

# The Origin Project



BOOK SIX | 2020

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# The Origin Project

BOOK SIX | 2020



# The Origin Project



"Stories keep memories alive and people real to us."

—Jarrett J. Krosoczka, *Hey, Kiddo*

"It is said that books save lives, but I also say that empty sketchbooks save lives too. I filled up many, and there is no doubt they saved mine."

—Jarrett J. Krosoczka, *Hey, Kiddo*

Writing is a valuable, sometimes vital, tool in human endeavour. Story writing is a particular talent: the memorialisation of personal experiences, tales, and narratives inspired by family or friends or teachers or mentors.

*The Origin Project* is an in-school writing program sprouted seven years ago from the idea that Appalachia's stories are national treasures and its children should celebrate their roots. Our program inspires young people to discover and liberate their inner voices through the craft of writing about their unique origins; it celebrates diversity and inclusion. *The Origin Project* has evolved into a melting pot, capitalizing on the precious chance to expose young people to their individualities and galvanize their curiosity about, and respect for, each other.

*The Origin Project* has grown organically from 40 students in Big Stone Gap to nearly 2,000 students in 19 schools. Each fall, our students are given a personal journal and thereafter work on multiple projects or stories that speak of and to their heritage. Their work is professionally published year-end in this anthology, presented to each student and made available in school and public libraries. *The Origin Project* is integrated with the Virginia Standards of Learning curriculum and collaborates with each student at her/his skill level to conceive, develop, and hone ideas into short stories, poems, plays, interviews, or other art.

We synergize community and schools to offer heritage-related presentations and incorporate libraries and museums to convey the role of history in the present and develop the skill of research. We encourage and help arrange visits to exhibitions and events that celebrate the rich culture of the area.

The students present their work aloud to their peers, parents, teachers, and guests, often at iconic venues including the Barter Theatre, Mountain Empire Community College, The Birthplace of Country Music and Emory and Henry College. In past years' anthology unveilings, our student-artists have been congratulated live or by video by Governor Terry McAuliffe, Senator Mark Warner, and Senator Tim Kaine.

Renowned authors—in recent years, Jarrett Krosoczka, David Baldacci, Meg Wolitzer, Margot Lee Shetterly, Mary Hogan, and New Yorker poet Laurie R. King—journey to meet with the students and share their personal writing experiences. This year, our students visited with National Book Award Finalist Jarrett Krosoczka, who shared his personal story of how drawing and writing guided him to create best-selling graphic novels and graphic memoir *Hey, Kiddo*. Jarrett's poignant life story afforded us the opportunity to populate an evening panel, *Talking Our Way Out*, where Jarrett joined with health experts, Dr. Art Van Zee, Susan Myers, and Dr. Bill Kanto to engage with community members about ways to tackle the opioid crisis faced by the Appalachian area.

It never ceases to be a joyful surprise to read our students' work, witness their growth, and observe the budding of their self-esteem. Through their creative writing with *The Origin Project*, our students are able to connect the stories of their past with their dreams of the future.

*Henny Bolmeier Fisher*

*Adriana Triguani*



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WITH APPRECIATION FOR SUPPORTING AND  
GUIDING *THE ORIGIN PROJECT* STUDENTS

**Dryden Elementary School**

Mona Baker  
Lena McCall  
Katie Middleton  
Tammy Wade

**Eastside High School**

Bryan Crutchfield  
Hope Cloud  
Katie Jessee

**Elk Knob Elementary School**

Brian Huff  
Alane Barker

**Flatwoods Elementary School**

Michelle Warner  
Gigi Long  
Gretta Carroll  
Kim Goforth  
Melody Cress  
Nikkie Grabeel  
Sherry Moore  
Lisa Barnett  
Angela Ellis  
Andrea Hines  
Alyssa Dotson

**Greendale Elementary School**

Allyson Willis  
Brenda Sprinkle

**John I. Burton High School**

Brad Hart  
Stephanie Cassell

**Jonesville Middle School**

Stacey Belcher  
Briana Allen-Austin  
Sheila Shuler  
Laverne Brown

**Lee High School**

Renia Clark  
Alex Long  
Sindy Fields  
Jillian Skidmore  
Cari Belcher

**Morrison School**

Jami Verderosa  
Carla Sisk  
Karla Rasnake  
Shannon Dabney  
Rachel Buckles  
Christina Mizelle

**Norton Elementary School**

Scott Addison  
Cheryl Duncan  
Jennifer McCall  
Lisa Bolling

**Peter Paul Development Center**

Damon Jiggetts  
Stephanie Bassett  
Betty Hagan

**Phoebus High School**

Margaret Dee  
Kasey Rizzo

Kelli Cedo  
Jennifer Butler  
Jeremy Blunt

**St. Charles Elementary School**

Kellie Leonard  
Roberta Gibbons  
Laura Barnett  
Bambi Butina  
Amber Huff

**St. Paul Elementary School**

Karen Dickenson  
Melissa Galliher  
Katie Jessee  
Gina Almarode  
Alana Broyles  
Tracy Perkins

**Stonewall Jackson High School**

Kelli Macdonald  
Chad Cavender  
Lori Sellers Sterne  
Teresa Duke  
Sarah Duvall

Mark McElwee  
Jen Malechek

**Thomas Walker High School**

David Graham  
Cari Belcher

**Union Middle School**

Paul Clendenon  
Deventae Mooney  
Amber Garrison  
Catherine Stewart  
Rochele Roberts

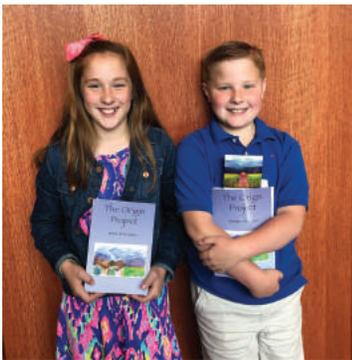
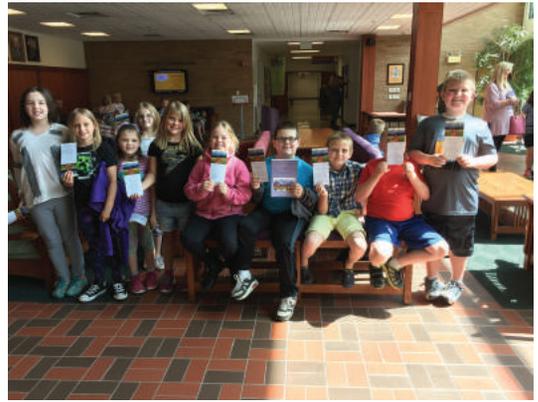
**Virginia High School**

Ronnie Collins  
Brad Hutchinson  
Crystal Hurd

**Woodbridge Senior High School**

Heather Abney  
Roxanne French  
Cheryl A. Zizzo  
Catherine Hailey  
Theo Huynh

UNVEILING CELEBRATIONS FOR  
*THE ORIGIN PROJECT BOOK FIVE*





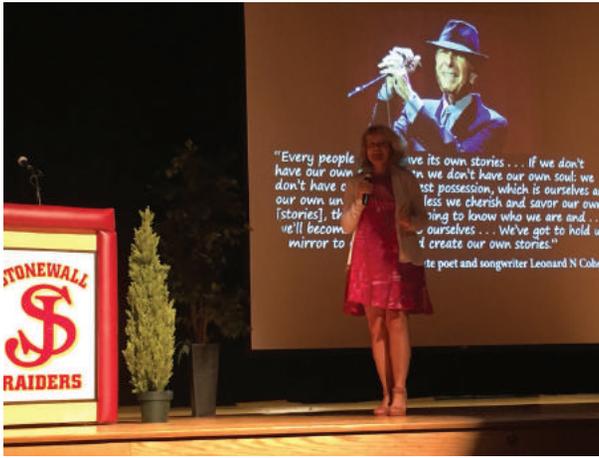
At the end of each school year, The Origin Project invites its participating students and guests to the unveiling of an anthology that showcases the young authors' artistic contributions and celebrates their tenacity and creativity. Last year, we hosted different unveilings of *The Origin Project Book Five*. Senator Mark Warner surprised the audience with a congratulatory video and Senator Tim Kaine Skyped from the US Capitol.

Students from The Origin Project displayed their imaginative and expressive artwork and audiences were treated to musical performances by talented individual musicians, choral and instrumental groups, and by beloved local musician, Tyler Hughes.

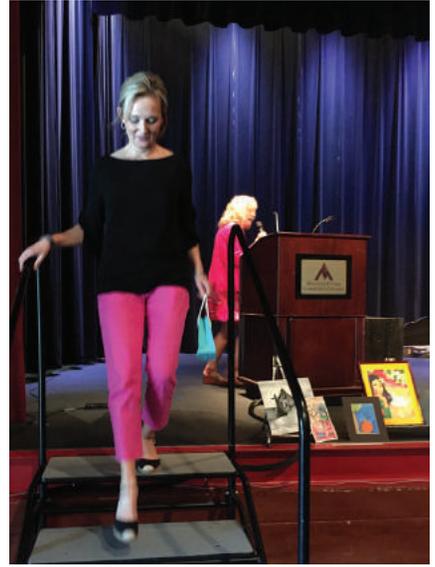
At these events, students hone their public speaking skills by presenting their stories to an audience of teachers, administrators, local dignitaries, parents, and grandparents. Each student leaves with a copy of the book that forever preserves her or his family's tales. We like to think of our unveilings as literary launching pads for students' dreams, higher education, and future endeavours.















# KICKING OFF THE YEAR





## *New Journal*

Today I got my new journal at school! I love my new journal because it is dark green and the cover feels like cotton. I'm very excited about all I'm going to write. I have done The Origin Project before, but I'm excited about this year because I love to write and we get to do more writing this year. I'll write some later! This is Allie Jones signing out!

ALLIE JONES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

## *That's My Story*

Hello, my name is Hagan. I love The Origin Project. I've done it since 2016. The Origin Project is fun to do because it inspires me to write stories about my parents, my family, and agriculture. It's the reason I like it because the stories are good and I like reading them. I like listening to other people's stories more. I've gotten better at writing about my life through 2016–2019. I love my journal. I didn't give up because giving up means losing it all. That's my story!

HAGAN NEFF, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

## *My Journal*

Today I got my journal. I like the color of it and everything! It was very nice of Nancy to give us these journals.

KAILYN ROBBINS, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY



## *It's Mine!*

Today we received our Origin Project journal! I really like the color on it. I also like how the words on the front are moved over so the elastic doesn't cover them. I will thank the people who made it if I can. I am so happy that it's mine to keep even though it has to stay at school during class. I am so thankful for the people that made this and that they put a lot of effort into it. I love, love, love, my journal!

LEAH COWDEN, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY



## *Journal*

Today we received our journals. I like the color of it because it reminds me of my dad's green Charger. The smell of it reminds me of hand sanitizer. I can't wait to write in my journal about my horses that bit me.

KAMERON JERRELL, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

## *Handy For All Time*

Today I received our Origin Project journal. I like that it comes with a book-



mark. I also like the way it feels. I will thank the people who made them. I love the way the journal is made. It is made with good texture to hold my writing. This book is handy for all time!

KENADEE MACLYEA, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

## *My Journal*

I got a journal today that feels soft like fur. It smells good like roses. It is very fancy looking. It holds about 100 pages. It has my name on it.

AARON ELDRIDGE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

## *Excited!*

I am so excited about getting my journal today! It feels so soft like cotton and it is a very pretty green. It has green elastic and a string to hold my place. There are so many pages with black lines. I love it, and I am so excited to write in my journal!

AVA STAFFORD, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

## *I Can't Believe It's Mine!*

I'm so excited to get my journal today. I love the color of it. I love how it feels.





It's so nice that somebody bought it for us. Neon Green is my 2nd favorite color. It's so cute. I can't believe it's mine! I can't wait to start writing in it!

K-SHEA LANE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

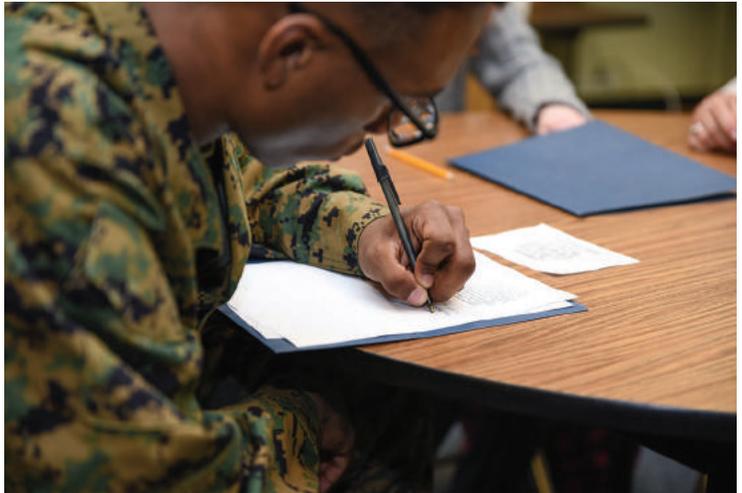
### *Journal*

Today I received my journal. The color of the journal reminds me of fresh cut grass. It is really smooth and soft to feel. I love it has a bookmark to hold your place. I can't wait to write so much cool stuff!

BREANNA SYKES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

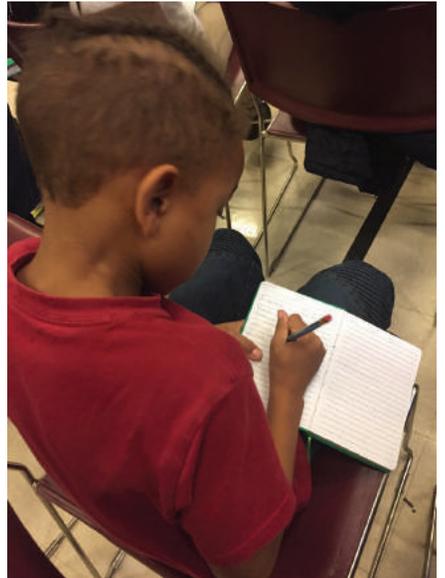
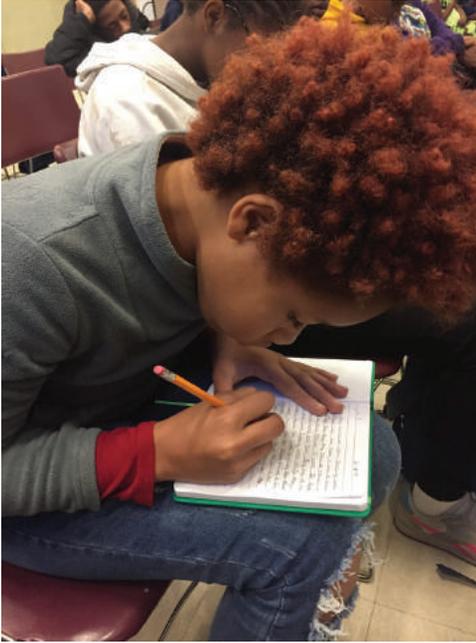


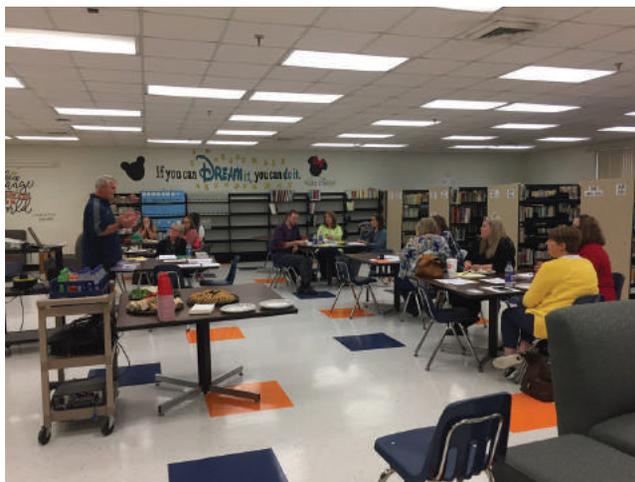
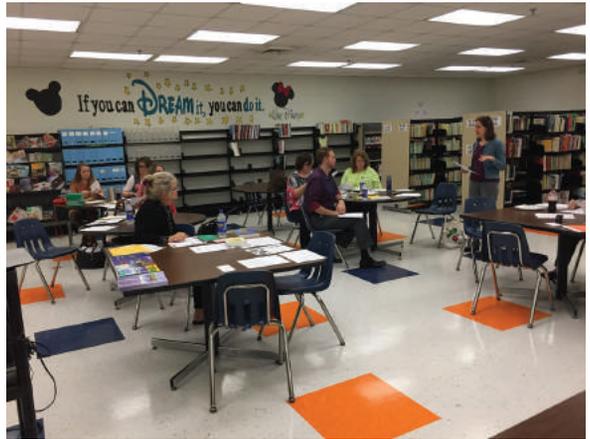
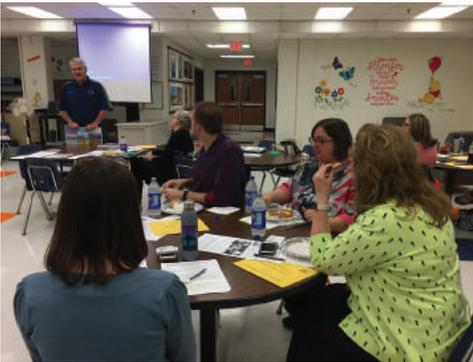












# JARRETT J. KROSOCZKA & THE MAGIC OF MENTOR TEXTS



The Origin Project's cornerstone is the annual visit by a renowned literary figure to inspire our students and assure them their voices and stories are heard and read, near and far. Selecting the sublime artistic luminary and juggling schedules to land him or her in the appropriate Appalachian venue, at the appropriate time, comprise a complex and rewarding endeavour.

When Adri proposed, for this year's visit, the author Jarrett Krosoczka, I began reading his books and watching his TED talks. I was inspired by Jarrett's story of combining drawing and writing to—evoking Lin Manuel Miranda—"write and draw his way out" of the personal challenges he faced.

For many years, Adri and I had been asked to find a way to educate and assist students with the growing opioid issue. Because of Jarrett's unique experience, we asked him to join us on a panel of experts to discuss this important topic; "Talking Our Way Out" provided a forum for high school students, parents, teachers, and community members to have this discussion.

We are deeply grateful to Emory & Henry College and The Birthplace of Country Music for hosting the evening panel and student workshops. Attendees were awed by Jarrett's autobiography and generosity of time. A bonus was the participation of Jarrett's lovely wife Gina.

Jarrett's books provide encouragement and inspiration to our students, as well as templates for their own stories. His participation in our opioid panel and student workshops exceeded my wildest dreams and was the highlight of The Origin Project's seventh year.

We are thrilled to welcome Zoe, Lucia and Xavier Krosoczka to The Origin Project family and share their contributions below.

NANCY BOLMEIER FISHER

TOP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & CO-FOUNDER

### Defrancescos by Zoe Krosoczka Interview 1 - Joyce DeFrancesco (Grandma)

Zoe: Where in Italy did your family come from?

Joyce: Le Marche.

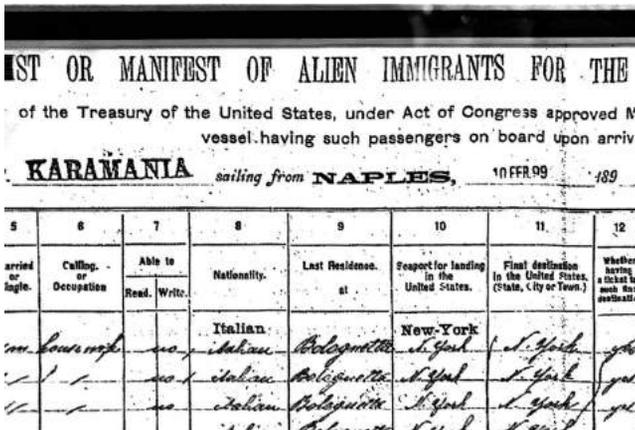
Zoe: Who in your family came over to America?

Joyce: My grandma and grandpa.

Zoe: When?

Joyce: Around the early 1900s.

Zoe: What was it like when they came?



Zoe Krosoczka; Parents, Gina & Jarrett Krosoczka

Joyce: It was scary. They had no money and didn't know the language. They were separated from family and friends who were in Italy.

Zoe: What were your grandparents names?

Joyce: On my mom's side, my grandma was named Anita, my middle name, and my grandpa, Aurelio Simoncelli. His name was Aurelio because he was blonde. On my dad's side, their names were Joseph and Tertulinna.

Zoe: What were your parents names?

Joyce: Fred and Zoe Manocchi.

Zoe: What is your sibling's name?

Joyce: James.

Zoe: What were your grandmas like?

Joyce: They spoke to me in Italian and I spoke back in English. They were also very good cooks. Anita always had lots of friends.

Zoe: What were your grandpas like?

Joyce: Well, Joseph died when my dad was two, and Aurelio died when I was four. I do remember that he grew grapes and strawberries.

Zoe: What was your mom like?

Joyce: She was a school nurse, she liked organizing, and had lots of friends.

Zoe: What was your dad like?

Joyce: He was very funny and nice. He was a talented craftsman and loved fun, laughing, and helping.

Zoe: What is your sibling like?

Joyce: He is very smart and oriented towards business. He likes to fly his plane and to sail his boat.

Zoe: What were they like altogether?

Joyce: They were loud, happy, and very welcoming.

ZOE KROSOZKA

PARENTS, GINA & JARRETT KROSOZKA

Interview 2 - Greg DeFrancesco  
(Grandpa)

Zoe: Where in Italy did your family come from?

Greg: Sorrento.

Zoe: Who in your family came over to America?

Greg: My grandparents on both sides.

Zoe: When?

Greg: 1899.

Zoe: What was it like when they came?

Greg: They got factory jobs, like my dad's dad got more than one. My mom's dad opened a restaurant instead. They lived in small communities where there were lots of other Italian immigrants.

Zoe: What were your grandparents names?

