

Volume 30 2014

Stepping Stones

A Junior High Literary/Art Magazine



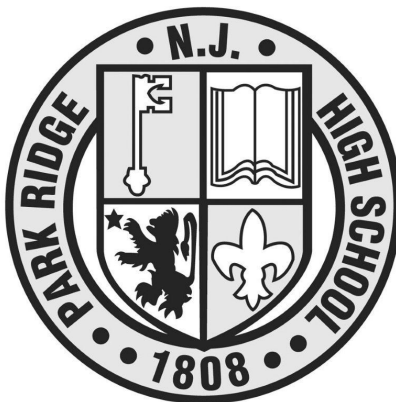
PARK RIDGE MIDDLE SCHOOL • 2 PARK AVENUE • PARK RIDGE, NEW JERSEY 07656

Stepping Stones

**A Junior High Literary/Art Magazine
2014**

Stepping Stones is a student-run publication that showcases the creative writing and visual art talents of a variety of Park Ridge Middle School students.

All entries are original works of written and Visual art.



Stepping Stones

A Junior High Literary/Art Magazine

Writing Staff:

Students of Grades 7 & 8

Illustrations by:

Alison Ciarletta
Grace DiMeo

Advisor:

Mrs. Gina McCann



Picture of Park Ridge Junior/Senior High School
Photo by Anoushka Ramkumar (grade 7) taken with an I-Phone .

Cover Design:

Jacey Zeug -Grade 8

A creative student photographer who used her I-Phone to capture a picture telling an inspirational message to always believe in oneself. The photograph was taken in Jacey’s backyard and features herself. Jacey loves photography and enjoys editing the pictures she takes. In addition to photography, she also loves music and enjoys expressing her musical talent through the guitar and the piano. Jacey hopes to continue with photography for a long time.

From the Advisor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those students who volunteered their time in helping with the production of Stepping Stones magazine and to those students whose literary and art contributions were selected to be published. Our 7th & 8th grade students are a very talented group of young writers and artists and we are very proud to share their talents with our readers. I would also like to thank the teachers of Park Ridge Middle School for encouraging their students to write, draw, and take photos for the magazine. Without their support this creative publication would not be possible. The contributions submitted to this magazine will be memorialized for future enjoyment.

At the start of the school year, all 7th & 8th grade students were offered the opportunity to submit written and visual works of art, either through classroom assignments or voluntary contributions. The cover was a creative photograph taken by an 8th grade student who wanted to communicate a personal message of always believing in yourself. Microsoft publisher was used for layout and design. Printing was done by a professional outside source, Ridgewood Press, in Ridgewood, NJ. There were approximately 300 copies produced and distributed, free of charge, to all 7th and 8th grade students, as well as to all faculty, staff and administrators.

Mrs. McCann

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Dance

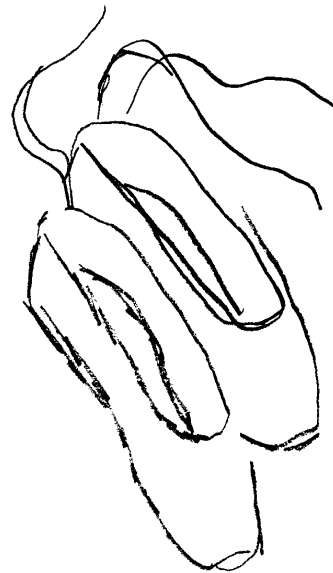
By Ayse Seker '18/Illustrated by Grace Dimeo '18

The lights, the floor, the people in front of you
It seems nerve racking
The scariest three minutes of your life
Walking on seems dreadful and hard to do
But then you think
The lights, the floor, the people in front of you
Are why you do it

After the three minutes were up
It felt like only a minute
You would do it again
Maybe even better before
Even if you're out of breath or beat red
That rush just wasn't enough

The day trickles down
No more watching others perform
You gather up on the stage
Waiting for your name
As the announcer slowly gets close to your number
You and your teammates squeeze each other's hands
Hoping for the best
That all that hard work was worth it

Once they say your number
A big breath is let out
Try and remember why you love it so much
Get past the hunger, the sweat, the pain
The lights, the floor, the people in front of you
Make it all worth it.



Swimming

By Brenna O'Connor '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

That first jump

As I fall

CRASH

Fear as the piercing cold hit my feet and gradually move up to the strands of
my golden hair.

The freezing rush I could feel in the tips of my toes had awaked me,

Miniature bubbles rush to the surface,

As I fell nearer to the bottom.

I felt as peace there was no one that could have taken this moment away
from me.

I just continued sinking slowly just for a few seconds,

Until my home was calling me back for a breath of air.

I could feel the pain in my lungs,

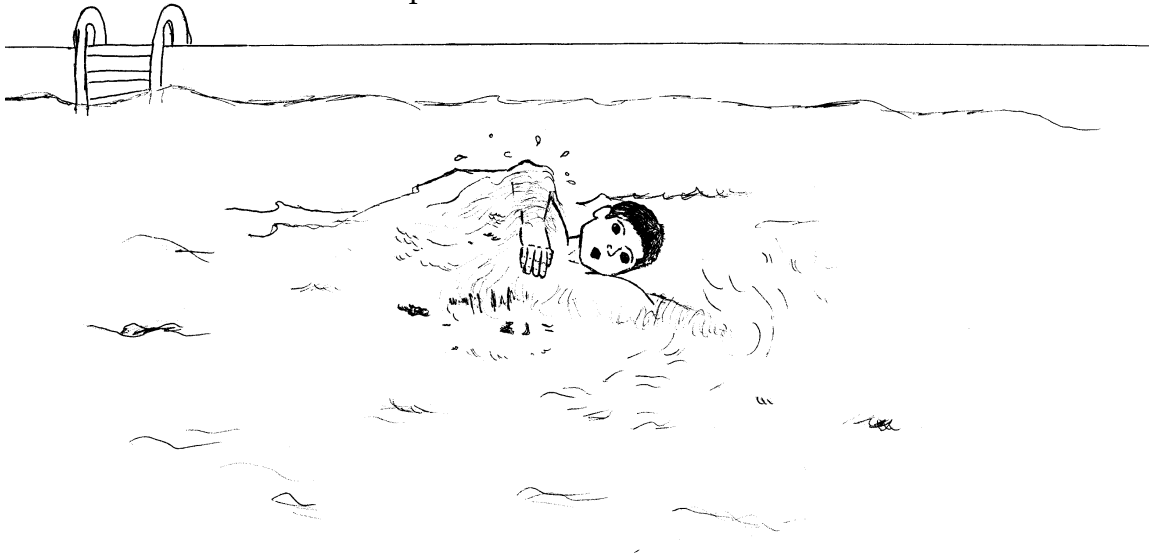
Begging to invite the piercing cold inside,

But I struggled up the surface.

As the air pours into my body,

I lift myself out of the water.

The last parts of that world leaked off of me.



A Happy Soul

By Devin Ariza '18

One day there was a boy who was hurt inside. He went to school every day. This boy wasn't like other boys. He got bullied just for being different. His name was Jimmy and he had a dream. He was in a wheelchair all day, every day. He always wished he could speak in front of a crowd and sing to those whom he liked. He always got picked on. Jimmy wouldn't talk much but he tried his best in class. One Monday in school, kids threw him out of his wheel chair. He fell onto the floor but did not cry for everyone to see. He tried getting up but no one cared. Everyone was laughing at him. This boy walked over to him and helped him get up and back into the wheel chair and wheeled him out of the area. Meanwhile, everyone stopped laughing and observed the boy helping Jimmy. Later on in the day, Jimmy found out the boy's name was Shawn. Shawn and Jimmy went to the park together and talked the entire way. People were staring and talking about Jimmy as they passed. Shawn took him across the road. Shawn dropped his phone along the way. He turned around and saw the phone lying in the street. He went back to get it, as soon as he knew it was missing. A truck's horn was getting louder and louder. Jimmy charged into the street in his wheel chair and pushed Shawn out of the way of the truck and boom! Jimmy ended up in the hospital. The next day, while Jimmy was lying in bed, Shawn came to visit. He said, "Hi" and said, "Sorry" to Jimmy. Jimmy didn't say anything except that it wasn't Shawn's fault. Shawn started to cry. Jimmy said he had to go. Shawn held his cheek against the bed. Jimmy closed his eyes and fell into a silent sleep. Jimmy believed in God, which left him in peace and lifted him up into heaven. Shawn didn't know much about God until he met Jimmy. Shawn went home after the emotional day and fell asleep. Jimmy spoke to him in his dreams and said, "Thank you my friend". Shawn cried with joy and smiled in his sleep. From that day forward, Shawn lived a happy soul on earth knowing he did the right thing.

