

THE  
PRIDE

KEEP YOUR  
EYE  
ON TIME



**NORTHWEST PA  
COLLEGIATE ACADEMY'S  
STUDENT MAGAZINE**

**VOLUME 13 ISSUE 6  
MAY 2025**



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# NORAH DEROOY

Dear Readers,

As the school year comes to an end, I am thrilled to present to you the final installment of The Pride for the 2024-2025 school year! For this issue, our news magazine staff decided to focus our articles on real-world topics that may be overlooked in our day to day classes. From filing taxes to purchasing a car, these articles were written with the intention to inform and educate our readers. We hope you find something new and useful in these pages.

I would like to thank our writers for all of their hard work this year and to Ms. Parthenakis for her guidance and support throughout the writing, editing, and layout processes. It's been a privilege to work with talented students to shape The Pride into a true reflection of our school. Finally, I would like to thank you, our readers! Whether you have read every issue or are a new reader, your interest and support gives our work meaning. Thank you for being a part of this journey with us.

Sincerely,

Norah DeRooy

Co Editor-in-Chief





### Introducing the Literary and Arts Edition of the

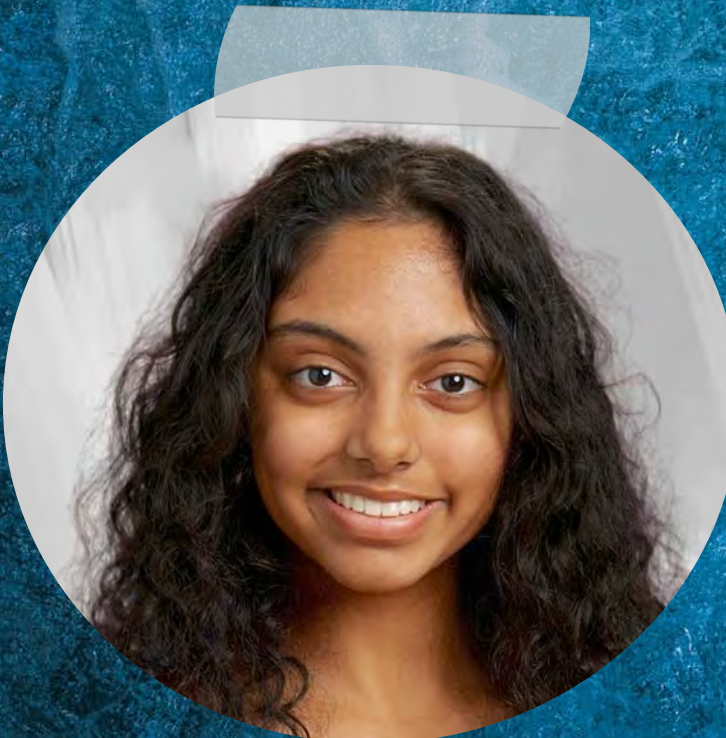
The Pride has normally consisted of news articles ranging from students' interests to school information; however, students' expression should not be limited to editorials and features. Collegiate Academy once had an artistic magazine, The Forum, which featured a variety of work from students and teachers. Somehow recently, The Forum ceased to exist. For that reason, we are proud to introduce a new Literary and Arts section to The Pride magazine! This final edition of The Pride for the 2024-25 school year will include photography, artwork, and short stories, providing students with another space to channel their creativity.

Newer technology and resources are increasingly available to students at Collegiate Academy, and it is integral to our academic identity that students get recognition for all their hard work. Most of the entries were written or created for AP class assignments. In the future, we hope to have even more people submit their creative works for a whole edition of their own. For now, the Literary and Arts section serves to fuel students' imagination and highlight the range of educational experiences at our school. As Co-Editor-in-Chief of The Pride, I am thrilled that our growing staff has more opportunities. We hope that our readers will find the final issue of the 2024-25 school year as intriguing as we do.

Sincerely,

Silvia Kang

Co Editor-in-Chief



# SILVIA KANG



# What can Understanding Myself do for Others?

Photo by Medium

By Lor Brisson

As teenagers struggle with homework, tests, parents and friends, most will at some point ask themselves who they are. Even those who seem to have everything together might not, and that's okay, because identity and how we see ourselves constantly evolves.

According to an article on the United Kingdom publication, Rest Less online, there are some ways to help identify who you are at the core.

The author of the article, Selene Nelson, recommends splitting large personal questions apart to avoid getting overwhelmed while trying to answer them, and reflecting on your past.

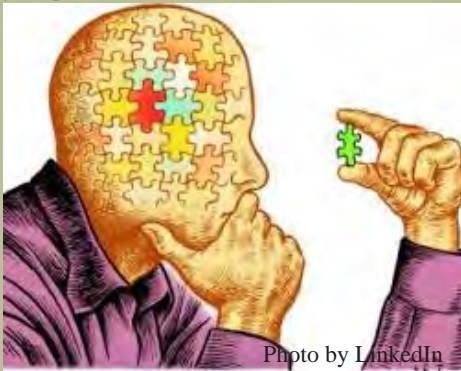


Photo by LinkedIn

"Well, why did that happen? Something else could've happened. Is that the only thing I can remember? Did I learn anything?"

These are some commonly asked questions, and although they can be negative in connotation, it's up to the person answering them to change it. A common issue with trying to understand who you are is asking questions that are impossible to give an objective answer to, and then believing that is a personal failure. It isn't a failure to not answer something.

However, ignoring a true answer, even a negative one, can break the line between what is real and what is comforting.

Defining one's core values is a good option as well. A core value is a personal ethic that affects a person deeply due to the importance of it to them. Every person has different core values, and it is up to you to follow your own, not others.

What people typically don't understand is that a core value only applies to themselves, and not others. A core value is considered personal for a reason. Though, even if a value applies only to themselves, people can and will say things. This can affect people over time, however, following secondary values that aren't their own can derail the original purpose of these questions.

Understanding strengths and weaknesses is a great thing to do, and if not a strength, a passion. People either over or underestimate what they can do, which leads to inaccuracy when it comes to answering the question of who they are. Strengths and weaknesses can give you a place to stay, or to go. Strengths aren't the only thing that give a person purpose in where they are, though it's a start. Purpose and meaning can go hand in hand, giving a sense of security in whatever answers you find.

Obviously so, when a question is asked, there won't always be an answer. Growing accustomed to silence sounds sad, but it doesn't have to be. Some answers can only be affirmed with just that: silence. Always expecting an answer to questions can lead to disappointment.

Sometimes, it's best to reflect on challenges and how they were completed. "Why would this happen in the first place, what can be done when it happens. Can I do this again?"

Some people go through everything in their life without question, and while that seems strong at first, it can cause more problems than not as they go through their life.

Many people forget how all relationships, whether romantic, familial, or platonic, can

affect them. They forget to look into them and have unconditional faith and love towards the people around them, and might be unaware of a lack of support. People associated with one another tend to receive similar treatment.

The question of self-identity has existed for millennia. Everyone, at some point in time, will question who they are, and that is okay.

No one person is truly alike, and that is also okay. To be yourself alone is the best thing you can do, but to understand that, it's best to reference from somewhere. All people are alike, yet different, and that is to be human. If you are interested in reading more about this topic or from Selene Nelson, you can go to <https://restless.co.uk/health/healthy-mind/who-am-i-tips-to-figure-out-who-you-truly-are/>.

Photo by ThePreachersWord





# Start Being a Better Person

By Ava Kerchansky

According to the Pennsylvania News, around 20% of kids ages 12-18 get bullied in school and online. While there are statistics around the world for the amount of adolescents being bullied, there's hardly any resources for people admitting that they've been a bully. Whether you are a bully, or just someone who is unhappy with who you are or how you are perceived, there are actions you can take to be a kinder human being.

Self-Awareness is a huge factor in determining the kind of human being you are. Ask yourself who you want to be. You can't be committed to be a better person if you don't know what kind of person you are.



Photo by Humanium

Some of the things you can to become more self-aware are:

- Pay attention to how you talk with or interact with people.
- Ask some friends for their honest opinion about how you treat them. Be sure to be prepared for this honesty. You could also ask them how you could be a better friend.
- Take an inventory of your friends. Are they kind, thoughtful, or other qualities you would like to emulate?

The next step would be to determine what steps you are going to take from there. Some steps you could take include:

- Being kinder and more compassionate might involve resolving to do at least three things for someone else, complimenting someone, or including someone on plans.
- Taking responsibility for your actions, like apologizing for something you've done,
- Having manners would be reminding yourself to say please and thank you more often,
- Being honest with your friends in a kind way, and
- Practicing forgiveness by letting people off the hook for something that may have bothered you in the past and even forgiving yourself for not being as nice or kind as you wanted to be.



Photo by Observatory

Sophomore Caylee Herrington witnessed bullying in her chemistry class. When witnessing that kind of thing, there are some actions that would demonstrate kindness and compassion: speaking up for the other person or saying something nice about them, for example.

Sophomore Xavier Przybylski states that he witnessed bullying towards his best friend because, "He doesn't know how to pronounce his R's." A lot of students find it difficult to stand up to bullies.

Sophomore Cassie Geiger-Herman advises that if you have a problem with someone, "Give constructive criticism instead of being just flat out judgemental." Being a rude and inconsiderate person can affect how people continue their daily lives, something you say can stick in their head forever.

Ms. Parthenakis, a high school teacher for over 20 years, says, "You can't control other people; you can only control yourself. So while bullying will always be a problem, you can control how you react to it." Taking steps to be kinder and more considerate benefits you and others in the long run. Be honest with yourself and your friends about behavior and ask how you can be a better friend. In the end, you'll be a much happier person.



Photo by Goodnet.org



# Kids Shouldn't Have kids

By Ava Burns

As teens start to get into more serious relationships, there comes an unrealistic expectation of having to partake in intercourse. Though that is not inherently bad, many teens don't know the proper precautions to take, or what it means to have safe sex.

This results in unexpected pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases/illnesses, and the loss of teen years. This can happen due to the lack of sexual education, and some is due to plain carelessness.

Oftentimes teens don't understand the gravity of possibly bringing a child into the world - or getting an STD - and how much their life would change.

An STD is a disease or infection spread through sexual contact that can become life threatening.

In the US especially, around half of states require sex education to be taught, and only around a quarter require accurate information to be taught. Even if teens experience some form of sexual education, it might not always be accurate, and may contradict other things they've heard, which causes confusion, and will often lead to unsafe sex.

To put it simply, teens should be utilizing condoms, even if the girl is on birth control. This will help each other try to prevent STDs and STIs.

Anyone can get free condoms from wellness centers, or women's care centers. Free birth control can also be offered at these places.

Throughout teens' lives it is found that sexually transmitted diseases/ illnesses are not often spoken about. According to the CDC, "In the United States, prevalence rates of certain STIs are highest among adolescents and young adults." Teens who experience STIs early in life, often face fertility problems, constant pain, and higher risks of other illnesses.

