



# The Spirit

SPRING HAS ARRIVED!

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## Get to Know Us!



### Board of Education Members

William Ball

Christine Bellarosa

Katie Emerson-Hoss

Sakinah Irizarry

Carole Kelder

Michael Meyer

Jeffrey Riozzi

Timothy Wells

Meredith Mills- Student Rep

If interested in being a rep, see Mrs.  
Molyneaux before April 25!

# CARNIVAL FUN!

On Saturday, March 15th, a Disney-themed carnival was hosted by the Senior High Student Council and the Senior Class to raise funds for their participants.

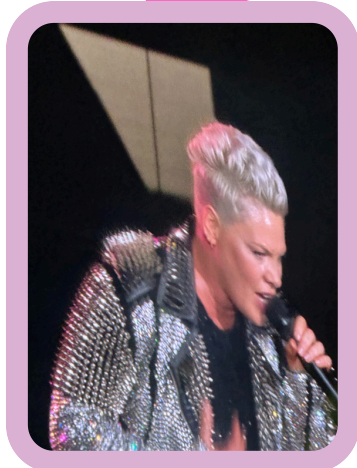
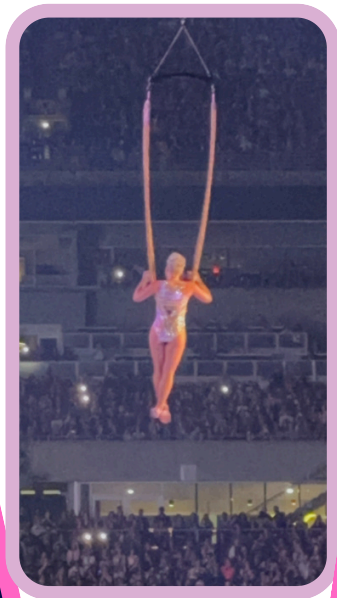
The carnival offered a variety of options from face painting to a balloon tree, to tie dye t-shirts, to corn hole golf, to whack-a-villain, to glitter jars, and balloon pop.

All in all, there were about 30+ different games/booths for children to play/participate in. All of the elementary schools were invited to attend as well.

Approximately 200 people attend to help us meet our fundraising goal.







## Singing for P!nk





## **Interview With Mrs.Gavner**

**By: Sara Dubón**

**In an incredible collaboration between music and American Sign Language (ASL), Mrs. Gavner, an English and ASL teacher, had the unique opportunity to sign for the audience at a Pink! Concert. Known for her deep connection to both languages and the arts, Mrs. Gavner prepared by studying the lyrics and emotional tone of each song, ensuring that the audience could feel the same energetic meaning of the performance. The process of preparing to sign at the Pink! concert was hard, because as an interpreter you don't get a setlist of the songs they are going to sing, so you have to be a good enough interpreter to listen and be able to sign just as quickly; you have to be fluent. Mrs. Gavner got prepared by printing out the lyrics of P!nk's biggest hit songs, so she could practice a little bit and hope she sang those songs.**

**Some challenges she faced when she was signing the performance was that she also had to sign the opening act, and the DJ in between acts. However, sometimes it is hard to understand what the singer is saying, because they are rapping and it is fast. A benefit was that she got an earpiece, but sometimes she missed a word because she couldn't hear it. There were over 10,000 people in the stands making noise! The experience, she noted, reminded her why live performance and sign language are so powerful together; they transcend words and bring people together in ways nothing else can.**

**In conclusion, Mrs. Gavner's experience at the Pink! Concert serves as a unique experience of professional and personal passion. It was not just about interpreting, it was about connecting with something bigger than herself. Being at such an iconic concert, showing how powerful music can be, no matter where you're from, or what language you speak, in front of a lot of people from different parts of the world was an amazing experience.**



# THE MUSIC MAN



"Congratulations to the cast and crew of *The Music Man*, along with all student musicians who performed in the pit band. These students have been working since November on this full-scale musical, and they did a terrific job."

