

# Great Falls CONNECTION

Halloween Pumpkin  
Design, by Georgia Martin,  
12, of Great Falls, Grade 7  
at Cooper Middle,  
Art Teacher: Nadene Wright



## Children's & Teens' Connection 2020

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# CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION

March 13,  
2020

The morning of March 13 started almost the same as any other Friday in 2020. Something was different, though. Maybe we could all sense the news we would find out later that day. It was a weird feeling, like being close to figuring out some sort of mystery. Yet I still couldn't have guessed what would happen by the end of the day, let alone what would happen for the entire year.

I sat at my desk in my sixth grade classroom as the afternoon sun shone through the blinds. I couldn't believe my ears when I heard my teacher's composed but anxious voice informing our class that our school would be shut down for two weeks. My whole class was looking glancing around the room, most of them with the same worried, apprehensive look as me: How big of an impact could Covid have on us?

If I could talk to my younger self, all I could do would be to tell her of the upcoming months. But would I even want to do that? Distill fear and confirm the worst to my already-stressed self on March 13?

If I really did get a chance to talk to my younger self, I would warn her: To be careful, wear a mask, and be prepared to face multiple cancellations and ruined plans. I would ask her to help out: Maybe sew masks, or donate hand sanitizer, because I wish I could've done more in the first few months of quarantine. But

lastly, I would tell her to be brave. To remember that this next year will be hard, but to keep my head up. And most importantly, I would tell her that I would survive 2020.

— PAIGE A. POULOS, 12, GRADE 7,  
TEACHER: LINDSAY BOVENZI



By Jihan Matthews, Grade 8, Rocky Run Middle School.



Santa Silhouette, by Arnav Khetarpal, Grade 6, Lemon Road Elementary, Art Teacher Ms. Norton

## COVID-19

As a drop of red pigment  
Turns a bucket of water into a red river  
A single case of COVID-19  
Turns the whole world upside down  
Like a bird trapped in a cage  
Like a hamster running on a wheel  
We feel hopeless and lonely  
We talk to ourselves in the mirror  
We wear mask to hide our fears  
We scream silently for help  
But  
There is a light at the end of the tunnel  
Peace and calm are waiting for us  
Let's pray and hope  
Changing tears into laughters  
No matter what happens  
We will find our way  
We will survive

— INA CHUNG, 17, OF MCLEAN, JUNIOR AT BISHOP O'CONNELL HIGH SCHOOL ] IN ARLINGTON.

## Tons of Feelings

In memory of my aunt who passed away a couple months ago.

BY CASSANDRA KUEBLER/MCLEAN/GRADE 6

All of these feelings, trapping me  
And they're always the opposite of glee  
Lonely, sad, broken, mad  
Why are people sick?  
Why do people die?  
Does God somehow pick?  
Why do I cry?  
Are they really gone?  
Why can't I go?  
Why can't we just respawn?  
Having feelings doesn't make me grow  
Or do they?  
Is it bad?  
Stay, just please stay  
It's a broken down want-ad  
Asking me to realize reality  
But all these emotions make me beastly  
I can't control them, or myself  
I wish I could toss 'em back on the shelf  
ABORT! When they attack, for everything I lack  
So support me when I crack, and then take me back  
But I got tons of feelings, and somehow I survive  
Yeah, I got tons of feelings, and it makes me thrive

## Christmas

It's not about the things around you  
or where you might be.  
Christmas is all about family.  
Eggnog, ham, turkey, anything on a platter  
none of those things matter.  
Family and friends are what are important.  
Not the presents galore  
all spread out on the floor.  
That's what Christmas is for.

— ZULEIKA PATTERSON, MCLEAN, GRADE 3, SPRING HILL  
ELEMENTARY, TEACHER: MRS. BOSWELL

# CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION

SPRING HILL ELEMENTARY



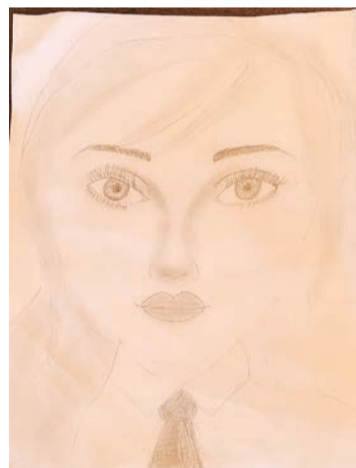
My Gingerbread House, by Raina Ailani, KG, Spring Hill Elementary School, Teacher Ms. Gore Ashe.



