

and Oakton
Vienna
CONNECTION

Children's Connection 2013

The Christmas Store,
by Jacqueline Palmer, 2nd Grade,
Colvin Run Elementary.

DECEMBER 25-31, 2013

ONLINE AT WWW.CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM



2013 FCFT President's Award



*for Outstanding Advocacy
for the Employees of FCPS*

Megan McLaughlin (Braddock District)

Elizabeth Schultz (Springfield District)

Pat Hynes (Hunter Mill District)

Patty Reed (Providence District)

Sandy Evans (Mason District)

Dan Storck (Mount Vernon District)

Tammy Derenak Kaufax (Lee District)

Ryan McElveen (At-Large)

Janie Strauss (Dranesville District)

Pat Herrity (Supervisor: Springfield District)

Kaye Kory (Delegate: 38th District)

Other Award Winners:

Phyllis Pajardo (FCPS)

Louise Epstein (FEC)

Michael Hairston (FEA)

Erica Hendry (media)

The Fairfax County Federation of Teachers would like to thank all of the 2013 award winners listed above for their consistent advocacy, proactive communications, and support of our workforce over the past year. We publicly acknowledge their efforts to make a difference in the lives of FCPS employees. Thank you for caring about us; it matters and is appreciated.



CHILDREN'S CONNECTION 2013



Tidewater Beach by Lauren Sung, 4th grade, Colvin Run Elementary.



By Emily Stevens, Thoreau Middle School.

Welcome

Dear Readers:

This week, the Vienna and Oakton 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.

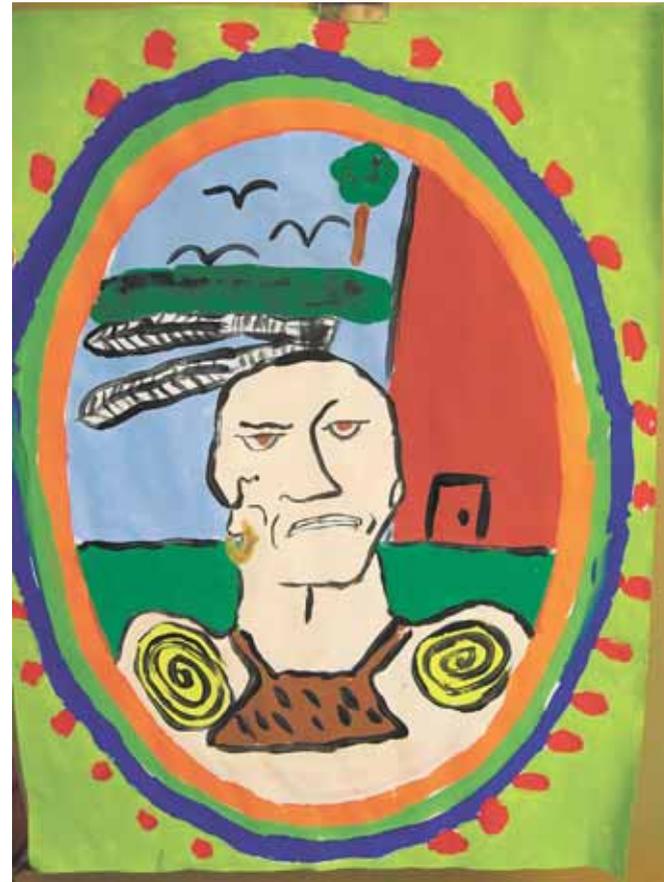
We appreciate the extra effort made by school staff to gather the materials during their busy time leading up to the holidays. We'd also like to encourage both schools and parents to mark their 2014 calendars for early December, the deadline for submissions for next year's Children's Connection.

Please keep us in mind as your children continue to create spectacular works of art and inspiring pieces of writing in the coming year.

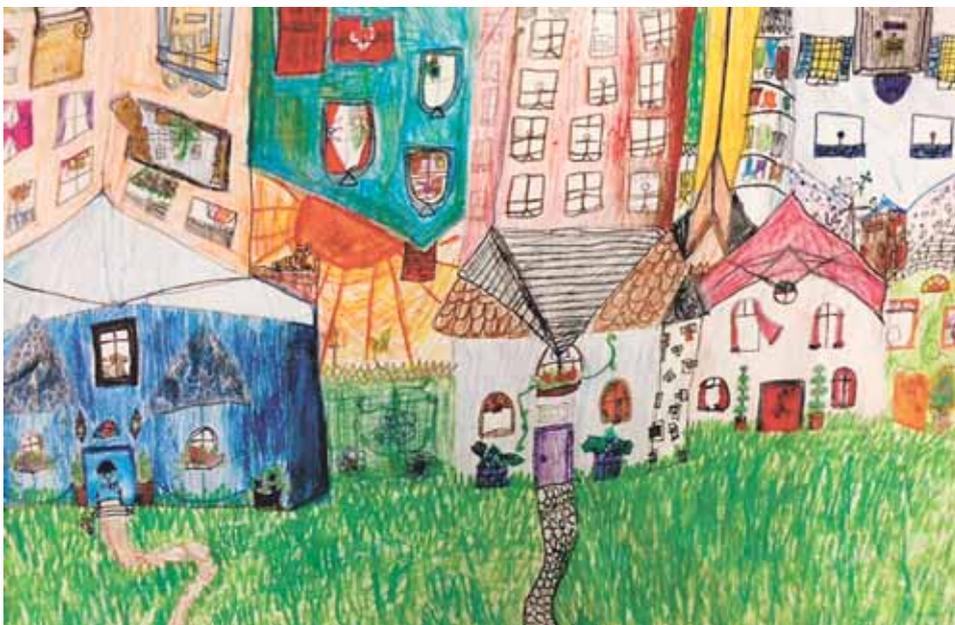
The children's issue is only a part of our year-round commitment to cover education and our local schools. As always, the Connection welcomes letters to the editor, story ideas, calendar listings and notices of local events from our readers. Photos and other submissions about special events at schools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

Our preferred method for material is e-mail, which should be sent to vienna@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



By Cesar Hilaraca-Chavez, 4th grade, Cunningham Park Elementary.



By Lucy Bowman, 6th grade, Vienna Elementary.



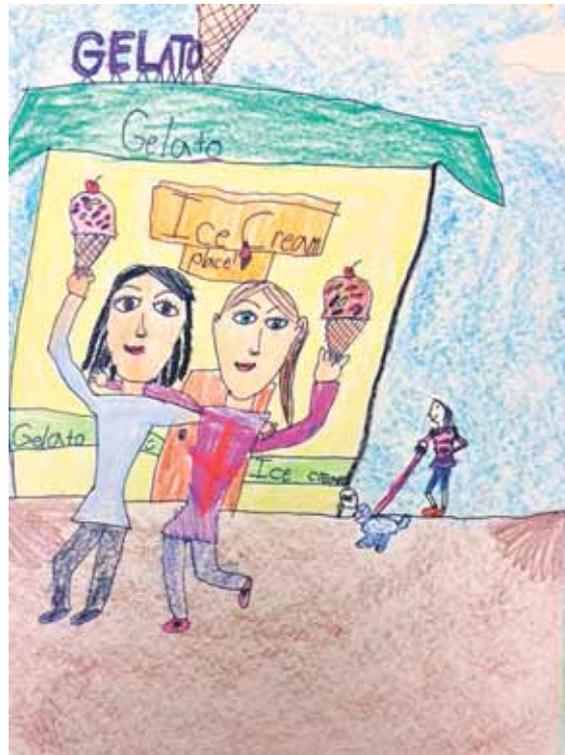
By Tyler Jensen, 4th grade, Haycock Elementary School.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