-Mr. Zelamsky





Congrats to Mock Trial Participants who did a wonderful job at their recent event. Not only will this run as a club for the 2025-26 school year, but it will also be offered as an elective class. Mock trial is for everyone, not just those interested in law--the witnesses have to play a believable part. Therefore, theatre students, or anyone interested in acting, should take advantage of this opportunity as well.



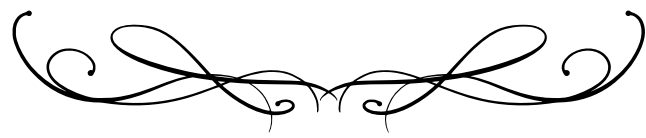
**Front row L to R:** Liv Smoller, Robin Weissman, Emily Loviza

**Second Row:** Anthony Lewoc, Alex Mattia, Jeffrey Huling, Lydia Slagsvol, and Lilianna Carter

**Third Row:** Advisors: Mrs. Ortlieb and Mrs. Paff, Humayun Ayaz, and Claudia Mason







# *Artists* **AT WORK**

Congratulations to two of our high school artists  
whose artwork was on display in the  
*Columbia-Greene Community College Arts Center*  
for the month of February.

Artwork by Daniel Stracuzzi, grade 10 &  
Maite De Leon, grade 11 have been selected to  
represent our school in this multi-district  
high school juried art show.

"The Deep"  
by Daniel Stracuzzi



"Still Life with Shells and Seaweed"  
by Maite De' Leon





## Book Review By Gabriella Smith



*If He Had Been With Me*, by Laura Nowlin, is a heartfelt story about two childhood friends navigating love, friendship, and the complexities of growing up. It follows the lives of Autumn and Finny, who were close childhood friends but drifted apart as they got older. The story explores their feelings for each other and the challenges they overcome. As they go through high school, they confront their emotions and misunderstandings and realize what they could have been. The book is about love, loss, and growing up.

When Finny and Autumn realize they have feelings for each other, their lives are never the same. The one-time friendship they used to have changed and was filled with excitement and uncertainty. They started to see each other differently, and there was more tension between them. As they opened up about their feelings, their connection grew stronger, leading to deeper conversations and moments that shaped them and their future.

Over the summer, Finny and Autumn spent lots of time together. They engaged in many activities like going to the beach, hiking, and attending local events, allowing them to make more memories together. The more time they spent together, the more they discovered about each other. The summer helped them realize that their feelings for each other were growing stronger, allowing them to set the stage for a deeper relationship. Unfortunately, Finny already had a girlfriend named Sylvie.

When Finny and Autumn grew closer, Finny realized that he had always been in love with Autumn and shouldn't be with Sylvie. Finny told Sylvie they can't be together anymore because of Autumn during a car ride, causing Sylvie to start screaming and begging him to pull the car over so she can get out. The argument led to Finny crashing his car, causing Sylvie to fly through the windshield. When Finny got out of the car to check on Sylvie, he was struck by lightning and died on the spot.

If only Finny had been with Autumn that morning, Finny would probably not be dead. Autumn struggled with feelings of guilt. She questioned her role in what happened; this emotional turmoil led her to withdraw from others, as she found it difficult to express her pain.

*If He Had Been with Me*, by Laura Nowlin, is a well-written book, and I liked their character development throughout the book. However, I was a little upset that Finny died as soon as he and Autumn realized that they had feelings for each other; I wanted them to be together.





**Yearbook:** April 18 is the deadline to place a Parental Recognition Ad in the yearbook. Directions are in the Yearbook Google Classroom.