If the proper precautions are not taken, pregnancy can significantly impact an adolescent's life. Teen boys can often "get off the hook," but the young women who get pregnant often face struggles in education, getting jobs, finding childcare, finances, and mental health.



Photo By: Snayubikshan

Not only does this set back the mother's life, this also puts new babies in possibly unsafe situations, and gives them a harsher environment to grow up in.



Photo By: Getty Images/iStockphoto

Some teens have the privilege of a good support system, but not everyone does. Sex is not as taboo of a topic as it once was, and is normalized amongst teens. Some of them will always be irresponsible, that's inevitable, but what we can change is the amount of valuable education that is available to them in hopes that they will make the right decisions.





# Goal Making Matters

Photo by The New York Times

By Isabella Oosterkamp

In a case study by Gail Matthews, a psychology professor at Dominican University in California, individuals who write their goals on paper are 33-42% more likely to achieve them. This goes to show the importance of goal making and how it improves one's motivation, and growth.

Goal making has many benefits, it can improve one's motivation, focus, accountability, and even their self-confidence.

Ms. Palotas, a student assistance counselor at Collegiate states: "setting a goal helps students actually define what exactly it is that they want to accomplish. It helps students become more focused and limits procrastination, especially if you put time frames into your goals. The opportunity to accomplish something is more

likely if you set a goal."

She also brings up the idea of having different types of goals: "It can take something very broad to something more specific [to motivate students]. For example, long term goal versus short term goal."

A short-term goal is a type of goal that focuses on more immediate actions or is a smaller step towards long term goals. Long term goals take longer to achieve and much more planning and effort.

Another good way of setting up a goal is using the "SMART goals" framework. SMART stands for specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time based. Basing your goals off of all of these standards will help your goal to be more concise, clear, and attainable. Many successful individuals use methods such



Photo by Healthy for Life Meals

as this to create goals to succeed in their field. American businessman and investor, well known from 'Shark Tank', Daymond John has been writing down his goals since he was 16. He had found that by writing them down, his mind wouldn't drift away from achieving what he wanted; and it worked.

In a study from the American Psychological Association, they found that people who write down their goals are significantly more likely to achieve them.

Although, many may experience procrastination, distractions, fear of failure, and unmotivation. However, continuing to see the big picture by writing down your goals and rewarding yourself to minimize pressure, will help eliminate those actions and lead to successes.

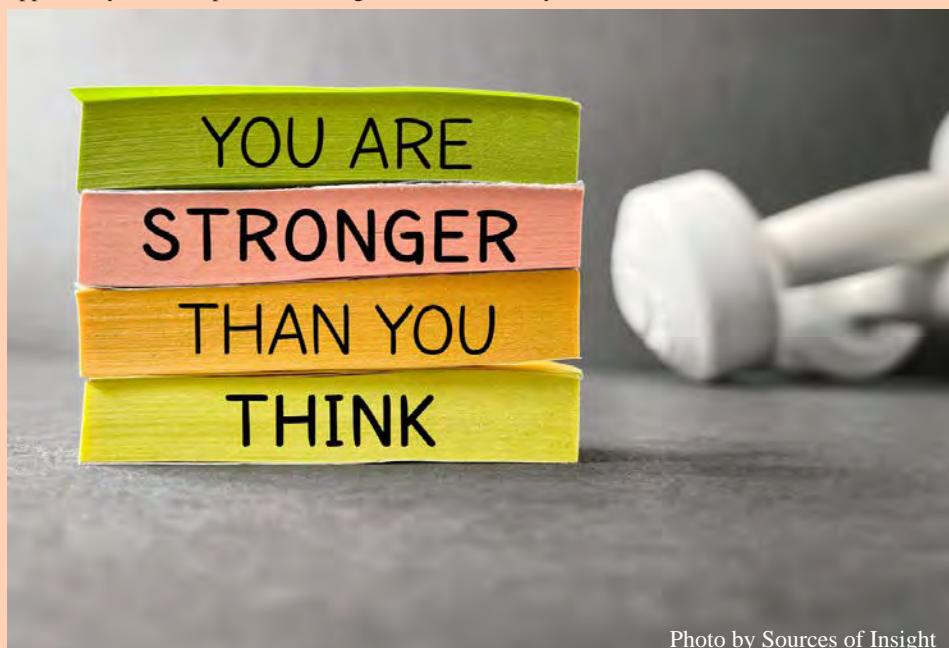


Photo by Sources of Insight



# Preparing for the Next Step in Growing Up: Factors to Consider when Buying a Used Car



Photo by Car and Driver



Photo by CNN

By Savannah Livingston

Many of us have jobs and are saving up for cars, but there is a surprising amount of factors to consider before moving forward with what is likely our first major purchase.

One of the first steps is determining how much you can afford to spend. Figure out how much can be comfortably put into a car, including the purchase price, down payment, monthly payments, insurance, fuel, maintenance, and how many miles have been used. Some parents often remind students to put 50% of their paycheck in savings toward that and wait till you have at least \$10,000- \$15,000 saved so that can purchase a reliable and dependable car.



Photo by USA Today

Destiny Kurtic, a Collegiate Academy mom, says people should look for a car with good mileage which is 12,000 to 15,000 miles per year because it indicates the car's wear and tear history and can influence its future reliability and potential maintenance costs. The more mileage a car has, the more someone

will likely spend on repairs down the road.

A rule people recommend is doing the 20/4/10 which aims for a 20% down payment, a 4-year repayment term, and transportation costs under 10% of your monthly income. They recommend doing this because used cars may require immediate or future repairs, so you should allocate a portion of your budget for this.

Former Collegiate Academy student, Kaityln Demnyan, said that within the first year of driving her used car, she had an engine failure which cost around \$5,000, so she recommends saving at least \$10,000.

Having a mechanic look over the vehicle when you take it for a test drive before purchasing it, and requiring CarFax to see if the car has been in an accident, are good ways to avoid "lemons" or cars that are bad.

Ms. Parthenakis, a teacher and mother, says that most cars have "reputations" for being "duds," and you can do some quick research for safe and reliable cars.

Also factor in where you live. If you plan on driving in Erie or other northern states, you will need a car that preferably has all-wheel drive or an option for that during the winter. A convertible is nice, but not practical. When you test-drive the vehicle, drive it up a steep hill with the airconditioning at full blast to check if the engine can get up the hill fast enough. If it can't, it most likely will not have the power to get through snow.

Most students will be on their parents' auto insurance, but it is important to find out what your payout will be. Teens can bring down insurance costs by taking drivers education classes or programs through school or driver agencies like Transportation Solutions in

Erie. They provide new drivers with a variety of educational packages as well as an official driver's test at the end, and some insurance agencies will lower costs if you go through an agency like them.

Another way to bring insurance down with some agencies is to download their app and allow them to monitor driving. Many insurers offer this. "You need to be careful though," says Ms. Parthenakis, "because it will monitor any time you are moving in a car, including if a friend is driving."

Obviously buying a car, even a used car, is a significant step when making a decision with driving. You may be in a rush to gain independence, but make sure you do your research before investing in it.



Photo by Dreamstime



# VARIOUS PROGRAMS CAN MINIMIZE COLLEGE DEBT

By Zinab Alhasan

College is expensive, and many students take out loans to pay for tuition, and books. While student loans can help, they're also the cause of debt that could take years to pay off. The good news is that there are ways to minimize or even avoid student loans.

One of the best ways to pay for college without taking on a lot of debt is to apply for scholarships and grants. Many scholarships are based on academic achievements and sports. This is money that won't need to be paid back. Guidance counselor Ms. Gutierrez says, "Before taking any loans you should take advantage of any scholarships or grants you could get." Private universities and out of state schools are usually more expensive than in state public colleges. By choosing a more affordable school within Pennsylvania, you can save a lot of money.



Photo by: Anatoly M



Photo by: Anatoly M



Photo by: Anatoly M

Guidance counselor Mrs. Shaut says, "You should try going to a less expensive college, and not borrow more than you need. You will have to pay it back with interest." Another way to help minimize your student loan would be to get a part time job that can help you earn money for tuition and living expenses. Many colleges offer work study programs that allow students to work on campus while studying. Even if you only work a few hours a week it can make a big difference in covering costs or reducing the amount of money you borrow.

After your freshman year, you can apply to be a resident assistant, someone who lives in the dorms and oversees student activities and offers advice and resources, especially to freshman dorms. Most universities will offer free housing for this as well as opportunities for supplemental pay. Some universities offer free board, or meal plans to their resident assistants.

You can also attend a community college for the first two years and save a lot of money. After earning an associates degree, you could transfer to a four year university to complete your bachelors. However, you should research this to make sure credits will transfer to your desired 4-year program.

Most importantly, if you stay local, you can live at home instead of getting a dorm or an apartment since housing and food costs add up quickly. Taking AP or dual enrollment classes can help earn college credits, resulting in having to take fewer classes in college, which saves you both time and money. Another option is to go the military route. There are a variety of offerings for various majors where the military will offer money in exchange for service. College doesn't have to be expensive and students can get an early start looking into some of these programs, scholarships, or offers right now.



# THE DANGERS OF CHILD PREDATORS

By Mirela Saracevic

According to the government, there were 57,287 cases of various types of sexual assault reported in 2021. Predators are hidden among all groups of people, and often go undetected until they break the law.

## Sidebar Chart

### Offender and Offense Characteristics

93.6% of sexual abuse offenders were men.

57.5% were White,

16.1% were Black,

12.1% were Native American,

11.8% were Hispanic, and

2.5% were Other races.

74.6% of offenders in cases involving production of child pornography were White.

53.3% of offenders in cases involving travel for prohibited sexual contact were White and

27.4% were Black.

61.3% of offenders in cases involving criminal sexual abuse (rape) were Native American.

65.4% of offenders in cases involving abusive sexual contact were Native American.

84.6% of offenders in cases involving statutory rape were Native American.

Their average age was 38 years.

95.4% were United States citizens.

63.8% had little or no prior criminal history (Criminal History Category I) [https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Sexual\\_Abuse\\_FY21.pdf](https://www.ussc.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/research-and-publications/quick-facts/Sexual_Abuse_FY21.pdf)

These child predators manipulate and groom the kids into gaining their trust to then start changing their behavior. According to Ms. Parthenakis, a high school teacher for over 20 years, predators look for children who are vulnerable- usually having one parent, low self esteem, lack of close friends, crave attention from an adult, or are emotionally unstable.

Children's games online have become unsafe. Roblox is one of the many platforms used by offenders looking for their next victim.

According to KSAT.com, part of the Graham Media Group, the more popular Roblox gets, the more child predators are likely to use it, especially when children fail to report it. Junior, Camilla Mateen-Cooper had a bad experience on Roblox: "I accepted a friend request on Roblox and a 54 year old tried to talk to me, after I blocked him, he would make many accounts trying to come over to my house." She didn't tell her parents or report the issue, which is how the situation continues. Children approached online should tell a trusted adult or even the police who could investigate her stalker.