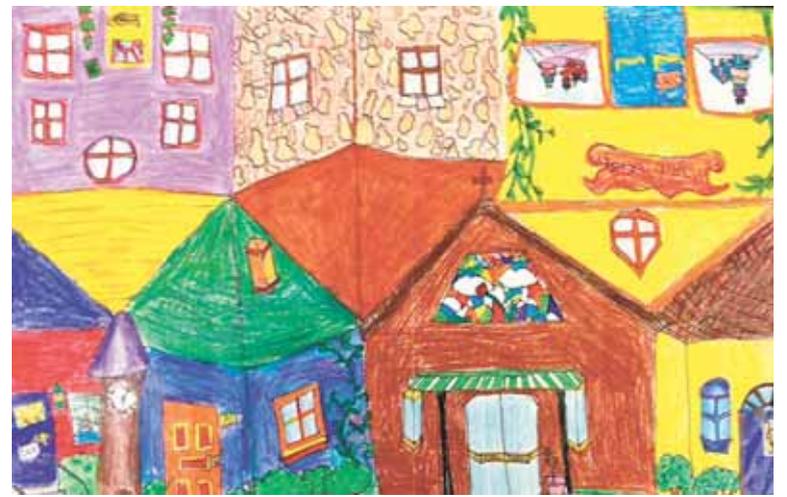
VIENNA ELEMENTARY GALLERY



By Addie McInerney, 1st grade,
Vienna Elementary.



By Nargiz Garibova, 2nd grade,
Vienna Elementary.



By Kyra Sanders,
6th grade,
Vienna Elementary.



By Owen Coleman,
3rd grade,
Vienna Elementary.

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

VIENNA ELEMENTARY REFLECTIONS

What Makes a Good Friend?

Good friends don't laugh at you when you do something embarrassing. Best friends are always there for each other when they need each other. Best friends tend to play a lot with each other. That is just what friends and BFFs do. When you get into arguments BFF should always be there for you and help defend you. I think you should argue with your friends and BFF's to release your stress. I bet you will soon get a BFF or at least a friend.

— AINONA BLACK-PLANAS,
5TH GRADE,
VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

What Makes a Good Friend?

You always need your best friends. They're what makes your life complete. Your friends should always be caring, loving, trustworthy, and loyal. Without them our world wouldn't be as fun. No matter what, good friends should be there "if you fall and they should help you get back up." Sometimes in your life you need love, support, and courage and that is what friends are there for. A good friend should also feel comfortable and safe around you. My friends are all these things and so much more and that's what makes them good friends.

— JORDAN RAMSEY,
5TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

When I Grow Up...

Growing up is a long way off and there are so many different jobs to choose from, but if I had to choose right now I would like to be a doctor. Being a doctor is a good job because, there are many people who are sick and in need. I could begin my doctor career in a third world country. I could travel all around the globe helping people that are sick, because when helping others I am as satisfied as king. Certainly I hope one day I will become a doctor.

— HANNAH PATTON,
5TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



By Mia Valencic, 6th grade, Chesterbrook Elementary.

When I Grow Up...

When I grow up I want to be an architect because I play all these games that you get to build. My two favorite games are Roblox and Roller-Coaster Tycoon. I am interested in how things were built and created, like the Empire State Building. I usually help my dad with work that he does in our basement, like putting up the walls. I think being an architect is going to be a very fun job. My grandpa used to be an architect, so I want to be one too!

— HUNTER MOSS,
5TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

When I Grow Up...

When I grow up I want to be like my dad. My dad works for the C.I.A. The reason I want to be like my dad is because I love math and my dad needs to do a lot of math for his job. My dad programs computer chips and makes soft wear. My dad gets access to the old stuff that used to be in the miniature museum. The things they have in there are rockets and model buildings of the C.I.A. In conclusion, there is no other job for me but this.

— GRAY EVERSMAAN,
5TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

When I Grow Up...

When I grow up, I would like to be a pilot. The reason I want to be a pilot is because I love flying. The reason I love flying is because it is fun, awesome, and enjoyable. If I had a choice to choose what plane I would get it would be a plane with Kirby all over it. The reason why is because I like Kirby. If I had a choice to choose where to fly to take things or people to, that place would be Japan or the Bahamas because I really enjoy those places.

— KEN WEINTRAUB,
5TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

When I Grow Up...

When I grow up I want to be a professional Irish dancer, because I love to Irish dance. I have been dancing since I was 7, and I am never going to quit. I have met a lot of awesome friends like Maddie, Claire, Ava, Emily, Kathleen, Meagan, Denneen, and Jillian. I have amazing teachers and their names are Ms. Liz, Mrs. Alana, Mrs. Ellen, and Katie. I love to dance and those are the reasons that I want to be a professional Irish dancer when I grow up.

— SYDNEY OLECHNA,
5TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

When I Grow Up...

When I grow up I want to be a professional baseball player. My dream team, the Philadelphia Phillies would be the team I would like to get drafted on. My dad was from Philadelphia so that's why I love the Phillies. I would want to hit 4th in the batting order just like my favorite player Ryan Howard. Baseball players make lots of money so that's great. I really love baseball and it would be an awesome job. The ball would soar high up into the sky from my bat. This job would be a dream come true.

— LEIGHTON HELLER,
5TH GRADE,
VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A Gift to My Parents

If I could give any gift to my parents it would be love. Love is strong and my parents definitely deserve it. They do so much for me. I love them a lot and I think I love them more than they love me. They are really nice and they discipline me which is good. I am very happy to give my parents love 24/7. They do and provide so much for me, I wish to repay them. Every day I give them love and I'm very proud of that.

— SARAH KIM,
5TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Looking Down Yosemite Valley

What to make of your impenetrable beauty.

Gaping cliffs in a shining sunset.
Stone glaciers at jaw-dropping heights.
But most of all
You alone...

— KAI MCCLOSKEY,
4TH GRADE, VIENNA ELEMENTARY

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

When I Grow Up...

