe

By: James Frommer

When I get home, I usually try to get right to work on my homework. It's not good to wait until the last minute to finish homework, or complete a project, though occasionally I still do. I learned the lesson not to procrastinate a few times, but one stuck up over the rest, and it happened this year.

Around December of 2021, I heard the Debate Club was starting for the year. I had wanted to join the previous year, but hadn't gotten the chance, so I took the opportunity to join this year. While at first I was apprehensive about it, by the end of the first meeting, I found my worries melting away. I learned that we had debates every week on different topics. Unfortunately, since they were not regular school assignments, I stalled working on them. Only on the last day(s), would I hastily prepare my arguments. However, that strategy wouldn't always work, especially on bigger debates.

In April, it was announced there would be debates between different schools in May. The week before it, I began to work on my arguments, but it wasn't enough. I still had too much unfinished work. As a result, the day before the debate I panicked, and tried to finish them by staying up late working, but in the end, they were still incomplete. My first debate, (of the 3) was one of my 2 unfinished debates, and I did terribly. I had no pre-prepared points and was stuttering the whole time. I knew I would lose the debate, because I procrastinated and didn't prepare for it.

I already knew not to procrastinate, but this experience reinforced the idea in some way. I learned that procrastinating is a bad strategy and also procrastinating with work once can lead to procrastinating with work every time if it becomes a habit or something. Though it's too early to see if this lesson has done much for me, I know it has helped me a little on several occasions. In conclusion, I believe procrastinating is detrimental.

I Believe in Pizza

By: Luke Tippett

I believe in Pizza. Pizza is one of the most popular foods in the whole world. You know when you're teeth sink into the delicious, creamy cheese and then CRUNCH, you hit the crust. That's what it feels like to bite into a delicious slice of pizza. I remember the first time I had stuffed crust pepperoni and sausage pizza. YUUUUUM. My first bite I tasted the delicious sausage and then the pepperoni. Then once I was almost done I got to the crust. My first bite of the stuffed crust was the most magical, delicious bite of food that I ever had in my mouth. My tongue was practically sizzling the taste was so extravagant.

And then there's Sicilian pizza, DELISH! Sicilian pizza is basically regular pizza but big. It is this thick crusted rectangular slice of pizza that is like 4 inches tall. What's amazing about Sicilian pizza is that you can get it with stuffed crust since the crust is so thick. So just imagine this, you go to eat your stuffed crust Sicilian pizza, and BOOM, first you taste the cheese, then the sauce, and then the stuffed crust, every single bit out of that pizza you get the same amazing taste. It gets its name from Sicily, Italy. And Italy is the place where pizza originated, where it all started!

Pizza is also something that you can go out last minute to maybe eat with friends or family or just to have it as comfort food. To sum it all up, pizza is one of the most popular, delicious foods in the world, and stuffed crust is super good.

I Believe In Basketball

By: Marisa Peters

I first started playing basketball when I was 14 months old. When I learned how to walk, I walked with a basketball. My first memory of basketball was when I was 3 years old and learning how to control the ball. You could say I was learning to shoot but it was more of me just chucking the ball using both hands. It was in late March and the air smelt like spring and vibrant flowers were blooming. We had a low hoop made out of plastic that would fall over if it was too windy, and the sticker on the backboard was worn out. I was just running around the deck with the small basketball trying to dribble and shoot. That's where it all started.

I started Rec basketball when I was three years old. Then I started playing CYO basketball in 4th grade and thought of basketball as just a time to socialize with friends. As years passed I started to realize how much I enjoyed playing basketball, and how it was more than just time with friends. In 4th grade my team did very well. We only lost one game throughout the whole season. Our team was happy, and we were known as the team to beat. The next year (5th) was a very different scenario. We had two 6th graders who wanted to play but there was no team for 6th grade. When they joined our team it meant that all of us 5th graders were going to be playing against 6th grade teams. It was a rough season; we only won one or two and lost all of the others. It was a good experience to be able to improve but it wasn't as exciting as the last season. At the time I also played Rec but that wasn't as competitive and I played as a chance to play more basketball.

It was February of 2020 and I was ready to start playing on a competitive, travel AAU team. I was filled with nerves and constantly debated whether I should go to the tryouts or not. I saw videos of the girls I would be playing with if I made the team. I was scared; I didn't think I was good enough. At the time I didn't understand that it was good to face your fears and to not be afraid. The night I was supposed to leave, it was my mom, my dad and I who were standing in the kitchen. I was so nervous I didn't want to go. I was wearing my brother's old basketball shoes. I think one of the reasons I went to tryouts was because my dad said "If you make the team, I will let you get new basketball shoes". I headed to the tryouts with my mom and through the whole car ride I was terrified.

