



McLean CONNECTION

Drawing: Cold Observer,
by Dasha Makarishcheva,
15, Grade 10,
McLean High School

Children's & Teens' Connection 2017

DECEMBER 27, 2017-JANUARY 2, 2018

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

By Grove Teates, 7,
Art - science
and art
integration -
scientific
drawing of a
butterfly,
Churchill
Road El-
ementary,
Grade 2,
McLean,
Teacher:
Sarah Finger



Under the Sea, by Addison Mosher, Grade 2, Kent Gardens Elementary, submitted by Art Specialist Lida Saeedian

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 2018 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.

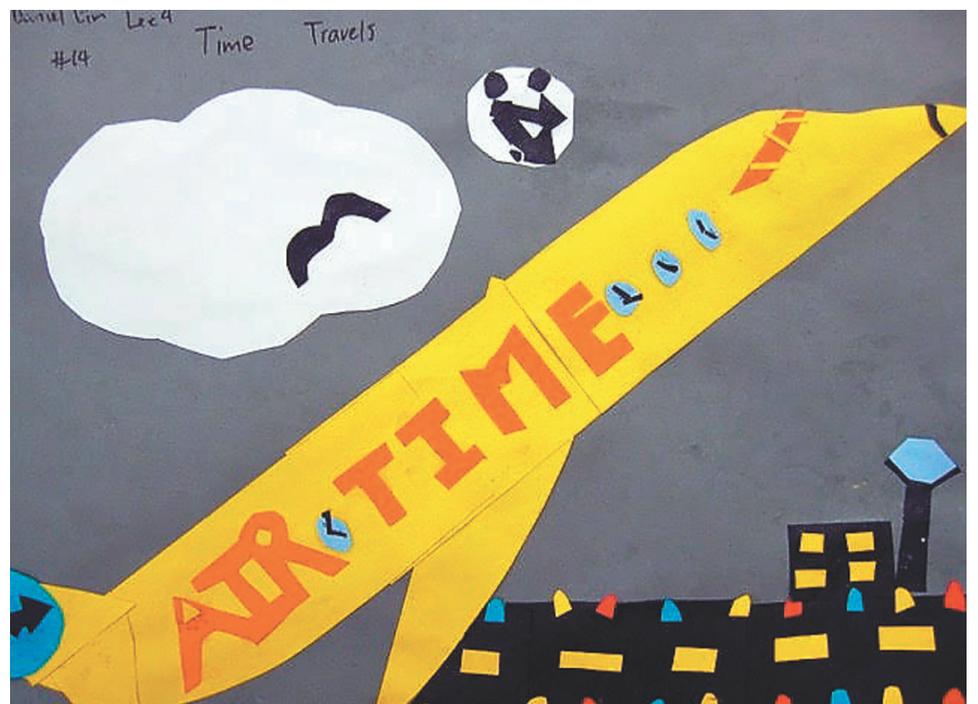
EDITOR KEMAL KURSPAHC



Butterfly, by Anna Newell, Grade 2, in Cheryl Bamdad's class at Churchill Road Elementary.



By Liza Teeter, Haycock Elementary School, Grade 2, submitted by Sharon Baumgartner, Art Specialist



By Daniel Kim, Grade 4, Spring Hill Elementary, submitted by Art Teacher Dorothy Moon.

CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY

Hook, Line, and Sinker

The sun beats down viciously, oozing blistering heat into every crevice, every hobbit hole, turning the wriggling beasts into lifeless crisps as they seek shelter in their bare compost confinement.

One such brown monster squirms and slithers away into the chocolate brown-*Fwish!*

I swivel my gaze away from the plastic can of worms. My fishing rod sits placidly on the wooden bench besides me, a long light pole, and the drab hook swings around as the weathered dock sways beneath beneath our feet.

My older sister proudly struts over, fish in hand. "I got another one!" she yells to Mom and Dad while dropping the streamline shaped fish into the small bucket of water, and the water rocks side to side as the newly caught fish zooms around.

I wistfully glance down, hoping I had caught that fish, hoping I could finally add a fish to the square bucket, one that I had caught.

I gaze at a fat brown nightcrawler. It sits ignorant of the sun, of the hook in my hand, shaded by the bench.

I impale it on the hook and I snatch the rod off the deck and carefully dangle the hook near the water.

Fwish! The hook instantly fades from view into the unknown murky depths. I wait and peer up at the vast lime green canopy of titanic trees surrounding the vitreous lake, their pale bark rough and uneven.

I stare lasers at the rod. I will it to curve into a perfect rainbow-shaped arc, for a fish to bite.

When it happened, I dismissed it as a figment of my imagination. Then it happened again, all to evident as the fine cord vibrates, churning the water.

I was already there, yanking the rod out of the it's acrylic holder. I reel quickly, but the black handles seem to turn impossibly slow. I felt the rod pull downward, what I had wished for earlier. I braced against the oncoming weight. A glance over the railing told me that it had not broke the surface yet.

All was calm-*Fwish!* The sound was so soft, so delicate, so bare, that I could barely hear the faint sound. Yet the yearned for sound was there.

"You caught a fish!" exclaimed Mom, excitement etched on her face.

It hangs there, a dark arrow, a sleek dart. Its tail curls and tenses. Its gills flap open, not able to suck in air from it's new

world. Its scales flash defiantly in the sun. It flicks drops of water everywhere, shedding the liquid easily, not knowing that it would be the last drop of fresh water it would touch.

Time starts again in a rushed blur, and as I shout "Yes!" to no one, the fish willingly slides through the liquid like the sharpest blade as it retreats to the depths of the red bucket. A pure, small, white beam of light shone onto its forehead, with a *Flick!* of it's tail it swam into the crowds of fellow fish.

I walk back to the side of the forever swaying, groaning, fishing dock, rod in hand, worm on hook.

Fwish! The hook leaps forth into the water, a bloodhound on a scent, and I stand there, calm, watching, waiting, fishing.

— ANTHONY XU IS A FIFTH GRADER IN RICK WOLER'S CLASS AT CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY.

The Drop

I craned my neck all the way back to see the top of the slide. I was ecstatic to go on the sky scraping slide. The rough cement felt like I was walking on a frying pan. I ran to the wet, white stairs and started to climb. Ten minutes later me and my friend got to the top. And that's when I saw it, the human sized capsules.

"Yeah... I'm not so sure about this anymore," I said with a shaky voice.

"Ohh, it will be perfectly fine!" blurted out my friend Leila.

"I know but, how about I watch you go down first, ok?" I asked, trying not to sound too scared.

"OK!" she replied.

So I just stood in the scorching hot sun. I watched her as she quickly scurried into the capsule. I could tell she was a little frightened to go down but she was brave. I heard a muffled voice that sounded a little bit like Siri but I couldn't make out any words, and after that all I saw was a big blur that involved her dropping through the floor, her screaming and her vanishing like magic. About five seconds later I saw her whiz out of the bottom like a bullet. By the time she came back up she was drenched in water.

"It was... breathtaking!" she cried out.

SEE CHURCHILL ROAD. PAGE 15



By Grove Teates, 7, Grade 2, McLean, Teacher: Ms. Finger

CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY

Art – science and art integration – scientific drawing of a butterfly.



