

Sacred Art

A Literary and Arts Magazine

Showcasing student work from Network schools grounded
in the theme *Hearts Rooted in Change*



1st Edition

2024-2025

Introduction

Welcome to the first edition of *Sacred Art*! This literary and arts magazine was founded by the Shared Voices group of the Network Student Advisory Committee, and we are so excited to bring it to the Sacred Heart community.

Sacred Art features student work from Sacred Heart schools across the Network. Submissions range from poems, short stories, and essays to photography, sculpture, and paintings. In addition to the *Goals & Criteria* that ground our Sacred Heart education, our magazine will focus on the theme of *Hearts Rooted in Change*. We asked participants to think about how this idea relates to sustainability, social justice, and advocacy. Consider how you can use your voice for good.

We hope that you enjoy this compilation of Sacred Heart talent and that you continue to spark creativity and change in your respective communities.

-Shared Voices, Network Student Advisory Committee

Grey Webb
Richard Lu

Azalea Scavullo
Kaitlyn Bonilla
Luciana Palazeti

Goal III: Schools of the Sacred Heart commit themselves to educate to a social awareness which impels to action.

“Great hearts, generous hearts, are required in the family of God’s Heart, because the difficulties in the way of doing good increase day by day.”

-St. Madeleine Sophie Barat

Literature + Artwork

Section

Lord, I fear that my faith lingers in you just like the waves that crash on the shore; how the tide rises and falls. But through you O'Lord, over time, I know that in your will, you will rebuild me into the child you have made me to be. Just like the seashell erodes into sand due to the waves. I pray that I don't perish and obey the influences of the world, like how the waves obey the wind. For I know you make me whole in your likeness and that I strive to keep developing in your will, Amen.

"Beaches"

A Prayer by Marlie Hock

Academy of the Sacred Heart, Bloomfield Hills, Michigan



Madi Goei
Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York, NY

"Finger Paintings"

Marin Hammonds

Duchesne Academy of the Sacred Heart, Houston, TX

Paint the sky with the tips of your fingers

And so when people ask you where the color in your hands went:

You can tell them how much of yourself you give so that the world can be beautiful.

And let your hands be cold. Allow your blood to run to your heart. Allow the heat to rush from your limbs.

So read the papers,

The stories,

The words,

And feel alongside them.

Reach out your bedroom window,

Roll down the glass in your car,

Listen to the words that carry in the breeze.

The ones that linger in the air long after they're said.

And feel alongside them.

Hold out your fingers and let them paint the sky like you always said they would.

Let us see what we don't hear, what we shy away from reading.

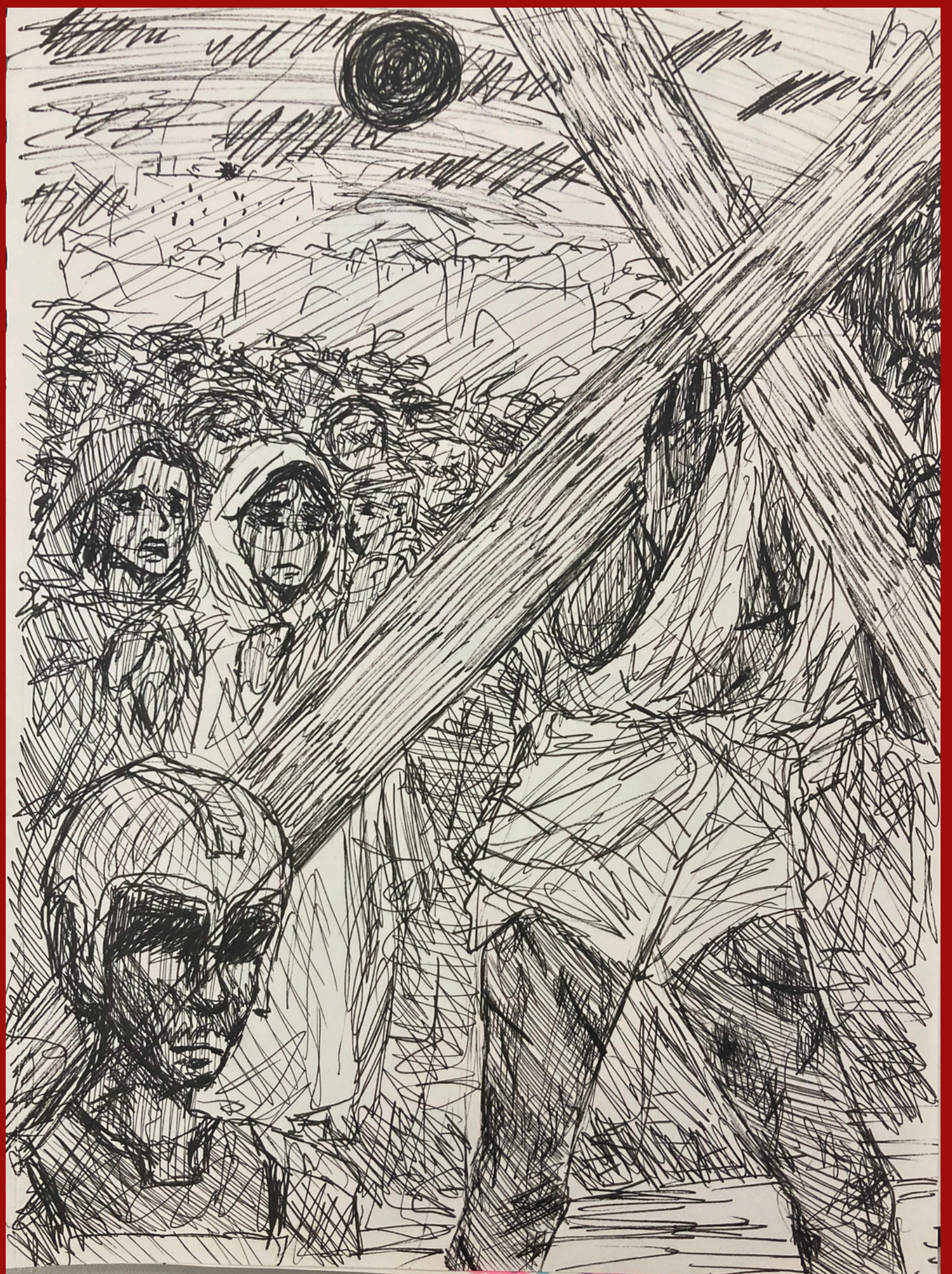
And hope this place will one day feel like your warm embrace, the kind that extends from your body,