Greg: My mom's parents were Frank and Carmel. My dad's parents were Liborio and Ermenia.

Zoe: What were your parent's names?

Greg: Robert and Carmel.

Zoe: What is your sibling's name?

Greg: Robert.

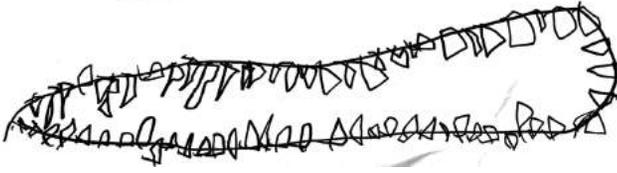
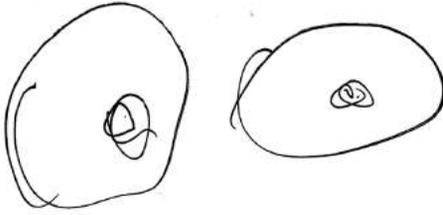
Zoe: What were your grandmas like?

Greg: I never met my mom's mom and my dad's mom died when I was nine. I do remember she was kind and gentle.

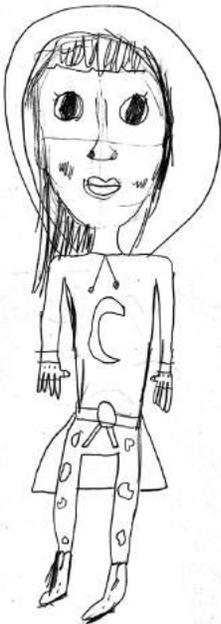
Zoe: What were your grandpas like?

17	Diello Michele	22	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
18	Bastone angelo	30	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
19	Caria Sabatino	29	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
20	Pitrelli Giuseppe	31	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
21	Sanorio Donatino	30	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
22	Fonti Felice	6	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
23	Fonti Felice	14	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
24	Di Liborio Ermenia	26	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
25	Carriano Francesco	19	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
26	Edwards Francesco	21	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
27	Sanorio Donatino	11	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
28	Di Bastone Angelo	22	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
29	Di Caria Sabatino	22	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian
30	Di Carriano Francesco	26	N	male	immigrant	yes	italian

Zoe Krosoczka's great-great grandparent's signature from Ellis Island



*Drawing by Xavier Krosoczka; Parents, Gina & Jarrett Krosoczka*



*Drawing by Lucia Krosoczka; Parents, Gina & Jarrett Krosoczka*

Greg: My dad's dad died when I was three, so all I remember is that he was very religious. My mom's dad was not mean, but not outgoing.

Zoe: What was your mom like?

Greg: She was loving and would do anything for us but was very strict and was a neat freak.

Zoe: What was your dad like?

Greg: He was nice and very generous. He was also very smart and skipped two grades.

Zoe: What is your sibling like?

Greg: He will do anything for you but has a little temper. He was an amazing athlete as a kid.

Zoe: What was your family like altogether?

Greg: The 'Typical Italian family.' It would look as though we were yelling but, in actuality, we were just very passionate.

ZOE KROSOCZKA

PARENTS, GINA & JARRETT

KROSOCZKA



Dr. Wells introduces the panel at "Talking Our Way Out"

## Author and Illustrator Inspires Students

During an *Origin Project* sponsored author visit, children's book author and illustrator, Jarrett Krosoczka, spoke to our students on inspiration and determination in writing. Detailing his own personal and social struggles growing-up, Krosoczka inspired students of all ages to not let their environments to dictate their futures, but to harness their own destiny through a found determination and inspiration from what's around them. What I personally like about Mr. Krosoczka's presentation

was his persistency and reliance, even during the dark times when he wanted to give up. Finding support through teachers, mentors, and family, he was able to power through the rejection authors, and especially illustrator go through when pursuing a career in publications. This is personal for my students as they overcome their own struggles in their writing and life. I hope to be the same type of support and inspiration for students to continue writing and sharing their unique stories with the world.

ALEXANDER LONG, ENGLISH ~  
LEE HIGH



On November 6th, 2019, we all went on a field trip to Emory and Henry. There, we heard Jarrett Krosoczka speak about his experiences with writing. I think he was very good with his words and I understood everything he said. It was a very sad, but, at the same time, happy story. From his family problems to his hardships with getting a book published, but he did it. He overcame all of that and got books published. I'm very inspired by him and hope I get to do something similar one day.

EMMA FORTNER, GRADE 8  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

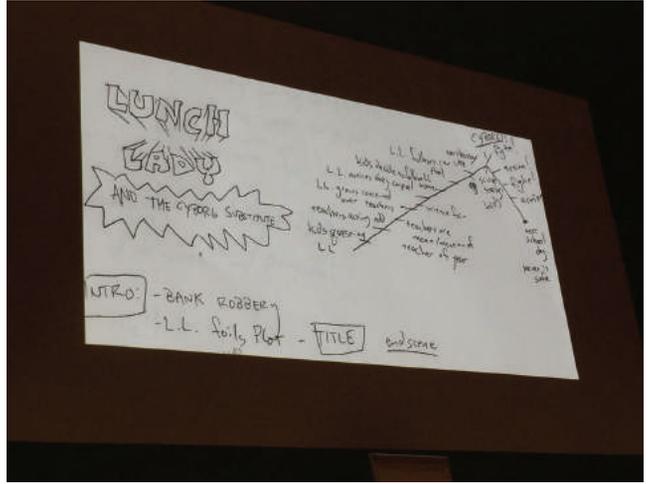


campus. Everything was very organized and the whole thing went very smoothly. I would definitely recommend going on this field trip.

ANNABELLE FRITTS, GRADE 8  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### Jarrett Krosoczka

Jarrett Krosoczka is an impressive author and illustrator. His talk was very engaging. He related well to his audience, which consisted of elementary age through high school. It was nice to listen

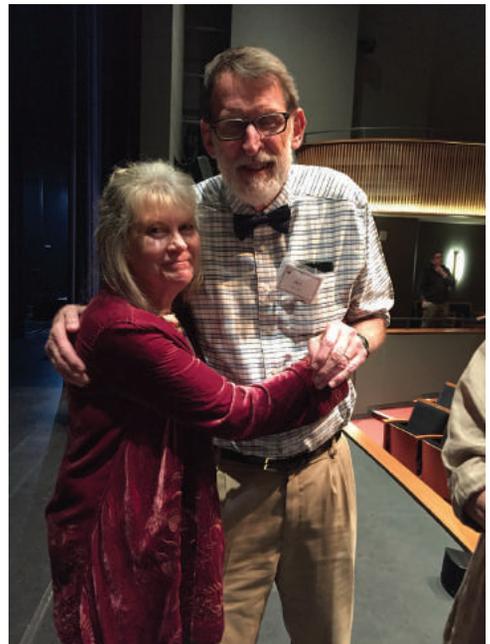


to someone speak about the obstacles he overcame to get to where he is now. Many of my students have backgrounds very similar to his. It is important for them to know that current circumstances are not forever and be given examples of this. My favorite part of the day was right before we left when Jarrett saw my colleague and me taking pictures of our students and had to jump in with them.

SARAH GUNN, SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER  
VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL

### Talking Our Way Out

The Origin Project was the most amazing experience of my high school career. The program allowed me to show my talent in poetry and creative writing while connecting on a deeper level with my peers who were also in the program. My favorite part was the seminar with Adriana Trigiani and the other people that were there. It felt good to know there were people so passionate about educating kids on the dangers of



Nancy Bolmeier Fisher thanks Dr. Art Van Zee for his participation in "Talking Our Way Out"



drug abuse. If I could do the program all over again, I would do it in a heartbeat!

AMANI SANDERS, GRADE 12  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

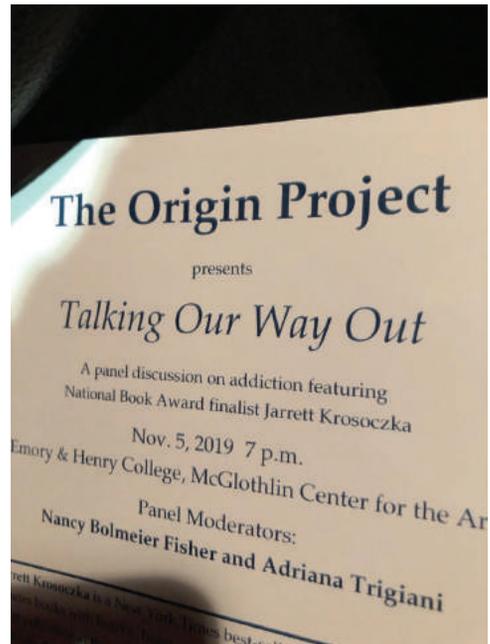
## The Magic of Mentor Texts

### *The All Inspiring Jarrett Krosoczka*

Author, Jarrett Krosoczka possesses many talents. His visit at the Emory & Henry College created quite a stir among our elementary students from Flatwoods.

The audience was glued to his inspiring speech about overcoming harsh adversity while growing up and were amazed at his persistence to see his ideas and art published and the success as a result. I was very impressed by how personable he was with many of the students and so free to share his ideas, encourage originality, and offer suggestions to those bold enough to share their own work.

What a wonderful experience our students and those from across the state enjoyed for this one of a kind visit. It is opportunities like this that reinforces the importance of exploring your talents, reaching for the stars,



and embracing your heritage which is the purpose of *The Origin Project*.

GIGI LONG, LIBRARY MEDIA SPECIALIST  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY, LEE COUNTY SCHOOLS

### *Jarrett Krosoczka*

Jarrett K. told us about how he draws and writes stories. I drew him in my mom's notebook and he took a picture of it! He also drew a picture of the lunch lady

who looks something like this. She has curly black hair, yellow gloves, a white lunch lady vest, and round glasses.

I thought going to see Jarrett K. was awesome. His book I got at the book fair was great and I think he's a really good artist. The drawings in his Star Wars book are cool!

MICHAEL HINES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *Best Day Meeting Jarrett*

Today I read a book by Jarrett J. Krosoczka. The book I read was *Peanut Butter and Jellyfish*. On the first page it said "This is peanut butter, and this is jelly. They are best friends." Then it goes on and says "This is crabby. He is not our best friend." I was laughing and then I showed Bellah and then she was laughing! I really liked this book because I love jelly fish and peanut butter sandwiches and I loved the illustrations.



Back in November the student council from Flatwoods School went to meet this famous author, Jarrett J. Krosoczka. We went to the program and he told us a lot. Flatwoods Student Council had their journals so we had to take notes about what he said. He told us about all his books. He showed us how to draw "Lunch Lady" and it was hard for me.

In the bookfair, I found one of his books called *Jedi Academy The Force Oversleeps*. When I saw it, I said, "I found a Jarrett book and it starts just like a Star

Wars movie!" It said "A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away" and instead of days like Thursday, it says Hexday. It's the same thing with Instagram. It is a Stargram but with the cover! One kid in his PJ's so I think the kid's been in bed and woke up and evil droids took him somewhere.

Once the program was over we got to have a tour of the school we were at called Emory and Henry College. We went to a church and we had to whisper then we screamed "Hallelujah!" We left the church and went to the li-





brary and got to have popcorn and went to see the ducks. Last, we went to the gift shop and got to get candy or chips. We can't forget about Olive Garden! It was delish. I had pizza, salad, and grapes. When we were heading back, we got 5 big trucks to hank. It was so fun going to Emory and Henry. That day was the best. I hope I can meet Jarrett again. He was super fun!

ADDISON CLARK, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *It's Tough to Lose Your Balloon*

I read *It's Tough to Lose Your Balloon* by Jarrett Krosoczka. It was an amazing book! It was a story about bad things with good outcomes. So if you ever have something bad happen just look for the good in it. I loved the story.

Life's not always easy. Like if in a basketball game I make a bad pass and the other team steals it you can steal it back or if you mess up in a dance routine it might make the crowd laugh. So if something happens



there could be something good to happen from it.

AVA STAFFORD, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *It's Tough to Lose Your Balloon*

I like this book so much! It's very funny. It says you lose your balloon and it may make someone laugh. It inspires me. If something breaks, you can have a good time with it. I love Jarrett Krosoczka's art-

work. I would like to know how to draw like that. He makes it like real life.

LUKE CANTOR, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

### *Peanut Butter and Jellyfish*

I just finished reading a book called *Peanut Butter and Jellyfish*. It's about these two really good friends that explore the ocean together. There's a mean crab that



calls them mean names everytime they go by him like bubble heads and he says they smell bad. Then one time Jellyfish said, "Driftwood and sea stones may break our bones but words will never hurt us."

AIDEN BROWN, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY  
SCHOOL

### *It's Tough to Lose Your Balloon*

Today, I read "It's Tough to Lose Your Balloon." I liked the book. The pictures are really good. It's funny to read. It is a good book. Jarrett J. krosoczka is a good author.

I like what the back of the book says. It says, "When life gets you down look up, up, up!"

ADDISON NASH, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *Punk Farm*

Punk Farm is the funniest book I have ever read. Punk farm is great for any kid to read, Jarrett J. krosoczka is an amazing writer. He writes amazing books like Punk farm, Jarrett is the funniest author in the world!

HUXLEY ALDRIDGE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Gina & Jarrett Krosoczka's first trip to The Birthplace of Country Music

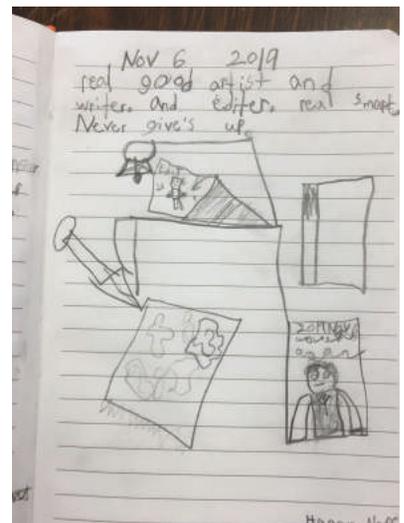
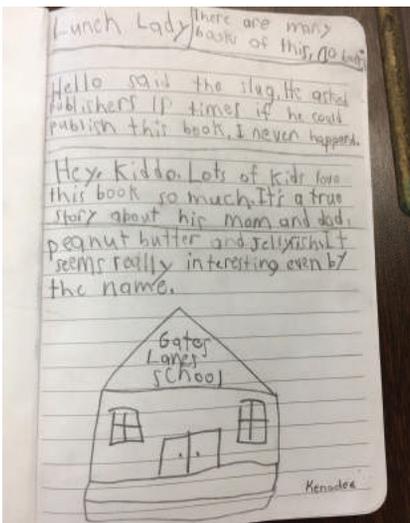
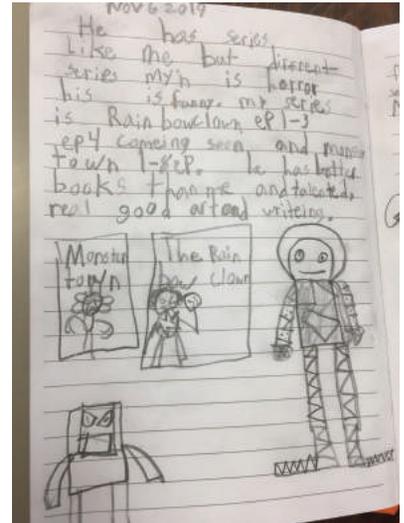
## *Baghead*

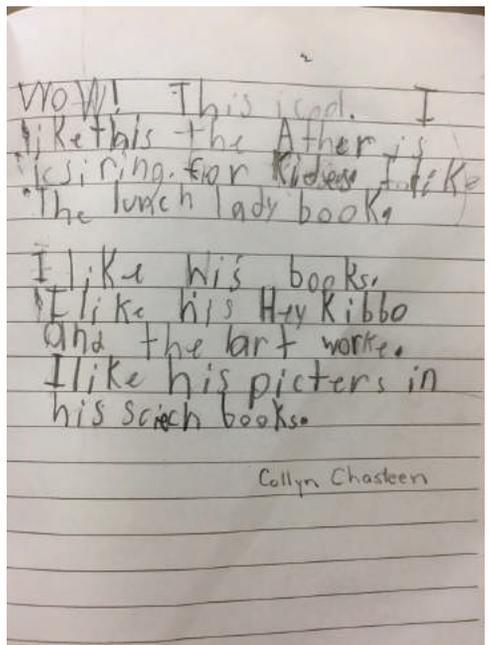
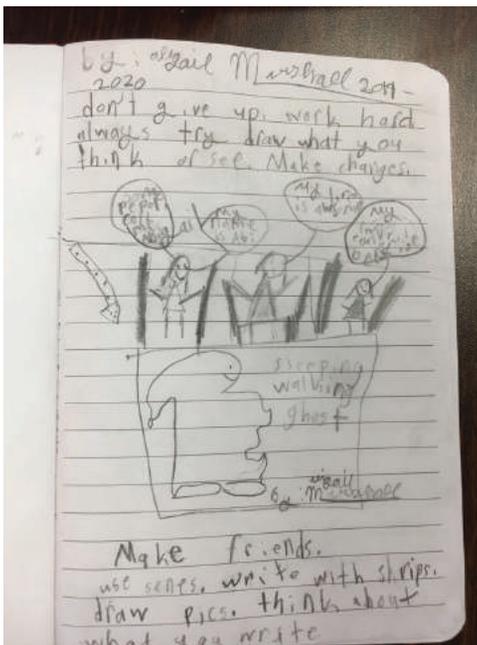
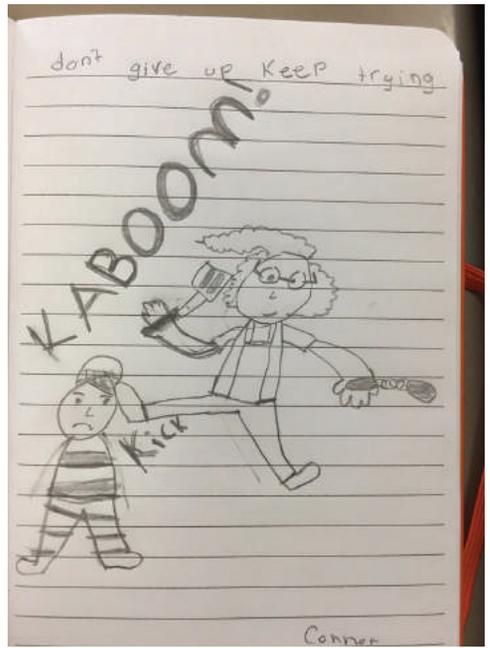
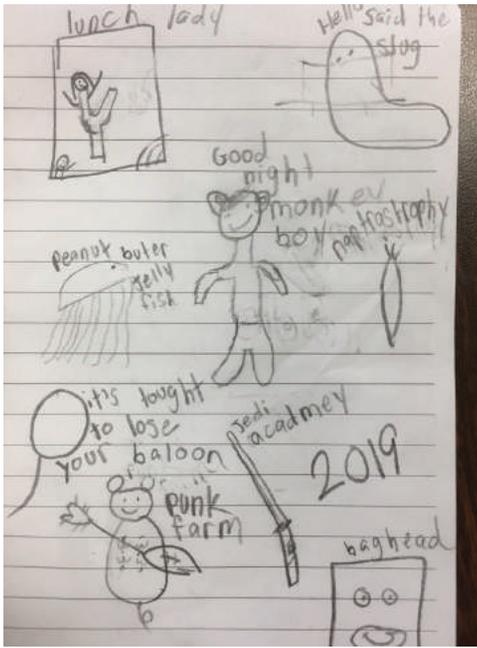
Baghead was about a boy named Josh. He put on a very big brown paper bag on his head. He cut out a mouth hole and 2 eye holes. All his teachers thought, "How will he work?" The reason he had a brown paper bag on his head was he cut his hair. I thought he was embarrassed.

BRYANNA SYKES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



*Drawing of Jarrett by 4th grade student, Michael Hines*





# SPECIAL EVENTS & EXCURSIONS





## Emory & Henry College

For years, Emory & Henry has been hearing wonderful stories of the work being done by The Origin Project (TOP); but seeing that work first hand was a gift beyond expectation.

We began hearing about the program even before TOP's co-founder, Adriana Trigiani, delivered our 2018 commencement speech. Our campus is still talking about that address, and she is the only E&H graduation speaker anyone ever remembers getting a standing ovation. I would argue that much of the success of that speech rested in Ms. Trigiani's ability to capture and convey the pride and joy that is a result of owning your roots and being proud of your heritage. Emory & Henry celebrates our Appalachian location, and it was reaffirming to hear those fond words about Southwest Virginia. She delivered a fine message to our E&H graduates as they prepared to enter a competitive world.

TOP offers this the same strong and important lesson of pride in place



to elementary and high school students across the Commonwealth.

That's why it was such an honor to be the location for two events connected to TOP in November of 2019. TOP officials brought Jarrett Krosoczka, a world-renowned graphic novelist, to Southwest Virginia to discuss his work. He is the author of many books, including *Hey, Kiddo!* which was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2019. On November 5, Jarrett was part of a panel discussion that featured an accomplished group of professionals who are at the forefront of the opioid crisis in our region. Mr. Krosoczka knows personally about this crisis: his nominated book chronicles his life as a kid growing up with a mother who was an addict.

The panel responded to questions from a moderator (Ms. Trigiani) and then took questions from a group of high school students who had traveled across the state from Manassas, Virginia, to take part in the event. Not one of the questions was easy. And none of the answers



offered simple promises. But every one of the interactions was meaningful; and the discourse felt like a movement toward hope.

The next morning, nearly 500 students from all over Southwest Virginia came to the Emory & Henry campus to hear Mr. Krosoczka talk about how he found art to be a creative and healing outlet in the midst of a complicated childhood. He took many questions from curious students in the audience at the McGlothlin Center for the Arts, and then raced to the Birthplace of Country Music in Bristol to address the students from Manassas who had just toured the museum.

