

The Arlington Connection



Children's & Teens' Connection 2017

By Hannah Burkholder, 11th
grade, Yorktown High School.

DECEMBER 27 - JANUARY 2, 2018

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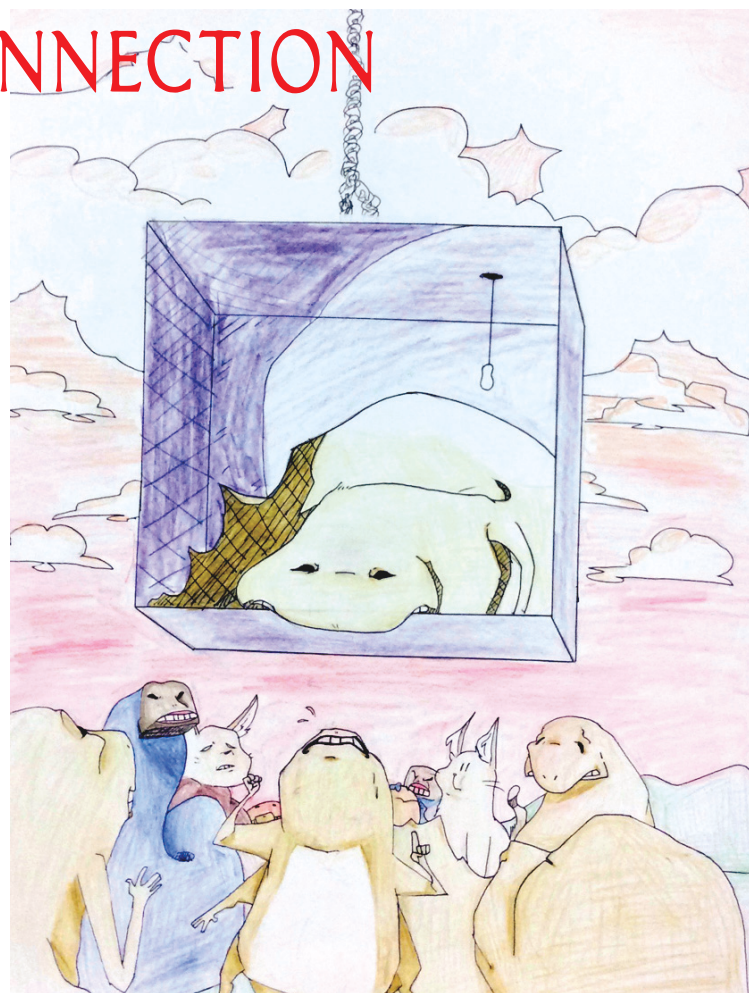
Reaching Suburban Washington's Leading Households

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CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION



By Morgan Feist, 11th Grade, Yorktown High School



Jantara McCormick, 8th Grade, Swanson Middle School



Eve Rosenthal, 2nd Grade, Still-Life, Nottingham Elementary School



By Anya Gowda, 7th Grade, Gunston Middle School

The Arlington Children's Connection

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Welcome

Dear Readers:

This week, the Arlington 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. Because of the re-

sponse, we will continue to publish more artwork and writings in January.

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 schools pages.

Our preferred method for material is e-mail, which should be sent to arlington@connectionnewspapers.com, but you can reach us by mail at 1606 King St., Alexandria, VA 22314 or call 703-778-9415 with any questions.

— EDITOR STEVEN MAUREN

GUNSTON MIDDLE SCHOOL



By Parker Friedli, 8th Grade



By Anna Moane, 8th Grade



By Riley Brodowski, 8th Grade



By Meijin Patil, 7th Grade



By Shams Alkhoul, 7th Grade



By Leila Greene, 8th Grade



By Violet Moore, 8th Grade

Infinite Stories

I am not a book, I cannot be read.
I do not have pages that can be flipped,
Nor is my life poured out onto a piece of paper. And yet, when I am asked about my story,
I do, in fact, have an answer.

I am a snowflake in a blizzard,
Delicate, yet strong.
No one can know for sure where I will strike next.

I am a drop of water in the mighty ocean,
Small, but part of something big.
Just a little drop, and yet I'll never be alone.

I am the wind in the trees,
Loud, yet still not quite sure where to go.
I am in charge of myself; nothing can change my mind.

I am a star in the night,
Bright and one in a million.
The same as the rest from afar, but up close, I am quite unique.