your limbs,

your fingers.

And the finger paintings you made as a child.

"Jesus Himself is fully God as well as man, so He is unchanging. But He changed the world through his sacrificial love for us."



"People have always been violent, but that doesn't mean that it's okay. Violence hurts everyone, especially the vulnerable."

"Stations of the Cross" and "I love(d) you"
Jane Rix
Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

"A Day in Your Shoes"

Maisie Rix

Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

5/11/25

A Day in Your Shoes

"I'm home!"

From different worlds, Melissa and Joey yelled the same greetings to their empty houses.

Melissa was ready to put up her heavy golden hair and remove the layers of concealer she'd put on that morning. Contrary to what her mother thought she was not, in fact, excited to start a new diet. Melissa's mother had told just that morning that waist size was more important than her hunger.

Joey's mother has always told him yes. Yes to clubs. Yes to dangerous excursions. Yes to whatever made him happy.

"Just once," Joey thought aloud, " I wish she would tell me no. Tell me I shouldn't, couldn't do something."

Joey wanted to know that his mother really cared, but she always said yes. Always let him go.

Joey was angry. He couldn't remember a time he'd felt that burning, clenching sensation in his chest.

Melissa was angry too. She couldn't remember a time she hadn't felt that dull aching sensation in her chest.

As Joey and Melissa slipped under the covers of their beds, they shared a single thought,

"I wonder what it would be like to walk a day in someone else's shoes."

Then the sweet quietness of sleep drifted over them. Nothing was really different as Melissa and Joey closed their eyes, but it felt like, somewhere, in some other world, something had shifted.

Melissa

"Mellie!"

Melissa, or Mellie, shifted at the sound of her mom's unusually chipper voice. Her mom was never happy. Mellie didn't want to get out of bed, but something, a voice, not her mom's, was calling her, beckoning her to seize the day. Mellie listened.

As Mellie staggered half asleep to the bathroom, she didn't notice the different sheets on her bed, the different colors on the walls. They were all things she loved but didn't show because they weren't "in".

In the bathroom, Mellie was aware of, but didn't care that all of her cosmetics and hair tools were gone; she was happy with how she looked. She dressed how she wanted, not in one of her mom's pre-picked outfits, although even if she had wanted one, they didn't exist in this world.

Joey

Joey had been surprised by his mother's cruel tone when he woke up. He was used to his favorite breakfast being prepared and a kind note along with it. All he got to eat was a strange smoothie he felt obligated to try because it helped clear his skin. Strange. Joseph had never worried about how his skin looked before.

After getting ready with an uncountable number of creams, masks, cologne, and gels, Joseph picked out his clothes based on the weather, his color analysis, and his sign. He had never thought about whether or not his clothes were trendy before today.

As Joseph walked the halls of his high school, he felt as if he were the main event at a show, with the eyes of all his classmates fixed upon him. He wished he had stayed in bed instead of quietly fidgeting with his sleeves as he tried to remember where his first period class was.

Mellie

As Mellie roamed the halls of her high school, it felt as if the tension before today had been a tap flooding a house and no one turned it off. Today felt like a plumber had been called and the water shut off completely. Mellie laughed with people she hadn't talked to since middle school, walked with people who used to hate her, only none was real. She had talked to those kids, and those other kids had never hated Mellie. Nothing had pulled them apart, no one telling them they couldn't be friends, that their aesthetics didn't match. Mellie felt at home, she felt safe and happy. By the end of the day, she couldn't remember a time when she wasn't.