My Ball

By Chandler DeMarco '18

It may be a green ball with red strings, but to me it's whether I hit or miss it.

Standing on the side of the plate waiting for the pitch.

It's the final pitch, the count is 3-2 with 2 outs, and my heart is about to fly out of my chest.

If I miss it the game will be over, losing by one run, this hit has to count.

The pitch is thrown. CLING! I see the ball flying, I don't think I run and focusing on running
around the bases.

I finally reach home and I was gleaming with happiness.

Life is a Tile

By Ryan Cawood '19

Life is a tile. Starting out plain and bland, but ready to burst out with colors being bold and bright. Some boring and bland, others intricate with your own patterns. Chipped and cracked, but never broken completely. Sometimes hard, other times easy, it depends on what you're made of. Always different shapes trying to fit in with the others. When your time comes, your tile shouldn't be the same as any other.

Forest

By Claire Perez '18 / Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

Leaves fall to the ground
Silently flowing through the air
Like they desired to be in the tree again
To be with others like themselves

Birds fly above you through the canopy
Singing their song
Not afraid of anybody hearing them

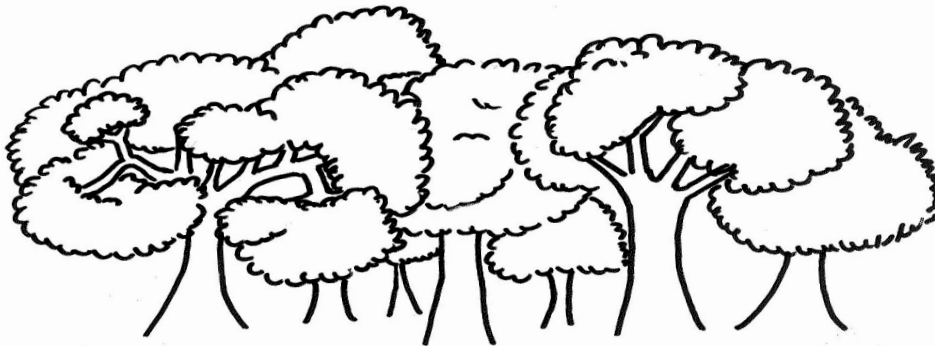
Sunlight streams from above
Bold and bright
Trees stand tall
As though nobody can bring them down

Man walk through the forest
Quieting the birds
Shutting the sunlight out
Making it a dome of darkness

Man is small compared to the trees
Small but they carry something powerful
Strong

One chop
Two chop three chops
Four

Down come the standing trees
Who thought they couldn't be brought down
Down come more trees
One after the other
Chop chop chop
Until there's none left



Crescendo

By Anoushka Ramkumar '19

My life is music. The volume goes *up* and it slowly *decrendos down*. I'm always in *harmony* with all of my peers. My life's tempo speeds up and slows down. In some moments, I feel so fantastic, *allegretto*, and those moments speed past me, hurtling through time and space. Sometimes, moments just drag along... like an *andante* tempo. When routines change, my rhythms change. There are so many variations of mood and pitches, where I feel pleased, miserable, silly, irritated, or pained. Keep on playing, keep on singing, keep on living.

My Life is a Basketball

By Samantha Green '19

My Life is a Basketball; it continues to go *up* and *down*. The **Basketball** hurtles up and down the court as fast as its little legs can carry him, stopping at destination to destination. It can halt at the foul line, or spin out of bounds, spring onto a shimmering hardwood floor or a crumbling blacktop in the heart of the city. As the player shoots, it rolls off the player's lean fingertips, and soars through the gym, all eyes glued to it, and soon tumbles into the net beaming with joy. Swoosh!

Escape the Pyramid

By Franklin Falby '19

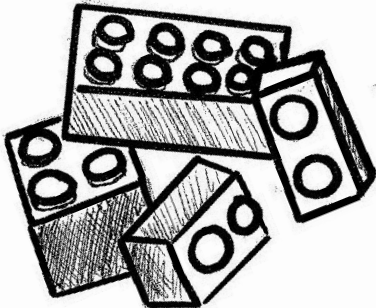
I'm
stuck in
this pyramid
and I cannot get
out. I have to get out
or else I will die. I can't
die. I'm too young to die.
I have to get...

OH,
I'M OUT!

LEGO

By Hermogenes Parente '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

I build buildings with you
I make towns with you
I make a whole story
With you,
But then I destroy you
And I tear you down
You just stand there,
Waiting...
For my foot



Writer's Block

By Grant Nunberg '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

Roses are Red

Violets are Blue

This is very cliché

And you probably think so too

I would try to rhyme

But this is free verse

So I can do what *I* want

I did not mean to rhyme

But I didn't have the time :

I know someone with a lisp

I love Hersey's new chocolate it is called Bliss

I think I'm done with this



Autumn

By Grace Wagner '18

Melancholy leaves of reds, oranges, and browns are floating to the ground.

People everywhere bundled in cozy sweaters, jeans, and boots.

Steaming cups of tea, hot chocolate and cider meet your lips and fill your body with their
warm, yet content sensation.

Bonfires burn, sizzle, and crack throughout the death of the night.

The cool air stings like a tender cut to your exposed skin,

As you part with the warmth and comfort of your home.

The crunch of leaves sound beneath your feet as you prance down the sidewalk.

Every memorable Friday night football game,

Excitement and frenzy fill the crisp, night air.

Bright orange pumpkins happily sit in front of every home,

Reminding you of the festivity of the season.

Witches, Fairies, and Pirates roam throughout the streets one joyful night.

The bright harvest moon sits high in the sky,

Casting a breathtaking glow on the world below.

Something about this kind of weather makes everyone feel just right.

The most favored and anticipated season.

Autumn.

Basketball Puppy

By Nicholas Shappell '19

I love basketball and I love my dogs

If I could I definitely would

I would make them into one

Or train them to be like Air Bud

If I didn't have them I would not be able to think

My two favorite things

Gizmo & Mr. Charlie

By Jha Harezod '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

As I enter the warm comforting embrace of my home.

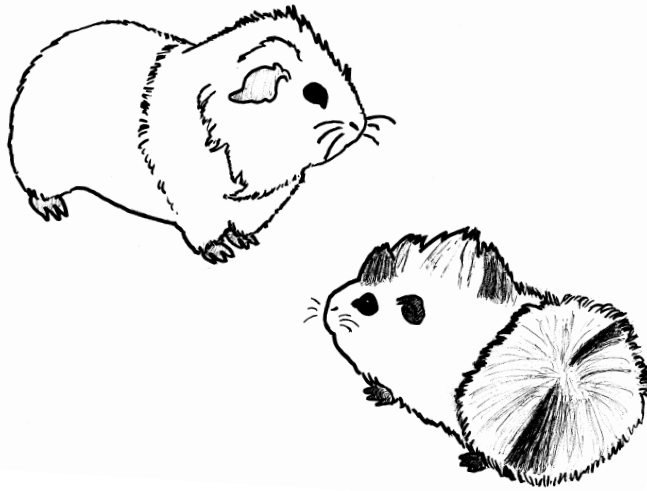
I slump to my couch, my temple beating at the thought of homework.
And then I hear them; the ones who make the sky fill with angels at the very noise
they make.

Their lips puckered upon fresh carrots and celery.
I am their servant, giving them whatever they squeak for, even though they are just
guinea pigs.

Waking in the morning is the same routine: Adore, feed, and adore some more.
All day in school I think about them, the way their long bodies resemble slinkies and
the way they claim their territory by nipping at each other with their instinctual
nature.

