

Volume 29 2013

# 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

## Staff Note:

Do you enjoy reading pieces of literature written by your peers? If yes, *Stepping Stones* is an amazing way to do so! As you read this magazine, you will experience some of the finest writing that Park Ridge Middle School students have to offer. While reading through this magazine, you will also come across fantastic images that your peers have hand drawn. These enhance the thoughtful and creative poems that you will come across. While browsing through the pages of *Stepping Stones*, you will be able to relate to many styles of writing, and experiences that your friends write about!

*Stepping Stones* opens the doors for many hardworking students to express themselves, and share their talents with others. When reading through these poems and stories, you will very likely find yourself feeling proud of your peers who have put so much thought and consideration into their writings and drawings. To realize what young students can produce within their writing is an inspiration to many.

The possibility of even laying your eyes on this phenomenal magazine would not be possible without the dedication of the staff. Make sure to thank Ms. Rotella the next time you see her as she was the advisor in charge of making this happen. We should also thank our seventh and eighth grade English teachers who encouraged us to submit our literary works to the magazine and all of the students who have put together and edited this magazine and even contributed their own drawings and poems. Last but certainly not least, we should acknowledge all of the middle school students who generously submitted their work to *Stepping Stones*. Without all of you, this magazine would be filled with blank pages!

Hopefully, many of you will consider joining the *Stepping Stones* club in the future. I wish you all luck in composing this intriguing magazine next year! I am so grateful to have been a part of such an amazing accomplishment!

Gianna Grosso  
Editorial Staff

# Stepping Stones

## A Junior High Literary/Art Magazine

### Staff:

Alison Ciarletta	Kayla Pantaleo
Nicholas Corso	Victoria Parente
Grace DiMeo	Bennett Rosner
Julia Drennan	Ayse Seker
Gianna Grosso	Allison Uhl
Vallerie Moran	Grace Wagner



Photo by Kayla Pantaleo: Grade 8  
i-Phone used to capture this photo

### Advisors:

Ms. Rotella

### Cover Design:

Kayla Pantaleo-Grade 8

*A talented young photographer who has captured the essence of nature in her photograph with a mature understanding of composition, color and design. For this original photo Kayla used her i-phone to seize this moment of serenity depicted in the scene. The photograph was taken at the New Jersey shore prior to Hurricane Sandy which devastated many of the beaches and beach communities along the Jersey shore. Kayla has been encouraged to continue her passion of photography and to share with us more of her exceptional photographic works in future school publications.*

### From the Advisor:

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those students who volunteered their time in helping with the production of the 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.

At the start of the school year, all 7th & 8th grade students were offered the opportunity of joining the staff of *Stepping Stones*. Meetings were held bi-monthly. Literary works submitted were either classroom assignments or voluntary contributions. Artwork was done in pen and ink or pencil with the exception of the cover. The cover was an original creative photographic work taken at the Jersey shore prior to Hurricane Sandy. Selections for the magazine were chosen by the student staff members with final approval from the advisor. Microsoft publisher was used for layout and design. Printing was done by a professional outside source, Imageworks, in Park Ridge 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.

I am hopeful that our young writers and artists will continue to exercise their creative talents and become inspired to contribute and share their works in future school publications.

Ms. Rotella

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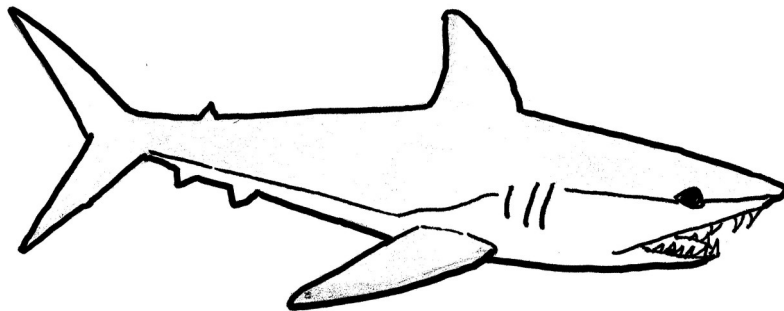
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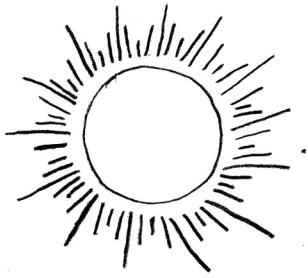
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## Am I Doing Well?

*By Amanda Lauer/illustrated Alison Ciarletta*

I hear the roaring crowd chanting various names  
It is extremely hard to focus  
Look up at the clock  
Estimating the amount of time I have before I swim  
Five minutes  
Four minutes  
Two minutes  
One minute  
I know what I have to do  
Try hard until it burns  
And when it starts to burn, try harder  
It should be a quick race  
Stay with the people next to you until its time  
Then make your move on them  
Move your arms as fast as you can  
Kick like an engine on a speedboat  
Set your mind to it  
Pretend there's a shark behind  
Trying it's best to catch you  
Then think to yourself  
Am I doing well?  
And if you did all of the above  
The answer will be a reassuring *yes*





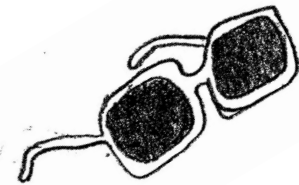
## Goodbye Summer

*By Charmi Desai/illustrated by Grace Wagner*

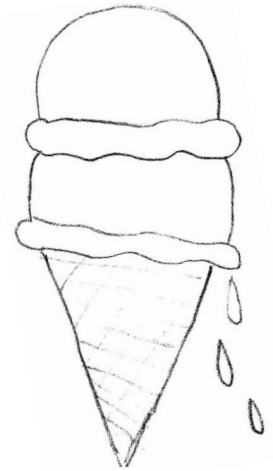
The winds of summer, hot and dry  
Lazy days go by quickly.  
Sun so hot it burns your face.  
Seasoned grass between your toes,  
Mowed and raked in piles and rows.

Friends who come for fun,  
Spend a lazy summer day,  
In the sun's hot rays.

Iced tea sweats in glasses tall,  
Lemonade and soda for everyone,  
Ice cream churned until cold and creamy,  
Makes a sweet treat for us.  
And ice pops make us dreamy.



It is all now a memory  
Those lazy days so hot and free.  
Mother Nature has ruled,  
And the kids are back in school.  
Summer dust that winds did blow  
Are replaced with Autumn's amber  
glow  
Summer's gone, where did it go?



## **Not Just Friends, But Sisters**

*By Kelly McCann*

The day I first met you  
I could tell we were going to be best friends  
To me you are always there  
And there will never be a goodbye  
Always there good or bad  
You're the best friend I've always had  
If I could do something for you it will be  
To give back all you've given me  
Thought our relationship gets foggy  
We stride together to make it better  
Through hard and scary times  
With our family not feeling well  
Next to me you stood  
You were there as much as you could  
A year after I was born you came along  
And together we bonded  
Always matching running through the mall  
And we can't forget IKEA  
Our favorite ice cream and cinnamon rolls  
We always matched and I was taller than you  
Not for long  
You sprouted right pass me  
The bear hug I was able to give you for being tall  
Now the ones you give me for passing right along  
Playing in the backyard on the swings  
Always brought back great memories  
My treasure hunts were so fun  
And the video of pictures when we were young  
I can watch it over and over again  
And all the home videos that never get old  
My best friend Kristina  
You were definitely not the kind to be a ballerina  
From the day I met you  
You were evil in the eye  
Playing dirty in soccer  
And swooshing in basketball  
You were so athletic  
We were meant to be together  
We are more than friends  
We are sisters holding together strong.