Joseph

Joseph was a mess. He had been called out so many times today, he felt like crawling into a hole and never coming out. All his friends weren't his friends anymore; they seemed to be liked more than before, and the girls who used to be best friends ignored each other. The only people who didn't throw him out of the boat were the seemingly unpopular kids. They told him he was the popular kid in school, practically royalty, then everything came flooding back.

By day three in their new, but known worlds, Melissa, or Mellie as she was called then, and Joey, or Joseph as he was called then, had forgotten their old universes, had dropped what they used to know and conformed like clay in a mold. That clay had changed under the potter's hand exactly how he'd wanted it to, until it was placed in the kiln. The clay cracked. Was worthless.

At least, to the naked eye it was.

(Continued on Page 9)

"Sophie's Sacred Garden"

Alina Amlani

Academy of the Sacred Heart, Grand Coteau, LA

50 ft x 50 ft

"The garden that I created is a labyrinth which represents the journey of life to God and how you walk in with an intention, leave it to God in the middle, and walk out back into the world changed and renewed."



"It takes courage to go to God with a struggle and the desire to get better, which relates the work of art to the theme and how this is a way to get there."

A Day in Your Shoes (continued)

Mellie

What was wrong with her? Why couldn't she focus? Why couldn't she take their snide comments like when she first entered this new world? Why was everything so difficult to do? All of Mellie's questions about her new world could have been answered simply: it wasn't really her world. She was an intruder, beginning to feel lost in a strange, unfamiliar place. Though this universe wasn't the out place one, it was her.

Joseph

Joseph was exhausted. He had to wake up at four just to get ready in time. When people told him they liked him, they only liked his appearance, not his personality. All of his "friends" hung out with him for the perks, not for his company, like life was a concert and was their VIP pass. He was used to it, though, wait, no, he wasn't. As if an old dream had come back to him, he remembered with vivid clarity, a time before this. He'd been happy. He'd been content.

Mellie

As Mellie pondered her old life, she came to realise what the last thing she remembered was. She had been angry, at her mom, she thought. She went to bed. The last thing she remembered was a thought. Mellie recalled it being in her own mind, but when she heard it again, it wasn't her voice. It was a boy's, saying, "I wonder what it would be like to walk a day in someone else's shoes."

Joseph

The last thing Joseph remembered was a thought. He recalled it being in his mind, but when it came back to him, it wasn't his voice. It was a girl's, saying, "I wonder what it would be like to walk a day in someone else's shoes." With his newly tuned mind, all Joseph could think about was the face behind that voice. He knew that face, she'd been his neighbor when he was young.

Mellie

Mellie knew that voice, he'd been her neighbor when she was young. He had moved just a few years before her family had. Mellie chuckled at the memory of him. Joey, that was his name. They were always getting into trouble together. Their games and stories filled countless afternoons that would have otherwise been spent alone. Mellie longed for those days, for hours in the sun, the bubbling of laughter, and easy friendship that is only found in childhood. Mellie longed for the arms of a loving parent, whose heart gave its virtue without conditions. Mellie longed to be a child, to be naive. Mellie wished to go back.

Joseph

Joseph longed for easygoing days without the expectations of society. The expectation to be happy, to think of himself. Joseph longed for a parent who said no because she cared, not who said yes because it would make him "happy". He longed for the security of being small, of always having someone look out for him. Joseph wished to go back. They didn't go back. Not to their first worlds, and not to the fond memories of childhood. But they did make their own universe where they found each other again. Joseph, or Joey as he was called then, and Mellie, or Melissa as she was called then, taught people not to judge until they had walked a day in their shoes. They worked hard for years, giving up themselves in the hope that no one would go through what they had, on their own.

But alas, there were not three different worlds, or three different Joeyes, or Melissa. Those fears of people experiencing what they had were in vain, because Joey and Melissa hadn't really experienced it themselves. Sometimes people get wrapped up in their own heads, creating twisted realities. Sometimes people judge without knowing the whole story. Sometimes people give up their authentic selves for the uniformity of society. Sometimes people need a friend to help them through tough times. Sometimes people need to take a step back, and look at the problem as a whole. And sometimes, all people need to do is... wake... up...

Two kids, who hadn't grown up yet, woke up with a start, their minds still buzzing with the dream they had shared. Melissa couldn't wait to tell her best friend about it, and Joey couldn't wait to tell his best friend. While a physical bridge connected these two kids, something deeper pulled them together. They always seemed to know exactly what the other felt, how to make each other laugh and smile. Some adults commented on how well they understood each other, telling their parents how emotionally aware they were. But Melissa's and Joey's parents could tell something greater was at play.

