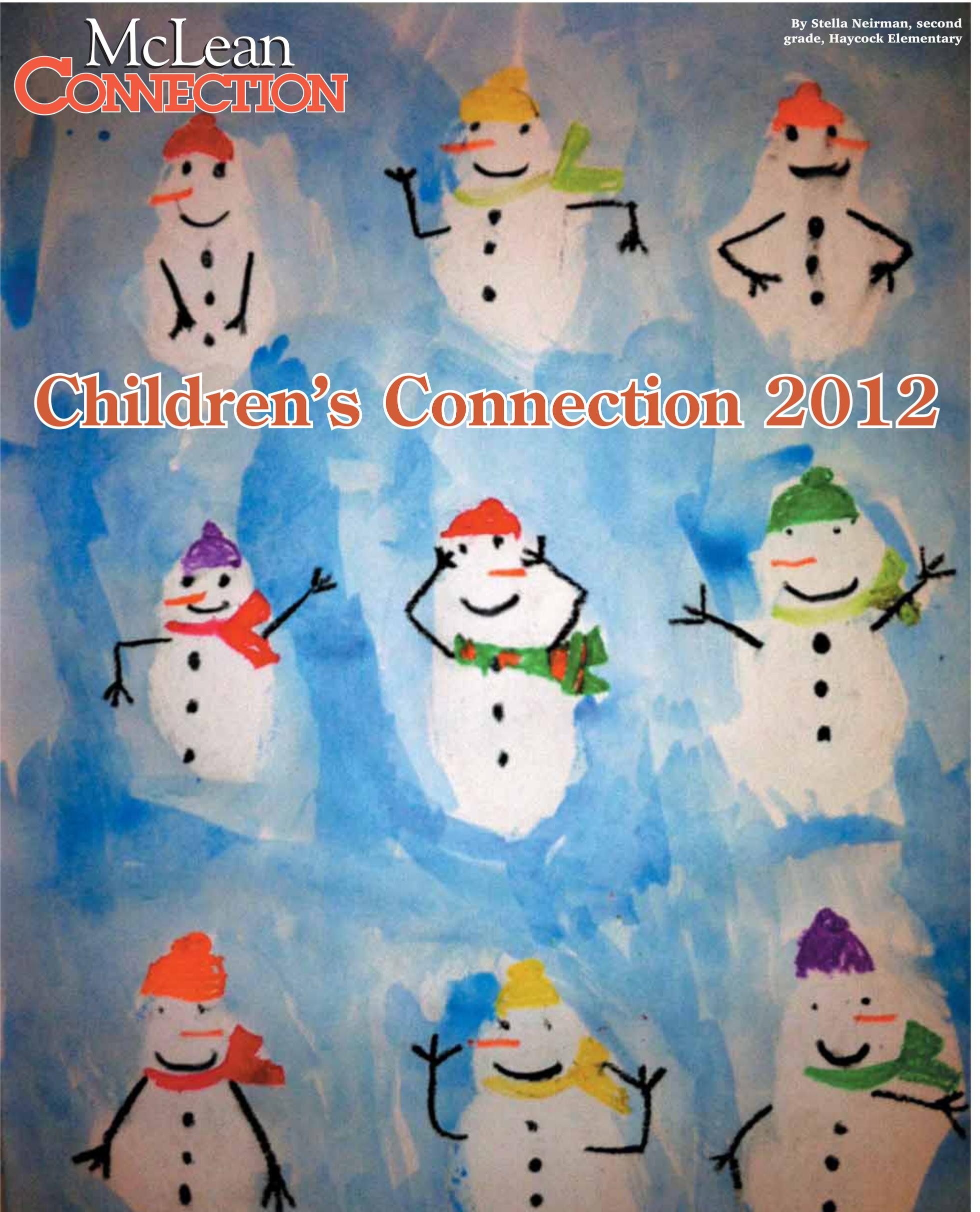
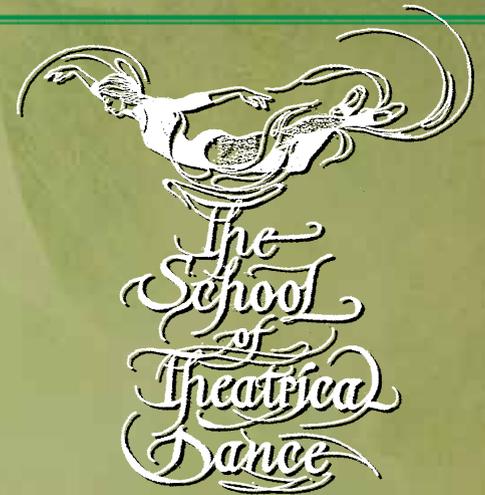


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The Dancers of The Great Falls Dance Theatre truly captured the joyous spirit of the season with their exuberant performance of Christmas Eve at the Nutcracker Club. Congratulations, Dancers!



ADULT COMPANY MEMBERS

(DANCERS) Florian Rouiller, Ashley O'Banion, Lisa Medici
(GUEST ARTIST) Michael Stokes
(ACTOR) Stewart Lawler

STUDENT COMPANY DANCERS

(FIVE CLASSES PER WEEK, AND LEVEL VII BALLET)
Rebecca Anger, Kate Fitzgerald, Alex Grieco, Mary Hagen Grow,
Jillian Lawler, Karsyn Lawler, Holly Lundeen, Allison Maebius,
Lauren Megrue, Dylan Murphy, Page Tofil,
Sara Warrington, Gabrielle White

SPECIAL GUEST ARTISTS

Retro Quartet of The Fairfax Jubil-Aires
Phil Merkel (Tenor), Art Medici (Lead),
Cliff Shoemaker (Baritone), Pat Varre (Bass)

APPRENTICES

(FIVE CLASSES PER WEEK, AND LEVEL VI BALLET)
Isabella Clapp, Sydney Copp, Taryn Dunlavy, Joanna Lundquist,
Meghan Marron, Sophia Nickles, Sydney Parks, Kaitlyn Pham,
Sarina Prasad, Sonia Prasad, Katie Satterfield, Taylor Smith,
Thora Toloczko, Emma Volanth, Aya White

JUNIOR APPRENTICES

(FOUR CLASSES PER WEEK, AND LEVEL V BALLET)
Emma Grassi, Sydney Pham, Leeann Soyka, Julia Steffy,
Julia Stucky, Anna Volanth, Ruth Wright, Jenna Zimmerman

STUDENT DANCERS

Katie Adler, Meghan Beskin, Haley Brandt, Emma Canann,
Brooke Combs, Pamela Kanal, Annie Mahoney, Kelly Marron,
Clara Nickles, Eliza Pastore, Erica Steffy, Laura Warrington

STUDENT ACTORS

Alyssa Medici, Christa Medici, Pierson White

760A Walker Road, Great Falls, VA

(In the Village Center above the Old Brogue)

Photography by
Tuan Pham

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012



Family Ritual, by Margaret K., eighth grade, Longfellow Middle.