By Bella Washington



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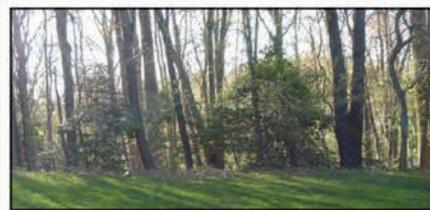
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11309 Geddys Ct., Reston \$490,000



10500 Leesburg Pike, Great Falls \$4,500,000



804 Lunenburg Rd., Great Falls \$895,000



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185 River Park Dr., Great Falls \$1,449,000



12113 Sandy Ct., Herndon \$725,000



11378 Seneca Knoll Dr., Great Falls \$1,199,000



439A Springvale Rd., Great Falls \$13,500,000



1141 Springvale Rd., Great Falls \$2,495,000



1106 Towlston Rd., McLean \$1,188,000



11545 Tralee Dr., Great Falls \$1,499,000



11402 Turnmill Ln., Reston \$525,000



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215 Walker Rd., Great Falls \$999,000



1207 Tottenham Ct., Reston \$1,199,000



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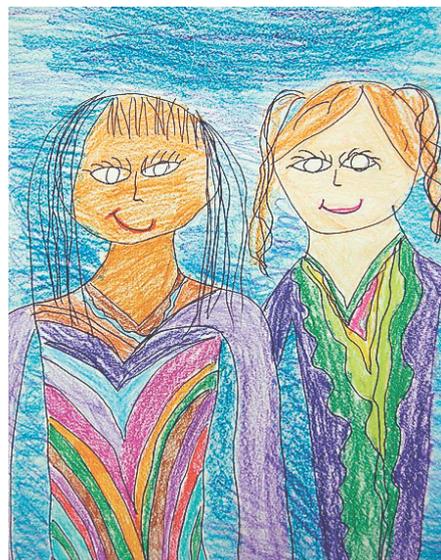


CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

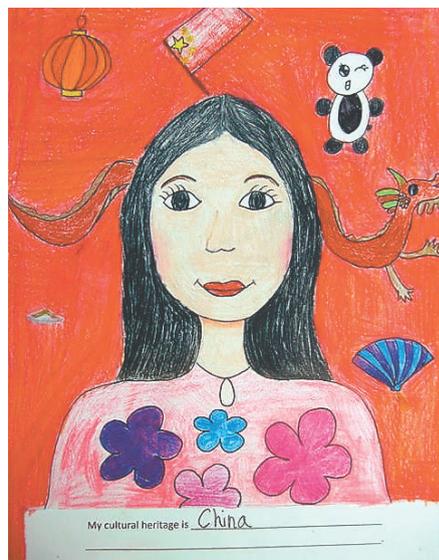
Spring Hill Elementary

Artwork submitted by
Art Teacher Dorothy Moon.

By Milan Nguyen,
Grade 6



By Pricilla
Kim, Grade 2



By Kristen
Han, Grade 3

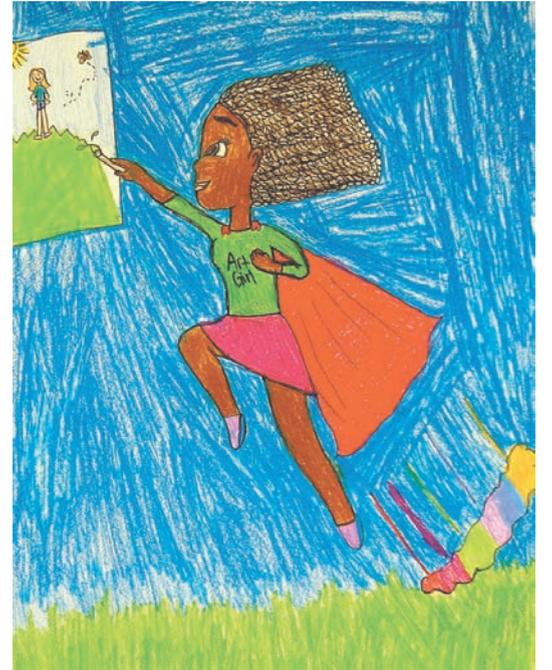


By Annabelle
Bozarth, Grade 6

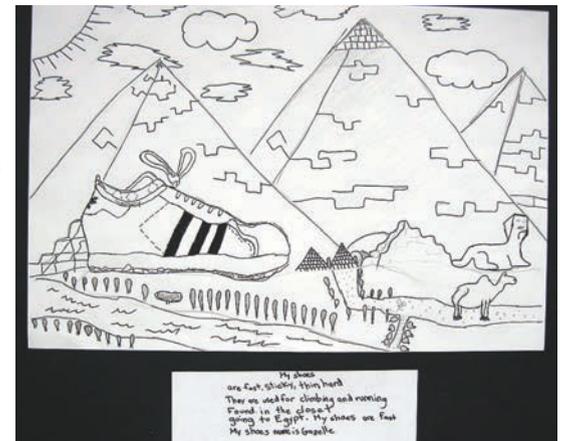
Spring Hill Elementary School

Art Teacher
Carolyn Gore-
Ashe submitted
the following
artwork from
her students.

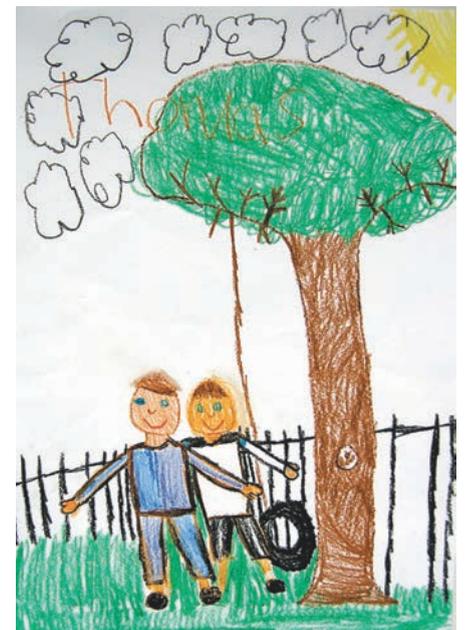
By Larissa
Nwokobia,
Grade 6



By Samuel
Nieto,
Grade 5



By Thomas
Haith, Grade 2



By Juwon Park, Grade 3



By Anirudh Chadalavada,
Grade 3

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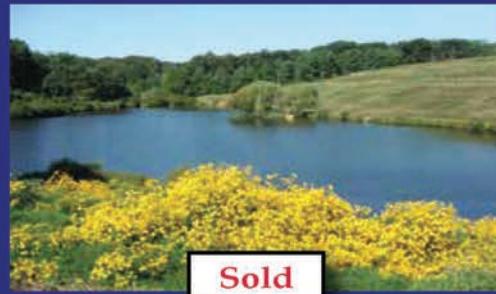
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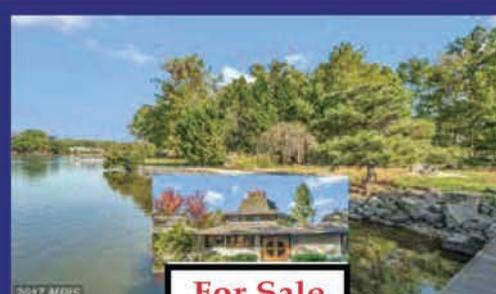
Thinking about that second home or downsizing? Call me to discuss several possibilities!



For Sale

OR10051883 - \$265,000 - Lake of the Woods

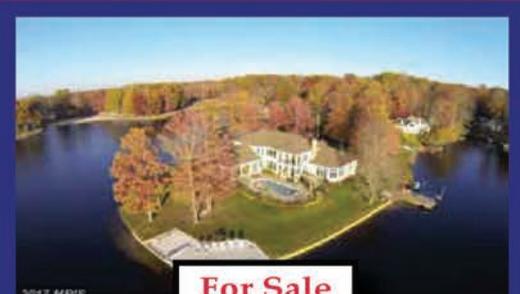
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION



Photograph: Little Angel, Dasha Makarishcheva, 15, Grade 10, McLean High School

On Top of the World

I dive into the snow
 Going at the speed of light, unstoppable
 Veering left in a sharp turn
 The wind stings my face as I soar down the hill
 My shiny sled, albeit rather expensive
 takes me down the rough course
 Snow flies everywhere around me, creating a whirlwind of white
 temporarily blocking my view
 All I can hear are my screams of joy
 I'm on top of the world

—ASHLEY KHANG, OF GREAT FALLS, AGE 12,
 GRADE 7, COOPER MIDDLE, TEACHER: MS. WOLFE

Miracle

Once upon a time
 I wondered
 What is a miracle?
 My brain thundered,
 And I realized,
 Everything is a miracle

—JIYUON PARK, GRADE 5,
 CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY,
 TEACHER: RICHARD WOLER

MCLEAN HIGH SCHOOL

A Gift that Doesn't Cost Money

If I could grant my family anything in the world, it would be good health for all of us. During this day and age, people are getting sick from large numbers of diseases of all kind such as heart, cancer, mental, and autoimmune diseases. I once asked a doctor how common totally healthy people were in the world, and she said, "Few and far in between." When I think of all of the diseases affecting our population, I find that with such a gift we would all be able to live calmer and more fulfilling lives.