**Give-back Days: (Unused Snow Days)**  
April 22 (Tuesday)  
May 23 (Friday)  
May 27 (Tuesday)

# Blood Drive

**Saugerties High School**

**Wednesday, April 23rd**

**8:00am-12:30pm**

Sr. High Gym

310 Washington Avenue Ext.

Saugerties, NY 122477



**Sign up** by scanning the QR Code.  
Walk-Ins Also Welcome!

## Prepare to donate



Eat well  
and hydrate



Bring a  
photo ID



Feel good and  
symptom free



Must be 17+ or  
16 with parental  
consent form



Meet minimum  
weight requirements

For full eligibility requirements  
and COVID-19 information, visit  
[nybc.org/eligibility](https://nybc.org/eligibility).



# Ms. Rabideau's Personal Narrative Winners

**Members of the English Department and our school librarians served as judges.**  
All work was anonymous for the contest. Judges looked for personal narratives that go the distance, stay organized, reach out beyond the page to engage the reader, and honor the tradition of sharing personal truths in essay form.

**There were 3 groups of essays: GROUP A, B, and C.**

Judges determined which essays they deemed 1st, 2nd, and 3rd places.  
There were ties and honorable mentions too!

Winning students were asked for permission to print their names and their pieces.  
**Only students who gave permission have been printed.**

**\*Disclaimer: Narratives appear as students submitted them.  
No edits have been made to the originals.**

## Why Do I Cook?

by Anonymous (3rd place winner, Group A)

I am sitting in a big wooden chair, my feet swinging excitedly, still a few inches from the floor. I was waiting, quite impatiently, for the dough to thaw. Could this take any longer? I reach up and poke the ball of sweet, light brown dough; it is still hard as rock. I frown and leave my high seat, nearly falling on my face when I land. I enter the kitchen to see a tall woman with white hair and big, happy, blue eyes standing there humming, while working on something on the counter. She turns, smiles at me. I frown back. “Besta! I want cookies!” I yell at her, angry at the dough for staying solid. She just keeps smiling. “Patience, Jelly Bean,” she coos and wraps her arms around my rib cage, and picks me up, spinning me gently around. She sings a soft tune in my ear.

This is how I choose to remember my grandmother.

We returned to the living room. It was small but homey and bright, with 2 big wicker chairs with colorful patterned cushions and a big, pale yellow couch. We sat next to each other and she taught me how to play solitaire. Of course, I wouldn’t remember how to play; I just liked to be with her. Soon the dough was softened, so we pressed it into little tins and worked the dough up the sides until it was spread evenly in the tin. Then I would put it on the pan. She would “inspect” as she called it and would show me how to fix it. I would do my best, but they’d always come out a mess: uneven, gooey, and overflowing. I was four, what do you expect from my little hands?

Every year, though, they would get better. Soon, we incorporated my brother, and she did the same thing.

Everything a process, each step taking a few minutes. It smelled sweet and like my childhood. The first thing to do was put four sticks of butter into a mixer and a few cups of sugar, then mix. Only the best things have butter in them. Then add flour and vanilla and eggs. We ate so much dough we probably only ended up with about half the cookies we should have. This forced us to make multiple batches. The whole house would smell sweet and warm. The oven was old so it made the kitchen hot and steamy. We opened the side door, even though it was winter. Her happy dog, Kora would come in and out of the room hoping to snag a bit of dough. We would kick her out almost immediately, that dough was all ours.

Over the years, though, my grandma started to get sick. Her hands hurt and she was unable to work the dough any more. She forgets things now, she gets angry and confused. She doesn’t trust me anymore, but I still make her cookies. Even though she doesn’t see me the way she used to, I still bake and cook with her. My Besta is the one who started this for me. Even though she can’t help me anymore, I hold up the tradition and make her her favorite sandkaker cookies, a Norwegian classic. Cookies were and still are my way of showing love. It is my way of showing people how I care for and love them. Cooking has always been a way for me to express myself through creating a magical tapestry of flavors and textures.