When I got to the gym, the director started explaining what we would do that night. She said only a couple drills I recognized but still had a little hope that I would do ok. When we started the first drill I was scoping around for people I knew but found nobody. The first drill was simple. It was a three man weave and a 2 on 1 on the way back. As I was waiting for my turn, two girls approached me. I thought that I recognized them but wasn't sure. Then they asked me, "Were you number 11 on Lady of Lorreto for CYO?" Yes, that was me, I responded. I was happy that people remembered me. I asked what parish they were from and instantly remembered one of the girls. I scored a lot of points that game. Their coach told them to do a box and one on me. That means the team would be in a zone around the key, and they had one girl who was playing man on me, pretty much making it much harder for me to get the ball. We talked for just a little but my main priority this tryout was to do my best. I stuck with talking to those girls and found that they were super nice. I was hoping all three of us would make the same team. Nothing really significant happened the rest of the tryout, I was just scared but I was able to catch onto the drills quickly. The ride home was happier and I was relieved that it was over. I told my mom about the two girls I talked to and she remembered the game as well. There was a second day for tryouts and I showed up to that one too. Luckily those girls did too. At the end of the last tryout the director said, "Tell your parents to expect an email on Monday saying whether you got on the team or not." I knew I would be waiting for that Monday to come.

Through the week I waited, that Monday I went to school knowing that the email would come during my classes. My mom had to pick my brother up at school so when I went up to her to ask if I could go into town with friends I also asked if I made the team. She excitedly said I did and my day turned to one of the best. The schedule was posted and I was so excited but also scared for the first practice. This was all in February of 2020. You know what happened in March? Covid hit. My whole season was pretty much cancelled. My coach did zooms to help our handles and a little bit of shooting but it wasn't the same as being on a court with a team. I spent my days shooting around in my driveway and doing zooms on sunny days. Those zooms helped me improve on my handles drastically. I was bummed because I knew that I would have to do more tryouts for the next season. Then the winter season started. So I went to the tryouts and found that most of the drills were the same and I was a little more confident. I saw girls with shirts that said the team name on it and I figured they were on the team before, I also saw the girls that I knew from before and they had one other girl with them who was just as nice. I made that team. I saw all three at the first fall practice. There were no tournaments that fall because of covid. The season was super fun and I learned a lot. Next came the winter season, I made the team once again. There was only one team for the winter season. During the winter we had my first tournament. I was terrified to play because it would be the start of having tournaments all the time. I was preparing for this year's spring season. The tryouts were pretty much the same but there were more people. I was a little nervous because the drills at this tryout were a lot more like a scrimmage rather than shooting, passing, or lots of small drills. I was excited to hear that I made the team again. We practiced and we prepared for another tournament. Just this past weekend I had a tournament. I was asked to play with another team, so it was very scary but it ended up to be a very fun experience. Those three girls turned out to be my closest friends.

I believe in basketball because it's more than just a sport. I know that not only my skill in basketball increased when I continued playing basketball, but also my understanding of how teamwork is one of the most important parts of playing basketball, how my determination grew to work harder, and how I learned to never give up. I learned through all of the hard and stressing parts of the sport how important it is to step out of your comfort zone to take risks every once and a while.

Contemporary

By: Ryder Wolf Henricksen

From the dawn of humankind we have been finding new ways to get things done in safer and more efficient ways than before. The human kind has been innovating for the past 200,000 years and after every year, decade, century, and millennium that we have been on earth something new has been created. These things can change a nation and sometimes the world. When the wheel was created it provided a new form of travel and when concrete was invented by the Romans, a new way of building was found. The world is always changing for the good and for the bad.

In the year of 2015 there was a child of the age of 7 who was in a car bound for Coldspring New York. This child was me and I was moving into Coldspring and into a new world.

Change like I said can be good and bad, but in this case it was for the good. Coldspring is a small town off the coast of the Hudson river. I was 7 when I arrived and I am 13 now. Coldspring is a friendly town where everyone knows each other and is very supportive towards each other. One important memory that I have from this small town is when my mother gave me \$1,000 to invest in any company or companies of my choice in the stock market. This offer sparked my interest in the stock market and had me make decisions that could help me earn money or lose money. I choose to buy two stocks in Tesla and one in Microsoft. Tesla has since been going up and down. In the meantime Microsoft had been going straight and steady for some time and I decided to sell the Microsoft and buy Sunpower stock, which is a solar panel company. This one thing can change how one looks at the world and it changed how I looked at it as well.

The world is always changing whether you prefer it to or not.
“Nothing is permanent except change” - Heraclitus

I Believe in memories

By: Samantha Thomas

I believe in memories. I believe in memories because I look back at lessons, lovely moments, time shared, hard times, even dark times. All memories have their ups and downs but it truly depends on how you either look at the benefit or the doubt. Memories sometimes can be painful to remember but all that matters is how you look at all your memories.