Best Friends, by Jaya Bali of McLean, Grade 5, Spring Hill Elementary, Teacher: Samantha Fitzsimmons.



Half Full, by Grace Fitzgerald of McLean, Age: 12, Grade: 6, Spring Hill Elementary, Art teacher: Dorothy Moon.



By Shveta Sunkar, McLean, Age: 12, Grade: 6, Spring Hill Elementary, Teacher: Cecilia Smith



By Noor Naffa, 8, McLean, Grade 3, Spring Hill Elementary, Teacher: Nicole Boswell



By Swara Chaudhari, 8, Spring Hill Elementary, McLean

CUNNINGHAM PARK ELEMENTARY



Wish You Were Here: California, Postcard Collage by Grade 3 Student Maria De Luigi



Who Am I: Present – “I Love to Hang with My BFFs” Collage by Grade 6 Student Brook Somerville



Who Am I: Present – “My present is me sitting at my laptop while the world turns behind me,” Collage by Grade 6 Student Casey Abbott

## EDITORIAL

# Merry Christmas

**“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”**

The pages of the Connection (including the Alexandria Gazette Packet, the Mount Vernon Gazette, the Potomac Almanac and the Centre View) are usually full of holiday spirit, beginning before Thanksgiving. While in this, the year of COVID, the year 2020, a year like no other, the holidays have been muted in so many ways. Still we have celebrated help for the needy whose numbers have expanded with the pandemic; collecting toys and warm coats for children who might not otherwise receive them; holiday celebrations, concerts and performances via Zoom; socially distanced Santa, tree lightings; stories of giving; the Virtual Nutcracker; and more.

And still, Christmas is about the birth of Jesus Christ. Whether you believe the Christmas story literally or in spirit, you know it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption. In this holiday of 2020, like no other as we keep saying, we need the Christmas story in whatever way we can access it.

Christmas is also about embracing the teachings of Jesus: to love thy neighbor as thyself; to help the needy; to feed the hungry and clothe the poor; to care for those who are sick; to invite and welcome strangers; to treat others as you would have them treat you. These teachings have deep meaning and consequence for us right now.

### Matthew 7:12:

“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.”

### Matthew 25:35-40:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

**SO SHARE** the verse relating the birth of Jesus from the Bible, Luke 2: 4-19:

“And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David.) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

“And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

“For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.”

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

— MARY KIMM

MKIMM@CONNECTIONNEWSPAPERS.COM

**Whether you embrace the Christmas story literally or in spirit, it is the story of joy, hope and love, with the promise of redemption.**



Artwork by Linna Liu, 6, of McLean, Kindergarten, Spring Hill Elementary, Teacher: Mrs. Burns

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# CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION

## The World Will Never be the Same

I stood in this very spot, four years earlier, grasping my mother's hand, watching the bustling city. People rushed around me. My attention shifted to the crowded street. Colors flew by, and I could smell the scent of fast food trucks, ones that were lined up on the sides of the street, the street that was home to the first black president in US history.

As I stand in that very spot today, I see the bright flash of this distant memory; I look around me. I see a few stands selling t-shirts, hats, flags, all marked with the same slogan. The streets are strikingly bare, and the only colors here are the bright yellow letters that have been painted onto the tarred, black street. The letters that go up the street to the fence that marks the edge of the president's home, a new president who helped inspire these words.

Those letters spell a statement that not just the president needs to hear. They spell the injustice that George Floyd experienced, and

countless others. They were painted onto this street for most of the worldwide shut down. Proof that the world is still fighting for just, free, equal lives, even in the face of a widespread disease that has wiped out 2 million of the world's population.

This disease is new, scary, and is happening now. So, no, there are not going to be busy crowded streets for a long time, the grocery store might not have enough supplies, and the world will never be the same. But that does not mean we can stop fighting for what's right. Each person only has around 70 years to live at best. We need to make sure everyone can live those years in equality, making sure that George Floyd's death is not in vain, that these painted words are more than just a slogan on a t-shirt or a hat. We have to fight for what is right, and always remember that Black Lives Matter.

— ZOSIA HENRYSON-GIBBS, 12,  
OF SPRINGFIELD,  
GRADE 7, COOPER MIDDLE

## The Day Everything Changed

I look outside my window; rain pouring, grey unfriendly clouds swept across the gloomy sky. I wake up and get ready for school in a rush because I slept in, like always.