As I enter the warm comforting embrace of my home.

I slump to my couch, my temple beating at the thought of... homework!



A Good Bye Hug

By Patricia Christensen '19

That morning, I remember not having a care in the world. Looking back on it now, I realize how naïve I was, how silly I was. I never noticed it before that day. I should've paid more attention. Now, all I feel is deep sadness about the day, November 24th.

Amazingly, she always fell down, *and* up the stairs. She slept almost all day long. You could see sadness and hurt behind her eyes. This was an everyday occurrence for my dog, Sporty. Of course, she was 16. But I was only 9, and I have had that dog for as long as I could remember. I loved her more than life itself. Every day was a struggle for her and my parents couldn't stand to see her this way much longer.

After waking up on a Saturday, I heard whispering from my parents' room. Like any other curious child, I tiptoed down the hall and put my ear to the door.

"Honey, she's lived a full life." My Dad cooed.

"I was the one who did everything for her! I can't possibly think of life without her!" My Mom wailed. She let out a loud sob.

"You're going to wake the kids." He warned. "They don't need to know about this yet."

I didn't have any idea what that was, or why Mom was crying. I did know that it was something that Mom felt very strongly about and that Dad thought my brother and I shouldn't know about now. I didn't think it concerned me because I "didn't need to know about it". So, like any other Saturday morning, I went downstairs, and flipped on the television.

After a while, Mom came downstairs with Sporty tumbling after her. She looked solemn, and Sporty looked tired. As usual. Mom came over and turned off the television.

"Patricia, I need to tell you something." She told me. "You know Sporty is a very old dog now, right?"

"Yea Mom." I answered. I had no idea what was going on.

"Your Father and I discussed it, and we decided that it's her time to go."

"Go where?" I wondered

"To that place in the sky where all good doggies go." Mom answered. "We are going to put her down."

I was speechless. I couldn't lose my best friend. She was my only friend. I ran to Sporty and hugged her as hard as I could. I was not about to let go. Dad lifted me away from her, and told me that it was for the best.

Now it all made sense. Sporty always looked sad, she slept a lot, and she hurt herself trying to do the things that used to be easy. I didn't want her to go, but I had to be strong and let her go. Dad put me down, and asked me to wake up my brother and tell him that we were going to Poppop's house. I did as I was told, and we hopped in the car.

Once we had arrived, my half awake brother and I walked into Poppop's house and waved bye to Mom and Dad. That hug I gave Sporty, was the last time I saw her. When my parents came back to pick us up, Mom was in tears. When I saw her, I started to bawl. I cried until I couldn't cry anymore. I missed my dog. I missed my best friend.

By this happening, I learned a lot. I learned that life is not long enough, and that you never know how much you love something until it's gone. I knew I loved Sporty, but I realized that I loved her more once she was gone. Because of this event, I learned that everything living would die at some time. That time is what is unknown. Another thing I learned, is that if holding on is more painful than letting go, it's time to let go. Watching Sporty hold on was painful to watch. My parents knew that, and knew it was time to let her go. I know that I won't ever get Sporty back, but I won't ever lose her memory.

My Room

By Jason Rosen '18 / Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

My room is my protection,

It gives me rest, comfort and a roof over my head at the end of the day.

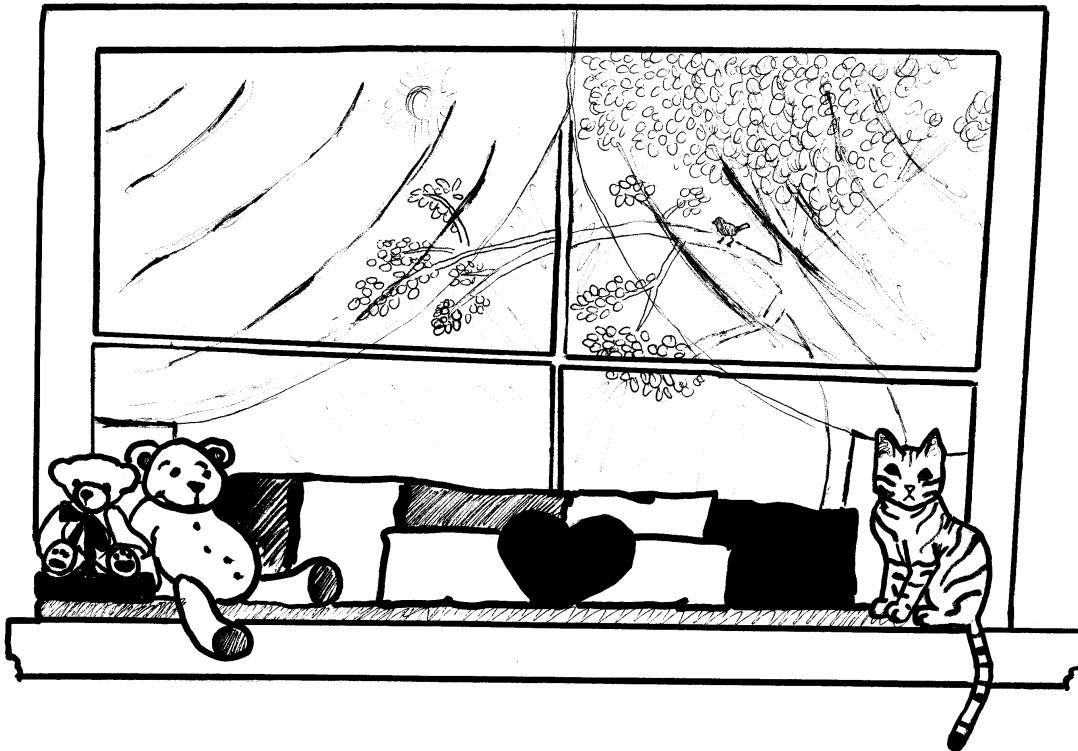
Pictures on the wall give pleasant summer days, wonderful memories of summers gone by.

The bright sunlight streaming through my window is a welcome site each morning,

Schoolbooks lay Unopened and dusty in the corner. For use on another day

Frantic attempts to turn off my shrieking alarm still no guaranty that I won't go back to bed.

After I finally wake up and stumble out of bed I jump into my clothes and now I am ready for a new day.



September

By Julia Wharton '18

September is full of changes
Leaves changing vibrant colors in the trees
A rainbow of colors falling from the sky
Falling
Screaming "Catch me if you can!"
Excited hands jump and reach for leaves descending
Graciously
Spinning, twirling, flipping through the air
Piling up ready to be leapt upon
Waiting for the rake to pile all of them on top of each other
I watched my sister leap on the mountain of leaves
Crunch
My footsteps find their shadows fading
Along with the sun
The moon creeps over the horizon
It gets darker earlier and earlier
Time for warm cider
Crisp cider slips down my throat
Thinking about September

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Life is a Basketball Game

By Michael Mastrangelo '19

Life is a basketball game. We are all crazy and no one can do anything to stop it. As you dribble up the court while someone steals from you it goes silent. But when you steal the ball and sprint down the court and jump and do a 360 dunk...SWOOSH! The stadium rumbles and everyone is cheering. When you look up at the score and you win, you feel confident in yourself. Next thing you know, you are holding the NBA Finals trophy. If you go out there and have fun, you will always be a winner.

My Unseen Reflection

By Ali Uhl '18

I'm frail, but I haven't broke
I talk, but I haven't spoke
I'm awake, but I never woke
These are words I never say or show or believe myself to know
And maybe explain more than the fake expression on my face
Other people read
It reminds me that I usually show who I'm pretending to be

I never broke down
From my sad feelings or my not showing a frown
I stayed strong throughout the hours
But sometimes I was really happy; it was kind of just a daze

I never close my mouth
But what is it that I talk about?
I never speak of what truly is me
I just let my fake thoughts fly off the page

I'm awake all day everyday
Although every morning when I wake up I just hit replay
What good is a life if it's like a replaying movie?
But everyday is new, and maybe I'm not just reliving...