The Best Gift You've Ever Given

One of the best gifts I've given anyone will have been in this year's holiday season. During the summer I entered a drawing contest to have my drawing printed in an actual book, and my entry managed to be accepted! To make it a fun surprise, I haven't told my mother that I won. The books come out in December, and I'm super excited to surprise my mom with this achievement!

What Makes a Good Friend

A good friend is one that accepts you no matter who you are, how you are, and where you are. A good friend is one - that after finding out you've just been through the most difficult trials in your life - has been standing by your side the entire time.

—DASHA MAKARISHCHEVA, 15,
 GRADE 10, MCLEAN HIGH SCHOOL

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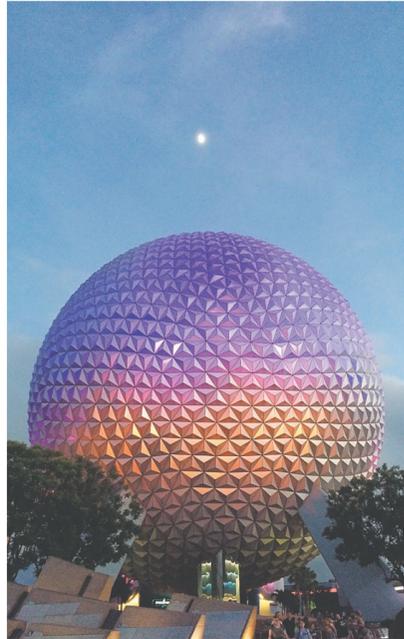
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION



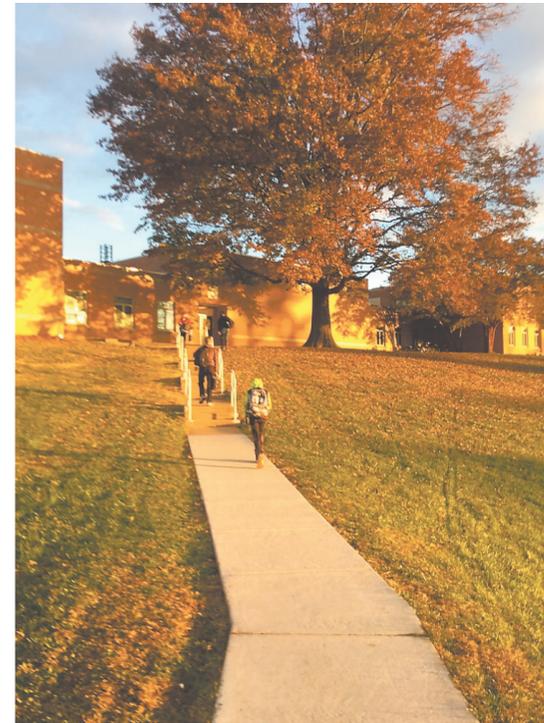
By Bridget Fulton, of Vienna, 12, Grade 7, Cooper Middle School: Looking behind the scenes of a great performance.



By Rachel Mears of McLean, 14, Grade 8, Cooper Middle School: The Epcot ball at Disney lit up in beautiful colors with the moon shining above



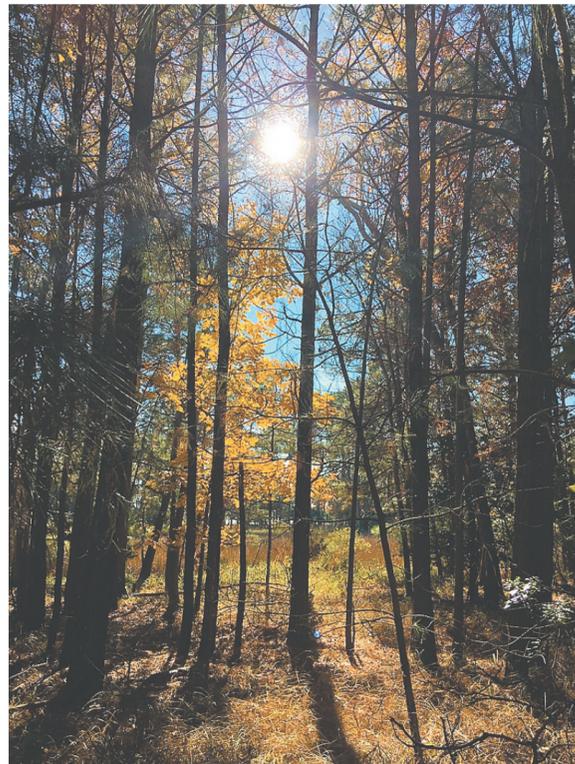
By Alexa Holloman, of McLean, 13, Grade 7, Cooper Middle: "I saw the amazing sunset while watching my sister, Bella's field hockey game at Langley HS."



By Lauren Jebrailli, of McLean, 12, Grade 7, Cooper Middle: A no-filter picture of Cooper Middle students walking into school. Can you believe this is morning?

COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Photos and written pieces submitted by teacher Lindsay Bovenzi.



By Irene Song of McLean, 12, Grade 7, Cooper Middle School: Lighting up the forest.

My Family's Danish Tradition

My family has a tradition that I find extremely entertaining. It's similar to a game known as White Elephant, but with its own twists. We play with about 10 or more people, a cup, a timer and a pair of die. We group up in a circle, set the timer to 10 and roll the die. If someone gets a 6 or higher they can take a gift from under the tree, if they score higher than a 10 they can take a gift from someone, we repeat, passing the die among us and stealing gifts.

I love this nail biting game because it's a fun and friendly way to entertain yourself and family during the holiday. There are also lots of tricks that can be used to win. For example, if you have a lot of gifts, you can take a long time rolling the die so that it doesn't get to other people. I remember the one time where I had 6 of the 10 presents, there are barely any feelings that can compare to that. I recommend this game to anyone who wants to try something new this Christmas. Remember, don't get too competitive, it's just a game! Have fun!

—SEBASTIAN MOLLER OF McLEAN, 14, GRADE: 8



By Lila Cahill, of Great Falls, 12, Grade 7, Cooper Middle School: A green leaf with water droplets sitting on top.

Following in the Footsteps of a Champion

Perfection is what it takes. Confidence is what it takes.

Endurance is what it takes. Dedication is what it takes. Rising to the top isn't easy. It isn't something that takes a week, a month, or even a year. Winners don't stop when victory is achieved. My mother never has, and I never will.

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I tend to think of myself as one who has performed well, however, the real champion in my family isn't me. Emily Ash Morin started her life as the daughter of a veterinarian in a small suburb just outside of Lafayette, Indiana. In rural Indiana, she was fortunate enough to find an equestrian trainer with the experience to raise her up to the national levels. While thriving with her horses, she didn't halt her education. Now an ophthalmologist working in Vienna, Virginia, she stills chisels out time in her hectic schedule to do what she loves.

Her numerous accomplishments could never be replicated, nevertheless, she has inspired me to work my hardest in both riding and school. Even more, she's always been the one behind me, cheering me on, helping me, and lifting me up in the case of a fall. Some families may play basketball, or soccer. My mother and I don't just ride, but we learn together. Mistakes teach us patience, and preparing horses teach us ethics.