This memory was very recent and brief. It was a 2 hour car ride to New York City. I was listening to Spotify on my phone, about 7 hours and 35 minutes worth of music to entertain myself with. My parents were talking to each other about something. All I heard were little murmurs but I didn't bother to listen. I was looking through the window were sights of tall buildings. Hundreds of windows to look at. Most the same colors. Looking over the throgs neck bridge, seeing cars pass by the other window of the car. Looking at the water below us, all the boats on the water and hearing the water crash upon the sides. My window was open with the wind brushed against my face with a slight chill, smelling the salted water outside. Crossing over other bridges with cars going over and under us hearing the sound of New Yorkers honking their horns at people who won't move quick enough. Taxis picking up people to their desired destination, we start to head our way to the parking garage.

Pulling into the garage, we waited for the car parker to park the car. As we waited, we all looked at a car, jeep, round and parking paralleled parked with what looked like the world's tiniest parking spot to fit a car in but he did it. As the car parker came over my dad asked about the tickets. "I have reserved tickets already....." The man interrupted, "Oh, hold onto them for now but when you're done you give them to me." "Ok thank you." As we walked up the driveway, The first thing I saw was a short building, but it looked like a structure. We turned left and walked down a street. I forget the name, but the buildings were sights to look at. 200+ buildings were looked upon, admired, and observed. As we walk the water from the trees starts to shake. Walking under a wet tree, cold, and it's drizzling. Not a warm situation.

As we peer around the corner, approaching the biggest building I have ever seen. The stairs filled with people, ready to be amused by wonders of ancient life. A water show, so relaxing, it's like laying down in a dark room, black and white moving on to fall asleep to, tons of blankets all cozy and warm. Ready to just close your eyes and take a deep breath and shut your eyes just for a little while. We got on line to walk into The Metropolitan Museum of Art. This enormous building went on for a mile in width and in length was about 2 miles long. It takes in total 4 days to tour the entire building full of art, artifacts, sculptures, glass, tumes, bodies, ect. As my family and I stand on the outskirts of the museum, I see cars pass by, taxis, even more buildings, and food trucks and stations. Bright colors of yellow and red would draw the eye of a hungry person. The first part of the museum we saw were the Roman sculptures. They were interesting and detailed in all the facial details eyes, ears, nose, ect. As I circled back to the main hall, I pulled out my phone, I dropped my ticket that will allow me to form the different sections. The ticket checker let us go through because he was gorgeous. Walking through the part of the museum we observe the egyptian hieroglyphics. Pieces and parts of the remains that were recovered. Looking at their jewelry, tombs, and architectural designs. Stopping for a quick bite to eat was easy. I had chicken tenders, chips and a brownie with coca cola for a drink. Eating with my family was so nice as it always is.

The next part of the museum we headed towards was the paintings. Looking at the paintings that were recovered and restored to their beauty were so admiring to look at, the detail, the shadowing, finding out who the artist was and what the painting was about. Reading about why, how, and even when. As I stepped into a huge room I looked up and I saw George Washington crossing the Delaware River painting. This painting was a sight to see. We had to go on an adventure to find it. After taking a human painting size comparison, we all looked at each other and made our decision to see if we wanted to stay or if it was time to leave as we agreed it was time to leave. We walked outside, and it was pouring. As we caught a taxi to the garage, we watched people from behind and in front trying to catch a taxi ride.

I believe in memories because they're cherishable. Even though memories can be lessons, time shared, hard times, and even dark times. All memories have their ups and downs but it truly depends on how you either look at the benefit or the doubt. That's why I believe in memories.

Unwanted Books

By: William O'Hara

I believe that you must try things before saying no. I have been given many books to read over the years. Not just in school, but my family has also given me books. Some of the books I was told to read, I ended up really liking and some of them were impossible to read. Once my dad gave me a book about rock walls, called, "Stone by Stone". I had a hard time reading it because it was so boring. When I complained, my dad said I only had to read the intro, but even that was a struggle.

But just because I didn't like one book recommendation doesn't mean that the others were disappointing. My dad told me to read "Raise the Titanic" by Clive Cussler, so I did. At first it was a slow book. The words and pages were smaller than a lot of books I had read and it was very delicate. But eventually it got better. When I was finished with the book, I realized that I didn't have to be so defiant. I ended up really liking the book.

Another one of the books my dad gave me was "Ender's Game" by Orson Scott Card. I didn't complain this time, since my dad and brother both suggested it. It started with the main character getting an implant pulled out of him, which really disgusted me and gave me a bad sense of the book. "Ender's Game" is a book about a kid who has to save Earth in a war against aliens. The plot might sound silly but it ended up being my favorite book ever. I'm most likely going to read it again, since I liked it so much. This taught me that good things can come out of trying new things.