They climbed through their windows to their spot in the trees and recounted the single dream, finally seen from both sides. Melissa and Joey spent the rest of the day in each other's shoes, not knowing the real meaning wasn't literal. They didn't know it yet, but they wouldn't move apart this time, they stayed friends through thick and thin. As they grew older, they never forgot their dream. Melissa and Joey loved to tell the story to their grandchildren, who loved it every time. The story always began and ended with the same message, "Oh, to walk a day in someone else's shoes!"



"Maine Road"
Maisie Rix
Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

"This is a watercolor painting of a road in Maine that I passed as I was driving to Canada. On this trip, I got to reconnect with family members that I hadn't seen in years and it also helped reconnect with myself and my values. While it was a Maine Road, it was the main road for me to find out who I am."

"H-O-M-E"

Anna Gill
Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

H- O- M -E

What is home to me
Where do I feel safe and sound
Where does peace and love surround
Where's the place where I am not judged
Where's the place where I am filled with love
Maybe it's my nice warm house
With love that my family spreads throughout
Where I can look like a mess
And not stress
For no one will make a face
And make me feel out of place
No, it can't be that

H-O-M-E

What is home to me
Maybe it's a fresh new book
When I cuddle up in a cozy nook
And crack open the new pages
And spend my day
Reading away
Getting lost in a new world
No No that's not it

H-O-M-E

What is home to me
Maybe it's center stage
Where I act a little older than my age
And I'm a whole new girl
Who dances and twirls
Around the place
Like I belong in that space
I become someone new
A character's dream I act and pursue
The bright stage lights that warm my skin
People's faces lighting up as the lights start to dim
Excited for the show that is about to begin
No no no that isn't right

H-O-M-E

What is home to me
Maybe it's Spotify
A simple app where lyrics fly
And dance around in my head
While I lay in bed
Pondering what it all means
And looking at how the lamp light gleams
Across my dainty rose walls
As the lyrics fall
Right into place
Making music my safe space
No No No No That is simply not true

H-O-M-E

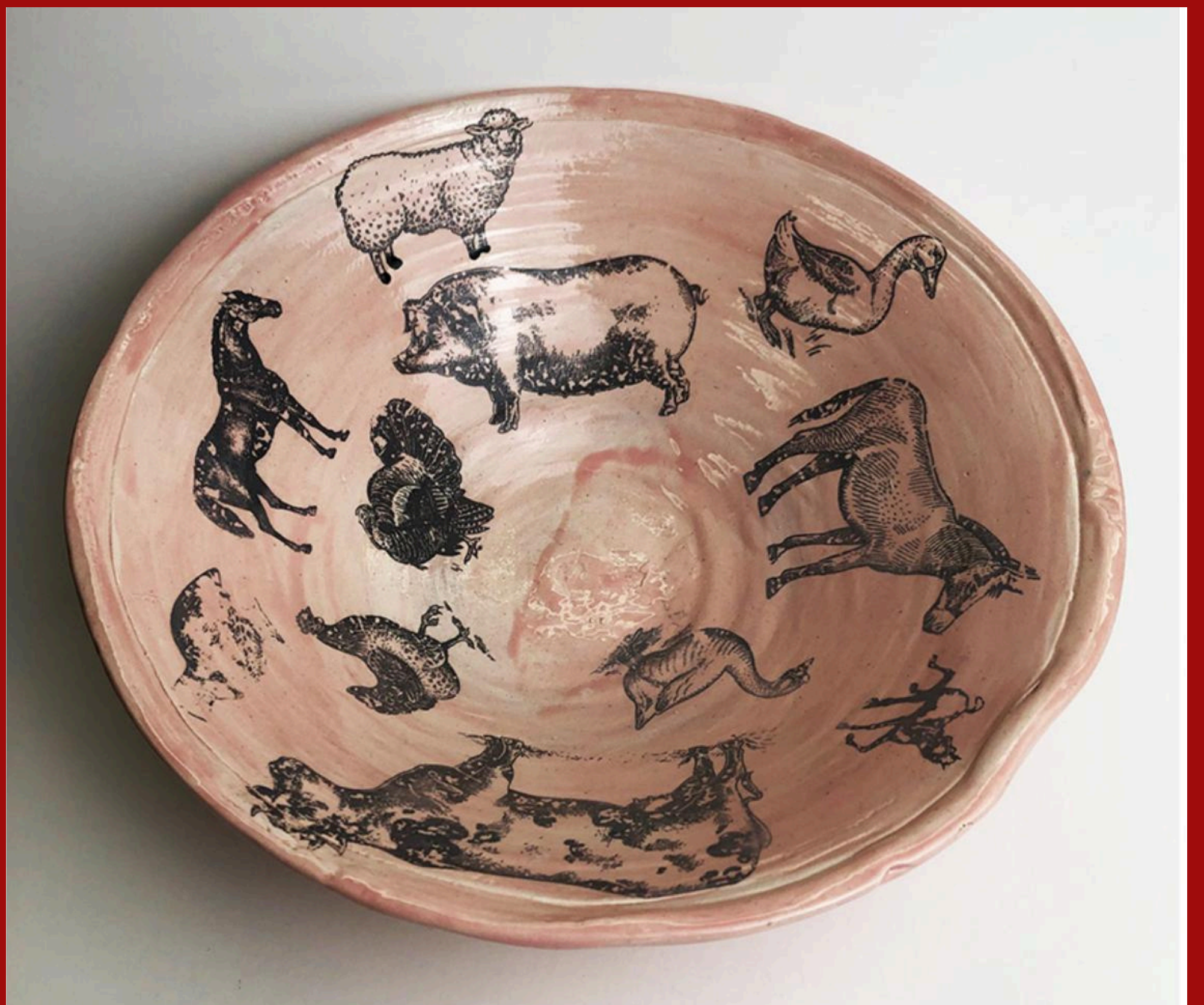
What is home to me
It's nothing that I've said before
It can't be for
Home is one place
Only one safe space
I need one answer
An answer to the age-old question
Where are you from
Hearing that makes my heart go numb
For my mind freezes up
And my mouth scrams for something to say
I'm supposed to answer swiftly
And know what the answer is
But there's too many places
That I call home
but maybe that's ok