—GABRIELLE MORIN OF McLEAN, 12, GRADE: 7

Dream More, Live More

"I have a dream. I have a dream that one day, random or expected, a miracle falls into my hands. I have a dream to have

flashing lights, crowds of people, and cameras surrounding me from every angle. I have a dream that my family, friends, and people I care about support me through thick and thin. That might be a difficult dream, but I believe that I have a dream." - Cyrene Belghith.

Acting is something I have been wishing for since when I was a small, innocent toddler to this moment in time. Whether it was my birthday, 11:11 pm/am, or a penny in a pond, becoming an actress has always been my desire. "Wish upon a star," they say; something I have been doing for years. I hope, just one day, that star decides to shine brighter than it has before and come down to make my dream as bright as it is.

Although, with every dream or opportunity comes the challenges. Far, deep into the mind, comes doubt. It is one of the worst emotions to deal with. Giving you the doubt to ever reach your dream, the doubt to ever follow the path you want to be on is a horrible feeling.

Not only that, but opinions come into place. Even if you might not want to hear them sometimes, they will always come back to haunt you. "You'll never make it. You should become something that's actually realistic," you should this and that.

SEE COOPER, PAGE 12

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COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL

FROM PAGE 11

But, something also tells me that I shouldn't listen to those opinions. If you believe you can get to that path without hurting anyone or giving up on yourself, go ahead and live your life. Don't listen to what others think of you or what other misleading things they need to say, listen to the positive thoughts coming to you. Wake up, smile, and tell yourself, "Today is my day." Your day to shine, to fly, and to live your dream because, "You have a dream."

—CYRINE BELGHITH OF RESTON, 12

What Holidays Are Really About

Why are the holidays so important? Holidays to me means staying home and spending time with my family and just enjoying every moment that passes by. It means being grateful for what we have and giving back to others. It means eating a lot of great food and just relaxing.

It means everywhere you go, the darkness is lit up with the most colorful strings of lights and decorations imaginable. You know that every single display whether big or small was done because someone else also appreciates the sharing of the holidays with others.

There are so many things to enjoy during the holiday season for example seeing family members that I don't see all year around and that just makes the whole experience more special.

Having moved from a different country and being away from most of the people I grew up with, holidays are a great time to just enjoy what we have, be grateful, and to give back to others.

—ANITA ANBARI, 14, OF GREAT FALLS, GRADE 8

Stepping Into the Spotlight

"For our next singer, we will be having...Ella Ramchand!" announced my singing teacher, Ms. Tuvn. I froze in for a split second, then turned my worried eyes to my mother. She grinned and nodded, motioning for me to stand up. My hands were sweaty, and my legs were stiff. My stomach seemed to be rolling around in circles, twisting and turning with nervousness. It was my first time ever singing in front of a large group and I was absolutely petrified.

I slowly rose from the hard gray seat and began the long walk to my teacher. She flashed me a huge grin and I smiled back weakly, turning to face the crowd.

"H-h-hi, my name is Ella Ramchand and I will be s-s-singing *The Wizard and I* from the m-musical *Wicked*." I stuttered. Not one kind face seemed to be in the audience. I was destined to fail and I knew it. I climbed up the metal stairs, clutching the railing so tightly that my hands turned white, and shuffled over to the microphone. Instantly, my perspective changed. The cramped boxy room looked enormous and everyone's eyes were on me intently, scrutinizing me carefully.

Suddenly, the accompanying pianist began playing the opening theme. The spotlight beamed down upon me as my eyes darted around the room, looking for someone, anyone, with a kind face who I could focus on. A single person stood out to me, my best friend Aarti. She smiled at me encouragingly and I felt a wave of relief wash over me. At least there was one person who would support me no matter how I did. As the pianist dashed out the opening chords, I beamed out at the crowd and my song began.

— ELLA RAMCHAND OF MCLEAN, 12, GRADE 7

Christmas Glows With Love

The glistening crystals on our Christmas star lied perfectly in my hands, as sparkly as ever. Using his arms, my brother boosted me into the air, and I felt like I was flying. I grasped onto the gleaming star and placed it on top of our fully decorated tree with the pine aroma lingering upon my nose. It seemed to fit perfectly on top and added to the beauty the tree already showed. My family had grins from ear to ear. Silence overtook the room as we stood back to admire our newly created masterpiece. It was just that time of year: hot cocoa in our hands, the warmth of the fire, and never-ending smiles upon our faces. I look to my left, my family was there, and then I look to my right, my family was there. That is what the holidays mean to me.

The holidays means showing your love for others and celebrating what life has given us. The best way to live life is to be happy and thankful for everything. As the sleigh bells ring, my family gathers together by the table and eats the delicious meal my mother cooks for us. We are lucky to have food on our plates and all the other unnecessary items we possess. There may be presents under the tree, but the true present we have is our family and the holidays is the time to celebrate what we have.

—ISABEL CHEN OF GREAT FALLS, 12, GRADE 7



PHOTO BY ANNIE ZHANG, GRADE 8, COOPER MIDDLE

What to Get a Teenager for the Holidays

With the holidays just around the corner, hoards of parents rush to get all sorts of gifts for their children. The most common item: electronic devices. The new generation of teenagers have been exposed to advanced technology ever since they were born. Anywhere you go, you can find teenagers glued to their phones, unaware of their surroundings. So why are teenagers being gifted even more electronics when they're already addicted to them?

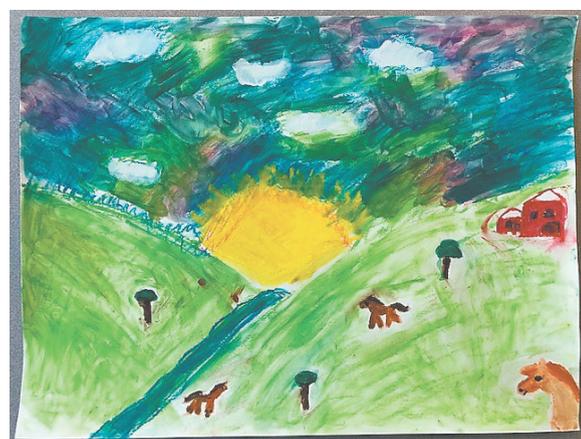
An alternative to electronics for a teenager's holiday gift is something really meaningful. Many people don't realize that deep down, teenagers will actually appreciate gifts that aren't technology based. Some of these gifts can be cute notebooks and pens, sports related items, fun sewing kits, and old fashion record players.

The reason for this apparent addiction to technology for teenagers has many causes. First of all, when one kid use technology, everyone

else wants to have it too, to fit in with the trend. During teenage years, it is very stressful, from grades, to romance, to social life. When teenagers experience stress, technology becomes an instant way to find relief. Just like alcohol and tobacco, although technology is nowhere near as bad as those, it gives the same pleasure, an escape from reality.

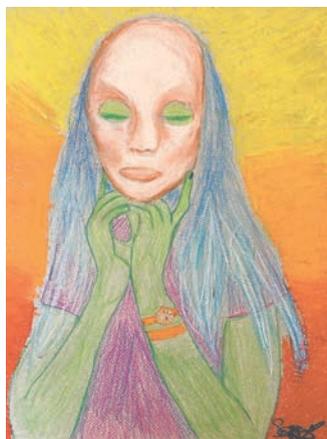
For those debating on what to gift a teenager for the holidays, something to consider are sincere gifts unrelated to technology. This will bring a teenager out of their technology bubble, leading to a different happiness than the addictive technology pleasure. So, go get a nice present for a teenager, or even hand make it! They will love it even more than an electronic device!

ANNIE ZHANG OF MCLEAN, 13, GRADE 8, COOPER MIDDLE SCHOOL, TEACHER: LINDSAY BOVENZI.