## **Lasting A Lifetime**

*By Lauren Sum*

Friends are far, friends are near,  
Friends are there to lend an ear.  
They listen, laugh and care.  
But most of all, they are always there.  
Through thick and thin, ups and downs,

Friends are always there, all year 'round.  
Always helping you through the good times  
and the bad,  
Friends are the best things you'll ever have.

Friends are far, friends are near,  
Friends are there to lend an ear.  
They listen, laugh and care.  
But most of all, they are always there.  
Through thick and thin, ups and downs,

The friendship we have is so unusual to find,  
We always hate to see each other in a bind.  
We've laughed so hard, we cried.  
We feel each other's pain like we're hurting inside.  
We can always find the right words to say,  
To help us get through any ordinary day.

When you're not here it makes me sad,  
But I have all our memories to look back at and make me glad,  
Even miles won't keep us apart,  
Forever we'll stay,  
Close to the heart.

## Music Is My Escape

*By Maria Vargas/illustrated by Alison Ciarletta*

Music is all around me  
It makes me forget all my terrible past.  
You can say goodbye and leave behind the  
life that you have grown.  
It makes me feel jumpy and wild.  
I always know that I'm not alone.  
Is there anybody out there?  
Am I swimming through this empty sea alone?  
Everyday music calls me and I reply  
Would you hear me if I screamed or cried?  
Music is my passion  
It's my love in life  
And I will never get rid of it.



## Undefined

*By Bennett Rosner/illustrated by Grace DiMeo*

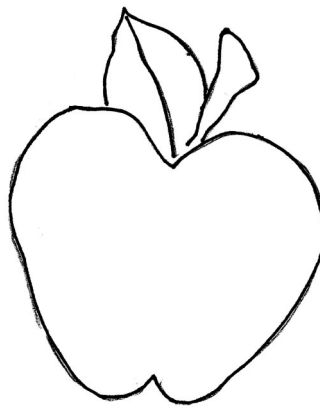
When a clean slate is ready to be dirtied  
And something bad is to occur  
Then you the owner of that rock  
Must make a choice  
To take a knife and scrape the blackboard of your soul  
Killing the pureness and filling its grave with ashes and coal  
Whether you should revoke the madness of the ungood  
Or give in to the opposite of God  
To shine the slate a little more  
Or to throw at it a mud pie  
A halo or devil's ears have yet to protrude your skull  
A thought or mere action can decide your fate, nevertheless  
It is reckoning day for your soul and time to make your move  
Your life is undefined before that point  
Make sure the choice is yours



## **Opportunities**

*By Michelle Zhou/illustrated by Grace DiMeo*

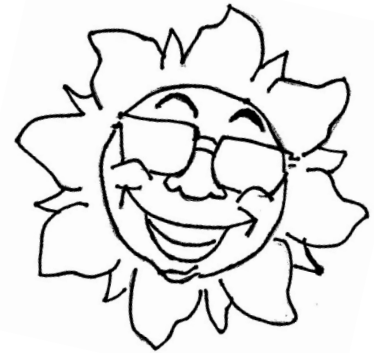
In my hands a big apple lies  
Glossy red, and juicy in every bite  
I open my mouth, and then I bring the apple to my mouth  
But then I quickly put it into a box  
Maybe if I save it, it will be sweeter later  
I put the apple away,  
For I only have one.  
But if kept too long, the apple will rot  
I open the box and slowly take a peek  
My saliva is dripping, and my stomach is hungry  
The apple has decayed, my stomach remains unfilled.  
There is nothing in the box  
The apple was long gone  
Opportunities won't wait



## Transitions

*By Misaki Dreispan /  
illustrated by Grace DiMeo*

Heat coming to an end  
No more yellow polka-dot bikinis or sun-bathing  
Closing up the pools  
Buying supplies for the new school year



Trying to get over sadness of the transition  
Shopping for long pants and shirts with long sleeves  
Finishing up summer reading books for school  
Getting things ready for school with stress

Leaving home at 7:30am every weekday  
Leaves turning chestnut and crunching with each step  
Going all-out in pink for Breast Cancer Awareness Month  
Thinking about Halloween costumes



Weather becoming chillier  
Losing a tan  
Purchasing turkeys and apple cider  
Getting ideas for Christmas and Hanukkah list  
Going on hay rides and picking fresh, crisp apples



Making snow angels in the bright snow  
Seeing my breath in the air  
Hot chocolate  
Snow becoming green wisps

Getting my rain boots and raincoats prepared to be worn  
Counting raindrops on your tongue  
April Showers  
May Flowers



## Transitions (cont.)

Valentine's Day

Winter Recess

Taking off your cardigans

Buying new "shades"

Finals

Nearing the end of the school year

Sleeveless tops

Colorful shorts

Sleeping in late

Heat coming to an end

No more yellow polka-dot bikinis or sun-bathing

Closing up the pools

Buying supplies for the new school year





## **Disney World**

*By Joshua Gruenberg / illustrated by Grace DiMeo*

The place where dreams come true...Disney World  
From the Kingdom of Magic to an Experimental Prototype of Tomorrow  
to the Studios of Hollywood to the Kingdom of Animals

### **Journeying into the future and around the world**

Experience Canada, the UK, France, Germany, Italy, China, Japan, Norway,  
Mexico, the US, and Morocco in one day

Soaring over majestic pine trees smelling their leaves and flying through  
California wine country

Dining on a salad grown with conditions comparable to Mars

Fly and land a space shuttle to the Moon

Swimming with dolphins in a tank with a million gallons of water

### **Journeying through the lands of fantasy, tomorrow, and frontier**

Meeting the 43 presidents

Dining with royalty in a palace

Going back 50 years and comparing to today

Zippering through space

### **Experiencing life in the movie business**

Dropping 13 floors in a haunted elevator

Zooming through the freeway in a limo with Aerosmith

Watch an Indiana Jones movie being filmed

Try out for American Idol

Meet your favorite movie characters

### **Go to a land where animals roam**

Take a "two week safari" through the African Savannah seeing giraffe,  
lions, and elephants

Adventure through Mount Everest on a malfunctioning train

Cruise down a scenic river and get drenched by a waterfall

See life from a beetle's point of view

"Johnny! Wake up ! We're going to miss the bus to Magic Kingdom"

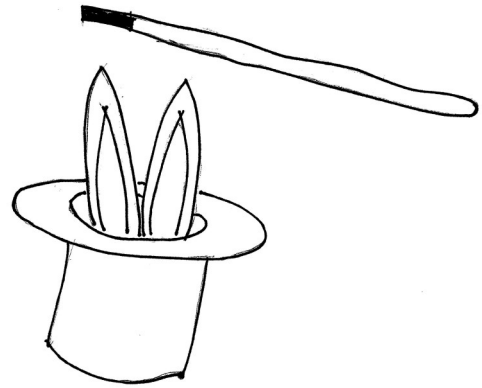
Only in Disney World



## Fantasy Smile

*By Alexa Ferranti/illustrated by Grace DiMeo*

We laugh, we smile  
Ideas flutter in the air  
My imagination overtakes my body  
The feeling of magic and monsters  
Seems like a lullaby singing me to a state of peace  
My heart beats the words "I'm safe"



I can spot...  
Dragons soaring overhead  
The monsters thick, indefinite shaped wings stretch open  
Mermaids swimming  
The inhuman creature's emerald tail glistens against the water  
Dwarfs running around the forest  
With their childish, pure hearts to frolic and laugh with the beauty of the evergreen realm

As a naïve child the world seemed rather  
Blissful  
Now that has washed away like the shoreline of the Pacific  
The natural world is frightening  
Those times of youth are only a memory  
They only thing that sparks back those memories of joy  
That triggers my fantasy mind and memory  
Where I can find serenity is...