H-O-M-E

What is home to me
It is my brick house
With a red door
It is a simple book
Where I pour
My love and time
And I feel calm at mind
Home is on the creaky wooden stage
With old paint splattered on the floor
Home is the music that echoes through my head
That soars
through my thoughts
as to stop my racing mind
Home is all these places
Everywhere, all combined



"Hummingbird Plates"
Grace Sutton
Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York, NY



"Farm Animals"
Grey Webb
Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York, NY

"Hold Your Tongue"
Emma Greenwood
Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

Hold your tongue

I try to make sense of this beautiful
complex
wonderful world
I do, I really do

But on occasion
I envy those who cannot hear
for they are able to dodge the venom-laced bullets being spewed
from the mouths of those who cannot learn
to turn the gun back towards themselves

From time to time
I am jealous of those who cannot see
for they receive solace
when the scene being played before them
cuts deeper
stings harsher
bleeds more freely
than what they see behind their eyes

But I pity those who cannot speak
for they are at a loss
when it comes for fighting for themselves
when it comes to preaching
when it comes to singing
when it comes to mourning
when it comes to believing



"Kaaterskill Falls"
Kevin Williamson
Sacred Heart, Greenwich, CT
16"x20"; Black and White Film

"This photograph relates to environmentalism because it represents the beauty of the earth. With my photography, I hope to show why it's important that we protect our natural spaces."

"Memento Mori: Getting Better Every Day"

Mia Stanley

Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

My first job, at ten years old, was a professional funeral attendee. I was an altar server for my parish, serving at funerals. For twenty dollars, I would sit on the altar in my white robes, and for an hour or two, I would share in the burden of a family's grief and their celebration of a life well-lived.

Throughout my time as an altar server, I became deeply aware of death as both a concept and a reality. However, being confronted with mortality at such a young age led me to adopt an outlook on life that shapes how I approach the world: we do not live once, we die once. We have the opportunity to live every day.

As a middle schooler, I began to adopt this perspective into all aspects of my life, starting with my day-to-day experiences. For several months, I gave myself the challenge of performing at least one small, kind action every day. My favorite method of brightening people's days quickly became compliments, which often brought sparkles into tired eyes and smiles onto frowning faces.

One Thursday, after a rough English test, I complimented my friend's hair, about which she was very insecure. She had put it up in a new style, and I mentioned how well it framed her face and inquired about her inspiration for the style. As she animatedly began talking about it, I found life worth living in the curves of her smile and her delighted gait that she maintained throughout the day. After a while, I did not have to count the days; the kind actions happened naturally, and every day was made the better for them.

In my efforts to better myself, I decided to join my school's rowing team. For a while, I was not serious about the sport, until being sidelined by a back injury forced me to confront how important rowing and my team were to me. Once healed and holding oars in my hands again, I resolved that I would use every day to get better instead of wasting them as I had before I realized the privilege of my health and well-being.

This resolve was challenged one Tuesday. I was out in my single in twenty-five mile-an-hour gusts, about five thousand meters away from the dock. Every wave broke over the bow of my boat, sending water into it and splashing me, but with clenched teeth and a tense core I pushed through. Gratefully, I focused on how, despite the agony of fighting Mother Nature, my back did not hurt, the sun was warm on my face, and my teammates laughed about the roughness of the day with me after practice. Even our worst moments are chances to truly live.

All my life, I have done my best to live. Beyond the river, the classroom, and the sacristy, I have sought to bring life wherever I go and remind people why it should be celebrated. Funerals, and the honor of attending them, are excellent reminders that we get one shot at being ourselves but about twenty-nine thousand chances to experience joy, pain, love, and loss before we die. And when Death finally meets me back in the shade of a steeple, I think I will set down my candle in the sacristy, taking one last moment to thank her for allowing me so many chances to live.