As I arrive at the bus stop, I see a peak of yellow through the dark green evergreen trees. It's the bus.

I hop onto the bus and I am greeted by my bus driver. She has platinum blonde hair and wears purple glasses and somehow always has the biggest smile on her face. I find it very shocking how she hasn't quit her job yet even though she drives a bus with the most annoying first graders I have ever met.

I end up getting to school as the school bell rings loud enough to damage your eardrums and the morning announcements blast through the long, boring, hallway.

After five dreadful periods go by, it's finally the end of the day.

When I walk into the gym I see students from all different ages and backgrounds lined up with their backpacks in 8 different single-file lines, anxiously waiting to leave school.

When I get onto the bus, I hear everyone talk about some sort-of virus called the coronavirus and how it might cancel school for a couple of weeks.

I don't know a lot about it but I think to myself that it probably won't matter and even if we did get school off it will only be for two weeks and then we will be back. I mean how bad could this COVID-19 virus be? It's not like it will be the end of the world.

66 million COVID-19 cases, over eight months in quarantine, and more than 1 million 500 deaths later, I regret saying those words.

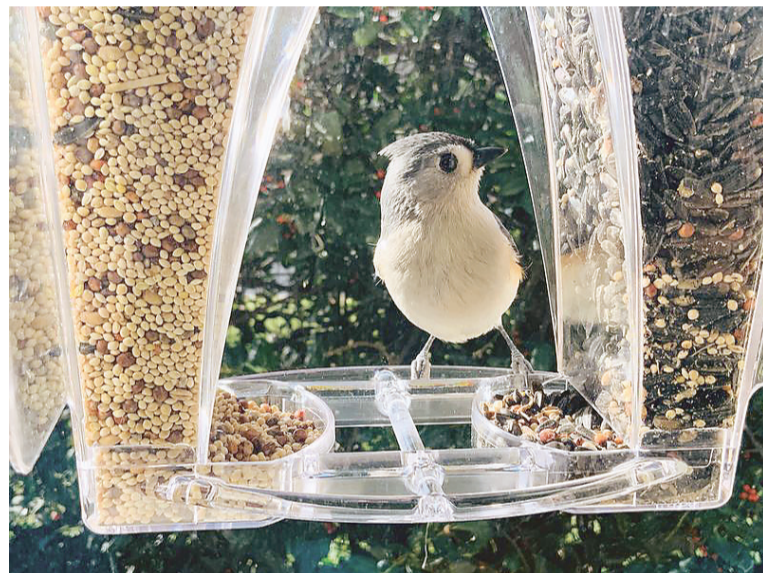
— SARAH BADE, 12,  
OF GREAT FALLS,  
GRADE 7, COOPER MIDDLE



By Nikta Sarani, 13, of Great Falls, Grade 7, Cooper Middle School: This photo represents how my family and I celebrate Christmas. For Christmas, my family and I put up decorations, and on Christmas day we open presents together.



By Asiya Malik, of McLean, Grade 7, Cooper Middle School: In this picture, you see a girl running free through the creative motions of life. I am so grateful for all the creative freedom and assistance my parents and teachers have given me this year. This picture portrays the freedom and flexibility they give me and how easy it makes my school experience.