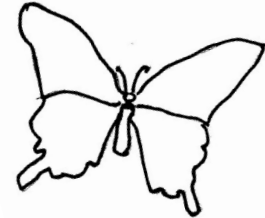
A smile



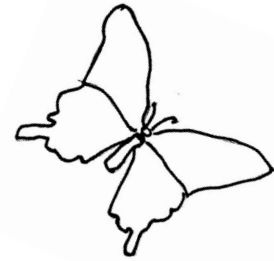
## That Special Feeling

*By Gianna Grosso/illustrated by Grace DiMeo*

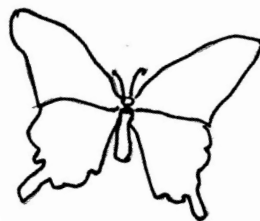
The stage lights up and the curtain rises  
I feel the heat against my skin  
The light blinds me,  
And the audience looks like a dark tunnel with no end...



There are butterflies roaming through my stomach  
My nerves vigorously surface  
All of my troubles wash away as I am removed from myself and become a character  
This is an emotional outlet  
I am no longer myself  
I become the character that I am portraying



My excitement is overwhelming...  
Before I know it, the performance has come to an end  
It is my time to bow,  
And all the pieces of my life are perfectly puzzled together...



## The Fight For Friends

*By Taylor Ferranti and Alexa Ferranti*

A fish's world isn't easy. Many things happen that aren't pleasant. I should know that. My world was once calm and clear. Yet on that day, that week, it wasn't the same. It all changed and I had no say. My world became upside down. Then it all stopped. I was once happy but now I don't know where I am.

"Sammy! Hello? Sammy!" shouted a voice in the distance.

As my sleepy body began to wake, a sudden force took hold of me. I was being shaken like an earthquake was happening, that only I could feel. Startled from this instant force I jolted awake, scared and confused. As shapes began to form I saw that the force was Nelly. Nelly was another brook trout. Nelly was a tiny fish compared to me. She was a vibrant red speckled color to her, which popped against her earthy coloring that matched mine.

"Nelly!!! What is it? You nearly scared me to death! Why did you have to wake me up so badly?" I honestly asked my friend,

She looked at me as if I had two heads sitting on the top of my head. "Are you kidding me?" she told me. As those words flowed from out of her mouth it hit me like a ton of bricks.

"Our adventure" I replied feeling like a horrible friend.

"Don't tell me you forgot?" she said beginning to get mad. I could tell because when she gets angry she stands completely still and gets tense, as if trying to camouflage from predators.

"I didn't, I just slept in late and I am still a little tired. I would never blow you off on something we have been talking about for a long time. A little sign was released by Nelly showing me she had let it go.

"Alright then, why are we still standing here, our adventure awaits!" she spoke in a voice of happiness and excitement.

So off we went speeding along the current to our favorite meeting place. It is a place where the sun didn't hit the water, making it the water nice and cool. As I trailed a little behind her I couldn't stop but have a feeling that something was different. As I looked above me at the shallow stream I saw no difference. My well oxygenated, shallow, stream was the same as the day yesterday. It felt safe and like home. So I wondered, what was so different about today. Nothing was different about me, or Nelly. At least I thought nothing was different or today.

Trying to brush this feeling away I swam faster to catch up with Nelly, she could always keep my mind positive.

"Nelly! So are we truly going to see people?" I asked curiously

"Sammy I told you, sometimes kids hang out there, but I can't promise anything. Remember we are just here to watch." Nelly alerted me. For the next several minutes it was completely silent. The reason I think it was silent, was that Nelly really wanted what she told me, to sink into my head.

## The Fight For Friends (cont.)

“Sammy! Look!” Nelly exclaimed, wakening me from a daze. The way we knew that we were there was the big rock we decided looked a little like a crayfish, which is our favorite food. Cautious, now Nelly and I made our way to the rock. Slowly we settled ourselves ready to wait for the sight of a person. Nelly and I always dreamed of seeing a human. So when we heard Joe, our other friend, tell us he saw a human here, we just had to make plans to come.

“Are you ready for this?” I asked Nelly, even though I really think it was meant for me. She also must have thought that because she responded by saying “Me? Don’t you mean you?”

With a slight blush washing over me I told her “A little but nothing is going to stop me from seeing a human.” Now that we were on the same page we sat and waited.

I must have gone into another daze because soon enough Nelly jumped onto me.

“What is wrong with you? I snapped coming to from my daze

“Ha! Ha! Ha! I saw that you were daydreaming and got bored so I decided to wake you up!” laughed Nelly.

“Well interesting method of waking someone up. First a violent shake and now tackle, what will come next?” I grunted in a sarcastic tone.

Suddenly a noise rose from our voices. It was like boulders were falling from the sky and once they hit the ground they shook the stream’s floor with a THUMP!

“I think it’s them! It’s people!” shouted Nelly.

“Wait, where are they?” I asked curiously.

Suddenly the strange figure I was now told was a human, took out a crabbing net. I had only heard about it. Although I knew it was how Uncle Gary went, my curiosity got the best of me. When I thought I was at a safe distance, I watched the human turn on a noise maker. It had a deep bass base to it. Unconsciously I swam closer, curious to see more.

I stopped dead in my tracks the moment I heard Nelly.

“SAMMY STOP! YOU’RE TOO CLOSE!” shrieked Nelly.

I wasn’t able to put Nelly’s words into action because once she finished her sentence a black net from underneath me sprung to life. It might seem easy to escape from a net, but it wasn’t. What seemed pretty slow happened really quickly. A mumble of words came from Nelly’s mouth but I was unable to make them into words. Within seconds I was out of the water in a black webbed net. Soon I gave up, trying to gasp for air seemed more important than escaping. I lay there still staring down at Nelly as if somehow it would get me out of this disaster.

Right then and there I knew deep down that I would never enter these waters again. I had a bumpy road ahead and bumpy roads never lead back to the beginning. I had a new adventure take hold of my life. I could either go along with it or fight it. At that moment I chose to go with it.

I was dumped into a small box of water, it was cold, but the lack of oxygen had me feeling, dizzy, light-headed...

## The Fight For Friends (cont.)

The next thing I remember is a rush of oxygen flowing into my body as the cap opened. The strange human leaned in real close.

“You ready to see your new home little guy. People call this place Mill Pond!” said a skuzzy looking man

With the flow of the water, I was dumped into the unfamiliar pond that according to the man was Mill Pond. As my focus started to come back, I saw that as quickly as that man was here, he was gone. Like the wind, he was here one second then swept to somewhere else the next. Stunned and a little confused I slowly backed up getting into the water deeper and deeper. Unexpectedly, a loud excited voice filled the silent, empty pond. It reminded me of Nelly, although Nelly wasn't captured so who was the one talking.

As I turned I saw an excited, happy carp staring at me.

“Hi there my name is Barney” smiled the carp.

Understanding that this carp has no sense of personal space I jumped a little back.

“Sorry, I'm not here to scare you. I just forget my manners when I get excited.” chuckled Barney.

Then a happy Barney finally picked up on my thoughts and came out with “Umm must be a rough day for you. Why don't you come home with me? It's late, and fishing starts tomorrow and you could use a little help.”

“Thank you, I would really like some explanation for all this.” I gestured all around me.

“No problem!” Barney said wrapping up the conversation. Without warning Barney took off heading for what I figured was home. It was a short trip and within minutes we reached the place he called home!

“Here little guy this is HOME!” exclaimed Barney. As I looked into his home I noticed that there wasn't much to it. So I settled in a corner and tried to relax my body.

At first I was wide awake and alert, but ever so slowly I felt tired, sleepy...

\*\*\*

After a couple days of learning my new surroundings, I had the layout pretty down pact. Although I noticed since I had arrived there were less and less fish, I definitely didn't want to be one of them.