Winning Shot

By Keith Sacco '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18



In and out
Through the legs
Around the back
The shot is in the air
Your arm is up
The buzzer goes off

And

It goes in

You win

50-48

Your arm stays up as coach jumps

And

The team crowds you

As the other teams heads fall

Soccer

By Shine Lita '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

Time is ticking
I'm blinded by the rays of the sun
30, 29, 28, 27.....
I run as fast as I can
I breath heavily in and out
The ball going round and round
I spot the white net
I kick the ball
The scoreboard changes
My team clapping and cheering



And the Winner is...

By Nicholas Ippolito '19

Life is a **championship**. All of the fans cheering for **me**. All the ups and downs they are still *cheering*. Even if I have an off day, still *cheering*. Still have some fun here and there, but life is a **championship**. Set some score, some goals, and give some up. The true fans still believe. The ball just keeps on rolling. But make sure the ball rolls **YOUR** way.

Clean Water Essay

By Sarah Vicari '19

Imagine having to drink out of the puddles of the streets? Maybe you have it, but many people in the world don't have fresh clean water. Water is important for you and your environment for many different reasons. You need clean water for drinking, and to keep our marine life alive and active.

First, you need fresh clean water to drink. When people drink contaminated water they can get a disease called amebic dysentery (amebiasis). From amebiasis 40,000 to 100,000 people die annually. This is a popular disease and mostly why we need fresh clean water to drink.

Second, you need clean water in the ocean for our marine life. Oil can easily get into the ocean and causes many animals to die. You need the marine life to feed off of. Animals die every day from oil and you can help by doing a beach cleanup. This helps from dirty garbage going into the ocean. Plastic bags can kill fish if they eat it and by doing a beach clean up our waters can be clean. It's good to save animals and be proactive to your community.

We can all help by getting the water in our community clean in many different ways. When the water is dirty you can get it clean by participating in the water project. The water project is a project when you bring safe, clean water to villages in Africa with water wells. This will help them get the clean, fresh water they need to survive.

In conclusion, everyone can work on getting us fresh, clean water because it is very important to me, and should also be important to you. These are many different reasons why we need clean water in our life today. You can save someone just by helping the littlest bit.

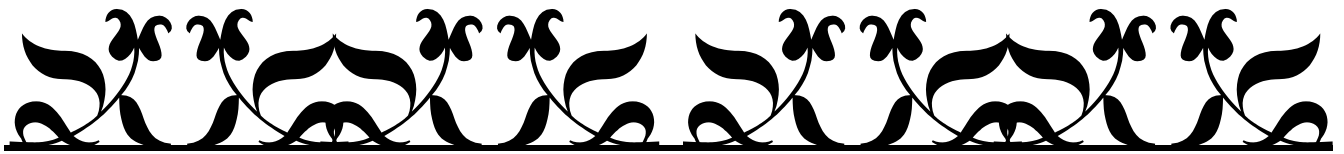
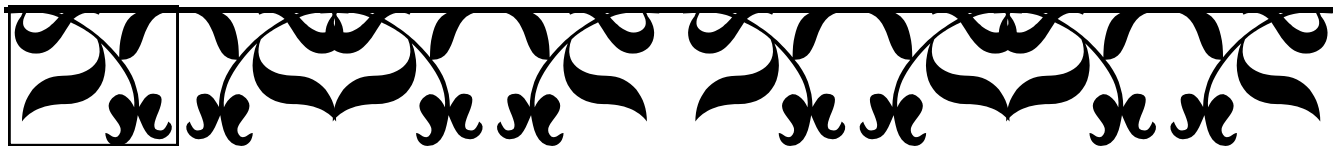
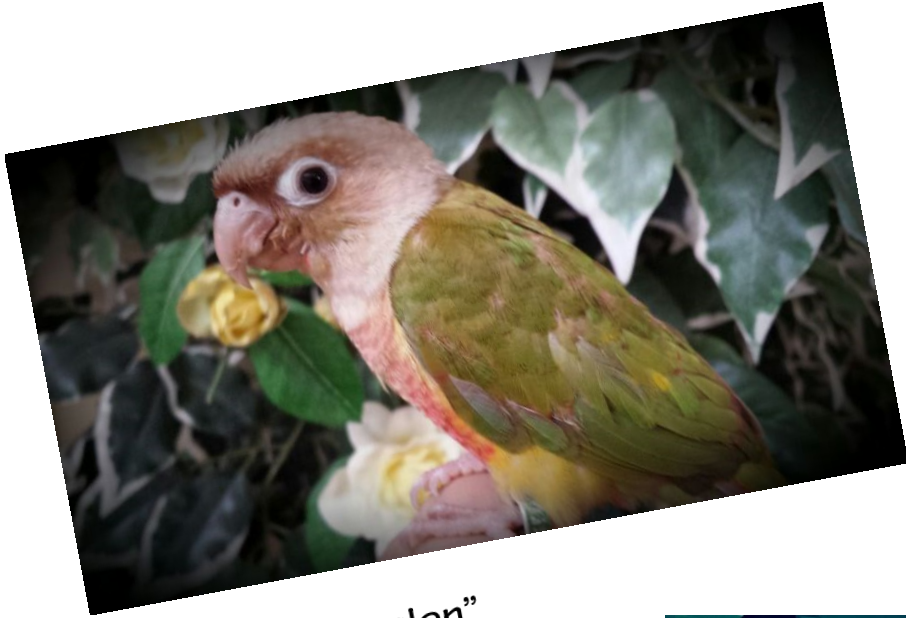


Photo Gallery

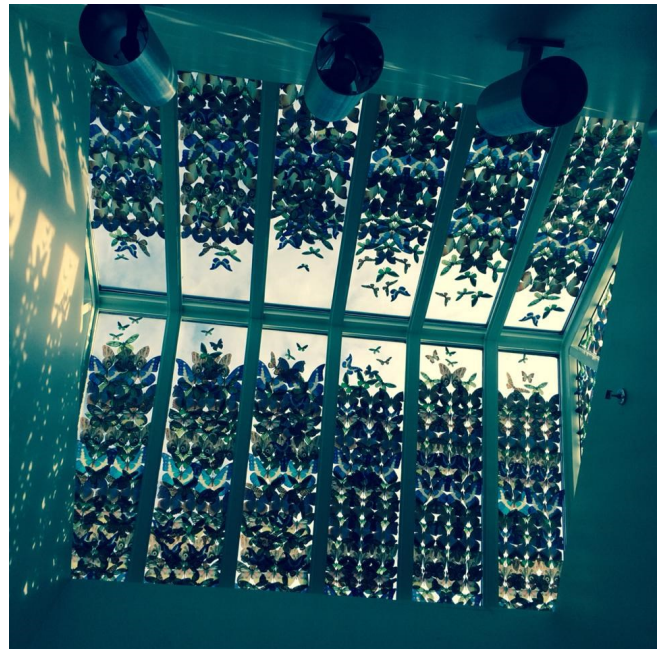
Photos taken by :

Veronica Angiuli
Grace DiMeo
Chandler DeMarco
Elizabeth O'Rourke
Anoushka Ramkumar
Jacey Zeug