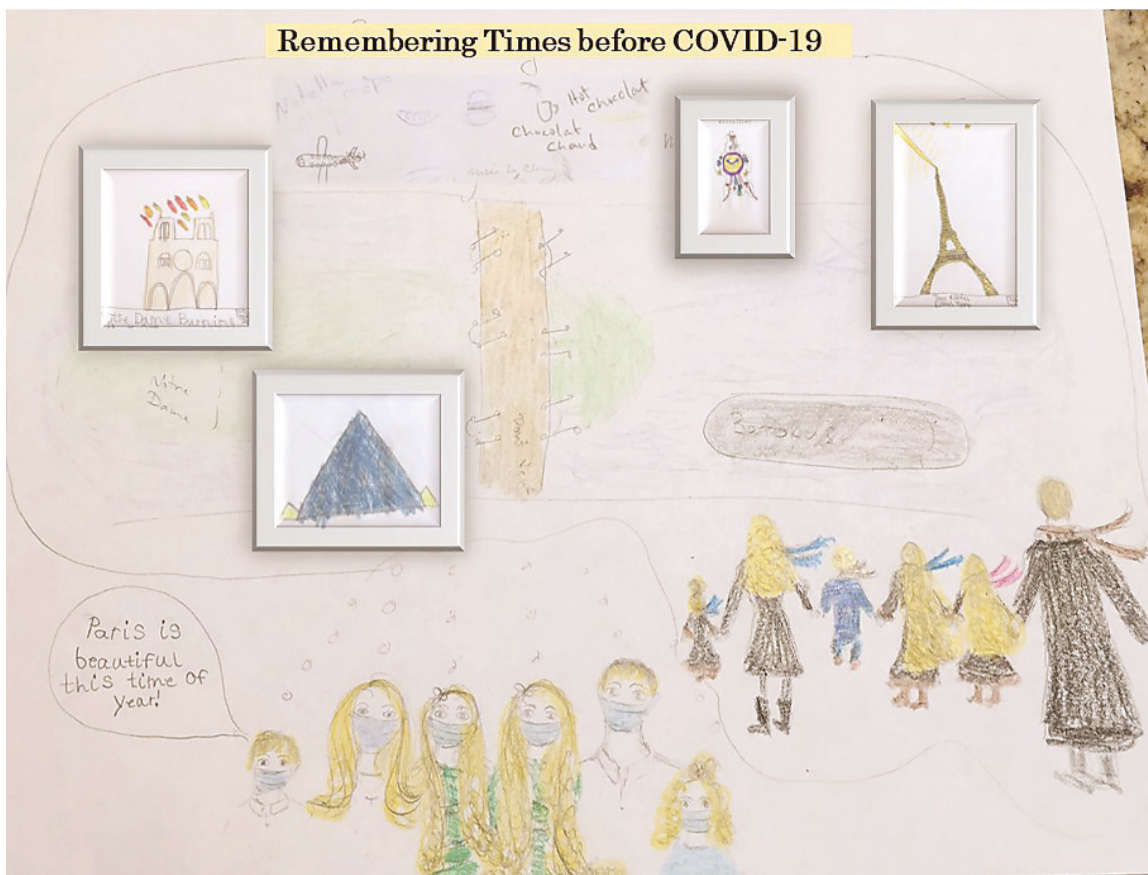


By Nikhil Natarajan, 12, of McLean, Grade 7, Cooper Middle School: Since COVID has started, we have hung up several bird feeders in our backyard. During class, I have discovered we have visitors — these are titmice and they are always at my window feeder.



Halloween Pumpkin Design, by Georgia Martin, 12, of Great Falls, Grade 7 at Cooper Middle, Art Teacher: Nadene Wright

# CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION



## Remembering Times Before COVID-19

Symanski Family Homeschool, Great Falls: Elizabeth Symanski - Age 10, Grade 5; Katherine Symanski - Age 8, Grade 3; Alexander Symanski - Age 4, Pre-K; Victoria Grace Symanski - Age 2, Preschool. Teacher: Andrea Symanski

## 2020: A Year of Patience, Change, and Endurance

2020 has been a year of firsts. A year of ups, and many many downs. We have witnessed history in the making. We have made our voices heard. We have persevered through all the hardships. We have shown that humanity is strong when we come together as one. This is a year of patience, change, and endurance.

As students in a virtual learning climate, we mainly have one goal, to succeed in an online environment. This can be challenging, from the technical difficulties to the eye strain. But we have been patient throughout this virtual year. We have learned to tolerate minor setbacks and use other resources to achieve our goals.

2020 will always be remembered as a year of bad things, but it will also be remembered as a year of change. People took to the streets, created hashtags, and made their voices heard. They stood up for their rights and other's rights. So while this year may bring some unpleasant memories to mind, it also has the scars of change and justice.

Endurance. This is an important trait. A trait that,

until now, most people didn't have. It is the core of our resistance to quitting during this pandemic. It's what's holding our boredom, pain, and sadness, and keeps it from bursting into the world. Yet, it's hard to imagine us surviving without it. Without this trait, we wouldn't have been as productive as we were. We would have just sat around sulking, instead of using this time to solve problems, like creating a vaccine. If this pandemic has shown us anything it is that if you want something done, you have to do it yourself.

While 2020 hasn't been the best year, we certainly learned a lot. We learned how patience has helped us succeed not only in online learning but in the outside world too. We learned that if you keep fighting for change your voice will eventually be heard. And most importantly, we learned that endurance helps us solve problems during hard times. So even if you want this year to finally end, we should still remember all the lessons that we learned this year.