“Man, Nelly would have loved this place. It's full of adventure and mysteries. I wonder where she is? I wonder if she disappeared like some of the other fish in this pond?” I said starting happy but ended puzzled.

“Yes, you sure do wonder” Barney expressed with a very monotone voice.

Picking up on his unhappiness I investigated by popping him a question.”

“Is there something wrong Barney?”

“Ohhh nothing, everything is just peachy,” snapped Barney.

“Barney tell me, please,” I begged.

“You want to know why I am annoyed!” shouted Barney.

Afraid of the answer I said in a small voice, “yes.”

## The Fight For Friends (cont.)

“Well, let me begin. You never shut up about this Nelly girl, after all it’s been four days. You never acknowledge that I am here and you always brag about your old home! Well, why don’t you figure out a way back there? I am sick and tired of hearing you whine, so I am leaving. Have fun figuring out your life, ON YOUR OWN!” admitted Barney with a final grump and with an exit.

“Barney stop, please, I’m sorry” I called out to Barney but he was too far ahead to hear.

Still stunned of what just happened I began to grow stiff. I was confused why suddenly Barney began to get angry. For the past four days Barney has been patient, and kind. Now I saw a different side. The truth was I didn’t care. He was my best friend, and helped me through tough times. I wasn’t about to let him walk away from our friendship. I decided to go after him.

“I’m coming,” I called out into the air hoping that Barney could hear me.

I swam past, rocks, and other fish only to see my worst nightmare. I saw millions of humans, each holding a fishing rod. I frantically searched for Barney; I found him just a couple feet away from a shiny glint in the water. It seemed like he was about to be hooked. I could just float there and watch my friend die; I swam as quickly towards him, keeping my eyes locked on him. I was almost to him in what seemed like seconds. As Barney almost got caught in that trap I leaped. This was my last attempt to get Barney out of this mess. I succeeded but every good thing has a consequence. Instead of Barney begin hooked, it was me. When I leaped I accidently got my mouth onto the hook.

Forcefully the hook pushed me up. I tried to resist and get free, but like the net it was impossible. Even Barney was stunned and barely able to move.

Teary-eyed and sad I told him “I am sorry and you are my best friend”.

This seemed to shock Barney out of his daze because he sprung to action, slowly following me to the top still trying to free me.

I knew he wouldn’t get me out in time. So I pushed him off of me and said “I’m not taking you down with me. You are a good person. You live and share your love and I will always remember you”.

Then the line gave me one final jerk and I was out of the water. My body jerked for air, but I knew there was no hope. I jerked for what seemed like forever, until my body gave up. Calmly I stared at my captor. There was a force pulling my soul down. At first I fought it but it was too strong. Then my soul gave up and all I saw was blackness.

**It Left Me**  
*By Katelyn Rinda*

My childhood left me and I'm confused on what's coming  
I have mixed emotions about growing up  
Is it good

Or bad?

I feel I can't have fun  
Once I became a teen people expected so much from me  
They want me to forget friends and think about my future.  
Then that gets me nervous  
Am I set for a good life, am I smart enough for college, what do I want to do?  
Adults want me to be just like them because that's what they think is right  
But they're wrong  
I can't be mature and serious all the time, it's just not me  
It's not who I am, don't turn me into something I'm not

I love to laugh, I love my life, I love the way I am

I will not just change since I am becoming an adult  
Becoming an adult does not mean you have to change  
It means you're getting wiser and more experienced  
Adults seem to forget they were ever a child; they don't seem to want to have fun  
Now that I'm getting older I will always be the same  
Maybe not from the outside but from the inside I will always remain the same

## The Diamond

*By Nicholas Corso/illustrated by Alison Ciarletta*

Metal cleats grind against the rocky dirt

The ball travels from glove to glove

The batter taps his bat against the plate

Each team ready for the game to start

The home plate umpire calls both of the coaches over to discuss ground rules

The game begins

The pitcher lets go of the red-stitched ball

He hopes that it pounds the strike zone for a called strike

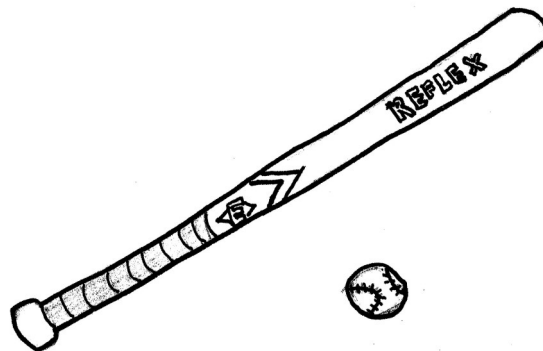
The batter swings and drives the ball to left field

The whole world stops

They watch the ball soar over the left fielder's head

He runs around the diamond confidently touching each plate

I had hit my first homerun



## My Playlist

*By Grace Wagner/illustrated by Allison Ciarletta*

My life is *My Playlist*

And the songs are the experiences and memories

I add new songs every day

Each song tells more about *My Playlist*

Sometimes *My Playlist* is fun and upbeat

And other times it is slow and solemn

*My Playlist* has different moods based on the song you are listening to

It also has very different genres, from rap to country or pop to alternative rock

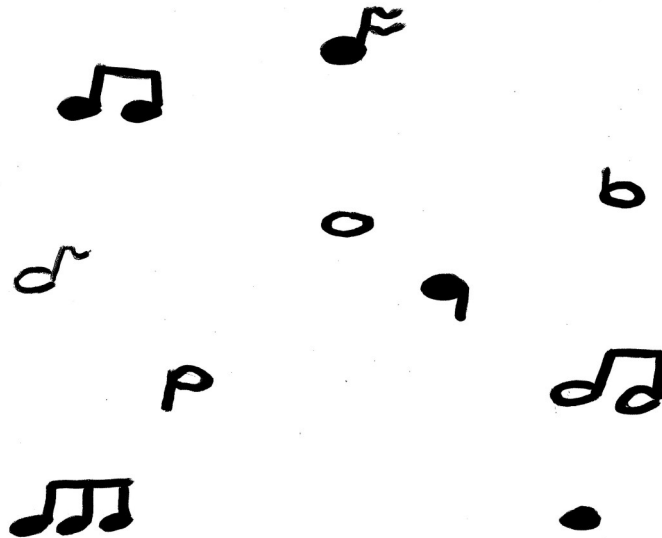
There will always be a song in *My Playlist* that I don't necessarily like anymore

But I don't delete it

I listen to it and see how I've changed

No matter what song is on

I love *My Playlist*





## Reading Really Is Food For The Soul

By Victoria Zdanowicz

Do you ever just pick up a book and read? Probably not. Children and adults tend to read less and less as they get older. People need to read more. Most kids in their pre-teen to teenage years laugh at the idea of actually reading a book. In schools, kids are forced to read and they usually don't even read the book they're given, thanks to web sites like [www.sparknotes.com](http://www.sparknotes.com). Students always find ways to get out of reading. Most people don't understand that reading makes you more intelligent and also helps you to use your imagination. Reading is a great way to step away from the real world and the problems you are facing.

As students move up in grades the grammar exercises for nouns, pronouns, verbs, et cetera are cut out of the English lessons. This causes students to forget how to speak and write properly. Think about it, when you read a book you are being exposed to the English language and you are reading what is correctly written. There aren't books written with lines like, "OMG, so like then, she like went to the mall and like." Most books are sophisticatedly written. Therefore, you are reading firsthand, English being used correctly. Reading also helps broaden your vocabulary. You begin to not only feel more intelligent, you will sound smarter too. I read on a regular basis and I definitely feel more exposed to correct English, which helps my own writing.