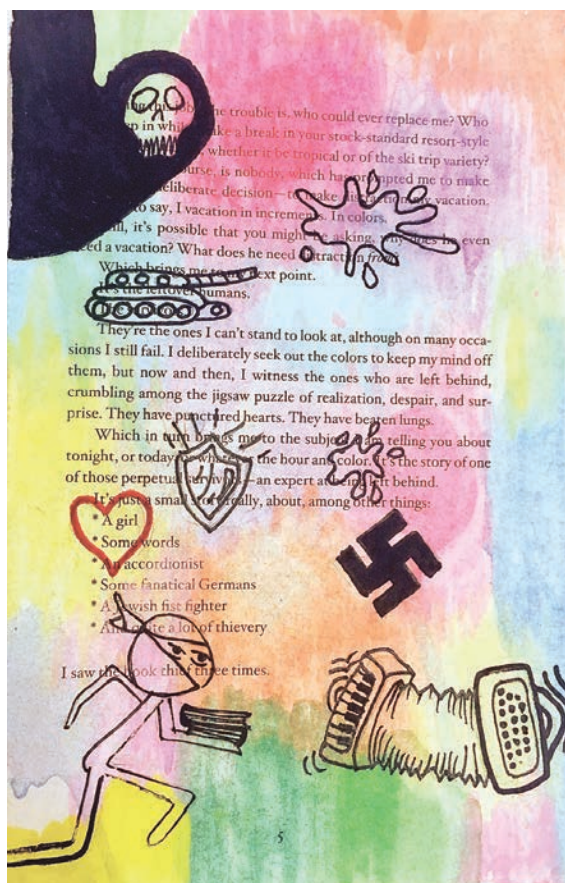
On the outside I am human, But the inside is not the same. Around me, the world goes on, But within, I am infinity and more.

By CHARLOTTE PAPACOSMA

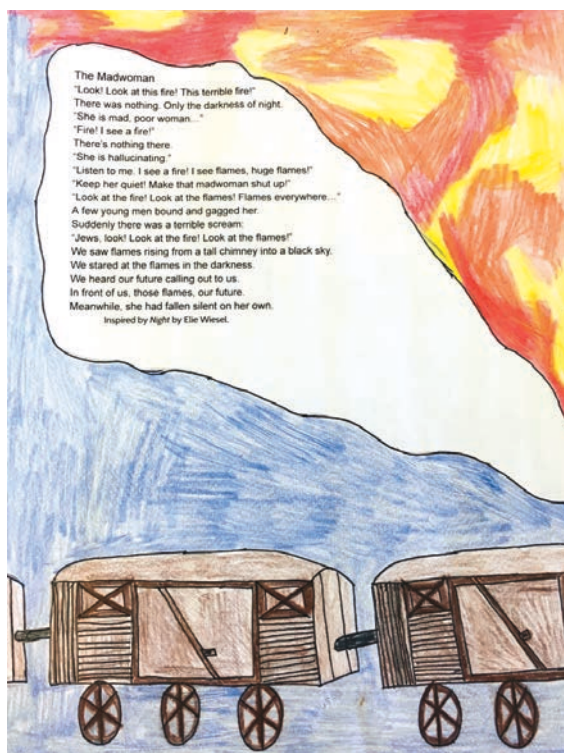
From the students of Art Teacher Peter Fitzgerald

YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

From students of Ruth Mohr.



A Multi-media response to "The Book Thief" by Natalie Macheret. Explanation: A visual product made for an Individual Oral Presentation analyzing page 5.



Found Poem from the book "Night" by Elie Wiesel by Anna Goco. Explanation: This is a found poem from the book "Night" by Elie Wiesel that I wrote and drew an image of. This depicts the scene on the train to a concentration camp where a woman said she saw flames when nothing was there.



A watercolor painting titled The Road of Yellow Stars, based on "The Book Thief" by sophomore Jada Lansing. Explanation: The passage connected to my painting is — THE LAST STOP (The road of yellow stars) "It was a place nobody wanted to stay and look at, but almost everyone did. shaped like a long broken arm, the road contained several houses with lacerated windows and bruised walls. The Star of David was painted on their doors. Those houses were almost like peppers. At the very least, they were infected sores on the injured German terrain" (Zusak 51).

Discover Burgundy creativity!

We're thrilled to share Burgundy students' art and writing in this issue of the Connection!



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NOTTINGHAM ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

From the students of Art Teacher Sarah Zoller.



**Naima Malik, Kindergarten,
Fall Landscape**



**Augusta Kostenko, Kindergarten,
Fall Landscape**



**Cameron Domnitch, 1st Grade,
Sunflowers**



**Annabel Teres, 1st Grade,
Autumn Landscape**



**Kiraz Terzi-Rowe, 1st Grade,
Autumn Landscape**



**Lauren Jeffrey, 2nd Grade,
Still-Life**



**Declan Connor, 2nd Grade,
Still-Life**



**Reese Hinkle, 2nd Grade,
Fall Landscape**



**Conor Bouda, 2nd Grade,
Fall Landscape**



**Danny Sullivan, 2nd Grade,
Fall Landscape**



**Alex Lin, 1st Grade,
Sunflowers**

YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

Liesel's Nightmare

The book thief was dreaming about the Führer, Adolf Hitler. In the dream, she was attending a rally at which he spoke, looking at the skull-colored part in his hair and the perfect square of his mustache.