By Kate Moore, third grade, Spring Hill Elementary.

Welcome

Dear Readers:

This week, the McLean Connection turns over its pages to the youth and students. We asked principals and teachers from area schools to encourage students to contribute their words, pictures and photos for our annual Children's Issue.

The response, as always, 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 2013 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.

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 pages.

Our preferred method for material is e-mail, which should be sent to mclean@connectionnewspapers.com, but you can reach us by mail at 1606 King Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 or call 703-778-9414 with any questions.

EDITOR KEMAL KURSPAHC



Magical Birth, by Victoria Cho of Great Falls, 12, seventh grade, Cooper Middle School.



By Elaine Li, 8, third grade, Churchill Road Elementary.



By Isabella Cai, first grade, Haycock Elementary.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012



Rain Garden, by A. DeJesus, eighth grade, Longfellow Middle.



Still Life, by Abigail F., eighth grade, Longfellow Middle.



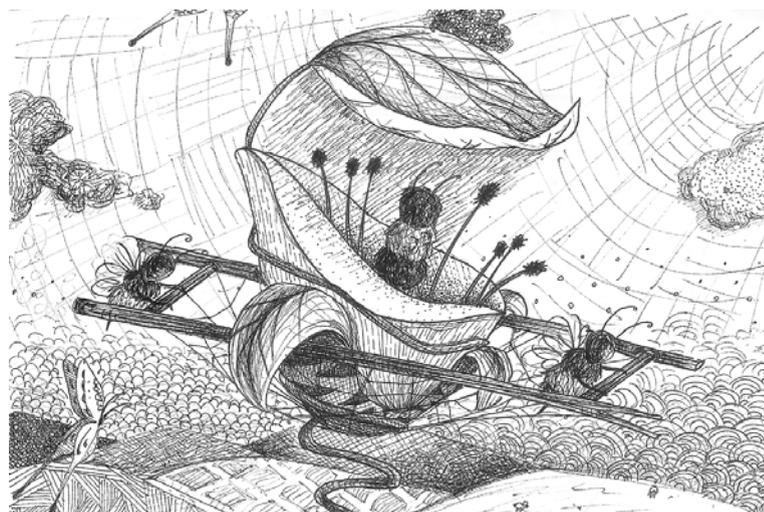
Rain Garden, by Caitlin N., seventh grade, Longfellow Middle.



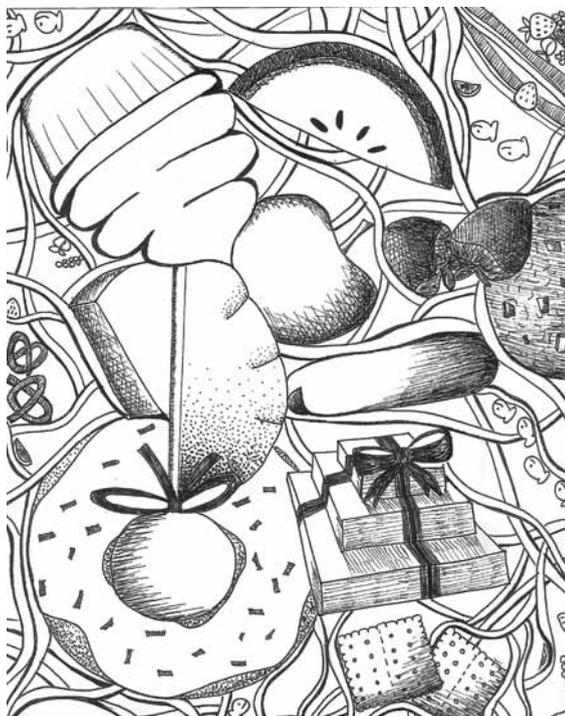
Family Ritual, by Anna L., eighth grade, Longfellow Middle.

LONGFELLOW
MIDDLE ART
GALLERY

Fantastic Transport, by Jaewon C., eighth grade, Longfellow Middle.



Doodle drawing, by Laura J., eighth grade, Longfellow Middle.



Doodle drawing, by Linda D., seventh grade, Longfellow Middle.

Knowing

BY ALEXANDER KAO-SOWA
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY

"Knowing is half the battle," they say.
But what if you do without knowing?
Would that be the other half?
If you do but you do not know,
would that be as important as knowing?
For every half of knowing, there is a half of doing.
But people say,
in their own way,
that knowing is better than doing.

Deceiving Amounts

We think that we have so much,
so many things in life.
We believe our money will never run out,
how one thousand is a lot.
But every day,
people find out
how much things cost.

Computers

Sleek and new,
they come in many a different hue.
There are Macs and Dells and Acers,
all three are our very top placers.
Computers are the centers of our lives,
you can trust them, and don't be surprised
if you find something new!
If we had no computers, what would we do?

Lonely

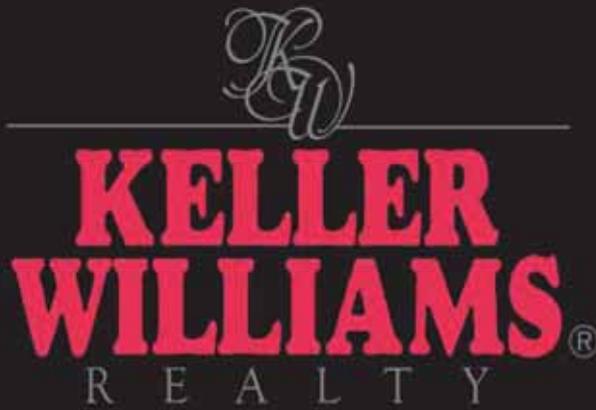
Our race, the humans,
have been lonely long enough.
With no one to guide us,
no one but ourselves,
on the blue sphere we call home.
The cosmos,
the universe,
all waiting to be discovered.

Pebbles on a Riverbank

The pebbles,
worn and weathered,
lie by the river,
dully shining in the moonlight.
You may kick them aside,
not care for them,
scorn them,
but remember,
they were once mighty mountains,
the grandfathers of our world.

On the Couch

I was sitting on the couch,
content to stay where I was.
But then,
as I doze,
I think,
What could I be missing?