When was the last time you made up a fun game or pretended to be a superhero? As kids mature, many lose that imaginative spark they had when they were younger. When you read, you use your imagination to picture people, places and events. Some books take place in futuristic places with unusual people and problems. This forces you, as the reader, to think outside of your usual life and experiences. Reading opens up your imaginative side because you think, predict and infer things that maybe wouldn't happen in the "real world". Many people believe that your imagination is a very important part of your well-being and staying mentally fit. Reading exercises your brain to think and your imagination to run wild.

### **Reading Really Is Food For The Soul (cont)**

People of all ages experience life changing events and smaller problems on a regular basis. Some people keep their emotions bottled up inside or lash out at other people. Reading is a healthier and safer way to escape your problems. While you read, the world around you moves on. When you get into a book, you feel and live what the characters are going through. You face their problems and forget your own. I love reading because it's like being able to step into someone else's shoes. Some people resort to drugs or other things to escape their daily lives, when they could just read a book.

Reading is important to do and continue when you have the time. Instead of reading less, read more. With all of the technology around us, we tend to forget how to write and speak correctly, because of luxuries like AutoCorrect in Microsoft Word. Everyone needs to read. You need to expose yourself to the proper ways of English, explore your imagination and escape your problems for a bit. When you find that little bit of free time, instead of turning on the television, turn on your brain and read. Reading really is food for the soul!

## “So B. It” by Sarah Weeks

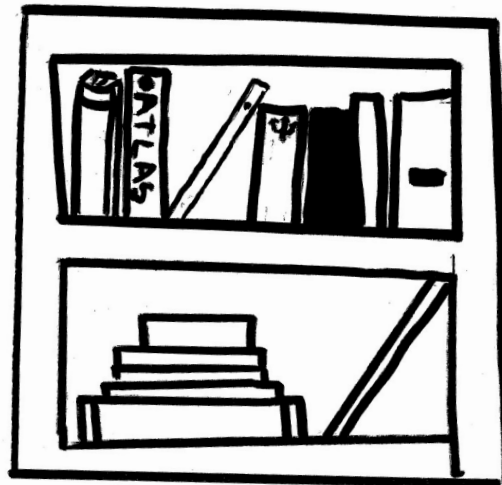
Book Review by Ayse Seker/illustrated by Alison Ciarletta

As you may or may not know, the Middle School Book Club discussed the book *So B. It* by Sarah Weeks on December 5, 2012. We had delicious brownies and pretzels. The food wasn't the only good thing. Personally, I thought *So B. It* was an amazing book. It's a coming of age story about Heidi—a girl who lives with a mother who is mentally slow, and their very caring neighbor Bernadette.

Heidi has rarely gone outside her whole life. Her sole caretaker Bernadette has agoraphobia—a fear of going outside. She's been home schooled all her life, and now she's been very curious. Her mom has always been mysterious because of her limited vocabulary. One word that Heidi has always been curious about is *soof*. After finding pictures of her mom and her Grandmother she's never met, Heidi goes on a quest from Nevada to Liberty, New York—where her mom is from. She has to travel by bus across the country alone. Along the way, she meets new people and finds out about herself.

When Heidi arrives in Liberty, New York, it's raining, she's cold, has no money, and she has no shelter. With her amazing luck, she wins a free taxicab ride to the address where the photos of her mom were taken. It turns out this place is a mental hospital, and it seems like there's nothing there for her. Heidi learns about her family, her mom, herself, and what *soof* means.

I totally recommend this novel. There were so many shockers, and heartwarming moments. I was so into the story, I cried at one scene. This is definitely a must-read!



## **The Un-Knowing Animal**

*By Bennett Rosner*

At night, the animal rests his head upon an uprooted tree  
Knowing not if tomorrow or the day after that, he will see  
Will he look on the world forever or will that sense go away like his hearing  
The constant state that he lives in, one could only pity  
His stomach growls while his mind moans  
He must do something, but what it is, he does not know  
He has no knowledge of sickness or fear  
He only knows that he is a beast who has lost both his ears  
Wallowing in his own filth he only hopes of one thing  
That maybe his suffering will cease and he will feel like a king  
No such luck will come for him though  
For I have seen many others who have been this way  
Although, there is one thing I can guarantee for you  
For the beast, it will all be over soon

## A Close Encounter Of The Worst Kind

*By Bennett Rosner*

No, I'm not talking about extra-terrestrials or a near death experience; I would if I could because those things are much more interesting and peculiar to read about than what I'm about to tell you. My story is alien to most people and a close encounter with the worst kind of feeling. My story, in a sense is a tale of survival and the cruel hostility of the confines of a small enclosed space. My story is that of a boy, his mother, his brother, and a trip to the airport.

The day started off as unusual as ever, with my mom quietly yelling "wake up" in my ear. Something was off, I was young and stupid as usual, but when I woke up I was also plain old tired. I soon realized it was 2:00 AM in the morning and my family had a plane to catch. I was basically sleep walking through my morning routine and let me tell you that is no easy feat, especially when you live in your grandparent's house and they want no noise in the early morning. You try doing your morning routine in the dark while you're ninety percent asleep. Let me tell you it is as hard as trying to give a cat a bath. Impairments aside, I succeeded in getting into a cab that would drive my brother, mother, and me to the airport. As soon as we got in we could tell we were in for a long ride. The taxi driver was constantly yelling things like "Politicians, can you believe them!" and "Damn Yankees I tell you boy, one of these days they'll buy up the entire league." Not only this but, it smelled like tobacco and old coffee in the car. Luckily, our cab made good time and as I stumbled out of the car to breathe in the fresh morning air, I gazed upon the splendor of sleek chrome that was Newark Airport.

To be fair, Newark Airport wasn't all sparkles and glimmer. It could better be described as beautiful chaos. Thousands and thousands of business men, moms with crying babies, young lovers, and the occasional scammer all were together in one place, getting to where they needed to go as fast as humanly possible. Unfortunately, since my mother, being the overprotective woman she was back in the days of the 2003-2006, shielded my brother and I so that nobody could catch a glimpse of our faces, or even the tips of our fin

## A Close Encounter Of The Worst Kind (cont)

gernails. The best thing I could see after my mother donned me with her own homemade invisibility cloak was the blue color of the security guards shirts and the best thing I could hear was the security guard telling us to “Move along.” I can tell you this; it’s not a beautiful sight when you’re constantly staring into the middle of a sweaty mans collared shirt. Finally, after all the hustling and pushing, my family arrived at our terminal, relieved that we finally made it. However, getting to the gate was only half the journey.

We waited for what seemed like eons just to get into the plane. For my mother however, the constant fear of abduction of my brother and I, probably made the waiting seem even longer. She was constantly looking around nervously and mumbling to herself “Keep the kids safe.” If I even moved an inch away from her she would flip out on me and tell me, “Don’t you ever try to run away from me again.” At the moment I was a prisoner and my mother was the warden. Finally, we boarded our plane, sat in our seats, and waited. We waited, drumming on our legs carelessly, looking around the planes interior time and time again, and humming to ourselves a tune that was popular at the time. Finally, after an eternity of useless filler entertainment, the pilot spoke the glorious words I had been waiting to hear. “We will be taking off in just a few minutes, please strap in your seat belts, and enjoy the flight.” Suddenly our plane started to taxi and we were on our way to taking off.

Unfortunately, our story does not have a happy ending, at least not yet. As with most airplane experiences written on paper, there was a problem that occurred that made this story worth telling. As we were taxiing down the tarmac, one of our plane’s tires burst, and we were stuck on the ground. “We have encountered a slight problem with taking off, so please be patient as we fix the problem,” the pilot announced. A simultaneous groan then erupted from the passengers, including me, just what we needed, more waiting. The stewardess then called an announcement for everyone to hear. She explained that our flight was to be continued in “Forty five lovely minutes”. Little did we know that these forty five minutes were going to be the most hellish ones my family and I have ever experienced in our entire lives.