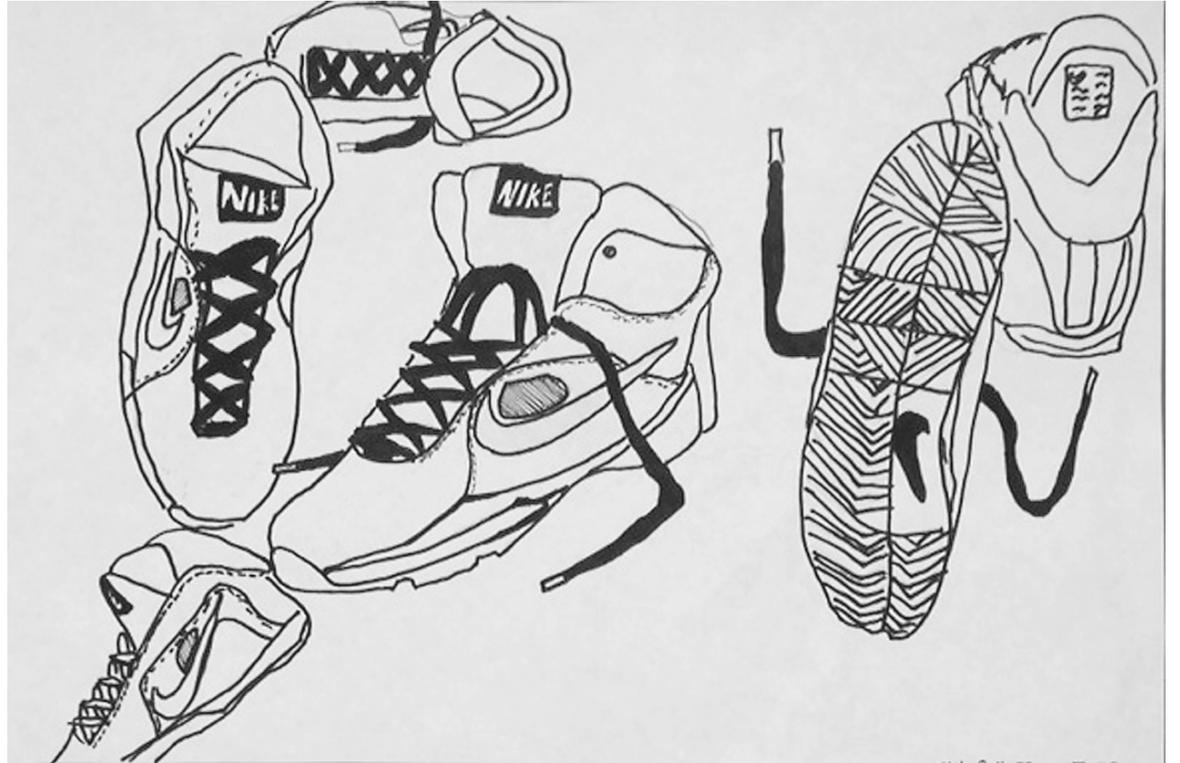
When I grow up, I want to cure cancer. I want to do this, because cancer is a terrible thing. I have friends whose relatives have died from cancer. It makes me feel sad, angry and confused that we don't have a cure. In order to cure cancer, I will need to become a doctor that studies how cells change to cancer cells. I will study hard and go to medical school. I think I want to go to Harvard or Johns Hopkins.

— REAGAN EXLEY,
2ND GRADE,
COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY

corn. There would be about 11 or 15 people guests. Everyone would be laughing and dancing and there would be so much fun! Then my parents would come down the stairs. Once they were there....we would shower them with presents! After that we would eat the cake and cookies. They would love it. Now that you heard what I would give them, what would you give them?

— AMELIA MOORE,
2ND GRADE,
COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY

I have been thinking, my parents have been brilliant and helpful beyond words. I wish that I could give them something pleasant, but my lack of money got the best of me. Oh, I know! How about a savory meal? It strangely has a priceless value, but it's free! How odd is that? To hold them over, my mom and dad would love a petite appetizer of respect. It soothes the throat because yelling at the top of your lungs is not necessary. Perhaps a refreshing glass of responsibility will help wash that down. Later, I'll serve them an entrée of



By Nate Salkoff, 5th grade, Chesterbrook Elementary, McLean.

If You Could Give Your Parents Any Gift, What Would it Be?

I would give them a surprise party! Why? To show how much I care about them. It would have balloons and cake with cookies and of course ice cream with pop-

deep-fried kindness with a side of good attitudes. Along with that flavor, I'll give a cup of honesty sauce. Yum yum! If they still have room left, I might as well take all fine

behavior in store and pop it into my mental blender for a sweet surprise! Don't forget manners a la' mode! I know this will make my parents eyes light up with joy more

than anything else I could give. This makes me feel warm and fuzzy as if the whole world is made of thick, luscious cashmere! Now that is what I call the gift that keeps on giving!

—REAGAN ALLVIN,
4TH GRADE,
COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY

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|---|---|---|



The Best Gift

The best gift I've ever been given is my little sister Elinor. I love her so much, she is so special to me. Her birthday is July 27. When I am not busy, I always play with Elinor. She always cheers me up, but she can be a little naughty sometimes. I am soooo thankful for my little sister!

— EMELIA KIM,
2ND GRADE,
COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY

A Good Friend

A good friend is someone who you trust and are completely comfortable around. When you can trust someone you can rely on them when you are stuck or need help. If you are comfortable around that person, you feel relaxed and can do things without being too cautious or nervous. This can allow you to do more things and do it freely. If you can be happy and enjoy them, that's a good friend. Having a good friend can take a while and your friend has to feel the same way.

— LUCAS MARSHOUN,
2ND GRADE,
COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY

SPRING HILL REFLECTIONS

I Am Thankful For Books

I am thankful for books. Books bring me on an adventure. They bring me to a deserted island filled with wild animals as I meet the Robinsons, and to a sparkling palace filled with beautiful ladies as I see Cinderella waltzing by, holding Prince Charming's hand. Books have taught me lessons that I couldn't have learned from teachers. Lessons that have changed the way I speak, stand, and think; lessons that have taught me that not everybody in the world has as much as I have and that not everybody will be with me forever. Books pick me up when I feel down and can swallow me whole, just like Moby Dick. Books can control my feelings. I have found myself crying as I read Marley and Me and laughing as I read about James when he gets stuck in a giant peach. I have grown up with Ramona and Beezus at my side guiding me through hard times and Harry Potter casting magic spells in my dreams. Books have helped me grow up and that is why I am thankful for them.

—SOPHIA ZIMMER,
5TH GRADE,
SPRING HILL ELEMENTARY

My Family

My name is Mia and I am going to tell you a little about my family. My mom is 46, her real name is Nancy. Her birthday is one day earlier than mine. I also love to cook with my mom, it is my favorite thing to do with her.

My dad is 40, his birthday is on February 3rd. He really likes me, he takes me swimming and to tennis. He also spins me around. But he also screams a lot, his favorite color is chocolate brown.

My brother is 8. I hate him, but my mom wants me to change that phrase that I just wrote. His favorite color is cerulean. He is a pain in the neck. His birthday is on March 21. His name is Myles.

My sister's name is Mindy. She is 4 and is very cute. I always chit-chat with her at night. She loves to color, she also loves spaghetti. Her favorite color is hot pink.

I am 7 years old. My favorite colors are hot pink and blue. I am a girl, I share my room with my brother and sister. I sometimes like my brother and sister, but not always. I love my family. I also like video games. I love all raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, and blueberries and I like carrots and apples.

One night my dad brought out a few presents for Myles, me and my mom. They were all ski stuff. My mom got ski pants, Myles got ski gloves and I did too. Mindy got mad because she didn't get a present so she started to cry, so my dad spun her around as a present for her and she laughed. I wish it was actually Christmas because Christmas is my favorite holiday, and me, Myles and Mindy all made a special surprise for my mom and dad. But I can't tell you what it is because my mom is going to read this. Merry Christmas.