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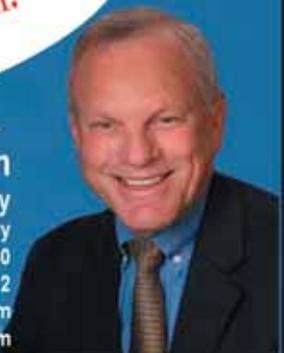
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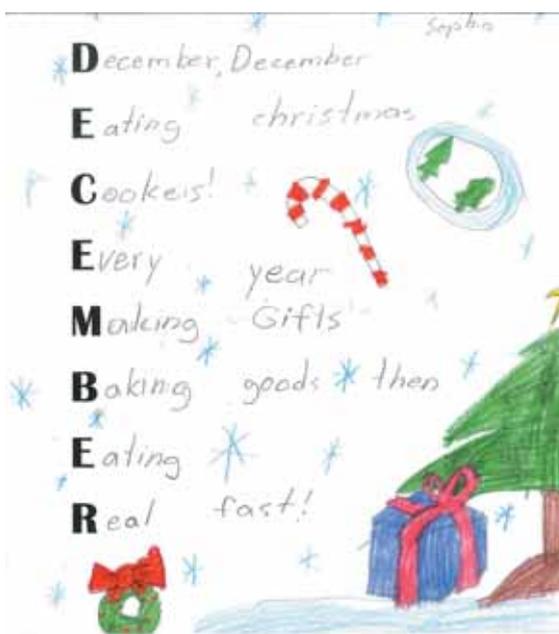
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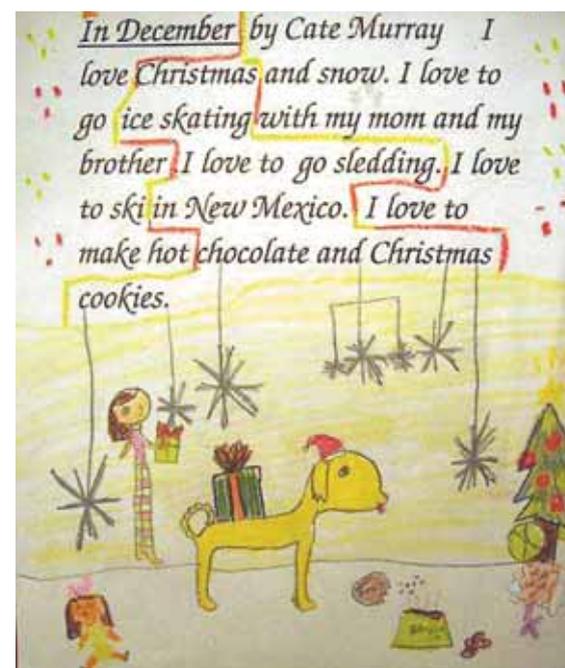
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By Sophia Lee, second grade, Churchill Road Elementary.

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By Cate Murray, second grade, Churchill Road Elementary.

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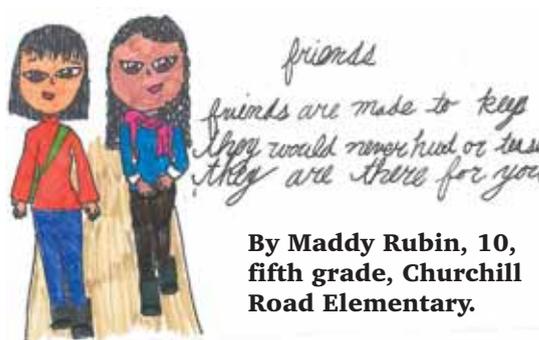
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By Isabel Zhang, 10, fifth grade, Churchill Road Elementary.



By Maddy Rubin, 10, fifth grade, Churchill Road Elementary.

The Qualities of a Good Friend

A good friend is someone you can trust
Someone who will help you when you're in a bust
Someone you can count on all the time
Someone who would give you that extra dime
Someone who's just like you
But has their own qualities too
Someone who can make you smile
Someone who will run that extra mile
Someone who has a heart of gold
Someone who is strong and bold
Those are the qualities of a good friend
Now is the time to say THE END.



By Zoe Gomez, 10, fifth grade, Churchill Road Elementary.

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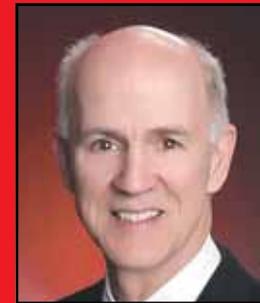
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012



By Anna Nguyen, sixth grade.



By Michael Mealey, fourth grade.



By Bedirham Akin, sixth grade.



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By
Sydney
Luttazi,
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Celebrate students, camps, schools, enrichment programs, colleges and more in our **A-plus: Education, Learning, Fun** pages, the third week of every month.

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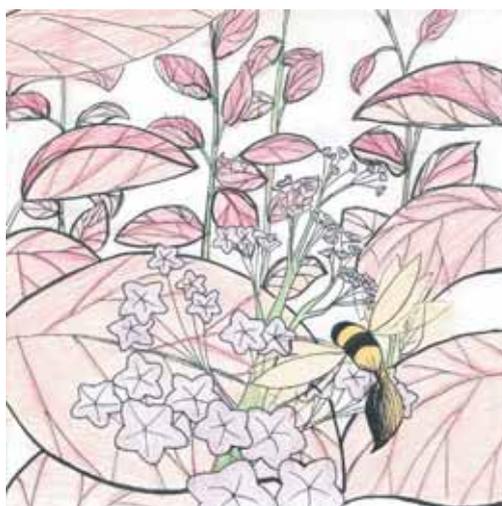
THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012

Rite of Passage

By FIONA DO, 14,
MCLEAN HIGH/NINTH GRADE

Different stages of a person's life
marking the special events and occasions,
celebrating the goals that have yet to be strived for.
Life goes on as seasons do,
from birth to death
one has to endeavor many complications along the way.
Won't say it is easy to handle,
won't say it will never end,
because serendipity seldom is present
in a world that is seen as indignant.
Sometimes sadness swallows us,
engulfs us until we asphyxiate,
Feeling like the whole world has turned on us.
That's when faith and hope starts to take place.
It really is a magical thing,
there is no other word to describe it.
Hope is not something that one can easily believe in
in a matter of time.
One can only wait and be taken onto a journey that awaits them,
patience takes skill and time.
We all say what we plan to do for the future,
but are we really meant to saunter through those paths of life?
No one will know for sure,
until they encounter the passage of life.
Fall in love,
shed some tears for the broken heart,
yearn for happiness
when feeling depressed.
Yearn for tranquility,
banish those troubles that seem to never end.
Yearn for inspiration
that will spark a new bright fire.



Rain Garden, by Audrey P., eighth grade, Longfellow Middle.

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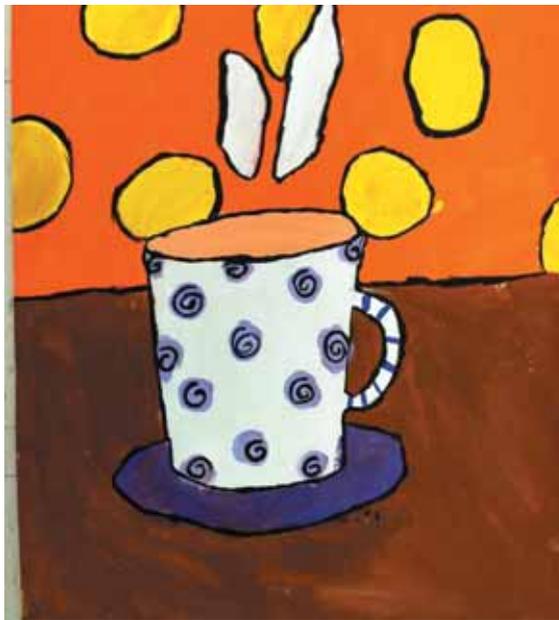
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012



By Livia Lampal, fourth grade, Haycock Elementary.