## **A Close Encounter Of The Worst Kind (cont)**

At first the time waiting in the plane was lovely, as the stewardess had said. Peanuts were going around the cabin, everyone was laughing, and it was good time. Soon though, it got hellishly hot in the plane, and everyone's mood turned sour like the milk the baby in the back of the plane was drinking. Even in the heat of the plane an old man next to me was sleeping, and snoring like a beast. I wanted to wake him up and tell him to, "Please just don't sleep." However, it was too hot even for that. All of a sudden, as if things could go any worse, the baby in the back started to yell, scream, cry, wail, and make a whole mess of other noises. A hellishly hot place plus unnecessary loud noises plus nothing else to do besides listen to the snoring of an old man... was I in hell? I was not of course, I was in a place much worse; I was in between a jagged rock and an extremely hard place.

Things got better from then on in; in fact, everything turned a complete one eighty. The air conditioning was finally turned on and the tire was replaced. The old man woke up out of his temporary coma, and the baby in the back went to sleep. Everything rapped up very nicely in the end and all was well on the plane trip. I guess that chaos is just a temporary replacement for order and harmony. However, it did not seem that way on the return plane back to Newark. But that is an entirely different story for another time.

## **Santa...Why?!?**

*By Katelyn Rinda*

Before you think I'm selfish let me just say this, I was going through a mega crisis and yes my sister broke her chin but I have a real problem...SANTA ISN'T REAL! My sister and I went to the same private school for a while until I switched to public school. This horrific event happened when I was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade and my sister in 8<sup>th</sup>. I remember that morning like it was yesterday.

It was an average morning; just like any other but I do remember my sister, Stacie was in an unusually grumpy mood. I was driven to school and had a regular day, until I got out. My mom, who always picks me up, was not there. My friend Lucy and I were very confused until her mom came over. I thought her mom was just taking her ...nope, I was going too. We got in the car and my first question was, "Why are you picking me up instead of my mom?" She just told me my mom needed a favor because my sister broke her chin. I wanted to know more, but that's all she knew for now. We drove straight to Lucy's house and I was happy and safe, but I was concerned for my sister.

"Is she in pain? Does she need surgery? Will she be able to talk?" There were so many stupid questions flowing out of my mouth that I could not seem to control. Lucy was reassuring me that everything was going to be okay, but we still wanted to know how this happened. I was panicking because I felt so helpless! What could I have done? That's right—absolutely nothing, which killed me inside. I love my sister and I didn't want her to be in pain. Honestly though, my biggest concern was her not being even more grumpy than she was in the morning when she got home.

Later, Lucy and I became bored concerning the topic of Stacie's chin—we wanted to do something else, to get Stacie off our minds. We went downstairs to talk, play—whatever we were planning to do, it did not matter because it had to be more fun than thinking of Stacie. We started talking and I have no idea how this topic arose, but we were talking about teeth. I was saying how I had lost all of my teeth really early and bragging about how I knew the tooth fairy was not real. "Little kids are so dumb, who would want teeth instead of money. It's so unrealistic," I said proudly.

"Yeah, I know, right? The same kind of thing with Santa," Lucy replied.

"What do you mean?" I said surprisingly.

"What man has elves making toys for kids everywhere around the world? I remember when my mom said it was possible because of the time change. I didn't believe it for a minute," she stated confidently.



“Lucy, let’s get this straight: the tooth fairy is not real and Santa is,” I said un-  
surely.

“Katelyn, I’m sorry to break it to you but he is NOT real,” she said in an irritated  
tone.

“But how can this be possible? All the years with Santa stickers on my presents, all  
the Christmas movies, all the lies,” I said sadly.

While I was still very confused on the topic, the doorbell rang and my heart sank. It  
was my mom and Stacie—I was happy they were here but scared for what I was about to  
see. Lucy’s mom opened the door as Lucy and I were walking up the stairs. She opened it  
and Stacie was smiling. I leaned over to Lucy and whispered, “How does breaking your  
chin make you happier?” She just laughed in reply. I asked Stacie what happened and she  
explained the story, so obviously she could talk. She said she was in gym and her friend  
Erika pushed her on a scooter. Stacie’s chin slid against the gym floor with such speed it  
ripped open her skin but not her bone. She had to go to the hospital and get stitches. She  
never looked at the gash because my mom advised her not to: she is very queasy, and  
would probably have fainted or thrown up. It was a relief to know that she was okay and  
that it will not affect her in the future.

Once we got home I asked my mom and Stacie if Santa was real. They both grinned  
and said wait until your dad gets home. Right when he opened the door I asked him if  
Santa was real. He was so overwhelmed with a hard day at work and knowing Stacie  
broke her chin; I am sure he did not really want to deal with me at the time. He tells me  
to hold on and goes into the kitchen to see Stacie. Once he looked at her chin and realized  
she was fine, I asked again.

“Why are you asking?” he said, somewhat confused.

“Because Lucy said he was not real and I do not want to believe her!” I said con-  
cernedly.

He told me I’m getting older now and that Santa was not real. It was very hard for  
me to accept this so I tried to cool down and watch TV. Then in the middle of the show I  
screamed,

“Does this mean the Easter Bunny is not real either?”

## The Swim of a Lifetime

By Gianna Grosso

Many miles away from New Jersey is a beautiful vacation spot in Mexico called Cabo San Lucas. It is a five hour plane ride to paradise. In 2012, I had the privilege of going to Cabo with my single aunt Cindy, and my aunt, uncle, and two cousins. Sadly, my parents and brother Lewis could not come with us because at the time, Lewis was in a Broadway show called *Newsies*.

“Bye Mommy! I love you so much!” I started to cry. We had never been apart for a whole week. She was extremely upset that I was leaving.

“I love you, too sweetheart!” My Mom exclaimed as I walked out of the door. My aunt Cindy and my Dad were waiting for me in the car. As we drove away from the house, I was crying, but I knew that I would snap out of it because I was going to have a great time! Finally, we arrived at the airport.

“I’ll miss you so much Daddy!” I was extremely upset to leave him, but we said goodbye, and he drove off.

“Hi guys!” Cindy saw my uncle Michael, my aunt Chrys, and my two cousins Nikki, and Kyle sitting at the diner in the airport.

“Hi!” They all exclaimed. We exchanged hugs and kisses. I was so happy to see them! I could already tell that this was going to be the best vacation ever! After eating a short breakfast, we boarded the plane.

“Please fasten your seat belts. We will be taking off soon.” Cindy and I sat back as we took off. Only five more hours left to go! The plane ride was smooth, and did not feel too long!

“Cindy, look!” I was so excited to finally see land from the plane window. We were landing in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. The view was absolutely stunning. It looked as dry as a desert. The second we all stepped out of the plane, we felt how amazing the weather would be while we were there.

After going through security and picking up our baggage, we entered the outdoors,

### The Swim Of A Lifetime (cont)

and took our first step into vacation. We rented a car and drove to the hotel. It was gorgeous and luxurious looking. While the adults were signing in, Nikki, Kyle, and I explored a small portion of the hotel. There were two oversized pools of different shades of blue. There was also a hot tub followed by an entrance to the beach.

“Kyle, we should go into the hot tub tonight!” Nikki suggested. We already had plans! How were we going to do all of these fun things in just one week?!

The next day, Cindy, Michael, and Chrysty were planning activities for us to do. We practically had a different activity planned for each day of the week, along with exploring different places to eat each day. The activity that really caught my eye on the list was swimming with dolphins! This was going to be the first activity of the week.

