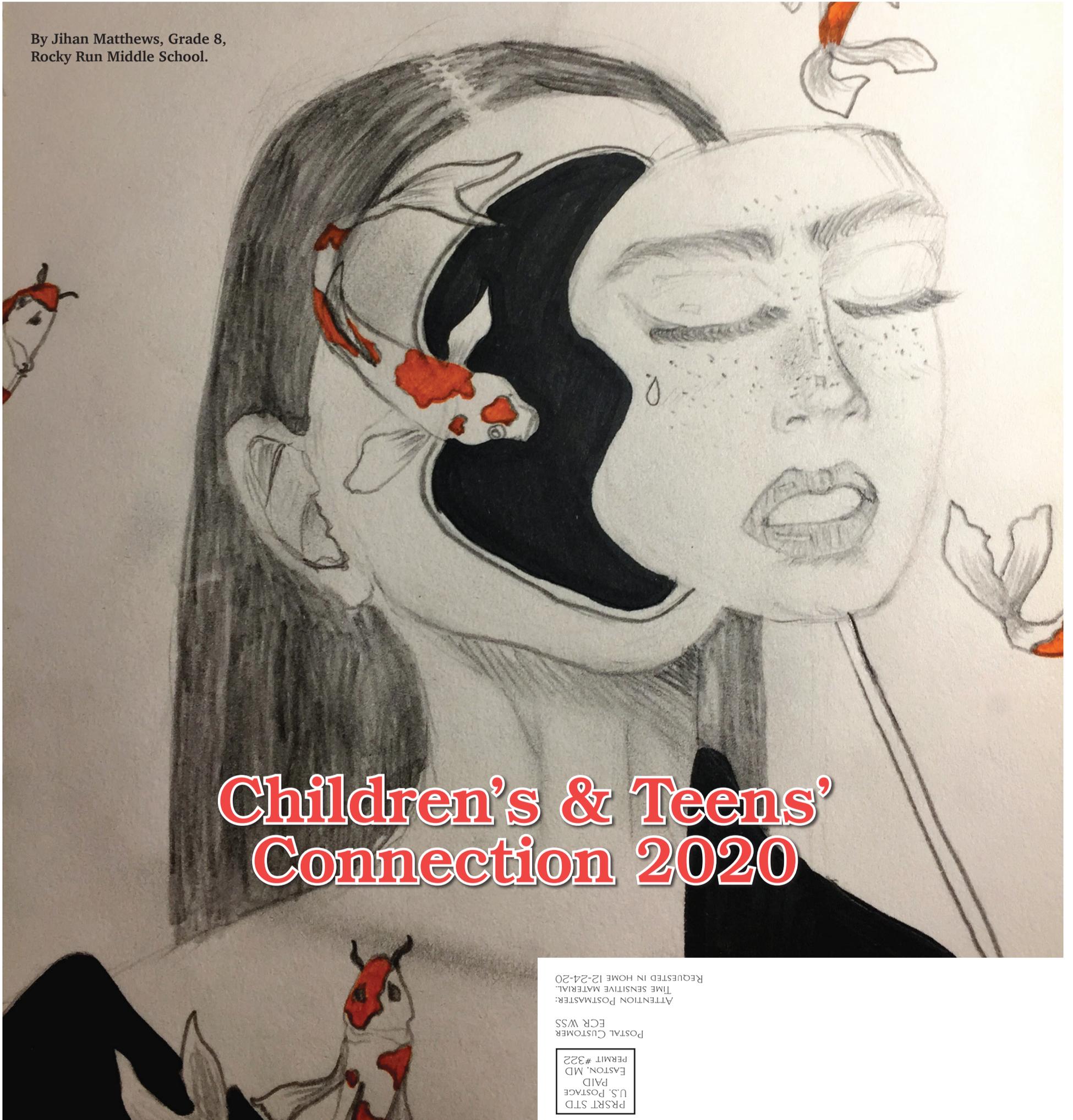


CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

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



Children's & Teens' Connection 2020

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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 teach-