By Odessa Zhang, first grade, Haycock Elementary.

HAYCOCK GALLERY

Artwork from Haycock Elementary students.

By Audrey Morse, sixth grade, Haycock Elementary.

By Elliot Thames, kindergarten, Haycock Elementary.



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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012

Winter Holiday

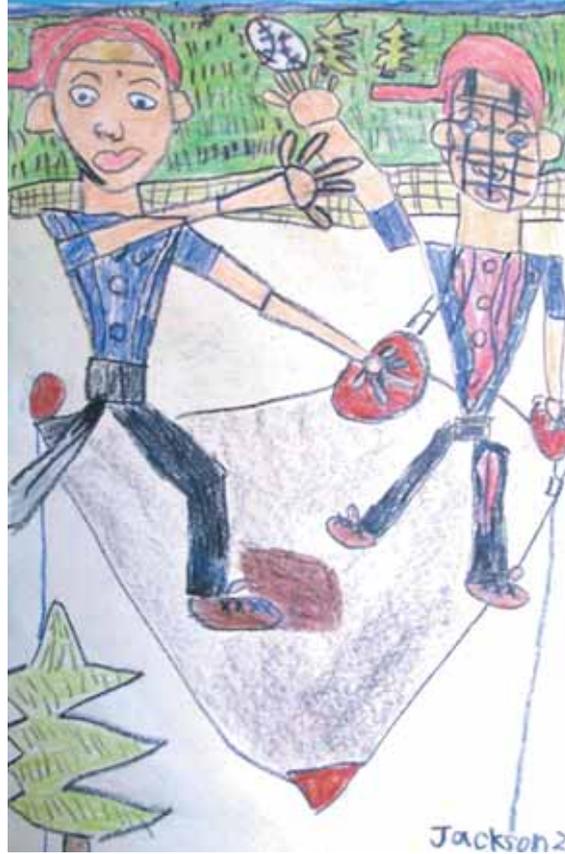
During the winter break I do a lot of activities. But there are two special holidays I celebrate. They are Christmas and New Year's Eve. I'm going to tell you some events that I do during these holidays.

During Christmas I would first go to a farm and cut down a tree with my family. When we go to the farm we would have a blast and we have been going for 11 years. But my mom and dad have been going for 20 years. Another thing we do is decorate the tree. We have three boxes of ornaments and we put them all on the tree. For the start, we all take turns to put it on the top of the tree. Another thing we do is make a Christmas wish list. Our Papou will call and ask us what we want for Christmas in his Santa voice. The last thing we do is go to church on Christmas Eve and then to our friends' Christmas party and we always have a great time. The best part of all is Christmas morning when my family gets to open all of their presents.

During New Year's Eve my family goes to our friends house except last year we stayed at my house. We have so much fun being with our friends. I have always thought it was cool to watch the ball drop. The best part is that we get to stay up until like 2 in the morning. But we always get sparkling apple cider that isn't that good.

So these holidays in winter break are amazing because I get to spend a lot of time with my family and friends. So overall these two holidays are awesome. I can't wait until next year!

—DILLON KALDES, SIXTH GRADE,
CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY



Neighborhood Friends, crayon, by Jackson Baldrate, second grade, Chesterbrook Elementary.

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McLEAN CONNECTION ♦ CHILDREN'S CONNECTION ♦ 2012 - 2013 ♦ 11

COOPER MIDDLE

What makes a good friend?

A good friend will always stand by your side. They will never purposely do anything to hurt you or make you feel bad. You can know that you are a good friend if you think about the way you treat people. Have you ever embarrassed someone on purpose or talked meanly about them behind their back? Do you keep their secrets?

Another major trait of a good friend is loyalty. A good friend will also help you if you need it. They won't watch you fail, they will save you from failure, or fail with you. They don't just have those days where they just stop talking to you or just start making fun of you. They won't suddenly ignore you or shoot down all of your ideas. A good friend will stay by you, and not let you fall.

— HANNAH CURTIS,
MCLEAN, 12, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

Many things can make a good friend. I think that a friend is someone who you can trust and believe without consideration. A good friend is someone who won't let you down and isn't afraid to be themselves. They strive to stick with you and do the right thing. They keep your secrets and don't go behind your back. They try to always have your back and would stick up for you in an instant. But even so, they realize they aren't perfect and don't expect themselves or you to be either. They know how to accept a loss and comfort you without hesitation. They try to stay friends and try to not take friendships for granted. They realize that even if you or they don't live up to their expectations that it is okay. Any of these qualities make up a good friend, but we know that nobody has all of them because we are only human and we aren't perfect in every way. We all have flaws but we still try in other ways. This is what makes a good friend.

— TIM FAHLGREN,
GREAT FALLS, 13, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

A good friend is someone who helps you and keeps you captivated. They are uplifting and understanding when you need them to be. A good friend can keep you laughing when there's nothing to laugh about. A good friend is someone who understands you when nobody else does. They are honest and never talk behind your back. They care about you and how you're feeling. A good friend doesn't have to explain something twice. You can read each other without words. A good friend doesn't care whether or not you're embarrassing them. They look at it in your perspective. As Atticus Finch says, "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view—until you climb into his skin and walk around in it." That's what a good friend does. Friends will always be there for each other, no matter the situation.

— ISABELLA CLAPP,
12, GREAT FALLS, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

A good friend is always there for you. All the time. A good friend will be there for you when you are happy and when something good happens, but a best friend is there when you're not always in the best mood or you're going through a tough time. They will hold your hand and be with you at any cost. I have a friend, and she always manages to make me smile. At the beginning of the long road of friendship, sometimes it is hard to live with that person, and they can get on your nerves occasionally, but once you become best friends, you learn that you cannot live without that person. And yes we fight, but that is not the important part. What really matters is that somehow, we always forgive each other. My friend has been with me and has shared all of the challenges in my life with me. When a close family member of mine passed away, she was there. I told her to leave me alone, but she just held my hand tighter. That is what makes a best friend.

— LAUREN CHRISTENSON,
GREAT FALLS, 12, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

SEE COOPER MIDDLE. PAGE 15

COOPER MIDDLE PHOTO GALLERY



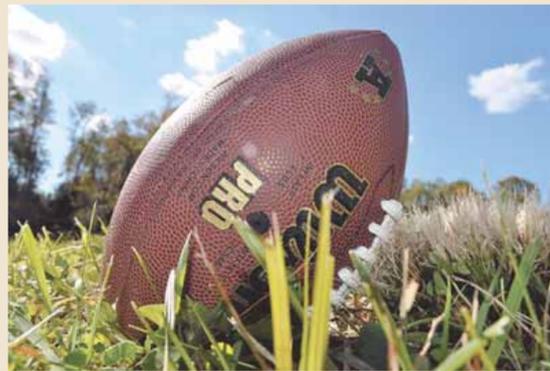
Dog, by Lauren Christenson of Great Falls, 12, seventh grade.