It was a very gloomy day, it seemed like the day before it had rained a lot, but the crowd was as excited and proud as always. Everyone was listening contentedly to the torrent of words spilling from the leader's mouth. I was standing next to him watching with awe; his sentences glowed in the light.

In a quieter moment, he actually crouched down and smiled at me. I returned the smile and said "Good day, Herr Führer. How are you today?"

I hadn't learned to speak too well, or even to read, as I had rarely frequented school, but he understood unconditionally. "It's going pretty well," he replied. Just as he had finished answering me, a scream rose up from the crowd and made its way through the whole rally.

Everyone stopped what they were doing and payed attention quietly to where the loud, high-pitched scream was coming from. Even the birds flying by stopped to watch, but no one seemed to know where it came from. As the scream became louder and louder, everything started to fade away. The Nazi flags, the audience, the

gloomy sky; everything disappeared.

Suddenly, I was standing in front of a fire and from it came the scream, which turned into more of a desperate cry as it continued. I tried to get away from it, but when I tried to move I couldn't, I couldn't even open my mouth to speak.

The fire kept growing, and I noticed there were human-like shapes in it. I could barely make out their faces, but they looked miserable. They were the ones causing all the screaming. When the faces became clearer, I saw my mom standing in front of me begging for help, next to her was my brother.

No matter how hard I tried to get to them, I wasn't still able to move and had to watch them burn until I finally woke up moments later.

BY ANGIE PUERTA,
MRS. MOHR'S CLASS

Explanation: In "The Book Thief," the main character, Liesel, has traumatic nightmares about her brother's death, but she never tells the reader what happens in them. I felt very intrigued by it, and decided to write my own nightmare based on the events and issues going on in Liesel's life. The nightmare is linked to a passage on page 20 of the book where the narrator tells the reader about one nightmare Liesel had, but she woke up too soon and not much happened in it.

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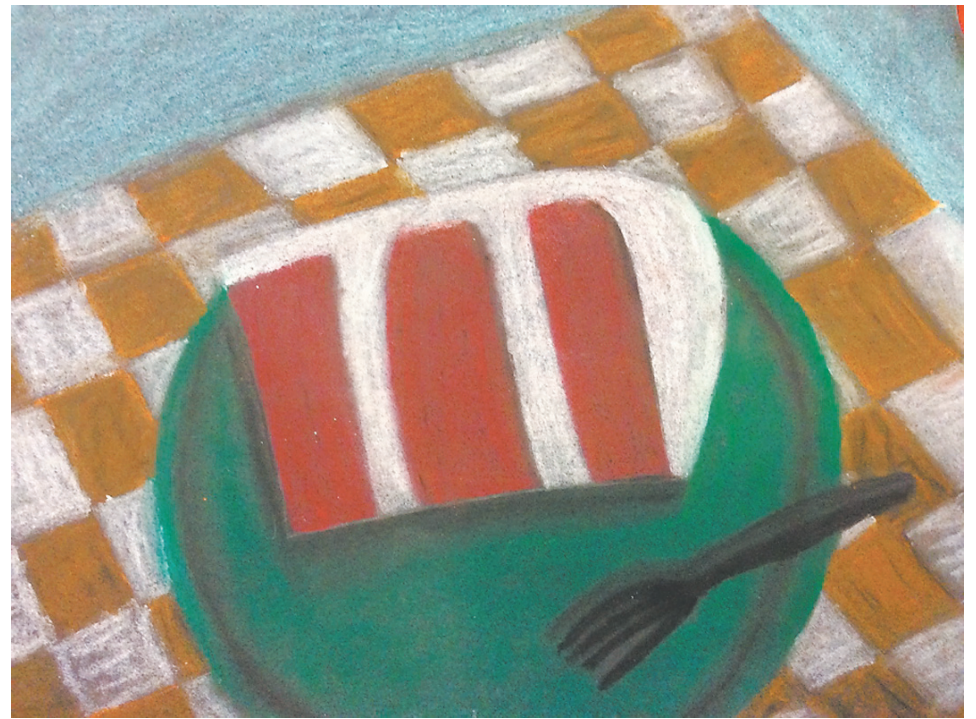


SWANSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

From the students of Domenica Diane Felice, M.Ed., visual art teacher



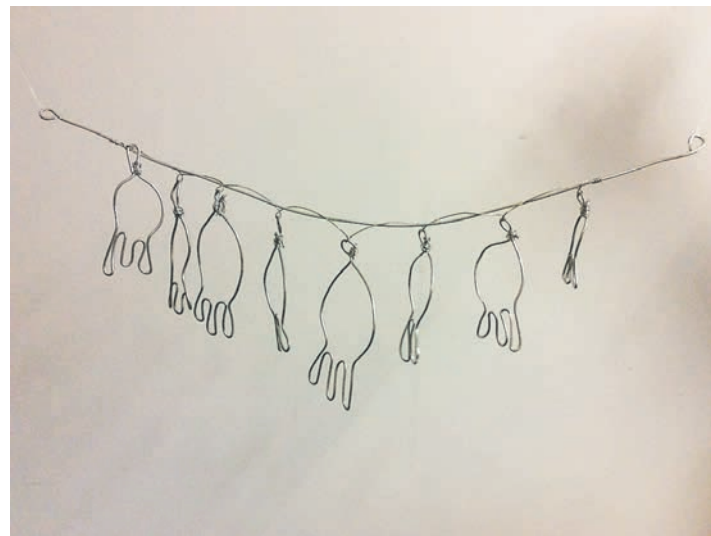
**Hannah Bruggeman-Ton, 7th Grade,
Self-Portrait, graphite pencil and watercolor.**



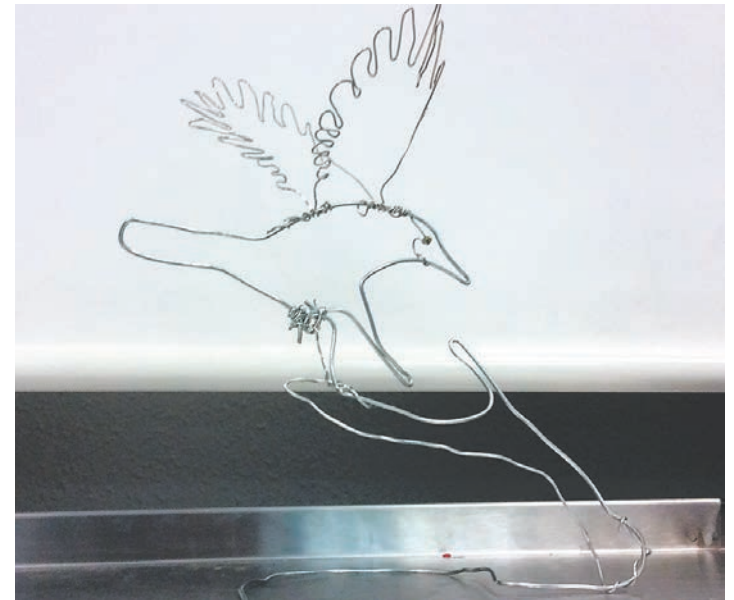
**Ashley Kennedy, 7th Grade,
Self-Portrait, graphite pencil and watercolor.**



**Pia Cruz, 7th Grade, Self-Portrait,
graphite pencil.**



**Lucy Flannery-Goodman, 7th Grade,
Octopus Dance, wire.**



**Kate Heavner, 7th Grade,
Hummingbird, wire.**



**James Lyuke, 7th Grade,
Self-Portrait,
graphite pencil and oil pastel.**



**Hana Christensen, 7th Grade,
Holiday Dessert,
soft pastels.**



**Olivia Feehan, 7th Grade, DC
Selfie, colored pencil, marker and
mixed media.**



**Li Ping Tung, 6th Grade,
Fantasy Tree house,
marker and watercolor pencil.**

SWANSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

From students in Cecily Corcoran's class.

By Caroline
La Piano,
8th Grade



By Ethan
Dodini, 8th
Grade



By Alexa
Dembosky,
7th Grade



By Evan Bauer, 8th Grade



By Mia
Hindermann,
8th Grade

Infant - 8th Grade Co-ed, Independent, Day School in Falls Church

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ARLINGTON CONNECTION ❖ CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION 2017-2018 ❖ 9

YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

Pieces by Christine Bolon's ceramics students.



Briggs Coyle, 12th Grade



Grace Allen, 12th Grade



Kalin Cormack, 12th Grade



Lila Araujo, 11th Grade



Matthew Neuman, 12th Grade



Emily Brooks, 12th Grade



Isabelle Klein, 11th Grade



Konika Akter, 11th Grade



Melvin Duran, 10th Grade



Cat Vaccaro, 12th Grade

From students of Mrs. Mohr's English class

A scene from "The Book Thief"

The day was filled with cheer and joy
It was the girl's birthday
Although spend with a family different than her own
It was a memorable time
For she had received a book
Her soul and imagination loved words
To play and with and broaden her knowledge
Gave her joy
She gave her parents a hug
While the Jew sat in the corner
She could feel awkwardness lurking
So she decided to give the Jew a gift
A hug
The Jew knew he would give her something back
Thus sparking an unbreakable friendship

BY ANGELICA HENRIQUEZ

Explanation: I connected this poem to a scene in "The Book Thief" where the spark of friendship between Liesel and Max is ignited when Liesel gives Max a hug when he was feeling lonely and vulnerable.