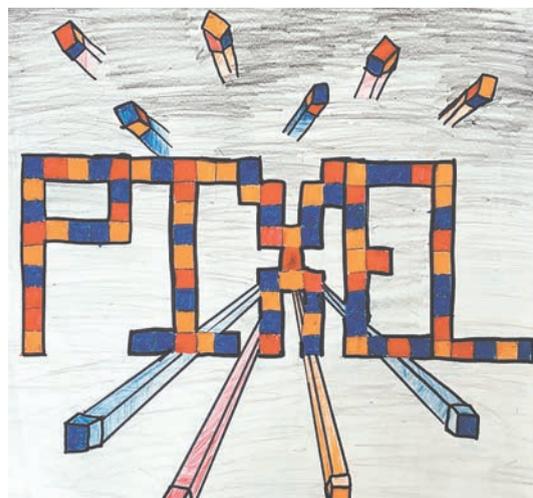


By Anna C. of Great Falls, Grade 5, Burgundy Farm Country Day School

CONGRESSIONAL SCHOOL



Imaginary Self Portrait by Sara Auer, Age 13, 8th Grade, McLean



Pixel by Evan Judge, Age 10, 5th Grade, Oakton

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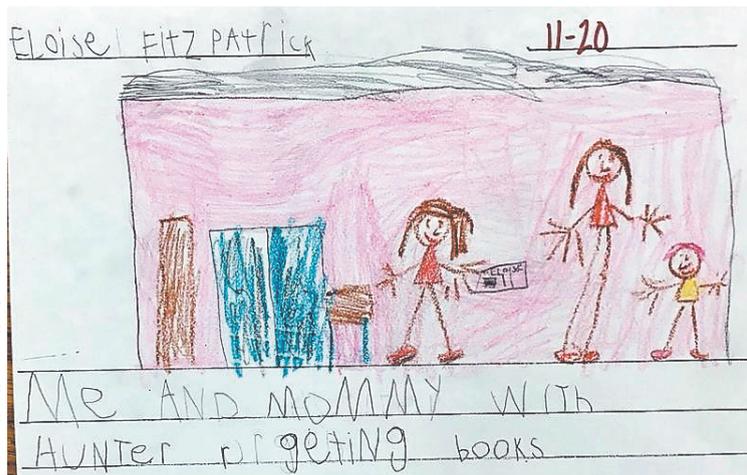
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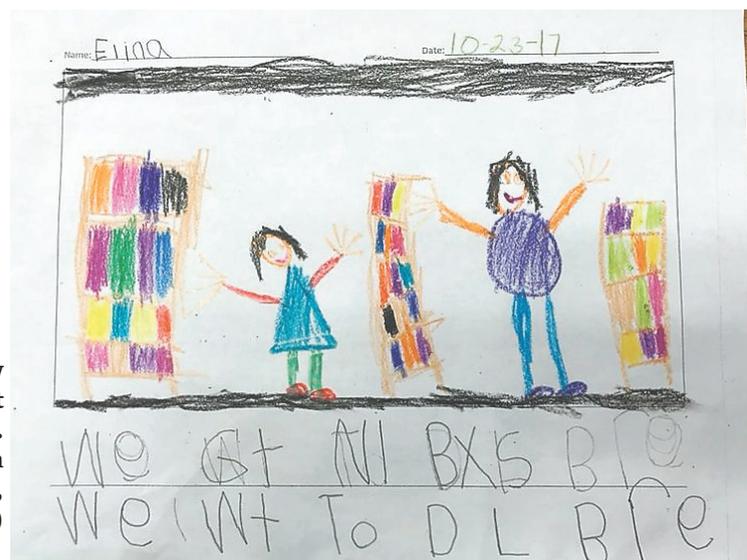
HAYCOCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Me and Mommy with Hunter are getting books, (Eloise Fitzpatrick, age 5)



Haycock Elementary kindergarten students write about excitement of going to local library. Submitted by teacher Leah Yoo.

We get new books. We went to the library. (Elina Ghaffarzadegan, age 5)



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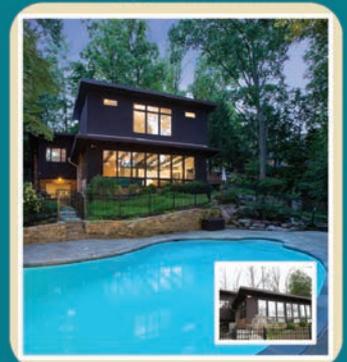
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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

KENT GARDENS ELEMENTARY

Artwork submitted by
Art Specialist Lida Saeedian

**Fashion Design,
by Charlotte
Lavender,
Kindergarten**



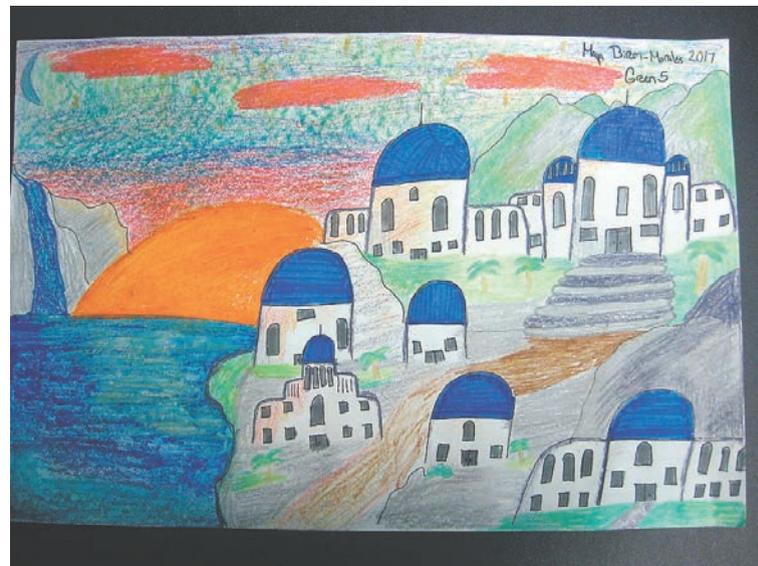
**Global
Architecture,
by Fiona
Keough,
Grade 5**



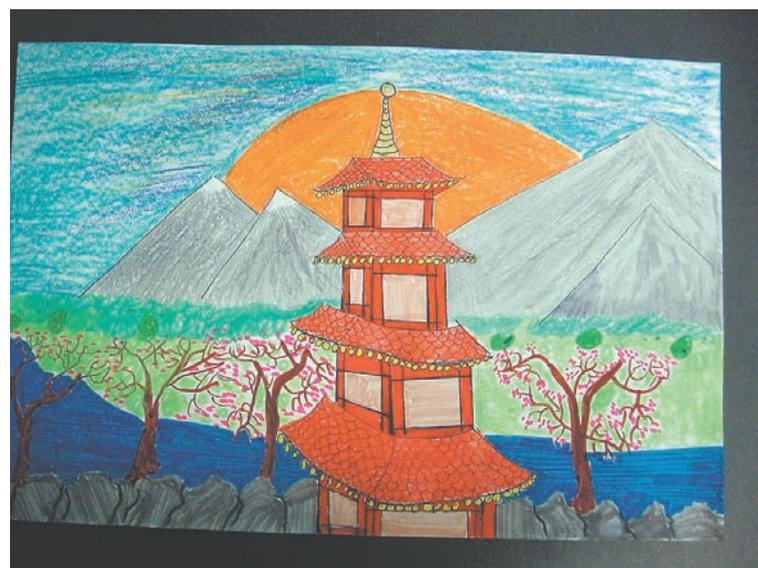
**Fashion Design, by Mia Fumano,
Kindergarten**



**Fashion Design, by Kevin Nearing,
Kindergarten**



**Global
Architecture,
by Maya
Birem-Mo-
rales, Grade 5**



**Global
Architecture,
by Vivienne
Holly, Grade 5**

**Under the Sea,
by Benjamin
Kim, Grade 2**



**Under the Sea,
by Isabella
Brady, Grade 2**



KENT GARDENS ELEMENTARY

Written by fifth graders in Debbie Bulford's Language Arts block at Kent Gardens Elementary in McLean.

Happiness

Happiness lives in a bright clearing in a forest full of magical delights. She wears a smile that only leaves her face when she laughs.

When we play with her we leave the game breathless and a dazzling smile is left on our face. She is a unicorn.