At the end of the Bristol event, a young woman came to Mr. Krosoczka to explain that she had recently lost her mother to addiction. His response was warm and thoughtful, and it spoke volumes to what is at the heart of every TOP program: genuine interest in the lives of young people.

The thread that ran through these November 2019 gatherings, and every TOP event, is that we can recognize



our challenges — but they don't need to define us or deter us from building our best lives. TOP organizers remind students to be proud of their origin stories, and then offer skills and encouragement for building on those origins in a way that creates a bright, fulfilling, creative future.

Nancy Bolmeier Fisher and Adriana Trigiani could focus their volunteer time in many directions; but they have chosen to oversee a program that offers encouragement for our youngest neighbors. Emory & Henry is proud that one of our former students, Linda Neff Woodward, serves as the program coordinator for TOP, and the College was grateful to be a partner for this event in 2019 that reflects our own respect for this region of the country and our deep-seated belief in the abilities of young minds.

We hope to welcome The Origin Project, and all its participants, back to campus soon!

Sincerely,

DR. JOHN W. WELLS  
PRESIDENT, EMORY & HENRY COLLEGE

### *Sweet Moments*

Let's face it, some days are just a little better than others. November 5–6, 2019 were really great days for all of us at Emory & Henry because we were so excited to welcome friends old and new with The Origin Project. And there were a couple of moments that didn't take center stage — but they will be long cherished.



We were so happy to welcome Jarrett Krosoczka and his wife Gina to campus, and before the panel discussion on Nov. 5, we gathered at the home of Emory & Henry President Dr. John Wells for a light dinner and the opportunity for folks to get to know each other before the event. The evening was delightful and friendly and everyone was displaying their best professional demeanor. . . . until our guests of honor saw Dr. Wells' little pug dog, Thatcher. Jarrett and Gina suddenly squealed and grinned and rushed in to pick up Thatcher for cuddles and pug

snorts! Turns out the Krosoczkas have three pugs of their own, so seeing Thatcher made them feel right at home.

That same evening we enlisted two E&H students to be on call in case our guests needed help. They listened intently as we tried to explain what was happening and who all these people were on campus. As college students, these two are very busy reading textbooks, articles, abstracts, and lab manuals — so they don't have a lot of time for best-selling novels. So to help them understand how exciting it was to have Adriana Trigiani on campus, I smiled and said, "Text your mamas and tell them what you're doing tonight." Later on, one of the young women sidled up to me and said, "My mama is freaking out." Turns out, the young woman's grandmother lives with her family, and her mama very often reads aloud to the grandmother from Adriana's books. Mama wanted to know how her daughter was getting to do such a cool bit of volunteer work.

The last fun story I'll share happened after Jarrett Kosoczka's Wednesday morning presentation. Students from Flatwoods Elementary School and Lee High School got to stay on campus a bit longer so they could see the campus. They all were treated to a backstage tour at the McGlothlin Center for the Arts (MCA). Then the group split so that the high school kids could get a campus tour from an E&H student who had graduated from Lee High. The elementary school kids got to go to feed the ducks at the duck pond, shop at the campus bookstore (where they each got an E&H tote bag and snacks for the bus ride home), and visit the big college library (where they were given fresh popcorn). All eyes widened as they heard the librarian say that building's three floors were chock full of literally thousands of books. One young woman exclaimed, "I'd start reading on the first floor and work my way up through all the books on every floor!" Now that's real enthusiasm for reading!

There were so many sweet moments to recall; like watching Adriana Trigiani and Barbara Kingsolver have a casual conversation; like watching Jarrett Krosoczka run through the seats and stairs of the MCA with a microphone to take questions from



kids; and like seeing hundreds of students gather with their TOP journals in hand to celebrate the power of writing. I can't wait until they come back to see us again and share more of those giant little moments.

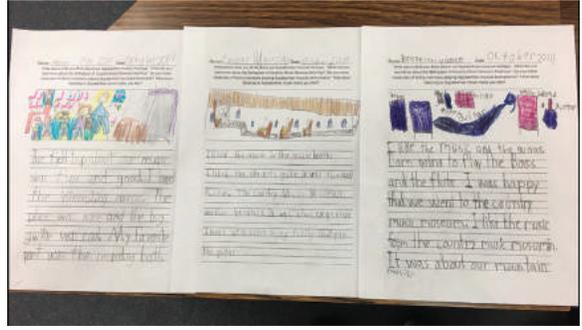
MONICA HOEL, ALUMNI DIRECTOR  
EMORY & HENRY COLLEGE

## Birthplace of Country Music

This is the Birthplace of Country Music Museum's second year partnering with The Origin Project, and once again it was a wonderful experience. Students from the local Morrison School and from Manassas's Stonewall Jackson High School came to the museum for a variety of programming, including a writing workshop with Jarrett Krosoczka that was held in our Performance Theater. We toured the museum's permanent exhibits with the students and teachers, digging deeper into the history and impact of the 1927 Bristol Sessions and early commercial country music, and providing ample time for the interactives, theater films, and music and dancing areas. We also spent time in the museum's special exhibit, American Ballads: The Photographs of Marty Stuart (on loan from the Frist Museum of Art in Nashville) – here we explored the concept of portraiture, what portraits can tell us about the object and artist, and how we express our own personalities and messages through selfies. Students then participated in a writing exercise, interpreting a portrait of their choice for the group. Staff and volunteers had a great time with the students from both schools – we were impressed with their interest, enthusiasm, questions, and reactions. Students who might have had little interest in country music before visiting with us, showed a great deal of curiosity on their visit and engaged with the content in meaningful and interesting ways. It meant a lot to us to be able to share the museum as an educational resource with both a local school and one that is much further away and might not have the chance to visit us otherwise. Collaboration with The Origin Project is always a positive and engaging experience, and we look forward to future work together!

RENE RODGERS, HEAD CURATOR  
BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC  
MUSEUM





## Barter Theatre

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support for the Origin Project on behalf of Barter Theatre in Abingdon, Virginia. We have had the honor of working with the program in the southwest Virginia region. Barter has hosted many of the events that The Origin Project has held in the area, and

what the students receive through the project is world class. Watching Adriana Trigiani and her partners work with the students is to watch skill and honesty combine to give young people access to their own voices. It's clear that Adriana cares about these students and works to make sure that they claim writing as something that belongs to them.

In addition to hosting the Origin Project events, Barter has also worked with Origin Project students in workshops and with our Young Playwrights Festival. Through the YPF, the students learn to write plays and receive feedback from theatre professionals on this unique form of creative writing. We have been proud to see some of their plays featured in the Origin Project yearly publication.

The Origin Project provides students from an underserved area an opportunity to celebrate and be recognized for their personal expression. We at Barter are glad to be part of this mission.

THANK YOU,  
KATY BROWN  
PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR,  
BARTER THEATRE

Inspirational, creative, transformative, and powerful. Those are the words that immediately come to my mind when I think of The





Origin Project. Each year each group of students shed new light and bring a new focus to what it means to grow up in Appalachia. Their stories are amazing and truly inspirational for them, for the region, for the future of the culture of Appalachia, but most importantly for the future of their lives. Adriana Trigiani, Nancy Bolmeier Fisher, and Linda Woodward have given a gift to our region through this immensely unique and creative program, which has helped transform the lives of the students they have touched and the powerful and enlightened view of Appalachia that these students have unleashed through their work. Each year I have watched

the growth and the depth of this project, which continues to get stronger through its increased partnerships and connections with artists who, like ourselves, understand the significance of the work that is being done here. When I look for invigoration, I go back and read the stories written by the students and published each year as part of The Origin Project. For in those stories, I find hope, struggles against all odds, revelations, and a true love of humanity. Kudos to The Origin Project for their success in helping us all to realize the value of those around us and for their role in shaping the future of our region and our culture.

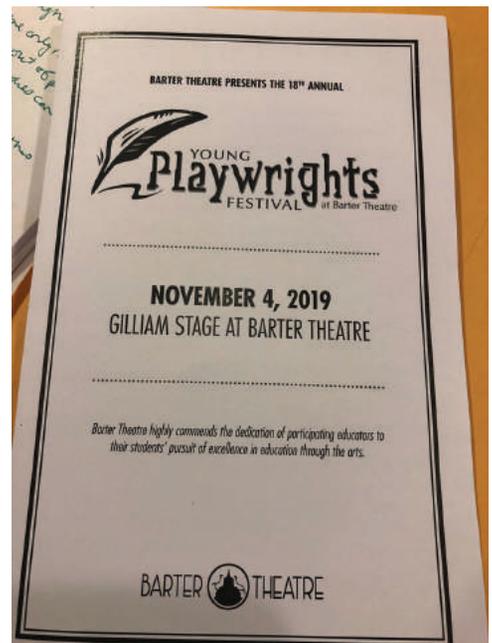
RICHARD ROSE

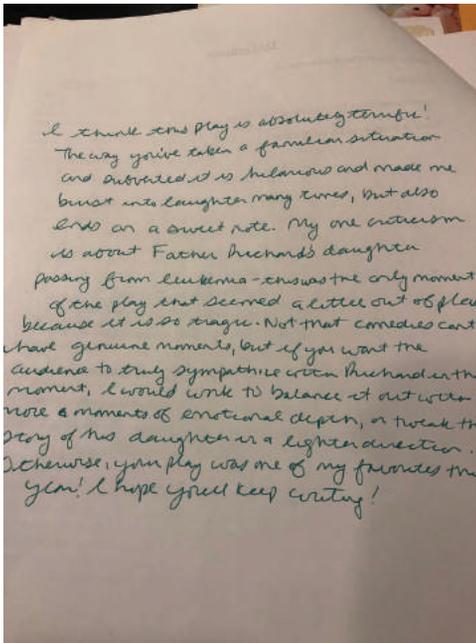
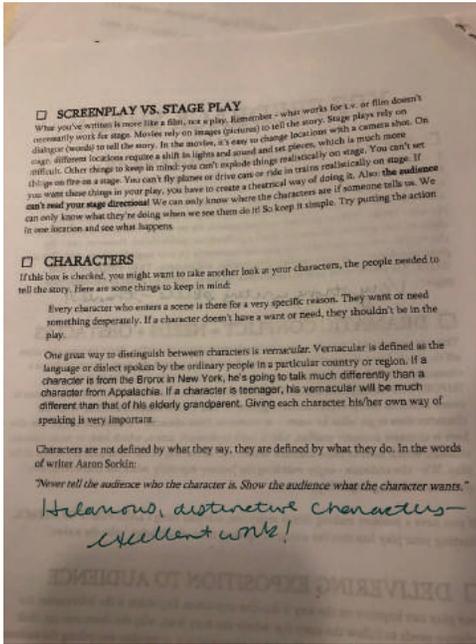
PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, BARTER THEATRE – 1992 TO 2019

### *Barter Theatre Young Playwrights Festival*

My Theatre class had a wonderful experience participating in the Barter Theatre Young Playwrights Festival this year, the first time our school has participated (to my knowledge). The process started with a YPF workshop for teachers. Catherine Bush, Barter Theatre’s talented playwright-in-residence, outlined the main ingredients for a successful play, which include “a heightened situation which takes place in a compressed time period involving high stakes, dramatic conflict, and some sort of resolution,” and shared strategies for teaching students how to write successful plays in the 10-minute format.

Back at school, I shared what I had learned with my students, who began brainstorming ideas for their plots. This was the first time that my students had ever attempted to write in this genre, and it was both educational and fun. Most of the plays leaned toward comedy, and they laughed as they wrote collaboratively. When the drafts of the student plays were read aloud — by their classmates, rather than themselves, at Catherine’s suggestion — they quickly realized what a different genre drama is and the challenge of moving a story along almost solely through dialogue. They were actually eager to tackle the process of revising their plays to better communicate what they





had originally intended before the next read-through. As we continued to collaborate and revise, they also improved their mastery of character development, letting the action of the play be propelled by the wants of the characters and the obstacles in their way.

Attending the Young Playwrights Festival in November was even more entertaining than we'd imagined; who knew that student-written plays could be almost as enjoyable as those written by Barter professionals?! I was proud that two of my students were semifinalists in the competition with their play, and all of my students received helpful and positive written feedback on their writing. I am thankful to have involved my students in YPF; it was valuable project-based learning with an authentic audience. And even before we left the theatre, my students were planning what they would write for next year's Young Playwrights Festival!

STEPHANIE CASSELL  
 ENGLISH AND THEATRE TEACHER  
 JOHN I. BURTON HIGH SCHOOL

The Confession

Semifinalist, Barter Theatre's Young Playwright Festival Competition

Setting: Catholic Church confession box

Characters:

Father Richard (a.k.a Rick): a Catholic priest; 40ish

Carol: A young woman in her 20s or 30s

*(Lights up. The stage is blank except for a confession box. The scene begins with FATHER RICHARD inside the box weeping very loudly.)*

Father Richard: *(weeping)* OH FORGIVE ME FOR I HAVE SINNED! I am a disgrace and do not deserve your mercy, O Father. Strike me down because I am guilty. *(says the following words, each with more sadness and guilt)* Guilty. Guilty! Guilty! GUILTY!!!!

*(Enter CAROL)*

Carol: Um . . . Hello?

*(FATHER RICHARD looks up to see CAROL, a young woman, standing before him. He wipes his tears and gets off the ground and greets her.)*

Father Richard: Oh— um . . . sorry. I was just— Nevermind. Can I help you?

Carol: Oh, I didn't mean to interrupt—

Father Richard: No! You didn't interrupt anything. Just— ya know *(Lifts hands in "jazz hands" manner)* Praise the Lord! Ha ha..

Carol: Oh . . . um . . . okay. I just came to make a confession. I might've come at a bad time. I-I'll just come back when you're not so . . . excited.

Father Richard: Don't leave! It's a great time. Never a bad time to confess, you know what I mean? (*Laughs nervously*) Ha..ha

Carol: Um..are you sure? I don't wanna get in the middle of whatever you're doing.

Father Richard: Please, come. It's fine.

Carol: Okay then.

(CAROL and FATHER RICHARD step into the confession box. Each on the appropriate side.)

Carol: Well, let's see. I had an affair with my doctor, which led to a divorce between me and my now ex-husband, Freddy-

(FATHER RICHARD *sniffs and cries a little bit*)

Carol: Is everything okay in there?

Father Richard: What? (*sniffs*) Oh yes. Please continue.

Carol: Oh . . . okay. Well, I-

(FATHER RICHARD now weeps louder than before)

Carol: Is there a problem, Father?

Father Richard: I'm sorry ma'am. I don't mean to . . . I just . . . I just have a lot on my mind right now.

Carol: Do you wanna talk about it?

Father Richard: Oh no, it's fine. This is your time to confess.

Carol: If it's gonna get you to stop yelling and crying, I can wait.

(CAROL and FATHER RICHARD swap place in the confession box)

Father Richard: Huh. It's weird being on this side of the box. Feels pretty nice. (*Touches box*) I ought to confess more often, haha.

Carol: (*Looks at FATHER RICHARD with annoyance*) Can we just get this started?

Father Richard: Oh, yes of course. Okay so I guess I'll just start off by telling you what I've done. A couple weekends ago I took my daughter to the carnival that was in town. We tried a ping pong game where if you made it in the bowl you got a fish. So we played and she won a goldfish. She named him Fredrick. (*Begins to weep*) She had him for two weeks. She took such good care of him. I noticed one day that his bowl needed to be cleaned. So I took him out and placed him in a small bowl with enough water for him to survive . . . at least that's what I thought. After I cleaned his bowl, the phone rang. I went to answer it and forgot all about Fredrick. By the time I got back, he was . . . he was . . . I'M SO SORRY FREDRICK!!!! I just wanted to clean your bowl!!! (*weeps uncontrollably*).

Carol: A fish? You've been weeping this whole time over a fish?!?!?! I can't believe I wasted my time listening to an old man cry over a stupid fish!

Father Richard: Stupid fish? Stupid fish?!?! That fish was special!

Carol: Sure, maybe with some lemon pepper, that is a special fish, but a *goldfish*? What could possibly be so special about a goldfish?

Father Richard: I will have you know that Fredrick was the last thing my daughter had before leukemia took my little girl from me. She was only six years old. He gave her life. He made her laugh. They had conversations together. She loved playing "Tea Party" with him. (*voice cracks as he begins to cry*). She always told him he was holding the cup wrong.

Carol: Oh. I-I'm so sorry. I had no idea.

Father Richard: It's okay. You didn't know.

(*Beat*)

Carol: What was her name?

Father Richard: Lily

Carol: That's beautiful.

Father Richard: Thank you. She was named after her mother's favorite flower.

Carol: How did her mother handle it?

Father Richard: She left me almost two months after Lily died.

Carol: Wow. Father, I am so sorry for being so rude. Here I am thinking that I've got it bad.

Father Richard: It's hard to see others and believe that our lives aren't so bad when we keep looking through our own circumstances.

Carol: Yeah, you're right (*sniffles, as if crying*)

Father Richard: Um, are you-

Carol: What? Oh, no! I-It's . . . It's dusty in here. You should clean this more often

Father Richard: (*Chuckles*) Yeah, not many people are complaining about the dust during confessions.

Carol: Haha, yeah, I guess you're right.

(*Both sit in silence for a beat.*)

Father Richard: Say, you come on and finish your confession.

Carol: Oh, right . . . um, actually this talk together has really opened my eyes and showed me that other people struggle way worse than I do. So I'm going to do something about it. I'm going to start with spending more time with my daughter.

Father Richard: I'm glad, Carol. Say, what's your daughter's name?.

Carol: Rose. Named after *my* mother's favorite flower.

### *End of Play*

DASANYE SMITH, GRADE 12

EDEN GREER, GRADE 11

JOHN I. BURTON HIGH SCHOOL

### *Cultivating Future Playwrights*

For the past four years, I have been partnering with the *Barter Theatre* and their *Young Playwright's Festival* to help foster the writing of my students. Over the years, not only have I seen my students' writing grow, but I have also watched as their confidence blossoms. What begins as doubt and insecurity soon becomes a realization of the opportunity to express themselves in a new and engaging way. The phenomenal hands-on personal training we teachers receive every year from resident playwright, Cathy Bush, is truly invaluable as we, too, discover our own voices in the midst of helping our students find theirs. This camaraderie influences our writing as we band together for the joint commitment of furthering our students' experience in high school. However, it also fuses us together in new and unexpected ways. I have made new friends and connections through these training seminars that have gone over into my other coaching and mentoring duties and opportunities throughout the year. I have watched as the YPF experience has been incorporated into *the Origin Project*, along with the *Appalachian Writing Project* with Stephanie Cassell. I look forward to many more years of working with the Barter Theatre and discovering what my students will write next.

ALEXANDER LONG, ENGLISH TEACHER

LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *How the South Won the War*

*Semifinalist, Barter Theatre's Young Playwright Festival Competition*

Setting: A field in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

Characters:

JACK : A hardened Confederate soldier, out for blood.

TIMMY: A young Confederate soldier, kind of annoying, nervous at what he has to do.

CAPTAIN MARSHALL: Head of the secret service, gruff, unlikeable man.

LINCOLN: 16th President of the United States, tall, dignified man ready to deliver his speech.

GENERAL MCCLELLAN: General in the United States Army, friend of Lincoln's.

PRIVATE DILLON: Soldier attached to Lincoln's protection detail, fed up with Captain Marshall.

\*Potential for more characters as bystanders or Union soldiers.

### Scene 1

*(It's a chilly Pennsylvania morning. People are gathering around a stage in the middle of a field, where the President is about to give a speech. On the edge of the field, in the woods on a trail, an older man and his younger companion make their way to the field, speaking in hushed whispers. The younger man, James, carries an old shotgun. The older man carries a new rifle with a telescopic scope)*

TIMMY

So, where are you from?

JACK

Shhh! Keep it down, you'll give our position away!

TIMMY

*(Speaking quietly)*

Sorry. But where?

JACK

*\*sighs\** Waycross.

TIMMY

Where's that?

JACK

You're just full of questions, aren't you? *(Thinks for a second.)* It's South of Atlanta.

*(Three men come walking along the stage, Both men dressed in Union uniforms, one is angry, talking very loudly, giving orders to the others and his voice keeps getting louder)*

JACK

Quick, hide!

*(Jack and Timmy jump in bush and peak over top, eavesdropping on the conversation.)*

CAPTAIN MARSHALL

. . . and also, Private Dillon, I want more soldiers on the left side of the field, towards the river. Got that, or do I have to repeat it so your little mind can understand!

PRIVATE DILLON

*(Annoyed)* Got it, Captain Marshall, sir.

*(All four men leave, Jack and Timmy sneak out of bush)*

JACK

They are beefing up the defences on the left side, that means if we go on that trail to the right, we will have less opposition.

TIMMY

That's good Jack, but do you think you can get the job done when we get there? I mean, to take someone's life like that. . . .

JACK

*(Interrupting Timmy)* Stop. Timmy, just stop. You can't think like that. I, we, aren't just doing this for our country. We're doing this for the ones we lost, the ones killed by our own brothers. Now come on, we're losing daylight.

*(Jack runs offstage, leaving Timmy standing there. Timmy sighs, looks back to where the Union troops left, looks back at Jack, and then looks down as though he is making a tough decision, then runs off-stage after Jack.)*

*(As soon as Jack and Timmy exit, Abraham Lincoln and General McClellan come on stage, Lincoln is talking while McClellan writes the things he says down. They turn to the audience and stop in the middle.)*

LINCOLN

..yes, yes I want to add that. Wait, wait stop. Look, look out there. You see that? Out in that clearing? That is a few hundred proud Americans, waiting to see their president give a speech that will prolong this war even further. And to what avail? To bring our country under one banner. We are fighting to abolish the

practice of slavery, but what are they fighting for? Surely, they cannot be fighting for slavery, but something more grand. Alas, we might never know why they decided to break away, to plunge us into war. Maybe they think they can be like we were, when we once became free. Four score and seven years to be precise. Sometimes it seems a curse that I was to take the oath to preserve this great union, for it pains me to see these young, proud people's lives cut short. Life is such a short and fragile thing to be thrown away. And yet, a wise man named Mr. McCoughey once said that time is as a flat circle, that everything we have done or ever will do, we will do over and over again, forever. I hope that is untrue, because I don't think this country will survive very long if we are always divided. *(Checks his pocket watch)* Hurry up now, we are going to be late.