Standover Men

All my life I've been scared of men standing over me

I suppose everyone has a standover man of their own

Save gentle birds, who soar high and free
In a place where they look up at the heavens alone

In my youth I could be found lying defeated
Beaten and bruised beneath the eyes of standover man with eyes of scorn
I remember hating the victors smile so cruel and conceited
Looking back it was an odd way for a friendship to be borne

Years later, in another time, I needed to hide
My dreams became bouts against the standover man trying to take me away.

I would pound the mustached man, Bobbing side to side
I would wake up angry, cursing the fuhrer's foul play

My standover men some helped some hurt
One was not a man but a little girl who spoke of dreams and feathers
Though I've been shamed locked under dirt
My mind is a bird flying free of it's tethers

BY JACK NELSON, 10TH GRADE

This is the poem that my English teacher Ms. Mohr encouraged me to submit. I originally wrote this as a creative response to "The Book Thief" a book set in WW2. The poem is essentially a retelling of the story of Max, a Jew who spent several years in a basement. A degree of contextual knowledge is required to understand the poem. Be aware that the first line directly quotes the book.

Found Poem from the book Night by Elie Wiesel

Faith: Created or Broken
Inspired by "Night" by Elie Wiesel

In the beginning there was faith
We **believed** in God
We trusted man

This was rapidly falling
Prisoners kept coming
Thousands of Jews

A n g u i s h e d

Where are You, my God?
Blessed be God's name?

Every fiber in me rebelled,
He allowed:
Burning
Slaughtering
torturing

But **still**, thousands:
Pray before you
Praise your name

BY CAMILLE ASHE

Explanation: I connected my found poem to the lives of Jews living in the Holocaust, and how in the end, many of them never lost their faith.

YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

From students of Allen Beland, photography teacher



By Will Clough, 11th Grade



By Sean Keeley, 12th Grade



By Liam Wells, 12th Grade



By Carson Wood, 12th Grade



By Mariel Baquedano, 12th Grade



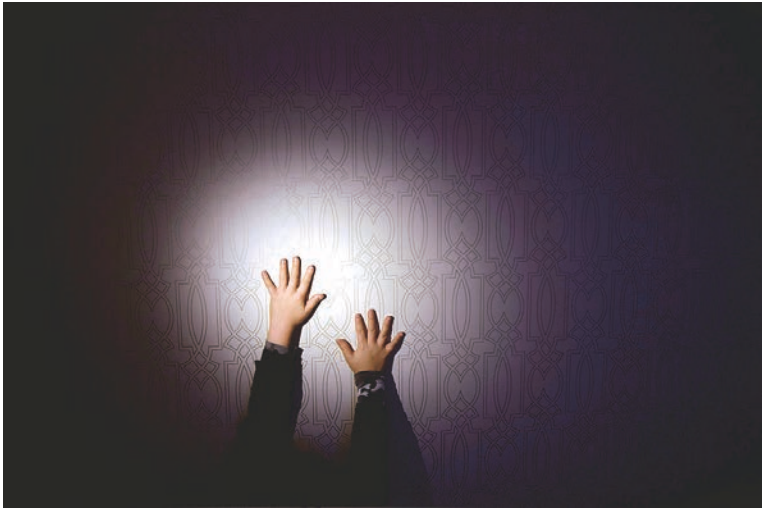
By Aidan Henning, 11th Grade



By Maddy Heinemann, 11th Grade



By Grace Cochran, 11th Grade



By Casey Fishman, 11th Grade



By Nadya Syazza, 12th Grade



By Jake Wiersberg, 11th Grade

YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

From students of Visual Arts Teacher Virginia Teaford



By Matthew Kress,
9th Grade



By Allison Sawyer,
11th Grade.

YORKTOWN

From students of Drew Smith Mulligan,
photo and computer graphics teacher



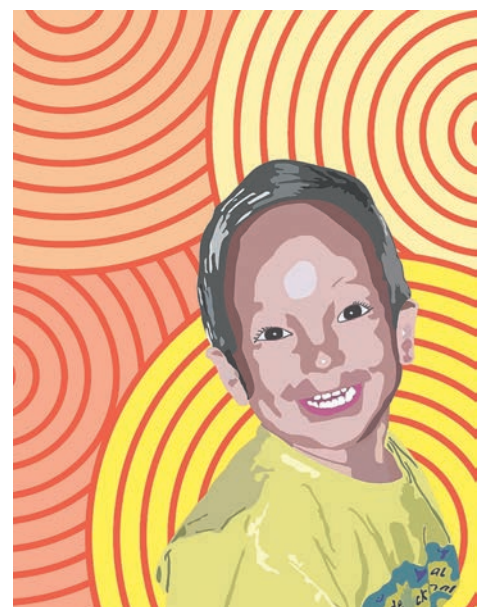
By Elayna Simon,
12th Grade



By Samuel Gonzalez,
11th Grade



By Xiaoran Chen,
12th Grade



By Jack Dempsey,
9th Grade

Death to the Death Penalty

"Death row is full of isolated hearts and suppressed minds.... Why does my heart ache? ... Life without meaning is life without purpose. It is no life at all" (Turner). These are the famous last words of Johnny Johnson, before he was put to death for a conviction of murder. The debate of whether or not capital punishment should be used in the United States is unresolved, as the same question is asked over and over again: Is it right to kill someone who has done something wrong? This question could be debated for a lifetime. Morality aside, the death penalty should be eliminated because of its high expenses, slow timeline, and high rate of error.