—MIA BAO,
2ND GRADE,
SPRING HILL ELEMENTARY

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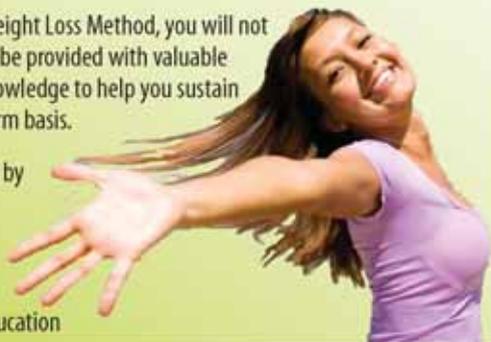
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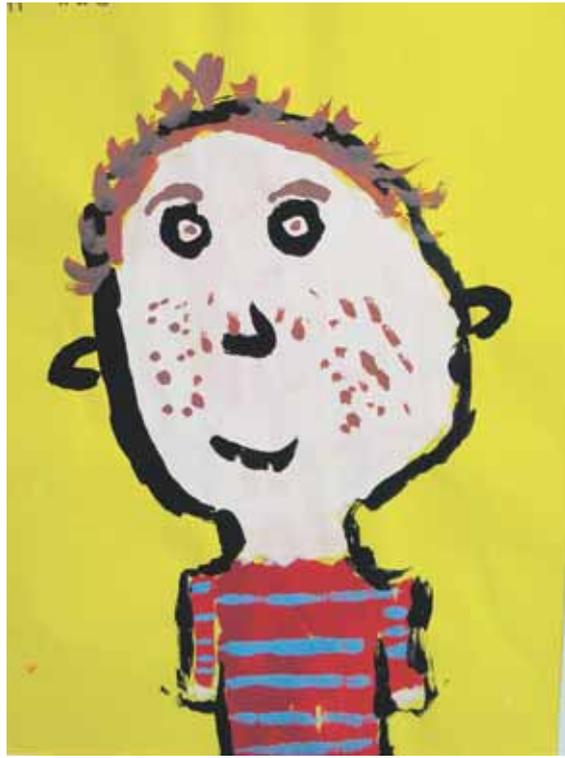
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION



By Carmen Palacios-Alcantara, 3rd grade, Cunningham Park Elementary.

CUNNINGHAM PARK GALLERY



By Trent Collins, 3rd grade, Cunningham Park Elementary.



By Maliha Mirdha, 1st grade, Cunningham Park Elementary.



By Xiomara Cabrera-Ramos, 6th grade, Cunningham Park Elementary.

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

Roy Lichtenstein Inspired Portrait by Fatima J., 8th grade, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School.



By Chris W., 4th grade, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School.

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—Sir Philip Gibbs



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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

THOREAU MIDDLE REFLECTIONS

The Perfect Christmas

Family, that's what brings us all together at Christmas time. All the love, hope, peace, and joy gathered around the beautifully decorated Christmas tree. As Christmas is only one day ahead of us, we wait patiently for Santa's arrival. As we wait, we tell funny stories that we've all heard many a time. Then our mothers and fathers tuck us safely under the warm flannel sheets, as my heavy eyelids closed gently into a dream.

I awoke with excitement and leaped to the window, all I saw was luxurious white snow falling from the sky. My dream came true, a beautiful white Christmas.

GIULIANA KATHERINE TOSI,
8TH GRADE,
THOREAU MIDDLE SCHOOL

The Gift of Patience

In my family, patience is key. There are so many things in our lifestyle that drains into our patience, and we are all guilty of running out at times. But if I could, I would grant my parents with some hope and patience.

My sister, Megan, has a severe case of Down syndrome. She is a true wild card, and occasionally her temper gets the best of her, usually out in public, where small children stare, teenagers point, and adults whisper in disgust. It hurts to know that this is what normal people think when they see my family. But regardless of her many troubles and obstacles, she is as sweet as can be and does the best with what she is given.

Megan's struggle is one that we all share, but we somehow gather together the patience to cope. If she can, we can. It is hard to find anyone who can relate to my situation, but that is okay. We will always love Megan and make an effort to be patient. I love my whole family, and if I could give the gift of patience this holiday season, I most certainly would.

— CLAIRE FOLEY,
8TH GRADE,
THOREAU MIDDLE SCHOOL



By Aubrey Kuhn, Thoreau Middle School.

What I Am Most Looking Forward to in 2014

What I am most looking forward to in the upcoming year is going to the same private high school with my older brother. My brother is three years older than me. Therefore, we never went to middle school together. Finally, we will be going to the same school. I am looking forward to my brother driving me to school and spending more time with him. I am also looking forward to playing lacrosse with him on the same team. It would be great to win the school lacrosse championship together.

— JEFFREY KEDDA,
8TH GRADE,
THOREAU MIDDLE SCHOOL

White Christmas

It's a cold winter day and the smell of fresh brewed coffee and pine needles just blasts through my nostrils, waking me up right away. I slowly drag out of bed and then stretching, I yawn in front of my window. I slide the curtains out of the way only to find myself blinded by the morning sunlight. My eyes adjust to find a surprise that was waiting for me. IT'S SNOWING!! I jump up and down running around the whole house to wake everyone up to tell on what they're missing out. I then find my mom hidden inside all the pots and pans sizzling and crashing. The smell of pancakes with a slab of butter on top with a side of scrambled eggs and bacon calms me down just a notch.

My Shivery Soul Mate

A blanket of silver shimmer,
Engulfing the land below.
The smell of burning hickory,
Wafting out its fragrance
To the neighborhood surrounding.
The quiet rustle of the bitter wind
Pierces the silent dark.
But when the child awakes from bed
To see the frost on his window,
His sharp eyes grow wider
As he sees his freshly fallen playmate.
His heart begins to pound harder,
With every moving flake.
He can't postpone any longer,
For his new best friend awaits.

— BAILEY BANE,
8TH GRADE, THOREAU MIDDLE SCHOOL

Winter Is Here

White snow falling gracefully
Icy lakes shimmering in the sun
Nothing to do but sit by the fire
Telling young children old Christmas stories
Eggnog so tasty while playing monopoly and clue
Restless kids waiting for Santa to come
Incredible lights hanging from houses
Some carolers knocking at your door
Helping to decorate the tree
Energy-fueled snowball fights
Ringing bells singing their beautiful song
Enchanted moments that winter brings

— ALLISON ROUSH,
8TH GRADE, THOREAU MIDDLE SCHOOL

However, with all the excitement, I run out the door and the crispy air touches me like a million needles on my skin. With a warm cup of hot chocolate, I spend the rest of Christmas outside. Too good to be true, I wake up to find out that it was only a dream and with

a "Merry Christmas" from my mom. Want to know the mind blowing part? This was exactly what happened that day like I saw the future!

—GLORIA KIM,
8TH GRADE,
THOREAU MIDDLE SCHOOL

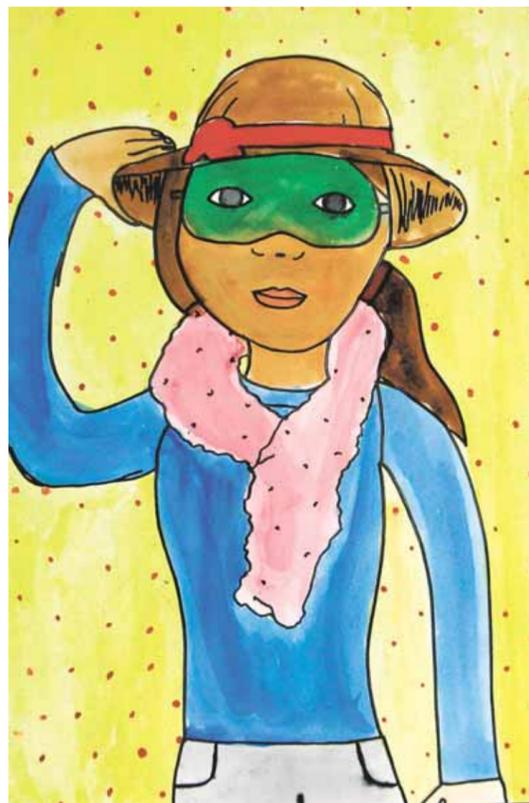
THOREAU MIDDLE ART GALLERY



By Cindy Lee, 8th grade, Thoreau Middle School.



By Anna Brinkhuis, Thoreau Middle School.



By Jane Kim, Thoreau Middle School.



By Nicole Porcaya, Thoreau Middle School.