I think the youngest memory I have was probably at four or five years old, it was Christmas day. I was again at my grandmother’s house, but this time my whole family was there; my aunt and uncle, their two children, my great great Uncle Albert (tried to give me champagne that night as well; funny story), my brother and my parents too. The house was filled with laughter and light, it smelled like turkey and warm stuffing. My family doesn’t get along all the time, but holidays have always been an exception, we put aside our differences and enjoy each other’s company. That year I was allowed to help make the stuffing, the cookies, and even the turkey. I was so young I had to sit up on a tall stool to be able to reach the counter, my uncle standing behind me watching my hands as I methodically worked the knife through the bread, the spoon through the dough, my hands around the balls of dough. It was calming and exciting all at the same time. I was purely happy then. That Christmas was different than the others, it was really where my love for food began.

Soon my love for food grew and my dad took over to help me learn. Of course, we had our differences in style as well; I like to follow recipes, and he just liked to improvise. These times were what helped me learn my style and how the flavors would mix together.

Food is my love language, love for myself and for others. If I make food for or with you, you know I really care for you. It is how I become my younger self; how I remember what my family was like when I was small. When my grandmother remembered my name and my cousins were babies gently placed in my arms; when life was full of music and laughter. Still today, when I am making food - whether it is baking cookies or sauteing vegetables - my life is still joyful and bright. Why do you do what you love? How did this activity affect who you have become?



## Why I Draw

by Arianna DeWitt (Group B, 1st Place Winner)

As my pencil hits the paper, a new world begins. The colors fill the paper and a new creation is made. The freedom it gives to express opinions and emotions through the paper. It's a colorful journey we can all take when we put in the effort. And this is why I draw because I can express and represent myself through the paper.

It all started when I was about 5-7. When I started to draw, I was curious about what my mom was doing and she was drawing a beautiful tree that popped with color. It had shapes and lines and each line told a story. Each beautiful streak of color added to give it life to make it real. I remember the life and color pouring out of the page. I wanted to join in with her. So I asked her what she was doing and if I could join. She said yes and that's where it all began. Drawing feels like flying or having no rules to guide you but It's just you. You can do whatever you want and enjoy It not having to do it because you're asked to but because you want to do it. It's a way to express yourself and let your imagination run free. A place that is safe for you and only you. One sound that reminds me of it would be waves crashing against the shore. Birds chirping, a fresh morning wind hitting your face when you wake up it fills you with comfort and warmth. When I picture a drawing I picture a journey with quests and treasure chests, something that is all your own. When I don't draw or can't draw then I feel like sometimes my mind is too filled up with things. When I draw I find happiness and comfort. As I developed my skills, I've found new opportunities. It shaped who I am today as a person. Drawing has given me more confidence in my abilities. It keeps my knowledge of knowing that Ii can always change as well as Ideas and if it isn't what you wanted then change it. Everything you might want to change as it goes on just like life you change with it. Drawing has given me a creative mindset and a good problem solving it has given me a passion. Now I'm 15 yrs old and I still draw with my mom and my sisters. We compete in drawing contests to see who is the best but we always all get a 10/10 on all of our work because drawing is different for everyone's eyes. It's not just for one person, it's for everyone. Drawing has drawn me closer to my family. Showing them my art is like showing them a piece of my heart. As I stand there waiting for their comments on the little piece of my heart I have given them I see their smiles grow as it reflects on my face just as much I see it on there's. My drawing might not always be what i wanted it to be but sometimes the images in my head aren't the one meant to be on the paper.

This passion gives me hope and life in a dull and numbing world. The lines shaping the paper as I continue to draw. It is a life line I hold onto when I feel alone and it's more than just doodles on paper; it's a friend. Everyone should find something that gives them the feeling where they can unburdened themselves with and that is drawing for me.

## My Happy

by Lauren Kennett (3rd place, Group B)

My heart freezes, everything goes completely quiet. Peace, I feel peace when I see them. The feeling of my legs swinging over them, the feeling of the wind in my hair, the feeling of not knowing if you can stop, and the feeling of everything coming together just how you want. You may never understand what I mean, but there is no such feeling like it. It is my happy. The cold air against my skin as I jump.