ings 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

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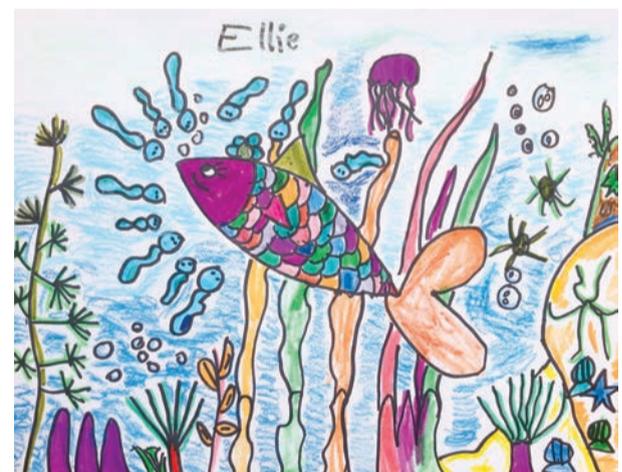
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Ellie Liu, Grade: 2, Oak Hill Elementary, Age: 7,
Teacher: Yanshun Sui



Ethan Liu, Grade: 4, Oak Hill Elementary, Age: 9,
Teacher: Yanshun Sui

CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION

HUNTERS WOODS ELEMENTARY

Artwork submitted by Arts Teachers Norma Morris and Judy Sohn.



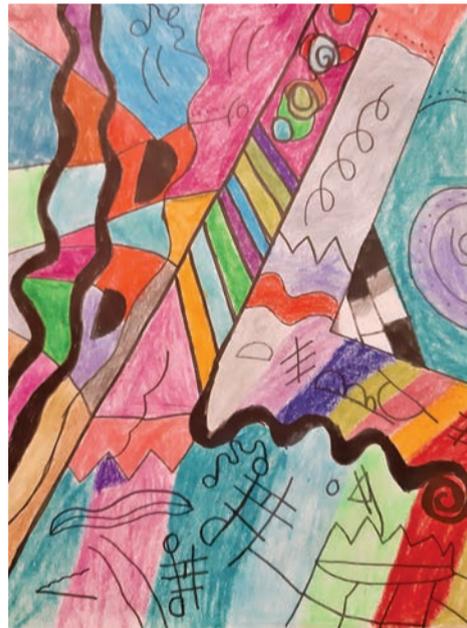
Me and My Friend, by Nora Ivanov of Reston, Grade 2, Hunters Woods Elementary



By Aishiq Roy, Grade 3, Hunters Woods Elementary, Reston



Me and My Friend, by Nora Ivanov of Reston, Grade 2, Hunters Woods Elementary



Kandinsky Interpretation, by Sama Amer, Grade 5, Hunters Woods Elementary



By Angela Luo, Grade 6, Hunters Woods Elementary, Reston



By Angela Luo, Grade 6, Hunters Woods Elementary, Reston



By Shreyas Bharadwaj, Grade 2, Hunters Woods Elementary, Reston



By Summer Ristau, Grade 2, Hunters Woods Elementary, Reston



Futuristic City, by Jocelyn Conrads, of Reston, Grade 4, Hunters Woods Elementary



Kandinsky Interpretation, by Hadi Shah of Reston, Grade 5, Hunters Woods Elementary