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

ESSAYS FROM COOPER MIDDLE

The Best Thing Mom Ever Taught Me

BY OLIVIA PERNA
7TH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

I don't know about you but writing an essay on some book I never read at 1 a.m. isn't the most appealing thing in the world. Over the years I found good ways to procrastinate by conjuring up things to Instagram or maybe something fun to do with my cat.

Afterwards I was so fed up with lying to myself I just stared into the white void of unfinished homework and walked away to complain to my mom on how I was so bored. She'd then reply, "Well, have you finished your homework?" I would state the automatic, unenthusiastic lie every adolescent repeats to their elders, "Yes." Followed by a rolling of the eyes and a terse grown.

It's about 5 p.m., and with no homework done I would be playing with my cat, Dexter. He lived the best life. No problems. No worries. No pain. No work. But then again, look where that put him. He's a big fluffy cat. Half of his day, he eats and the other stares at his food bowl, probably with a blank thought. Just as blank as my homework...

My mom told me she worked like a dog when starting out in her career. She once



Homage to Thomas Kinkadee, by Victoria Cho, 8th grade, Cooper Middle School.

even worked through Christmas Eve into Christmas morning. I couldn't imagine doing such a task, the thought of it gives me a headache! I mean, how would working until you drop help someone? Living in what I guess is a cheap apartment, eating ramen

daily; did all of that pay off?

Maybe it didn't pay off at the time, but she later became what I perceived as a great person. She seems to be always happy, and that's what counts, right? I don't believe you must become the utmost famous and

wealthy person to become successful. Perhaps I may idolize my mother too much, but she's one of the most successful people I know. She's earned herself through hard work.

I might not say it much, just to preserve my teenage pride, but I love and idolize my mom for all of her hard work, if it be raising me or her struggles on becoming a businesswoman. She's no rich Bill Gates, or famous Michelle Obama, but she's my beloved mom.

My mom has influenced me to work harder in whatever it is I'm doing. Maybe with this newfound confidence will help me finish my homework! But then again, it's late and tomorrow is a school day. I should go to bed and worry about homework another time...

An Act of Kindness

BY MOMIN KALEEM
7TH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

When I was in first grade I moved into a new house. Nothing changed too much. I was still going to the same school and things like that but this neighborhood was a lot different than my old one. The old one wasn't big at all and had lots of kids around to play with. This new one was really big with huge houses and all the kids were a

SEE ESSAYS, PAGE 14



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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION



My Backyard by Miina Anvelt, 3rd grade, Colvin Run Elementary School.

My Backyard

This is my backyard in the winter. When the weather gets cold we have three crows outside. One of them knows how to remind us when it wants food, and then we have squirrels. Our squirrels usually don't hibernate (we give them food throughout the

year). I have two cats. Their names are Tiger and Jaguar. I have deer in my backyard and usually many. Sometimes a fox will run through our backyard too.

— MIINA ANVELT,
3RD GRADE, COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION



By Lily Nickl, 11, Oakton.

ESSAYS FROM COOPER MIDDLE
FROM PAGE 12

lot older than me.

After four more years of living in that neighborhood more kids came but either they were way older than me or traveled a lot. Across the street from us lived a nice couple that we had always been friends with. In fact when we first moved in they threw a house warming party for us. I don't know if that happens often or not. Either way they were really nice neighbors.

They sometimes told my brother and I cool stories about what their childhood was like since they were born around the 60s. During a yard sale they gave my brother and I their old superhero comic books that use to sell for 15 cents at the stands. I still have them.

But one winter it snowed a ton and they flew out to Mexico to escape the cold. I realized that by the time they came back the snow in their yard would still be there. There was too much of it to melt that fast. I put on my coat and snow boots and walked across the street with my Dad's shovel in my hands.

I was still only nine so shoveling up that much snow was rather difficult. So I only shoveled enough to make room for their two cars to drive. I didn't really want those cars to get messed up in the snow because they were restored cars from the 50s and 60s. One was pink and the other a really dark green. I really liked them.

I came back about an hour later because they had a huge driveway. I took off my coat and boots and set my Dad's shovel in the garage. My mom had started a fire in the fireplace, so I sat down and felt the heat against my red cheeks.

A week later the snow hadn't melted and our neighbors had returned from Mexico. They showed up at our door. They asked if we knew who shoveled their driveway even though I could tell they knew it was me.

I felt weird about responding so my Mom told them it was me. They smiled and thanked me. Now I felt even weirder.

Our neighbors said goodbye and we closed the door and returned to the fire. Despite how weird it felt when they thanked me for shoveling the now, it still felt good. I couldn't stop smiling to myself.

The Most Important Thing I've Learned

BY ANNIE KRAEMER
7TH GRADE, COOPER MIDDLE

"Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you're gonna get." -Forest Gump

What I've learned is not something you takes notes on in class, and not really something you learn in a school at all. It's the kind of thing you learn when you have to do go through it yourself. What I've learned is to always stay positive. Yeah, people always tell you that, sometimes you can help yourself. We all have negative thoughts sometimes and we can't stop thinking about those silly little imperfections, and mistakes.

I've had negative thoughts and sometimes it's so hard to push them away, but we all just have to stay positive. Look on the bright side of things even in the darkest light. I know there has to be at least one thing you love or there is something to smile about, even if it's one thing it does counts. Life can be so brutal and annoying but staying positive is about all you can do when you're in a hard spot.

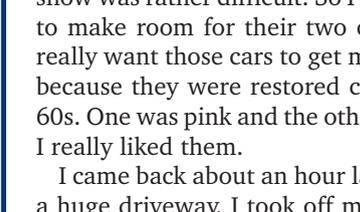
I used to worry about everything I did. If my hair looked weird, the way I ate, the way I looked, how did I look when I did this or that, and all kinds of stupid stuff, and I would dwell on it but I have to realize it doesn't matter. By now everyone knows that saying, "Yolo" it's very annoying now, but it's true. You only live once so why worry about the stupid things when you can be happy.

Being positive is so much more refreshing and fun. Always try to stay positive, and not let the negative get to you. There are times when you can be sad, but never let it consume you.

If you don't have positive people around you it's hard to stay positive, sometimes you're going to have to make a choice, to be happy and positive, or people that keep bringing you don't? Even if it means you'll be alone for a little bit, it doesn't mean you'll be a lone forever.

Positivity is a big part of life choices.

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The Daze of My Life



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Every three weeks I have chemotherapy. Every three months I have a CT Scan. And every three months – after that scan, I have an appointment with my oncologist to discuss the results. And before any of the above, the Wednesday before my Friday infusion, I go for my pre-chemo lab work to determine if my levels are up to protocol standards in order to allow me to even get treatment two days hence on Friday. Accordingly, I live my life in three-week/three-month cycles. And after each infusion/appointment, the cycle begins all over again. Unlike a credit card expiration date that renews for three years, my expiration date, such as it is presumed to be, renews for only three months – or shorter if my scan results and lab work are discouraging. And I can live with that; I have been living with that. But short-timing like this can play mind games, as I alluded to in last week's column. Though I usually know whether I'm coming or going, I don't always know whether I'm standing pat or betting on a future.

And since I'm not a betting man – or much of a gambler, I usually stand pat and act as if life will go on as it sort of has: with fits (not literally) and starts, with some good results – and some not so good results. On balance though, my results have been above and beyond the expectation of my oncologist. And in a peculiar way, that's what I sort of live for: to surprise my doctor. There's no better feeling I have than to see my oncologist smiling back at me, almost inexplicably, as to why I've been able to live for as long as I have. Though I've always maintained a positive outlook and kept my sense of humor, I can't really speak to whether these two traits would have convinced my oncologist that my initial "13 month to two-year" prognosis was merely a starting point, not the end game that he had predicted. Moreover, given the severity of my original diagnosis: stage IV, non-small cell lung cancer; metastasized, inoperable, terminal; and supported by all the less-than-encouraging, life-expectancy-challenged statistics from your favorite cancer society, I am in fact living proof that what has gone around is not always what goes around. Patients are different. Lifestyles are different. Drug/medication interactions are different. Commitment levels to alternative methodologies are different. In general, there are many variables. As bad as the diagnosis/prognosis was, I never gave up hope, never gave in to my disease – emotionally.