MCCLELLAN

I like the "Four score and seven years" part.

LINCOLN

Yes, I like it also. Add it to the speech.

*(Lincoln and McClellan walk offstage, and resume talking about the speech. As they exit, Jack and Timmy come on stage from the other side, ducking and moving swiftly.)*

JACK

Alright, we're almost there. Just a few hundred more yards, and then we can set up and wait for the speech to carry out the mission.

TIMMY

You mean murder.

JACK

What? What's that supposed to mean?

TIMMY

Nothing, just that . . . *(Stops)*

JACK

Come on, spit it out. What do you mean about murder.

TIMMY

Well, that's what it is, isn't it? You're going to set up with your fancy telescopic scope, and wait until he is onstage, then you're going to kill him. It's murder.

JACK

It's not murder, it's revenge.

Timmy

*(Raising his voice)* Revenge for what? What could he have possibly done to. . .

Jack

*(Interrupting)* He killed my wife! There, I said it. I've never said it out loud. He killed her, he killed her by sending his troops to force us under submission. *(Pauses)* One night we heard a knock on the door, and my wife, her name is, or was, Jenney, opened it to find Union soldiers standing there. When she wouldn't let them in, they shot her dead and ran like cowards. That is why I want to kill him. Are you happy now?

TIMMY

*(Surprised, stutters out an apology)* I'm sorry, I didn't..

JACK

It's fine. What's done is done, but I have to kill him. I have to for Jenney.

TIMMY

Alright, I'll help you get there. But I won't pull the trigger. Not like that. If I am to kill a man, I am going to look him in the eye as I do. I'll do it like that because I hope that I might regret it, so I may not do it to anyone else again.

JACK

That's a good rule. Everyone needs rules they can live by, but I seem to have lost mine somewhere along the road of life, along with my pride and dignity. That is why I am doing it like this. I have nothing left. *(Wipes tear from his eye, then checks his pocket watch.)* Right then, we must press on. It's almost time.

*(Both run offstage, hurrying to get to their position before Lincoln starts his speech.)*

*(Platform is brought onto the center of the stage and spectators stand around it anxiously, impatient that the president isn't there yet. On the left side of the stage, You see Captain Marshall and two more soldiers. On the right you see one union soldier standing near the edge of the forest in front of a bush. Jack and Timmy are behind the bush the soldier is in front of. Jack turns to Timmy and puts a finger to his mouth, signaling him to be quiet. Jack proceeds creeps out of the bush and grab the guard silently, dragging him back to the bush, and back of the stage,with Timmy following. Timmy emerges momentarily in the Union uniform with Jack right behind him.)*

JACK

Remember, when the shooting starts, you have to take out the soldiers.

TIMMY

Yes, yes I know.

*(Timmy walks over to the other soldiers, Jack stays behind hiding in the bush.)*

CAPTAIN MARSHALL

Hey, you! What are you doing over here?

TIMMY

Um, uh, General McClellan told me to come over here. He said more troops are needed to defend the left side.

CAPTAIN MARSHALL

General McClellan!? He's here!? Dang Generals, they think they can boss anyone around just because they hold a higher rank. All right then, take your position.

*(Timmy salutes, then takes his place. Abraham Lincoln comes onstage with General McClellan, and the crowd starts to clap. As Lincoln and McClellan are waving to the crowd, Jack is laying on the ground with his gun at the ready. Timmy and Jack make eye contact, and Jack starts counting down from three with his fingers. 3,2,1, the stage goes black and you hear a gunshot.)*

*(When the lights come on, you see Jack and Timmy crouching behind a log while Union troops fire at them from cover left of the platform. A body is lying wrapped in an American flag left of the platform. Timmy and Jack are returning fire, but are almost out of ammo. Captain Marshall lies fallen among the dead Union soldiers.)*

TIMMY

Did you do it? Did you kill him?

JACK

No, I got McClellan.

TIMMY

How are we going to get out of here? We're outnumbered.

JACK

We're not. (Pauses) You are.

TIMMY

What? I can't just..

JACK

Yes, you can. You have to. Now go, I don't have anyone left, but you do. Live your life Timmy. I've already made my peace with God.

*(Jack stands up and starts to shoot. Timmy begins to run but stops at the edge of the stage and looks back)*

JACK

Go!

*(Timmy runs offstage, and Jack takes a bullet to the shoulder and slumps behind the log again.)*

JACK

Jesus Christ, my lord and savior, I ask you into my heart, to protect my soul from evil, and to let me into your kingdom. In your holy name I pray, amen.

*(Jack stands up and is immediately killed by a hail of bullets. The Union soldiers turn and walk off of the stage. Abraham Lincoln comes onstage and walks over to his friend's body. Timmy also comes onstage and walks over to Lincoln.)*

LINCOLN

It's a shame. A good life cut short, shot down by this cruel world we have found ourselves living in. Have you lost someone?

TIMMY

Yes, very recently.

LINCOLN

*Haven't we all (Let's out a sad sigh.).* Was it him that was supposed to go, or me?

TIMMY

Beg your pardon?

LINCOLN

Oh I know you are not a Union soldier. Your pants are much too small, you are covered in mud, and you talk like a hillbilly.

TIMMY

*(Looks down and lets out a small laugh)* Yes, I suppose you are right. The bullet was for you, but maybe it was fate. Maybe it wasn't supposed to hit you. I guess we will never know.

LINCOLN

No, I guess we won't. *(Pauses)* Well are you going to finish the job?

TIMMY

*(Looks at Lincoln)* No. I have a code, and a friend once told me that everyone needs a code. I won't kill you.

LINCOLN

This doesn't happen to be the same friend that tried to shoot me, is it?

TIMMY

Well, no one is perfect. But he was lost, he had no one to turn to. No one left.

LINCOLN

\*Sighs\* What has the world come to? I cannot deal with this loss anymore. I am stopping the war, effective immediately.

TIMMY

You are a good man. It's a shame you're no longer my president.

LINCOLN

*(Shaking Timmy's hand)* You'll always be welcome in the United States, Mr. . . .

TIMMY

Dalton. My name is Timmy Dalton.

LINCOLN

Lincoln. Abraham Lincoln.

TIMMY

Maybe one day we will see each other again.

LINCOLN

Maybe. But now, you better go. The soldiers will be back soon.

TIMMY

Goodbye Mr. Lincoln.

LINCOLN

Goodbye Timmy.

*(Timmy runs offstage, and Union troops come running from the side of the stage.)*

PRIVATE DILLON

Sir, do you want us to go after him?

LINCOLN

No. There is enough death in this world already.

*(Lincoln walks slowly offstage followed by the soldiers as the curtain slowly falls down.)*

LATCHLON ALDRIDGE, CARSON WILLIS, AND JAKE MULLINS  
GRADE 9, LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Finding Your True Colors*

One of the best things about having our students work with Nikki Skillman and the Barter Theatre is watching them begin to expand their self-awareness. Through their work with Nikki, our students are learning valuable social and emotional skills that are rarely explicitly taught in schools, in spite of the fact that adolescence is a challenging time when one learns to navigate the world as an individual. Many teens are very cognizant of who they are in terms of their family or friend-group identity, but they lack the intrapersonal skills to reflect on who they are and what their strengths and weaknesses are as individuals. Because it is inherently challenging for them to understand how various characteristics of their personality affect them in their interactions with others, teens often are uncertain of how to navigate the inevitable everyday interpersonal conflicts that come along with adolescence. They are also typically just as uncertain of the positive qualities they possess that make them uniquely valuable to a group.

This year, one way that our students have been able to expand their sense of self is through the True Colors work they have done during their Barter time. Students took an interactive, kinesthetic personality

quiz, modeled after the True Colors personality traits quiz. They focused on words that describe them, situations in which they excel, circumstances that cause them stress, and ways that they want others to see them. Based on their answers, students were assigned one of four personality color types: Blue (warm, empathetic, idealistic), Gold (dependable, organized, stable), Green (creative, analytical, logical), or Orange (bold, spontaneous, optimistic). As soon as they were introduced to this concept, students enjoyed comparing their colors with their peers and teachers and learning about the specific details associated with their color type. They were surprised by how well their color type explained who they are, and they had fun using their colors to explain their motivations and behaviors, even in the classroom.

Truly remarkably, students have taken their newfound self-knowledge and have begun to apply it to their interactions with others, using it to help them understand the challenges they face in the classroom. It's not uncommon to hear conversations in which students are discussing why their particular "color" approach to a given situation makes it difficult to relate to the way someone of another "color" approaches it. Students have also begun to understand the ways in which their particular attributes can help or hinder them, realizing that if their "color" tends to procrastinate, they need to be mindful not to, or learning that if heightened sensitivity is a trademark of their "color," they need to be aware of not having an automatically negative reaction to constructive criticism.

Learning about their True Colors has been a fun and insightful part of Barter for all of our students this year. They have really begun to understand not only themselves, but also their peers, teachers, and families. Through True Colors, our students are learning how to be compassionate and patient with those who think differently than they do. The knowledge and skills that they have gained throughout this process will continue to serve them well as they move on to higher education and the workforce with an improved awareness of who they are and what they are capable of doing, both in the classroom and in life itself.

KARLA RASNAKE  
HIGH SCHOOL LITERATURE TEACHER  
MORRISON SCHOOL

### *My Identity*

Part of my identity is doing my work on time, working hard in school everyday, and helping my best friends out whenever they need help with something. I have a good identity because I am really smart and I like to be organized for any classes and I also make really good grades in school.

I did a True Colors test at my school for Barter class, and my true color is gold. True colors are colors that explain your identity, like for example, some people are really emotional so that true color is blue, some people like creative/complex problem solving and that true color is green, some people are really energized and that true color is orange, and some people like to be organized and not procrastinate and that true color is gold. I am a gold. Gold is part of my identity because I follow directions, I work before play, and I am really kind to others.

In my opinion, my identity is gold because I am really organized during school with all of my materials, work on my homework before I relax and watch TV, and help other people out with homework or anything else they need help with. I am proud to be a gold, because it helps explain my identity.

TYLER BRANHAM, GRADE 9  
MORRISON SCHOOL

### *Being Gold*

I am proud to be a gold  
Though some think me too bold

Some think me uncaring and cold  
But I wish the true story could be told

One day our teacher said,  
“Now don’t lose your head,  
“Through colors we will tread  
“And your personality will be bred.”

We were green and gold, orange and blue,  
These were our colors through and through  
Everything really was quite true  
And these words took on a new value

Us golds aren’t what we seem to be  
Yes, we are often smart, it’s not hard to see  
We don’t have the same longing to be free  
And with our teachers we often agree

Golds like to be the boss  
And hate it when people try to cross  
But for our subjects, it really isn’t a loss  
For our reign is as smooth as soy sauce

As golds we really value tradition  
And hold true to our position  
We will fight the opposition  
In order to crush new competition

Golds are tidy and neat  
And work hard, never cheat  
We don’t have to complete a stunning feat  
Just enough to not be beat

Yes, now it has been told  
Golds aren’t at all cold  
We do like to keep things in our hold  
But I sure love being gold!

AMY COTE, GRADE 8  
MORRISON SCHOOL

### *Orange I Be*

Orange I be,  
strong and free,  
tis my personality

My teacher said we take a test,  
what about, I pressed,  
what color you are, you will learn the rest

Students of our society  
don't have anxiety  
my teacher said  
there is a variety

A color you must pick  
the one that best describes you very quick  
It needs to be one that you handpick

Choose the color, based on you answer to the question  
this is not just a suggestion.  
It is not something that should cause indigestion

Orange is what I did pick  
The opposite is gold and they make me sick  
They burn me to my last wick  
Until I snap like a stick

Orange doesn't like being held in a room  
All of their energy is held in until, KABOOM!  
We are released outside  
Anyone in our path will meet their certain doom

A schedule is not for me  
Nor is less than first place  
Since competitive I be  
Anyone who beats me  
Hurt they shall be

And now, my friend  
I shall recommend  
to stop reading  
because this is the end

ANDY COTE, GRADE 9  
MORRISON SCHOOL

### *Barter Colors*

I like the Barter  
In the Barter Real program  
We learned about our personality  
We had an interactive test,  
To see the colors in which we rest

The colors, orange, green, gold, and blue  
We found out which one for us was true.  
After we did the test I found  
To orange I am bound.  
It is spontaneous,  
It knows no bounds.  
Schedules often give us frowns.  
I also found I was bound to blue,  
They are normally caring too.  
We also learn differently,  
I like to see and move.  
Some people like to hear,  
But I find moving very dear.  
Those are only some things we do  
I can't wait to see what's new.  
These are things I want for you  
So come on down and then you'll see,  
What the Barter has done for me.  
The Barter Theatre does plays,  
They are special in their ways.  
Some are funny, some are not,  
But they all have a good plot.  
This is why I like the Barter,  
Come on down, there may be laughter.

GAVIN DIAMOND, GRADE 8  
MORRISON SCHOOL

## Excursions

### **Blackfriar's Playhouse, Staunton, Virginia** *Students Go Back in Time*

Through travel and entertainment. This past Fall 2019, I took my English and Theatre classes to Staunton, VA to experience William Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra" in what was once the world's only recreation of Shakespeare's *Blackfriar's Playhouse*. This completely indoor theatre is entirely wooden lined with chandeliers that remain lit at all times. It is like going back into the time of Shakespeare! Seeing the Bard's plays in this way, I find, makes the play more enjoyable and also makes more sense as you see it played-out in front of you. This rendition of the romantic tragedy kept to the original costume and limited sets that Shakespeare would have had. Together, we found that "Antony and Cleopatra" was a more political and dramatic take on the Bard's earlier play, "Romeo and Juliet."

In addition, this trip was an overnight excursion for the students. We were able to stay in the historic "Stonewall Jackson Hotel" right next to *the Blackfriar's Playhouse*. The stay and subsequent breakfast they provided was surreal for both my students and myself. The experience of staying and dining in a historic building and eating under crystal chandeliers was truly memorable. Students were able to also explore the



town that straddles a river. This antebellum town held many adventures among the innumerable antique and book stores that is sure to fuel a now present passion for passion and exploration in the world around us.

ALEXANDER LONG, ENGLISH  
TEACHER  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Magic and Mystery*

During our theatre trip with our teacher to Staunton, VA, we not only uncovered a new appreciation for Shakespeare's

writing, but also we discovered real magic in the town. For one, the spellbinding production the actors at *Blackfriar's Playhouse* put on was truly a sight to see. Both the "Egyptians" and "Romans" were gilded in jewels and gold along with what looked like authentic looking Egyptian gowns and Roman armor. I truly felt like I was in Shakespeare's day watching the play! The theatre itself was also a magical experience. With the all-wood furniture and chandeliers-it was like I had time traveled into another world. However, Staunton itself has a magical secret—it is the home to a massive Harry Potter festival every September! The town had traces of it everywhere! Each shop redecorates and get in character and costume to be a "Harry Potter/Wizarding World" location and character. They have a real, authentic scarlet train like the Hogwarts Express, and have games and experiences like unicorn horn toss, dragon dunking, potion making, and cauldron races! I really want to come back to this town in the fall to experience this—and also see another Shakespeare play!

EMILY DAVIS, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Staunton*

Our class trip to Staunton was meant to give us as students a greater understanding of Shakespeare. However, it turned out to be so much more than that, at least for me. Perhaps it was because it was my first trip without my family or perhaps it was because it was my first trip beyond a hundred miles outside of the confines of Lee County. Whatever the reason may be, the experience I received in being immersed in the performance of the live stage will remain with me forever. Mr. Long ensured that we stayed at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel which was tops and at the center to the town of Staunton. We got to experience the town, it's quaint boutiques and restaurants that I never knew existed. We even got to eat authentic Indian food. This trip allowed me to experience a side of culture that I have only read about. It's one that has changed me and my outlook for what I wish to accomplish as a look forward to furthering my education after high school. I am truly thankful to have had this opportunity.

JANE GREEN, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Antony and Cleopatra*

This past fall, our English teacher, Mr. Long, took us to Staunton, VA to watch an authentic production of a Shakespeare play. In a beautiful replica of one of Shakespeare's indoor theatres, we saw "Antony & Cleopatra," which is basically an adult "Romeo and Juliet." I think that is what is most interesting about this play. While

Romeo and Juliet were crazy in love and their suicide was tragic, they were teenagers who were impetuous and stupid in love. Antony and Cleopatra are both adults with previous families of their own—they should have known better! Maybe this makes the play even more tragic, they indeed did know better, yet they still took this way out.

What I found most entertaining was the costumes both the Romans and Egyptians wore in the play. I have never seen such beautiful and authentic looking costumes up-close before! Sitting there, I felt like I was in the action, as the actors would interact with audience members and made us feel like one of them. I will never forget this opportunity Mr. Long gave us and it has really opened my eyes to a different style of learning.

TERRI HAMILTON, GRADE 9

LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Shakespeare Adventure*

In November, our One-Act Theatre group took a trip to Staunton, Virginia. Our teacher, Mr. Long, was kind enough to take all of us to the Shakespeare Theatre to see the play “Antony and Cleopatra.” It was an experience I was grateful to have, because I’ve always felt that everyone should go to see such a highly renowned performance at least once in their life. The actors were marvelous, and portrayed their character’s emotions so fluidly. It was easy to understand what was happening, but still captivating and thrilling at the same time. Staunton was a lovely town, but the theatre itself dwarfed the town in comparison. The interior was beautiful, the stage was intimidating to look at, and the actors walking through the audience was a refreshing contradiction to every other play I’ve ever been to. This experience is definitely one I will never forget, and I look forward to returning to Staunton for even more performances.

CARESSA SANDERS, GRADE 12

LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Discovering Civil War with Shakespeare*

Recently, our class took an overnight trip with our English teacher further north in Virginia to Staunton to attend a Shakespeare play. Before and after the show, we had time to explore the town. It is so cool! This town had seen a lot of action during the Civil War and they still have the hospitals and museums devoted to it. I have always been interested in our country’s history, especially the wars which defined it. After walking around in and out of museums and galleries, me and a few of my friends found antique stores which had swords and uniforms from many wars, including the Civil War! I was so excited to see regimental weapons in the store—I just knew I had to have one. My father has one of his own from his time in the military. Who would have thought I would find a little bit of American history and treasures on a trip to see a British play writer’s work? I hope to one day go again, not only Staunton, but also with Mr. Long on another adventure soon.

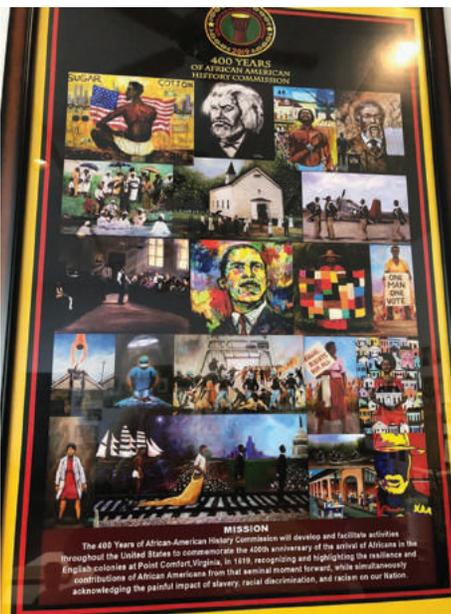
CARSON WILLIS, GRADE 9

LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Appalachian African American Cultural Center*

Each year we encourage the students and teachers of The Origin Project to explore places that highlight the rich heritage of the area they inhabit. Our anthologies have chronicled these visits via stories written by our students.

One exceptionally inspiring venue is the Appalachian African American Cultural Center in Pennington Gap. This charming little brick building houses a treasure trove of photos, letters, and other memorabilia that tell the story of a deeply challenging time for African Americans in Appalachia. Jill and Ron Carson relate stories of life in the area, prior to school integration, which mine ideas for the future. The Center provides a comfortable place for community members and students to discuss racial issues.



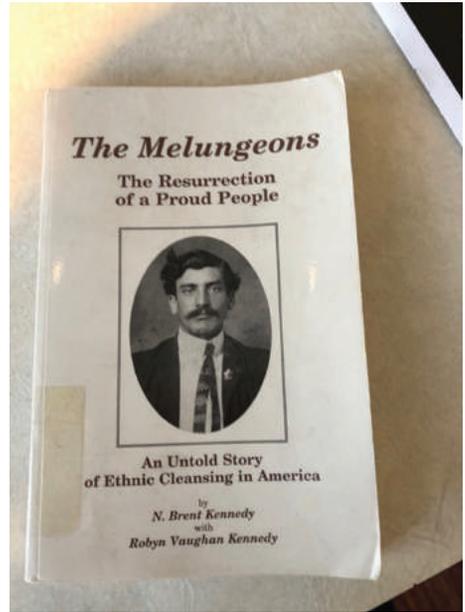
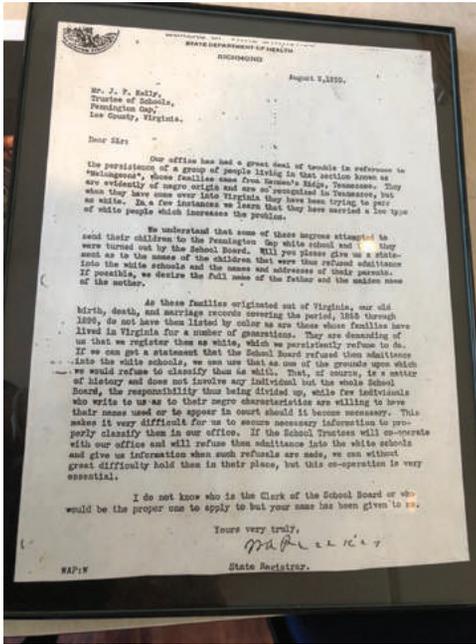
The Origin Project is deeply grateful to Jill and Ron for sharing their wisdom, and for collaborating with us in helping students understand this important part of Appalachian history.