Many people in favor of capital punishment argue that it is a cheaper option than sentencing someone to life in prison. However, this is just a myth that most people believe without checking the facts for themselves. In reality, "the state will shell out approximately \$3.5 million [on capital punishment], as opposed to an average of \$150,000 if the state had not sought the death penalty" (Holloway). The

money wasted on capital punishment could be invested in better causes, such as preventing crime.

Another misconception is that the death penalty is fast and relieves the stress of the loved ones of both the victims and of the convicted. In harsh contrast, "death penalty cases on average take 25 years or so to reach ultimate resolution" (Holloway), making it a long court process that is painful for everyone involved. A life sentence provides certainty and closure quickly to the criminals and victims' families.

A final reason why people justify the death penalty is that the convicted criminals deserve it after the terrible crimes they have committed. However, a "conservative estimate of the proportion of erroneous convictions" is 4.1 percent" (Drehle). Despite this being a small number, "this could mean that approximately 120 of the roughly 3,000 inmates on death row in America might not be guilty" (Drehle). Killing the innocent is unethical by anyone's standards.

Even if we cannot agree on the morality of the death penalty, it is an illogical practice that's inac-

curacy rate is too high to be forgiven. Contrary to some beliefs, it wastes time and money. With facts so clear, how can we ignore such a huge problem in American society? Take a stand against the death penalty and save a life.

BY HALINA SANTOS,
MRS. MOHR'S CLASS

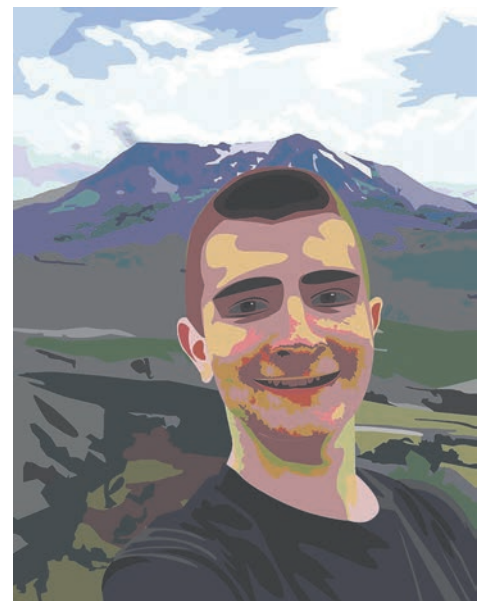
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By Owen Plimpton,
11th Grade

CONGRESSIONAL SCHOOL

From the art students of Kate Fitzpatrick and Sarah Philip



Folk Art by Raghav Belle Trichur, age 9, 4th Grade, Falls Church



Watercolor Abstract by Peyton Guagenti, age 5, Kindergarten, Falls Church

BROWNE ACADEMY



Matisse Goldfish by Michael Landry of Arlington, age 6, 1st Grade

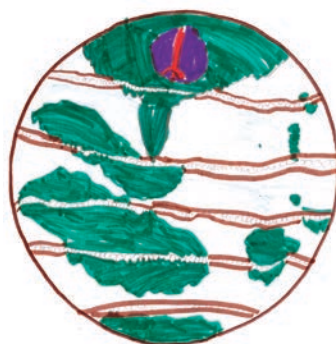


Blue Cake by Tilda Saks, age 9, 3rd Grade, Falls Church

BURGUNDY FARM COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Arlington students who attend Burgundy Farm Country Day School.

Peace Looks Like



Peace by Kimi S., 2nd Grade



Leokai G., Kindergarten

Thankful

There are so many things I am thankful for but my family stands out most of all. This is what they do. My family supports me when I am down. They teach me new things every day, like a skill. They also give me someone to play with to help me improve. And they cheer me on when I have a game to play or when we lose the game. They comfort me when I am nervous and scared. It totally makes me feel better. They give me lots of love especially if I have a special event. They give me joy and fun to make me have a great day and night. They give me hope for the next day to help keep me happy. They do lots of things to make sure I have a great day. They help me survive the journey to become a grown up. I am so grateful for my family because I wouldn't be here telling you how great they are.

By WILLA H., 3RD GRADE



Sidonie G., 5th Grade



Spring by Lindy F., 2nd Grade

Saint Ann Catholic Church

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Announcements

GALLERY

Kittens in Casa
by **Sawyer Frederick**, age 10, 5th grade at Key Immersion Elementary. July 31, 2017 in Casablanca, Morocco: In Morocco, there are many cats who are homeless. These kittens and their mother did not have a home but they had each other. The mommy cat



felt happy because she had her babies and the kittens felt protected by their momma. They were probably tired from walking around looking for food but they seemed to like the doorway of this store. The kittens were hungry but they looked satisfied and comfortable because they always had their momma's milk.

YORKTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

By My Side

The night before my surgery I laid in bed, the streetlamp outside my window illuminating a thin strip of the hardwood floor and giving my room an eerie orange glow. My heart pumped and my mind raced as I fought to fall asleep, tossing and turning until my comforter became a twisted mess under my sweaty legs.

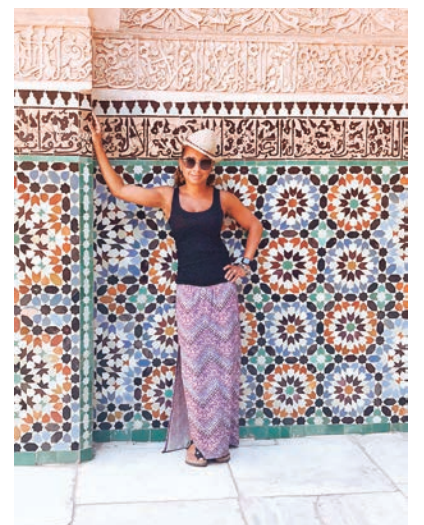
Nervousness seemed to fill every cavity of my body, making my stomach turn and keeping my eyes open, resisting sleep no matter how hard I tried. Spasms of fear, worry, and anxiety would not leave my mind, and I felt tears filling my eyes as I thought of the day to come. In the midst of my thoughts, I felt my mattress give way; a warm body pressed against mine; the comforting, sweet smell of Dove soap and shampoo. Neither of us spoke, yet both of us knew exactly what the other would say. Our breathing met the same rhythm, the clock ticked softly, and I slept.

One of the questions that I am asked most frequently is what it is like to have a twin. For me, this question has always been difficult to answer. All of my life, I have known no different than having my identical twin by my side. The constant comparisons of our appearances, questions about twin telepathy, and inevitable name mix-ups have become normal for me, all part of the experience of having an identical twin.

What it is truly like to have the person who understands you utterly and completely in your life is an entirely different story. For people to better understand, I compare having a twin to being born with your soulmate; someone who is always on your side, who has your best interests at heart, and knows everything about you, from your dearest aspirations to your deepest secrets and fears. A person who is constantly available to be a shoulder to cry on, to pick you up from heartache, pain, and loss, or just to watch TV with in silence as a comforting yet silent presence. A person who knows exactly what you need when you need it, who knows what will make you happy and will do anything for you, all out of the devotion of your relationship. This, I explain, is what it is like to be a twin; having someone who is so important to your life that without them, your world would be incomplete.

Growing up, my identical twin, Sarah, and I were nearly

Marrakesh
Mama by **Jackson Frederick**, age 12, 7th grade at Gunston Middle School (Spanish Immersion). Photo taken at the Ben Youssef Madrasa in Marrakesh, Morocco on July 28, 2017: This photo was taken at Ben Youssef



Madrasa, a former Islamic college for young men. I like that the drawings and the patterns on the walls are all about Arabic culture. I got to learn so much about Morocco, Islam and Arabic this summer. It's cool to travel around the world and learn new things about language and culture. I'm glad that I'm in the Spanish Immersion program and that I plan to take French next year. Because I travel and speak multiple languages, I know that the entire world is within my reach.

inseparable. Our sticky, chubby hands gripped tightly together, we would travel throughout our preschool classroom as one unit, playing games and doing activities with each other. We would stay apart from the rest of the class, content with our own relationship and expressing no interest in socializing with our peers.

To the two of us, our friendship was all that we needed at that young age. Eventually, concerns over our social skills arose, prompting our preschool teachers to separate the two of us for what would become seven years in different classrooms. Despite heated debates with the principal and the school system over allowing us to remain in the same classroom, Sarah and I found ourselves spending the majority of our days apart from each other.

Years of spending time with each other and not with other children our age had made the two of us shy and secluded without the other, retreating to the corners of the classroom and having difficulty making friends. With the other, however, it seemed that we drew strength, becoming more lively and completing the other's personality.

As we grew older, our separate rooms eventually merged as our parents installed a bunk bed in a room for us to share. Each night became a slumber party, with the two of us passing books from the upper bunk to the lower bunk and laughing at the other's whispered jokes. Our late night rambles would be silenced near midnight with the door creaking open, a clearing of my father's throat, and the all-too-familiar growl to turn off our lights and go to bed. Even with the lights off our whispers would continue, hushing each other if a creak was heard outside our door or a muffled cough was heard from our parents room.