A protector, sweet, and happy.

She leaves no one sad and is the water in a desert full of sand and unending tricks and turns.

She is funny and energetic and makes us laugh and feel confident.

Her parents are just the same Love and Cheerful. She gets us up on our feet when we are down and protects us from sadness and anger.

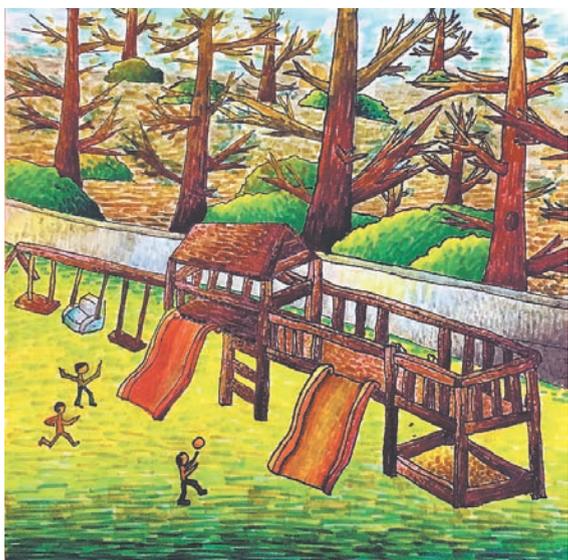
She carries us and tends to us when we are injured, and loves us when we are unloved.

— ALEX LOMBARDI

SEE KENT GARDENS, PAGE 17

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

Moon Phases, by Clelia Benedetti, a fifth grade student in Sue Lackey's class at Churchill Road Elementary in McLean



Backyard Fun (left) and Boy Drawing (right), by Michael Hanchao Wang, Grade 6, Churchill Road Elementary, Mclean (Art Teacher:Julianne Wallace)



CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY

FROM PAGE 4

"Fine I'll do it." I said quickly.
 "Good choice!" stated the white headed, elderly man.
 I stepped inside the capsule and I leaned on the back of the slide. I felt the icy water running down my back. It felt like when my brother sprays my back with a hose. I took a quick glance at the man and saw him press a bunch of buttons and then I heard the pep talk.
 A voice started talking and I recognized the voice right away. It was that voice that I heard that sounded a bit like Siri.
 "Welcome to the Drop, please cross your arms and legs for safety purposes. The floor will drop in three (in a low voice), two (in a regular voice) and one (in a high voice)."
 All the sudden I felt the floor rumble and then the orange floor went back like when you open a soda and before I knew it I was at the bottom laying down flat on my back with my arms crossed and my legs crossed.
 "You look like a mummy," Leila said as she giggled.
 "You looked the same way when you came out!" I replied, a little mad.
 We went seven times after that and I got scared every time.

— SHEILA KESHAVARZ, A FIFTH GRADE STUDENT IN SUE LACKEY'S CLASS AT CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY.



Butterfly, by Michaella Park, Grade 2, in Cheryl Bamdad's class at Churchill Road Elementary.

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CHILDREN'S CONNECTION

Antarctic Gloves

My cousin Ruby and I are going to bed early tonight. Tomorrow is going to be an amazing day. We hired a private plane to take us to Antarctica. We have some friends there, so they are going to let us stay with them. We have been to every other continent so we have been planning this trip for months.

I heard the alarm ring and I woke up with a jump. It was four in the morning and we had to take a flight to Cape Horn. We were going to meet the guy that was flying us to Antarctica. The ten hour flight went by like the speed of light. When we arrived at the airport, we went directly to Starbucks where we were supposed to meet the guy. We found him sitting at a table waiting for us.

"I have the plane waiting at station three," he said.

"Ok, we will follow you, but what should we call you?" I asked.

"Call me Aaron," he said. We grabbed our stuff and followed him. "I hope you don't mind if my wife Abigail comes along. She and I are going to Madagascar for our honeymoon."

"Guess it's ok," I told Aaron.

As we flew, it got colder and Ruby put on her neon pink gloves. I looked out the window, the sky was hazy and one lone cloud lingering behind the pack. At that moment, Abigail gave me an eyeing look. That sent a sharp shock deep inside me. I have the feeling Ruby saw the same thing because she had the same look of terror on her face that I did.

Then Aaron said, "less than twenty minutes left."

"Whew," I thought to myself, "less than twenty minutes." Then I heard a bang. Instinctively, I looked back toward the engine. "Whoosh!" The noise came from the other direction so I looked there. To my surprise, Aaron and Abigail were gone. Then I felt a chill in the air. "Wohchump!" The engine had given in and stopped. My stomach lurched and I felt the feeling of going down a roller coaster. Then, everything went black.

"Rubyyyyyyyy? Rubyyyyyyyy?" I yelled.

"Camron? Camron?" I heard someone calling just barely over the rushing wind.

"Ruby, where are you?"

"I fell down a hill and hurt my fragile, ankle," Ruby said.

"I will try to come get you," I yelled over the wind. But it was so cold. I first searched for my suitcase to get a blanket. After awhile, I found a blanket and carefully climbed down the treacherous, bluff to get Ruby.

"Camron did you bring a rope? I think it will be our best bet," Ruby said.

"I did, let me get it," I screamed over the sound of the wind. As I reached for my rope, my thumb slipped

and as I looked down I saw the rope falling in slow motion. Then in a flash I saw a neon pink glove reach out to catch the rope. It just barely caught it. I wondered how she would get the rope back up to me. It would be extremely sad to lose the rope; it has cost a lot of money. As I looked at the rope, it began to rise, defying gravity. Then it stopped in front of me.

There was a screech and I looked down below where Ruby was supposed to be. Instead of Ruby, there was a neon pink glove. Next to the pink glove, there was a whitish, but slightly light blue, piece of fur.

"Oh no," I thought. "Where has she gone this time?" There was a small trail of boot prints, but only marks of the left boot. They went for awhile and then they stopped. There were also some colossal footprints with miniature trails of lines like fur. I was worried about following the tracks, but I needed to find out where Ruby was. I went down the hill carefully. With a little bit of a slip, I almost fell off the edge. But I grabbed onto something quickly and was able to pull myself up. What an unlucky day I was having. First the plane crash, then Ruby falling, losing Ruby, and finally almost slipping of the cliff. *How could it get any worse?*

Then I heard a large "Thump". Then, another, then, another. I was frozen in fear, my eyes locked in front of me even though the sound was behind me. Slowly I turned around with my eyes tightly closed, then to my surprise there was nothing. Just nothing. As I turned around, I saw a little glow where I had been looking before, so I followed it. I saw a shadow that looked like Ruby, and it also had the faint pink color of her glove.

Then, two dark red dots appeared a few feet above my eye level. They looked like menacing eyes. I gave a little screech, turned around and started to run. I found a cave entrance, so I went in, still able to view Ruby in the distance. But now it looked like the figure was moving toward Ruby. Then, I saw Ruby's shadow fall over the side of the cliff and her glove was left hanging from a tree branch.

At that moment, I awoke in my bed, as the alarm was continuously blaring.

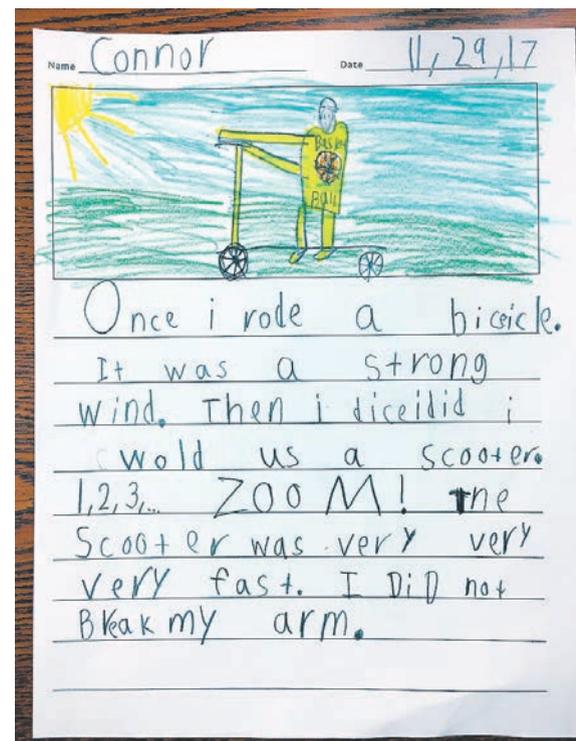
Ruby was saying, "I made pancakes, do you want some? We only have a little while until we have to go."