— ISMAEL AHMED, 13, OF RESTON,  
GRADE 7, COOPER MIDDLE

## Family Time

Let's face it. The coronavirus has ruined all of our lives.

Okay, okay. Maybe I'm exaggerating, but what I do know is that COVID-19 has flipped my world upside-down.

One day I'm hunched over a tiny desk in my sixth-grade classroom, excitedly chatting with my friends, and the next day I'm stuck at home for who knows how long.

However, there has been one silver lining of being in quarantine: I get to spend more time with my family.

Ever since my sister started high school and got burdened with an overwhelming amount of home-

work and after-school activities, I haven't been able to watch a single movie with my family during the busy school year.

Well, that's one thing that has completely changed in 2020. Now, during the weekends, I spend my time snuggling with my family on the plush couch in our cozy living room, streaming immersive TV shows.

If there's one lesson you learn from reading this, it's to spend all the time you can with your loved ones. Especially in uncertain times like these, because any minute could be the last.

— SOPHIE LI, 12,  
GRADE 7, COOPER MIDDLE

## COLVIN RUN ELEMENTARY

Student artwork submitted by Lauren Grimm (Art Teacher), Colvin Run Elementary



Fay Amirullah of Vienna, Grade 6, Colvin Run Elementary School



Iris Xie of Vienna, Grade 5; Colvin Run Elementary School



Evan Johnson of Great Falls, Grade 4, Colvin Run Elementary School



Samhita Athreya of Vienna, Grade 2, Colvin Run Elementary School

# CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION



**We All Bleed the Same**, by Habeeba Kassem, Age 12, Grade 8, Langston Hughes Middle School, Reston, Teacher: Mary Dolmat

## Family Hikes

The coronavirus has changed the way we do things dramatically, forcing a quarantine in many areas, which can lead to unexpected traditions. In the early spring and well into the summer my family had been cooped up in the house and it was driving us all crazy, so we started to do things to remedy that.

For example, my mother, brother, and I took long hikes in the woods behind our home. It was so beautiful and serene, with the flourishing trees swaying gently as we walked down the well-trodden trails, and there was practically no one else out there.

I distinctly remember one occasion when we stumbled down a hidden and somewhat treacherous path

leading up a rocky incline. Boulders juttied out from the side and brambles clambered over each other to reach onto the trees above, giving us an uncomfortable but energizing trek. We then turned a corner which led to an awe-inspiring and magnificent vista soaring above the Potomac river far below.

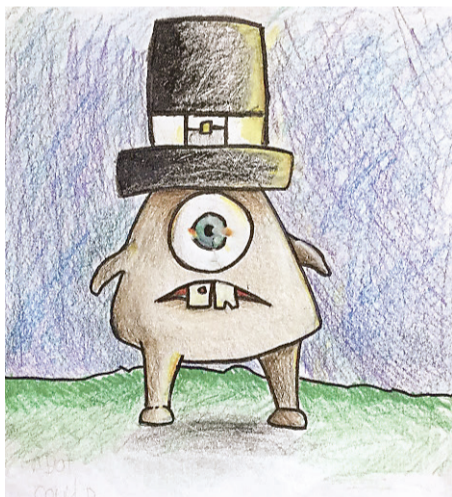
There was a small bench there, so we all took a moment to stop and savor the view. It was an unforgettable experience that was very tranquil and refreshing, especially after being stuck up indoors for a while.

— DYLAN LOVE THOMAS, 13,  
GRADE 7, COOPER MIDDLE

## VIENNA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Artwork submitted by Vienna Elementary School  
Art Teacher Katie Aiken