Later nights would bring the creaking of bedsprings as one of us would climb up or down the wooden ladder between the bunks, pad across the jute rug, and settle in bed with the other. Mornings would find us entangled in the sheets, our bodies curled around each other and our deep breathing in rhythm. As time went on, there were fewer and fewer visits to each other's beds, yet certain exceptions would come along that would make us forget our age and climb back into the other's bunk for the night.

SEE YORKTOWN, PAGE 15

Legals

NOTICE OF SERVICE OF PROCESS BY PUBLICATION

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
JONES COUNTY

IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE
DISTRICT COURT DIVISION
17 CVD 422

RICKY WAYNE BRAXTON vs. LESLIE LEE BRAXTON
To: LESLIE LEE BRAXTON

TAKE NOTICE that a pleading seeking relief against you has been filed in the above-entitled action. The nature of the relief being sought is: ABSOLUTE DIVORCE. You are required to make defense to this pleading and / or otherwise properly respond not later than January 23, 2018 (40 days from date of first publication), and upon your failure to do so, the party seeking service against you will apply to the Court for the relief sought.

This the 13 day of December, 2017.

A. Bowden Houser, (42917)
Attorney for Plaintiff
c/o The Houser Law Firm, P.C.
PO Box 279
Jacksonville, NC 28541
(910) 333-9679

Dates of Publication: 12/13, 12/20, 12/27/17
Pursuant to N.C.G.S. § 1A-1, Rule 4(j1)

Legals

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YORKTOWN

FROM PAGE 14

An aspect of being a twin that many people ask about is whether we feel each other's pain. Though we may not directly feel each other's physical pain, Sarah and I are deeply affected by it. When we were younger, vaccinations at the doctor's office would result with both of us in tears, even if only one twin was receiving the shot. As soon as one of us viewed the other crying from the pain, that would send both of us off, crying just as much as the twin getting the shot.

When I was 12, I fell in a soccer game and my ankle snapped, causing me to scream and sob on the field as my ankle exploded with pain. My teammates would later describe Sarah crying just as hard as I was, and watching as I was carried off the field. When I was 14, after being told that I was at high risk for skin cancer, I underwent a painful surgery that removed a large section of skin from my leg and left me with 20 stitches. While recovering from the surgery, Sarah was constantly by my side, bringing me ice and painkillers and sympathizing with the pain that I was feeling. The close relationship that I have with Sarah causes us to "feel" the other's pain, though not in the physical way that many people believe.

In the summer of 2011, Sarah and I had the opportunity to travel to Twinsburg, Ohio to participate in the Twins Days Festival. The Twins Days Festival has been held every year since 1976 in Twinsburg, drawing thousands of multiples from across the country. Sarah and I each wore t-shirts bearing the words "I'm the Evil Twin!", which drew much attention from the other sets of twins that we met. The festival was exciting for the two of us, since we had never seen so many sets of twins and multiples all together in one place. Sarah and I were extremely excited to meet other sets of twins, who all seemed to understand the relationship that we had and how important it was. Meeting people who understood the way our relationship worked was an amazing experience that neither of us have ever forgotten.

One of the aspects of being a twin that I feel extremely fortunate to have is never experiencing loneliness. With a companion constantly by my side, I have never had to experience loneliness or isolation. Many people feel isolated from their family and friends, and feel as though there is no one that they can turn to in their lives. With Sarah, however, I have never had this problem. Being both my family member and closest friend, I can always trust my sister to stand behind me in all of my decisions and to constantly have my back. It is comforting to have this relationship that I can turn to in my life, and to always have a person that I can express my issues to in full confidence.

Though we may be identified by many people as being the "same person," Sarah and I have struggled throughout our lives to separate our personalities and to inform people that we are quite different. We share many of the same characteristics and values, yet aspects of our personalities are different and we still maintain our individuality. Sharing the same DNA does not make the soul of a person the same as the other, and this is something that we have attempted to establish to many people who believe that we are the "same person" in two different bodies. To the two of us, saying something to this effect is insulting; we both feel that we deserve to be treated as individuals, not as one person.

As fortunate as I am to have a twin, however, hardships still come along that make me question how much I enjoy our relationship. The lack of independence that I have from my twin has influenced my life, in addition to the dependence that I have on having my twin with me. Being without her affects me greatly, which brings into question what our futures may be like without constantly having each other in our lives.

Being a twin has certainly been one of the defining factors of my life. The experiences that I have had and the people that I have met from being a twin have influenced my life greatly, making me the person that I am today and that I continue to evolve into. Most people have trouble understanding the relationship that we have, which is understandable. When you have spent your entire life with a person, their life becomes yours and your life becomes theirs, which is a concept that many cannot even begin to comprehend. The special bond that I share with my identical twin is one that few people get to experience, but it is one that I feel extremely lucky and grateful to have.

BY EMILY ROBERTS,
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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-liable 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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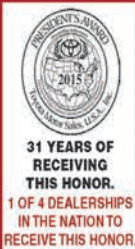
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