Rocky Path, by Isabella Clapp of Great Falls, 12, seventh grade.



Angle, by Blake Shabshab of McLean, 12, seventh grade.



Angles, by Patrick Welch of McLean, 13, seventh grade.



String of Lights, by Jackie Prestoy of McLean, 12, seventh grade.



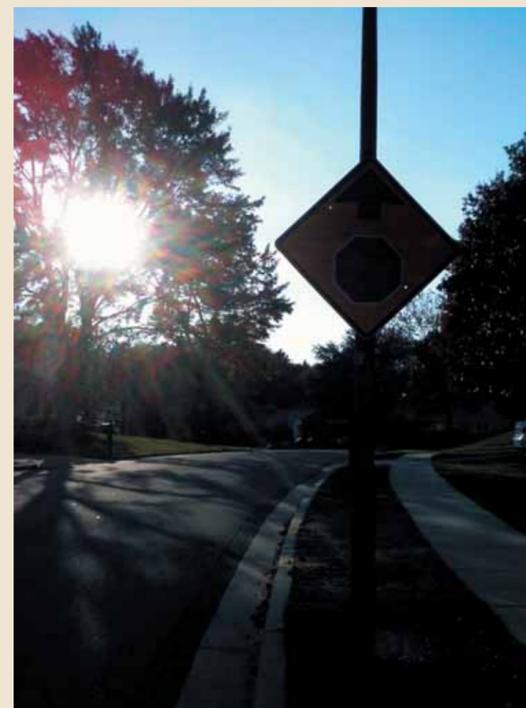
Bloom, by Anna Sampson of Great Falls, 14, eighth grade.



Berries, by Ben Hunt of McLean, 13, seventh grade.



Bus Ride, by Hailey McGrath of Great Falls, 13, eighth grade.



Hidden Sun, by Eden Ferreira of McLean, 12, seventh grade.

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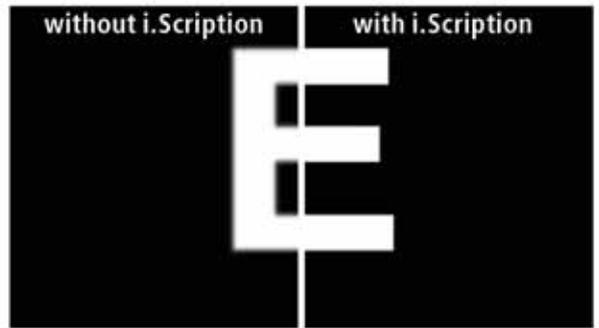
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LANGLEY HIGH



Lighthouse on Shore, by Abigail Paredes of Great Falls, 10, Lowes Island Elementary in Sterling.

COOPER MIDDLE

FROM PAGE 12

What is the best gift you've ever given?

Last year in sixth grade when I was at Great Falls Elementary we had an event where we made gifts for less fortunate children. We got to pick our groups, get a trike and we all got to put it together. My group whipped out a trike pretty quickly with no mistakes, happily smiling for the yearbook, though this did not really put me in the giving spirit. We finished the event by making more gifts such as scarves; in my opinion it was fun but empty.

It was after winter break and I was on the morning announcements. I turned the time over to one of my classmates and he showed the school a video of the kids receiving the trikes we made for them. Right after I saw that video I felt that we had made a big difference. Even though it was after the holidays I still felt in the giving mood. I noticed how happy the kids were and made me feel like we made a difference. Even though these kids were not our family we still brought joy to their lives.

— BENJAMIN JOHNSON,
GREAT FALLS, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

The Best Thing Ever

The best thing that ever happened to me was in the summer before eighth grade. Our swim team was having an incredible season, we were undefeated with one more meet left, and the team we were facing was undefeated too. It was not a good day for a meet; it was cold and rainy, the officials actually considered stopping the meet and doing it on a different day. Nobody was swimming their best times, and when the relays came around we needed to win more than half of them to win the meet. When my relay was up we needed to win two more. I was the last person in our relay; we had the lead, but not by very much when I was up, and the guy I was swimming against looked pretty fast. I swam as fast as I could and on my last stroke I reached as far as I could and I also looked at the lane next to me where he was swimming and saw I beat him. Then I saw the time boards and it was official, we won the race. Then when we finally won everyone went crazy because we were the champions!

—DUNCAN PROXMIER,
MCLEAN, 14, EIGHTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

A Hike From Winter to Spring

BY KATHERINE ROHLOFF, 16,
LANGLEY HIGH /TENTH GRADE

The wind whispered in my ear as the long swaying grasses gently tickled my fingertips
I gazed up at the grayish blue sky dotted with puffy clouds promising snow
The spicy scent of the mountain air deliciously engulfed me
I breathed it in, taking in the crisp piney taste
I continued walking in the meadow heading towards the dark line of the horizon overhead
The first flakes of snow floated down from the clouds into dusty layers
The crunching of my footsteps was all that could be heard
And the occasional red flash of feathers was my only company
I found a soft dirt path and followed it along the edge of the mountain—gradually descending along the twisting unknown

Until I heard the crisp sound of a waterfall flowing around the next bend in the trail
I approached it and felt a sudden urge to jump in
“Splash!”
The water shot up around me—raining down like glassy crystals
I dove beneath the surface and floated on my back just inches from the bottom
I gazed up at the rippling surface and saw the diffracted rays of sun shining down upon my face
I swam back up to the surface and grabbed a strong pointed rock
I got up, my clothes trickling icy water
I looked around and saw iridescent flowers
And a brilliantly blue sky
This could only mean one thing
The assurance of a beautiful spring

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One Big Fat Melting Pot

BY ANNIE LU, 12, MCLEAN
LONGFELLOW MIDDLE

Most girls love going to the mall and buying stuff. Consequently, so do I. But after a few trips to Tysons Corner Mall, I began to notice an interesting trend. On the walls, catalogues and other propaganda of clothing stores, there was a lack of Asian models. Being Asian myself, I found this a bit disturbing.

Standard Western beauty for women includes a tall, skinny figure, flawless skin and large eyes. Stereotypes are the gorgeous blonde beach girl and the pretty, seductive brunette. That usually makes it hard for women to "meet" those standards. But the scale of beauty is so wide, you might be considered beautiful in one country and ugly in another. So just because you're an Asian living in America you're not beautiful?

At the root of it all lies the media. All those celebrity faces that we consider gorgeous and talented don't represent America's diverse population. This influences what we see in other races. Sometimes we put people at higher or lower positions in our society based on prejudice and stereotypes. What's really troubling is that I'm seeing this happen in my own middle school.