**"Local Landscape"** by Charlotte Melchior, Age: 8, Grade: 2, Vienna ES



**"Peter Pan and Tinkerbell"**  
by Caitie Pendleton, Age: 11,  
Grade: 6th, Vienna ES



**"A Dot Could be a Monster"**  
by David Kharitonashvili, Age: 12,  
Grade: 6, Vienna ES

## LEMON ROAD ELEMENTARY



**A Snowman with a Tree**, by Aaradhya Menon, Grade 3, Lemon Road Elementary School  
Art Teacher Cheryl Bearss



**Scarecrow**, by Aadith Eadhara, Grade 3, Lemon Road Elementary,  
Art Teacher Cheryl Bearss



**Snowman flying**, by Mary Bareis, Grade 3, Lemon Road Elementary School  
Art Teacher Cheryl Bearss



**Two Snowmen on Pond**, by Aanya Bhatia, Grade 3, Lemon Road Elementary,  
Art Teacher Cheryl Bearss



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**Grinch's Grotto (Now thru Dec. 31).**  
Located on Level 2 next to A Christmas to Remember. Guests will meet The Grinch and interact with him right in his cave, as well as pose for a photo. Admission includes a free 6x8" printed photo with a playful Grinch catchphrase. With over 20 sayings to choose from, guests can customize their own Grinch holiday memory. Admission also gets you a collectible Grinch ornament. Each ticket allows admission for up to 5 guests to meet the Grinch as a group. This ticket secures your individual time to meet the Grinch and experience his cave. Social distancing and mask usage will be in accordance with local and mall regulations.

**NOW THRU THE HOLIDAYS**

**Santa at Springfield Town Center.**  
Santa and his reindeer have arrived at Springfield Town Center to kick-off the holiday season. In an effort to create touchless experiences and accommodate varying levels of visitor comfort, Santa will be available at Springfield Town Center via numerous experiences and offerings: Picture with Santa; Virtual Experience; Family Pet Photos on Mondays; Family Photos and Visits with Santa. Reservations are required for all Santa and photo offerings.

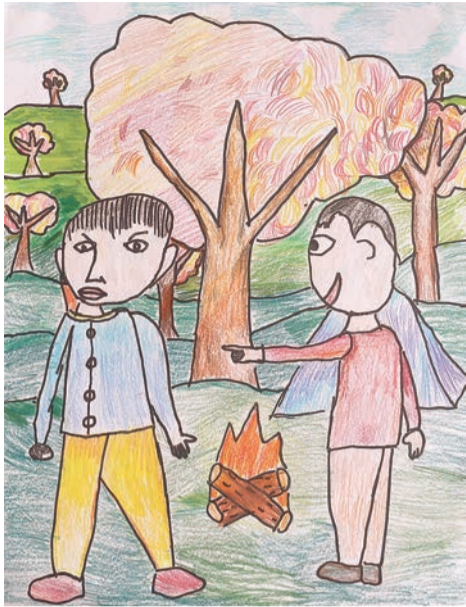
**DEC. 18 TO JAN. 4**

**Naturescape Narratives: Chinese Brushpainting.** 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. At Reston Community Center Hunters Woods, 2310 Colts Neck Road, Reston. Offering a break from the pandemic, 67 brushpaintings by Tracie Griffith Tso are on exhibit at Reston Community Center Hunters Woods through January 4 offering a 6,000-year-old Chinese artform in a nature-based display.

**DEC. 20-30**

**A Winter Star.** Encore Stage & Studio is making spirits bright this season by offering a unique theatrical experience outdoors in the comfort of your car in the parking lot of Temple Rodef Shalom (2100 Westmoreland St., Falls Church). Performances dates are December 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, and 30. Showtimes begin every 15 minutes between 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.; and 2:30 - 4:30 p.m. All entry tickets must be purchased in advance. Entry tickets are Pay-What-You-Can donations, starting at \$5. Ticket proceeds from A Winter Star will be donated to the Arlington Food Assistance Center and Encore's Theatre for All! Fund which provides scholarships and outreach programs. Tickets are available online at [www.encestage.org](http://www.encestage.org). To learn more, visit [www.templerodefshalom.org](http://www.templerodefshalom.org).