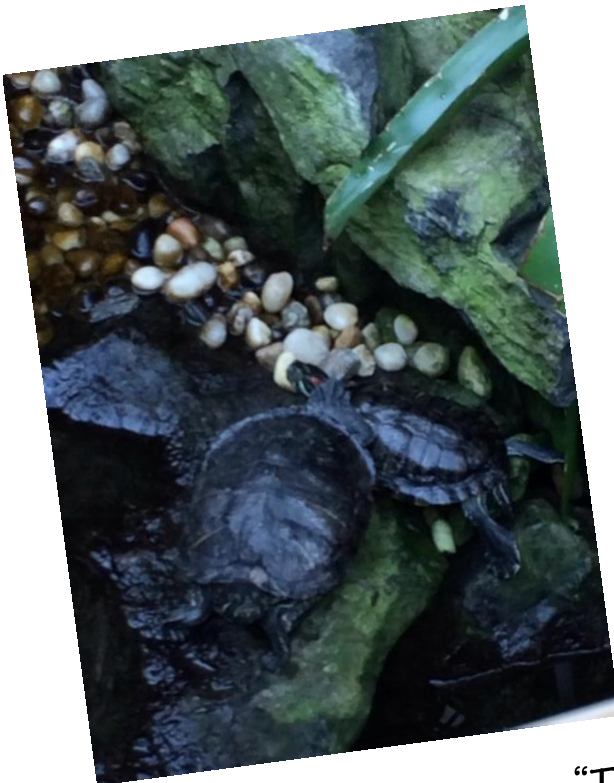




“Watermelon”
Photo taken by Anoushka
Ramkumar using a
Samsung Galaxy S4



“Rainbow Butterflies”
Photo taken by Veronica Angiuli
using an I-phone

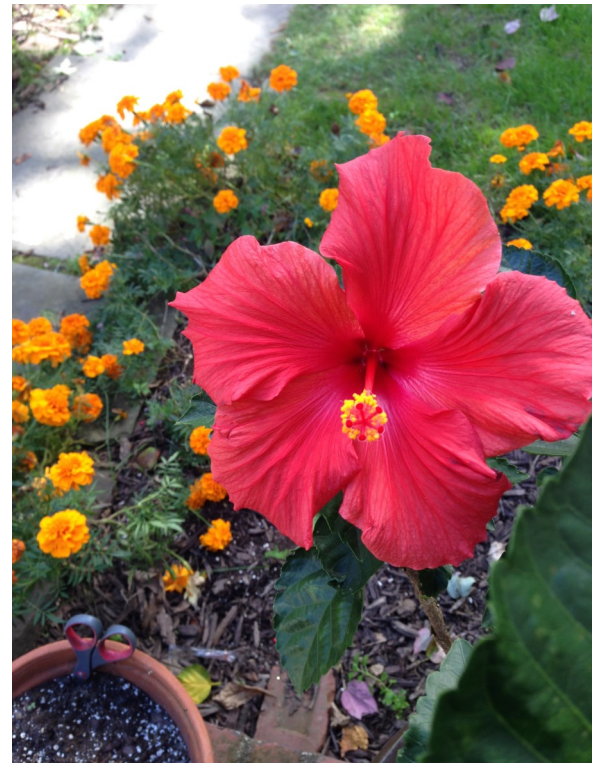


“Turtles”
Photo taken by
Veronica Angiuli using
an I-phone



“Above All Beauty”
Photo taken by Chandler
DeMarco using a Nikon
camera

“Serenity”
Photo taken by Danielle Dimeo
at Smith Point Nantucket
using an I-Phone



“Bright Days”
Photo taken by
Danielle DiMeo in her backyard
using an I-Phone





“Evening Sunset”

Photo taken by Elizabeth O'Rourke on
Montauk using an I-Phone



“ Glowing Horizon ”

Photo taken by Jacey Zeug
while on a sunset cruise
using an I-Phone



“Loving Hands”

Photo taken by Jacey Zeug by
putting her hands in front of a lamp in
her bedroom using an
I-Phone



“Swirl of Imagination”
Photo taken by Veronica
Angiuli using an I-Phone

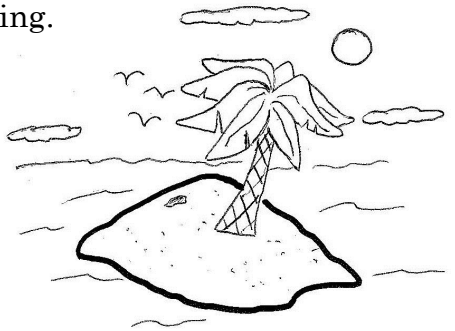


“Bubble”
Photo taken by Veronica
Angiuli using an
I-Phone

Block Island

By Jacey Zeug '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

My second home.
Where I know all the streets by name.
No building as far as the eye can see.
No noise. No honks. No yells.
Not using any cars, riding your bike everywhere.
To the lighthouse, skipping rocks.
My dog running in the vineyard.
Free.
The ocean behind your shoulder.
The doughnut shop right around the corner.
No palm trees, no surfboards.
The banana boats, parasailing, hiking.
Different.
The breeze. The trees. The air.
My second home.



The Great Warrior of Sparta

By Agustin Velasco '19

There was a fierce warrior who once stood with flames in his eyes. With blood of a lion.
With enemies to despise. Leading Sparta to victory, and dying with pride. He stomped
over Thespians, Thebans, and Persians. He had 300 men by his side. Clashing and slash-
ing, the king was brave. Victory and Conquest was what he craved. For him, war was
bliss. This man was...

King Leonidas I

End of the Beginning

By Maeve Young '19

I walk across my room, evaluating every crook and cranny of the space in front of me. All of a sudden, I spot something, shining like the sun in the corner, hanging on the wall with pride. There, hanging on a pink hook, is my medal from the 2012 Irish singing competition, the Fleadh. I take the cold silver medal in my hands as memories flood my mind of that joyous day.

I was on my way towards the room of the singing competition, clamminess settling in the palms of my hands. I fiddled with my pink polka dot dress, immediately regretting the formal attire. What if everyone else was in shorts and a tee shirt? What if they stared at me, as if I was a clown in the middle of the circus ring?

I stopped my negative thoughts as we approached two heavy doors leading into the room of the competition. I walked across the hotel to the doors with my sister, Deirdre, my breath picking up speed. When we reached our destination, I was close to hyperventilation. Thoughts were clouding my mind, thinking about how good the other competitors would be, while I probably would choke while singing the Irish traditional songs my mom's friend chose.

Deirdre swung open the doors, revealing a big room with about fifteen people in it, three in the center of them all, probably the judges, I thought.

"Ah, welcome! Are you a competitor today?" asked a man around 30 years of age, hair black as coal and an Irish accent lacing his words.

"Uh, yeah, I am. Maeve Young?" I stated warily, unsure if I was in the right place. There were about six girls in there, around my age, indicating that my thoughts were false. I was really in the right place.

“Let me see... ah, yes! Here you are, just have a seat next to the other girls, and you’ll be the third person to perform,” a woman next to the man said in a Southern Irish accent, sweet and soft.

This was the time I surveyed the room around me. It was a large space, a rectangular meeting table in the middle with spinney chairs around it. The three judges turned out to be the man and the woman I spoke to, as well as an aged old man with salt and pepper hair, black and grey blending together as one. All the other contestants and their family members smiled at me, very kindly may I add, as I sat next to a girl in a red, poufy dress. Guess I wasn’t dressed too formal.

After two very beautifully singing girls—including the red poufy dressed one—sang, my name was called out by the aged man, making my breath catch in my throat. My mind was spinning as I stood up from my chair and walked to the front of the room where the performers went, and I started to sing the song called “Lough Sheilen’s Side”. My mom’s friend, Margie, had taught me the song just for this competition. I have never preformed in front of this many people, well, by myself, and I was absolutely terrified. However, as the song went on, I felt myself getting lost in it, my mind in a dreamland as I sang the depressing song.

As it felt to me, as soon as it started, it was over. I was pulled out of my dreamland at the sound of clapping, and I opened my eyes to find everyone staring at me in shock, the judges seemed impressed.

“Thank you very much, Maeve. Please have a seat,” the old man had said, me learning from his nametag that his name was Cormac. I nodded shyly, blushing, and walked towards my sister.

“Mom?” I whispered, seeing her staring proudly at me.

“Yeah, I got here just in time to hear you sing the last chorus! Great job, Maeve, I have a feeling you’re going to win something big!” she gushed, wrapping her arms around me.

After I sang, we walked out of the room to go see my sister. I wanted to hear all of the talented girls, but my mother said that I couldn’t, we had to go find my sister before she got scared.

As the time wore on, it was time to go back into the singing room to find out who won first, second, and third place. My breath was going fast, something it has been doing the whole day now, as we sat down in the room, the judges standing in the front.

“Hello, competitors! Right now is when you learn who won!” Everyone clapped in the room to the smiling man, but he quieted us down so he could continue. “First and second place get to go to Ireland to compete in the world nationals, while the third gets fifty dollars!” We all clapped again, making him laugh.