When I was 3, it all started. My My Little Pony party. Watching them graze as they waited for the next kid. The rigid pieces of leather on the western saddle, the scary feeling of adrenaline that I didn't understand at such a young age. Even if I didn't understand it, I wanted to experience it again. I never forgot about that feeling even years later.

I started taking real lessons at the age of 8, It was the closest barn my mom could find that didn't charge a fortune. I only took a couple of lessons because I found out that this definitely wasn't the place I wanted to be. I then continued to look everywhere for a good barn, they were either too expensive, or not what I was looking for. My neighbor informed me about a farm in Claverack that was about 45 minutes away, which at first I thought was kind of far, but I still tried it.

Four years later and I'm still here, in Claverack where the wind is stronger than any place I've ever been, where the smiles are bigger and brighter than you can imagine, and where I see myself forever. Bright and beautiful flowers surround the property in the summer. The most cared for flowers I've ever seen, with bright blues and purples. There is no such place that could ever compare. It is my home away from home.

Looking out into the fenced area, I see horses of all kinds. Bays, greys, paints, of all different sizes but one catches my eye. His dark fur, tall appearance and energetic personality catches my attention. He's different from the rest, a piercing white star on his forehead catches my attention quickly. His eyes are full of many different thoughts. Thoughts I can't understand yet. He comes running up to the gate, and I can feel his presence from many feet away. Little did I know he would change me.

I saw him again, two summers later. He would soon be up for sale since he didn't serve much of a purpose at my barn. I couldn't bear the thought of this horse I barely knew leaving, he had a chokehold on me. The first time I ever rode him, I just knew. He was the most difficult horse I'd ever been on. Bouncy, unbalanced gates, but he tried his best for me. He was different from any other horse I've ever ridden; he was powerful and he gave me that adrenaline rush I was eager for.

My mom and trainer could see the potential for us, and so we grew together. He didn't have much knowledge, but after years of riding him, I can now say he has taught me more than any horse could. He made me a completely different person mentally and physically. He went from knowing little to nothing about riding, and he was a very spooky horse. People said he was too much for me. They were completely wrong. He is a completely different horse. He taught me how to ride, and I taught him how to shine to his full capability. His little white star is whiter and fuller than ever now. He is my happy.





The Hunt That Told Me What I Love  
by Paxton Wells (3rd place, Group B)

The feeling of the cold sharp wind on your face when you are in a tree stand., The animals all around you. You can't move a muscle because you will scare them away. Then you see him, the buck you've been chasing the whole season., Aa feeling of excitement and nervousness rushes over you and you start to shake a little, then the buck stops in his tracks. You can get even more nervous because you think he's going to run away. You look down the scope and realize it's a perfect shot. Thenthen he looks up at you. You feel an adrenaline rush and start shaking even more. You are so focused on perfectly placing the shot that you can't hear anything around you. Thenn, you take a deep breath in and slowly let out and take the shot. Everything goes silent.

When I was 3 years old, I started hunting. I was never the person that shot something at that age, but I was always there with my dad. He taught me everything I know about it. We always used to go out hunting, and it wasn't just hunting deer, it was deer, it was also pigs in Georgia, squirrels, and ducks. A little bit of everything. Us just sitting there in a blind or a tree stand has brought us a lot closer because we have conversations and learn a lot about each other. He has also taught me at a young age to pass small bucks most of the time so the bucks get bigger.

In the woods it sounds like nature and silence at the same time. Like your brain kind of zones out - the birds chirping, squirrels squawking and all of the other day to day things you hear when you are in the regular world. When you really listen, you can hear the beautiful birds chirping, the squirrels eating, the woodpeckers pecking. It really is just so peaceful to watch the animals do their thing and them not knowing you are there. Even this happens with deer. When they are not shooter deer, you just get to hear them roam around watching them eat. Andand sometimes with little bucks that you pass you they will even fight with their antlers.