KENT GARDENS ELEMENTARY

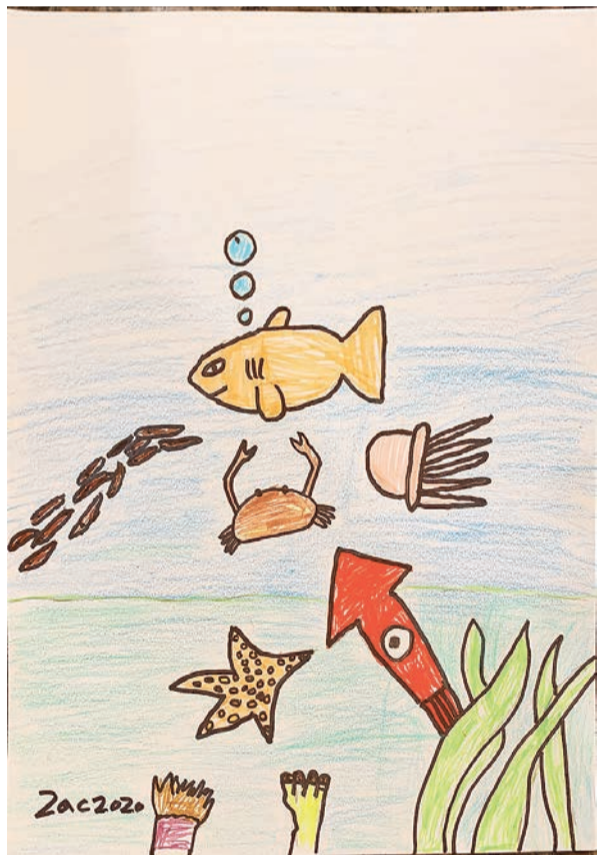


**Bickering Campers**, by Kyler Liang, Age: 9. School: Kent Gardens Elementary, McLean, Teacher: Ms. Sui



**Cabbage Tree House**, by Kyler Liang, Age: 9, School: Kent Gardens Elementary, McLean, Teacher: Ms. Sui

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**Under The Sea**, by Zac Lee of McLean, Age: 7, Grade 2, homeschooled



**Snow Day**, by Zoe Lee, 8, of McLean, Grade 3, homeschooled

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## Trip, and Hopefully Not a Fall



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

Having recently returned from a driving sojourn through the south with stops and stays in North Carolina, South Carolina and Florida visiting four sets of friends in those three states, I can say with certainty that wearing masks, social distancing and common sense consideration for your fellow citizen were not nearly so accepted as we had hoped. Though we didn't exactly mingle with the masses, we were, nonetheless, in uncharted territory. As such, my wife and I will be getting covid tests after a week or so of being at home. Though still symptom free, it seems prudent under the very unique circumstances in which the world finds itself that we not wait too much longer. Time is very likely of the essence.

As a precaution - and courtesy to our southern hosts, we both got tested before our trip and with negative results, off we drove with one less concern. Now we could say with certainty that we had acted respectfully and with other people's prospective health in mind. Nevertheless, it was hardly a guarantee that we would remain covid free. After all, it was only a test. It was not an inoculation. Speaking of which, as a cancer patient with a compromised immune system, I imagine I'm likely to get my two shots sooner rather than later. But what about my wife, Dina. She raised an interesting question. Though she's not in any of the categories of early shot recipients, she is however living with someone who is me. Moreover, I don't suppose it would be to my advantage living in the same household/sleeping in the same bed/caring for a covid-positive person: my wife, even after receiving my shot. Data for that situation likely doesn't exist yet. I don't imagine it's akin to playing with fire - for me, more likely like playing with embers. Still, there seems to exist a risk, perhaps one that's been considered in the hierarchy/schedule of "inoculees." In summary, will family members of high-risk covid 19 recipients receive their vaccinations earlier on in the schedule than they might otherwise have been eligible? Or is the demand too great, given the worldwide pandemic, which I imagine it is.

If the plan is to minimize the risk for those most at risk, how do you accomplish that while leaving those closest (literally and figuratively) to them unprotected? I'm not asking for special treatment or dispensation from the Pope (has he gotten his shot?), I'm just wondering. Granted, there's not an unlimited supply - on or off the shelves, of vaccines, but there does seem to be nearly unlimited numbers of people who need to be vaccinated to accomplish a sort of worldwide herd-type immunity. That being said, if other people living in the home of an individual qualified/fortunate to receive a shot or two, are not inoculated as well, will it in fact enable the virus to move on, so to speak and find some other host susceptible enough to keep the virus straining? Will the proximity of other non-inoculated people defeat the purpose of getting the tier ones and twos inoculated? (I sound like Carrie Bradshaw (Sarah Jessica Parker) from "Sex and the City" sounding out one of her columns.)

I don't mean to be paranoid; I'm just wondering/theorizing if my fear is at all founded in reality or am I just cruising for a verbal bruising? I'm also curious if there's any discretion in the recipient process. Presumably, there are lots of circumstances/patients like me where the cancer patients' health and welfare - to varying degrees, are dependent on the health of people (family, friends or caregivers) entrusted to care for them. Giving the vaccine to the patient but denying it for the people responsible for their wellbeing seems counterproductive - or short sighted. I may very well be inoculated against covid in the not too distant future, but if I don't receive the care and feeding I need, I may survive covid but still die from my underlying disease: cancer. I understand there's no perfect solution at present. But it's the future I'm worried about.

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



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