People in my middle school who are Asians often have to try harder to fit in with the "in" group. Maybe I don't really know but, from what I've seen, it looks like it. They dye their hair, put on makeup and say they're bad at math or purposely do badly at math in order to avoid the general stereotype. Or in some way, they define themselves as different from what the media labels them to be.

The larger world plays a big role in small, modern middle school society. Asians are just one example but what about the other people? The Hispanics and Latinos, Arabs, Caucasians, African-Americans, etc.? Media reflects itself on the children because things like stereotypes first start with the faces we see and hear about every day and work themselves into our minds.

You might think it doesn't matter because we're just in middle school, but teens are actually pretty impressionable, even though we say we're not. And after a teen observes this happening in his or her own life, it stays with them. They look at themselves and others differently, whether it's a higher opinion or a lower one. And sometimes they hurt themselves.

It's kind of hard to picture how this idea associates with the modeling industry, but if you think harder, you'll see this all connects. Even though we're all in one big,

fat melting pot, we still need to learn how to accept different ethnic groups without prejudice and media should set a better example for children and teens.



By Lina Al-Atrash of McLean, 9, fourth grade, Churchill Road Elementary School.

I Watched it All

BY NADIA EUGENE JO, 11,
SIXTH GRADE/CHURCHILL ROAD
ELEMENTARY

I witnessed everything.
I watched it all happen.
I saw them choking him,
and I saw them kicking her.
I saw them taping "Hit me"
signs and I saw them posting ru-
mors.

I witnessed everything.
I watched it all happen.
My friends and I, we're all too
scared—
too scared to do what's right.
I don't want to be targeted;
I want safety, even if I become
the bystander.

Tomorrow, I'll go to school,
and will watch it all happen
again.

Marathon

BY NADIA EUGENE JO, 11,
SIXTH GRADE/CHURCHILL ROAD
ELEMENTARY

Sweat trickling down my back
Heart pumping to go forward
Hours of running and panting
Shoes wearing and tearing

No thoughts in my head
Just moving
No idea how I'm running
Just automatic
A sign catches my eyes
"1 mile to go."
With a sigh I run faster,
hoping for it to be over.
A line pops up in my mind:
"I can do it."
This is the time to never give up.
In the loud cheer I see the finish
line.
Each step brings me closer
as I spread my arms wider.
I break through the ribbon—
finally I made it.
In this race and also my own.

December Days

BY ERICA HARP, 12,
SEVENTH GRADE, LONGFELLOW MIDDLE

The world is like a Pfeffernüsse,
candy canes cover every lane.
Gingerbread houses on every floor,
smiling faces at every door.



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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012

Letters to the President

Excerpts from letters written by Cooper Middle School students.

Dear Barack Obama,
 . . . When I found out the man responsible for 9/11 had been found and killed because of you I was very happy/relieved. I feel safer now and think that your acts towards terrorism have been great and are exactly what you need to do. When I first watched the 9/11 I was heartbroken and scared but that went away when I thought about what you have done to bring closure to some families who lost loved ones. I hope you keep protecting our country the way you are and are doing anything possible to get rid of those terrorists who want to bring harm here.

—MEGAN KILDUFF, SEVENTH GRADER, COOPER MIDDLE

Dear Mr. President,
 America, to me, is a home, a place to express myself and a place of freedom. I think that America stands for freedom. People have the rights to practice any religion, beliefs, etc. It is also a great place to come and start a new life. My vision for America's future is a place where people can, with some hard work, get a well-paying job,

get along better with other countries and for anyone to be able to afford a good education. I hope that together we can make America a better place to live.

My biggest concern with America is the economy. It is getting harder and harder to find jobs and the amount of un-employed people is increasing. I think a way to help this is to have more products made in America instead of China. This would increase the number of jobs because we would need workers to replace the production we got from China. The economy is a big concern of mine, and I hope you will be able to do something to make it better . . .

—MATTHEW FEINSTEIN, 12, MCLEAN, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

Dear Mr. President,
 . . . One main thing that I as a minor am worried about is the job crisis. I feel like I won't be able to get a job and the job I do get might not be my first choice of job. All I ask you is to try to find ways and industries to make more jobs. I do realize that it is a major concern

among most Americans and that I am just another one, but I hope you do find a way to do this. And I know how the saying goes, "You can't make everyone happy." But I feel that if there is one thing that America needs help with most, it is jobs. . . .

Yours sincerely,

—TIM FAHLGREN, 12, GREAT FALLS, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

Dear President Obama,
 . . . Over the next four years you will be faced with many problems that will need to be resolved with challenging decisions, and one of the biggest problems is education. I believe that everyone should get an equal opportunity for education. No matter where they come from or where they live, everyone should be able to receive a quality education that will build a base for the future. I also think that everyone deserves the right to go to college no matter their heritage or ethnic background because all young adults in America should be able to have the choice to attend or not attend college. Also, I think that universities and colleges

should not use race as a determining factor when choosing which students to accept into their school. In conclusion, I believe that America should be a country that allows each student to get an education to help them in the future. . . .

Congratulations on winning a second term as being president. I believe that you will be a great president and will handle these and many other issues very well. I wish you the best of luck over the next four years.

Sincerely,

—ISABEL BARNEY, 12, MCLEAN, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

Dear Mr. Barack Obama,
 . . . America means so much to me because I was raised here since I was a child. During that time my parents have repeatedly told me how lucky my sister and I are. We didn't need to leave our homelands to start a new life in a new country, we didn't need to declare a war every time we never go a day without having food or water. To me America means a country where people have a say in

change and you can get whatever you want if you try hard enough or don't give up. This country stands for equality, justice, rights and much more that I believe cannot be placed into words. . . .

Sincerely,

—ERICA YAP, 12, GREAT FALLS, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

Dear Mr. President Obama,
 Congratulations on getting re-elected! My family voted for you! American means a country of freedom. It also stands for having sovereignty of any belief or religion. My vision of the ideal future of America is a country of freeness with a powerful economy, many jobs available for the citizens of the U.S, and an affordable economy with people having a bunch of opportunities like going to college, having their choice of job and believing in any belief. . . .

Thank you for your time, sincerely,

—PARISA HAJI, 12, GREAT FALLS, SEVENTH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

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What Am I Thinking?



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

What I think I feel. What I'm afraid to think I feel. Moreover, is what I feel symptomatic of what I'm afraid to feel? Is it the cancer doing what cancer so often does: create pain and suffering? Or is it simply an older age than I've ever been: middle age, manifesting itself with all the associated mental, physical and emotional adjustments that come along with living longer than you ever have? Unfortunately, the timing of all of it couldn't be more problematic in my determining whether any pain or discomfort I feel is symptomatic of a cancer on the move or characteristic of an age whose effects I'm only beginning to understand.

The underlying and complicating factor to my constant self-assessment is that I don't want to think any of the physical effects I feel are the cancer. I want to believe they're middle age. As a result of this continual denial, I neglect to admit that what I think I feel is potentially cancer-significant and presume instead that it's just another day in middle-age paradise (alive and reasonably well; not terminal) – it's befuddling, sort of. Am I being incredibly stupid, stubborn and irresponsible with respect to not acknowledging certain symptoms that might be e-mail-worthy to my oncologist or, have I found the key to living with cancer: not making too much of anything?