I Believe in Forgiveness

By: Aine Fortuna

I never really thought forgiveness was about acceptance, at least acceptance in that way. I always thought it was saying it's ok, that whatever happened was fine. But I was wrong.

A while ago I saw a video on forgiveness. It said "sometimes, forgiveness isn't always about saying what they did to you is ok or acceptable. It is accepting that you can't change the past. It's a way of moving forward, living without it." I paused thinking about what had happened.

I guess it meant, at least to me, that forgiveness takes more wisdom and kindness than holding a grudge. If you dwell on whatever they did, then you think about it more. When you think about it more, it gives you a reason to be angry. Even if you forgive you can still be angry. If they hurt you, you can be mad because forgiveness doesn't let what they did be ok. Forgiveness is one step towards acceptance.

A lot of the time, we forgive ourselves without knowing. Sometimes when you're in the wrong you can excuse what you did. In other words, rationalize your actions. This is so much easier than thinking about what you did wrong. Another way of forgiving yourself is by knowing it wasn't ok, but choosing to not think about it. It's harder for the person you hurt, to forgive you and move on. Because they think about how you affected them. That's why the person forgiving you is so important, and kind.

This is why it's best to forgive in certain situations, to help move forward so it's not in your life. This is why forgiveness is so important for yourself. It's why you forgive to help yourself. But you don't owe them anything, they hurt you, you owe yourself acceptance. I also heard that sometimes you forgive a person not for them, but for yourself. Worrying isn't going to help you at all because it only causes problems. Do something about it, or move on.

So I hope that this sticks with you, that you can let yourself forgive and continue on. It will probably always make you angry they wronged you, but at least you can learn to move on with your life.

By: Daniel Campanile

I remember the day when DanTheFryPan133 joined the bruddas. The first thing that happened to him was a mysterious player named PendantJewel941 (may or may not be me) attacked him. After that, he started a brawl over some Yeezy's. He lost to SlimzYT who immediately lost them in lava. DanTheFryPan133 had a goal from the second he joined and saw the destroyed plaza. His goal was to fix the bruddas.

On the second day, he joined he started that goal by starting construction on the upside-down pyramid which would soon turn into a meeting place for everyone on the server. This one simple pyramid brought everyone together. In some cases good and some bad. Through countless wars and conflicts, pets being stolen or killed, bases being destroyed and court cases, DanTheFryPan133 always helped the right side or would sit on the sidelines. He was a place of peace where anyone could reside. Even though DanTheFryPan133 joined some military organizations like the Akatsuki or considered joining the rebels, he always helped his friends. Even though DanTheFryPan133 considered the path of evil he refused. As he saw PendantJewel941 (myself) win countless battles against the rebels and attack many of their bases, or as he watched the rebels steal from him or destroy his base he never started wars and only fought when he felt it was right.

DanTheFryPan133 wasn't the only one who was like this. There were others like him but they all strayed from the path. The main example was GoGriff44, my right-hand man in combat and my greatest ally on the server. He joined the first day only a minute after I made the server. All he wanted to do was live in peace and after the first server we made; he knew it was possible. After a week his goal was complete. Houses were made and paths connecting bases stretched across the wooded landscapes.

But it all changed when I had a war with Kaitzilla. GoGriff44 knew he had to end this peace to bring true happiness. On December 22, 2020 myself and GoGriff44 struck at the Christmas festival leaving no one left and destroying the palace. GoGriff44 went on to be an anarchist leader of a nation in the seas never able to return the server to how it once was. But DanTheFryPan133 was able to change it. He single-handedly led the server to a state of mutual peace. Even though small skirmishes and grudges remain DanTheFryPan133 helped heal those wounds and brought peace. I believe in DanTheFryPan133.

I Believe in the PendantJewel941

By: Daniel O'Sullivan

I believe in PendantJewel941. PendantJewel941 is the owner of the Bruddas, the best Minecraft server ever. The Bruddas is a place of war, peace, and lots of buildings. I remember the first time I joined the Bruddas. It was exciting but scary. It was night and I was in a dirt pit. I looked around and saw a falling apart plaza made of all kinds of wood, I walked down the prime path made of oak. It had potholes and dirt everywhere.

When I got to the main area I saw buildings and structures that went to the height limit. but also saw holes everywhere all over the ground from all the war that had happened before I came there. There was so much history that I had yet to learn, and then I saw him, in full netherite armor with a trident in one hand and a sword in the other: it was PendantJewel941. After that day forward me and PendantJewel941 would dominant the server winning wars and ruling lands but most importantly we became friends.