“Well, in third place, we have Claire!” We all clapped as a girl, seeming about eleven years old, walked up to get her medal, strapped around a blue ribbon to wear on your neck, and fifty dollars. You could see disappointment in her eyes, so I congratulated her, sure that I wouldn’t get any higher than her. “And now, in second place, there is Maeve!” I kept on talking to Claire, until I realized that they had actually called *my* name. Claire seemed happy that I had won, congratulating me as I did her. I walked up to the judges, and they handed me a small little plastic bag, containing a metal on a white ribbon to wrap around my neck. I took it out of the bag and placed the silver around my neck, feeling the metal clink down onto my chest as I walked back to my seat, smiling proudly.

“And in first place, Colleen!” a girl with brown hair stood up, seeming over

joyed at her win. I clapped to her, happy that someone beat me. Why would I be happy, you ask?

I guess then, if I did get first place, there would be so much pressure on me if I did further competitions. People would expect the best of the best, where I could only be my standard. I clapped for her because I was relieved to not be in her position, trying hardest to work, which would only add stress to myself.

“Don’t be upset, Maeve. I’m sure you’ll win first next year,” Deirdre smiled surely at me. All I could do was smile back, knowing that she didn’t know what I was feeling. I was so happy I had won second. So, so happy that I could just smile my biggest smile, and hope to my lucky stars that I wouldn’t win something that I couldn’t live up to.

I smile weakly back at the memory, placing the medal back on the pink, rosy hook. I sigh, sitting down on my bed and think about what had happened after that day.

I ended up not going to Ireland for the world finals. It cost way too much money, and our family there didn’t live in Dublin, where the competition was at, meaning that we would have to stay in an expensive hotel for two weeks.

I haven’t told anyone this, but I am happy that we didn’t go. I truly am. That would mean competition against the best of the best, and I couldn’t do that.

Claire, the third place winner, went to Ireland in my absence. I smile about that, even to this day, about how I helped someone living their dreams, especially if it cost me my nightmares of not.

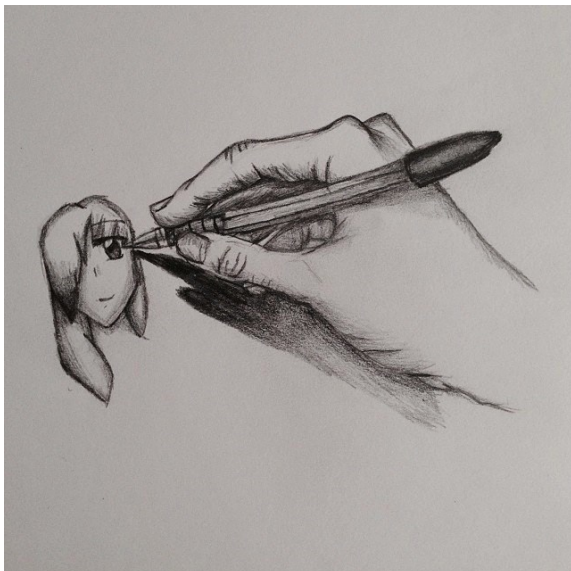
I didn’t win that day, because I didn’t have my heart set on it. And you know what? I’m totally okay with that. One day, I will have my chance. *This is only the ending of the beginning.*

THE END

**Pictures on this page
were all drawn by
8th grader
Chandler DeMarco,**

**Freehand using
Royal Graphite
pencils.**

*Picture of an eye crying and
the tear travels down the
flower then drips from the
bottom leaf.*



Chandler drawing Nagisa from
Clannad



A Portrait of Nagisa from
Clannad

Finish, Finish, Finish

By Michael Mastrangelo

I was sitting on my couch shaking like a kid running in the snow with no shoes. It was in overtime 17-17. The Giants were one field goal away from beating the San Francisco 49ers and going to Super Bowl 46. Lawrence Tynes was one kick away from sending the Giants to the Super Bowl.

My mom, dad, sister and I were all on our feet screaming. David Baas snapped it to David Carr. The crowd went silent in San Francisco. Lawrence Tynes came up and kicked it. It was soaring through the freezing wind, and it had the distance, and it was GOOD! The Giants were going to Super Bowl 46! My whole family was on our feet screaming our lungs out. We couldn't believe our eyes. To me this felt like a dream come true.

The next afternoon I rushed through the door coming home from school. I sprinted to the couch, hurtled over all of the pillows ready to take a nap. My dad silently walked over and tapped me to wake up. He said he had something special to give me. I walked into the kitchen and I saw 4 Super Bowl 46 tickets. My heart just dropped at that moment.

3 weeks later, I was sitting in The Indianapolis Colts Super Dome watching the Giants versus the Patriots. The atmosphere felt amazing. I was so excited to be the only person that I know to ever, go to a Super Bowl. So far it was an amazing experience with my family.

It was the 4th quarter with about 2 minutes to go. The Giants were around the 10-yard line in the Patriots end zone. The score was 14-17 Patriots. The Giants wanted to run the clock down and then score so they wouldn't let Tom Brady come on the field so the Giants could win Super Bowl 46.

Finish, Finish, Finish cont'd

Ahmad Bradshaw took the handoff and wanted to get down on the 1-yard line so they could waste time and then score a touchdown. He tried to stop himself but his momentum made him score a touchdown. The Giants fans were silent even though the Giants scored a touchdown. It was a mistake.

Now the Patriots get the ball with about a minute thirty to go in the 4th. Tom Brady is a really big threat and they could possibly win. Tom Coughlin said at the beginning of the 2012-2013 season, "That's what they need to Finish, Finish, Finish". That's what they needed to do; Finish, Finish, Finish. Those words were stuck in my head at the moment. Tom Brady needed to throw 80 yards to score a touchdown to win because you can't win the game with a field goal. They would lose still if they made a field goal.

Soon the clock winded down to 6 seconds. The Patriots were on their own 40-yard line. They needed to score now. Both sides of the field were silent as a monk. This was it.

Brady received the ball. All receivers went deep into the end zone. Tom Brady heaved the ball up high. It had the distance and the ball hit the turf. The Giants did it! The score was 21-17 Giants. Confetti spurted out of cannons. The Giants finally did it. After all of their ups and downs, I will always remember to finish, in my basketball games, either if it is following your shot or making a free throw, you need to finish no matter how hard you try.

THE END

The Frog Prince

By Elizabeth O'Rourke '19

One sunny afternoon, I (the princess) went outside to play with my golden ball in the backyard of the castle. I was throwing it up and catching it until it fell into the stream. The only way I could get my golden ball would be if the grumpy frog got it for me. So I shouted "Oh frog could you please swim down to the bottom of the stream and get my golden ball?" So, the frog swam down to the bottom of the stream and got me a rock. I guess he thought it was funny. Once again I asked him to get me my golden ball. The frog once again got me a rock. After two more tries I finally was able to get the golden ball.

That evening when I went to have dinner I heard a slight tap on the door. I got up from the table to get the door. When I opened it, that same rude frog was there, who got me rocks instead of my golden ball. Why would I let him in? When the frog stepped in, he proceeded to say that he wanted to come in and have dinner with us. There was no way I would let him in to have dinner. The only thing he did for me was give me a hard time. Nobody, even a frog, should give a princess a hard time. Even worse, the frog should not come to the king's house without an invitation. So I shut the door and did not let the rude frog come in.

The next afternoon while my father (the king) and I were having tea, I heard a slight tap on the door. I got up from the sofa to get the door. When I opened the door, the same rude frog that interrupted my dinner and got me rocks instead of my golden ball was standing at the door. Why would I let this rude and interruptive frog inside the castle? Once again the frog stepped in and said that he would like to have tea with us. Why would this frog come again when yesterday he was not allowed to come in? I did the same as the day before and closed the door in the frog's face.

The next evening while my father and I were having dinner I heard a slight tap on the door. I got up from the dinner table to answer the door. When I opened the door the frog was standing at the door. This time the frog had a more serious expression on his face. I asked the frog "What can I help you with?" The frog stepped inside the castle and replied by saying, "I am so sorry dear princess, I don't know why I was so rude to you when getting your golden ball. Please forgive me." After the frog said this, I thought hard about everything that happened. I decided that it would be a good idea to let him in to have a meal with us. He could not do too much harm. I then accepted the frog's apology and pulled out a chair for him to sit in to have dinner with my father and I. The frog sat down and ate off the golden plates. Then I carried the frog to the sofa where he sat with my father and I until it was time for bed.