Hunting has helped me find who I am by just being myself. It has also helped me learn patience because when a big deer comes in you have to wait for it to give you a perfect shot. Also it has helped me learn that I should take everything for granted like don't just hunt deer for their antlers, hunt it for the food. Hunting has also shaped me to be humble about the deer I shoot because there will always be someone that shoots a bigger, better deer than you and you just have to keep hunting harder and try to shoot even bigger deer than the last ones.

Hunting has taught me a lot about my family and friends I hunt with because when I'm in a blind or tree stand with my dad or grandpa we talk and learn a lot more about each other every time I walk out of the woods I learn something new about the people I'm with.

Hunting brings gratitude and happiness to my life because whenever I get a deer I get to eat really good meat. Also if the antlers are big I get to mount it to honor the deer.

Everything is silent. You watch the deer run off in the thick of it and a rush of excitement runs over you. You are so cold you start to feel warm. You're getting down from your tree stand to go track the deer. You look around but can't find any blood. Now you are super anxious because you think you missed him. Then you look 20 yards in front of you and see him. You feel the adrenaline rush and sprint over to him. You call all of your family members and tell them to come check it out. Then, while they are on their way, you have time to think about all the things that have led up to this. That feeling when you first saw him, Then when you took the shot. Now you are just sitting there just you and him and you are just so ecstatic. Then everyone shows up and you take your pictures with him and thank god for letting you take him.

## GROUP C

### Why I Go Fishing With My Dad by Anonymous (1st place, Group C)

“Reel! Reel bud!” my dad shouted as I was fighting the biggest fish of my life. The line was zipping off into the distance, and all I could do was to grip the handle of my rod as hard as I could. The boat was creaking underneath me, my dad was reeling in other poles, the smell of fish stunk up the boat, and my heart was about to beat out of my chest. This was the best day on the Hudson yet.

That morning, my dad and I got up at 6 AM to go striper fishing on the Hudson River. We loaded up the boat and headed to the docks. We launched the boat and headed to our good ol’ spot. It was pretty notorious for having big fish. But at the time, it wasn't really working so well. After about an hour, we hooked up. We got 1 or 2 little guys but not big enough to call it a successful day. Then, we decided to move spots.

As we were moving over, it started to get really shallow. The waters were about 10ft, but my dad insisted that we try it anyway. The fish scanner was picking up a lot of fish, but our poles were saying otherwise. Once again, another little guy. Unfortunately, my dad didn't want to stay too much longer because the sun was getting somewhat close to setting. I asked him if we could just finish our bucket of bait, and he said yes.

We reeled in our poles to do one last cycle. Throw off the old chunks of bait, cut new ones, slide them on the hook, recast, and wait. Typically when you cast out, the line moves a little bit because it's settling to the tide, so it seems like a fish is biting it but it's really not. That's what I thought when the line started to move. But then all the sudden, it just took off. The line was zipping off into the water. This was most certainly a fish, not the tide. With the adrenaline pumping in my arms, I picked the rod and set the hook. This is where the fight began. I was using the technique that my dad taught me when I was little. Pull the rod up, reel when you're letting it back down. No matter how hard I fought, it didn't feel like this fish was getting any closer. For the next 5 or so minutes, I was fighting and fighting until I could see the fish at the surface of the water about 10 yards out. The fish was exhausted so I could reel it in nice and easy to the boat while my dad scooped it up with the net. This fish was no little guy.

After my dad laid the net down, he bent over to pull the hook out of its lip. When that was ready, he pulled out his phone for a picture. I lifted the fish up with my hands in its gills. I lifted hard, flexed a little bit, pumped up my chest, and smiled wide. With a fist bump, a smile, and a “Good Job Bud”, I could tell that he was proud.