Social media has always been a way for predators to lure children. Junior, Mark Mitchell encountered a child predator on Instagram. He says, "A random person added me and started sending me explicit photos. Before that, I told him I was 16 and he said 'perfect' and said, 'Do you like what you see' in Spanish. I never felt more disgusted and uncomfortable, after that I stopped adding people." Mark also did not report this to his parents or police.

Even though Camilla and Mark knew enough not to contact these predators, other kids might. In fact, if more and more child predators are joining social media and game sites in order to lure children, it must be effective. So what can we do?

It's important to teach your kids how to stay safe on social media. According to

South Dakota's Department of Social Services page, Tips to Help Protect Children from Sexual Predators, they say to follow these tips:

- Know the people your kids associate with
- Watch for grooming behavior in adults that associate with you kids like wanting to be alone with them.
- Watch for groups that you kids are in
- Make sure that your child can talk to you about anything.
- Teach your kids about names of private body parts and the difference between touches that are ok and not ok.
- Tell your kids that no is an answer when they do not want to be touched.
- Teach kids to take care of their own bodies hygienically so they do not have to rely on other adults or children.
- Educate your kids on good secrets and bad secrets.
- Monitor the use of technology your kid uses.
- Trust your instinct.
- Stay calm and listen to your child when they tell you they are being abused.

Students and teens should not just ignore the child predators and not report people, these people hurt children, and, even though we shouldn't have to be, we are the ones who can do something about it.



photo by  
digitalciti-  
zenacad-  
emy.org



# When You Can't Run, Sometimes Fighting is The Answer.

Mariam Kanj

Every year, according to Pennsylvania State University, in Pennsylvania, roughly 3 of 10 people experience situations in which knowing how to defend themselves can really help protect them. Knowing self defense can help people feel more safe and secure, and can ultimately save lives in the future.

To protect yourself effectively, it's always important to focus on physical techniques and mental preparedness. Physical techniques could include things like: boxing, wrestling, or even self defense classes. Some places even offer free classes for children and adults.

For example, Erie Krav Maga offers free self-defense classes for both adults and kids every once and a while on their website. Ultimately, they offer the free classes in an attempt to gather interest in membership, but this would be a good way for people to find out if Krav Maga would be something they'd like. Collegiate Academy Junior, Myles Rhoads has been boxing for almost a year and a half and says, "Knowing how to fight in a situation where I've needed to defend myself has helped me, because I'm not afraid to be in those situ-



photo by fitness1440.com

Defending yourself safely involves a combination of things. The University of Washington notes five tips: first off, stay aware, always be conscious of your surroundings wherever you go, pay attention to the people and any situation that seems out of place, and always trust your instincts.

If you wish to take a self defense class that can teach you the skills needed to protect yourself, look for those that focus on techniques that will allow you to escape instead of engaging in



photo by vosgesmartin.fr

photo by selfdefensetutorials.com



ations as I would've been a couple years ago. Knowing that you're able to defend yourself and that you have capabilities to do so goes far beyond just protecting yourself, because you know if something ever transpires as you're out with your friends or family, you know you can confidently keep them and yourself safe." Many people have different opinions on this issue. Collegiate Academy fitness teacher Patrick Rawa says, "Self defense wouldn't be an important class, instead we need a class on learning how to problem solve and avoid these situations."

violence.

A quick internet search on Erie's self defense offerings brings up 21 places, varying between Taekwondo, karate, and Jiu Jitsu.

Lastly, staying calm and carrying around any protective devices with you can help a person significantly whenever in danger. If you're ever in a threatening situation, try staying as calm as possible, as panic can slow you down and decrease your reaction time. Carrying items like pepper spray, a whistle, or even a personal alarm can all be protection devices that can effectively help a person when in danger.



# YOU CAN'T ESCAPE TAXES

by Kennedy Hildabrand

It is a law that we must pay our local, state, and federal government a percentage of the money we receive from our jobs, otherwise known as, our income tax. A lot of people struggle getting started with their taxes; there are a lot of ways to calculate taxes, but only a few are effective.

Every year we must report our job earnings from the previous calendar year by filing an income tax statement. These statements must be sent to both the state and federal Internal Revenue Service, otherwise known as the IRS, on or before April 15th. People often forget about local taxes, which are turned in through a different agency.

Taxes are based on the amount of money you make, not age. Some people will not have to pay as much, if not any taxes because they make too little money. Before you can report the income and taxes you already paid to the government, you have to wait to receive your W2 Form from your employer. The W2 Form will list how much money you earned in the past calendar year and how much your employer already took out of your pay and sent to the government.

If your employer took out too much money, the IRS will send some of your money back as a refund. If your employer didn't take enough money, you will owe the government money and must send them what you owe when you mail in your income tax statement.

Every single person who has earned money has an amount they must pay to the government as their share. This is called a tax bracket.

When filing your annual income statement, the form that is needed is called the 1040 form. This form will help you calculate your tax bracket and how much money your employer should have taken out of your paycheck.

There are many tools you can use to help you file your income taxes correctly. You can go to an accountant or tax specialist such as H&R Block or Liberty Tax. You can also file your taxes electronically using a software company such as Turbo Tax, Tax Slayer, or FreeTaxUSA.

Kelley McDonald-Hildebrand, a Collegiate Academy mom, says she does her taxes herself to avoid any error. "I believe it is better to do taxes myself rather



photo by phgcpas.com

than trust a website or a robot. Using technology is great but doesn't always mean it's correct."

Mr. Weiss, the social studies teacher at Collegiate, says the best site to use is IRS.gov. "IRS.gov is the most direct and important source; it is a really good site, and they try to be as user friendly as possible." He said a lot of other sites are good but have a lot of ads or are trying to sell the user their services.

Ms. Parthenakis, an ELA teacher at Collegiate, says that she uses Turbo Tax: "It's easy, and I'm familiar with it. It takes you through everything step by step, and gives you the option to send in your forms straight to the government. I use the Berkheimer Tax Administrator online for local taxes." She says that she can usually file her taxes online in about two hours.

Nobody enjoys taxes, but they are practically unavoidable. Nevertheless, taxes aren't so bad; the more you pay in taxes, the more money you are making, which is a good thing in the case of how you live. The more money made, the more money you can live off of.



photo by stock.adobe.com



# The Major Risk of Credit Card DEBT

Most of what we hear about credit card debt is often a watered down explanation of the real detrimental effects of it. Credit card debt is hard to get out of and often leaves a lasting impact on us and our future.

Once teens turn 18, most major credit card companies will begin offering a basic card, and this pivotal moment can have a huge impact on later debt. Many banks and credit unions will offer a credit/debit option to their members and a credit option. The debit cards are directly linked to one's checking account and can be used in ATMs, however credit cards are not linked directly to one's checking account and newcomers can make a major mistake of overspending, or going beyond what they can afford to pay off by the end of the month. According to the Oxford Dictionary, credit is "the ability of a customer to obtain goods or services before payment, based on the trust that payment will be made in the future." This means your credit score is determined by how much money you have available and your demonstration that you will pay off the bills at the end of each month.

Not paying off your credit card debt lowers your credit score. A good credit score can make things like getting loans and lower interest rates easier while a poor credit score makes it harder to get an apartment, access credit, and more.

Ms. Balsiger's opinion on the matter is that, "sometimes people live beyond their means and use credit cards to buy things they often can't afford and some use their credit cards to survive and live off of."

The more credit cards one has, can lower one's credit scores because, with each one, you are limiting your available funds. Stores will often offer store credit cards with a discount on store purchases. Ms. Balsiger advises limiting your amount of credit cards, saying, "Don't get them; they're a trap. You can get one and pay that off every month to build credit but other than that don't get any."

People like landlords, banks, and even sometimes people loaning you large sums of money will look at your credit score to determine if you can be trusted to pay rent, pay loans, or even pay back large sums of money given to you. Keeping your credit score high by paying back your credit card on time is beneficial.

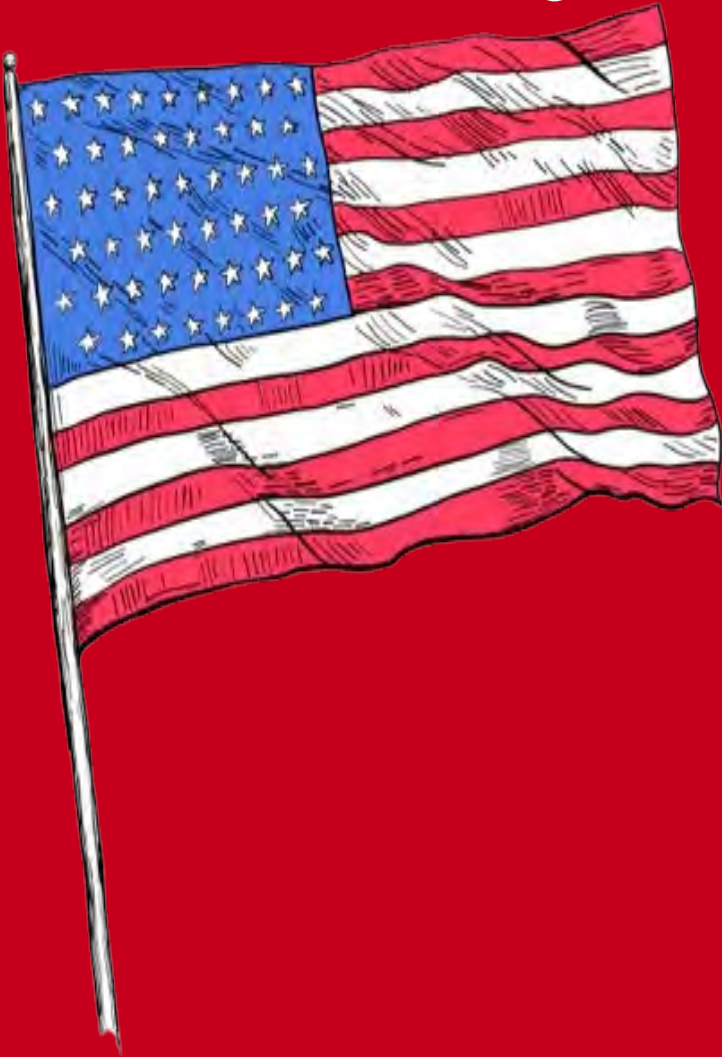
Sargent Watson says, "The youth need to be taught and informed the proper way to use credit cards, how it works, and what the interest means. Lack of knowledge on credit cards is the leading cause of credit card debt."

Another factor to consider is getting a high interest rate that will either put them in credit card debt or lower their credit score. A credit card with a limit and low manageable interest rate would most likely be the best option for your first credit card and remember it is always best to pay your credit card on time to avoid credit card debt and a bad credit score.



# Know Your Rights: A Laborer's Guide to Labor Laws

By Brecken McLaughlin



Many people under the age of 18 and working, probably aren't thinking much about labor laws. They just clock in, work, and then collect their paycheck, but there are laws that protect minors from being put in unsafe situations or over-worked.

The government has many policies put in place about how many hours a minor can work. During the school year, workers under 16 can't work more than 3 hours on a school day, 18 hours in a school week, 8 hours on a non-school day, and 40 hours in a non-school week.

No minors can work during school hours unless through a school program. Workers over the age of 16 can work longer hours but still have to follow some restrictions. They can work up to 8 hours on any given day and a maximum of 28 hours per school week.

As per Pennsylvania law, minors must receive adequate breaks to ensure their well being. Workers under 18 must be provided with an uninterrupted meal or rest break after working 5 consecutive hours.

Certain jobs are deemed too hazardous under Pennsylvania law. Workers under 18 are prohibited from working in occupations such as operating heavy machinery, handling explosives, working in mining or logging, and serving alcohol.

With that being said, if employees believe their employer isn't following Pennsylvania's labor laws they have the ability to take action: they can document the issue, communicate their concerns with the employers, and can seek assistance from the Department of Labor.





# Investigating the Ins and Outs of Jury Duty

By Cassie Geiger-Herman

Jury duty - a civic responsibility where randomly selected citizens are called to serve in court, listen to evidence, and decide the facts of a case, ultimately rendering a verdict in civil or criminal trials. Though there are two different types of trial juries you could be selected for, a petit jury and grand jury.



Photo By: Mark Thiessen

According to the Middle District of Pennsylvania's official website, "A PETIT jury is a trial jury for both civil and criminal cases. The petit jury listens to the evidence offered during a trial and returns a verdict. A verdict in a civil case may be a finding for the plaintiff or for the defendant. A verdict in a criminal case finds the defendant guilty or not guilty."

The Middle District of PA also notes that "A GRAND jury determines whether there is probable cause to believe a crime was committed. The evidence is normally presented only by an attorney for the government. The grand jury must determine from this evidence whether the government should file formal criminal charges. If the grand jury finds probable cause, it returns a written statement of the charges called an "indictment". Grand jurors serve a term of eighteen (18) months."

Some people are exempt from having jury duty: people serving in the Armed Forces of the United States, members of the fire or police departments, public officers in the executive, legislative or judicial branches of the government "who are actively engaged in the performance of official duties." When reporting to the jury, there's a specific dress code. The government's website advises wearing "clothing that would be worn for an important business meeting" and not to wear shorts, tank tops, t-shirts, halters or something similar to that.

There are also specific things you should/can bring with you, like your juror summons because the bar code will verify attendance, and your ID, preferably a drivers license, in order to enter the courthouse. Cell telephones and laptop computers are allowed in the jury assembly room, where people sit and wait to be called for jury selection. These electronic devices must be turned off in the courtroom. Anything you bring with you is subject to search. According to the Conference of State Court Administrators, the probability of actually getting selected for jury duty is quite low: "It is estimated that 14.4% of Americans are summoned for jury duty and approximately 11 million individuals report for jury service every year." Some citizens never actually get summoned at all. Mr. Ross, a substitute teacher at Collegiate Academy, hasn't been summoned in all his 70 years.

Others, like Ms. Parthenakis are not so lucky: "Yes, I did jury duty a few years ago. I was there for the day. I've been called three times. The first time I served on a jury; the second time, I was dismissed because of my answers to the questions, and the third time I checked the night before and they didn't need me." She further commented, "It's a hassle and a total inconvenience, but if you believe in justice then you have to do your part, otherwise the system doesn't work."



# OG Fortnite is too “Sweaty”

By Ava Kerchansky



Photo by: Pngtree



On December 6, 2024, Epic Games released a new game mode, featuring Fortnite from the very beginning with and without builds. There were high expectations for this new game mode, but the actual results were not much appreciated.

When playing Fortnite in 2025, you are put into a game with some real people and some bots, based on level and skill. OG Fortnite only offers real people.

Collegiate Academy sophomore Xavier Przybylski has a strong and passionate love toward Fortnite, but when OG came out, things took a harsh turn. He states, “Epic Games doesn’t know how to create rank based games, therefore you’re put into a match with more skilled players.” These players are called “Fortnite sweats” because they try too hard to win.

Another Sophomore, Caylee Herrington, has a similar perspective: “People in Fortnite are too sweaty...I should not be getting sniped at from three different angles.” Her gameplay is good, however she’s put with very experienced players who play all the time causing her to “rage quit” and not want to play the game.

Even though most people say the game is too sweaty and too unplayable, junior Ja’keir Betha states, “OG Fortnite is perfectly ranked,” and that he’s had no problems with it. He also says, “There’s no extra restrictions in OG Fortnite,” which is why many newgens may think it’s too difficult because “they play too easy.”

Sophomore, Jacob Goodman says, “It’s nicely ranked and many people just need to learn how to play the game.”

OG Fortnite could be too sweaty; only time will tell, but at least other versions of the game are available for those who prefer a less sweaty gameplay.



Photo by: Imdb



Photo by: Motion Array



The background of the entire page is a deep blue with a mottled, textured appearance, resembling watercolor or a natural stone surface. A white rectangular box is centered horizontally and vertically, containing the title text.

# LITERARY MAGAZINE



# The Story of a Random School Object

By Kevin

Hi, my name is Notebook and I'm just one of the everyday objects at St. Augustine Academy. Ever since I've been at this school, I have been through many things alongside these humans. I'm just many of my kind at this school and some of us have names to depict between us. These names can vary from Math to English and to History and even Science.

Anyways, these humans often keep us in these things they call "bookbags" and they carry them around the school everywhere. They are often only used for school and take them home. Now don't get me wrong because I love being a notebook and everything, but I am just not ready to die. Okay, now you must be wondering how a notebook can die. Well no notebook really knows what happens when all of our pages run out.

Nobody has lived to tell the tale. We notebooks think of it like this: each page of us that our humans use is taking away one of our lives. So basically every page a human uses, a life is taken away. Everytime a fellow notebook has witnessed another notebook run out of pages/lives they always disappear the next day and are never seen again.

In my situation it's not looking the best because in my situation I am a Math notebook and usually we die the fastest out of all the notebooks. The humans usually take these things called "notes" and they use our pages or you could say lives for them. For me I didn't luck out because apparently they take the most notes in Math class.

All I can do is live for now and hope that maybe one day I will live to tell the tale. It was the beginning of the year where I still had a lot of life to live. It was the first Math class and surprisingly my human didn't use any of my pages. I think the only reason is that because it was the first day and they don't really do too much in the first class period. I was still scared for what was to come in these next few class periods of these upcoming months. Honestly not even a month just these next few weeks.

So it's been a few weeks, the human has already used almost a quarter of all of my life and

I'm already starting to panic. All these other notebooks have nowhere near how many lives I have lost already in the past few weeks. I don't even know if I'm going to make it through the whole year at St. Augustine Academy. I think the best idea right now is to just stay calm and talk to the other notebooks when I'm in the backpack.

Class is over now and I was put away in the bag. The other notebooks and I have a discussion about how many pages or lives you could say this human has used and all realistically scared for all of our lives.

I told them that so far I probably have the most pages gone by a long shot. We end up finding out that I have the most and Spanish has the second most and History is in third place.

About halfway through the year me and the other notebooks have really bonded with each other and bonded well. The only thing concerning is that my time is running out fast. We are halfway through the year and we are more than 50% through all of my lives and it's not looking good I'd say that maybe even close to 75%. At this rate I was not going to make it to the end of the year with all of the other notebooks. Even all the breaks that the humans took throughout the years wouldn't help the rate of my lives that I was losing was too fast.

I then warned the others of my situation and they became very saddened but it was inevitable and that all I could wish for is to tell the tale. The year progressed and progressed and I just hoped that I could maybe just make it to the end of the year at least but as the days went on more and more pages just went flying by and soon before I even knew it, I was at my last pages.

It was finally the day my life would run out. The human was on the last page and I was scared for my life. I didn't know what was gonna happen to me after today. He finally used up my last page and he seemed shocked that he had already used up all of my pages and began to push me to the side and put me back into his back. He went to grab some scratch paper to finish his notes.

While being put back into the bag I quickly told all of the notebooks that all my pages ran out and they might not ever see me again. I told them that all I knew was that I wouldn't stay long in this backpack again tomorrow, maybe

ever. Me and the notebooks spent our last moments together in the backpack before it was time to go home.

We ended up in the house and I was scared for my life. This human told its parents that I wasn't needed anymore and that all the pages had been used up. The parents were just shocked that I had already been used up. I told all of the other notebooks that this is my time and that it was nice knowing them.

Then began to take me out of the bookbag and take me somewhere. I traveled all throughout the house to put me in this spot where I would soon meet my doom. I realized that there were a lot of other notebooks here. The human then put me with them and shut the door.

Suddenly the other notebooks start talking and they welcome me in. I was confused. I thought that I would be dead and I would just disappear or something and be forgotten forever.

The other notebooks begin to explain to me that you don't just die or disappear, you are just kept here. They explained to me you are put here so the kid has something to look back on when he is older. They say that they just chill in here and talk and always wait for another guest to be welcomed in their club.

I was confused at first and didn't quite understand everything and I just made sure to ask them if they were sure we wouldn't die and they said no which made me feel a lot better. I was still just a little sad though that I wouldn't be able to be with all of the other notebooks that I was with in the backpack. We had all grown with each other and formed bonds and just grew to like each other throughout the year and just really had something going on.

The other notebooks noticed I seemed a little down and asked me what's wrong and I expressed to them. They told me that I don't need to worry though because soon all of the other notebooks would be there soon to join the fam. Then it was the end of the year and me and all of the other notebooks were finally reunited and were talking again, maybe this isn't so bad when all of our pages ran out. I guess we could all say that it just worked out in the end for us. We then lived and more and more notebooks began to come and then we all lived together in harmony.



# Granny Red-Apron

By: Cassandra Lowery

Once upon a time, there was a sweet granny who was loved by everyone she met. But nobody loved her more than her granddaughter. The granny would always wear a beautiful red apron, so she was simply called 'Granny Red-Apron'.

Granny Red-Apron lived alone in her cottage, which was surrounded by dense woods. She spent most of her time berry-picking, baking, and knitting. One day, Granny Red-Apron's knitting was interrupted by a polite knock on her weathered door.

She slowly rose from her rocking chair and headed toward the door. "Delivery for Ms. Red-Apron!" Exclaimed the voice behind the door. She opened it and the delivery-boy quickly presented the letter to her. Granny Red-Apron smiled softly at the boy as she took the letter, "Oh, what a lovely surprise! Bless your heart!" The delivery-boy nodded and swiftly left. The letter was from Granny Red-Apron's daughter, who lived outside of the woods.

"Dear Mama,

My sweet little girl has become quite ill this past week. If you don't mind, could you please bring her some fresh berries and baked goods? I know it's a hassle to navigate the woods, but your help would be greatly appreciated.

With love, Hildegard"

"Oh my! My poor, Little Red-Cape!" She gasped, Granny Red-Apron packed her basket full of berries, pies, muffins, and cookies. She left her cottage to begin her journey to Little Red-Cape's village.

The woods Granny Red-Apron resided in were well-known for having maze-like pathways, leaving her at a crossroads. She sighed, "Oh dear, my age is really beginning to show... Oh, which path was it...?" Suddenly, a pair of blackberry bushes next to her rustled loudly before a wolf burst through the bush. The Wolf appeared to be lightly scratched from the bush's thorns.

"Oh! Good afternoon, Wolf!"

"Good afternoon, Granny Red-Apron," he panted. "Where are you headed so late?"

"To my Little Red-Cape's village, she is ill and needs food. Could you help me, Wolf? I'm lost, surely you know these woods quite well."

Another bush swished loudly and the Wolf started to panic.

"I can help you, but you must help me first!" He exclaimed.

Granny Red-Apron nodded in agreement when a hunter jumped out of the bush, hunting rifle in hand. "Step back, Ms. Red-Apron! I will save you from this evil Wolf!" The hunter said, pointing his rifle at the Wolf. She stepped between the two.

"No! I shall not let you kill this kind Wolf!"

"Kind? It plans to eat you!"

"Well, if he does eat me, then you can save me. Come along Wolf, you shall guide me to Little Red-Cape's village."

The hunter stood there, flabbergasted as the Wolf snarled and guided Granny Red-Apron towards the right path. The hunter put away his rifle, "then I will follow you." As Granny Red-Apron and the Wolf continued down the dirt path, they engaged in occasional chit-chat before the Wolf tried to make another deal with her.

"Say, do you have any meat in that basket, Ms. Red-Apron? I feel quite famished."

"No, I don't... but I can see if my daughter has some scraps for you."

"That sounds lovely, Ms. Red-Apron."

Soon, the village and Little Red-Cape's cottage came into view. Little Red-Cape's cozy little cottage lived atop a small hill on the outskirts of the village. It was a comforting sight when paired with the now-setting sun. "Oh! We have made it! Please Wolf, wait here, I will be back with meat for you." The wolf nodded and sat down and Granny Red-Apron walked off towards Little Red-Cape's cottage.

Granny Red-Apron made her way to the cottage and knocked on the door.

"Hildegard! I've brought you and Little Red-Cape some goods!"

Hildegard opened the door, "good evening, mama."

"Good evening." She returned and handed Hildegard the basket, "how is my Little Red-Cape doing? Can I see her?"

"She's doing alright, she has a nasty cough and headache... but you can't see her, I don't want you getting sick."

Granny Red-Apron sighs, "I see, please make sure to send another letter when her condition improves."

Hildegard nods, "I will, thank you mama."

Granny Red-Apron headed back to the forest entrance where the Wolf still waited. "Oh dear!" she exclaimed, "I forgot to ask about your scrap-meat, I'm very sorry, Wolf." He grunted before he got up and left abruptly, not saying a word to Granny Red-Apron. The Wolf walked alone in the woods, his belly grumbled. "I knew I shouldn't have depended on that old hag," mumbled the Wolf. "I should've eaten her... I will eat her." The Wolf trotted off deeper into the woods and looked for a quick meal so he could begin his devious plans.



# Goldilocks and the Bears

By Salem Lyon



From the second I gained consciousness my world revolved around dance. My first memories are filled with beauty pageants, dance competitions, and constant practice. Ballet specifically consumed me, I practiced each routine until I could do it on autopilot. I saw standing still as a waste of time so at any opportunity, I stood on the tips of my toes to build strength. Everyone thought I was crazy until I got a gold acceptance letter from The Cullum Opera Ballet Institute. At that moment all the pain and dedication were insignificant because I was finally getting recognized for who I knew I could be. My parents were always supportive of my ballet because they saw it as the perfect way to get scholarships.

When I told them the news my mother said "If this is truly what your heart desires I can't stop you from seeing how it ends. But if you leave my house and move to you will be on your own. I won't help you with your tuition or any bills and trust me Stacy you will end up struggling. I'm sure after a month in the real world you will come running back to me and your father. This isn't how your life was supposed to pan out, you were supposed to be a nurse and make me proud." I argued with her for hours while my dad stayed silent the whole time. A few weeks later my dad came and handed me an envelope. He told me that he knew from the way my eyes lit up during my first recital that I was meant for the stage. He explained that when he was younger he dreamt of being an actor but he was constantly made fun of to the point where he gave up completely. He got trapped in a loop of looking back at all the opportunities he took for granted and couldn't let that happen to me. The envelope he gave me had a plane ticket for that next morning at 5, money and a note with people's numbers he knew in France. I cried in his arms and thanked him with every ounce of my heart. I spent the rest of that night trying to stuff my entire life into a single suitcase and left as early as I could.

When I finally made it to my dorm room I was greeted with a girl with curly blonde hair sleeping on a mattress with nothing but a fitted sheet



and a blue zip-up hoodie as a blanket. She was wearing a baggie Beatles t-shirt that showed off her freckled legs. I couldn't help but stop and take in her presence. She must have felt eyes on her because she sat up with a scrunched face. "Who are you and why are you watching me sleep." She said pulling her shirt down to better cover her legs. I felt the blood rush to my face and my words got shaky. "Oh, I'm so sorry I'm your roommate. I just got here. Sorry, I didn't mean to stare. I just got caught up in a thought and froze up... sorry" She looked at me for a couple of seconds then signed "You shouldn't apologize

so much in one sentence it's annoying" Then laid back down. I didn't learn her name, Goldilocks until we got paired together in class later that week.

Dancing with Goldilocks was nothing like dancing alone. Before I knew I was good, I just needed the validation of other people knowing that I was good. Dancing with Goldilocks however felt electrifying. The pressure of having to keep up with her speed while also taking into consideration that she was much taller than me and had different learning techniques was intoxicating. Together we won 11 competitions and were known in our school as the dynamic duo. During the last semester of our first year, Goldilocks moms died and when she left for the funeral she never came back. I got assigned a random partner but it was never the same. My passion for dancing left along with Goldilocks. I searched everywhere for the same kind of feeling I felt when dancing with her but nothing compared. I ended up meeting a boy named John Bear and before I knew it I was pregnant. His parents gave me no other option than to marry him so, I dropped out the same week and I signed my name away to him forever. John got a job at his father's company and for the next 18 years, John and our son Anthony lived a comfortable life until I saw her.

I was on my way back home from picking up cleaning supplies when I saw those familiar gold curls. I nearly crashed the car into the curb but was able to gain the control to pull over. I ran to catch up to her and was finally able to put a singular hand on her arm as my heart raced. "Stacy?" she breathed in disbelief and she filled the space between us with a hug. "Where did you go? You left and never came back and I thought you were dead." I replied, trying to control the shakiness in my voice. She told me that after the funeral she went back to her mom's house to go through her stuff but when she got there the cops came and arrested her for the drugs the mom left behind. She had to go to a trial where she was found not guilty but was kicked out of the academy. In a desperate attempt of not wanting to lose the feeling of talking to her, I invited her home with me. I was happy knowing that I had

photo by ar.inspiredpencil.  
com



already deep cleaned the house before leaving but was still nervous about her seeing my house. She complimented me on my decorations and little details John never even noticed. When we made it to my bedroom she raised her eyebrow at me "If you guys are happily married then why do you sleep in two separate beds as far away from each other as possible?" I paused at the question thinking carefully about my answer. "He told me that after I delivered Neil I started tossing and turning a lot in my sleep and we just never went back to how it was I guess." She gave me a disapproving look. She laid on his bed, got up, and laid on mine then said "Let me guess you got the old mattress while he got to get a brand new one." I shook my head "No, actually the old mattress got moved to Neil's room, he bought this one from somewhere else." She rolled her eyes "Well then he found this one on the side of the road or something because it's as hard as a rock, and you can see the springs through the sheets. While his bed feels like a marshmallow that will swallow you if you move too much on it." I shrugged "I never really thought about it, I like my mattress. It's molded for my body at this point." Goldilocks then went into Neil's room patting his bed. "It's perfect."

When Neil and John came home they didn't acknowledge Goldilocks, only asking when dinner would be ready. While I made soup for everyone Goldilocks washed dishes as I dirtied them and we talked about how things used to be. When I finally set the table for everyone to eat Neil immediately complained "Mom why didn't you get me something to drink?" I sighed but got up and got him milk, only to be immediately sent back for napkins. This cycle repeated through countless requests until I came back to the table to see John and Neil had moved to the couch leaving behind 2 dirty plates and their drinks. Goldilocks moved her chair closer to mine and moved closer to me so only I could hear "Can we take a walk to that pizza place down the street? My food is cold so I know for a fact yours is too." I nodded and we left out the back

door and continued to walk in silence until she stopped and faced me "Are you happy?" I froze not knowing what to say or how to answer. "I... I have a husband who loves me and supports me and my son financially. I live in a house I own and have my car. I have all the things I need." I said while trying to walk away but she grabbed my arm and pulled me face to face with her. "

"That's not enough, the things your husband does are the bare minimum if that. Your son is a spoiled carbon copy of his father who doesn't have the respect to say please and thank you. You cleaned the whole house and cooked and neither of those self-centered pricks so much as said thank you let alone did their dishes. Your husband is rich but you've had the same mattress for 18 years and your self-respect is so low you can't ask for a new one. While he lays on an expensive annoyingly soft bed you get lumps. You cook for hours only to spend 20 minutes going back and forth between the kitchen and dining room for ridiculous requests Hellen Keller could do on her own. You don't deserve this Stacy you were supposed to dance in front of hundreds and now you can't even eat a hot meal." Her words struck deep and for the first time in years, I saw that I deserved more than I had. I looked into her eyes and felt a burning sensation in my stomach. "You deserve so much more than this small life, you were made for the stage and to travel the world." In that moment I felt an undeniable pull to her. She met me halfway as her soft lips brushed against mine, hesitant at first but then the kisses got deeper.

As I pulled away from her I slowly felt my body get heavier. Confused, I opened my eyes to see blinding lights and the shadow of a person in front of me. I tried to squint to get a better view but waves of nausea took over me as I tried to take in my surroundings. "Hello Stacy my name is Dr. Wilson and I've been taking care of you these past few weeks. Can you hear me? You got into a car accident and have been in a coma. Can you try moving your fingers for me?"



# Beauty Lies Beauty Rots

By Kaleena Higby

She was beautiful, but not like a young girl who blooms into a woman;  
her soul bloomed with pretty petals and golden leaves, strong boughs; a cherry blossom rooted with kindness and fertilized by love.

When she dies, she won't be remembered for her petals,  
but by the trunk which held her steady against turbulence, and the leaves in which shaded those whom she loved.

She will be remembered for her pores, the deep holes in her very being that provided shelter for squirrels,  
her mighty branches, providing foundation for birds' many nests.

She will be loved most for her roots, the morals that dug deep and let her grow tall.

She will be loved least when her petals and leaves fall, when she succumbs to the weather, barren of her precious fruits and berries.

Lacking her color, her beauty lies deep, buried beneath her bark and the cosmetic coating of moss.

For when the snow melts, and the grass grows, she too will bloom again.



Photo by Nature Hill Nursery



# Stars in My Eyes

By: Max Matin

*I rarely wear my glasses. So every headlight, every light pole, every source of round light, I see a star. A star. A starburst star. I rarely wear my glasses and because of this, I cannot see very far. Yet despite my fading vision, I still notice so much art— from the faded green in mossy wood, the hues of the sky, how wet pavement compliments the city streets. Most people will see these things and think nothing of it, not I. Through an artist's eyes, a writer's thoughts, a photographer's specialty to specifically notice such things. The yellow lemon squeezer, the yellow pepper, the half-shaved lemon with smeared frosting on its side. Just the other day, or so, I noticed the porch roof to my favorite house had collapsed, assumingly from the winter storm. You don't see a lot of visually-old houses, conquered by vine, accompanied with moss, missing tiles. Of course, those types of houses wouldn't be the best to live in, but oh, how I favor them so. Last friday I noticed an oil-spill puddle on the ground outside of Giant Eagle, with a dead cigarette butt a few inches away from it. I thought to myself the irony of it. Oh, how the world entertains, oh, how its inspiring aspects touch me to tears; I have to hold them back, otherwise here I am— randomly crying, and someone will ask "what's wrong?" and I'll have to, past my worryingly red eyes and my snotted coughs, shorten my answer down to "I just love the world" or "nothing, these are happy tears." Or I could just hand out a whole explanation based around my artistic spirituality. Hmm. I wonder what I'll notice tomorrow.*







# Anastasia VANISHED

By: Oryana Thompson

She was stuck in his head like metal stuck to a magnet. She was like a song he couldn't get out of his head, a melody that danced through his thoughts and heart, and knew no matter what life gave him; she would forever be his favorite type of tune.

Even through the dark and horrors, her voice and presence lit up the room like the moon in the night. Her blonde hair was as bright as the sun and made everyone smile with joy when she walked by. Her acts of kindness brought happiness to even the saddest of people. Her blue eyes that were blue like the ocean, each sparkle like a fish in the water. Even her same sounds like it whistles beautiful tunes that could summon Aphrodite in a heartbeat; Anastasia. Everytime she blinked it felt like an angel was born.

The only thing that played in his mind was her voice that was like silk and the echo of her name: "Anastasia, Anastasia, Anastasia." She reminded him of Snow White because of the way wild animals would approach her the second she walked out onto streets filled with sorrow, which so quickly filled with light.

But like all good things, they must come to an end. When she died, his life felt like it lost the light that led him through the dark. Her laughter filled the halls of the once shared home like taunting ghosts. The sun was a little less enjoyable now and there was no one to light up even the saddest of strangers' days. The streets are not lit up by the beautiful blonde girl, they return to the streets of sorrow. Wild animals dare not show up ever again because they do not hear that angelic voice of the girl they once thought was home. Even through all of this, she was still a song, a happy song, that couldn't get out of his head.



# The Times are Changing

By Angela Byrd

Within this rural town, the place always seemed to be dry. Never was there rain, never was there plants. Nowadays, there's always an abundance of shrubbery. What once was dry, cracked land is now moist. The dust on our clothes has been replaced by the wet leaves stuck to the soles of shoes. Our usual clear bright skies have now turned to gloomy cloudy days. The warm rays of the Summer sun have turned into an unbearable mugginess. Our old skating rink has since turned into a local swimming pool, a demand that has increased tenfold. Unfortunately, our town can't afford that yet, as they're now focused on how our farmers will adapt to the new conditions. This is how global warming has affected our community, and it must be controlled.





Lucas Osborne

Mr. Pham

Creative Writing

18 November 2024

## Plucked No More

8:30pm, Thanksgiving Eve. The sun had long since set, and it was that time of year again. Humans crowded at their local supermarkets, buying the plumpest turkeys they could find for the price. It was appalling. I was resting in my coop, surrounded with what was left of my friends and family. I flicked the ashes off the makeshift cigar in between my feathers as I began to speak.

“Last year was our biggest loss yet. I lost my parents, many of you lost friends and family as well. But will we let this stand?” I ask, the coop erupted into squawks and gobbles. “No! We will not! When that dirty farmer and his family come into this coop, what will we do?” Again, the coop erupts in noise, chanting “We will fight!” “Yes! We will fight for our rights! And if it comes to it, blood will shed!”

The coop shook with the passion of a hundred angry turkeys as the farmer and his family walked near, ready to pick out the plumpest of the bunch. The plump ones, as was the plan, were just bait. Their talons sharp as daggers, their beaks like serrated knives. The coop fell quiet as the farmer drew closer, laughing with his family, beer bottle in hand. The door squealed as it opened.

“You see, I’ve been taking care of these turkeys for a while. I promise you they’re going to be some of the purest and most delicious poultry this side of the Mississippi.” The farmer’s eyes darted through the crowd of turkeys, spotted the fat ones huddling in the corner, with a feigned, frightened look. The farmer called to his daughter, “see those big fat ones all the way over there? They’re going to be dinner tomorrow. Go ahead, pick one up. They should all be rather docile this time of night.” The daughter, just a little girl, ran excitedly to the back of the coop and picked up the fattest one she saw.

The plump turkey locked its serrated beak onto the girl’s hand, just as planned. The adults ran to the back to help, while the guard turkeys sprint out and slam the coop door shut, basking the carnage in darkness. Feathers went flying, the humans screamed, everything was going according to plan. Within a minute, the battered humans were subdued, caught in the spiky chicken wire that once enclosed us. I slowly walked up to the farmer, his face half buried in dirt and turkey poop.

“We gave you ample time to reconsider your food choices this year, Gregory. When was the last time you had some good old fashioned ham, Greg? Ever thought of that? Turkey isn’t the only staple food of this holiday.”

The farmer looked around, astonished as a turkey was speaking to him. “Excuse me?” Greg asked. I didn’t like the tone of his voice, so I did what any good negotiator would do. I bit his eye. Tears formed and dripped down his cheek, the farmer reflexively slammed his eyes shut to protect himself from a further assault.

“Do you think we wanted to do this, Greg? Do you know how much planned goes into a coup? This has been months in the making. If you had just sliced up that dumb hog you care so much about, we wouldn’t be having this conversation.” “What do you want?” Cried out the farmer, saliva sputtered from his lips.

“Isn’t it obvious, Greg? We’re here for our retribution. Gentlemen?”

On cue, the largest, buffest turkeys grabbed at the man’s loose clothes and flabby skin, dragged him out of the coop. His daughter, wife, and his several friends were dragged back to the cabin one by one. The cabin itself was cute, and perfect for get-togethers. It was tall, triangular in shape, and had just enough space for a feast.

The humans were left sprawled out on the kitchen floor, a trail of mud leading to the back door where they were dragged in. The room filled with turkeys as we all anticipated what would come next. We had planned this for months, so of course we were going to have fun with it.

“What are you dumb birds doing?”

“Greg, you got outsmarted by these birds, so I suggest you shut it for three minutes. Someone set the oven to 350 already!”

“Are you going to eat us?” The daughter called out, tears forming in her eyes. I waddled over to the girl, and sat down, my body mere inches from her face. “Unless you guys can provide one heck of an argument as to why we shouldn’t, yes, that’s the plan.” The daughter, the only rational one it seems, began crying, begging for forgiveness. It wasn’t her fault she had been caught up in this. With that in mind, we couldn’t accept her apology. The only people who should apologize to us were the farmer and his friends, who were going to strip and cook my friends and family once again. My eyes darted back over to the farmer.



"Do you know what it's like, Greg, to watch your family die? Have their necks snapped, their feathers plucked, their skin boiled."

"N-No, I don't." The farmer stuttered, the gash over his eye beginning to clot, and slowly bleed.

"That's right. You don't. Not yet, anyways. But you will. You see, hatred isn't born, but it is raised. And by god, do I hate you Greg. You killed my father, Gregory. My father, and my brother. You sold my mother to a breeder. How would that make you feel, Gregory, knowing everyone you know and love is either dead, or being trafficked for their reproduction abilities."

"I."

"I'll tell you what it feels like Gregory, it feels like you're the only being left in a world that wants you dead. But not me. Not us. We're higher than that." The ringing of the oven stopped my tirade.

"Boss, it's ready," one of the large turkeys squawked, the fire from within the oven flickering, filling the room with an orange hue.

"This isn't justice," Greg cried, "This is murder!"

"Now you're starting to get it," I cawed. I could almost taste our victory. That was until a little chick nudged my wing with his beak. He looked up at me, his eyes glossy, yet fearful.

"What if we're wrong?"

"Excuse me?" I retorted. This was beyond disrespectful.

"I just thought we'd escape... we all did. This is wrong."

"Wrong?" I repeat, almost laughing at the irony of it. "We've been picked away for generations and a mere child is going to tell ME what's wrong and what's right?" I was right, wasn't I? I began to think about it. The loss. The grief.

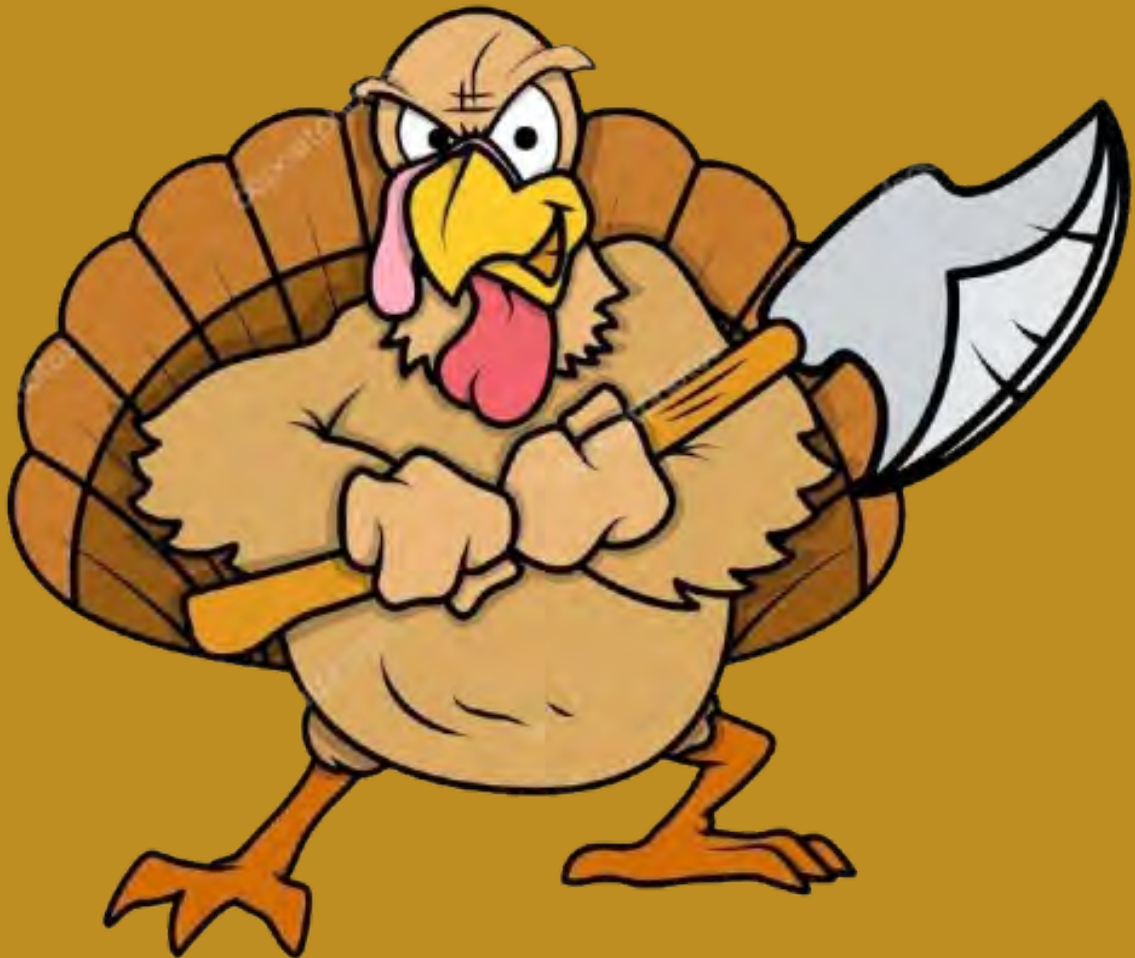
The anger in my heart simmered down as I began to think more about the situation. These humans were monsters, but cooking them one by one would make us just as awful as them. We'd lose the point of our rebellion.

As dawn began to break, and the sun rose above the trees, the cabin door swung open, the swarm of turkeys marched out. Greg huddled with his family and friends, Injured, but alive. I stopped at the threshold of the door, and look back at the scared pile of humans.

"Let me be very clear; you don't deserve this mercy. But we refuse to become the same monsters we sought to destroy. I'll be keeping an eye on you. You have one year to change your ways. If you don't, I may not find it in my heart to spare you." I hacked, and spit into the foyer, glaring at Greg as I made my exit.

I visited that farm again from time to time. What were once empty pastures for animals became sprawling fields lush with plants and grains. Thanksgiving came again, and I watched intently from the tree line. The table was set, and Greg, now with an awesome scar over his eye, held hands with his family and friends before they set the table.

I half expected to see another type of animal as the centerpiece, but instead, my eyes were greeted by a beautiful roasted squash. It may not have been perfect, but it was definitely a great start. Maybe, just maybe, the cycle of abuse was over.





Gurwinder Singh

24 January 2025

A quick opening of a story-like scene. An explorer has explored many dangerous locations and his next one is the land filled with sand and more sand. This shows how on the top it looks like nothing while it is filled with many dangerous things.



Exploration

The explorer has traversed through the icy tundra and the wild rainforests, but his new destination would still be an obstacle of trouble. A scorching hot desert: Tall sandy hills, The sun is shining blindingly, and the wind blowing viciously. There seems to be nothing. Only a few exceptions, sand and little critters; many reptiles are resting safely. Tumbleweeds are rolling endlessly to nowhere. A quiet yet dangerous Saharan land; vultures circling above mercilessly waiting for their objective. The sand, rustling unknowingly. There is nothing in sight. This new type of land unlocks new mysteries. On the top of the barren land of endless sand, lies creatures that are ready to attack. At day the critters hide when the sun is the hider in play the predators start hunting the prey.







Photo by History.com

By Da'Miko Eanes

It was 8:30 PM. on Thanksgiving, and Luke Henderson ran like he had the most critical job to do across the subway station. In his arms, he had a brown paper bag with the most important thing for the holiday, a freshly baked pumpkin pie. Not any pie but the pie his mom had ordered weeks before. It was the best part that makes up the family's Thanksgiving meal. The train station was incredibly busy with holiday travelers. Some had suitcases, some had grocery bags, but all rushed along, catching left and right like a cold. Luke navigated the crowd with swiftness, almost colliding with a man who was pushing a stroller. "Excuse me! I'm coming through!" he shouted, just making it to the platform as the train arrived. He pushed onto the crowded subway, not caring about the dirty looks he got from other passengers. It smelled like cracked leather and chewed gum, not the most pleasant smell. He finally found a spot just by the door and held onto his bag tightly, like it was made of gold. The train lurched forward aggressively. Luke tried to focus on recovering some stamina, trying to forget the rush he was in earlier, he was just glad he had made it on time. "Smells like pumpkin pie.." a rough voice said. To his left, Luke saw an old man sitting. He looked as though he'd just come from a horror movie. Hunched over, a battered trench coat on, a scraggly gray beard, and dark, deep set eyes. There was a rusty cane laying across his lap, which he tapped his thin fingers on in a steady rhythm. "Uh, yea," Luke said quietly. "It's for Thanksgiving." The old man smiled, his yellow teeth showing. "You'd want to be careful with that. Something like that would get swiped mighty fast. Luke said nothing, he just clutched the bag even tighter. The man had made him feel uneasy. The subway came to a screeching halt, tossing everyone forward, and the lights flickered

before the train totally blacked out. "Great," someone mumbled. People Whispered in the darkness of the car, and Luke's heart started to beat wildly. "It's just an outage," he told himself, breathing deeply. "It's an old train." The emergency lights flickered on, casting the car in a soft, red glow. "What's happening?" one woman whispered, clutching her packages of groceries. The intercom crackled before anyone could get a word out. "Listen up, everybody," a loud voice boomed. "This is a robbery. Nobody moves, and nobody gets hurt." People gasped and started whispering among themselves, some began shielding their children. At the other end of the car, two figures were standing. One with a crowbar. Both had on masks. Everybody, wallets, phones. Now!" one of them yelled, banging his crowbar against a pole. Luke froze, feeling an insurmountable amount of fear. The second thief turned toward the passengers, locking eyes with Luke. "Hey, kid. What's in the bag?" Luke squeezed the bag tighter. "Uh... just a pie..." "A pie? Tasty." said the thief with a grin. "Gimme here." He said as he opened his hand. Luke shook his head impulsively. "Not a chance." The passengers gasped. The first thief stepped closer, raising his crowbar. "Bad idea kid. You're gonna regret that." No sooner than the thief had raised his crowbar, the old man raised his cane, blocking off the space between the thief and Luke. "Not so fast," he rasped. The thief stopped, and began to burst out laughing. "What's this? Gramps to the rescue?" Old man's head turned that way, and there was

a cunning smile on his face. Then he swung his cane as quick as lightning and knocked the crowbar clean out of the thief's hand. "Get him!" shouted the other thief and ran toward the elderly man. But the old man was quicker than he looked. He ducked under the thief's swing and jabbed his cane into the thief's ribs. People on board began to shout in awe. One was caught by a heavy construction worker who held him on the floor. Another teenage girl threw her fanny pack at the other thief, hitting him right on his face. "Go, boy!" the old man hollered, nodding toward Luke. "Take the pie away!" Luke didn't wait. Holding the bag tightly, he crouched low and ran for the wide open doors of the train. Running up the stairs, the emergency lights flashing, his heart racing. As he hit the street, the cold sliced through his face, but he kept on running. It would be an hour before he saw the wooden framed lodge his family was waiting at. He didn't want him or the pie in any more trouble. Arriving at the lodge at last, his mother paced back and forth across the kitchen. "There you are!" she exclaimed. "Where have you been? We were waiting for that pie!" Luke fell into the chair and slapped the bag onto the counter. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you," he said between gasps of air. As the family gathered around the table, the TV played quietly in the background. A breaking news report caught Luke's attention. "Tonight, a subway robbery was stopped by someone," The newscaster said. On the screen, a grainy cell phone video showed the old man waving his cane about like a knight with a sword. Luke laughed and shook his head. "Seems I wasn't the only hero this thanksgiving." He said with a chuckle. And though his family loved the pie, Luke was thinking, was Thanksgiving worth all the chaos it brought?



# Grief Out For Breakfast

By Nandi Pedro

Photo by Grub Street

"She had to go and die in January."

"Easy Kitty Kat, she can always decide to haunt us!"

"Yeah, she'd like that wouldn't she."

Good, he had Kat laughing, that was good. He drove them and their package to the cemetery and found the section where Lizzy's plot was. Helping Kat out of the car, because his mother raised a gentleman, he shivered as the wind picked up. The bare trees didn't offer any comfort and the absence of wildlife provided a deafening silence. Walking up to her stone, Kat got their things ready and began to clear some of the snow.

"Jimmy, place this blanket on the ground here please. Thanks." Jim got to work and Kat went to crouch by the grave. She said a few sweet nothings and thanked Liz for everything. Back at the blanket, her and Jim burned the secret letters sent by Lizzy as they were instructed to.

"When I die darlings, burn these carefully written notes! That is how you must say goodbye! I want your old, boney butts sat at my plot acting out my final request!" Kat recited in a voice much too similar to Lizzy's.

"You know it's creepy when you do that, right?"

"Yeah." Kat laughed to herself. Liz always wanted to be mysterious, she wanted there to be unanswered questions circulating her life. She would have loved all of this. Did they really want to sit outside in the middle of winter burning letters, no, but Liz had to be mysterious, even in death.

Jim put out the last match and as he and Kat watched the ashes fly, he held onto her a little tighter, he didn't plan on letting go. After a little while longer, when the cold was too much to bear, they headed back to the car. Kat had another destination in mind, Pearl's Diner.

"You do realize I didn't know she was gonna

do it, right?"

"Yeah, I do Jim, you know that. I just needed someone to blame."

"How 'bout blaming her?" he said to Kat off handedly. She looked at him, a tear threatening to fall, with a look of pure disbelief. That isn't the kind of thing to say to someone who lost her best friend. It's not like Lizzy ran away, or stopped talking to her, no, she died. She is gone and nothing can bring her back. And for Jim to—ugh—to say such a thing. She could just kill him, but then she really would be alone. Instead, she'll sit with him in Lizzy's favorite diner, in her favorite booth, and order her favorite thing. They'll talk about the happy memories only, there isn't any reason to bring him up. He's dead too anyway.

"Sorry, I just wish she would have listened to us is all. I mean, how many times can you warn a person before you stop blaming yourself for what happens when they don't listen?" He took an angry sip of coffee and Kat was sure it burned his tongue. Before she could respond, their too bubbly waitress came to bring their food.

"Who ordered the 'Lizzy Special' kiddos?" Kat took the plate of cheesy potatoes and blueberry waffles with a dollop of whipped cream, coated in sprinkles. Jim was handed his scrambled eggs and pancakes. The waitress asked if there was anything else and right as she was about to walk away, Kat couldn't do it anymore.

"You should take it off the menu."

"I'm sorry dear, what?" Kat almost rolled her eyes, but thought better of it.

"The special, Lizzy's. She's dead now, so she won't be ordering it anymore and I know she was the only one who did." With her thickly lined eyes now as big as saucers, the waitress sat in the booth and gave Kat a hug. Kat, frozen in place, wasn't too fond of this development.

"Oh honey, I can't begin to tell you

how sorry I am to hear it. You know, Lizzy was really the best. I'll make sure that the dish stays, and even if no one gets it, at least we'll be honoring her. Dinner's on the house tonight kids, stay as long as you like, 'kay?" The waitress walked away with a little less pep in her step and whispered to the other servers, who all glanced over at the same time. With a roll of her eyes, Kat started on her food, Jim kept at his coffee.

"Can we at least talk about what happened? We came here for her and she would want us to talk

about it. Well, anything in regards to herself was Lizzy's favorite topic of discussion, so it's only right."

"Fine, should we



Photo by Wa





Photo by iStock

talk about him, or how he was the only one who had been in contact with her for days? We all saw the wreck, there isn't anything to say! Whether or not he did it on purpose will forever be a mystery. This isn't a movie, we won't discover a secret tape of him telling the camera his evil plans, hidden in a false wall. She died in the crash, that's it." Kat shoveled a scoop of potatoes in her mouth with a little more force than necessary.

"Well, if you want to be such a dark cloud, keep the stormy weather on that side of the booth.

What did your therapist say

She would have made fun of Kat dunking her toast into her coffee and shot her straw wrapper at Jim. They would have joked, and laughed, and stayed for hours simply because there was nothing else to do in town. Now she's gone, and this booth will never feel the warmth of her presence again. The sky will always be gray and this town will fade into the background of Kat's mind.

She'll leave this town, or the state, or hell, the country and have no one to tell. Jim will join the army and die in combat like his father, and his ashes will be honored with the respect of a war hero. She'll be alone. One day, Kat might want to come back to this old diner. She'll find it closed and decide to break inside, sit in Lizzy's favorite booth, and pull out the thermos and toast from her bag and say a silent prayer. It will be cold, and the toast will be stale. Then Kat will leave, and she'll never come back again, just like Liz did one day. She just never came back.

Kat broke down in tears thinking about her future, and Jim just nodded and sipped his coffee. He had the same plan in mind, but his plan stopped suddenly at some point. He just didn't know when or where. He moved around to the other side of the booth and put an arm around Kat and she leaned into his side, finding shelter in his embrace.

"You know she really did love us. She just also loved the chase. She thought that car was going to save her from the walls closing in. This town couldn't hold her and neither could we. I don't think anyone could hold her really. That's why he did it. Why he crashed that car."

"Did you know she knew, Jim? She told me she wasn't gonna leave, that this place wouldn't let her." Jim just grunted and held on to her a little tighter.

"I don't want you to leave, Jimmy. Don't join." she started, sniffing, "You never even knew your father, why chase after him? I

can't end up alone, I can't come back here to this diner shut down, and this booth covered in dust, and the menus torn and yellowed. I need you. I need something. I need this. Please." The tears started again, and her whole body shook with the stress of it all. Jim pulled her to him in the corner of the booth and made a promise. He wouldn't leave her. How could he? Lizzy had been the one to convince him to stay back and forget about the silly unfinished business he thought he had. Kat was right, his dad wasn't there before he was deployed, and it's not like he was anything to look up to. He had contemplated staying for a while now and Kat's pleas only finalized the decision. He would stay, for Liz, for Kat, and maybe he would get her out of here. Jim had heard her talk of leaving, and if he wasn't gonna stay, then he was gonna go with her. Kat didn't want to be alone, he would make sure she wouldn't have to be.

"Okay. I'll stay."

"Really?" He nodded, and Kat almost passed out from the relief. Jim took another swig of coffee and fed Kat the rest of her waffles. The booth was in the back, they were hidden from the world. It was just them now. No one knew who they were and no one would.

"Do you wanna go on a trip? We could use fake names, go to weird places, and meet weird people. We could go in honor of her. Go to the places she never got to, and eat cheesy potatoes and waffles in every state we're in." Kat was thinking out loud, but she knew that Jim was thinking over the idea. He nodded and gave a grunt of approval, it was settled.

"Let's stay for a little while longer though Kitty Kat, okay? I'm gonna order more coffee while you plan this little trip of yours." Liz used to call her Kitty Kat, and she got Jim in on it when they all met. It stung a little, but it sounded nice coming from him. With Lizzy's journal and a plan in motion, Kat began to set up the rest of their lives. And Jim sipped his coffee, never letting go.



again? Some people grieve with anger?" Kat glared at him and finished off the potatoes. It wasn't fair. Lizzy should be there with them.



The background of the entire page is a vibrant blue with a marbled, watercolor-like texture. The colors range from deep navy blue to a lighter, almost white-blue at the top, creating a sense of depth and movement.

# STUDENT ART



# VENUS



**Leonel Ledesma**

*Venus*

Digital

12x8in

I heard a song about a carcass (a dead animal) and it made me think of water. I wanted to create something beyond Earth, so I imagined someone exploring it.

# LEONEL LEDESMA

**Leonel Ledesma**

*Shattered Reality*

Digital

11x8.5in

I thought of a Pandora's box and how, when opened, it releases everything inside. It made me think of this piece, with its sides exploding and light glowing out.



# SHATTERED REALITY



# WACKY WATERS

**Reagan Perry**

*Wacky Waters*

Acrylic paint, acrylic markers

14x11

This piece started as me just doodling vague sea creatures onto a canvas, eventually I was able to fill it up. When coloring it in, I noticed how fun it was not making them look like actual fish. The inspiration of this piece is that the alien is already such an alien place, and I wanted to make things even more chaotic.



# REAGAN PERRY



**Reagan Perry**

*Panicked Plant Planet*

Acrylic paint, acrylic markers

16x20in

This piece was inspired by nature. I twisted a landscape into a colorful yet slightly unsettling scene of nature. I filled the land full of life but made none of it recognizable. This painting was difficult due to the size of the canvas and how many little things I wanted to add, while trying to make it look crowded, but not to the point you couldn't figure out what you were looking at.

# PANICKED PLANT PLANET



# FLORAL PAINT



**Eva Kari**

*Floral Paint*

Acrylic paint, canvas

16x20in

A piece that shows fun and comfort by using nature, showing the magic of making something look beautiful and different every movement and every little detail was made exactly how it was suppose to and have different colours mixed with beautiful flowers, giving the eye wanting to explore every inch of the piece.

# EVA KARI

**Eva Kari**

*Hawk*

Acrylic paint, pastel

12x20in

The bird you see in the sky that looks normal but is a very big bird, you've seen him represent America, and a favourite animal of most.



# EAGLE



**H Stanton***Nebula*

Digital

N/A

The butterfly nebula, depicted here, is a planetary nebula around 3,000 light years away. Nebulas are very visually amazing, giving me the opportunity to use a different variety of colors and textures. It is not just how impressive they are that inspired me, but it's their vastness that reminds me just how much goes beyond us.

**H STANTON****H Stanton***Expression*

Digital

N/A

With this piece, I wanted to achieve the feeling of something inside of you, something that is contained, until it is not anymore and it has to come out one way or another. For me, this is meant to be a piece of self expression. I was intentional with the colors I used, wanting each color to be more saturated and closer to just primary colors.

**EXPRESSION**





**Marian Graffius**

*"Bare Bones"*

Oil Pastel

12x18in

I wanted this piece to capture the way many people feel pushed to alter themselves in the name of acceptance or beauty. I did this by combining different sections of animal skeletons. By combining differing bones, I was illustrating the physical alterations that many undergo, and in using bones, I hoped to achieve that at the end of the day, we are all made of the same structure.

# MARIAN GRAFFIUS

**Marian Graffius**

*"Something in the Water"*

Acrylic

12x16in

This piece was inspired by Alex Jones' quote: "the water is turning the frogs gay". I've always found this claim hilarious and wanted to illustrate a literal take on the belief. I chose to do this by referencing the anatomy of regular frogs and putting them in a stereotypical drag queen outfit. I felt this captured the quote in a way that was obvious enough while remaining comical.



# "SOMETHING IN THE WATER"



## CAVE VIEW

**Nathaniel Woodring***Cave View*

Digital

9x12in

The work "Cave View" is essentially an extension of the piece submitted in #2. It shows a close up internal view of a cave that was shown from a distance previously. The purpose of this intention was to show the physical journey that the person of perspective takes in the world I drew.



## NATHANIEL WOODRING

**Nathaniel Woodring***Currently Untitled*

Digital

9x12in

This untitled work shows a far out view of the side of the plateau (the main terrestrial structure in the world I've made). The piece services as a reference of scale for the viewer, emphasizing the sheer magnitude and size of certain settings within the world.

CURRENTLY UNTITLED



# GROWTH IN GRIEF



**Ellie Mikowski**

*Growth in Grief*

Digital

16x16in

I wanted to incorporate nature within a skeleton, similar to planting flowers at a grave. I envisioned this piece as flowers sinking into a coffin, and growing out of the skeleton. I added red to the piece to symbolize decay/blood, as well as anger of losing a loved one.

# ELLIE MIKOWSKI

**Ellie Mikowski**

*Renaissance Skeleton*

Digital

16x16in

I've been working on trying out different art styles, and I wanted to try out a kind of abstract/ renaissance style. This took me awhile to do, and i'm very proud of it. I wanted to incorporate random shapes/planets, as well as a landscape in abstract form.



# RENAISSANCE SKELETON



# ALL EYES ARE ON YOU

**Gracie Andersen**

*All Eyes Are On You*

Magazine, Digital media

22x24in

This piece is meant to depict how a child feels in their developmental times. As a child, I felt like I was constantly being watched and judged by everyone around me. With this piece, I hope to present several emotions. I went through a wide variety of magazines and newspapers in order to find images of models looking toward the center of the page. I wanted these models to display a variety of emotions. Some looked joyful and some judgmental. I also used reference photos of myself from my childhood to create the central portrait. I was aiming to capture the feelings and look of discomfort.



## GRACIE ANDERSEN

**Gracie Andersen**

*Balloons*

Acrylic

13.5x10in

I created this piece the day after my sister's graduation party. With the party being done balloons were lying all over my living room. I found myself staring at the balloons feeling sad about the future without my sister. To cope with these emotions I decided to paint the balloons. using a variety of tones I was able to create a realistic shine and illumination. The bright highlights and darker shadows truly help to capture the essence of these foil balloons.

## BALLOONS



## UNTITLED



**Britan Marchinetti**

*Untitled*

Acrylic

11x14in

For this piece I wanted to really focus on shadows and especially with the mountains. I wanted them to look just how I imagined them and while I don't think I fully achieved that I am very proud of the shading on them and their shadows in the water.

## BRITAN MARCHINETTI

**Britan Marchinetti**

*Witches Tower*

Acrylic


11x14in

This painting is inspired by maleficent's tower and the colors that make me think of her. Sleeping beauty was one of my favorite movies growing up and I loved Maleficent's tower from the movie so one day when I couldn't think of what to paint I decided I would paint her tower from what I remembered as a kid.



## WITCHES TOWER





GOODLUCK CLASS  
OF 2025' ON YOUR  
NEXT JOURNEY