The Power of Taylor Swift

By: Eleanor Chew

I have always cared for Taylor's music, for as long as I can remember. Every time she releases a new album I am exhilarated. First Fearless, then Speak now, Red, 1989. I thought it could not get better but then came Reputation, Lover, and Folklore. Folklore is an album that makes me feel like I'm in a wonderful black and white land filled with trees and hope. Taylor's songs always come on at the perfect time.

Last summer my mom, my brother and I went to a town called Long Lake in the Adirondacks. We go there every summer. We stayed at a one-story motel painted red. The motel was beautiful. Inside the room there were comfy beds, a gigantic deck, and a small bathroom. My brother and I would blast Britney Spears and Elton John throughout the day.

One day we wanted to see the campgrounds nearby for next summer. We found out the camp ground was closed, so we hopped back into my mom's gray car and decided to go on a hike. On the car ride to the base of the hike I was playing the album Folklore on the car speakers. My Mom's phone does this weird thing where it doesn't stop playing music even when the car is off. We started the hike and continued on to see a waterfall. There were two people, one holding a camera taking a picture of the other standing on a rock wearing a tightly fitted t-shirt. We came up to the waterfall, and they were so nice. They offered to move out of the way, so we could see it up close. Then they started explaining why they were taking pictures.

The man started speaking. He said, "This is a very special place for me, my wife and our son Dakota, who died in March from COVID-19. He was in his apartment, and he wasn't feeling well. Dakota collapsed on the floor, and someone found him 2 days later. Earlier today we scattered his ashes here. This was his favorite place to be. We are recreating pictures he took with his friends here. I put his old t-shirt on that he wore in that picture." By this time my mom and I were tearing up. This was the saddest thing we'd heard in a while. We let the man and his wife continue taking pictures. My mom led us to the car. She turned it on. And the music immediately started playing again. Because my mom's phone never stopped playing music it was a different song than what was playing before. It was the song Epiphany on the Folklore album. It was a song about death and hope. This song was so perfectly timed. We all started crying. My mom, my brother and I will always remember this moment.

I value truly beautiful songs. When we went back to the car after talking with this man, the song Epiphany came on, and it turned the memory into something that I will never forget. The right song can change your whole perspective.

I Believe in the Second Side

By: Ember Mahoney

I believe in the second side, or the other parts of a story. Growing up, when I had problems at school, or drama with friends, I would get home and immediately tell my mom. Everytime I told her about who did this and who said that, she would always ask me what their side of the story was. Every time I got the same response, and each time I always got slightly annoyed. Shouldn't your parents always believe you, or defend you? At times I still get frustrated when she asks me, but I know now that you should always hear the other side of the story, and I can thank my mom for making that one of the most important things in my life.

One of my friends was throwing a party on Saturday. And of course, I couldn't make it. Typical. I wasn't too upset, but I was surprised to walk into school on Monday with everyone who went rushing up to tell me about the "grass lady." "Ember, did you hear about the grass lady?" One of my friends rushed over to ask the second I walked through the door. Of course I didn't know anything about this "grass lady," but I was shocked to hear what my friends were telling me. Apparently, a woman was planting grass and they stepped on some of the parts she had been planting it in. One thing led to another, and my friends ended up yelling at and getting yelled at by the lady. They made her out to be so rude, but when I asked them why she got so mad, they had nothing. At first it seemed like she was just a grumpy person. They didn't step on the grass too much so I wasn't quite sure why she reacted the way she did. But while everyone was talking about how terrible she was, I had one thing stuck in my head; that there had to be a reason. I didn't intend on trying to figure it out, and after a few days it wasn't even a thought in my head.

About a week later, I decided to take my cat on a walk. I had been taking him around the neighborhood and ended up on the street next to mine. The street that the grass lady lived on. My friends had already shown me where she lived, so I was just trying to be careful not to walk on her grass. I had to walk on her side of the street because the sidewalk on the other side was being remodeled or worked on. I was just praying she wasn't there. But, to my dismay, there she was, watering the flowers in her garden. I just wanted to pass by quickly, and pretend I didn't notice her. I picked up my cat in case he stepped somewhere he wasn't supposed to, and began my walk down. But as I was just walking by, she stood up. My heart must have skipped a few beats. I hear a voice asking "Is that a cat?" I turned around, and I was face to face with the grass lady. I continued the conversation. She told me that she and her husband used to rescue cats, and told me some stories about them. Me being the curious 11 year old that I was, I asked her what happened. "What do you mean, 'what happened?'" I told her that I was confused about how she had said her and her husband *used* to rescue cats. She sighed, and explained to me that the Friday before her husband had died. I said I was sorry for her loss, talked a little more, and started to head home. But as I was walking back it hit me- the day her husband died was the day before she yelled at my friends. This lady, who my friends wrote off as a nasty old woman, was just in pain. I couldn't stop thinking about it. I don't know her well, but I hope she's ok.