When it was time for bed I carried the frog to my room and placed him on the opposite side of the bed from where I would sleep. I turned off the lamp in my room and gracefully went to bed. When I woke up in the morning, I turned to where the frog had gone to bed last night to see a prince sitting there. The prince was tall and handsome. He told me that a mean witch turned him into a grumpy frog. "Now that a beautiful princess reversed the spell, I can be a handsome prince again." We got married the day after and moved to a new castle where we would live for many years to come.

Sweet and Sour

By Elizabeth O'Rourke '19

Life is a piece of candy. The candy bursts into flavor. It is sweet and then sour. I am a piece of candy. I can be the sweetest thing you ever ate or the sourest thing you ever ate. The piece of candy will get you through any hill. The sweet to sour to sweet moments. Sometimes you can savor the candy or you can chew it to make it over. Some candy will last longer than other candy. It could make sores on your mouth if it is too sour or make you crave more if it is sweet.

Matilda

By Mary Lisa '19

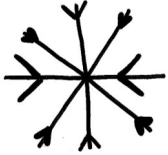
Matilda lived in a coffeehouse when she was fourteen
Her mom and grandpa lived with her and a mouse who was often seen
Nathaniel Benson was her crush
Whenever she saw him it made her blush
A terrible illness began to spread making everybody sick
When Mattie's mom suddenly became ill she told her to get out quick
Not knowing where to go Mattie and her Grandfather left home headed for somewhere
As bad luck would have it Mattie gets sick and needs care
They went back home to find the coffeehouse being robbed
Then the robbers seriously injured Grandfather which caused his death and Mattie sobbed
She makes new friends and goes with Eliza and Nell
She helped nurse the children until everyone was well
The fever had disappeared
And everyone was cleared



Snow

By Rishi Dhokai '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

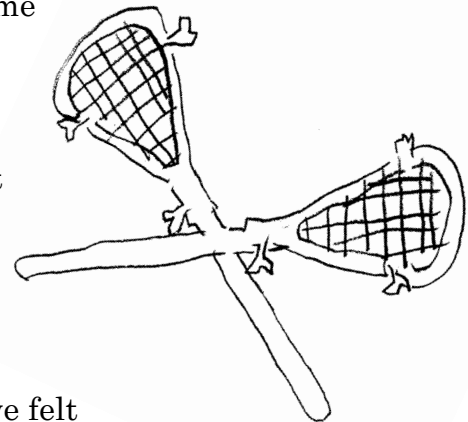
Snow is nice and white
Which always spreads delight
Kids miss school on snow days
Snowflakes will be your gaze
But if there is a blizzard
Your jacket should be zippered
Or else you'll get a cold
Your mother may have told



The Final Game

By Ryan McGee '18/Illustrated by Grace DiMeo '18

The final game
Ourselves we blame
We played sloppy
Though we do not play hockey
The game lacrosse is the sport we play
We were not ourselves that day
The bell went off with a chime
We went into over-time
It was ten seconds left
The goalie outside the net
#57 got the ball
He blew it all
He had missed
No one could assist, the pain we felt
We could not complain these were the cards we were dealt



My Angel

By Sarah Manzo '18/Illustrated by Grace DiMeo '18

Grandpa,
I know you're flying high in the sky
I know I absolutely shouldn't cry
I remember the days
And your sweet ways
There's not a day that goes by
That I don't ask why



You were always happy
Never sappy
You never showed your true pain
Without you it makes me insane
Now that we're apart
It really breaks my heart

Your silver hair was sometimes a mess
But you were always very well dressed
The sweater you wore in crisp, cool weather
My brother wears now to make him feel better

Your life was a treasure
You gave me much pleasure
I hope you know
That I loved you so



The Beauty of Fall

By Serena Nappa '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

I see the children running,
Giggling with joy.
My friend at my side is grinning,
Watching the little kids.
They then kick the black ball,
As they tumble to the ground,
Into the leaves of many colors.

I then start to join them
Running with the ball at my feet.
Dribbling and passing,
Blocking and kicking.
I feel young once again.
We laugh and we play,
On this wonderful October morning,
With an end of cookies to eat!

As I wake up the next day,
I see the beautiful sky.
The colorful leaves,
Have fallen to the ground,
And have caught my eyes in amazement.
I walk outside to the cold crisp air,
And quietly sit down for a moment.
As I see the world's beauty before me.

This wonderful season,
Has so many reasons,
To be my favorite for sure.
Then I saw them,
The little kids running,
Giggling and chasing the ball.



Basketball

By Sarah Spagnola '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

The ball sliding off your fingertips,

SWOOSH

And the crowd goes wild

Point guard scramble, through the legs, into a pull up jump shot aiming right at the box

Basketball is my life

Getting past everyone and making a perfect lay-up

Box and one defense, calls the coach

We all align

Hook shots and a fade away,

Everyone's favorite

Could basketball be any better?

Man to man, the best defense ever

Then, comes my personal favorite

The pick and roll

Brushing off their shoulder and then whipping the pass so hard

The game was 30-31 and Hillsdale was winning

There was 13 seconds left

We call a time out and they all get into a green and white huddle

We gather around my dad, the coach, and he tells us exactly what to do

We break from our maroon and white huddle and get back on the court ready to win

Since I am the point guard, the ball gets passed into me and I show a fist

The other team is pressing, but I know it won't work against our plan

A maroon and white jersey comes and sets a pick for me

As I quickly brush off of her shoulder, I fake the lay-up and whip the pass so hard

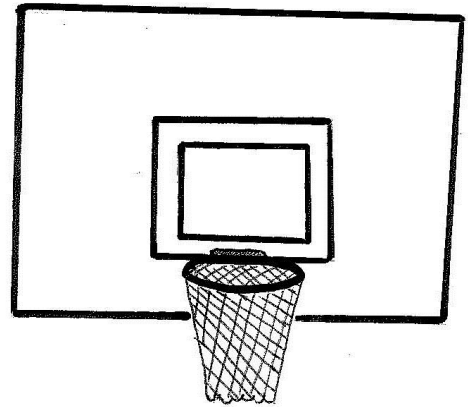
My teammate catches the ball and makes the lay-up with 2 seconds left!

The crowd goes crazy!

We won the game, 32-31, with of course, the pick and roll

It was the best feeling and we all went home excited and happy, we did it!

Who knows where I would be without basketball?



My Bar Mitzvah

By Jonah Schechtman '19

I remember the time I had my Bar mitzvah. It was very recently. It meant a lot to me and it is a very meaningful thing in my religion. I am glad to say that I had it and I am a man.

I prepared very hard for my Bar mitzvah. It took a lot of training and hard work. I knew it wouldn't be an easy task from the start. I had to make a speech, prepare for it, read a little bit from the Torah, and I had to learn Hebrew. I trained very hard because it is a tradition in my religion and it is an honor to have my Bar mitzvah following my brothers Ethan and Zach. At first, I didn't know what it was when I went to my brother's Bar mitzvah. When I got older and more prepared for it, I learned more and more about it. Once I started preparing for it, I understood it more. I had to lose a lot of social time and other time to go to Hebrew school and learn and prepare for my Bar mitzvah. I went and I am thankful for my mom because she drove me there, all the way to Mahwah, every time I needed to go and she never tried to get out of it or anything.

When my Bar mitzvah finally came, all the hard work and training paid off. All my friends showed up to the Temple in the morning to help support me and watch me do my best and I did very well. My entire family congratulated me and my friends did too. I was very pleased with myself because the hard part was done. Now came the fun part, the party! It was so fun, there was dancing, and food, and presents, and candy, and my family and friends were there, it was so great. I was so thankful for my family and friends supporting me and helping me out.

