Puff

A puff of breath
And the sky is white
Its ivory spray across the night
As snowy wings lock the inky black
Only to dissolve for the next breath to come

And the night clouds away
Creamy and soft it graces the stars
But a blink and a sniffle and it’s already out of reach
Melting away in crumbles of light
This time longer till air runs out

Swirling, smoking, sizzling, and steaming
A funnel of warmth disperses to the sky
My puff is gone
My breath is gone

But in its place is a buzz
A warm buzz
A swirling, tingling, and pounding heart
Blazing through from head to toe
A thousand suns and moons within

Now filling the air is my hope
A breathless wish for a warmer night

Hyohyun Jung, 17, Grade 11, McLean High (English Teacher: Seth LeBlanc)
Welcome

Dear Readers:

This week, the Great Falls Connection turns over its pages to the youth and students. We asked children from area schools to contribute their words, pictures and photos for our annual Children’s & Teens’ 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 2020 calendars for early December, the deadline for submissions for next year’s Children’s & Teens’ 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 news pages.

Our preferred method for material is email, which should be sent to greatfalls@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 Kurspahic
The Best Gift

The best gift is not an object or a place yet a feeling. The feeling of warmth of family and friends. The feeling of paying it forward or buying something to help someone. That little drop of kindness that makes yours and others day so much better. The exquisite delight of making someone smile is the best gift of all.

—Meissa Islam, 11, Grade 6

The Best Gift I Have Ever Been Given

The best gift I have ever been given wasn’t something big, like a play set or a bike. It wasn’t expensive either, like an iPad or a phone. It was something more meaningful than any of those gifts combined. It was a door to imagination, a window to creativity. It was a very highly recommended cure for boredom: A Book. This magical gift led me on so many adventures and to so many memories, even though it was just a combination of writing and pages, brought together by a hard cover. I am extremely grateful that I was able to receive the pages, writing, and cover. I wish that everyone will be able to receive such a gift, and be able to treasure it forever.

—Maxine Leonard, 11, Grade 6

What Makes a Good Parent

Being a good parent is a difficult task but very beneficial to your child or children. Ways to be a good parent are loving your child, making sure your child is making good choices, being protective of your child, and talking to your child when they need you. Parents are a role model to their child or children. That’s why parents also need to make good choices, kids should be able to look up to their parents. A good parent should know how to deal with their child or children in almost any situation. The most important thing a good parent should do is love their child or children.

—Amanda Li, 11, Grade 6
Children’s & Teens’ Connection

Creative Photography

Photos by Aubrey Augustine, 17, Grade 11, Langley High School, Teacher: Kelly Mulligan.

Young girl looks off into the distance in a Christmas photoshoot.

A long shutter speed and flashlight is used to create this memorizing light picture.

By Cynthia Yuxin Huang, 13, Oakton, Grade 8, Luther Jackson Middle School, Teacher: Ms. Yanshun Sui

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Artful Siblings
Artwork by Jenny Wang, 11, Grade 7, Cooper Middle School; and Jason Wang, 9, Grade 4, in Forestville Elementary School in Great Falls.
Children’s & Teens’ Connection

Spring Hill Art Gallery

Artwork submitted by Carolyn Gore-Ashe and Dorothy Moon, Art Specialists, Spring Hill Elementary School

By Zosia Henryson Gibbs, Grade 6

By Nola Gramatikov, Grade 6

By Olivia Gerace, Grade 1

By Brendan Li, Grade 6

By Ethan Chen, Grade 2

By Joshua Riz Avino, Grade 6

By Cannon Zdimal, Grade 3
Shrevewood Art Gallery
Artwork submitted by Jessica Chinn, Art Teacher, Shrevewood Elementary

Aadhirai Thirumal, Shrevewood Elementary, Grade 1.

Lisa Romanova, Shrevewood Elementary, Grade 1.

Luca Pipia, Shrevewood Elementary, Grade 2.

Alisiya Kunt, Shrevewood Elementary, Grade 2.

Francisco Ocampo Valenzuela, Shrevewood Elementary, Grade 4.

Nathaniel Webster, Shrevewood Elementary, Grade 6.
The doctor told me that I’ll probably receive results from today’s biopsy in five to seven days. The pathologist will send the results to my oncologist who presumably will email them to me. Now whether that new information will cause a change in my treatment, I certainly don’t know. However, I would imagine that finding the genetic mutation/biomarker would cause an immediate change. We’re not exactly waiting for Godot here. And neither is the biopharma world in the fast lane of science. It’s medicine. It’s research. It’s years of clinical trials. All of which has led to the FDA’s approval of more drugs for the treatment of lung cancer in the last three years than in the previous three decades, according to LUNGevity. Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer deaths annually with up to 200,000 new cases diagnosed every year.

“Targeted Therapy” is what I’m talking about. It’s a simple as in sound medicine. It’s more effective when given to a patient with a specific biomarker (type of tumor; they’re not all the same). Eleven years ago when I was first diagnosed, mutations were not yet a part of the oncologist’s playbook. Now, they’re on page one. After years of research on targeted mutations and on old-ish/conventional methods, I am about to move to the head of the class. One new symptom and/or unexpected result from a CT scan or a brain MRI and once again, it will be “Katie, bar the door.” Accordingly, I have become a patient patient. That’s not double talk, that’s years of experience. I’d like to think it’s part of the reason I’m still alive.

Another reason I’m still alive is the Team Lourie philosophy: hoping Kenny can stay alive until research catches up – or even passes you by which then enables you to take advantage of the next big thing/new drug. Over the last 11 years, I’ve been the beneficiary of research provided drugs which allowed me to live 11 years beyond my original “13 month to two year” prognosis (in quotes because that’s what my oncologist said). Now I hope to be the beneficia ry once again of the latest and greatest treatment: “Targeted Therapy.” If so, another 11 years would suit me just fine.

To say I’m excited would not exactly describe my state of mind. Hopeful, of course. Anxious, for sure, because I think my oncologist, per our last meeting, was anticipating my future a bit and discussed. Sure, we’ve occasionally mapped out, generally speaking, a course of action/ reaction, but my oncologist prefers not to get too far ahead of where we are at present. One new symptom and/or unexpected result from a CT scan or a brain MRI and once again, it will be “Katie, bar the door.” Accordingly, I have become a patient patient. That’s not double talk, that’s years of experience. I’d like to think it’s part of the reason I’m still alive.

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

By KENNETH R. LOURIE

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