I feel this because I worry that once I open that door, I'm likely going through to the other side – and likely not coming back. As my father jokingly asserted about his car: "If I don't take it to the dealership, they can't find anything wrong with it." The related advisory concerning life and health that I've often heard is: once you're admitted to the hospital, you're not coming out – alive. It's a slippery slope between the fear and loathing (with attribution to Hunter S. Thompson) of being sick and lying in a hospital bed versus what the medical professionals don't know not being able to hurt me. (I know, I might as well be Judy Garland in "The Wizard of Oz" clicking my heels together three times: I don't have cancer. I don't have cancer. I don't have cancer.)

But the fact that I'm still alive and not just beating the life-expectancy odds I was given, but smashing them to smithereens, is a kind of reinforcer to "what I feel" and "what I'm afraid to think I feel." Having survived for as long as I have might just be blind luck or inherited DNA doing what I had no reason or expectation to believe it could: enable me to survive the stage IV non-small cell lung cancer with which I was originally diagnosed and live beyond the "13-month to two-year prognosis" that went along with it. Or, however, why ever I'm doing what I'm doing, or not doing what I'm not doing or not admitting what is likely symptomatic – or not; all this confusion, juxtaposing and double-negative rationalizing might somehow make a positive.

I realize this haphazard approach is hardly a strategy, but perhaps it is and has been so far, a means not to my end. And considering that I haven't reached that end as yet, maybe the means are justified? No one knows for sure, and that's what I'm counting on. It's too late to stop now; heck, why would I? See you next week.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

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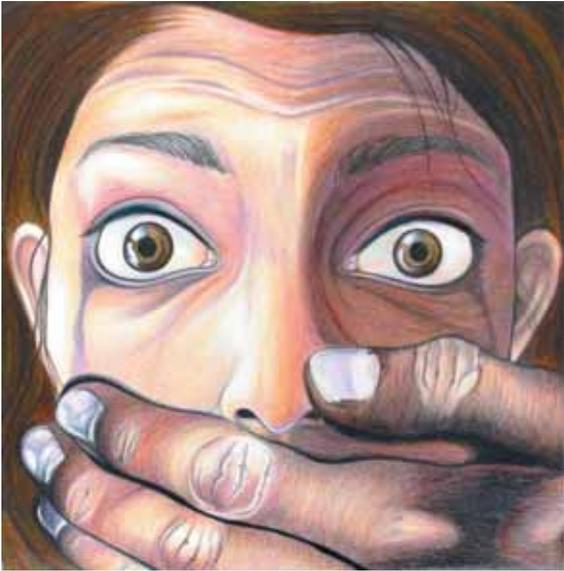
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-Abraham Lincoln

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012

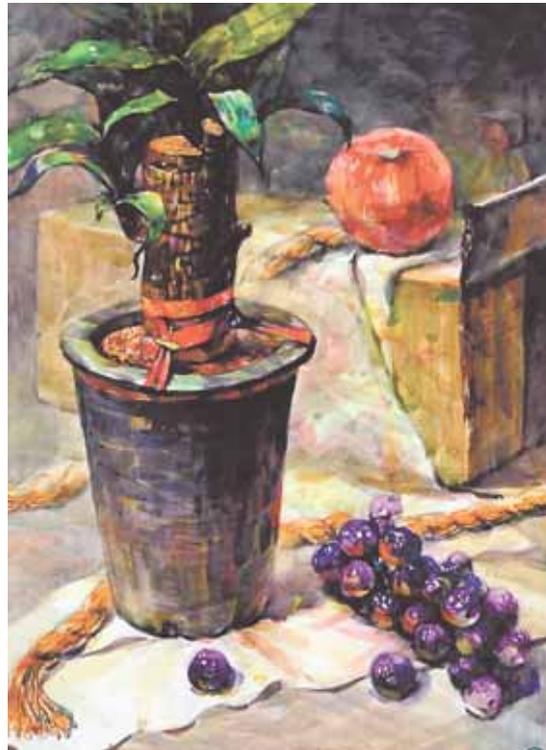


By Pari Sheth, 17, 12th grade, Marshall High.



MARSHALL HIGH ART GALLERY

Artwork from Marshall High students submitted by Nicole Walter, Art Teacher, Fine & Performing Arts Department Chair.



By Victoria Choi, 18, 12th grade, Marshall High.

By Alexandra Sandlin, 17, 12th grade, Marshall High.

WRITING

Santa

BY FIONA CARCANI/SIXTH GRADE
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY

My parents told me that Santa,
Would come and give me gifts,
But all my friends at school,
Said that Santa doesn't exist!
So on the night of Christmas,
I went downstairs to peek.
What I saw right then and there,
Left me in awe for one whole
week,
"Ho, ho, ho!" shouted a merry
man,
As I walked down the stairs,
His mouth was completely
covered,
By an abundance of snow white
hairs,
In his hand he held a gift,
Undoubtedly for me,
And at the sight of him,
I wanted to shout with glee,
"Ho, ho, ho!" he said again,
And then he disappeared,
And I still believe in Santa,
Though everyone thinks I'm
weird,
So here's some advice,
For you who want to know what's
true,
Don't listen to anyone else,
Only listen to you.

Sunrise

BY WENBO WU/SIXTH GRADE
HAYCOCK ES

The world is waking:
The night is gone.
Birds hopped out of
Nests with wanted
Light.
Despite the shivering
Cold of night,
They are ready to
Take the bright
Of
Sunrise.
Colors of
Red, orange, purple, yellow, and
blue
Of hue Flash
And blend,
With a dash.
Where's it all
Mistakes shall now mend;
The bend
Of Midnight.
The Earth turning to face
The Sun.
Morning, morning:
A new day approaches.
I'm ready!

A Letter to My Cafeteria Lunch Food

BY SAMANTHA YAP/SIXTH GRADE
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY

Friday, Nov. 30, 2012
U R DSGUSTING School Cafeteria,
Ewww St., 12345 VA

Dear Disgusting Lumps of UFO
(unidentified food objects)
Cafeteria Food,
Why do I have to eat you? The
teachers, the school board, and my
parents claim you are "safe to eat"
but we kids know the truth. The
hot dogs bounce on the floor, the
milk is expired, and someone swore
they found plastic in the chicken.
And don't get me started on the
pizza! I think the people that make
you use the same ingredient for
everything: rubber. Plus, I'm
convinced there is a secret
conspiracy that reuses you. If you

don't want to change your taste, at
least change your smell so that I
don't have to wear nose clips to
school every day. I beg you to not
taste or smell so horrible!

A Disgusted Student,
Com P. Laint

Dreams

BY LAUREN COOK/SIXTH GRADE
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY

I have dreams.
That one day the earth will not be
polluted.
That not one tree will be missing
from a forest.
That an angel might come to
earth and be happy about what he
sees.
That maybe, just maybe, if people
thought, these dreams might come
true.