This experience has taught me to be patient when it may seem like nothing good is happening. To hold hope in tough times. To appreciate good things. This is what fishing is all about and what it teaches us.

The sound of a fishing line zipping off into the distance, water hitting the side of the boat, wind hitting the glistening water, always brings peace. It allows me to think clearly, and not have to stress or worry about anything in the world. The second my bait hits the water, I can finally relax. My dad, My friends, Me, all love it, and now I can see why.

I hope that one day I will be the person taking my dad out fishing. Saying, “ Hop in my truck, Dad, the boat’s hooked up and the gears packed.” I want to return to him what he gave me. I hope that one day I will be teaching my son everything that my father taught me. I can show him how to tie on a lure, how to reel in a fish, how to take the hook out of its mouth, maybe even show him some secret spots. These are what dads are for, and I want to be a successful dad, just like mine.



## Why I Do Art

By Cecelia Smith (2nd place tie, Group C)

Pencils sharpened until I can no longer hold them fully in my hands; paint stains my legs and arms and bedsheets. Graphite from my number two pencil is sticking to my right arm after I've finished sketching. Papers and sketchbooks are untidily strewn about my room, in baskets under my bed, scattered along bookshelves. Art for me has never been clean, and maybe that's why I find myself within it. Art can be unorganized; messy; there are no rules on it. Nothing about the way I do things has ever been very organized; it's just not in my nature.

When I was young, I always had marker ink and paint staining my face and clothes. My grandma was the one who always allowed me to be as messy as possible when doing anything, especially coloring and painting; I like to think she may have enjoyed cleaning all my messes. It's funny, I know these messy tendencies have carried over into my teenage years, because even now as I write this out, there is oil pastel staining my palms from my art class earlier in the day.

I don't think I can come to one specific reason for why I draw and create artwork. Maybe it's because of the feeling of accomplishment after I've finished a piece of art, or wanting to feel like I would've made my younger self proud. I love when people compliment my work, it brings a warm feeling, a feeling that is only brought to me through art. It feels like summer, the warm sun on my face, my hair is up in a bun, my skin is tanned; to me that is what it feels like to be told my art is good. But in all honesty, even compliment after compliment, whether it is from an art teacher, my family, my friends, I still never feel completed with my art. Something could always be done better, and that is just how I see it. That's what I find most difficult about art. Never feeling finished, never feeling good enough. Despite that feeling, I love to see myself improve and get better at new techniques. I like how everyone's art is different in its own way, and I love seeing the way well known artists have their own unique stylization. So even though I sometimes feel as if my art isn't perfect or good enough, neither does any other artist. No matter how amazing your artwork may be, you will always compare it to someone else's art that you view as "better" than your own. From time to time I have to remind myself of that, their art isn't better, it's just different from mine, and that doesn't make me or my art worth any less than theirs.

Now as I write, I've come to the realization that this doesn't just apply to art, but everything else I and other teenagers are experiencing right now, our grades in school, our homes, our looks, our personalities. Everyone was gifted with the privilege of being unique, and sometimes we take this for granted; especially in school and on social media. Instead of wanting to stand out for being different, and wanting to embrace the things that make us ourselves, we would rather be just like everyone else. Coming to the realization that most people are feeling that same exact feeling as you could bring a lot of peace, no matter how perfect someone else may seem to have it, they're doing the same thing as you, comparing themselves to someone else. Comparing ourselves to everyone else is never going to bring the satisfaction and confidence within ourselves that we all need, but being able to embrace the things about us that are different and unique, and being proud of that individuality, is the best thing we can do.

## Why I Cook

by Hailey Tool (2nd place tie, Group C)


The aroma of freshly chopped herbs mingled with the sizzling sound of onions in the pan, creating a symphony of scents that filled the kitchen. The rich, savory scent of garlic and onions sauteing in butter filled the air, making my mouth water in anticipation. My stomach growled like a caged beast, urging the food on the stove to cook faster as the delicious aromas teased my senses. The tantalizing smell of the cooking food made the wait feel unbearable.