That Monday morning, my stomach was filled with butterflies. I was so happy that we would get to play with dolphins, but at the same time, I was really nervous that something bad would happen to me.

“Are we there yet?” Kyle asked impatiently as he could not wait to get into the water.

“Yes Kyle. We will be there in about five minutes.” Chrysty answered him with a smile.

Five minutes later, we arrived. I had no clue what to expect. Questions were roaming through my head one after the other. *Will we be out in the ocean? What if the dolphins accidentally hurt me?* The second we got there, I knew that it was a safe environment. Nikki, Kyle, and I put on our wet suits, and followed the dolphin trainer to the enclosed salt water area. There, we saw two magnificent mammals swimming around.

When we walked into the water, the trainer told us to line up in front of the two dolphins. First, he instructed us to splash the dolphins with all of our might. By doing this, I thought we would bother the dolphins and make them nervous. Everyone participating was a bit hesitant at first, but soon enough, the dolphins were mimicking our actions. At that moment, it was made completely evident that these dolphins were kind and well-trained. Afterwards, the trainer called each person up to be with each dolphin.

### **A Swim Of A Lifetime (cont)**

“Ok Gianna. What I want you to do is swim out there and wait for this dolphin to come to you. You will first be with Titus, our male dolphin. When he reaches you, he will flip over onto his back, and wait for you to grab his fins. Grasp them tightly, and you will be gliding on his tummy.” The way the trainer explained this made me really excited to try it out.

“Ok!” I answered happily. After I swam out far enough, Titus came zooming towards me. As intimidating as he looked, he did exactly what the trainer told me he would do. Then, I grabbed on and I was off! “WOOOOO!!!!” I screamed as I made my way towards the people standing on the other side.

Next, we grabbed the boogie boards. I swam out this time with the boogie board by my side. When I reached where I was supposed to be, I laid on the boogie board awaiting the dolphin. This time, the female dolphin, Glinda, came towards me. Before I knew it, I felt her mouth hit my boogie board. Suddenly, I was soaring through the air on my boogie board with Glinda pushing me along. I felt so free! She did not slow down for a while, and I began to get nervous that she would forget to stop. Once again, the dolphin proved to be always right! She began to slow down, and swam back to her trainer. Next, I got to kiss the dolphin. The photographer got a picture of me kissing Titus. He was the cutest little thing!

After many other things that I got to do with the dolphins, we had to say goodbye. They ended with a big and impressive finale. Titus and Glinda danced on the water, and did many tricks for us! I was amazed at their talent! Then, they were able to wave to us as we left.

I could not believe how much fun I had swimming with the dolphins! “How was it guys?” Cindy asked.

“Oh My Gosh, I had the best time! I was nervous for nothing! Both dolphins were too sweet, and they were so much fun! I have no clue what other activity could top this one!” I answered cheerfully. Little did I know how much fun the rest of my vacation would be. Every single activity was unforgettable, but swimming with the dolphins turned out to be my favorite part of the whole entire vacation in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.

## Hardheaded

*By Casey Osborn*

Blood encircled my father's head as he lay, almost motionless on the concrete. Taylor's compression with his shirt to the wound could not hide the red consuming the fabric. My sister called 911 in a frantic state, though trying to stay calm. A car or two pulled over to see if we were all right and gave my father a blanket. I could only stare.

My mind was a hurricane. Swirling, it could not comprehend what had just happened, until its full force unleashed on me. Memories of my father were thrown around by the storm, and I thought all of them would be gone forever. Rain streaked down my face, and my vision blurred. Reality seemed to bend and I could only hope this was only a dream. I kept telling myself that this couldn't be happening, but of course those were lies.

\* \* \* \* \*

During the summer of 2012, my family rented a condo in Huntington Beach, California as a combined vacation and to attend my cousin's wedding. The condo was about a mile from the ocean; an eight minute bike ride. So my sister, Molly, father, Aunt Tricia, cousins Taylor and Nick, and I decided to take a ride to the beach. Since it was such a nice day, my father went without a shirt or shoes, only his bathing suit. The ride crossed some major roads and was difficult for a beginner like my seven year old cousin Nick. But we all got to the beach and were ready to relax. My mother and Aunt Laura met up with us by car. It was a hot, sunny day that would burn a fair-skinned person, like me, in an instant. An ocean breeze brought salty air throughout the beach. The sun glistened off the crashing waves. It was a seemingly perfect day.

My eighteen year old sister and I went boogie-boarding, and tried to teach Nick how to, too. My skin was beat down by the sun, but relieved by the cool, bobbing waves. My father came out into the water with us too, body-surfing without a board. The waves carried us back to the beach on our boards in just a few seconds.

Before the sun had dropped too far, we decided to depart. We crossed the cooled sand along with crowds of others. Our bikes were locked to a bike rack just a block from the beach. As we walked in the street, the party town still swarmed with people. Our bikes were just as we left them. As we mounted them, Aunt Tricia decided it was best to let Nick drive home with my mother and Aunt Laura because he was tired and his bike was about six inches too big for him. My father was wearing his favorite Mets hat under his helmet, which was tilted back and not on the proper way.

"Dad," Molly groaned. "Put on your helmet the right way."

### Hardheaded (cont)

"I'll be fine," my father waved the concern away. *Be careful*, I thought to myself, but refused to say because I knew my father didn't want to hear it and would ignore it. Now I can only imagine what could have happened if I had said it. I will never truly forgive myself.

The ride back was the same route, only on the other side of the street. The wind dried my body and hair. My dad was in the front of the pack, followed by me, then Molly, Taylor, and Tricia. My dad was having fun, swerving back and forth on a leisurely bike ride. I enjoyed this peace too, until one unfortunate driveway. The sidewalk dipped for a driveway, so my father went down it for fun. As he came back up, his front tire dipped into the street. He lost control and wiggled along until he took flight. It was evident that he would crash. Soaring over his handlebars, his arms and legs were flailing. His head took the full impact of the crash. I slammed on my brakes and stepped off my bike. I walked over to my father who was on his stomach with his head turned to the left.

"Are you all right?" I asked. He sounded as if he was snoring, and I noticed his neck was vibrating. On closer inspection, he was not snoring, but gurgling; gurgling on his own blood. I backed up, speechless, as Molly, Taylor, and Tricia pulled over and took action. Blood encircled my father's head as he lay, almost motionless on the concrete. Taylor, who was nineteen and aspiring to be a paramedic, compressed the wound with his shirt, while Tricia held his head up, but it could not hide the red consuming the fabric. My sister called 911 in a frantic state, though trying to stay calm. It was a challenge for her to tell the operator where we were because we were unfamiliar with the area. A car or two pulled over to see if we were all right and gave my father a blanket to prevent shock. They told us where we were, and luckily, we were a mere block away from the ambulance building. All I could do was stare.

My mind was a hurricane. Swirling, it could not comprehend what had just happened, until its full force unleashed on me. Memories of my father were thrown around by the storm, and I thought all of them would be gone forever. Rain streaked down my face, and my vision blurred. Reality seemed to bend and I could only hope this was only a dream. I kept telling myself that this couldn't be happening, but of course those were lies.

My sister was now on the phone with my mother, an EMT and physical therapist, who was already on her way. I embraced Molly after she was off the phone. I heard, "Keep his chin up," and "Keep him on his side," by the people who had pulled over. Sirens sounded for what seemed like an eternity, though probably only a minute. My mother

### Hardheaded (cont)

and aunt beat the ambulance to the scene. My mother took over for Taylor and checked my father's pulse and kept pressure on the wound. Police and ambulances arrived and took over the block. The paramedics went to work on my father, and put him on a stretcher. The police questioned Taylor, Molly, Tricia, and me about what had happened. I later learned this was to make sure that my father wouldn't sue the town; that also explains why the police took the bike and helmet for inspection.