"Maybe we could postpone this trip for an eternity," I whispered to myself, as I slowly climbed out of bed.

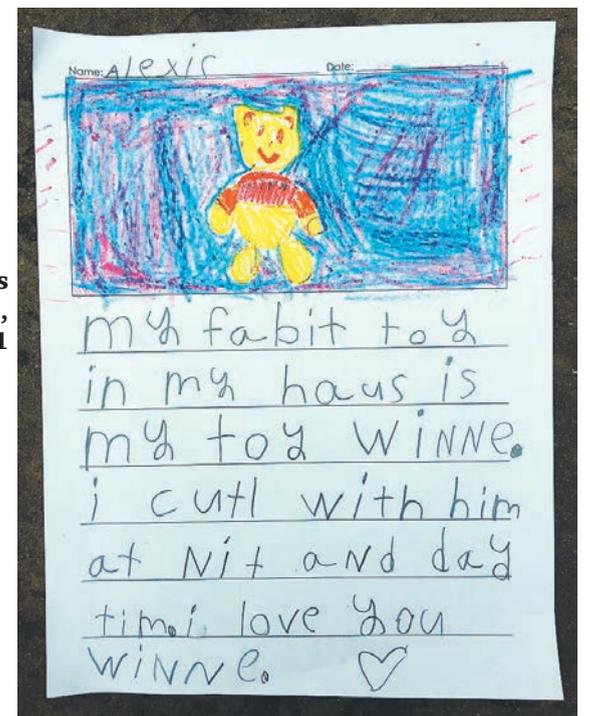
—BY SOPHIA PARK, GRADE 5,
KENT GARDENS ELEMENTARY,
TEACHER: DEBBIE BULFORD

Churchill Road Elementary

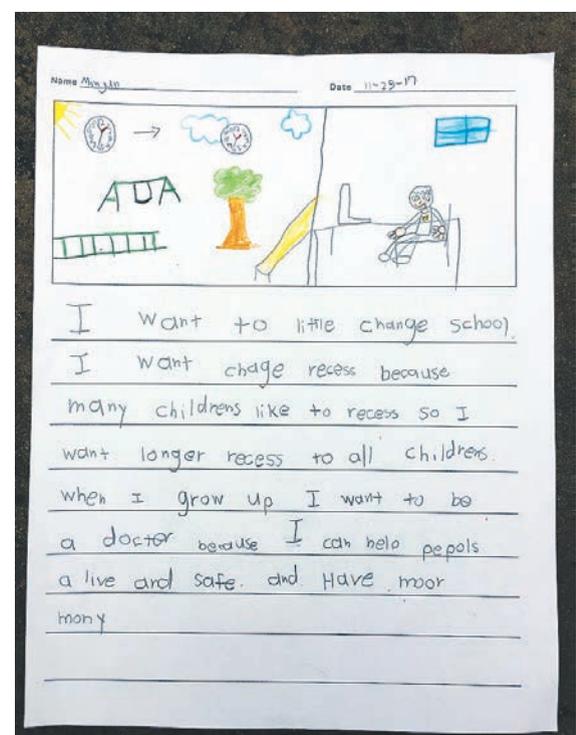
Artwork by first graders submitted by teacher Lisa Williams.



By Connor Satkus, 6, Grade 1



By Alexis Nied, 6, Grade 1



By Minjun Choi, 7, Grade 1

What Am I Thankful For

There are many things I am thankful for, but this is one of the things I am most thankful for, my guinea pigs. There are many things that it is nice to have, a pet is one of them, and I have my guinea pigs, Finch and Camry. First of all, I think that it is fun to spoil them, because every day when you wake up they start squeaking at you for vegetables. Second of all, it is nice to play with them when you have nothing to do or your folks are out. Third of all, it feels good to take care of someone other than yourself, or a stuffed animal. Fourth of all, as a parent (to guinea pigs) it improves your mood when your children (guinea pigs) do some-

thing that makes you proud (like get potty-trained, eating more hay, or purring). You get to see their cute faces and that just brightens your day. Fifth of all, it feels good to a loving guinea pig parent to watch your guinea pig grow through life and support them when times are hard and care for them with a loving heart. Sixth and final of all, they make me laugh when I have nothing to laugh about and when I do not know what to do. I am thankful for my guinea pigs so much.

— OSCAR B., GRADE 3, BURGUNDY FARM
COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

CHILDREN'S CONNECTION



By William Li, 6, Grade 1, Spring Hill Elementary, Teacher: Ms. Ciullo, Art Teacher: Yanshun Sui

Firefly

Harsh, cold night
Small glimmer of light

This flicker of luminescence
Is from a tiny firefly.

The night gently whispers
"Please turn off your glow."

The firefly delicately twinkles "Though I'm small,
I will light you bright."

Nocturnal animals yawn
As the night turns to day

Finally, the night is gone,
And the firefly goes to sleep.

— RYAN CHUN, II, GRADE 6,
CHURCHILL ROAD ELEMENTARY,
TEACHER: MR. BAUMGARDNER

KENT GARDENS ELEMENTARY

Failure

Failure is like a turtle, backing into her shell when she is asked to display her work.

She is as pale as the moon and as shy as a sun octopus.

She lives next to Optimism and Joy, their bright personalities make Failure seem like just like a dull pencil in a world with sharp ones.

A failure.... perhaps.

She always hides in the shadows like a mushroom, never stepping out into the bright light without a dark, black, and shady sunhat.

She never sees colour, and she only wears black, because that's all she sees, black and shades of gray.

Failure is like an orphaned kitten, timid and frightened by just a single touch.

Her peers tease her and reject her, especially boastfulness and vainness.

She is more than just a failure.

If she didn't doubt herself so much, then she would finally see herself, as herself. Maybe she would see colour like everyone else, and maybe she would finally see that she is really not a failure.

But maybe there's one thing she's failing at, she's failing at seeing her true self.

— CLARA FANG

Relaxation

Relaxation is like reading with no interruptions,

Being outside without instructions on what to do,

Video games while my sisters asleep,

Board games with my friends and family,

Baking a cake on a Friday night then eating it the next...

Relaxation is like watching sports, America's Funniest Home Videos and Jeopardy on TV,

Sleeping in,

When I don't have anything that needs to be done,

Messing around on the computer till late,

Playing baseball under the lights till 9 then taking a hot shower after.