"More than a Race"

Brigid Kane

Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

I still remember the sting of gravel in my knees and the burn of tears in my eyes. I was in third grade, halfway through a cross-country meet, when I tripped over a rock and I tumbled to the ground. Shoes pounded past me, and I began realizing that the race was slipping away. Unexpectedly, a girl running behind me slowed down, reached out her hand, and pulled me back up. She didn't say much, just a simple, "Come on, let's go," but that small act of kindness has stayed with me.

A year later, the roles reversed. I was running downhill during another meet when I saw a girl ahead of me stumble and fall hard. Instinctively, I stopped. For a moment, I could hear my coach's voice in the back of my head telling me to keep going, to focus on the race and to earn a good time. But I thought about that girl who had once stopped for me, and I knew what I needed to do. I helped her up, while others ran by her, and together we finished the race.

Moments like these shaped my understanding of running early on: it was never just about times or medals, but about resilience, empathy, and the connections between people who share the same path. From kindergarten through eighth grade, cross country taught me patience, mile after mile of pacing, learning to push through exhaustion, and to keep going even when it hurt. It taught me community: bus rides to meets, cheering for teammates as they sprinted to the finish line, checking in on one another, and learning that even in a sport that seems individual, you are never really alone.

By high school, I transitioned into track and field, where the pace of the sport changed but its lessons deepened. I found myself on the starting line of my 800-meter dash race, where every second mattered, the pressure was sharper, and the competition tighter. Track demanded a different kind of discipline. I had countless practices, endless drills, and the mental toughness to push past the voice in my head that told me I had nothing left. It forced me to grow not just stronger physically, but also mentally. I still remember the day I finished a steep hill workout I thought was impossible, fifteen brutal intervals where, halfway through, I was certain I couldn't keep going, yet I finished.

Running has given me more than endurance or strength; it has given me a mindset. I've learned that setbacks, like falls, don't define me; how I respond does. I've learned that helping others doesn't slow me down; it lifts me up. And I've learned that the finish line is never the only goal. The rewards are found in the moments of growth, the friendships formed, and the strength I've carried with me.

Now, as I take my steps into college, I know that same mindset will carry me forward. The grit, kindness, and persistence that running instilled in me will shape how I face new challenges. I may not always be racing, but I will always be running toward becoming the best version of myself.

"Cultural Breakdown"

Safiyat Muhammad

Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

This summer, in 2025, I went to Africa to visit my family. Initially, I didn't want to go. I dreaded going back to Mali for vacation because of the distance. Being away from friends and family in America is hard for me. I miss home and have trouble enjoying wherever I go, especially on a vacation. However, this summer changed my perspective on how I view my identity and who I am as a Malian American.

As we arrived at our house in Kalabancoro, Kati, I couldn't stop thinking about America. Every morning, I'd grab my phone to try and connect with my friends, but never managed to reach them. My friends called me back, but it just never worked. I was so upset by this. My mom noticed my face and how mokey I looked. She would ask me what was wrong, but I never told her. During this time, I would just sit in the house and not do anything. As weeks went by, I still felt sad about being far from my friends. Little did I know, having that mindset might ruin the fun of my trip.

Eventually, I decided to put those feelings aside and enjoy my time.

My cousins called me one day and asked if I wanted to go swimming with them. I took that opportunity to get my mind off what I was feeling. Swimming helped me gain a clear view. As I dove into the water, it was that moment I realized that I was on vacation and I needed to spend my time here embracing it. I forgot about my friends for a while and started to do more things with my relatives. I couldn't have imagined the fun I had and how in tune I was with my culture.

It was hard for me to communicate with my cousins because of the language barrier. This was another reason why I initially enjoyed myself. However, we made it work. With the little English they knew, we started to build conversations. We were able to relate and connect on things. We spoke about different topics that were trending on social media and things that we found funny. This made me feel as if a weight was lifted off my shoulders. I was finally able to connect to my people.

As the days grew shorter, it was getting closer and closer to the departure date. I made sure to spend my time wisely. I went out almost every day. There was always something new going on; it was almost impossible to get bored because of it. For instance, events were happening in almost every neighborhood. I didn't want it to end. However, everything has to come to an end. It was the last week of Mali, and I started to become emotional. A tsunami of emotion hit me in the face every time I'd wake up. I never realized how much being in Africa would mean to me. I no longer reached for my phone and instead immersed myself in my surroundings. The connection with the lifestyle, tradition, and overall culture lit a light in me. That light made me proud of who I am as a Malian American.

When it was time for us to board the plane to go home, I tried not to tear up. I truly did, but when we sat down on the plane and waited for takeoff, I let loose. I took off. I cried for so long. I've never felt so attached to a part of my identity this much before. As of now, I always repeatedly say that Africa changed my life. Although my friends and family are tired of me saying it, this slice of my identity will always mean so much more.

"Ceramic Sheep"
Genevieve Fitzpatrick
Convent of the Sacred Heart,
New York, NY



"Hillside"
Frankie Hinton
Sacred Heart, Greenwich, CT
Digital

"A short study of lighting, a perspective which explores aspects of environmentalism and creativity."