After the conversation I had with the grass lady, I realized how often people get mistaken and judged by other people over things they can't control. I always try to give people a chance, and judge them based on my interactions with them and not what other people tell me. No matter what story you hear, there's always someone with a different perspective. Sometimes you'll never know what caused them to react the way they do, and sometimes you don't even know if you'll see them again, but if everyone gave people the benefit of the doubt, the world would be a better place. I believe in the second side to every story.

I Believe in the New Normal

By: Kayla Ruggiero

I believe in the new normal. I believe that covid was very difficult for everyone. But something that we all had to do was adapt, adapt to the new normal. Which was wearing masks everywhere and always keeping hand sanitizer around. Everyone had to adapt to not seeing each other and the people they love most for months to keep each other safe and healthy, but I'm sure that at one point in time we all wished we could just go back to normal. We had gone from seeing each other and socializing everyday to talking only with the people we live with, but for some people there was no one. We had to learn how to be unsocial and deal with the only people we saw all day (our families).

March 12th. March 12th was the last day of "normal" school before everything happened. I remember that day going to DCI class that morning for 1st period like every other blue day. I walked in with my brother next to me as we sat down at the tables with our friends. We were working on an art club project, fooling around and getting little to no work done like usual. I remember overhearing my brother talking with the teacher wondering if she was worried about something called the Coronavirus. My brother was always the one keeping up with things going on in the world, even the ones that no one seemed to have any interest in except him. I remember my teacher saying she wasn't worried about it and for him to get back to work.

The bell rang for us to go to our next class, everyone rushing out the door to get to their lockers. I got my stuff and went to my next classes. Then lunch time came around. I sat with my group of friends like normal. After lunch we had homeroom, a class where everyone just sat around and talked while they were supposed to be doing homework or something. More people started talking about Covid, then my homeroom teacher asked us for our attention for 5 minutes because he just got an important email or something that we needed to know about. He said something about us having 2 weeks off of school because they needed to deep clean the school and just make sure everything was going to be okay with Covid. They wanted to make sure everything was going to be kept under control. Most people were thrilled "2 weeks off of school!" they all said. All the teachers told us to clean out most of our lockers so if we needed to stay home longer we would have everything we needed to do school from home. Everyone thought it would be kinda like homeschool. We were wrong. At the end of the day when the bell for the end of 9th period rang everyone ran outside to see friends and people from other classes. We all said goodbye and said see you after the break. The break that we didn't know was going to be months and months.

When we came back to school in September things were different, way different. We didn't have lockers to go to when the bell rang. We had to sit 6 feet apart from each other in each room which meant not as much laughing and fooling around in class with each other without the teacher yelling at us. No more seeing people from other classes during the day because we have to stay with the same 12 people in our homeroom class for all of the day. No more talking with friends and eating together at lunch because we have to sit in silence while we eat 6 feet apart so germs don't spread inside. Things were weird. But we had to get used to them, because most of us knew that the new guidelines were not going anywhere. I learned later that it doesn't help complaining about how bad school was because of all this. I had to learn to get used to "the new normal".

I Believe in Coke and Mentos

By: Lincoln McCarthy

I believe in Coke and Mentos. I believe in friendship. I believe in the fact that when you are with friends you can do a lot of things you usually wouldn't be able to do alone.

It was a hot, sunny Friday and school had just ended. I walked out of the doors into the sunlight and saw some of my friends run out of the school. We asked each other if we were able to go to town and we all could. The four of us walked down into town. While we were walking one of us asked, "What do you want to do?" We all were excited that it was the weekend and we wanted to do something exciting and fun. We thought about what we wanted to do as we walked the sidewalk. We went to Cold Spring Pizza and ordered slices, and as we ate we discussed some things we might want to do.

One of us had the idea to buy Coke and Mentos and experiment with that. We all thought that was a good idea so we headed up to Foodtown to buy the stuff we needed. When we got to Foodtown the air conditioning hit us as we walked around the aisles looking for the drinks aisle to find party sized bottles of coca-cola. When we found them we grabbed 5 bottles and then went to the checkout, because there were mentos packages there. After we had bought everything, we went outside, each of us carrying one or two bottles and our sweatshirt and sweatpants pockets filled with mentos. We walked around for a while trying to find a place to experiment with the Coke and Mentos.