My Life is a Flower

By Terri-Jeanne Liu '19

My life is a bright flower that stands out in a patch of ordinary green grass. It starts out from a seed and grows to be a unique beauty. Bees and butterflies help it grow better, but it mostly flourishes independently. It is busy; it is always working to do photosynthesis to keep itself alive. In droughts, floods and bad weather, flowers are in danger. A few survive these things, while the weak ones wilt and get destroyed. Even though they all look the same, no two flowers are alike. A flower might just be glanced at, ignored, or even stepped on. Even though this happens, it seems to always rise up again to stand tall and proud. A flower is always growing bigger and prettier.

Life Is Up At Bat

By Vincent Ippolito '19/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

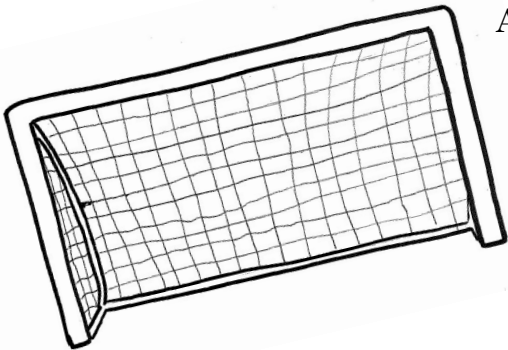
My life is a “baseball game”. With all the excitement and enthusiasm building up inside of you, that is just like my life. You can either get a homerun or strikeout. Getting a homerun is like getting a good job or getting into a good college, those are all good things you want. Striking out is anything you didn’t want to happen, but that striking out moment has to mean something to you. It’s not like you wanted a soda and you didn’t get it, but like not doing good on an essay that can get you to Harvard. The umpires are like your parents. Your parents control some part of your lives when you’re young, umpires can decide if it is a strike or a ball when you are up at bat. Just like your parents, they can’t control a lot of things once you get older, like what you want to become, and what you want to be known for. Umpires can’t decide a lot of things too, like if you are going to get a hit or not, they can’t control that. The other things are like the things that are blocking you from what you want to accomplish. If something or someone tries to stop you from reaching your goal it will prevent you from achieving it. The other team is trying to stop you from getting a hit. Although you have all these obstacles in your way, you should just keep pushing and fighting through it and at the end you will “win” and “succeed”. My life is **just** like a “baseball game”.



Soccer

By Veronica Angiuli '18/Illustrated by Alison Ciarletta '18

I kick the ball while
Watching the autumn leaves fall
The wind blows in my face
As I rush down the field
Fall is here
And my dreams are near
The wind swishes the net
As my team scores
The leaves start to sway on the trees
Like their dancing, and
I watch them fall to the ground.
The colors are red, orange, and green
There is nothing that I love better
Than “learning about my life
With a ball at my feet”
As they say; nothing is better than this
First half is done
And I’m so tired
When the second half comes,
In the goal I must go
I stop the ball
From going in the net,
And the final whistle blows.
I’m thrilled with
Another victory



Clean Water Essay

By Thomas Whang '19

Where would you rather swim, in a beautiful crystal clear lake or a polluted dirty lake? Clean Water is not polluted and we are able to drink it, while polluted water is horrible and dirty water that can make you ill. People in many different countries do not have access to a clean water source. Two reasons why clean water is important is to survive and our economy depends on it. Clean water is very important.

First, humans need water to survive. People consume water every day in many different ways, such as drinking or through food. When consuming water it must be clean because dirty water can hurt you by making you physically ill. How would you feel if your glass of water was brown and dirty? Consequently, if lakes and streams are polluted, the water supply will become contaminated and we will be just as “polluted” as the water.

Also, many people in our society depend on access to healthy fish. Fishermen make a living by catching fish and selling them to restaurants, and supermarkets for a profit. Without clean water, fish would not survive because the chemicals in the water could be poisonous to them. The fishermen would lose a lot of money if the fish lived in contaminated water and if the amount of dirty water increases, then more fish will die. Also, if the amount of dirty water increases, then the restaurants and supermarkets will lose money because they are losing their fish products that people want.

In conclusion, polluted water can hurt the environment and us. Two reasons why clean water is important is to survive and is to help the economy. Clean water is the reason why the community is still here. Without clean water life would never be same and people wouldn't have as many jobs. Clean water is important for all.

The Flaring Phoenix

By Carnig Shakarjian III '19

As I gaze upon the stars
From the dunes of sand
I see a blazing figure
And it grasps my hand

I'm flying through the barren sky
As I look down to see something erupting
When the coffin starts opening
I begin to faint for being so high

We begin to dive deeper and deeper
Into the mists of the soaring desert
The eyes of the beast were blind
And I start to fall with no clench from behind

Partially buried in soft dust
The mummy glares at my body
His bandages start to dismember
And that was all I could remember

I wake up
Nothing but darkness surrounds me
When the lights turned on
There wasn't any humanity left inside of me

I was nothing but a warped corpse
Who was white and soggy
I felt little remorse
And I began to see my late daddy

I could see the light
My life essence was escaping
From the prism of fright
As my eyes were closing

Finally, I've rejoiced
With all my loved ones
And our love was kindled
Once again

Park Ridge Baseball

By Dylan Triano '18

Baseball is so very fun.

I run the bases faster than a gun.

Dreaming about my favorite game.

Going to the field as my teammates came.

Running around getting ready for a win.

Its better than the sport where you get kicked In the shin.

Digging my feet into the ground.

Getting ready to give the ball a pound.

All the kids that are scared of me.

After I hit them in the knee.

I love baseball more than candy.

It sure is fun and dandy.

On the mound pitching with all my force.

If we want to win practice is the main source.

I love this game so much.

Every time I am the clutch.

How To Show My Pride In Being An American

By Agustin Velasco '19

To be an American means more than being a citizen of the country. It means that people of the country have freedom of speech/press, and the pursuit of happiness. Though these rights are a privilege for Americans, many abuse and take advantage of the freedom. A citizen can show pride in being an American by helping neighbors when they need assistance, volunteering in community services, and by admiring/preserving the land.

When 9/11 occurred, it was a downfall for many Americans. It was a huge attack from outside terrorists, where two buildings in New York City were demolished. This surprised many Americans. There were people killed, injured, and traumatized from this act against justice. Even though, there was danger in the country, neighbors and citizens helped each other to safety. Americans carried neighbors, and supported each other. Everyone was showing pride in his or her country by not being selfish.

Volunteering in community services is another way to give back to the town or city you live in. This shows Americanism because one can do something for others without getting a reward. This would be an act of showing selfless characteristics. Some ways to volunteer in your community are by organizing a food bank, cooking for the homeless in a kitchen, and by coaching a school sport. There are many more ways to volunteer. Getting involved with your community can also help people make friends, which can get more people involved in the activities. By spreading the services, one can show pride in being an American.

Recycling and protecting the American land can show pride in being an American because it shows that people care for the beautiful land they live on. "Liberty means responsibility. That is why most men dread it" (Shaw, George Bernard). This quote means that with freedom comes ownership and responsibility of land, actions, or people. That is why most people do not like responsibility. They are afraid to own or be responsible for something. That is why, if one protects the American land by keeping it waste free, it would be a sign of respect.

To conclude, with natural rights comes responsibility. This responsibility is imperative for everyone to handle. A citizen can show pride in being an American by helping neighbors when they need assistance, volunteer in community services, and by admiring/preserving the land.

Americanism Essay Contest Winner - American Legion Auxiliary Unit 153

Sunny Day Spud

By Casey Urmanowicz '18

The ball is thrown high into the sky,
The sight of the bright sun blinds my eyes.
The kids run hoping they don't get out;
Players already out never pout.

The number four is shouted loudly,
"That's my number!" I smile proudly.
I catch the ball as fast as I can,
"SPUD!" I scream, and I shout it again.

I take four steps towards a player.
She gets out; I become happier.
In the neighborhood we always play,
Running around on a summer day.

The game continues and I get out.
I stay calm, and I don't scream or shout.



Photo taken by Jacey Zeug '18

We hope you enjoyed the 2014 edition of
Stepping Stones

We look forward to our young, talented artists
continuing the tradition of writing and drawing
for future publications both in and out of school.

“Every artist was first an amateur.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson