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Great Falls
Children's
CONNECTION

DECEMBER 30, 2008-JANUARY 6, 2009 VOLUME XXII, NUMBER 53

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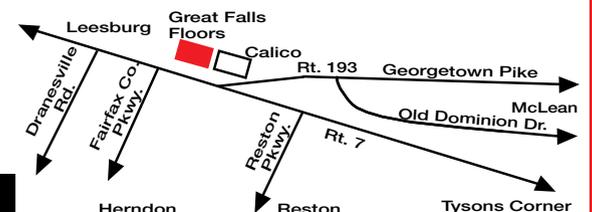
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Devon Hero of Great Falls, a 7th grader at Cooper Middle School, took this picture on Kiawah Island, S.C., in August 2008.



Stephanie Derminassian, Grade 1, Learning Fun School

Welcome

Dear Readers:

This week, the Great Falls Connection turns over its pages to the youth and students of its communities.

We asked principals and teachers from local schools to encourage students to contribute their words, pictures and photos for our annual Children's Issue.

The response this year was enormous. While we were unable to publish every piece we received, we did our best to put together a paper with a fair sampling of the submitted stories, poems, drawings, paintings, photographs and other works of art.

We appreciate the extra effort made by school staff to gather the materials during their busy time leading up to the holidays. We'd also like to encourage both schools and parents to mark their 2009 calendars for early December, the deadline for submissions for next year's Children's Connection. Please keep us in mind as your children continue to create spectacular works of art and inspiring pieces of writing in the coming year.

ing in the coming year.

The children's issue is only a part of our year-round commitment to cover education and our local schools. As always, the Connection welcomes letters to the editor, story ideas, calendar listings and notices of local events from our readers. Photos and other submissions about special events at schools are especially welcome for our weekly schools page.

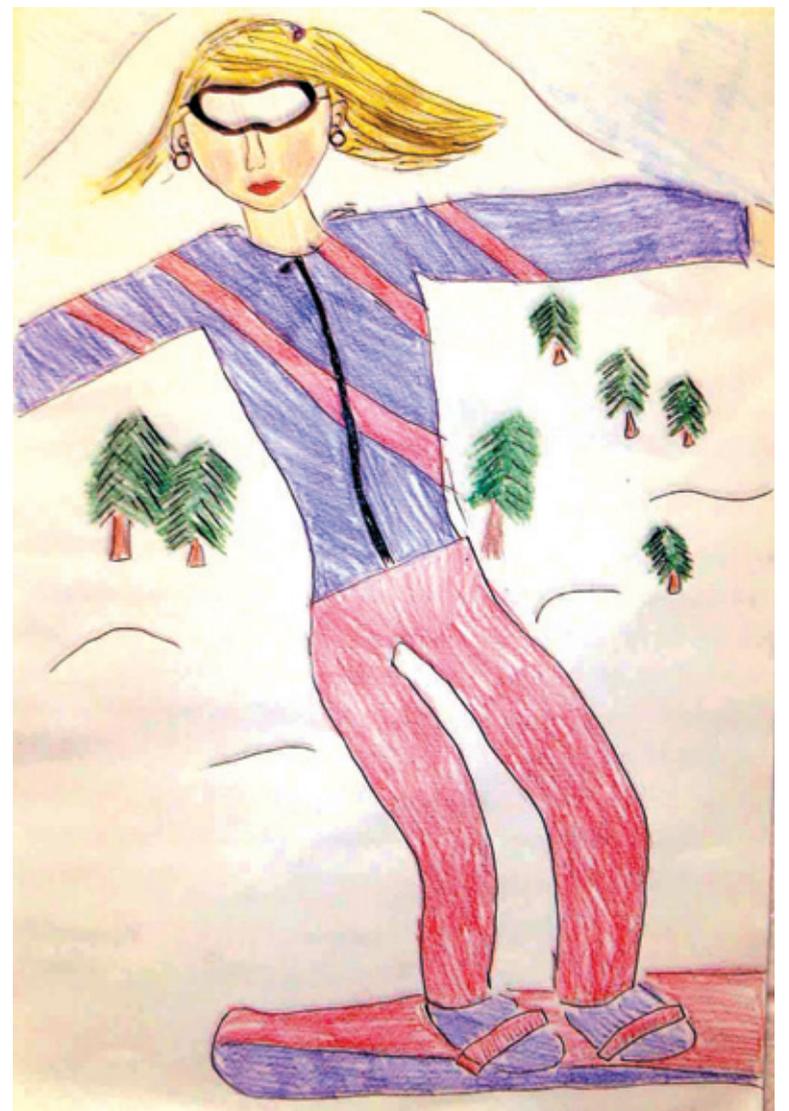
Our preferred method for material is e-mail, which should be sent to greatfalls@connectionnewspapers.com, but you can reach us by mail at 7913 Westpark Drive, McLean VA 22102 or by fax at 703-917-0991. Call 703-917-6428 with any questions.

EDITOR KEMAL KURSPAHIC

Connection interns Janelle L. Plummer and Danielle Landau provided valuable editorial assistance in putting together this year's Children's Issue.



**Gabby Peker, Grade 1, Forestville Elementary School
Art Teachers: Renee Parmiter and Maria Brown**



Anya B., 4th grade, Colvin Run Elementary School



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FORESTVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Stephen Eichler, Grade 1, Forestville Elementary School

Letters to Santa

Dear Santa,

How are you? I hope you are well. I wish you a good journey this Christmas. I am writing because I want to ask a favor. I would like a Webkinz for Christmas because I have been a good friend, I have been nice to my sister (most of the time), and I have worked hard in school. This is the best choice because I want it the most, it's always available, and the cost is good. My second best choice is Webkinz clothes. It would be little of the elf resources, and you can find them both anywhere.

PS: Would you like chocolate chip cookies or oatmeal cookies?

—AMELIA PATTON

Dear Santa Clause,

You are awesome!!! Since I wrote this letter in school, I decided to put some economics into this letter. I have six things and a few opportunity costs. Since I don't need an ice skating rink, I'll make that an opportunity cost, with the Ipod nano, and the ferret. Now I have three economic choices left: an English Mastiff, a digital Canon camera from my daddy, and a parrot.

—ANGEL OH

Dear Santa,

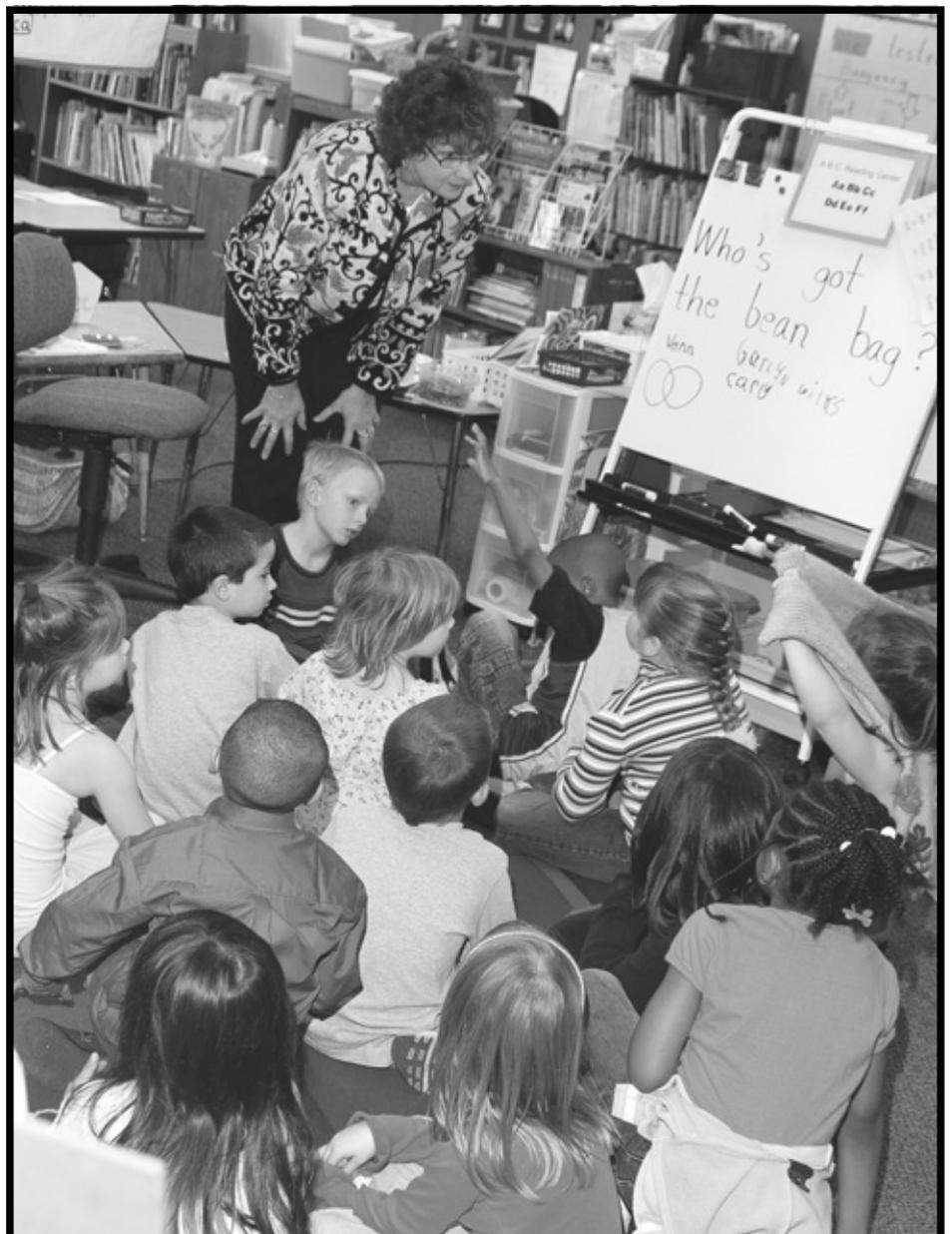
How are you doing? I'm doing great! Are your reindeer doing well? I hope so. This year I wanted a lot of things, but then I thought I should make a decision tree to help me decide what I really want for Christmas and what will be my opportunity cost. So this year I would like a flat screen TV, and Ipod (green or blue), an I-am-Me, Wii, a tennis game for the Wii, a Nintendo DS (pink), games for the DS, Imagine Fashion Designer, Imagine Wedding Designer, Dogz, a sewing kit, cloth, fashion designing kit, and a book. So, like I said, I made a decision tree, so my opportunity costs are the Wii, the tennis game for the Wii, and the Ipod.

— ANISA OSTAD

Dear Santa,

How are you doing, Santa? I've been nice to people. I have been very good this year. I learned about limited resources, natural resources, capital resources, human resources, interdependence, and specialization in economics. I made a decision tree to

SEE LETTERS, PAGE 18



Fairfax County Public Schools Budget Cuts Are They Educationally Sound?

Fairfax County Public Schools are making major cuts in vital areas that will directly affect your child. Next year the children will go to school with an increase of class size, less staff and fewer programs to support their educational needs. All instructional staff will be heavily impacted. Students will have less individual help. Facilitating learning will become more difficult. Parents, imagine how your life would change if triplets were added to your family and your income reduced.

The Superintendent and the School Board have made many of these cuts, but need to continue to look for other ways to trim the budget that does not directly affect your child's classroom instruction and education. Tell the School Board that the cuts must come from non school-based positions, programs and items.

The Fairfax County Federation of Teachers urges you to become involved by making calls and sending emails to School Board Members and the Board of Supervisors. Even if you do not have children, your community will be affected with this erosion of the school system. Our message must be heard to save the quality of the education we provide to all of our students in Fairfax County. Your children's future depends upon it.

- **Public Budget Hearing: January 21 & 27**
Register January 9, 2009 at fcps.edu/schlbld
- **Email School Board Members at fcps.edu**
- **Email Board of Supervisors at fairfaxcounty.gov/government/board**
- **Visit FCFT.org for more detailed contact information**

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In Giving I Received

BY ASHLEY DOLL
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL,
8TH GRADE

Last year I donated 11 inches of my hair to locks of love for them to make wigs for cancer patients. You may be thinking, oh how great, or what a nice girl but I'm no saint. I wasn't exactly happy afterwards. I'm not good with change that big.

When I got home from the salon I attempted to pull my hair back into a pony tail. I strove to get every last strand of hair in there but at least half always fell out. I had a bit of a breakdown when I realized it wouldn't stay, no matter how hard I tried.

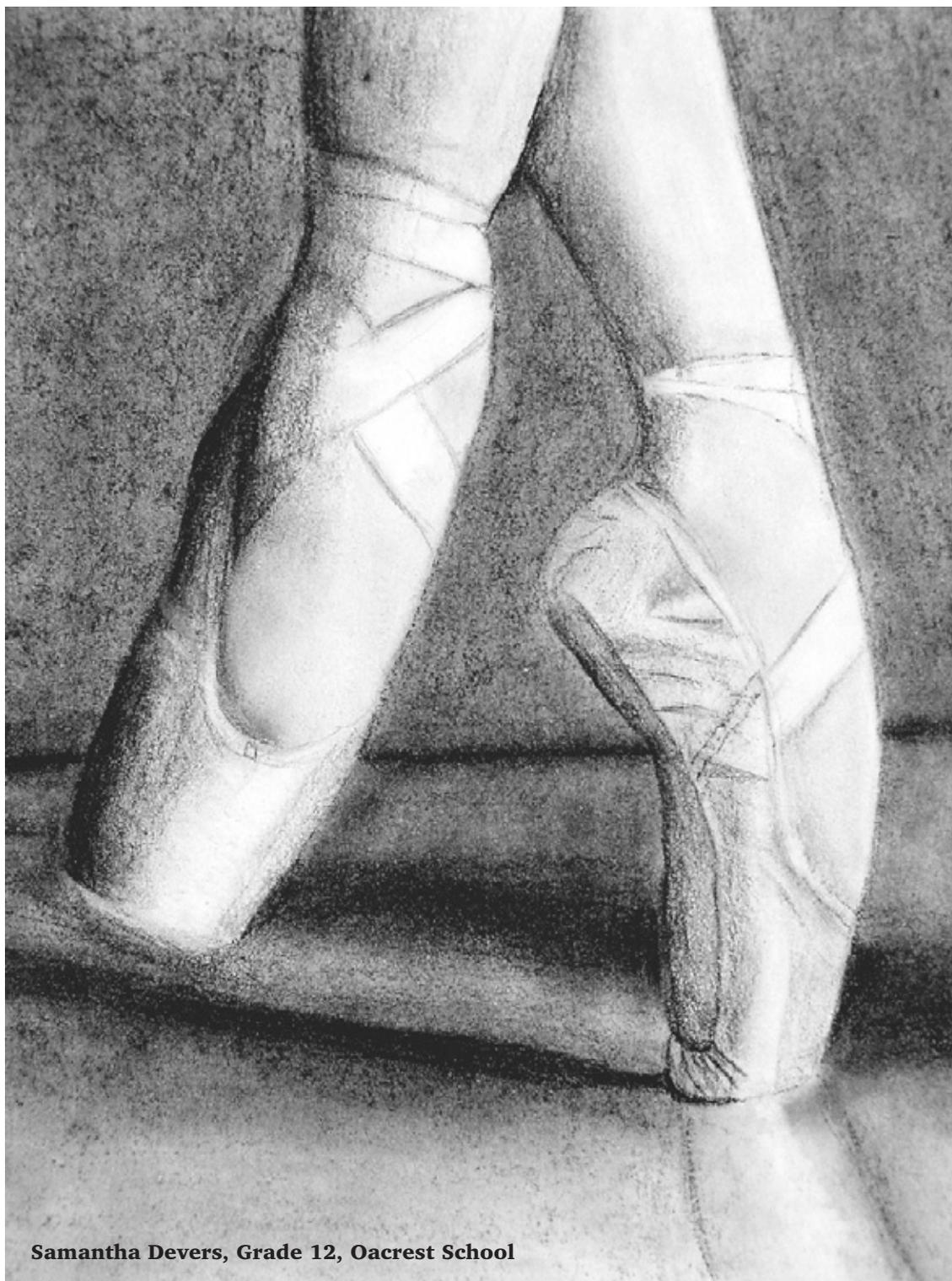
The next day I came to school with my hair in a pony tail, well more of a stub really, with help from about 20 clips. When my friends noticed my thick long hair was gone they were shocked and astounded to say the least. All of them were begging me to let them see it down but I refused. They wouldn't accept that answer, so, though I tried to run, Hannah got a hold of me and took all the clips out. My short bob cut was revealed for everyone to see.

Many people told me they liked my hair throughout the week, but I was convinced they were just being polite. Some people I didn't even know came up to me to tell me how good it looked, I knew they were just more pity compliments. I felt so weird, like a different person, like a part of me was missing.

I continued to complain for the next week. I went on and on about how awful the cut was and how bad it looked on me. Finally, my mom couldn't take it anymore. She turned to me and told me that I was lucky I had hair to give. The girl who would get my hair didn't have any. The girl who would get it is suffering from cancer, and I'm lucky I still have my health, and lucky I still had any hair at all.

It was until that moment that I really even remembered why I gave my hair away to begin with. I realized just how shallow and selfish I was being. I had completely lost sight of what was really important, my hair would go to a girl who really needed it. I was so self absorbed adjusting to this major change that I didn't even realize how much what I did helped someone; I was just acting like a shallow brat.

Since then I've tried to look at things from a different angle and never forget how blessed I really am. Surprising as it was, it turned out donating 11 inches of my hair, was the best gift I could ever receive.



Samantha Devers, Grade 12, Oacrest School

Gift of Believing

BY SARA GUGLIELMO
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL,
7TH GRADE

The greatest gift I have gotten is not an object at all (unlike many kids). This may sound crazy or weird at first, but in the end you will get it. It is believing. You are probably thinking that's not a gift, but it is and most people do not see that. It is gift that you get when you are born. You can make a choice to keep that gift or tear it down as you get older. You have to believe in yourself or you will not get anywhere in life. You have to believe that people will help you and are not always against you or you will not be able to work with a group of people. Many people tear this gift apart during their teen years, it's called low self-esteem. They may think they're too fat, not strong enough, stupid, or bad at

sports and that causes them to stop believing, sometimes it gets so bad they never recuperate and just stop believing all together. Horrible, right!

Believing has helped me in so many ways. It has helped me through family problems like the loss of loved ones which is always a sad thing. Believing has helped me become more faithful in God and believe me it helps to know that God is watching over you. It has opened my eyes to many things that I did not see before. It has helped me through tough times at school like a fight with a really good friend or a bad grade. Believing has not only made my self-esteem higher, it has changed the way I look at things. I used to get negative, thinking everything would turn out badly, but I have started believing things will be okay even if they seem really bad.

It is better to be positive, trust me.

Believing has done so much for me. It has helped me get good grades at school which please my parents and me. It also made me work harder in sports that I think I am not good at, which makes me improve in that sport and that makes me better at them. Believing has expanded my imagination making me more creative. It has made me wonder about many things, which expands my knowledge and makes me a more intelligent and interesting person. The best thing believing has done for me is it made me more high-spirited, which really makes my life easier and less stressful. Believing has made me believe that I can do things that I thought I could not do. If you start to believe it will help you in so many ways just like it did for me, I just know it will. Give yourself a chance to believe.

Soldiers

Where Would We Be Without Them?

BY DEVON MALONEY
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL,
8TH GRADE

Defenders of our government, soldiers are the ultimate symbol of our freedom and peace to most Americans. From the Revolutionary War when our country was founded, all the way to the current War on Terror in the Middle East, a war with no front lines, soldiers have always been there for us. Many have willingly paid the last full measure of devotion to protect what they think is right thing to do. How many of us could say we would do the same for something that we just thought was right?

My family tree is crammed with military service from the 1800s in the Civil War down, my dad included. He joined the Navy young and served until 2002, when he retired. Although he is no longer officially enrolled in a branch of the armed forces, my dad continues to help the military achieve their goals around the world, even if he didn't believe there is a completely just cause in the conflict.

Now he's headed off to assist the elimination of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. At first I was a bit shocked when he told us he had volunteered to represent his agency there, but now I'm okay with it. After all, I think I would have done the same.

Who would have kept us free from the British? Who would have countered the attack on Pearl Harbor? Who would have hunted down the Sept. 11 conspirators? Without soldiers, we would have no way to fight for causes that we believe in, and would have no way to defend our now great nation. Better yet, they volunteered to save us from the job.

Overall when we think of the brave men and women out there in Iraq or Afghanistan or those who are overseas fighting for our freedom, we should think of national heroes, because they really are our nation's heroes; and because of it they should get more recognition than they do. They are our silent heroes.

My Hero

By: CLAYTON KENNEDY
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL, 8TH
GRADE

Is your hero Superman, Batman, or even Spiderman? Well mine isn't, my hero is someone that was very close to me. He was always there for me, he comforted me when I was down, and made me laugh to help me feel better. My hero doesn't have super powers because he is my grandfather.

Now I'll tell you a little something about my grandfather. He was born in North Carolina around 1925. He lived through the Great Depression with no hardship because he lived on a farm and they had all they needed. As soon as World War II started my granddad was still in high school. But as soon as he was old enough to go to war he went to the recruiter and came out a United States Marine. He was soon shipped of to Parris Island for the most excruciating training in our great country's armed forces. He said it was tough but he made it through and as soon as he was done with his training the Japanese surrendered and my

granddad never saw the heat of battle. He stayed in the Marines for two more years then went to NC State. After that he went to work for the state until he retired. He was also in the Army Reserve until he had his first heart attack. He then retired as a colonel.

My grandfather was a good man. He worked for what he wanted and never took no as an answer. I always remember my grandfather being nice and kind and never being angry not even once. I will always remember the way that his pipe smelled as he walked up to our front steps. He even watched Batman with me when he was in the hospital for the last time. He always let me up onto his hospital bed and made sure that we were watching Batman because I was obsessed with Batman when I was 6. I couldn't believe it when my mom told me that I would never see him again. I remember the folding of the flag and the shooting of the guns in salute of my grandfather. My grandfather was a role model, a leader, and a great man. He will always be remembered and never forgotten. This is the story of my hero.

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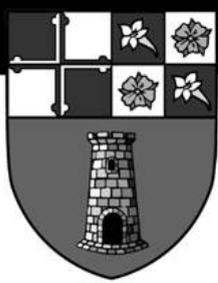


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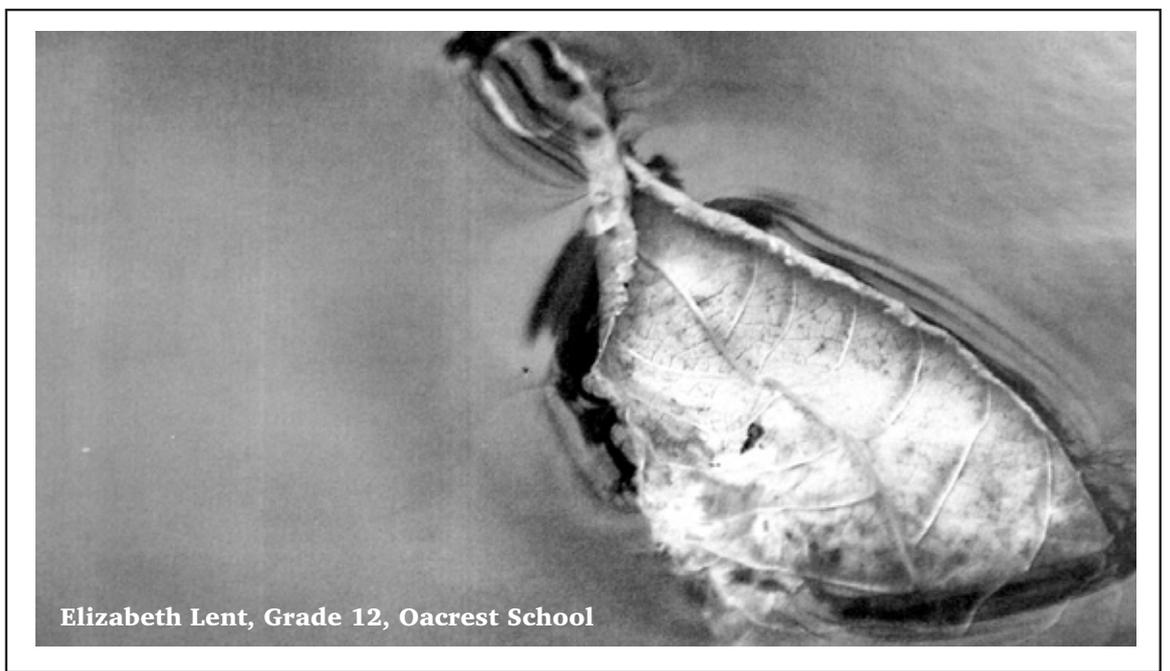
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Elizabeth Lent, Grade 12, Oacrest School

September 11, 2007

BY PHIL NOVACKI
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL,
8TH GRADE

Almost everyone in the U.S. remembers Sept. 11, 2001. It was a day that will be remembered forever. On that day, terrorists hijacked four commercial passenger jet airliners and crashed them purposely. Two of them hit the twin towers in the World Trade Center located in New York City. Another plane hit the Pentagon in Washington, DC while the final one crashed in Pennsylvania. It was a horrid day.

But that is not the Sept. 11 that I am talking about. It is a long story but let me start from the beginning. As a boy growing up at the age of two, Peter Choo, a small Korean boy was diagnosed with neuroblastoma, a type of cancer. But Peter didn't let this stop him. Peter went to school at Great Falls

REMEMBERING PETER CHOO

Elementary until third grade. That was when he was moved to Colvin Run Elementary school. I myself met Peter when we were in fifth grade. Ever since then we remained good friends. Since Peter had cancer, he would miss much of the school year. Whenever he was at school he would always be very happy and never get in trouble. Everyone in Colvin Run knew Peter. Whenever they saw him they would give him high fives. On sixth grade graduation, I remember hearing his name called for the diplomas and people cheering louder than ever. I also remember seeing adults crying tears of joy. Mrs. Choo, Peter's mom, was one of these adults.

The next year was seventh grade. I was looking forward to seeing Peter at Cooper. But unfor-

tunately, on Sept. 11, Peter passed away due to his cancer. I remember when my friend called me to tell me this. I was nearly crying and I couldn't finish my homework. My family did their best to try to make me feel better. The following weekend, there was a funeral service in honor of Peter. I remember seeing almost everyone from Colvin Run. Most of the people there were crying. Fortunately, I was able to keep my tears in. It was a wonderful service, but it made me miss Peter even more.

About a month after the funeral, some parents that knew the Choo family decided to organize a 5K run. The results were great. Almost everybody I remember from Colvin Run was there. They even decided to make it an annual event. I decided that I will go every year in honor of Peter. I hope that one day, we will find a cure for cancer so no one will have to go through what Peter went through.

My Hero

BY GRANT GRIECO
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL,
8TH GRADE

Who is your hero? Do you have more than one hero? Why is he/she your hero? My hero is one of my best friends ever. Peter Choo! Peter Choo was diagnosed with neuroblastoma at the age of two in 1997. Neuroblastoma is a form of cancer that forms in your nerve tissue. It usually begins in your early childhood which is what it did in Peter's life. Peter passed away from cancer on Sept. 11, 2007. He was 13 years old.

Peter is my hero because no matter what bad news he got, he always kept an upbeat attitude. He influences me to always work hard just as he did even while he was

diagnosed with cancer. Peter was always nice and respectful to everyone he met. He wasn't at school very often but when he did come he was embraced by everyone around him. Since he couldn't go to school because of his cancer a teacher came to his house and would teach him all the things that he missed. This shows how much he cared about school and his grades. To me, it also showed that he never used his cancer as an excuse to not do something.

Whenever I encounter something that I don't want to I think of Peter and all that he went through and that is what makes me work hard. Whenever I play hockey or any other sport I think of Peter and I play for him and work hard for him. Peter influences me to try my hardest and get

good grades. Whenever I think of Peter it makes me sad and happy at the same time. It makes me sad because he passed away and I'm never going to see him again unless I go to heaven. It also makes me happy to know he put up a great fight against cancer even though he lost. It also makes me happy to know that he's in a better place now where he is free of cancer. Maybe, when the time comes, I will hopefully see him again up in heaven.

Peter has definitely been one of the biggest influences of my life. He will always be in my thoughts and prayers and maybe in other people's thoughts and prayers too. I will never forget him and he will always be in my heart. That is why I chose Peter Choo as my hero.

WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

It's a Sad Story, Not a Sad Ending

BY KATE RAY
COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL,
8TH GRADE

I was thirteen years old when it happened. The world just seemed to stop spinning and everything that I had worked for was going to fall off the planet. I was left with nothing. It was the end. I was sure my life here on earth would be over in a matter of seconds.

My mom passed away. October 2008. It just didn't sink in. I didn't want it to. I fought off the pain for weeks. I was trying to hide what happened in the back of my mind, but eventually it overtook me. My mom stole my life. It was hard to be happy. I had to force myself to put a smile on and go to school each morning. It was the hardest thing I ever had to go through in my life. I don't know what will come in the future, but I was sure

that this was the worst; the worst thing to happen to me, the worst thing that could happen to anyone.

If it wasn't for my friends, my dad and my sister I wouldn't know what to do with myself. Some days I wish I could go to bed at night and never have to wake up. I wish I wouldn't have to see the sun rising everyday. Sometimes, I thought that if the darkness would just suck everything up, I wouldn't be able to feel the sadness. The pain takes over me and I can't think of anything else, if it wasn't for my family and the people that I care about, I would be jumping off a bridge right now.

I knew, in the back of my head, that I had to keep going with my life. My mom didn't want me to be like this; hiding from the world, my friends, being afraid of myself, being afraid of her. She wanted me—and my family to keep going,

to live our life, and to live it to the fullest.

It's hard to do that though; I mean, she left me and my family and she left me with *nothing*. My mom was the strongest person I ever knew. She battled cancer for four years. She fought it off for a long time, and she knew—I know that she knew—that eventually the end would come for her. One person could only fight off cancer for so long and her time was up.

It's been almost two months since she passed on Oct. 14 and I've realized that she didn't leave me with *nothing*. I've gotten through this. I'm happy. Some people are sad for months, even years, but not me. She gave me her strength. I got *her* strength to help me through the rough times. I'm sad that she left, but I'm glad that I got her strength. So, it's sad story, but not a sad ending.

A Not So Tough Decision

BY HARRIS N. LA TEEF
6TH GRADE,
GREAT FALLS ELEMENTARY

The day I found the magic ring was just like any other summer day. School had just been let out and I was on my first fishing trip of the summer. It was a hot and slow day. I did not catch anything

all afternoon. Just when I was thinking of putting away my fishing gear a huge largemouth bass was nibbling at my bait. I pulled the line in as quickly as I could, took the hook out of its mouth, put the fish in the bucket and went home.

When I showed my mother what I caught she was amazed. She took

the fish into the kitchen to prepare to cook it. Then she called me over and showed me a ring she had found in the fish's stomach. Washing the ring off she gave it to me and said, "You caught this fish so whatever is inside it is yours."

The next morning I woke up and discovered a blue button had

SEE DECISION, PAGE 14

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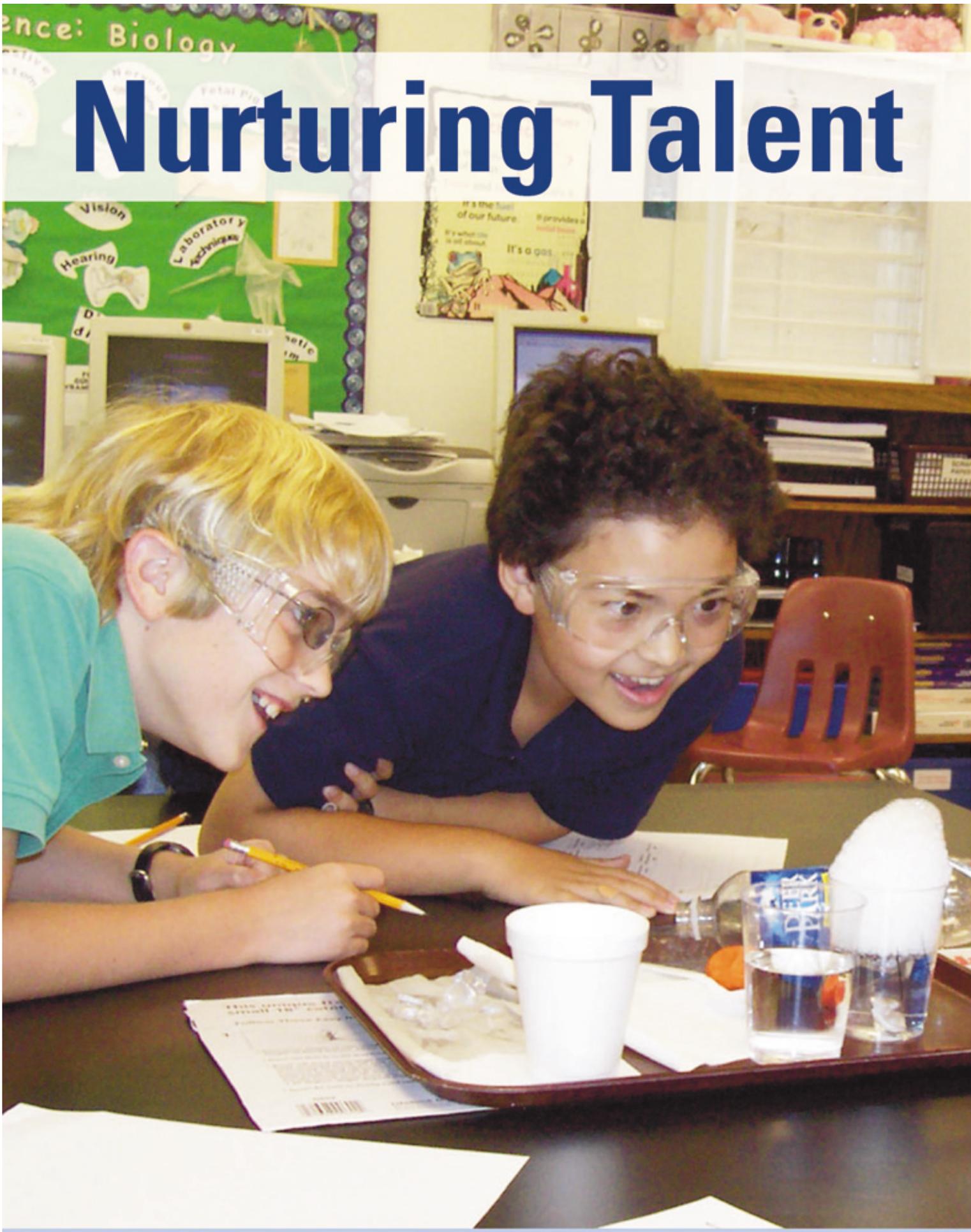


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Decision

FROM PAGE 9

popped up from the ring over night. The ring was made of bright shining gold with red rubies studded around the perimeter of the surface.

I couldn't resist pushing the button and so I did. Suddenly a deep voice said, "Congratulations, master, you are awarded three wishes!"

"Three what?" I replied.

"Three wishes. Anything you desire is yours."

I was flabbergasted. Then I thought about the great things I could do with this ring. I could end world hunger, stop wars, and give every homeless person a house. But then some greedy thoughts crept into my head.

The following day I made my decision. I would split my wishes. I would have two unselfish wishes and one greedy wish. Then I had another thought. I thought how happy I was with my life. It was just how I wanted it to be and if I were tempted to use the ring my life would never be the same. What if I lose my friends? What if I don't have my family?

I went down to the river. I knew what I had to do. I made one wish. I wished that I would catch some fish. Then I tossed the ring with all my might into the river.



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Celebrate Normalcy—Most People Don't

What I love more than anything else in the world is to write. To put my fingers to the keys and just type out a story, or an article, or anything—words that people can read and feel something, whether it's pleasure or sadness. I've always dreamed of seeing my name in print. I've read numerous books (like *Chicken Soup for the Soul*) where kids like me can write about their life and who they are and their experiences,

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and they are the kind of pieces that make you think: "Wow, this is touching. I'll never forget this child's story." And that is when, despite all my aspirations, my heart begins to sink.

Nothing profound has ever happened in my life. I've never had a fatal disease (I've never even broken a bone!), my parents are totally normal, and I've never had a meaningful conversation with a World War Two veteran or anything like that. I've had a very nice, quiet life, without strife. I go to church every Sunday, I have two sisters who are in equal parts my best friends and my worst enemies, my favorite subjects are English and Journalism, and the rest, as they say, is history.

So when I was assigned to write a personal essay to be published in a real newspaper, and to make it "powerful" I didn't really know what to write. I sat, wondering. Hmm...which stimulating part of my life should I detail? Perhaps what I had for breakfast this morning? What could I write that would possibly warm hearts this holiday season?

And then I realized. Meaning doesn't have to be found in misfortune. In fact, quite the opposite: if you are like me, then that could actually send a message in itself. I could think that my life is dull and boring, but what I haven't realized is that my life is not normal. Not for the world, not even for America. In fact, I am probably one of the luckiest, happiest girls in the world. And that's something worth writing about.

So, without further ado, the lessons I have learned in 2008 and every previous year are: the greatest gifts we can ever get are love and hope. If you have both these things, don't take them for granted. Give thanks.

Count your blessings. Treat everyone like your friend. Don't agonize over a "normal" life when you're sitting in a classroom typing on a computer, wearing clothes you could afford to buy. Think about the type of person you want to be instead. I, for example, hereby resolve to be more aware of the world away from McLean.

What I'm trying to tell myself, and whoever's reading this, is that millions of people would kill to be where I am now. I have a family that loves me and a pretty bright future. And that being well...*normal*...pretty much rocks.

Meaningful enough for you?



**Alex Aguilar,
Grade 7,
Oacrest School**

I'm thankful for...

OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL SCHOOL

I'm thankful for Thanksgiving Day and my family and friends. I love my family because they love and care for me.

—BRIDGET O., GRADE 3

I'm thankful for a family that loves me, some friends that care for me, and God's nice creations: the sun for warmth, the rain for water and lots and lots of trees.

—THERESA S., GRADE 3

I'm thankful for food, water, shelter, football games, and the sound of sports. Also for my teacher, Mrs. Bowers, and my school. I think you're the best, Jesus. Thank you, Mary. Thank you, God.

—JACK C., GRADE 3

I'm thankful for my family because they all love me. I'm thankful for my food and drink because they give me the health I need. I'm also thankful for my friends because they play with me.

—NOAH S., GRADE 3

SEE THANKS PAGE 16

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I'm thankful for...

FROM PAGE 15

I'm thankful for all of these wonderful blessings: for my pet fish Lucky Luigi, and Mario. They have had long lives which are still going on. And also for my parents who care for, love, and help me. The last, but not my least, for my family, who spoils me rotten.

—ZACK, GRADE 3

I'm thankful for a family that loves me and friends that always include me. I'm thankful for my

pets who always want to see me when I come home from school. And I'm thankful for the green grass that grows.

—JULIANA CALLEN, GRADE 3

I'm thankful for my lemonade.

—BECKER S. KINDERGARTEN

I'm thankful for my two fish.

—ISABEL W. KINDERGARTEN

I'm thankful for flowers and col-

ors.

—EMMA B. KINDERGARTEN

I'm thankful for me.

—MARY T. KINDERGARTEN

I'm thankful for my parents.

—JACK N., KINDERGARTEN

I'm thankful for Dale Earnhardt Jr.

—DEAN V. KINDERGARTEN

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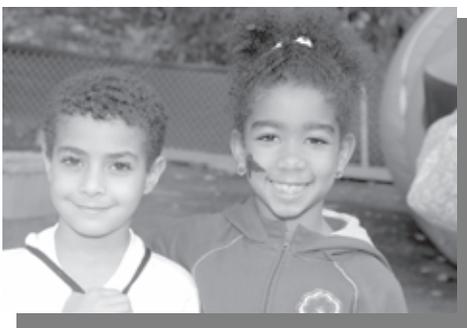
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Don't you think this world would be a better place to live if we all learned to forgive our friends like Joe did and remember only the good things that happen to us?

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FORESTVILLE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Letters from Forestville Elementary

FROM PAGE 5

decide what I want most. I also learned about opportunity costs. My opportunity cost is the Manningham and Henne 07 Capital One Bowl jerseys. I want a Mario Manningham 2006 Rose Bowl jersey. I want it, but they're scarce, and they have a high cost. I also want a Chad Henne jersey (2006 Rose Bowl). I'd also like a Tiger Woods 09 X-box 360 game (medium cost and availability).

I have been very helpful, caring, and very nice. I have helped people do work quietly this year.

—AUSTIN HANLEY

Hi Santa! How are you doing? I'm doing great! I've been very good this year. I gave socks to the people who had none, I gave two cans of food to charity, and I was helping with some stuff when I could have been doing other stuff. Now I see your elf resources can't make all this stuff for me. You'll have a scarcity of natural resources! So I've some choices to figure out my opportunity costs. My choices are a Diamond Castle with dolls, a Barbie Glamour Styling Head, Sponge Bob Krusty Krab Lego set, and the Sandy's Rocket Lego set. So I think you'll have enough natural resources for my economic choices. I'll let you get back to work now.

—AVA PLANTE

Dear Santa,

I love your genuine kindness. It must be super hard to deliver all those presents. How are you doing Santa? I'm doing fine here in Virginia. Snow is coming very soon. I hope your elves are healthy, so they can make toys for every human being. This year I would like one Webkinz, some Bacukgan, a remote controlled helicopter, a remote controlled airplane, and a remote controlled car.

—BIJAN BOROUMAND.

Dear Santa Claus,

This year I'd love so very much for you to get me a Webkinz Snowman, a pair of gold earrings, a Nintendo DS, and a puppy. I couldn't decide which one of them I wanted, so I made a decision tree. It helped me a lot in choosing my economic choices. When I finished I ended up having the Webkinz Snowman. It wasn't the best thing to get, but I think the North Pole might be easier for the elves to make. That means the pair



of gold earrings, the Nintendo DS, and the puppy are my opportunity costs. Besides, I don't even think those elves of yours could "make" a puppy or even get one. I hope you get the chance to get that new Webkinz Snowman I've wanted! Thank you!

—DAISY NG

Dear Santa,

How are you doing? I am doing fine. I have been working hard in school, and trying my best to be good. To decide what I want for Christmas, I wrote down what I wanted, made a decision tree, and decided that my opportunity cost will be Petz Dog Pack for the Nintendo DS. My list is a pair of Uggs, the Bolt video game for Nintendo DS, and "The Diary of a Wimpy Kid," Do-it-Yourself book.

Thank you for using your elf resources for all the children of the world. Love,

—DEIRDRE PRICE

Dear Santa,

How are you doing? In school we have been learning about economics and I decided to make a list of presents because there is so much that I want. But since there are so many other children in the world, I've decided to shorten it down with a decision tree. Now I only want three things. It would be wonderful if you could get me Aqua Dots, a Girl Gourmet Cupcake Maker, and a fashion designer DS game. That makes my other choices my opportunity costs. I think I deserve them because I get very good grades, and I try my best in school. If you can get me those it would be very nice.

—ISABELLE KADISSI

Dear Santa,

I would like an Ipod touch, a laptop, a gum ball machine, girl stuff, candy, an American Girl doll, a Webkinz, and an X-box. I hope you get me the stuff. Please have a good time with your elves, and if you can't get me the stuff I want, it's okay, because I know you might be busy. I love you.

—JANELLE VALENTA

Dear Mom and Dad,

I've been good all year. I do have things to work on in life like, I could raise my grades in school. Speaking of school, we learned about economics. I'm about to teach you something. This Chanukah I want a specialization of electronics like a PSP 3,000, an electric scooter, FIFA Soccer for the PSP, NCAA Football for the PSP, and an Ipod player. I made some opportunity costs like an Ipod touch, a new soccer ball, a guinea pig, and a \$30 Itunes gift card. The things I want are my economic choices. I hope you are both in a happy mood, so I can get what I like. Your son,

—JARED HELMAN

Dear Santa Claus,

I hope it is not too cold up at the North Pole. I have been really good this year. I worked hard in school. I have been learning about economics in class. For example, I've learned about resources, interdependence, and specialization. Here is what I want: a skateboard, Webkinz Snow man, and a Webkinz dinosaur. My opportunity costs are the skate board and the Webkinz dinosaur. What I absolutely want is a Webkinz

Snowman! I hope you have a Merry Christmas!

—LINDSEY GRIES

Dear Santa,

How are you? Good I hope. For Christmas I would like to have a Zoe 101 DS game. I think I deserve it because I've tried my best in school and I've been nice. I would also like a High School Musical boxed CD set and a pink digital camera. I also wanted a Hannah Montana CD, "Diary of a Wimpy Kid," and the Hannah Montana Sing It game, but I decided to make them my opportunity costs because I want the others more. Your elf,

—HALEY LOBSENZ

Dear Santa,

Hi, how are you? Are you having fun packing at the North Pole? I decided from my decision tree the things that I want are some American Girl doll pink pajamas with the matching slippers that go with the pajamas. I'd also like an American Girl doll suitcase, an I. M. me, and a guitar with a strap. Out of my decision tree my opportunity cost is an Easy Bake Oven. How are your reindeer? How's everything at the North Pole? Are you getting ready to take a sleigh ride? By the way, I really liked my gifts last year, and I know I'm going to like them this year. I've been really good! I help out by doing my chores and by listening to my parents. My mom agrees that I've been really good!

PS: Merry Christmas!

—LUCY BREISETH

Dear Santa,

How is it at the North Pole? How



cold is it there? I've been a good boy this year. My friends and I like having nerf wars, so I would like a nerf gun called the Nerf Vulcan.

This year I made a decision tree to decide what I really want. Since there were a lot of Civil War battles near my house, I would like a metal detector to find the bullets.

How have your elves been this year? Have they been good? I'd also really like this cool X-box game called Battlefront 2 (it's a Star Wars game). There's one last thing I want, and it's really cool! They're called Tech Decks. They're little skateboards. They're really cool, and they'd be even cooler with some ramps!

—MARK DRASBEK

Dear Santa,

I know how hard it is to bring all of the goods here, so I made a decision tree to figure out my opportunity costs, so that I can tell you what I want the most. To decide, I thought about the cost, how much I want the item, and its availability.

I want an X-box, a PSP, and Star Wars, the Clone Wars game to be my presents for Christmas. My opportunity costs are going to be a guitar and an Ipod touch. I didn't want to make a lot of presents because other people have wants too.

I hope you're good with my Christmas list, and I hope you're doing very well because I'm doing great, because you're the best Santa! I hope your Christmas is excellent. Have a Happy Christmas.

—PRANAV PURITIPATI

Dear Author ...

Letters from Spring Hill Elementary School fifth-graders.

Dear John Grogan,

Have you cried listening to something, because it was so heartwarming? You felt as if you knew them all your life. That is how I felt when I read "Marley, A Dog Like No Other."

I have a labradoodle; he is a super dog to us. He pulled our family together just like Marley. It touched my heart about how loyal this dog was and to think he searched everywhere in search of his owner.

Marley taught me that the loyalty between a dog and its master could be broken. He taught me that everyone is special and has a purpose on Earth. Thank you for writing Marley.

—KATIE ZECHMAN



Linda Maldonado, Spring Hill Elementary School, 6th Grade

can do all of this perfectly." After I read your book, I learned that sometimes, it's okay to make more mistakes than we would want to. Like Mr. Fogelman, I learned to "just go with the flow."

Now thanks to you (and Mr. Fogelman), I can believe in myself more. Whenever I do forget my homework, or do badly on a quiz, I don't let it get in my way. Now, it's okay to drop a ball or two once in a while. Thank you, and I hope people learn from your book.

—JACK POSEY

people, going to new places, and adjusting have been rich experiences for me. Change is always necessary.

By reading "Shakespeare's Secret" and connecting with Hero, I have adjusted even better to my move. It was wonderful to feel so connected with the main character.

—ANANYA SURI

Dear Gordon Korman,

Until about last year, I have been handling school with ease. But then, more and more work and stress piled on; peer pressure, schoolwork, sports, etc. It's like juggling balls; you need to keep them up and go in a steady pace. I always felt like I had to keep it at a perfect rhythm. Until "No More Dead Dogs" came along.

When I read your book, I saw myself in Mr. Fogelman. We both shared similar stresses, and didn't know what to do. Then, when I started 5th grade, more and more balls were thrown into the cycle. I thought to myself, "I didn't think I

Dear Shel Silverstein,

The talking, the humor, and the animals, how could anyone forget? Your poem "The Farmer and the Queen" gave me the laughs with the animals. When the farmer talks to the animals, I think of myself talking to the cat and wonder if you do it also, that is, if you have pets. If you don't, would you?

My cat is really nice compared to other cats I know. She knows when to come or not. When she's really cute, I stroke her for a long time, and just talk to her. Sometimes if she just comes in on a night when I'm deciding what to wear for the next day, I ask her "which one?" and sometimes I put an outfit in front of her and her meow sounds like a no! Even though she can't talk to me, I understand her in some way.

I hope that most cats are as loving, gentle, and kind as her. Plus if you don't have a pet, get one. It brings out a whole new level of creativity and imagination (a nice quiet pet that is not that loud (just not fish).

—PRITHA SANDELL

Dear Elise Broach,

I am writing this letter after reading your book, "Shakespeare's Secret," because it connected to me in many ways. Reading this story took me back to one of the most significant experiences of my life.

This book describes Hero's experiences of moving to a new place. Three years ago, I moved with my family from Bakersfield, Calif. to McLean, Va. Reading about her move, meeting new people, going to new places, and adjusting made me relive everything I went through. I can still remember the feelings I had when I found out that I was going to move—the excitement about going to a new place, the sadness of leaving a place too wonderful for words, and all the mixed emotions.

The city of Bakersfield is very close to my heart. The years I had lived there were "happy golden years." But since I have moved, I have changed. Hero also changed as she moved. Meeting new

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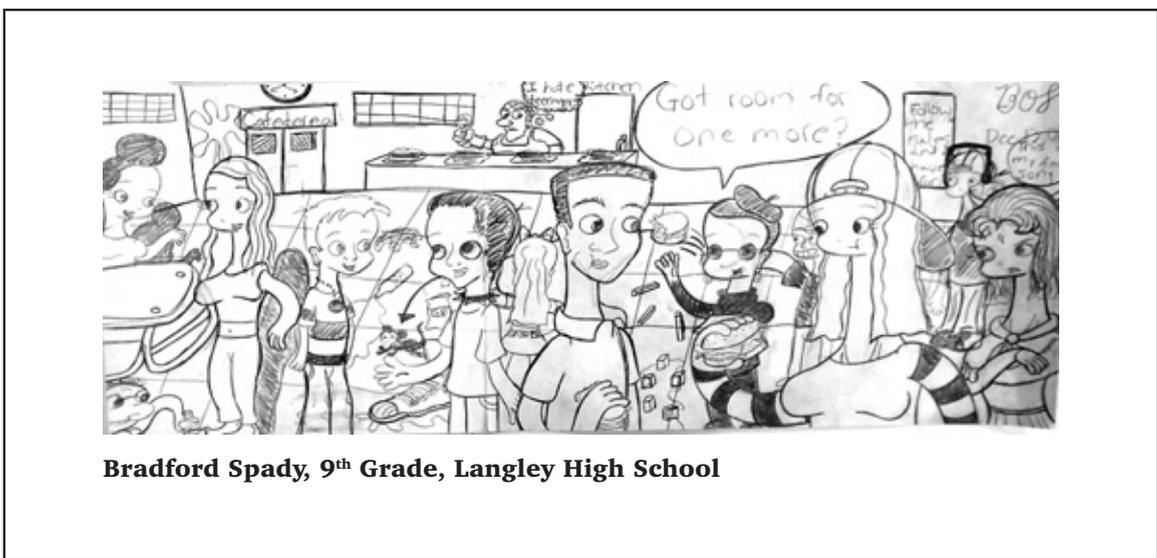
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Bradford Spady, 9th Grade, Langley High School

Fantasia in D Minor

BY LAUREN LA TEEF
GREAT FALLS ELEMENTARY,
GRADE 4



Lauren LaTeef, Grade 4, Great Falls Elementary School

I have been taking piano lessons for almost two years. I started when I was 7 years old. My piano teacher Miss Lola is very nice. Not too long ago Miss Lola shocked me. She said I was ready to play Mozart's Fantasia in D Minor! She said that she played that in high school when she attended a music conservatory in Russia. I reminded Miss Lola that I was only 9. She said that doesn't matter, "I think you are ready to play this piece."

When I first looked at the music for Fantasia in D Minor I thought it was way too hard. It was ten pages long and there were a lot of chords. I don't like to play chords because you have to play three to six notes at the same time. Also some parts of the music you have to play piano, which is soft and slow and other parts you have to play forte, which is loud and fast, and there

are a lot of rests and foot pedal work. It is a hard piece to play.

Miss Lola told me that if I practiced everyday it wouldn't be so hard. So everyday after school for a long time I worked on a line at a time from the score and practiced over and over. One day Miss Lola came early and sat down with my mom and asked her if I could play Fantasia in D Minor at a church to raise money for orphans. My mom asked if I wanted to. I didn't want to disappoint Miss Lola so I said

yes but I was really scared.

When I went to perform at the church, Miss Lola said there were over 600 people in the audience. After I finished playing everyone clapped. One boy in the front row said in a very loud voice, "Wow she is really awesome!" All I could think was how happy I was that just by playing Mozart's Fantasia in D Minor I could help keep children warm this winter. I think it was worth all the time I spent practicing.

Wow

AARAJ D. VIJ
GRADE 2, LEARNING FUN SCHOOL

I often say "wow",
When I think about my five senses.

The magic of my eyes to enjoy sunlight,

Seven colors of rainbow shining bright.

I can see my friend and hold his hand,

I like to watch the butterfly on flower land.

The power of my nose,
To smell a morning red rose.

I love to sniff fresh baked goodies,

Apple pies and yummy chocolate chip cookies.

My soft skin can feel,
My dad's hug and mom's kiss,

The softness of my blue velvet

blankie,

Always makes me ticklish and comfy.

My sharp ears help me hear
The plop of raindrops,

Chirping birds, buzzing bees,
And the music of my snare drum beats.

Have you ever heard your own echo?

I tried at Luray and it came back so.

Do you know my tongue has millions of taste buds?

To taste fruits sweet and sour,
Honey from bees,

Mangoes from trees.
A variety of cheese,

Mild or sharp, as I please.
I can taste and tell many flavors,

Sweet, sour, salty,
Bitter, spicy or tangy.

So it is no surprise I cannot stop



Aaraj D. Vij, Grade 2,
Learning Fun School

saying "Wow"

And I am sure you feel the same way now.

If you are wondering how I made the right guess,

That was my sixth sense at its best!

Wow!!!

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• Scheduling caregivers for assignments; new assignments and replacements for vacations or requested time off.
• Receive new caregiver applicants' information/calls and arrange interviews.
• Weekly interviews for prospective Caregivers in our Reston office.
• Attend bi-weekly one-hour staff meeting in Great Falls office
• Receive/field calls for potential new clients and contact our Client Liaison via phone and/or email immediately.
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Sunset Beach, a small barrier reef island 2 1/2 miles long and 1/3 mile wide, is quiet and family oriented and only 30 minutes from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Call Carly or David at 336-282-1870 for more details

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