We finally got to a spot where we decided we would use them. "How should we use the Mentos?" I asked. Someone else said in a daredevilish tone, "We should put the whole package in, that way it makes a huge explosion." We all agreed with that so we came up with a strategy. One of us would open the cap, another would open the package of Mentos and drop it in the bottle, we would close the cap and then hand it to someone else, who would throw it in the air. The first time when we did it, my heart was pounding as it seemed like the bottle was descending in slow-motion, and then it hit the pavement. The second it hit the pavement, it made a sound like someone jumping in a pool as it landed cap first. The cap shot off and the pressure of the soda was causing it to fly up. We were all yelling as the Coke was drenching us as it spun higher, higher in the air. The second time we did it, the cap shot off and shot it down the street. After we had done all five we talked excitedly about the results for a while, then I headed home.

I think the Coke and Mentos was almost like a real life metaphor for the things you can do with friends. If I was alone, I probably would not be able to come up with that idea. If I was alone, I wouldn't be able to do all those steps, it would probably explode in my face. The experience showed me that with friends the possibilities are almost endless because when you are working together, and having fun while you do that, you can do something really cool instead of doing nothing. That is why I believe in friendship. That is why I believe in Coke and Mentos.

I Believe In Dream Catchers

By: Louise Denehy

I believe in kindness. In second grade, I was lonely. I didn't have many friends, and I had a severe head injury. I cried almost every day in school, constantly embarrassing myself. I was always forgetful and confused. My teacher helped me, though. She understood my struggles, and never got frustrated or mad when I broke down. This was the year we all learned our multiplication facts, which was a challenge because I had such a short-term memory. She helped me no matter how difficult I must have been to teach.

After I had gotten injured, I had lots of nightmares. I dreamt of earthquakes and monsters. The other students thought I was odd. My teacher didn't, though. In fact, she was never afraid of what others would think. She had an entire desk showcasing glass, clay, ceramic, metal, and wooden apples. I thought it was pretty funny to have such a weird collection. She reminded me of Ms. Frizzle. One day when I went into school she gave me a dream catcher. It had a light brown rim and was laced with white webs to catch my 8-year-old dreams. It had beautiful white and brown feathers dangling from the bottom. She also gave me a dream catcher necklace, so I can take one with me wherever I go. It had a thin silver chain, and it had little metal feathers and webbing. I thought it was beautiful. I put the dream catcher in my room, though I am not sure if the bad dreams had stopped back then. I was so happy to have her as a friend in school.

I still have my dream catcher, but not the necklace. I had lost that, like an eight-year-old would, but the dream catcher still hangs over my bed, and I can't recall any recent nightmares. It isn't only the dream catcher I appreciate now, though it may have been when second grade me received it. Now I understand the care she had for her students, and it motivates me to want to become a teacher too. I want to go to college and change the world one good dream at a time. She helped me catch my bad dreams, and her kindness and love to us supplied me with my own dreams for my future. This gift may have seemed small to others, but my dream catcher means more to me than they may understand. Thank you for the kindness and inspiration, and rest in peace Ms. Isler.

I Believe in Caring

By: Near Sevilla

I remember my dad telling me that Kira was sick but I never thought that it would get so bad. We had found out that she has a lung disease and that she would die eventually but we wouldn't know when. My dad called us to the table to have an "important family conversation". My first thought was that it was bad news, and as I predicted it was. He told us and I tried talking to them about it but tears started streaming down my face and the next thing I knew we were both bawling our eyes out together. I couldn't believe what was happening. We had her for over 18 years. I grew up with her. She was alive even before I was and she was always there for me, when my parents were arguing about something, or when I was just having a bad day she would sleep next to me. We did have the decision to give her medicine to help her stay alive longer, though I thought that would be selfish since she was in so much pain.

On her last days she would go to her favorite spot in her bed next to the back door where the sun would shine in. She would always like going outside and laying in the grass while the sun shines on her fur. She wasn't an outside cat though she really enjoyed nature. The day that she died she was in her favorite spot one last time and passed away peacefully. I was in my room and my dad brought her to the garage because we couldn't bring her to the vet yet. I went into the garage not knowing that my dad had put her dead body in there. I just stood there staring but I couldn't cry. I acted as if nothing happened but for the rest of the summer I felt out of place. Nothing felt the same anymore. And even though we did get 2 new cats, they'll never be like Kira.

I believe in caring because caring for your loved ones is very very important. You never know what could happen. One day you could be sitting with them laughing or you just got into an argument with them, but the next they suddenly aren't there and you feel out of place and regret. If one of your family or friends loses a loved one too, always be there for them to comfort and **care** for them.

Disney World

By: Owen Powers

I believe in Disney World. Now, Everyone wishes to go there, I assume, but I believe in the magic of it. In the magic of all the theme parks. In fact, they have 4 theme parks. Let me tell you...