Seasons

BY LORA ZHOU/SIXTH GRADE
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY

A warm sun engulfs you
Lighting the air with fresh joy
Dew coats the green grass
Birds fill the air with lullaby
Sounds of laughing fill the air
Lemonade is being sold by the
dozen
The hot sun beats down on the
Earth
Beaches are filled with people
A cold breeze whips through the
air
Leaves of many colors and sizes
pile on the ground
Children are dressed in warm
coats
Squirrels are scurrying around,
waiting for winter
A white blanket of snow covers
the Earth
Snowmen are seen for miles and
miles
Mammals of all kinds are sleeping
away
While children play in the snow

Winter

BY RITIKA SHRIVASTAV/SIXTH
GRADE
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY

Quiet...
The cold wind
On the
Cheek
Snow falling
The land is
White
Silence...
White trees
Freezing
In the
Cool breeze
Nature
Living
Its
Life
The Perfect Christmas
Green tree
Lights
Ornaments
Delightful singing
Family...
Presents in
Stockings
Wrapped with
Bows and paper
Under tree
All around
White snow
Covering the ground,
The world
All is white
People talking, laughing
Cookies
Mugs of chocolate
What is your Christmas like?



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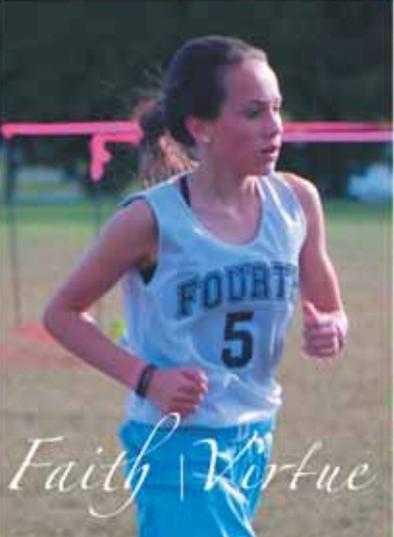
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Knowledge

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2012

CHESTERBROOK ELEMENTARY ART GALLERY

Sara Kodosi, art specialist at Chesterbrook Elementary, has submitted a selection of artwork by Chesterbrook students.



Move It, Move It, oil pastel, by Alex Feehan, fourth grade, Chesterbrook Elementary.



Cultural Identity, crayon, by Izzy Small, third grade, Chesterbrook Elementary.

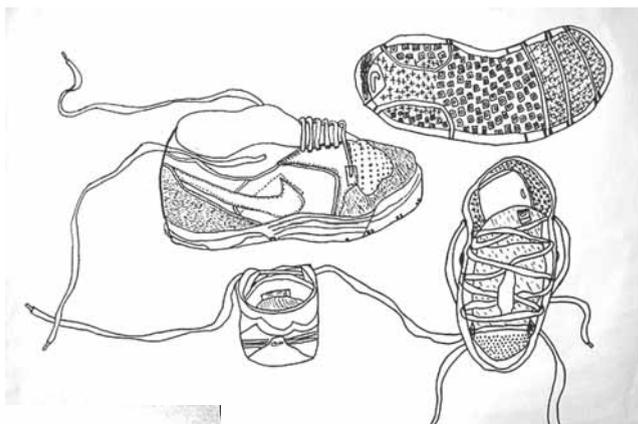


I Am Special, crayon, by Vanessa Haubold, kindergarten, Chesterbrook Elementary.

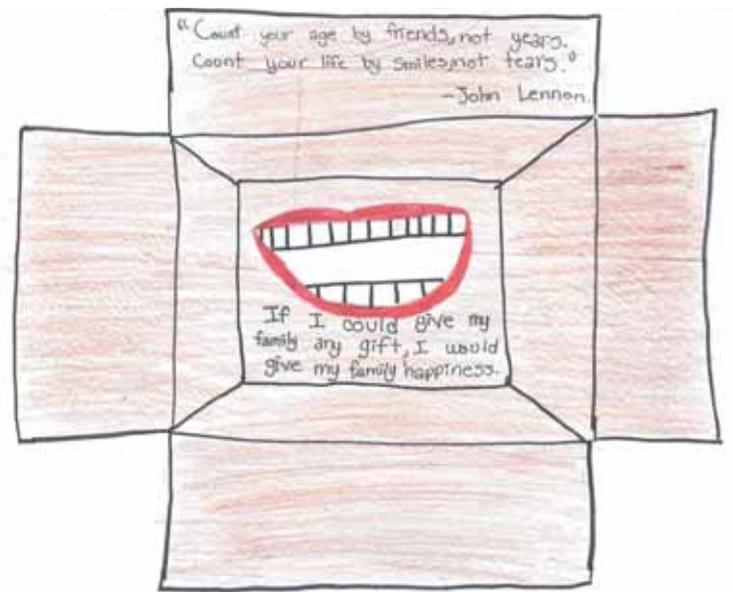


Family Helper, crayon, by Campbell Hughes, first grade, Chesterbrook Elementary.

Shoe Contour Drawing, pen, by Jake Rothenber, fifth grade, Chesterbrook Elementary.



Plant Contour Drawing, pen, by Keiichiro Watanabe, sixth grade, Chesterbrook Elementary.



By Yujin Kim, 10, fifth grade, Churchill Road Elementary.

New York New Years

BY AMANDA HIRSCH/SIXTH GRADE
CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY

All huddled together in an apartment (13th Street East), the Hirschs rest.

Tomorrow morning is New Year's Day; they were a little anxious they still had so much to do and say.

The girls saw a Broadway show and boys enjoyed a stroll in the snow.

Sparkly 2012 glasses were upon our eyes and we are determined to stay up late tonight.

My grandparents are asleep and are missing my favorite part, watching the ball drop.

I watched the ball drop and saw it slow time; it's way past my bedtime!

The year's beginning and end in one night is quite a sight!

Then when all is well we disappear into the snow because it's a long way home.

Hanukkah

BY SEAN GUBERMAN/SIXTH GRADE
CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY

Hanukkah is a holiday that lasts eight days, and the word means dedication. It's celebrated in my house because I'm Jewish.

During Hanukkah we light eight candles over eight days. Each night we add a candle to the menorah. We also spin the dreidel, and if you get certain letters you can win or lose coins. We also eat special kinds of food like latkes and donuts.

Hanukkah started when the Macabees defeated the Greek and Syrian army. The Greeks and Syrians had damaged the temple. The Jews only had enough oil to last one day. When they came back with more oil, the original oil lasted eight days. Since then, most Jewish families light a gold menorah, spin dreidels and eat Jewish food.

As you can see on Hanukkah we do a lot of traditions that are Jewish. I hope you understand Hanukkah and about the Jewish culture.



By Lila Pournaras, 10, fifth grade, Churchill Road Elementary

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