### *The Origin Project*

Thank you to Nancy Fisher and Linda Woodward for taking the time to visit the Appalachian African American Cultural Center in Pennington Gap, VA and allowing us to share our story.

For those of you who don't know us, we are Ron and Jill Carson and we co-founded the Center that is housed in the one-room school that Ron's great, great Grandmother, Rachael Scott, built in 1939 for the





Black children in the area to attend. Ron's mother was in the first class that attended this school and Ron attended it as well up until 1965 when schools integrated in that part of Virginia.

After graduating from High School and working in the coal mines for a short period of time, Ron moved to Boston, MA where we met and later married. In the late 1980's we moved back to Pennington Gap and found ourselves on a mission to save the one-room school from demolition.

With the help of the Highlander Research and Education Center, we learned that very little had ever been written about the experience of African Americans in the Appalachian Region so we began our quest to research, document and preserve this rich history and decided to use the former one-room school as a repository for the information.

It is important to note that we do garner our inspiration from Dr. Carter G. Woodson the father of Black History. To paraphrase Dr. Woodson . . . "Perhaps the most important element of any given people, is the documentation and preservation of their history. If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition and it stands to be lost in society forever."

In addition, in 2017 the U.S. Senate passed the bi-partisan “400 Years of African American History Act”- legislation to commemorate the 400th anniversary, in 2019, of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans into English Colonial America. A commission of 15 individuals was seated in 2018 and charged by Congress with the important task of planning, developing, and implementing programs and activities throughout the country that serve to recognize and fully tell the story of African Americans, our contributions to the fabric of our nation and or experiences over the past 400 years. We are proud to say that Ron is one of the appointed Commissioners and the Appalachian African American Cultural Center is one of the sites sanctioned by the Commission.

In addition to this work, over the past 30 years, Ron has worked diligently to help coal miners suffering from Black Lung disease to secure the benefits that they are entitled to. In 2018, he was recognized on the Senate floor in Washington D.C. for all of his work in this area.

I am currently serving my second term on the Pennington Gap Town Council and last year appointed Vice Mayor. During my first term, I was also appointed to the Executive Committee of the Virginia Municipal League.

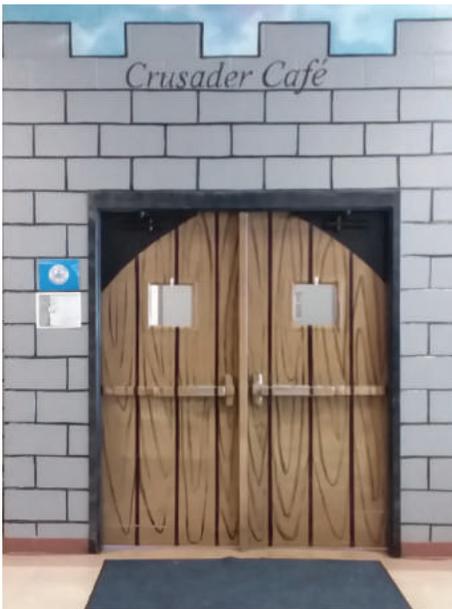
While we are very busy and our lives have truly diversified, our passion and commitment still rest with the preservation of our history.

In a nutshell, this is what we do and who we are!

JILL AND RON CARSON, CO-FOUNDERS  
APPALACHIAN AFRICAN AMERICAN  
CULTURAL CENTER



# DRYDEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



## *Katie Middleton, Grade 2 Social Studies*

### *My Grandmother*

My grandmother is Greta Alsup. She was born in St. Charles, VA and then moved to Detroit, MI. Some of her happiest memories were making summer trips to Virginia. When she was growing up, she liked to play baseball, red rover, hopscotch, marbles, onesie-twosie, and hide-and-seek. Her strongest memory was always feeling safe and loved. Her grandkids are the most important things in her life. She learned to never judge a book by it's cover.

ABIGAIL ALSUP, GRADE 2

### *Emma Ruth Garrett*

Emma Ruth Garrett was born in St. Charles, VA and went to school in Dryden. Her favorite subject in school was English. When she was my age, she wanted to be a teacher. She became one when she grew up. She taught in Lee County for 45 years and is still working as a tutor. She remembers riding in the wagon, picking corn, and raising the runt pig. She liked to play outside, playing tag and red rover. She also liked to play basketball. Some of her chores were putting up hay, working in tobacco, and in the garden. She says to always respect all adults and your parents.

BRAYDEN BARNETTE, GRADE 2

### *My Grandfather*

Tony Biggs, Sr. is my grandfather. He was born in Pennington Gap, VA. He had 3 sisters and 1 brother. He loved going to the lake with his dad, driving mini-bikes and go-carts, playing kickball, hide-and-seek, and war. One of his strongest memories was learning to play the guitar. His chores were getting in the coal, picking up the yard, and keeping stuff picked up. His parents taught him to be respectful of others.

JOSIE BIGGS, GRADE 2

### *My Great-Grandma*

My great-grandma is Patsy Pridemore. She is 75 years old and was born in Lee County. Her favorite book was *Gone With the Wind* because she liked Scarlett O'Hara. She remembers playing Cowgirls and Indians, jacks, and hopscotch. She loved going to her grandma's house and swimming in the Big Hole. The water was ice cold. Her happiest memories are having 2 daughters, 2 granddaughters, and 2 great-granddaughters. She learned to always tell the truth.

ADDISON BLAIR, GRADE 2

### *My Great-Grandmother*

Edith Dennison is my great-grandmother. She was born in Benedict in St. Charles, VA. The games she remembers playing are hide-and-seek, horseshoes, baseball, and making swings from grape vines. Her chores were to wash dishes, carry water from the spring, gather eggs from the chickens, and help in the garden. The biggest changes in her life has been indoor plumbing, electricity, TVs, computers, phones, and medical advancements like heart surgery performed on me that saved my life. She learned to always treat people with respect, and don't lie or steal. Her advice to me is to be mindful of other people's feelings.

AIDAN CARNES, GRADE 2

## *My Grandfather*

William May is my grandfather. He was born in LaJunta, CO and went to school in St. Charles, VA. He walked to school every day. He had to keep coal and wood for the fire. He remembers a pet donkey that when he tried to ride it, the donkey tried to bite and buck. He liked to play Cowboys & Indians, and marbles. His mom made him go to church every Sunday. The most difficult time in his life was the 2 years he spent in Vietnam in the Air Force. His favorite book was *Old Yeller* because he liked dogs.

ADDISON CARTER, GRADE 2

## *My Papaw Doug Clark*

I am writing about my hero Papaw Doug Clark. Papaw was born in Lee County, VA. He went to school at Keokee and his favorite subject was history. My papaw had to walk to and from school. Papaw wanted to be a baseball player when he grew up. He does play baseball in the yard now with me. Papaw had 5 brothers and 5 sisters. Some of the happiest memories of Papaw's parents and grandparents were when they went out for picnics. One of the most important lessons that papaw's parents taught him was to always tell the truth. When Papaw was my age he liked to play games. His favorite games were ball and tag. His favorite pet was a horse. His strongest memories from growing up was making friends. My Papaw's favorite book is *Old Red* and it's about a dog. Papaw likes to tell me to give it my best. Papaw said his proudest moment was his high school graduation. Papaw said the most difficult thing he had to do was leave home from his parents for the service. He said how he gets through difficult times is talking to friends. Papaw said family and happiness is important to him. Papaw said some of the biggest changes he has seen over his lifetime is the government. Papaw said life is better now than when he was growing up. Papaw's favorite trip when he was young was going to a farm. Now my Papaw and Granny travel all over the United States.

CHANCE CLARK, GRADE 2

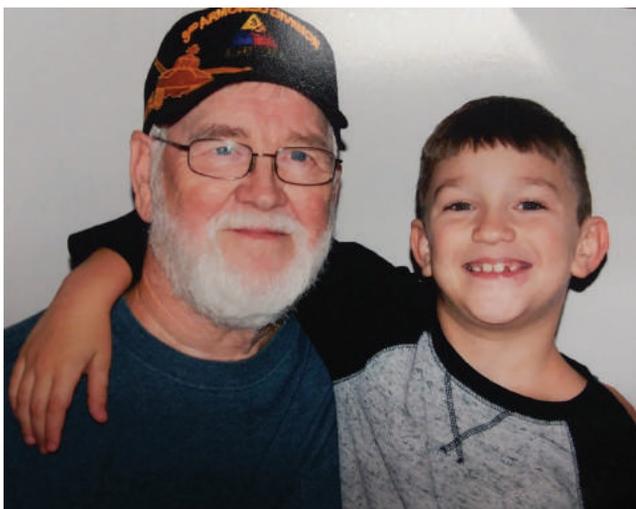
## *My Mamaw*

My Mamaw, Dawn Long, was born in Pennington Gap, VA and went to school in Dryden. She had 3 brothers and 2 sisters. She remembers spending time with her family, playing gag, and mother may I. Her best times were going to the beach and having grandkids. Her most difficult time was 20 years in the Army. She was taught to always tell the truth and her advice is to learn all you can at school.

KAIDENCE COLLIER, GRADE 2 *Chance & Papaw Doug Clark*



*Addison Carter & Grandpa William May*





*Jason Mastron & Papaw Jack*

### *My Grandfather*

I interviewed my grandfather, Papaw Earl Hamilton. He was born in Norton, VA. He had 12 brothers and sisters. He liked to play ball, cards, and puzzles. He had to get coal in and work in the garden. His advice for young people is to go to church. Praying helped him get through difficult times in his life.

DAVID DEAL, GRADE 2

### *My Grandmother*

Maxie Slempp, my grandmother, was born in Lee County and went to school in Dryden. She had 3 brothers and 7 sisters and loved spending time with them. Her parents taught her how to work. She had to run cattle and work hard when she was young. Her advice for young people is to stay out of trouble!

NICHOLAS DEARRY, GRADE 2

### *My Mamaw*

My Mamaw, Juanita Freeman, was born in Lee County, VA. She had 5 brothers and sisters and they went to school in Dryden. She remembers going on picnics with her parents, playing ball, tag, and hide-and-seek. The chores she had to do was cooking, washing dishes, carrying water, and doing laundry on a washboard. Her favorite book is the Bible because it's about God. She says all young people should stay in school.

PIPER FREEMAN, GRADE 2

### *My Poppy*

Melvin Galloway is my Poppy. He was born in Roda, VA. He had 3 brothers and 2 sisters. For fun, he would walk to the theater 2 miles away and he liked boxing with his brothers and friends. His happiest memories were holiday get-togethers and fishing at the lake with his family. He had to carry wood, coal, and water. He had a pet chipmunk that he kept under a potato chip barrel. Things that are important to him now are family, God, and his 12 grandkids. His advice for young people is to respect others, honor your mother and father, treat people how you want to be treated, and always do your best.

CAMERYN GALLOWAY, GRADE 2

### *My Papaw*

Carlos Garwood is my Papaw. He was born in Wise County at his parent's house. He remembers his grandma making homemade stack cake, playing baseball, hoopie hide, and hide-and-seek. He also remembers playing in the snow and getting very cold. They would go in the house and warm up by the fire and go right back outside. They rode sleds and made snowmen. In the winter, he had to bring 2 buckets of coal and wood in the house to make sure the fire didn't go out. In the summer, he had to carry water from the pump.

KEATON GARRETT, GRADE 2

### *My Great-Grandmother*

My great-grandmother is Nell Stewart. She is 97 years old, born in Arno, VA, and went to school in St. Charles, VA. She graduated in 1940 and was the highest in her class. Her most difficult time was when her mom died when she was 6 years old. She prayed and stayed close to her daddy during this time. She played at her daddy's store, played with baby dolls, and played in her playhouse. She was taught to be honest and always tell the truth.

ALEX GOODSON, GRADE 2

### *Tammy Ferguson*

Tammy Ferguson was born in Morristown, TN. She attended school at Pennington. She remembers going on summer camping trips with her family, playing outside, swimming with friends, playing hide-and-seek, and tag. Her advice to young people is to finish school, make the best choices you can, and help someone in need every chance you get.

RILEY GREGORY, GRADE 2

### *My Grandfather*

I interviewed my grandfather, Gary Grimes. He was born in Keokee and went to school there. He had 2 brothers and 2 sisters. His chores were getting the wood and coal. He liked playing checkers and playing with his dog, Mike, and his brothers and sisters. His favorite book was *2000 Leagues Under the Sea*. His advice is to work hard and go to church.

ALLYSON GRIMES, GRADE 2

### *My Mamaw Becky*

My Mamaw Becky was born in Kentucky and went to school in Tazewell, TN. Her favorite subject was history. A happy memory was her parents building a new house after the old one burned. One of her chores was to keep the house clean. She liked to be outside, playing tag and hide-and-seek. She loved spending time with her family. Praying helps her get through difficult times.

ALESEAH HATFIELD, GRADE 2

### *Barbara Hall*

I interviewed a neighbor named Barbara Hall. When she was a little girl, she played in the yard. She liked to play hide-and-seek. She loved spending time with her mom. Her advice to me was to always mind my mommy.

EMMA HUBBARD, GRADE 2

### *My Great-Grandmother*

My great-grandmother is Elsie Burton. She is 87 years old. She had 2 brothers and 1 sister. She remembers playing with paper dolls, hide-and-seek, and visiting her grandparents. She also remembers getting a red coat for Christmas. When they were sick, her dad made them take cod liver oil. Her favorite book is the Bible because she wants to live right and know how to get to heaven. She was taught to always tell the truth. Her advice is to listen to your parents.

LEAH HUFF, GRADE 2



Leah Huff & Great-grandmother Elsie Burton

### *My Papaw*

My Papaw is Larry Johnson. He was born in Wise County. He had 5 brothers and 4 sisters. He liked to shoot bows and guns. He also liked to hunt and play marbles. He had to tend to the garden when he was a boy. He told me to stay in school and don't be a bully.

KYLE JOHNSON, GRADE 2

### *My Papaw*

My Papaw, Danny Goins, was born in Lee County, VA. He went to school in Pennington Gap and his favorite subject was math. When he was a boy, he liked to play marbles, play in the dirt, and visit family. His most difficult time in his life was when he had lung cancer. He took one day at a time to help him get through it. His advice for young people is to study hard and get a good education.

GRACEE JONES, GRADE 2

### *Mildred Ely*

I interviewed a family friend, Mildred Ely. Some of her happiest memories were snowball fighting, riding bikes at the park, and playing checkers. She loved to read mystery books. Her chores were doing dishes and sweeping. Her parents taught her to be good and to do good for others.

BRANDON KELLY, GRADE 2

### *Joyce Williams*

I interviewed my mom's friend, Joyce Williams. She was born Jan. 2, 1951. One of her best memories was of her Mama King. She told them stories of when she was growing up. Joyce said that she enjoyed feeding the chickens and shelling corn. She liked playing outside, playing basketball, playing with her cousins, and spending time with her family. Things that are important to her now are family and friends. Her parents taught her The Golden Rule. Her advice to me was to pray and be thankful.

DANI LINDSAY, GRADE 2

### *My Papaw Jack*

Jack Laforce is my Papaw. He went to school in Flatwoods. He had 9 brothers and sisters. He remembers playing ball, hunting, riding the work horses, getting the wood in, and his mother yelling that it's supper time. Things most important to him now are love and his family. He was taught to be honest. His advice is to respect your parents.

JASON MARSTON, GRADE 2

### *My Grandmother*

My grandmother on my dad's side is Brenda Mullins. She was born in Georgetown, KY. She remembers watching her mom and dad slow dance, playing outside, and other games like kick the can and red rover.

Some of her chores were washing dishes, bringing in the laundry, and taking out the trash. She thinks everyone should get a good education.

C. J. MULLINS, GRADE 2

### *My Mamaw*

I interviewed my Mamaw Shirley Orr. Some of her happiest memories were having family dinners, playing tag, being with her family, and getting her driver's license. She learned from her parents to always do the right thing. The things that are most important to her now is her family.

ALEX ORR, GRADE 2

### *David Joe Russell*

David Joe Russell was born in Kingsport, TN, but grew up in Blackwater, VA. His parents taught him to grow and raise his food, and to save and prepare. His chores were to get eggs from the hens and chop and carry firewood. He also carried water to bathe in a tub in the kitchen. He liked playing outside in the woods. He liked to play tag, hide-and-seek, and building forts. His strongest memories are family and friends and his Granny reading the Bible. His advice is to learn everything you can and keep your family close.

BRYSON ROGERS, GRADE 2

### *My Grandmother*

My grandmother is Mossie Hall. She is 80 years old and was born in Blackwater, VA. She had 1 sister and 4 brothers. One of her happiest memories was working with her father. She also remembers playing softball, tag, and working in tobacco and corn. Her favorite book is the Bible because you live your life by it. Her most difficult time was growing up without her mom. One of the biggest changes she has seen in her life is the attitudes of people. She says to always work hard and be honest.

HARPER SMITH, GRADE 2

### *James Green*

James Green is in the nursing home where my mom works. He was born in Letcher County, KY. His happiest memory was going with his mother and father to see his grandparents. He always loved Sundays when they would visit them for the day. He liked to meet up with the kids down the road and go fishing in the creek when it was nice outside. He had a pet groundhog named Butch. He raised him on a bottle. Butch would follow him everywhere he went. Butch was his best friend. One of his strongest memories was his mother always cooking. His most difficult time was dealing with being a double amputee. Prayer, family, and friends help him get through the difficult times. His advice is to stay in school and always, always stay away from drugs.

NOLAN STACY, GRADE 2

### *Linda Ely*

Linda Ely is a friend of my family and goes to church with me. She is 70 years old and had 4 brothers and 3 sisters. She played outside a lot. She played tag, hide-and-seek, and ring around the rosies. She remembers having Sunday dinners with all her family and trips to the beach. Her favorite book is the Bible because it is our path to follow. One of the biggest changes she has seen is the disrespect in our country. When she was my age, she said she had lots of family time with loved ones.

HEIDI STIDHAM, GRADE 2

## *My Grandmother*

My grandmother, Emma Lou Waddell, was born in Norton, VA. She walked to school in Powell Valley. She had 13 brothers and sisters. She remembers playing games with the neighbor's kids like kick the can, tag, and hide-and-seek. She had to help clean the house and wash dishes. She enjoyed camping with her family. Her happiest memory was Sunday dinners and watching TV with her family.

KENZIE WADDELL, GRADE 2

## *My Granny*

My granny is Katie Foster. She is 88 years old and was born in Oneida, TN. She had to walk about



*Shelby Wilder & Granny Katie Foster*

3 miles to school but had to milk the cow first. One of her happiest memories was walking in the woods with her dad and learning about trees and leaves. Her chores were to wash dishes, milk cows, cook, garden, and saw wood. She liked to build playhouses in the woods, play hopscotch, and jump rope. She learned from her parents to never give up and to work hard. Her advice to me is to work hard, do your best, and be good!

SHELBY WILDER, GRADE 2

## *My Grandmother*

Patti Porter is my grandmother. She was born in Norton, VA, and went to school in Appalachia, VA. She had 7 sisters. She remembers family picnics on Black Mountain, big Sunday dinners, and everybody sitting on the porch together when it was raining in the summer. For fun, she played in the creek, rode bikes, played hide-and-seek, and kick the can. Some of the chores she did was wash dishes, make the beds, dust, and feed the chickens, dogs, and cats. She learned from her parents to work hard.

MELIA WILLIAMS, GRADE 2

## *Teresa Cross*

I interviewed Teresa Cross. She was born at home and went to school in Appalachia, VA. She had 6 brothers and 6 sisters. She liked to jump rope. She had to wash dishes every day. Her family is very important to her.

MARY YEARY, GRADE 2

## *My Papaw*

My papaw's name is Tommy Miles. He was born in Pennington Gap, VA. When he was a boy, he liked to play in the creek, throw horseshoes, and play marbles. He had to clean his room and help outside. He says to always help others in need and always do the right thing.

WILLIAM YOUNG, GRADE 2

## *Family*

Being from a large family myself, I feel that family is one of the most important things in ones life. I am the youngest daughter of twelve siblings, and had many cousins that I was raised along with that were more like brothers and sisters. I feel it is important to know where you come from. When the idea for the Origin Project for our school was presented to me by another teacher, Mrs. Katie Middleton, I was excited to get my students involved.

Some of my fondest memories from growing up was staying with my grandmother, Bertha Reynolds Shuler and hearing her tell of times when she was growing up. However, I also enjoyed stories from my parents who were also older, my father Jessie Christian was born in 1929 and my mother Mattie Shuler Christian was born in 1939 which explains how their beliefs was a huge impact on how I was raised.

Today, many of our children are too fascinated with video games and computers that they rarely take the time to speak to their elders. Having my students to interview someone born before the 1970s was a great way for them to gain some insight on how their grandparents or great-grandparents were raised. I am really proud of their work and enjoyed hearing about their families and hope that you too will enjoy it.

MS. TAMMY WADE,  
DRYDEN ELEMENTARY THIRD GRADE TEACHER

### *Ms. Tammy Wade, Grade 3 Students*

## *My Papaw*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandfather Earl D. Ball. Papaw was born in Ages, Kentucky ninety-five years ago. He had two brothers and four sisters. Papaw went to Ages School. He said he did not go to school much but really liked spelling, math, and geography. He also said that geography is probably the reason he wanted to travel and see the world.

My papaw said things are much better today, times were hard when he was my age. People were poor, he did not have an extra dime for an ice cream cone nor a penny for a piece of bubble gum. They did not have toys. He said they played games like hopscotch, tag, and hide n' seek when they could but everybody had to work so the family could have food to eat. Papaw said when he was my age he wanted to be a coal miner. He liked to run and play with their dog Jack.