When I was younger cooking has always been a special part of my life. I remember standing on a stool next to my mother, watching her knead dough and sprinkle flour like magic dust. The warmth of the kitchen, the comforting aromas of fresh-baked bread and soft ambient music made me fall in love with cooking. The way she would sing softly while stirring a pot of soup or the facial expressions she made when she tasted a perfectly seasoned dish made those moments feel incredible. It wasn't just about the food; it was about the love and care that went into every meal. Those early experiences taught me that cooking is more than just a skill, it's an art form, a way to connect with others, and a means to create lasting memories.

As I grew older, cooking became my way of expressing love and care for those around me. Preparing meals for family and friends, I found that food has a unique power to bring people together, to create memories, and to convey emotions that words sometimes can't. Each dish I make is a piece of my heart, a way to show appreciation and nurture relationships. I love the challenge of combining different flavors and textures to create something unique and delicious. The kitchen is my playground, where I can let my imagination soar and turn simple ingredients into extraordinary dishes. Cooking allows me to express myself in ways that words cannot, and every meal is a reflection of my passion and creativity.

In the future, I envision myself continuing to cook because it will always be part of my ultimate form of self expression and creative outlet. The thought of discovering new ingredients and experimenting with innovative recipes excites me, as each dish will be a new canvas waiting to be painted with flavors and textures. I see myself honoring my skills, mastering my complex techniques I've developed from my grandmother and mother. Perhaps I will share my culinary creations with other generations of family and friends. The kitchen will remain my sanctuary, a place where I can unwind, focus, and find peace amidst the chaos of my daily life. Cooking will always be a journey of growth and discovery, and I look forward to the endless adventures and joys it will bring.





## Dinosaurs on the Moon

by Naba Arabee (3rd place, Group C)

You're in a world where you know the secrets of life, what lurks under the dark stormy waters, or what the infinite vastness of space has to offer. You're speaking to life itself and living it to the fullest. No questions keeping you up at night, all because you think.

Let's venture back to my childhood, little me bombarding my mother with questions I conjured up from my imagination, even ones she had no answers to, "What happens in space, what's on the moon?" little me, being obsessed with dinosaurs, gave my mother the perfect excuse to finally shut me up. She told me dinosaurs lived on the moon, and this obviously backfired, I would just ask her more questions, "What do they do on the moon?", and although neither of us can remember how she answered, I remember her answers being vague, always leaving me wondering, leaving my imagination running in infinite shapes.

Let us jump back into the present, I'm sitting in my living room, the latest Bengali news in the background, muffled chatter of the household that I block out, the chandelier brightening, yet darkening the room with its yellow hue, and me and my dad chatting away for hours.

My dad asks me an abrupt question he knows I can't answer immediately, "What is quantum physics?", I tell him, I don't know. I always hated this part; he makes me feel like I don't know anything, when in reality, neither would anyone my age. But as the conversation goes back and forth of him trying to explain it to me, without directly telling me, he makes me use my thinking skills to answer my own questions. He says something confusing, almost like a riddle, and I must use everything I know to solve it. When I finally figure it out, I use my own words and experiences to explain and add to his words, and that is when he is proud of me. He tells me he appreciates my words and knowledge, and we move on to different topics as fast as a shooting star fades. But always in the back of my mind, I think of that dinosaur on the moon, I think of how I'm here today, who I am today, and why I think.

Thinking is why I am me. My parents have shaped me to think in complex ways and to view life how most people don't. I will always think and take time to consider things, leaving me with a different perspective on every topic and conversation.

I sit alone by the window, staring at the white, glowing circle in the sky, and think of a t-rex walking on the plain, dusty, old moon. Although it sounds funny, I relive this scene many times, too much to think about, too much to learn about.

I am who I am today, all because of one silly little answer, to one big question.