Now whether there's a rhyme or reason to my exceedingly good fortune – or whether I'm just incredibly lucky, I can't say for sure. Certainly I don't have any definitive keys to the kingdom, so to speak, that have enabled me to live free and not die. I just try to take each day as it comes, and not expect too much and not overreact to what symptoms/feelings I may be experiencing. As my father used to say, every day that he would wake up is a good day. And since I've been waking up now going on five years, in spite of my many three-week/three-month intervals, I'm happy to say: keep those intervals coming; it may very well be what's been keeping me alive.

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

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

POETRY CORNER

Poems by Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School students.

The True Christmas Present

BY ZACK H.

On a cold wintry late-December's eve a man saw a sight so poignant it made him cry.

It all began when he was taking a constitutional through the town square, He rounded a corner and saw the ordeal that would make his heartstrings tear.

This event was monumental; leviathan even, Brought on by his long and rigorous past,

So rough and precarious that if it were an ocean it would bring down a ship at full mast.

Before I tell you of the sight that provoked tears,

Let's backtrack into the past by twenty years.

This man had to pay the bills and their unrelenting steady stream,

Then he was offered a job overseas, a true godsend.

So precisely twenty years ago he left for a foreign country between and betwixt,

But this was a predicament that he could not fix.

All the while, he spent his time there, Counting the days, but all the while losing track of the date;

Hoping against hope that he would soon see his lovely children and true soul mate.

A score of years in a state of ennui and longing passed,

The man sensing that his bad luck would not abate,

When a sudden stroke of good fortune crossed his path, thereby entirely changing his fate.

At this point it was the beginning of Ad-

vent, and the man saw his holy grail:

A poster advertising room in the steerage of a vessel headed to his homeland.

This made him ecstatic, but he still felt a faint hint of dread;

Though, at the time he couldn't cipher why that seemingly erroneous emotion filled his head.

The whole journey overseas took about a week,

Every second of it the man in anxious anticipation waiting to arrive.

Upon his first sighting of the skyline, he started to dance on his feet as if he were standing on a beehive.

Now the plot returns to the present, the beginning of the story,

The tear-jerking sentiment is going to be in full glory.

The man first returned home, but no one was there;

So he went for a walk into the town square to come to know his surroundings afresh,

For it had been a while, and common sense and ignorance surely do not mesh.

Snow flurries were falling all around him, the day being the Eve of Christmas.

He rounded a corner and to what did his eyes appear?

His wife and kids, Christmas shopping and drinking root beer.

The man bolted towards them, the family's eyes a twinkling when their eyes rose to meet the sight of the man;

They all ran towards each other and embraced a zealous, affectionate embrace.

A family unified and united is better than any gift bought at the store,

Love and [warm] fellowship is the true Christmas present; it is more, so much more.

When Snow Falls...

When snow falls...

A snow globe has been shaken.

A world is cloaked in white,

A town is reawakened.

When snow falls...

Listen for the song.

Of the whispering wind,

Or Jack Frost's work at dawn.

When snow falls...

The world is truly seen

As beautiful and pure,

Delicate, serene.

BY GRACE M., 7TH GRADE

With his happy family.

The noise died down,

People head to town.

Santa came, Santa went,

Ending the season of Advent.

BY DAVID T., 7TH GRADE

A World of White

An icy cold day,

In a world full of white.

The sky is dark grey,

What a beautiful sight!

The essence of the pines,

Drifting through the air.

Filling the world

With much holiday flair.

Snow shines like a diamond,

Like a thousand little lights.

It glistens and sparkles

All throughout the night.

This white world,

Such a beautiful place.

This beauty around us,

We should embrace.

BY CHLOE M., 7TH GRADE

MORE POETRY, PAGE 17

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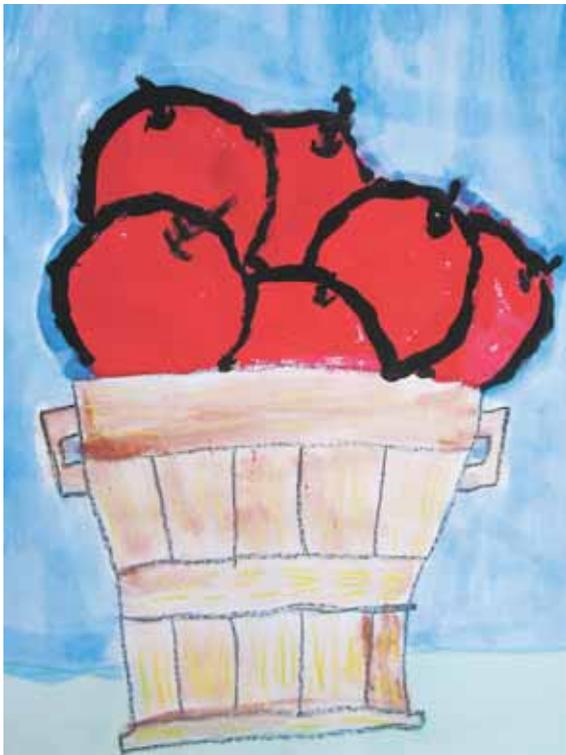
The Gift

Every Gift wants an owner,
It never wants to be a loner.
It wants the joy of being bought,
Never having to be distraught.
The time in Santa's sleigh,
It will get ready on its way.
Tumbling in Santa's sack.
Going to somebody named Jack.
Jack woke up with glee,
And ran to the tree,
To see what he could see,

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

POETRY CORNER

Poems by Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School students.



By Ella A., 1st grade, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School.

A Christmas Surprise

Brightly colored presents,
Sit around the tree.
Brightly colored presents,
I wonder if they're for me.
Red ribbon, gold ribbon, silver ribbon too,
Wrapped in decorated paper,
Maybe they're for you.
Picking up a gift,
I shake it up a bit.
RATTLE...RATTLE, it reacts to the lift.
The tissue paper rips,
And now scattered upon the floor,
You won't believe what it holds,
More wrapped boxes!
Boxes galore.

BY SOFIA F., 7TH GRADE

24 Hours of Christmas

12 a.m. North Pole time,
And the sleigh is loaded full
Toys and dolls and puzzles and rhymes
This time not one piece of coal.
1 a.m. Russia time
The ground is packed with snow.
Santa stuffs the stockings to the brim
And flies away saying, "Ho Ho Ho!"
2 a.m. England time
The tinsel and holly hung straight,
And when the children wake up and run down the stairs
There are no cookies left on the plate.
3 a.m. China time
And the trees are shiny and bright.
The reindeer clatter and wait on the roof,
Ready to fly into the night.
4 a.m. United States time,
And the morning is on its way.
The last house for the season is finally complete.
Right here, in Vienna, Va.

BY JULIANA C., 8TH GRADE



By Keira G., 2nd grade, Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic School.

That Time of Year

Here comes that time of year,
When all everyone can hear,
Is joy, happiness, and cheer.
You might even see some deer,
The air might even be crisp or clear,
No one around you has a fear.
Since it is that time of year,
When everyone gets some gear,
For the ones you love and even your peers,
Even other people that love you dearly.
There may be some tears,
For it is that time of year.