My papaw said the most difficult time in his life was during the Battle of the Bulge. I ask what he did to get through difficult times and he said " oh, just brace up and drive on!" Papaw said his proudest moment was when his emergency parachute opened on March 16, 1944 near Camp Forest Marlboro Tennessee. He was on maneuvers and his main parachute split from top to bottom. The pin to open the emergency chute was rusted and it took him three tries before it finally released. He said, "the ground was coming fast, I was falling 60 feet per second and I sure was happy when that emergency chute opened!"

Papaw said some of the biggest changes he has seen in his life are when they went to the moon and back to the earth and when it went from regular combat to today's battle being directed by technology. Papaw said that the things that are most important to him today are having a good home/place to live, a good church to attend, and have an easy retired life at the age of 95.

I asked papaw what advice he would give young people today and he said, " Get a good education, study hard, make your main goal in life to prosper and do well, help other people, be honest and truthful in everything you do.

MALIYAH AUSTIN, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw Cynthia*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandmother, Cynthia Stansberry. She was born in Knoxville, Tennessee. She went to school in Chicago, Illinois and Knoxville, Tennessee. Mamaw has two brothers and five sisters.

Growing up mamaw wanted to be a nurse or a doctor. She now works at a nursing home. Her proudest moments were getting her GED and having her kids and getting them raised. She said she was able to do all that because of how her parents raised her. They taught her how to be independent. I asked my mamaw what advice she would give to young people today and she said, "Stay in School!!!"

DEVON BAKER, GRADE 3

### *My Grandma Shirley*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandma Shirley. She was born in Boone County, Kentucky in 1946. That is over seventy years ago!! Grandma has four sisters and one brother. Some of her favorite memories are baking cookies with her mom, fishing with her dad, jumping on her grandparents feather bed and riding horses on their farm. When she was my age she wanted to be a nurse. Growing up she played softball and with her german shepard named Huba. She also had a raccoon that they would feed with a bottle. Grandma's favorite book is the Bible, she said, "It tells us how to be a better person."

Fun Fact: My Grandma Shirley was born before NASCAR started, she was born in 1946 and NASCAR started in 1948.

JADON BAKER, GRADE 3

### *My Nana*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandmother (Nana) Kimberly Sloan. Nana was born in Fayetteville, Tennessee. She moved to Surgoinsville, Tennessee in the second grade and went on to graduate from Surgoinsville High School in 1979. Nana has two brothers and five sisters. She said some of her happiest memories were the holidays when she would get to see all her family and all her cousins, that they were the best. And she would go to Petersburg, Tennessee to stay the summers with her grandparents.

Nana said she loved to play with her neighbors, they would ride bikes, play dodgeball, basketball, and croquet. She also loved to ride her pony, Sunshine. She also had a german shepard, King who loved to play tug of war with a rope and chased the ball.

Nana said her most difficult times have been losing loved ones. She said to get through difficult times she prays. She said that God has never let her down and always gets her through the roughest times. She said that her proudest and happiest moments in her life was having her children and having a grandchild. Nana says God and family is the most important thing to her now because life would not be much without them.

Nana's advice for young people today is to always be and do the best you can at anything you do and you will not be disappointed in yourself and to always work hard and love much!!

ADALEIGH BISHOP, GRADE 3

### *My Great-Grandmother Verna (Aunt Verna)*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandmother. She was born Verna May Gilbert in Rose Hill, Virginia. She went to school at Rose Hill. She walked to school and sometimes rode a bus. She had two sisters and three brothers. Aunt Verna's (that is what everyone calls her) favorite subject in school

was math. She said her chores was to do the dishes and sweep. She always whistled while she was working. She said she played marbles and had a cat growing up. She said the greatest lessons her parents taught her was not to lie. She said the most difficult time in her life was when she lost her husband but she turned her life over to the Lord and that helped her through it. She said that her children and grandchildren are the most important things in her life now. Advice she would give to young people today is to be truthful to the Lord.

TIANA BUTLER, GRADE 3

### *My Dad*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my dad, Eric Parsons. My dad was born in Bigstone Gap, Virginia. He went to Lee High School. His favorite subject was math. He has two brothers and a sister. When he was my age he said he had to bring in wood for the fire. He said he had a dog named yellow and played in the woods. He said they would play guns and hide n' seek. He said some of his strongest memories are from when he was working with his dad. Spending time with his family is some of his happiest moments. He said the most important life lesson that his parents taught him was that family is the most important thing. I ask him what advice would he give to young people my age today and he said it would be to learn all you can.

KANDICE COOMER, GRADE 3

### *My Nana*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my Nana, Anna Maness. Nana was born in Olinger, Virginia. She went to Dryden Combined School. She has two brothers and four sisters. Her favorite subject in school was math. Nana said she had to do dishes, laundry, cook, and clean her room growing up. She loved to play with paper dolls, red rover, and jump rope. She had a dog named Blackie, he was solid black even his eyes. Her favorite book is *Flowers in the Attic* because it showed all they had to do to survive. The best lesson her parents taught her was to grow up, get a job, and do your best. Her happiest moments in life was the birth of her kids. Her mom passing away was her most difficult. She said to help her through it she had to do a lot of praying. She said family is the most important thing to her now. Advice she would give young people today would be, "Always listen to your mom and dad, and to do your best in school".

LELAND DENNINGSON, GRADE 3

### *My Great-Grandmother*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to interview and write about my great-grandmother Elfriede Britton. She is seventy-two years old. She was born in Germany and went to school in Stuttgart. Her favorite subject was math. Grandma has three brothers. She said she wanted to be a teacher when she was my age. She loved to roller skate and play card games. She said she had to help out in the store. The biggest change she has seen in her life was moving to the United States. Her happiest moment was getting married. Having her daughter was the most difficult time in her life. She said she prayed and that is what helped her get through it. She said that serving God is one of the most important things to her today. She also told me she may take me to Germany with her someday, I would love to go with her.

JAMES DOTSON, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandmother Rebecca Duncan. She was born in Lexington, Kentucky. She went to school at Pennington Gap, Virginia. Her favorite subject was history. Her

favorite book is Charlotte's Web. She had six siblings. She said she did laundry, dishes, and dusted growing up. She liked to play in the woods and ride her horse named Dimples. She said Technology has been the biggest change she has seen in her life. The greatest life lesson her parents taught her was to be polite and honest. Mamaw said her proudest, happiest moment in her life was when she had her son. The most difficult time was when her son was killed. When I ask her how she got through difficult times she said she prayed.

MASON ELY, GRADE 3

### *My Great-Grandmother*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandmother Evelyn Ruth Clark. She was born in 1930 she is eighty-nine years old. She was born in Lee County, Virginia. She went to Blackwater High School. Her favorite subject in school was reading. She had five brothers and one sister. She said when she was my age she enjoyed playing with her cousins, cake walks, and chorus. She said they played games such as Drop the Hatch and Spin the Bottle. Her favorite book was Winky Dink. Mamaw liked going to Kingsport, Tennessee to spend time with her dad.

She said the biggest changes that she has seen in her life has been having electricity, water and raising kids. She said that the most difficult time in her life was losing her second child. The happiest and proudest moments are having her grandchildren. She says that her children and grandchildren are the most important things in her life now. I ask her if she has any advice for young children today and she said, "go to school and learn".

HAYDEN FOSTER, GRADE 3

### *My Papaw Joe*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my Papaw Joe Fultz. He was born in Lee County, Virginia. He rode a bus to school in Indiana and Kentucky. His favorite subject in school was math. Papaw had one brother and two sisters. When he was my age he wanted to have a good paying job making lots of money. He always had fun playing outside with his brother and sisters. They liked to play hide and seek and tag after their chores were finished. He also had a little black dog that he liked to play with all the time that got hit by a car. His chores were getting water, washing dishes, and getting the coal in for the night.

Papaw's happiest memory of his parents and grandparents were when the whole family played horseshoes outside. His happiest moment in his life was when he was sixteen he got his first gun. Papaw said his most difficult time in life was when his mom became sick. He said that prayer has helped him get through the difficult times.

Papaw said the most important life lessons his parents taught him was to be honest. He said the most important thing to him now is being the best person he can be. I asked him if he had any advice for young people like me and he said, "get a good education, obey your parents, and to tell the truth. He said life is better now than it was when he was my age. The biggest change he has seen in his life is cell phones. Papaw Joe's favorite expression is "spread out".

THOMAS FULTZ, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw Patty*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to interview and write about my Mamaw, Patty Doss StapleShe ton. She was born at home in Dryden, Virginia. She went to Dryden Combined School, English and Math were her favorite subjects. Mamaw had two sisters and one brother. Mamaw said she played tag, hide and seek, and checkers growing up. She also had a dog named ol'Ted. She had to cook, wash dishes, milk cows and feed the pigs.

Mamaw said her strongest memories from growing up was working hard farming and gardening. She said the most difficult time in her life was when her daddy got killed on the tractor when she was ten years old. She said talking with her mommy helped her through the difficult times in her life. She said the happiest time in her life was the birth of her daughter. She said the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to be honest and respectful.

Mamaw said that technology such as computers and smartphones are the biggest change she has seen in her life. She also said things were better back when she was my age because there was less bullying, drugs, and gun violence. I ask mamaw what advice would she give to young people today and she said, “work hard and follow your dreams”.

RILEE GIBSON, GRADE 3

### *My Nana Glenda*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to interview and write about my Nana, Glenda. She was born in Harlan, Kentucky. She went to school in Holmes Mill, Kentucky. Her favorite subject was math. Nana has three brothers and two sisters. Growing up my nana liked to play ball, jump rope, bob jacks, tag, and Red Rover. She also had a poodle she played with. She said her chores was to wash dishes and help clean the house. Her favorite book is the Bible because of God’s love.

Nana said the most important life lesson that her parents taught her was “do unto others as you would have them do unto you”. Nana said the most difficult times in her life was fighting with her siblings. She said her happiest moment growing up was when she got her first bike. She said she always trusted God when she was going through difficult times. Nana said her memories was the most important thing to her now because that is all she has of the loved ones she has lost. Nana’s advice to young people today is “to cherish every moment with your family”.

ELISHA HALE, GRADE 3

### *My Granny (Great-Grandmother)*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandmother, Jolene Cantrell. She was born in West Virginia and went to school in Kentucky. Her favorite subject was English. Granny had twelve siblings. She liked to jump rope and play with her brothers and sisters. Granny had a german shepard his name was Buck. Granny said she had to help her mom with the housework growing up. Granny said the most important life lesson that her parents taught her was to be kind to others.

Granny said the happiest moments in her life was when she had her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Family is the most important thing to her now because she loves them so much. I ask her what advice does she have for young people to day and she said, “ get a good education and obey your parents.”

EASTON HILL, GRADE 3

### *My Grandma Shelli*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandma, Shelli Osborne. She was born in Tacoma, Washington. She started school at Skyview Elementary then went to Pinellas Central. Her favorite subjects in school were Science and Art. Grandma has five siblings. Growing up grandma wanted to be a veterinarian and work with animals. She would play bingo, board games, skate, ride bikes, swim, play baseball and have relay races with the neighborhood kids. Growing up grandma had many pets, her favorite was a german shepard named Smokey.

Grandma said she had to do dishes, vacuum, sweep, and skim the pool. She said the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to be kind to others and share. Her most difficult time in her life was living far away from her family. She said that she kept her faith that everything would work out to get her through difficult times. Her proudest moment in life was when she had her babies. The doctor told her all three of them were going to be boys but they were girls. The most important thing to Grandma today is her family, they are her heart. Her advice to people my age is to “ pay attention in school, get a good education, and a career.

SHYLEYAH JACKSON, GRADE 3

### *My Papaw Roger*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my papaw, Roger Alsup. He was born in 1956 at home in Pennington Gap, Virginia. He went to school in Pennington Gap, Virginia. Papaw had five brothers, one of them died at two days old. Growing up they played kick the can and marbles, they played outside in the mountains all day. Papaw said he had to feed chickens, bring coal inside, haul water, and plowed and tended the garden. He had Ranger, a very good coon dog growing up.

Papaw went to the military as a Marine. He was on a helicopter carrier, the Iwo Jima. He was in charge of a big gun called a 106. His favorite country he went to was Japan. Papaw then worked as a coal miner for 36 years. He is almost 70 years old and has a lot of energy, he plays around a lot.

Papaw said electronics is the biggest change he has seen in his life that back when he was younger they did not even have a t.v. His advice to young people today is “ do your best in school and go to college.”

TRENT JOHNSON, GRADE 3

### *My Grandma Linda*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my Grandma, Linda Shepherd. She was born in 1958 Lee County, Virginia. She has one brother and three sisters. She went to school in Pennington Gap, Virginia. Growing up my grandma wanted to be a nurse. She had chores such as making her bed and doing dishes. Growing up grandma said she played outside a lot. She also had a big german shepard dog that liked to play fetch.

Grandma said her happiest moment in life was when her kids graduated school. Her most difficult time was when her mother passed away. Her kids and grandkids are the most important things to her today. My grandma’s favorite game is Yahtzee, I know because we play it every night. I love my grandma very much.

RACHONE KELLY, GRADE 3

### *My Great-Grandpa Leroy*

For the Origin Project. I wanted to write about my great-grandpa Leroy Deirth. He was born in St. Charles, Virginia. He went to school at St. Charles. He had two brothers and two sisters. His dad passed away when he was eight years old in a mining accident. Growing up he was always thinking about working in the coal mines.

Grandpa ended up working in the coal mines. He got hurt at a young age in the mines then went back to work and got hurt again, he smashed his hand and ended up having to have it taken off.

After my Grandpa Leroy retired from his mining job he stepped on a metal toy and had to have surgery on his foot. Later on he had to have both his feet taken off. My grandpa died on July 3, 2019.

DEVIN KING, GRADE 3

## *My Nana Deb*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my nana, Deborah Witt. She was born in Miamisburg, Ohio. She has eight siblings. Nana went to James A. Cawood High School. Home Economics was her favorite class. She always wanted to be a nurse growing up. My nana is now a Registered Nurse at a Nursing Home.

When she was young, Nana liked to play marbles and jump rope. She said she also played in the creek catching crawdads. She loved Nancy Drew Mysteries. Nana's proudest moment in her life was graduating nursing school, becoming a Registered Nurse. Her most difficult time was when her mother died. She said her family helped her get through it. The most important things to my nana today are God and her family. She said, "without God there is nothing".

KAILIE KORMAN, GRADE 3.

## *My teacher Rosemary Walker*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my teacher, Rosemary Walker. She was born in Beckley, West Virginia. She went to St. Francis School. Her favorite subject was Reading. Mrs. Walker has one sister. Growing up she wanted to be a teacher. She played outside with her friends, she would play tag, jump rope, and baseball.

Mrs. Walker said that some of her happiest moments of her parents and grandparents is cooking with them. The most important lessons her parents taught her was to be a hard worker and respectful to others. She said that feeling loved and safe was one of her strongest memories growing up. One of the biggest changes she has seen in her life is technology.

Mrs. Walker said her proudest and happiest moment in life was her college graduation. She said that her family and friends are the most important things to her now because they help her through the hard times. And her advice for young people today is to study hard, stay in school, and love your parents.

LANDON LAMBERT, GRADE 3

## *My Mamaw Joyce*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my mamaw, Joyce Taylor. She was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia. She had two sisters and six brothers. She went to St. Charles School. Her favorite subject was math. When she was my age she wanted to be a Nurse. She said growing up she enjoyed swinging on grape vines and shooting marbles. She said the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to be a good person and love everyone.

Mamaw said that the proudest and happiest moment in her life was when her babies were born. She said her children and grandchildren are the most important thing in her life now. Her advice for young people today is to be good and listen to your elders.

CHRISTIAN LAWSON, GRADE 3

## *My Grandpa*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandfather, James J. Delph. Grandpa was born in Lee County, Virginia. He had one brother named Scott. Grandpa said he would play in the woods, building forts and hide and go seek. Growing up grandpa said his chores was to cut wood and carry coal in for their heat. He said he always wanted to be a cowboy growing up.

When grandpa was nine years old his dad was crushed in the coal mines and died, it was the most difficult time in his life. Getting married to my grandma and having their three children was his proudest and happiest moments in his life.

His advice for young people today is to learn all you can and use that knowledge to become the best person you can be.

EBANY LINDSAY, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandmother, Judith Maness. She was born in Des Moines, Iowa in 1940. She went to school in Chicago, Illinois and Germany. Her favorite subjects were math and spelling. My grandma did not have any siblings. She always wanted to be a nurse when she grew up. Growing up grandma liked to go to her cousins house and skate. They would also play games such as Sorry, Monopoly, and Canasta. Her favorite book is *The Night Before Christmas*, because of its meaning.

My mamaw's happiest moments in her life were graduating eighth grade and getting married. Her most difficult times were losing her mother, her husband, and son Carl. She said to get through her difficult times she thinks about happy times and help with her grandchildren. Raising her great-grandkids is the most important thing to her now.

My mamaw's advice to young people today is to stay in school and respect others.

LODOUS MANESS, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw Jean*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my Mamaw, Jean Martin. She was born in Osaka, Virginia. She went to school at Dryden Combined School. Her favorite subject was reading because she loved to read when she was my age. Her favorite things to play were hopscotch, jacks, and riding her bike. She had a cat named Tiger. Her most difficult times in life is when her parents passed away. Her happiest times were when she first saw her children and grandchildren. My grandma has a lot of brothers and sisters. Guess how many? She has fourteen total.

GRACE MARTIN, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw Sheila*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my mamaw, Sheila McNutt. Mamaw Sheila was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia. She went to Dryden Combined School, her favorite subjects was reading. She lived up the road above the school so she would walk to school. She has three brothers and one sister. Mamaw wanted to be a Nurse when she was my age.

Mamaw's happiest memory was going to church with her parents. When her daddy got saved was one of her proudest moments. She said the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to love Jesus.

BROOKLY MCPHERSON, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to interview and write about my grandmother, Nancy Mullins. She was born at home in Lee County, Virginia. She has eight siblings. She went to school in Jonesville. Her favorite subject in school was math. Growing up grandma said she liked to play kick the can and hide and go seek. She loved to read books about animals. Mamaw said the most important life lessons her parents taught her was to work hard, be good to others and be honest.

Mamaw said the happiest moments in her life was when she had her kids, grandkids and great-grandkids. The most difficult time in her life was when her husband was shot and almost died. She said she asks God

for help to get through the difficult times in her life. She said that the most important things to her now is God and her family because they bring her happiness.

AUDRINA MULLINS, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my mamaw, Anna May Rigney. She was born in Hyden, Kentucky. She went to Elo Elementary School. Her favorite subject in school was math. She has one sister and four brothers. Growing up mamaw loved to play in the creek and play tag.

Mamaw said the most important life lesson she learned from her parents was to be good and go to church. Mamaw said the most important thing to her today is her grandkids because she loves Jess, Chloe, and me very much.

ANNABELLA MUSE, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw Joann*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my mamaw, Joann Musick. She was born at home in St. Charles, Virginia. She only went to the third grade but her favorite subject was math. Mamaw had six siblings, she loved being in a big family. Growing up she played in the creek and as she got older her favorite was card games. Her chores were cooking, washing dishes, and doing laundry.

Mamaw said the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to treat everyone with respect. Growing up my mamaw wanted to be a nurse and when she got her C.N.A. and Med Tech license was one of her proudest moments in her life. Mamaw feels that her children and grandchildren are the most important things to her today. She said her advice to young people would be not to take life for granted.

CARSON MUSICK, GRADE 3

### *Grandma Lisa*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my Grandma Lisa. Grandma was born in Lee County, Virginia. She went to school in Sticklelyville, Virginia. Her favorite subject was math. Grandma was an only child. When she was young her family would all get together on Sunday and play games. She liked to play kickball and baseball. Living on a farm was her strongest memories growing up. Grandma said the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to be independent.

Graduating school was one of her proudest moments. Grandma feels that family is the most important thing to her today because they are there to help her through the hard times.

MAKENZIE OLIVER, GRADE 3

### *My Mamaw Louise*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandmother, Louise Russell. She was born in Lee County, Virginia. She walked barefoot to a two room school in Dryden, Virginia. She was from a big family, she had eleven siblings. Growing up mamaw said she would climb apple trees or sit under them and sing. She said she also liked to play with marbles, jump rope, ring around the roses, and hopscotch. She also had to do chores before she could play which were cooking, washing dishes, carry water, wood, and coal in the house.

Grandma said the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to be honest. She said helping others is one of the most important things to her now. Some advice for young people today is to always obey your parents and to be honest.

LOGAN PENNINGTON, GRADE 3

### *My Pop-Pop*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandfather, Ken Woods. Pop-Pop was born in Brownsville, Texas. He was from a large family with twelve siblings. Growing up he liked to go fishing and he had a horse named Thunder. Pop-Pop said he wanted to be a cowboy when he was my age. Living on a ranch his chores included feeding the animals. One of the most important life lessons his parents taught him is to always treat others the way you want to be treated.

Pop-Pop said the most happiest time in his life was when his children were born. Being in the military allowed him to travel around the world but he said it was one of the most difficult times in his life and he prayed a lot to get through it. He feels that family is the most important thing to him today because without family you would die alone. His advice to young people like me is to get a good education.

NATE PRITCHARD, GRADE 3

### *My Grandmother Sarah*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandma, Sarah Reynolds. She was born in Norton, Virginia. She has nine siblings. She went to Powell Valley High School in Bigstone Gap, Virginia. Her favorite subject in school was english. Growing up grandma said she wanted to be a lawyer. She enjoyed playing outside games such as: tag, kick the can, and Simon says. She also had a dog named Sparky. Grandma said that the most important life lesson her parents taught her was to be kind, fair, and to trust in God.

Grandma said her happiest moments in life were when her kids were born. She feels that God and family are the most important things to her today. She said that people have forgotten what is important in life. Grandma's favorite book is the Bible, she said it has everything she needs to know in it.