"Backup Player"

Ellie Carreon

Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

"I'm going to be kicked off the team because of my grades, but I don't care. I don't even want to play anymore." My heart dropped as one of my players articulated the exact sentiment I was scared to admit for so long. I don't even want to play a sentence I had lived with for years. I took a deep breath, attempting to think of the best way to respond.

Growing up on the Main Line, a prestigious suburban area outside of Philadelphia, there was never a shortage of opportunities to explore a new sport. From soccer to golf, there were programs for all. Yet, the biggest sport was lacrosse. Many of the surrounding schools in the area were known for their renowned lacrosse programs. I grew up playing for Philly Blast Lacrosse, one of the most elite clubs on the Main Line. However, I was a backup player. Never the first or last attacker on the field, and only put in when the game allowed.

My lack of involvement on the field, while still being able to make a top team year after year, diminished my confidence and was utterly confusing. My whole being became suffocated by the fact that I was "good" enough to be a part of Philly Blast but not strong enough to be a contributor. This lack of confidence as a player transferred to a lack of confidence as a person.

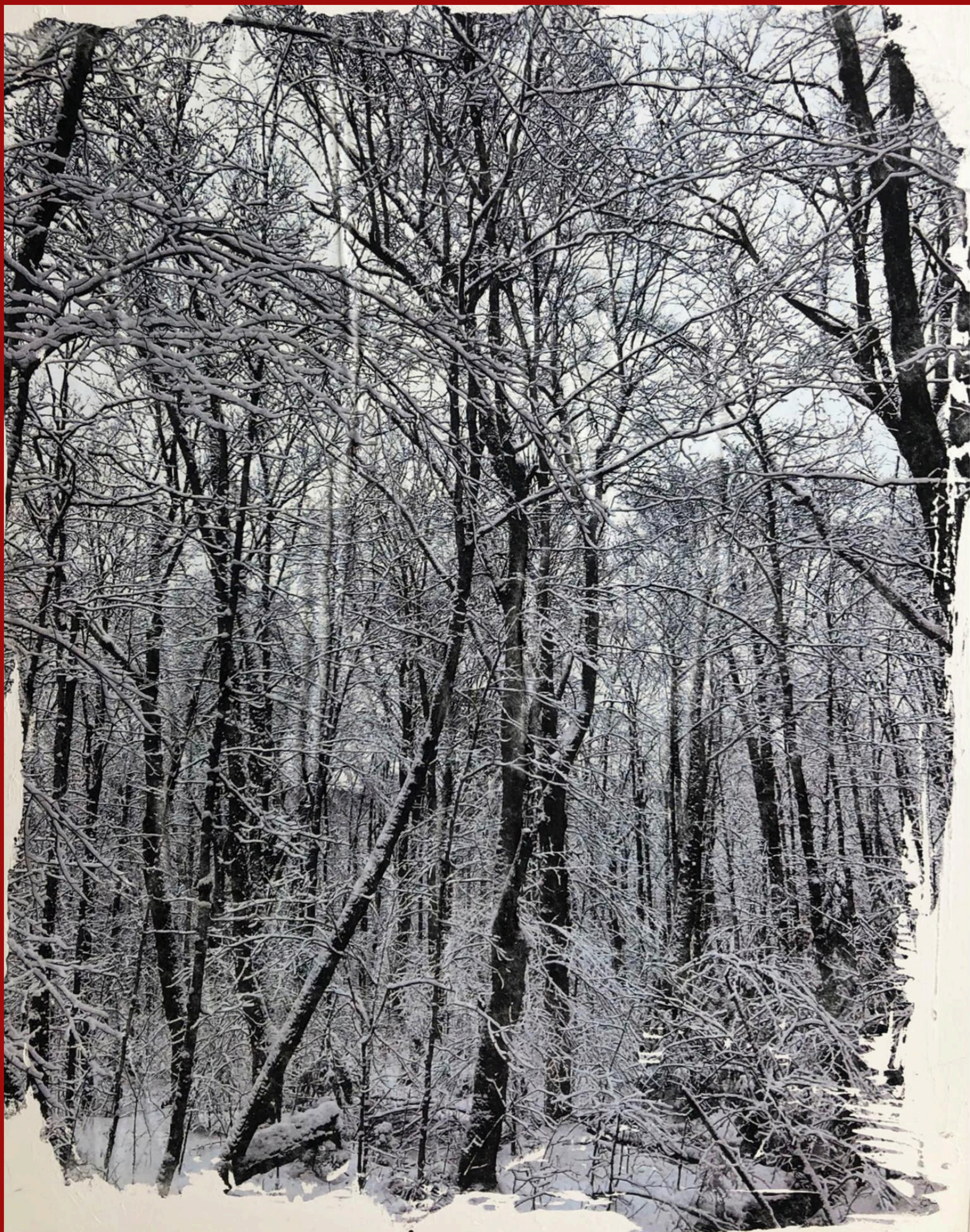
My internal conflict went on for three years. On multiple occasions, I expressed my wishes to quit. My dad disagreed, and pushed me to play. I had begun to further lose hope in my game until my freshman year at Conestoga High School. This experience allowed me to reset my perspective. During the Conestoga season, I slowly acquired more confidence with the support of new coaches and teammates. With confidence being instilled in me through genuine coaches, being able to play at the speed I no longer thought I could play at gave me a sense of closure. As my mind cleared, I realized I didn't need to "play" lacrosse to feel successful and worthy. Deep down, there was still a passion somewhere, but it took me years to realize this passion didn't have to be shown on the field.