BY ELIZABETH B., 8TH GRADE

The Spirit of Christmas

Snow is softly, slowly falling over the city;
Small sparkling flakes of white fill the sky,
And holiday cheer fills the air.
The streets lined with shops
Are decorated with all the stops.
Gifts in every window,
The faint sounds of music echoes.
Across the town,
Happiness is all around.
The children are sleeping,
And no one is weeping,
Awaiting the sound of bells.

BY NOAH S., 8TH GRADE

Hot Chocolate

Warm liquid coming in contact with chapped lips
The chocolate floods into a dry mouth
The steaming cup grasped between cold fingertips
Winter has come in the south
The savoring drink flows down a throat
Sending warm tingly shivers throughout
The cold body being embraced by a fur coat
It is winter without a doubt
There can't be winter
Without hot cocoa
It makes the cold less of a splinter
And saves us from going loco
Oh how I want some hot cocoa

BY JACK V., 8TH GRADE

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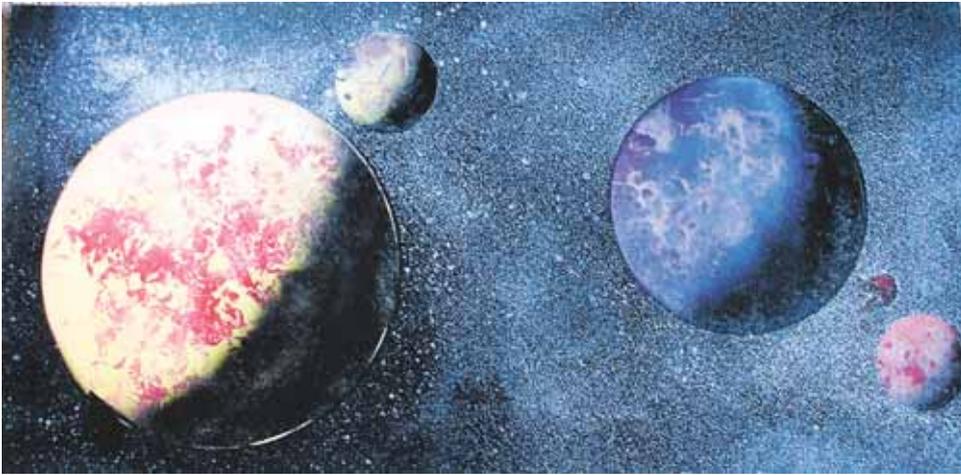
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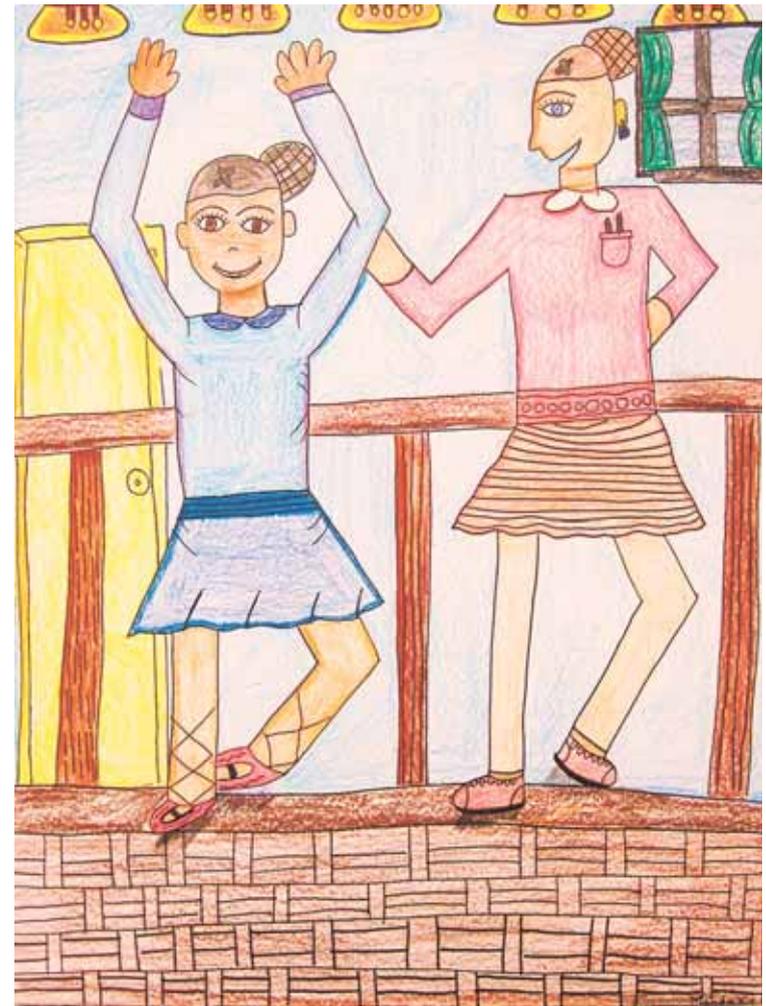
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

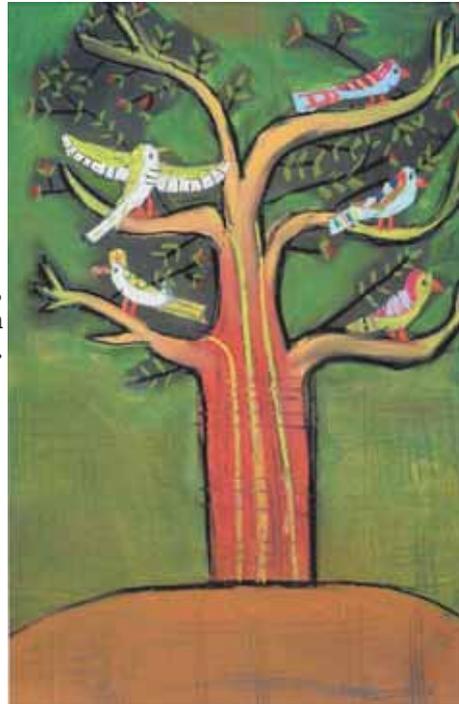
COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY ART GALLERY



By Morgan Billingslea, 6th grade,
Colvin Run Elementary.



The Dance Lesson by Manda Xie, 4th grade,
Colvin Run Elementary.



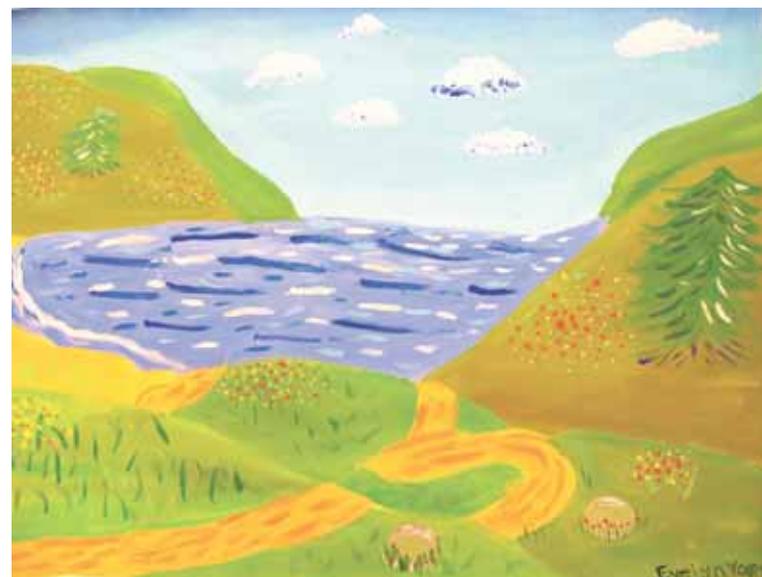
By Chloe Gao, 9,
Colvin Run
Elementary School.