TUCKER REYNOLDS, GRADE 3

### *My Grandma*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandma, Cathy. She was born in St. Charles, Virginia at her grandmother's house on May 13, 1962. She went to school in Martinsville. My grandma had one older sister and two younger brothers. She enjoyed playing with her barbies, fishing, and catching frogs. She also had a pet kitten named Willie that she played with. Growing up my grandma had to wash dishes, sweep and mop, carry water, do laundry, and help with her siblings. One of the most important life lessons her parents taught her was "if your going to do something then do it right".

Today the most important thing to my grandma is her family. She says, "Family comes first, no matter what." And that is also the advice she wants to give young people today, family first.

VICTOR SALAS, GRADE 3

### *My Grandfather*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandfather, Winford Dale Moore. Papaw was born in Clintwood, Virginia. He also went to school at Clintwood Elementary where Science and History was his favorite subjects. My papaw grew up in a big family, four brothers and five sisters. Growing up he enjoyed playing in the woods and baseball. He also had a dog named Lassie. Papaw said some of his strongest memories growing up was being poor but did not know it until he got older. His parents taught him to be a hard worker and to always be honest and it has been important throughout his life.

My papaw said that becoming a father was his proudest and happiest moments in life. He feels his grandchildren is the most important thing in life now because he enjoys them. My papaw said that his favorite saying is “whether you are a janitor or CEO you should always work with the same heart.

LORAN SAWYERS, GRADE 3

### *Papaw Junior*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to interview and write about my Papaw, Junior Tabor. He was born in Jonesville, Virginia. He went to school at Flatwoods, Virginia and art was his favorite subject. Growing up papaw wanted to be a teacher. Papaw grew up in a big family of six sisters and two brothers and his happiest memories was when all his family would get together and have dinner. He had a lot of fun with his brothers and sisters growing up. Papaw thinks life is better now because you can get with your family by using a phone, tablet and computer.

JACEY TABOR, GRADE 3

### *My Grandma Patricia*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my mamaw, Patricia Wade. She is very strict. She worked in the old days. She had a farm and a lot of animals. She was born in Olney, Maryland. She went to school at Pennington High School. Her favorite subject in school was math. She has two brothers and one sister.

One of mamaws happiest memories was when her dad got her a horse. She said she really did not have a lot of fun growing up because she worked hard every day. Working on a farm was hard work and there was always something to do.

Mamaw said her proudest moments in life was having her children. She feels that her kids and grandkids are the most important things in her life now.

ABIGAIL TAYLOR, GRADE 3

### *My Grandma Sue*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my grandma, Sue Lawson. She was born in Olinger, Virginia. She has five brothers and one sister who has passed on. She went to school at the same school I attend but back then it was called Dryden Combined School. Her favorite subject was math. Growing up my grandma wanted to be a nurse. Grandma said some of her happiest moments were holiday dinners with her family. Grandma said she enjoyed swimming in the river and playing hide and seek with her siblings. Grandma said her parents taught her to respect others.

Her graduation was one of her happiest and proudest moments growing up. Grandma feels that her grandchildren are the most important thing to her today. She said that the advice she would give to young people my age is, believe that you can do anything.”

CHRISTIAN TAYLOR, GRADE 3

### *My Dad*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to interview and write about my dad, Lloyd Lee Turner. My dad was born in Hyden, Kentucky. He went to Willard Elementary and then on to Leslie County High school. His favorite subjects were math and spelling. He has one sister and one brother. He enjoyed playing in the creek,

tag, and spotlight. He also had a beagle house dog and a rabbit hunting dog. The most important life lesson his parents taught him was to respect people.

My dad said his proudest moments was the birth of his kids. The most difficult times in his life was the death of his dad and his grandparents. He said remembering the good times in life is how he gets through the hard times. Advice for young people like me, my dad said, "try your best and do not ever forget where you came from."

SIERRA TURNER, GRADE 3

### *My Papaw Eddie*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my papaw, Joseph Woliver. He was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia. He has three sisters and two brothers. My papaw went to Pennington High School. His favorite subject was math. Growing up he enjoyed fishing and football. He remembers running around in the woods a lot. My papaw said the most difficult time in his life was when he spent three months away from home for boot camp. He said joining the Marines was one of his proudest memories of his life. Family and hard work is the most important thing to him now. His advice to young people like me is to be kind to people, stay in school, and work hard.

SOPHIE WOLIVER, GRADE 3

### *Grandpa Mike*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my papaw, Mike. He was born in Wise, Virginia. He went to school in St. Charles, Virginia. Papaw has a sister named Ginger. Growing up my papaw wanted to be a mechanic because he liked working on cars and trucks. My papaw had a pet raccoon named George, sometimes he tells me stories about George. He also had a turtle named Sally. Growing up my papaw enjoyed riding his bike, playing hide and go seek and tag with his neighbors. He also liked going hunting.

Papaw said the biggest change in his life was when he quit school to go work in the coal mines to help take care of his family. He feels that becoming a father of his girls was his proudest moments in life. Family is the most important thing to him today because without family you would be nothing.

URIAH THOMAS, GRADE 3

### *My Great-Grandma Sarah*

For the Origin Project, I wanted to write about my great-grandma, Sarah Pennington Roe. Grandma was born November 28, 1947, she is seventy-two years old. Grandma went to school at St. Charles, Virginia. Reading was her favorite subject. She always wanted to be a teacher. Grandma had four brothers and three sisters. The most important life lesson her parents taught her was respect.

Grandma said she enjoyed playing outside and that some of her strongest memories of growing up was playing out in the woods. Grandma said the happiest moments in her life was having her children and now grandchildren. She said family is the most important thing to her today because she loves them so much.

CAMERYN ZELL, GRADE 3

# EASTSIDE HIGH SCHOOL



Hope Cloud, Dual Credit English 12  
*Where I'm From*

I am from porch swings,  
From Kay's ice-cream and peach pop  
I am from the honey harvest,  
(Sweet, overflowing, a never ending supply.)  
I am from beds of roses  
the apple tree  
Whose limbs bear more than fruit  
I am from crossword puzzles and stringing green beans  
From Mommasue and Papaw  
I am from the front porch sitters and coffee drinkers  
From "mind ya momma" and "I love you big"  
I'm from early morning church services and the reckless love of God  
I'm from military bases and sunsets over the ocean  
Fried chicken and mashed potatoes  
From the divorce papers my parents signed  
The sixty years of marriage my grandparents shared  
Under my bed in a shoe box are all the pictures of those I love and those I've lost.  
I am rooted in these photographs,  
crinkled and faded,  
keeping me humble and leading me home.

EMILY BELLAMY, GRADE 12

*Where I'm From*

I am from Little Debbie cakes,  
from AXE body spray and Tide.  
I am from mud holes in the middle of the road  
(Dirty, cold it felt so good.)  
I am from the raspberry bush  
and the apple tree  
which I swung on about every day.

I am from apple butter and cigarette smoke,  
from Old Spice and Irish Spring  
I'm from consequences for your actions  
and from respecting your parents.  
From sit up and quiet down.  
I'm from Sunday mornings  
and Sunday nights  
with that peaceful gospel singing.

I am from Dry Fork and Crooked Branch,  
mashed taters and mac-n-cheese.

From the leg my uncle lost in the mines  
to the war my great grandpa fought in.  
Beside the couch in the living room  
in a plastic tote  
there are memories  
of people I once knew.  
I am from those people  
Those people from my family tree make me.

AARON DUTY, GRADE 12

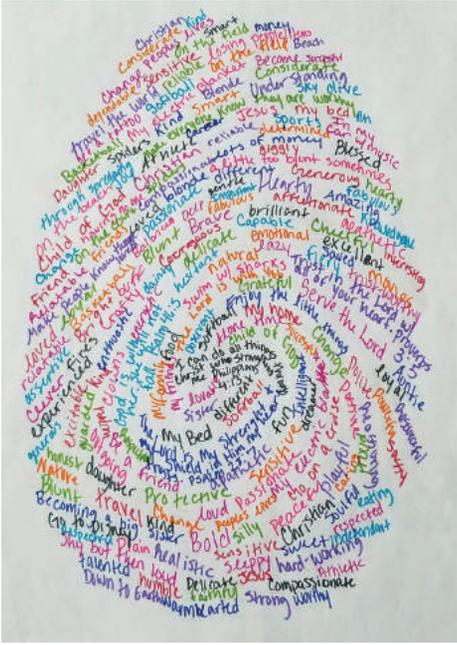
### *The Stairs*

They creaked with no warning  
as we sneakily crept back to bed  
and seemed to roar as we slid down  
them in Nana's pillowcases.  
They were sprinkled with pine needles  
from last year's Christmas decorations  
and overshadowed by a line of family  
portraits on the wall above.  
They threw bouncy balls back after we  
tossed them up.  
They're just stairs, but at the same time,  
they're not.  
Stairs are the keys of the piano that play  
the songs of our memories.

AMBER FREEMAN, GRADE 12

### *Where I'm From*

I am from swing-sets,  
From a box of new crayons and the inside of a book  
I am from lightning bugs in a glass jar  
(They tickled in the palm of my hands when I caught each one.)  
I am from the pine tree,  
The blackberry bush  
That had hundreds of thorns sticking out like a sore thumb.  
  
I am from fresh baked chocolate chip cookies and sewing needles,  
From Queen Elizabeth II and Ms. Rainwater.  
I'm from nerds  
And tourists,  
From keep your back straight and keep a smile on your face.  
I'm from John 3:16  
Vacation Bible School  
And lace dresses I still have in storage.



Carrie Boyd, Fingerprint Poem

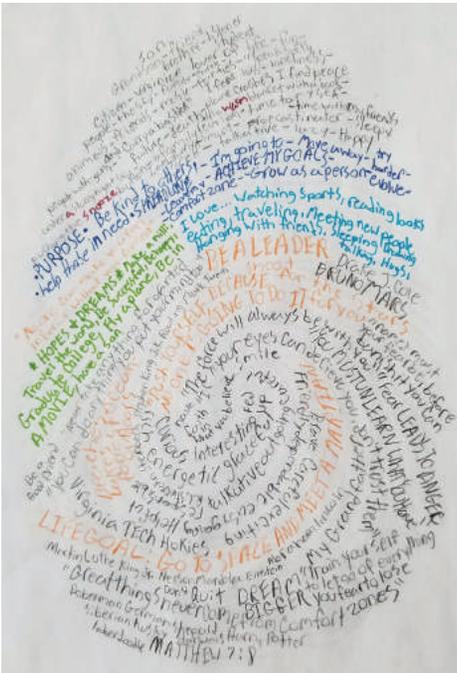
I'm from Flatwoods and Deland Drive,  
 Cornbread and coffee with cream.  
 From the rusty, old watering can that has lost its  
 gleam  
 The rustic pillows that are tearing apart at the  
 seams.  
 In a tall and wooden cabinet there lay countless  
 photo albums  
 Filled with aged pictures.  
 An accumulation of lost faces  
 To drift away in my train of thoughts.  
 I am from each one of these moments-  
 A bright flash of light before my eyes-  
 Unforgettable images in a family tree

RACHEL GREEN, GRADE 12

### Where I'm From

I am from homemade sweet tea,  
 from Lipton tea bags and 2 ½ cups of sugar.  
 I am from the winding road that takes me home.  
 (curves, turns  
 Surrounded by nothing but nature)  
 I am from the mossy wooden fence,  
 here before me  
 Which embraces my home and I  
 From the forest surrounding.

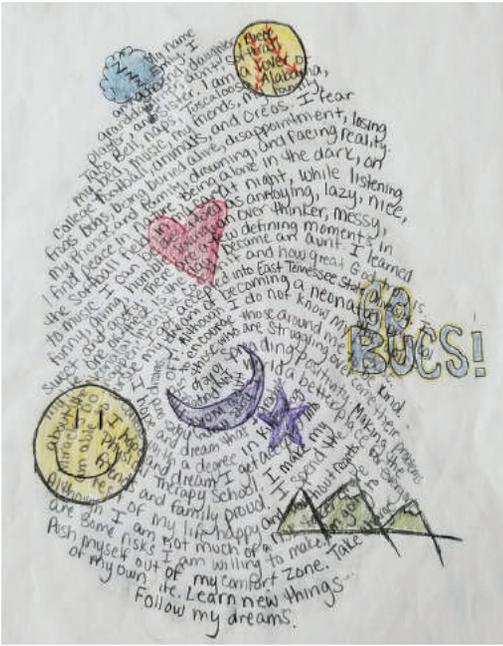
I am from baking gingerbread for every occasion  
 and  
 shorter than average  
 From a Salyer and a Hall, two very different  
 worlds.  
 I'm from the conventional  
 To the down right off the wall  
 From "Is this the first I'm hearing of this?"  
 I'm from "I can do all things"  
 The shaggy green carpet,  
 And the stained glass mosaic, a window to  
 another world I used to think.



Charlie Ward, Fingerprint Poem

I am from the two of the same Coeburn, yet not  
 the same upbringings  
 From fried bologna and proper family dinners eaten together.  
 The broken home that my mother rose above.  
 The sister of my father, taken too soon, who has yet to be found.  
 Buried in a woven chest, long forgotten





Emily Adams, Fingerprint Poem

from let's go and don't worry.  
I'm from a God that is greater  
than any other.

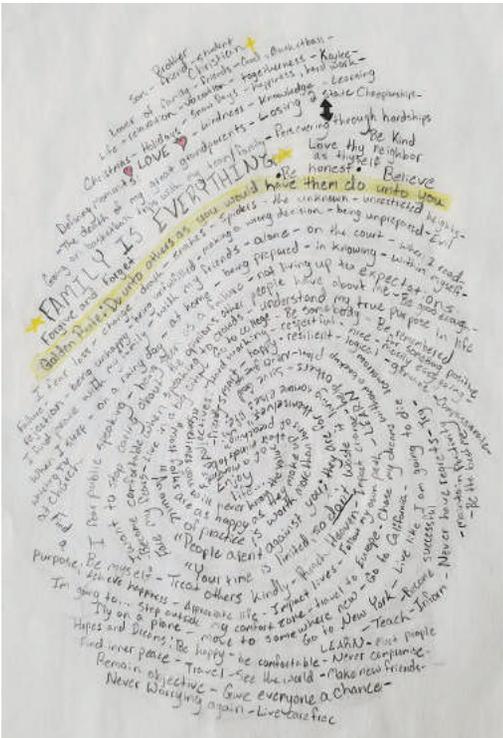
I'm from Cranes Nest and Saltville,  
chicken alfredo and Diet Dr. Pepper.  
From the porch that my dad fell off  
that almost broke all of his ribs  
to the numerous times my  
sister made me fall off my bike.  
Beside my mom's bed sits a chest  
that is overflowing with pictures and  
old drawings which holds  
more importance than all the  
money in the world.  
I am from these drawings  
who will paint the way for me -  
giving me guidance through every day.

ISABELL LAWSON, GRADE 12

### I Am From

I am from worn down running shoes,  
from hot wheels and DS group chats  
I am from the dark brick house on Sandy  
Ridge with foster dogs playing in the front  
yard  
I am from the rock garden in my front yard  
filled with my parents' old  
bowling balls,  
from pine trees that helped me decorate for  
Christmas  
I am from facetimeing grandparents on  
Christmas Eve and guitar hero battles  
from Greg and Laurie  
from the Miles and McKnights  
From "There you go thinkin' again . . ." and  
"Hurry up, pokey Joe!"  
I am from the cross necklaces and early  
morning choir songs  
I'm from Lexington and Sandy Ridge  
from taco casserole and Cinnamon Toast  
Crunch  
I am from the memory boxes under my bed  
filled with photos of those I never see  
And memories that will never fade

ANNA MCKNIGHT, GRADE 12



Ethan Powers, Fingerprint Poem

## Where I'm From

I am from pom poms,  
from hairspray and red lipstick.  
I am from the little pink playhouse  
built by my grandfather just for me.  
I am from the crab apple tree  
the blackberries in Kentucky  
whose vines I have not picked from  
in many, many years.

I am from eyeglasses and braces  
from Todd and Kristen  
I'm from overthinkers and hard-workers  
from Virginia and Tennessee  
I am from children's church on Sundays  
and Vacation Bible School in June.

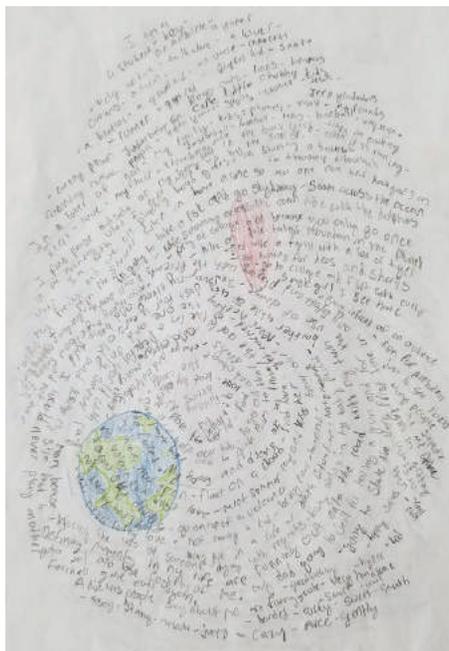
I am from Abingdon and Coeburn,  
from sweet tea and Mexican food.  
I'm from the memories my Momma Mac lost to  
dementia  
from the bucket that hit Daddy Joe's head.  
I'm from these unique moments  
I am from family.

ELIZABETH MCREYNOLDS, GRADE 12

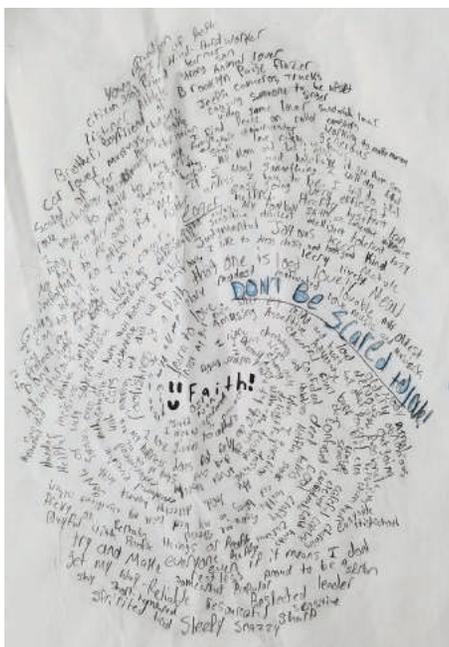
## Where I'm From

I am from bottles  
from Bud Light and cerevisiae.  
I am from under the couch  
(dark, quiet  
Did not hear the yelling.)  
I am from that white oak,  
the cherry bush  
whose fresh fruit tastes like heaven

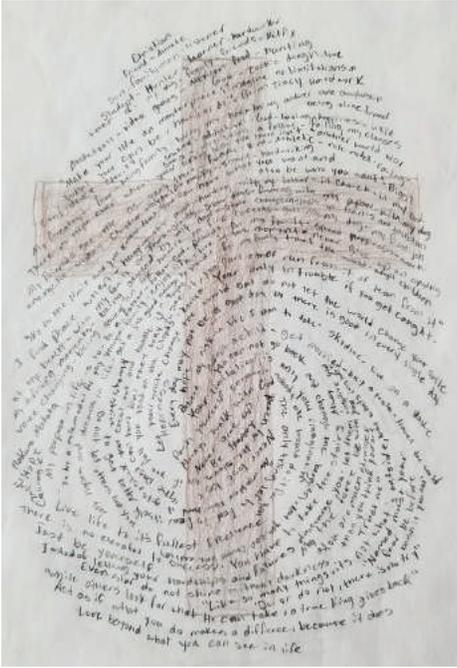
I am from hunting and addiction,  
from Howard and Kimberly.  
I am from greed  
and anger,  
From shut up to leave me alone.  
I'm from satan  
Who kept me away  
From glory above.



Garrett Whited, Fingerprint Poem



Grayson Whited, Fingerprint Poem



Luke Kirk, Fingerprint Poem

I'm from Big Stone and Norton  
 Reeses and dirty water.  
 From the wreck that made Papaw immobile  
 to the drugs  
 that took my parents away.  
 Over there is a house  
 Where the walls are rotting.  
 The moments in those walls  
 In the nightmares I dream.  
 I am from those moments—  
 Clicked before I emerged—  
 Rafter falls from that legacy.

JAMES OLIVER, GRADE 12

### *Where I'm From*

I am from homemade biscuits,  
 from Coca-Cola and macaroni salad.  
 I am from the 5th house on the right.  
 (White wood, red roof  
 with a fenced back yard.)  
 I am from the pine tree,  
 the mulberry tree  
 that left magenta stains  
 on all of the cars in the driveway.

I am from Christmas Eve pajamas and freckles,  
 from Travis and Stephanie.  
 I'm from the huggers  
 and the belly-laughers,  
 from "Whatcha up to?" and "You ask because  
 you're the youngest!"  
 I'm from "I see the moon,  
 the moon sees me,  
 God bless the moon,  
 God bless me."

I'm from Bristol and Coeburn,  
 biscuits and gravy and red velvet cake.  
 From the gas station my grandfather owned,  
 from the church right down the street  
 where my uncle is the pastor.



Vegas Weigle, Fingerprint Poem

I am from the pictures in my grandmother's closet  
 that tell stories of people I have never met.

I am from the pictures lining my grandmother's hallway  
showing how each family member has grown throughout the years.

KATIE PERRY, GRADE 12

### *Where I'm From*

I am from hand soap,  
From Germ-X and Clorox wipes.  
I am from the wooden house with a red tinted porch  
(A rather rough and creaky porch with  
rough edges that cut like a knife.)  
I am from the hayfield by my yard,  
the grass that grows high in said field.  
I'm from the games of Monopoly on New Year's Eve and glasses,  
From Melissa and Chad.  
I'm from stubbornness  
and worrying,  
from smart alec and get up.  
I'm from winter services at a Baptist church,  
from doing Christmas plays as a child.

I'm from the North, South, East, and West: Baltimore, Kentucky, Germany, and the  
Cherokee.  
From shrimp and soup.  
From the farm accident that damaged my father's arm,  
the food poisoning my entire family endured.  
In my parents' room,  
piled by a dresser by the bed  
are albums upon albums of forgotten memories,  
drifting away as I grow older.