It seemed to be over in an instant. My mother stayed with my unconscious father in the ambulance. Molly and Taylor rode the bikes home, while my aunts drove me back to the condo. I stayed silent on the ride, and on arrival I went upstairs to my room and tried to shut the world out with darkness. I didn't come down until it was dinner and Molly came up to tell me my mother had called and said my father was okay for now. Dinner was awkward because everyone was mute except Nick. I wondered how my brother, Ian could stay calm. Even though he hadn't been there, when he heard about it, he just kept on playing games on his laptop. I resented him for this, but I guess he had not seen the blood and the crash.

Right after dinner, I took the fastest shower I could so that my aunt Tricia could drive my sister and me to the hospital. Up until then, my sandy clothes were still on my body. On the ride there, my other sister, Megan, called my dad's phone, which rang in his shorts which were in the car. Molly answered and she told her that dad had an accident and he was all right, so not to worry her without having any real information. We waited in the hospital for about an hour. My mind was clear and kept replaying the accident, which it still does sometimes today. My mother brought relief when she came to get us.

"Dad hit his head hard," she said. I thought to myself that this was obvious. "All the doctors are wondering how he didn't fracture his skull; he's very lucky. But he'll be fine."

My mother led us down two hallways to reveal the curtain of my father's bed in the ER. He was hooked up to at least three needles and had a neck brace on. I was so relieved to see him conscious, but did not expect him to be so loopy.

"Hey dad," I croaked.

"Hey Case," he strained to look at me.

"Are you all right," I asked for the second time that day, but this time I got a response.

"Yeah, I am. I just want to go home. Come on Case, get me out of here. You have to," he replied with longing.

### **Hardheaded (cont)**

“Bye. Get me out of here Case,” I’m not sure if he was joking or serious. Another hour passed until my sister, mother, aunt, and I met my father in the ICU. The meeting was short; it was just to let us get him settled in for the night. My mind wanted to stay with him, but my body was ready to collapse for it was past midnight of a day that stretched on for years.

I did not see him again until two days after the incident, when he was released from the hospital. Luckily, he was recovered enough so that we could take our flight home the next day, although he needed a wheelchair to travel through the airport. But “recovered enough”, is not nearly “recovered fully”. He could not walk farther than a few steps, and his mind was not with him either. He slept for the next few days, and the few times he was awake, he was difficult to deal with. My mother told me he had hurt the part of the brain that has to do with reasoning; and he must have hurt it fairly badly because it lasted for months after.

My father came very close to fracturing his skull. I remember when I told him the story of the accident (for the third time, because he forgot the bike ride and me telling him twice before), he joked that he had a hardhead. Well, he must have to have survived this accident. But being hardheaded about wearing his helmet got him into this mess in the first place.



## **Mr. Cat's Life**

*By Mirian Flores*

On September 7, 2010 a small gray cat came into my family. He had a problem with his eyes; they did not open. Our family used chamomile to clean his eyes. The gunk was removed and within a couple of weeks he started to open his eyes and see normally. We all thought he would die, but he escaped death. After a month we decided to name him Mr. Cat. My family loves Mr. Cat because he is very intelligent and playful but a little lazy. He sleeps almost all day like most normal cats. His entire life is all about sleeping, eating and playing. His intelligence is revealed when he wants to go outside and opens the window by himself.

When my mom comes home from work, she brings food for Mr. Cat. My mom calls for Mr. Cat, "My viejito. . .come, I bring something for you" and Mr. Cat scampers quickly for his food. Whenever I call for Mr. Cat he never comes to me. He only listens to my mom.

My first impression of Mr. Cat was that he seemed nice. My family and I love him very much. He is not just the cat; he is a member of our family.

Last Halloween Mr. Cat had his first Halloween costume. He was dressed as a Mariachi musician. He looked like such a handsome gentleman wearing the mariachi costume. This year Mr. Cat will dress up as "Puss in Boots."

On July 19, 2013, Mr. Cat will be two years old. I hope Mr. Cat lives a long life because he has a great personality and we all love him very much.

## **It's A Beautiful Day And I Can't See It**

*By Dalia Bravo*

On a beautiful summer day, while visiting relatives in New York City, my dad and I helped an elderly homeless man who was blind. At first I was scared and started to imagine bad things happening to us.

As I recall, we were on our way to a store within walking distance from my aunt's house. Well, New York City is so big and poor people are always on the street. I was scared of these people but my dad told me, "Calm down; these people are not bad, they just have no home and are alone with no family." However, what I mostly remember about that day was when he told me, "Maybe these people are good and you should not be scared of them because you need to see what they have in their inside; maybe these people are like that because they have problems."

After telling me this, I started thinking in another way. As we were walking back to my aunt's we saw a very old man. The man was blind and I grabbed my dad's hand so hard as we passed by him. The man was sitting on a stairway and kind of smelled badly. He had a sign that said, "I'm blind help me please." My cousin who was with us at the time made fun of the man and began laughing. My dad reprimanded her and she stopped laughing. People really didn't help him; only some. At the time, I was carrying crayons and a coloring book. My dad said, "Mabel, give me a black crayon." He wrote on the sign, "It's a beautiful day and I can't see it." People passing by began giving the man more and more money. The old man said, "What did you do to my sign?" My dad responded, "I wrote the same thing but with different words." The man started crying and said, "Thank you." What he had experienced through his life my dad held the man's hands and cried with him. Since this happened, I have become more aware of those people who have such problems. People should not discriminate. My brother learned this lesson also when we were in Mexico when he shared his tacos with a grandmother and child who were begging for money and food.

Every time I think of that day, I thank my dad for making me the person I am now. My parents have taught me to value people and things, to respect one another and to treat others as you would want to be treated.

## Beauty in Everything

*By Michelle Zhou*

As I pass by these snowy mountains,  
and the hundred year old tree.  
There is a wise, old man who sits underneath,  
looking over a bundle of dead leaves.

I ask him, "What is there to look at?"  
For everything is barren and has perished.  
The old man does not say a word,  
But he continues to gaze some more.

I look again,  
Hoping to see what the old man can see.  
The old man only chuckled,  
But I still cannot see the beauty.

He stares at me directly,  
It looks like his eyes are about to cry.  
"You thought you saw the world correctly."  
Then he starts with a sigh.

He says with his deep, wise voice,  
"Look again child."  
"For the world is not only in black or white,"  
"But in every color."

# Stepping Stones Word Finder

*By Bennett Rosner*

O A L K Y Z M L D T H W Z E I  
V R W I K T I A E A O J T Y M  
E T P Y T M I N G R L E W L A  
E I U O R E N V D A R L W D G  
S S T I E O R W I C Z R A B I  
R T C A S T E A N T T I E B N  
E S N J A A S O R L A G N K A  
V I O E V C C B H Y R E W E T  
E F P E H A I K U Q A O R P I  
E Y R O T S T R O H S R F C O  
R S T C I N Q U A I N Q T E N  
F J C Q P Z G N I M Y H R S P  
R W I Y R I N R R A Q Y B H O  
Y C W O K C U H Z J K G T M E  
S T E P P I N G S T O N E S M

ARTISTS

CONCRETE

HAIKU

LITERARYARTS

POETS

SONNET

BALLAD

CREATIVITY

IMAGINATION

MAGAZINE

RHYMING

STEPPINGSTONES

CINQUAIN

FREEVERSE

LIMRICS

POEM

SHORTSTORY

WORDWEAVERS

*This Page Has Been Dedicated  
To The Twenty Children and Six Staff Members  
Who Lost Their Lives  
In The December 2012  
Sandy Hook Elementary School Shooting  
In Newton, Connecticut*