— DECLAN O'ROURKE



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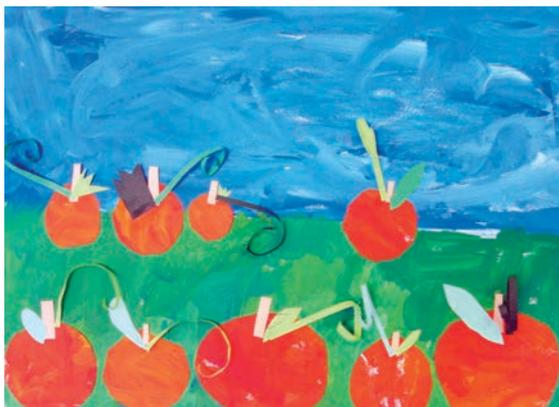
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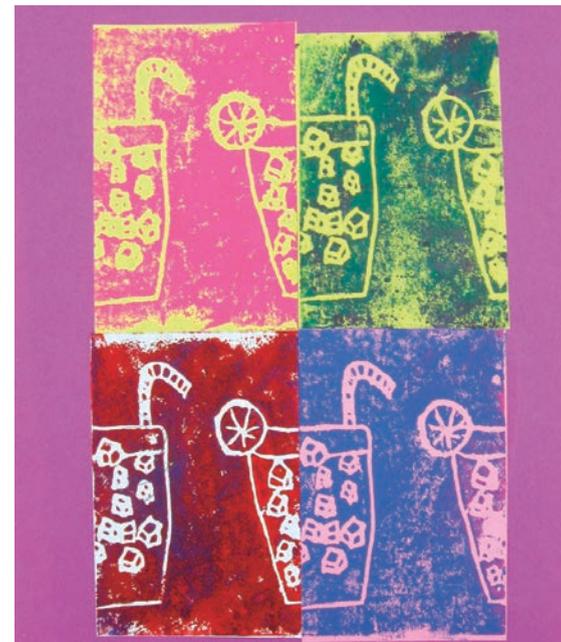
By Emery Shulof



By Heidi Polster, Kindergarten



By Mateo Ortiz Santana, Grade 1



By Sophia Levy, Grade 3



Haycock Elementary School

Artwork submitted
by Sharon Baumgartner, Art Specialist

By Liza Teeter,
Grade 2



By Walter Starz,
Grade 2

Walter 2017

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Submit civic/community announcements at ConnectionNewspapers.com/Calendar. Photos and artwork welcome. Deadline is Thursday at noon, at least two weeks before event.

HOLIDAY SOBER-RIDE

Free Sober Rides. The annual Holiday SoberRider program will operate 8 p.m.-4 a.m. each night from Friday, Dec. 15, 2017-Monday, Jan. 1, 2018. Area residents age 21 and older celebrating with alcohol may download Lyft to their phones, then enter the code in the app's "Promo" section to receive their no cost (up to \$15) safe transportation home. WRAP's weekly Holiday SoberRide promo codes will be posted at 2 p.m. on Dec. 15, Dec. 23 and Dec. 31 on www.SoberRide.com.

TUESDAY/JAN. 9

English as a Second Language Classes. 7-8 p.m. at St. Mark Christian Formation Center, 9972 Vale Road, Vienna. Come help 150+ adult learners master the English language, prepare for American citizenship, learn to converse fluently in English, improve their writing skills, and integrate into the local community. Call 703-980-9380, email stmarksesl@gmail.com, or visit www.stmarksesl.org.

THURSDAY/JAN. 11

English as a Second Language Classes. 7-8 p.m. at St. Mark Christian Formation Center, 9972 Vale Road, Vienna. Come help 150+ adult learners master the English language, prepare for American citizenship, learn to converse fluently in English, improve their writing skills, and integrate into the local community. Call 703-980-9380, email stmarksesl@gmail.com, or visit www.stmarksesl.org.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Are You A Caregiver? Shepherd's Center of Oakton Vienna Caregivers' Support Group takes place first & third Thursday of each month. February 2nd and 16th, 2017 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Join us at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax (UUCF) - Program Building, 2709 Hunter Mill Rd, Oakton, VA. For more info contact facilitator, Jack Tarr, 703-821-6838 jtarr5@verizon.net.

Haven of Northern Virginia Support Group. 703-941-7000, www.havenofnova.org or havenofnova@verizon.net.

Virginia Chronic Pain Support Group Meets from 1:30 - 3 p.m. the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Kaplan Center for Integrative Medicine, 6829 Elm St., Suite 300, McLean. Group leader, Jodi Brayton, LCSW. 703-532-4892.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

RSVP, a volunteer network for seniors seeking service opportunities in and around Fairfax County, Arlington County and the City of Alexandria, offers a wide array of opportunities for volunteers 55 and older. RSVP volunteers enjoy flexible schedules, free accident and liability insurance while serving, optional mileage and meal reimbursement and are invited to volunteer group projects and social gatherings. To sign up for an upcoming orientation, email Carly Hubicki at chubicki@volunteerfairfax.org or call RSVP at 703-403-5360. To learn more about RSVP, visit www.rsvpnova.org.

Shepherd's Center of McLean-Arlington-Falls Church, 1205 Dolley Madison Blvd., McLean continues to have an urgent need for new volunteers to help area senior citizens get to and from their medical and therapy appointments. To find out more about the Shepherd's Center and how you can volunteer to provide transportation and other services, call the Center at 703-506-2199 or e-mail the Center at info@scmaf.org. The Center's website is www.scmaf.org.

Master Gardener Training. The Fairfax County Master Gardener Association offers plant clinics, home turf training or speakers for homeowner's meetings. Fees vary. Visit fairfaxgardening.org or call MG Help Desk at 703-324-8556 for more.

Volunteers Needed. PRS is looking for empathetic and caring volunteers to make phone calls to older adults who may be feeling socially isolated. The commitment is one 3-hour shift per week for one year. Located in Arlington. Ages 21 & up. Intensive training provided. Learn more and apply: <https://prsinc.org/caring-volunteering/>. Questions? Email lpadgett@prsinc.org.

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"Cansir"



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Though I want to treat the disease – and my having been diagnosed with the disease, with respect, I don't want to treat it with the utmost reverence. I mean, it's not the Pope.

It's an affliction, not an affection. Certainly not one worth embracing anyway. But definitely one which needs engaging.

Treating and living with lung cancer shouldn't be a vertical-type, up or down, either-or set of options. There should be more integration with non-Western, holistic and alternative approaches rather than, as has been my experience: you're on your own; and your oncologist, generally speaking – or potentially legally-labile from speaking, knows/say less about it than you the patient.

I've tried to straddle this line going on nearly nine years now. Adhering to the conventional wisdom/treatment didn't seem like enough. Perhaps hearing the extremely grim prognosis that I received on Feb. 27, 2009: "13 months to two years," affected my thinking. Perhaps hearing the equally grim likelihood – statistically referencing, of living beyond five years (low single digit percentage); heck, even living beyond two years, might have given me pause as to what course of treatment: chemotherapy, I was starting and why. But what did I know? I had just been blindsided and then bewildered as to why and how I was going to live the rest of my life.

Yet here I sit, nine-years old, so to speak. Some days I believe my amazing good fortune has to do with the treatment and care I've received from my oncologist and staff at the Infusion Center. Other days, I think it has to do with some of the alternatives I've assimilated into my life. Though I can't honestly include exercise in that life, I have modified my diet somewhat and most definitely can mention vitamins, supplements, alkaline water and apple cider vinegar, among a few others; along with a positive attitude with mostly good humor, as important elements. It hasn't been easy, but it has been me. Meaning, I am proud of how I've managed a bad situation and so far, not made it worse.

Though I am somewhat unique, statistically measuring, in how long I've survived (however, I'm not exactly 108-year old Paul Edgecomb/Tom Hanks from the movie "The Green Mile"), I don't know that the varied steps I've taken and the humor and attitude with which I've put one foot in front of the other are likewise unique.

Of the many patients/survivors I've met along this way, many, if not all, have exhibited similar good humor and more of a can-do attitude quite frankly, than I. I've always been happy to make their acquaintance and eager to hear their stories, as they have been interested in hearing mine. Although cancer is not exactly catchy, I've found that, in speaking/sharing with fellow cancer survivors, what goes around comes around. And what "that" is that is going around is, to invoke The Beach Boys: "Good Vibrations," and that is catchy and healthy too!

When I was first diagnosed – and caught up in my own circumstances, I was not interested – too much, in interacting with other lung cancer patients/survivors. I was more concerned with my own fragile emotional state and was afraid that exposing myself to more bad news: other "terminal" lung cancer patients' stories would weaken my resolve.

I don't recall how many months or years it was before I realized how wrong I had been. Weaken? My involvement with fellow lung cancer patient/survivors has only strengthened my resolve. Has that openness and appreciation for my fellow lung cancer patient extended my life? I'd like to think it has.

But if it hasn't, I guess the jokes on cancer. And that's a laugh with which we can all live.

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

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