The Christmas Store by Jacqueline Palmer, 2nd grade,
Colvin Run Elementary.



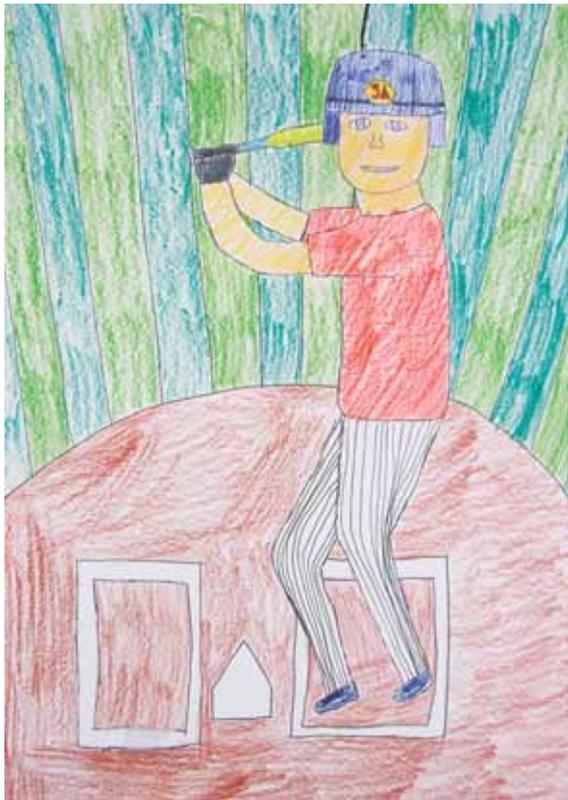
By Morgan Billingslea,
6th grade,
Colvin Run Elementary.



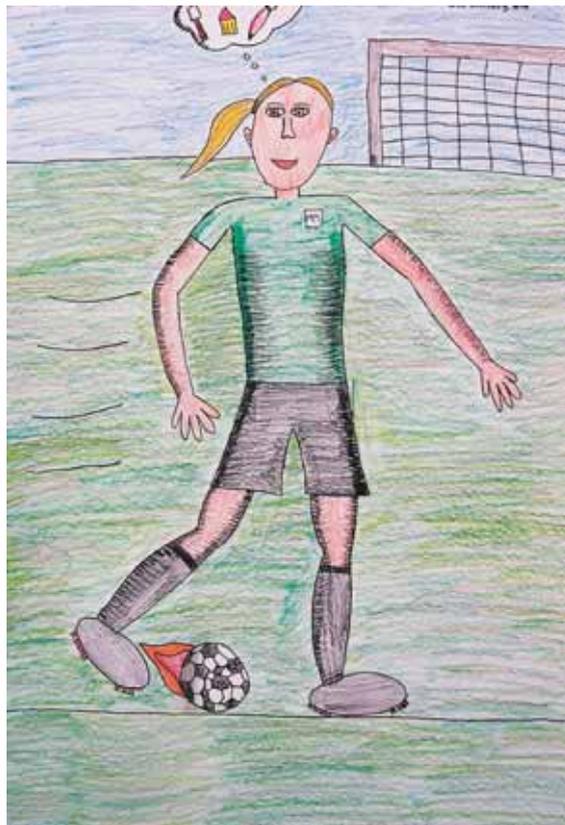
Lake in the
Piedmont Region
by Evelyn Young,
4th grade,
Colvin Run Elementary.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

SPRING HILL ART GALLERY



By Andy Ricketts, 6th grade, Spring Hill Elementary.



By Erin Connery, 6th grade, Spring Hill Elementary.



By Samira Shirazi, kindergarten, Spring Hill Elementary.



By Kristina Naydonova, 1st grade, Spring Hill Elementary.



By Eric Yong, 2nd grade, Spring Hill Elementary.

POETRY CORNER

Memory

Memory lives in your heart and eyes,
 Seeing everything you see,
 Loving everything you love,
 Wearing a coat of your thoughts.
 When you are holding her hand you remember
 All you cherish and all of your dreams.
 When you experience something,
 Splendid or sorrowful,
 She catches the image,
 And glues the image in your mind forever.
 When she crosses her arch nemesis, Forgetfulness,
 You cannot think of your thoughts,
 And she cries in pain as Forgetfulness harasses her.
 When Memory is by your side, you remember
 All of your happiness, all of your losses.
 Memory is made of many things.
 Laughter, sorrow, bliss and loss
 Are all her spirit.
 Children are starting to obtain her,
 But adults are full and bursting with her.
 Children listen intently with eyes full of wonder
 As adults tell them about their experiences with Memory.
 She remembers every moment you spend with her,
 All you hear, all you see,
 Everyone you love and all of your rivals.
 She caresses every minute of your life,
 But she only presents the best and worst events to your heart.
 Memory is someone
 You remember eternally.

— MALLIKA CHARAGUNDLA,
 5TH GRADE, SPRING HILL ELEMENTARY

Dream

Dream lives in the sky
 She floats on a cloud waiting until the sun is devoured by the stars
 Then she goes to work to write stories
 She doesn't need a publisher
 for she sings them to all children
 She loves telling the children her stories to soothe them while
 they are sleeping
 Dream argues and fights with her brother Nightmare
 It's always about her stories
 but most of the time Nightmare just runs away
 She loves every child like a mother
 and visits she visits them every night
 she only speaks when she tells her stories
 Dream dresses in clothes made of clouds
 so she can float wherever she needs too
 she's like a ninja
 a silent and is only found when she wants to be
 Dream is a friend
 That will soothe you till the end

— YUVI SING,
 5TH GRADE, SPRING HILL ELEMENTARY

Competition

I am thankful for competition
 Without competition the world would be dull and boring
 Competition is what keeps us from giving in
 Sports like swimming would not exist without competition
 Some people confuse competition with rivalry, but they can be
 very different
 Rivalry is fueled by resentment and jealousy
 Competition comes from hard work and challenges
 I have competition to thank for some of what I have today
 As it is the backbone of competition
 Competition fuels the fire that burns inside us
 Providing us with that extra boost from inside; driving us to succeed
 Achieving the ultimate goal through competition, that is the best
 feeling in the world
 That is what I am thankful for.

— JOHN BRADSHAW,
 5TH GRADE, SPRING HILL ELEMENTARY

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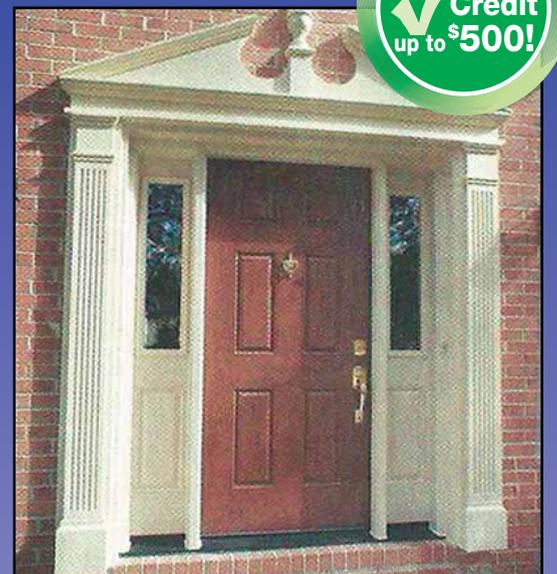
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