I switched to a smaller all-girls school for tenth grade and decided to no longer play lacrosse. I inquired and ultimately ended up with a community service opportunity, co-coaching the Tredyffrin Easttown (TE) Middle School 7th grade lacrosse team. This was a transformative experience for me.

That spring, I spent every afternoon with my seventh graders. Although I was the one who was supposed to be teaching them, the innocence and fun my athletes displayed each day taught me more lessons than I could have imagined. It wasn't long into the season until I realized a passion for lacrosse doesn't have to equal playing lacrosse. For me, coaching was my way of succeeding in the sport. I learned to love that.

My players quickly reminded me of a cliché, but important lesson for athletes. Lacrosse is just a sport, and we are supposed to have fun. Working with these girls enhanced my confidence as a leader, allowed me to learn patience, communication, and team problem-solving. These skills were not achievable for me whilst on the lacrosse field. Coaching TE lacrosse single-handedly renewed my confidence as an athlete and person without having to step back onto the field. I finally achieved a sense of purpose.

After the 2024 TE lacrosse season, I got a job coaching. I returned to my 8th-grade recreational coach and assisted the 2025 Quix Stix Blazers Lacrosse season, helping take the girls to the Philadelphia Area Girls Lacrosse Association (PAGLA) State Championship. There, I was able to further grow my confidence as a leader and love the sport once again. So, when one TE player said to me, "...I don't even want to play anymore," I took a deep breath, smiled, and said, "Why don't you help me coach today?"



"What Happens on Tuesdays"
Adele Cattier
Convent of the Sacred Heart, New York, NY

"More than a Jig"

Claire Wylie

Sacred Heart Academy, Bryn Mawr, PA

While many children first learn how to tie sneakers, I learned how to tie Irish dance shoes. By the age of five, I was more familiar with how to lace up these fairly complicated shoes than my pink Skechers. Irish dancing was a significant part of my life. My earliest memories consist of waking up early on Saturday mornings to go to feisanna, which are Irish dance competitions, getting ready to go to practice after school, and being filled with excitement once I received a new dance costume. Originally, my mom signed me up because of our strong Irish ethnicity; however, she could have never guessed the benefits that Irish dance would have on her shy five-year-old.

Before my first Irish dance practice, I was nervous. I knew nobody and did not know the first thing about Irish dancing. On the drive there, I begged my mom to turn around, but she reassured me that I would be fine. She told me that no one else would know what they were doing either, because we were a group of five-year-olds. When we arrived, I anxiously walked into the building, tightly holding my mom's hand. As I entered the classroom, I was met with a crowd of unfamiliar faces. I wanted to run out and hide behind my mom, but I willed myself to stay. Not even five minutes into class, I was having the time of my life. I made friends and quickly learned the steps. These accomplishments made me realize that maybe doing frightening things was not as scary as I had made it out to be.

Over the course of my Irish dance career, I acquired dozens of medals and multiple trophies. Although some would think that these demonstrate my success, I believe something more emotional represents what I truly gained from the sport. A feisanna is an extremely hectic environment. As soon as you walk into a competition, you are met with a wave of chaos. Some people run around the building in an attempt to make it to their dance slot in time, others are frantic because they cannot find their shoes. Then there are dancers who are nervously awaiting their scores, hoping to be in the top three. As you can imagine, this was very stressful for my five-year-old self; all I wanted to do was hide behind my mom and go home, but as every good mom does, she made me do something I did not want to do.

I still remember the first time I went out on stage. It was not willingly, that is for sure; in fact, my dance teacher had to physically push me out there. Now you may be thinking that once I was out there, I danced my little feet off, but in reality, I crashed and burned. Although at the time I was extremely scared and reluctant to ever dance again, I did not realize the impact this feis would have on me. After a few feisanna, I was able to confidently dance in front of hundreds, successfully overcoming my stage fright.

Irish dancing contributed to who I am today, someone who is not afraid to go outside of their comfort zone. I am extremely grateful to my mom for encouraging me to try something challenging. Irish dancing allowed me to gain faith in myself and taught me that with time and effort, comes improvement. I know that in the future, these lessons will be with me wherever I go. Though my career in Irish dancing came to an end a little after Covid, I will never forget what the sport taught me; in order to succeed, you have to be confident in what you are doing.

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“Be humble, be simple, and bring joy to
others.”

-St. Madeleine Sophie Barat