By Alyssa Manning, Grade 4, Hunters Woods Elementary, Reston

CHILDREN'S & TEENS' CONNECTION

HERNDON MIDDLE SCHOOL

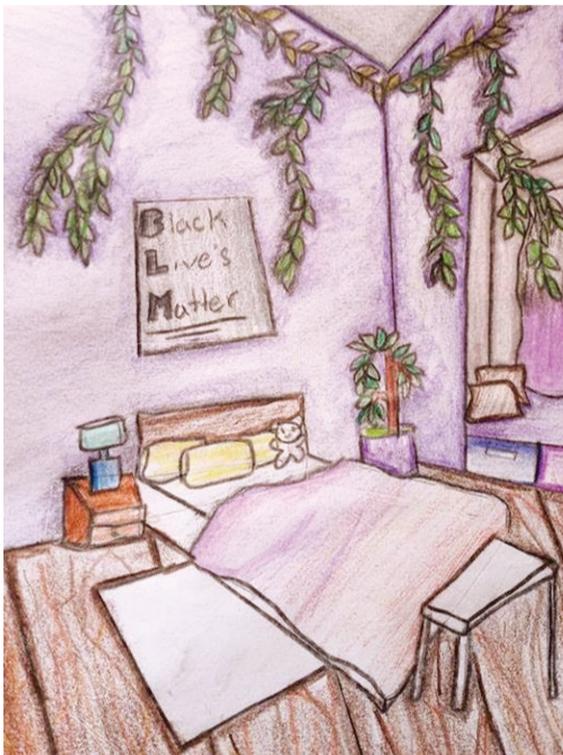


By Quincee Ewers, Grade 8, Herndon Middle School, Teacher: Jordan Citron

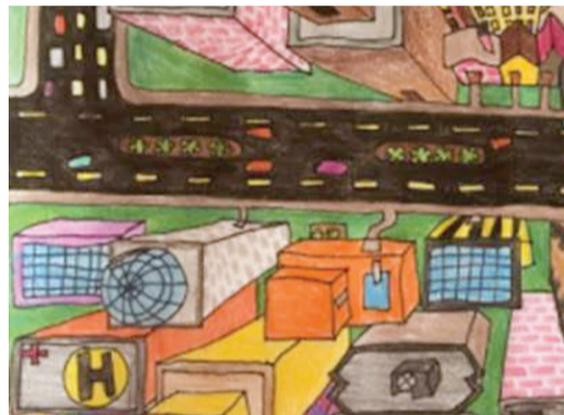
ROCKY RUN MIDDLE



By Gaayathri Mathuria: She is an eight grader at Rocky Run Middle School in Chantilly



By Angie Velasco-Villatoro, Grade 8, Herndon Middle School, Teacher Jordan Citron



Emely Recinos-Monjaras, Grade 7, Herndon Middle School, Teacher: Jordan Citron



By Victoria Quan, Grade 8, Herndon Middle School, Teacher: Jordan Citron



The Shape of the Night, by Sophia Wang, 11, of Chantilly, Grade 5, Oak Hill Elementary, Herndon (Mrs. Hadley Payne)



By Wendy Robinson, Grade 8, Herndon Middle School. Teacher: Jordan Citron



Hometown under the Sun, by Zoe Sun, 9, of Fairfax, Greenbriar West Elementary, Grade: 4, Teacher: Mr. Wright

CHILDREN'S



Equality Has No Gender, by Valerie Lavayen-Lazo, Age 12, Grade 7, Langston Hughes Middle School, Reston, Teacher: Mary Dolmat

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



LANGSTON HUGHES MIDDLE SCHOOL

Artwork submitted by Mary Dolmat, Fine Art Department Chair, Langston Hughes Middle School.

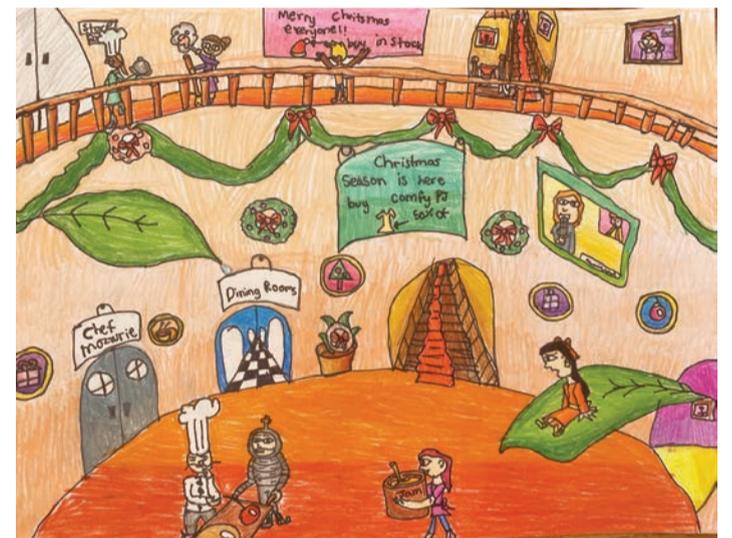
Pandemic Still Life, by Shan Sakhia, Age 12, Grade 7, Langston Hughes Middle School, Reston, Teacher: Mary Dolmat.



Zero Hunger- by Carlos Carranza, Age 12, Grade 7, Langston Hughes Middle School, Reston, Teacher: Mary Dolmat.



By Alana Dinesh, 6, Grade: 1, McNair lower elementary school, Herndon, Teacher: Ms. Rush.



By Aanvi Dinesh, 9, Grade: 4, McNair lower elementary school, Herndon, Teacher: Yanshun Sui.



By Alexander Yu of Fairfax, Age: 12, Grade: 7, Rachel Carson Middle School, Herndon

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An expert is someone who knows some of the worst mistakes that can be made in his subject and how to avoid them.
-Werner Heisenberg

CHILDREN'S



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.



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

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 jutted 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 OAK HILL/HERNDON / RESTON

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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.

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



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

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



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