There are 4 theme parks: Animal kingdom, which holds an epic ride, Mount Everest. Then, Hollywood Studios, which has 2 of the best rides in Disney World (In my opinion). Rockin' Roller Coaster, and Tower Of Terror. Next up, we have Magic Kingdom, the main theme park. This has it all, from a nice cool off on Splash Mountain (I remember getting wet. it is really nice to cool off.) Then, to a ride through the Wild West on Big Thunder Mountain Railroad. (There are a lot of twists and turns through the layout. I remember getting whipped around!) Lastly, there is Epcot. It has a fast paced ride called a Test Track. "Here we go, on the fast part" I say as we get ready to go from 10 to 66 mph.

Now, let's cut to the chase. I can have this paragraph go on for a very long time, but I want to keep it nice and short. My absolute favorite roller coaster is at Hollywood studios (my favorite park). That ride is Rockn' roller coaster. This is a high speed thrill coaster, with a launch from 0-60 mph in about 2 seconds. This ride had twists and turns through the layout, with 2 corkscrews, and 1 loopy-loop at the beginning.

"Dad, I don't know if I want to do this. I'm pretty scared" I said as I get ready to get on the ride. "Well, if you're scared, maybe just close your eyes," said my Dad. As I boarded the coaster, right before the launch, I closed my eyes. I get ready, and then...

"5.....4.....3.....2.....1....." says the speaker. "AHHHHHHHHHH," I screamed as we got launched. (Now remember, my eyes are closed, so I can't see anything.) I felt us going through all the twists and corkscrews. When the ride was over, I opened my eyes. "That was....EPIC" I said to my dad as we get off the coaster. After that we went to the gift shop and got.....nothing.

Well, I think that the moral of the story is that you can do anything if you put your mind to it. Thank you for reading (listening) to my story. Bye!!!! :)

A Championship

By: Ryder J. Griffin

I believe in teamwork. I had a basketball tournament earlier in the year. It was our second of the season. We were 2-1 in that first tournament. It was my first time playing organized basketball in over a year because of covid-19, and I would say I was pretty good for my first time back. We won our first two games but then in our third we were playing against this GIGANTIC player. He was 6 foot 4 at least. We ended up losing in a close game but it showed that we can play against any team no matter how good they are.

The next tournament rolled around a couple weeks later. My team was ready to win it all. We started off the tournament with two back to back wins. I played really well in those games. In the second game I dropped twenty points which is the most points I dropped in that tournament. We were supposed to play the next morning but the team forfeited, so we were automatically in the championship.

I remember getting to the court. My team had to wait outside until the court was empty and we were able to play. We walked in and the building was packed. We walked on the court and started warming up, the lights were shining on us and we could only hear the crowd roaring. The other team showed up and then after a few more minutes we started the game.

The ball went up for the jump ball. I knocked it to one of my teammates to start the game. The first half went pretty well. Every play my teammates passed me the ball and I would shoot it or my teammates would shoot the ball and I would grab the rebound then put it back up. I had my team's first ten points. I was playing really well until I pulled a muscle in my neck. I continued to run up and down the court playing as best as I could but my neck hurt and I wasn't able to help my team. My coach said that I was in pain and took me out.

I sat out the rest of the game, but I realized how hard my team was working. I saw that they were playing their hearts out to try to come back in this game. My teammates were working as a team to get good shots to win this game. Sadly we lost the game but I will never forget. That no matter what, always play your hardest and help your teammates. They were the ones that were getting me the ball so I could score and while I was still playing I was the one getting them the ball so they could score, and without that teamwork we would have never been in that game.

The Strength of Relationship

By: Tomas Simko

Before Covid, before all of this nonsense. My family and friends used to have the huge end of school summer party celebration. I actually didn't know why we had this party. I just liked that we could all get together before summer because we hadn't seen each other in a while.

It usually started off with me waiting for the guests to arrive. I remember the excitement building up in me as I waited. So right when I heard the knock on the front door I shot up from the sofa and darted to the door. It was one of my younger friends Patrick; he was 2 years younger than me and pretty tall for his age. Blonde hair and blue eyes. The next people to arrive were my 2 older friends Samuel and Gabriel or as we call them, Sam and Gabe.

Afterwards, all of us would go outside and play soccer. I was almost always on a team with Gabe and Patrick was with Sam. All of us would do anything to win, even sometimes cheat a little. But this year it was different, as I was going to make a save in the net the ball hit my hand so hard that I broke my hand. We had to stop playing and my mom put my hand in a bandage because we didn't know if it was broken yet. We decided to ditch the idea of soccer and go eat my dad's special soup-- we only got to have this soup once a year at this party. It was so delicious; it had chicken, mashed potatoes, carrots, and beans. I ended up having a good time anyway.

I ended up having to wear a cast on my arm for the whole summer and back then I thought my whole summer was ruined because of this arm. But looking back at this now I think you can have a good time if you are in the right place and if you have the right people with you.