DYLAN SLEMP, GRADE 12

### *Where I'm From*

I am from Beanie Babies,  
from Downy and lemon scented Lysol.  
I am from the brick house on the hill with a long, steep driveway.  
I am from the peach tree behind my grandparents' house,  
the burning bush whose leaves always bloomed a bright red in the spring.

I am from homemade biscuits and picking berries with my papaw,  
from the Burtons and the Trents, both full of old family stories.  
I am from the most stubborn and the most loyal,  
from zip it and speak up.  
I'm from Vacation Bible School in the summers and going to church every Sunday.

I'm from River Lane and Residence Road,  
fried potatoes and coleslaw.  
From the car wreck where my papaw nearly lost his leg  
the bullet in my cousin's arm from a hunting accident.  
In the garage sits a box full of pictures and VHS tapes.  
Holding the memories that will never be forgotten and that will be cherished for many  
years to come.

LANDON TRENT, GRADE 12

### *Where I'm From*

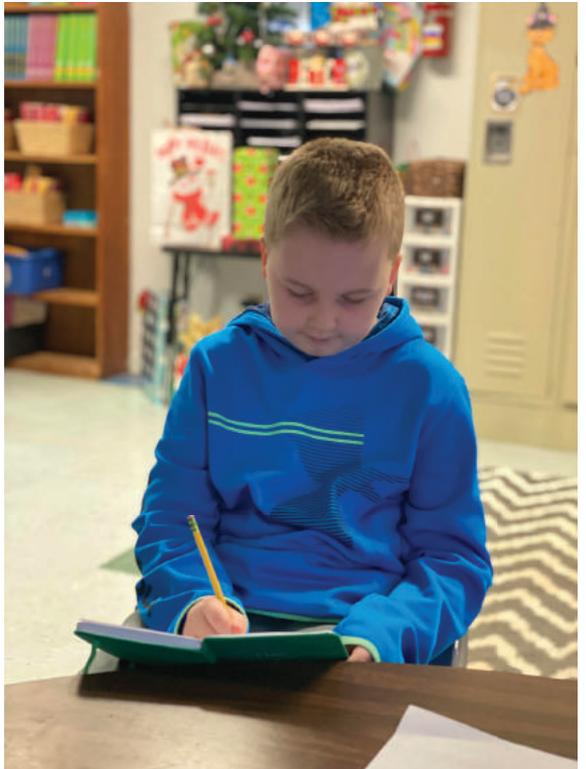
I am from Teddy-Bears,  
From Lagerfeld and mud stains.  
I am from the sand under the swingset.  
(Blinding white, messy  
Somehow always wet.)  
I am from Hosta plants,  
Six pine trees  
Stood like soldiers copy-pasted in a row  
Never a branch out of place

I am from lemon candies and rugs,  
From Nola-Mae and Goodnough.  
I am from the always-rights  
And the always-late  
From more than the stars in the sky and to the moon and back  
I'm from late nights  
From dinner on the couch  
And out-of-order reruns

I am from North Carolina beaches and Southern Virginia Mountains  
Correct grammar and Christmas trees  
From the middle child and the only child  
From dog tags and censored stories  
I am from people I've never met  
Living only on printed paper on the walls  
Under the bed or hidden in drawers  
Still just as close to the heart

JOLIE ZOSKY, GRADE 12

# ELK KNOB ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



## **Alane Barker, Grade 4**

### *My Special Memory*

My name is Alannah Hope Anderson. My middle name is Hope because I hope a lot! My family is very big. I have 2 sisters and 3 brothers. My sisters names are Harper and Sky. My brothers names are Dylan, Gavin, and Kaleb. My favorite memory is going to Myrtle Beach when I was four. I played in the sand with my toys. I enjoyed playing in the sand at the beach. I went in the water and swam. I will never forget that memory.

ALANNAH ANDERSON, GRADE 4

### *All About Me*

My name is Adrian Wayne Anderkin. I am 9 years old. I live with my mom and Donnie. I have 1 brother and 2 sisters. One of my favorite places to go is McDonald's. We also like to go to Just Jump in Kingsport, Tennessee. I like to go to my granny's house so I can play with my kitten. I like playing my Xbox One and I like feeding my animals. I have a bearded dragon named Geico. I feed her grasshoppers. I also feed her worms. I feed her mice. I also have a pet dog named Pepper. I have 4 cats named Sara, Callie, Q-Ball, and Taco.

ADRIAN ANDERKIN, GRADE 4

### *Our Beach Trip*

My family took a trip to the beach in August. It was a seven hour trip. I slept a lot of the way to the beach. We stopped in Johnson City, TN. Then made a few more stops along the way for gas and food. We got to the rental house at 4:00. The house was a two-story house on the beach with a pool. As soon we got everything unpacked, we went straight to the beach. We had seven days to spend at the beach with all of my family. We went shopping. We also went to the boardwalk to look at all of the shops. We went to the beach in the evenings. My dad and uncles would go riding boogie boards in the water. They liked to go fishing on the pier. One day, a man caught a shark. My Dad and my uncle Dustin said they kept feeling fish on the line. There was a lady on the pier and told them that morning that there were sharks on lines. That next morning, we were on the deck looking at the ocean. You could see the sharks where we were swimming.

KEELY BAKER, GRADE 4

### *The Ringing Bell*

My grandmother had so many stories to tell about her youth. The following is one of the stories she shared:

We all had an old dinner bell. If it rang, it meant to come home. If it rang at church, it meant to come to church. At home, it could mean to come home. Daddy moved our old bell from the old house and put in on the out building at the new house when they moved. I remember the first time Hank (her future husband) went to mom and dad's with me. We were in the yard and he didn't know about the bell ringing. He pulled the cord and rang the bell a couple of times in the middle of the day. We cringed when we saw daddy pull out over at the shop and head home. This is not how Hank wanted to meet him by ringing a false alarm bell. We thought he was just coming home though. When someone would die in those days, before cars and phones, they would ring the church bell at sunrise- one ring for every year of life. The farmers out doing chores would hear the bell. If it rang a few times, they would know that a young person had died. If it rang a long time, it

meant that an old person had died. They would find out what neighbor was in need. Grannie told me that she wanted her old bell rang when she died because when she rang it everyone always came home and she wanted us all to come when she died. She died in 1994. At her funeral, Doyle Ramey sang *When They Ring The Golden Bells*. When we got back to the farm to go to the graveyard, the bell rang 98 times. One ring for every year of her life. I think he was a little scared about staying at the old house by himself but he did it for me. We got up to the graveyard but the bell never rang and never rang. I thought he just got scared and just left. But as the preacher asked us to bow our head to pray, the old bell began to ring 98 times. It was perfect timing. Uncle Bill got her old bell and it is in the yard today at little Bill's house.

GRADY BERRY, GRADE 4

### *My Trip to the British Virgin Islands*

Hi! My name is Evva Bruner. This past October, I go to go on a very exciting trip to the British Virgin Islands. It was the first time going to a foreign country so I had to get a passport. We went on this trip because my Aunt Lesley was getting married but we got to do and see so much more. It was really unbelievable to see how blue the water was! We also got to see some sea turtles, dolphins, and baby sharks swimming in the ocean. My brother and I went scuba diving and saw tons of different fish and shells. My Aunt Lesley got married on a large boat with sails on it. While there, I met 3 new friends: Harper, Abby, and baby Reagan. They all were from Texas and we plan to keep in touch. This trip was fun and an experience I will always remember.

EVVA BRUNER, GRADE 4

### *A Christmas Tradition*

Christmas time is a special season for our family. We have several traditions that have been made over the years. My favorite tradition is making homemade ornaments for the Christmas tree.

I love putting up our Christmas tree each year. We all remember the times making an ornament. So many of my family members like to tell stories about the time before I was born. I love listening to the stories and seeing all the different Santas, trees and bells. We have ornaments that my friends made when we lived in Alaska, Arizona, and Virginia. We have ornaments that my relatives, who have gone home to be with Jesus in Heaven, have made.

We have several different ornaments we have made over many Christmases. My nana is 63 years old. My grandmother is 49 years old. My mother is 30 years old. I am 9 years old. That is four generations of memories.

My Christmas tree is our history of ornament traditions of our family and I love it.

KADANCE CHLOE BRYANT, GRADE 4

### *Catching Chief*

Hi! My name is Carter Cox and this is a story about my dog and me. I was in the car going home and saw my dog, Chief, had gotten loose. My mom and I were trying to put Chief in the side door going into the garage. well, Chief heard a noise! He hit my legs and I went airborne. I hit the concrete and hit my butt and my elbow, too. I thought I had broken my elbow. After I realized I was okay and nothing was wrong with me, I finally got Chief to get into the garage. When my dad got home, I had already done the hard part of catching Chief and all he had to do was fix his collar and put him up.

CARTER COX, GRADE 4

## *Horse Riding*

When my papaw was 12 years old, his family had a workhorse. One day, several kids in the family were taking turns riding the workhorse in the yard. His sister was watching them and making home movies. After many of the kids rode the horse, my papaw's mother decided she would ride the horse. As she was riding the horse and laughing, her false teeth flew out of her mouth. Everyone got a big laugh that day. The biggest laugh came later when they watched the home movie of her teeth flying out of her mouth. When they rewound the movie, it looked like the teeth flew up from the grass and she opened her mouth and caught the teeth.

JESSE CRABTREE, GRADE 4

## *A Christmas Memory*

On Christmas Eve, I got the cookies and milk ready for Santa. We were in bed but I could not sleep. I told my mom, "Can I get up?" I went to the living room. I saw presents. I told my mom and Jase. Jase and I went into the living room. Jase said, "Let's open the gifts!" I opened one big gift. It was a LOL dollhouse. My second gift was a LOL doll. My last gift was a crystal dragon. This was a special Christmas memory.

KATIE DINGUS, GRADE 4

## *My Uncle*

This is a story about my uncle James Shannon Taylor. I've heard my family talk about him everyday. I didn't get a chance to meet him. His birthday is on August 12, 1989. He died in a car accident when he was just 21 years old on December 8, 2006. My dad was only 16 when he died. James always lived his life to the fullest. He would give anything to someone who needed it. If you had a problem, he would be there no matter what. He had a 1989 Blue Z-28 Camaro T-Top. Now it's my dad's to fix up. He says it will go to me if I finish school. I really wish I could meet him. My dad misses him so much.

KAYLEIGH DURHAM, GRADE 4

## *A Scary Experience*

I would like to tell you something scary that happened to me. I was in my bathroom, all of a sudden my head started to hurt. I told my mom, but she said I was just nervous because it was the day before Easter. We were going to a dinner at my Mamaw's. Then my stomach started to hurt. I got really dizzy and then I couldn't see. I fell back. Luckily my mom caught me and yelled for my Dad. My Dad carried me to the couch while my mom got me some water and a Reese's cup. It turns out my sugar was low. Now I'm fine.

NEVAEH DURHAM, GRADE 4

## *Searching for Bigfoot*

One time, before I was born, my dad and two of my uncles were positive they saw a Big Foot or a woods monster out behind our house. They decided to try and hunt the creature. They made torches to go look for it at night. They got about two hundred feet into the woods and then they heard one of the craziest animal sounds ever up in the trees. It scared them bad they dropped everything they had and ran home as fast as they could. The crazy thing is that they never saw whatever it was they heard after that night.

KAYDENCE TROXAL ELY, GRADE 4

## *Remembering Family*

I enjoyed spending time with my dad. What I liked to do with my dad is play with him, go to the store, go to court with him, and go on vacation with him. Every morning my mamaw let me cook. However, when I was four years old, my dad died. Then, I met my mom, my brother, and my sister. My older sister, Christi, died when I was 7 years old. Now I only get to see my other mamaw on Fridays. I have a hard time because I miss my dad, Bobby Galey, and my sister, Christi Galey. When my dad was alive he told me that my favorite story was Cinderella. I will always remember my family.

ASHLEY GALEY, GRADE 4

## *My Mom's Trip to Canada*

My mom was 16 when she went to Ontario, Canada. It was just she and my papaw. My papaw drove a big truck and my mom rode with him. After riding in that truck for many hours and going through customs and getting the load delivered on time, they could go site-seeing. However, that night, they decided to get something to eat from Wendy's before they went to bed. Then they woke up in the middle of the night with food poisoning. My mom and papaw couldn't go site-seeing because they were so sick. By the time they felt better, it was time to pick up another load and head back to Virginia. So it was an awful trip for my mom and papaw.

BROOKLYN GARRETT, GRADE 4

## *The Cat Surprise*

One day, my mom was going to pick me up from school. When she was half way up the mountain, she saw something. She thought it was a dog, but when it jumped up the mountain, she realized that it was a large cat. She then realized that the only large cats near this area with long tails are mountain lions. They say we don't have mountain lions but now I'm not for sure.

BLAKE GREEN, GRADE 4

## *My Favorite Holiday*

I really enjoy Christmas! It is my favorite holiday! This Christmas break, my mom came down to my house. I got a lot of presents. I got an iPhone 6s, an Apple watch series 3, and a got a hoverboard. I got a very soft pillow and a soft blanket. We also ate a lot of food! When my mom went back home, I went to my aunt's house then I went to Dollywood. I went on the Blazing Fury ride, the Dragonfly, and the Mystery Mine. I was going to ride the Wild Eagle but I was too scared to go. Then, I watched the parade and looked at all the pretty lights. The lights were so great. They were everywhere. When I got home, my mom, my step-dad, and brother played tag. When my step-dad tried to tag me, he fell and his knee popped out of joint. We had to go to the hospital to get a cast on it.

ETHAN GRIZZLE, GRADE 4

## *The Good Ole Days*

As a little boy, my great-grandpa was the youngest of five and was raised in a four room house. They each had to share a bed. Many days he was kept home from school to cut corn and harvest wheat that was taken the mill by horse and wagon. He pumped a bucket of drinking water daily. Inside the house, this bucket of water would freeze on a cold night. Bed time came early with no electricity. These are some of the differences of being raised in the 1950's.

ELI HAMMONDS, GRADE 4

## *The Story of the Elf*

We have an Elf on the Shelf. His name is Hermie. Well, my dad and mom told me the story of the elf. They said that he reports back to Santa if you're good or bad. Four-year-old me DID NOT LIKE THAT AT ALL! One of the rules is that you can't touch the elf, because it will lose its magic, and it can't fly back. Later that day, I wasn't listening to my mom, and I got in trouble. She warned me that he would report back to Santa. So then. . . . I JUST STRAIGHT-UP GRABBED THE ELF because I was not going to let him knock me out of Christmas presents. In the end, I learned my lesson; HANDS OFF THE ELF or it's BAD NEWS on Christmas day.

ELIJAH HILL, GRADE 4

## *My Papaw, the Hero*

You probably do not think you can be as brave as you think BUT! You are wrong! Dont think so? Well the story I'm about to tell might change your mind. . . .

Years ago when my grandpa was 5 years old he went to a football game at Jonesville High School. A few hours later . . . after the game was over they went home and drove into the driveway of the house. "There goes Uncle Fred!", Papaw said. However, what he really saw was someone that had broken into their house! His Mom and baby sisters were asleep inside. His dad got everyone out safely and the robber ran out the front door. Luckily, no one was hurt. Papaw's dad went out into town with a police officer and they found the robber hiding in the back of the town bar. He was arrested and put in jail. So then Papaw had to go to the police station the next day and pick which man out he saw in his house. Papaw said he wasn't scared at all and when he grew up he became a police officer! He helped catch his first criminal when he was just 5 years old!

Remember, You're NEVER too young to be brave so next time you're scared BE BRAVE! YOU CAN BE A HERO TOO!

ELLA HINES, GRADE 4

## *My Summer Vacation*

During my summer vacation, I went to Miramar Beach in Florida. We stayed in a beach house with my mom's friend and her children, Rylee and Jayce. When we went to the beach, we bought a boogie board. I went to the deep part of the ocean. There were small waves that I went on. One day, the boogie board broke. Another day, Rylee and my brother started to catch little fish. Soon, I joined them. Another day, I saw someone digging up a square shaped hole. After a while, Jayce, Rylee, my brother and I joined to make the hole bigger. There was a pool at the beach house that was 1 foot - 5 feet deep. I can stand up to 4 feet but 5 feet is hard but fun. I love Miramar Beach and can't wait to go back.

XOE HOWARD, GRADE 4

## *A Trip to Bays Mountain*

One summer, my family and I went to Bays Mountain Park. We got to see the wolves. They were so beautiful and fluffy. Then, we got to go see the otters. They were very playful in and out of the water. The most fun but scary thing my family did was go and see the beaver dam. My family and I had a great time at Bays Mountain Park. I hope we get to go again this coming summer.

ABBY JOHNSON, GRADE 4

## *The Family Clover*

There is a family clover that was passed down the family line for many years. My papaw told me it brings good fortune to our bloodline. I always wondered what he meant by that. It means that clover will always keep me safe through all the heartbreaks and good times through life. It was given to me by my mother. She told me to always keep it close and it would bring me good luck. In conclusion, that family clover means a lot to me and my bloodline. I'm grateful I have it to remind me of my ancestors. I will always cherish it until the day I pass it on down the family line.

EMILY JONES, GRADE 4

## *Breaking Beans*

When my mom and my aunts were young, they would help my great grandma break beans. They would first help her pick them from the garden. Then, they would peel and hull them so she could can them. She said she wishes things were still like they were when she was a kid.

ANESSA LAWSON, GRADE 4

## *A Walk to Remember*

A long time ago, my great-great grandfather would go walking through Lovelady Gap. Most of the time, he would be walking to the drive-in movie. He would bring fifty cents with him. Fifty cents paid for the movie and some snacks. Sometimes when he was walking, he would get in a fight with other teenagers. One day he went walking and met his future wife. They were married for 50–60 years. They raised six kids. One of those kids was my dad. A couple months before I was born, my Mamaw Lue, who was his wife, died. My great-great grandfather is now 80 years old.

SARA LAWSON, GRADE 4

## *My Grandma, Linda*

My name is Ashlee Lewis. I was born in Johnson City, Tennessee on June 22, 2010. I was very close to my grandma. Her name was Linda Livesay. She was like my second mom. She died sometime in April 2017. That night when she died I couldn't go to sleep. My heart was so broken. I'm still not over her. I miss her so much but at least I know she is still in my heart. I still talk to her by sending notes. I still miss her at Christmastime. Some of my Christmas was fun, though. I got \$100 from my grandpa. He is really nice. I also got a singing machine and make up. Even though I miss her, her memory will never be forgotten.

ASHLEE LEWIS, GRADE 4

## *Learning to Ride a Bicycle*

Learning to ride a bike for the first time is an exciting experience. I am going to tell you how I learned to ride a bike. I was at a sleepover with my friend and her sister. That day, we were at her grandma's house and they wanted me to ride her bike. I got on the bike & kept falling off. Then, finally, I started to move. I was riding then I ran into a barrel! My leg got stuck under the front tire and they had to help me. They also recorded it, too. My family and I laughed and laughed. I will never forget how I learned how to ride a bike.

KENZIE MCCOY, GRADE 4

## *About Me*

My name is Liberty May. I was born in Florida on March 29, 2010. I have nine siblings. Katie is 22. Noah is 20. Darah is 18. Adison is 16. Brack is 15. Stephen is 13. Sarynity is 11. I am 9. Shay is 5. I loved my grandma. She died the first day of last year.

LIBERTY MAY, GRADE 4

## *The Mini Bike*

When my pap was a boy, he and his family liked to go swimming in the creek in front of their farm. While some of the family were swimming, some were riding on his brother Scott's mini bike. A mini bike is almost like a big bike with a motor that starts with a pull rope. Pap's sister, Jan, kept trying to start the mini bike. On the last pull, the mini bike jumped a big wheelie and she accidentally rode it straight into the creek. He said it was so funny and everyone laughed a long time. Scott wasn't laughing, however. He was worried. He started shouting, "My mini bike! My mini bike!". My pap said Jan was okay and later they got Scott's mini bike running again. My pap has many funny stories about growing up on the farm.

JOURNEY MIDDLETON, GRADE 4

## *Family Camping Trip*

Every summer, since before I was born, my family likes to go on a long camping trip on the Clinch River. When I was first born, I would only spend one night and only stay during the day. The first camping trip that I remember was a huge one. We stayed two weeks. Those that came on the trip were my cousin Jacob, his wife and two kids; my uncle Adam (Butthead), his wife and 2 kids; my uncle Mike Mike, his wife and daughter; my uncle Fuzz, my dad's friend Poteet, mom, dad, and me. I was only four years old. I don't remember a whole lot about it. I remember one funny thing that happened was that we were all in our tents. I said "Poteet, where's your sheep?" Everybody started laughing and my uncle Butthead and I talked back and forth all night.

JAZMINE MINOR, GRADE 4

## *My Mamaw*

My mamaw, Norma Parsons, was an active member of the community. She especially loved children. She worked in concession stands for over 40 years. This included football, basketball, and baseball. Baseball was her favorite. Through her hard work and dedication she was given the honor of the title of Grand Marshal of the Tobacco Festival parade. This title both shocked and pleased my mamaw very much. She got to ride in the front car in the parade and waved at all the people. They held signs for her. Everyone was cheering for her. She was interviewed by the local paper where she exclaimed, "I feel just like a movie star!"

FAITH NIMETY, GRADE 4

## *Papaw's Accident*

My papaw wrecked a motorcycle when he was 15 years old and broke his leg. There was a car on the wrong side of the road. There were 2 nuns in the car, Sister Beth and someone else. He went into the ditch he hit a rock and it flipped him through the air. Sister Beth took him to Lee General Hospital where he stayed for a week. He had a cast all the way up his leg. The cast was tight and cut off his circulation. Four weeks later,

he went to Holston Valley Medical Center with gangrene in his foot. He stayed there for 90 days. He had doctor David Cox. He did a skin graft on his foot. That was in the summer of 1974.

CLARENCE PENNINGTON, GRADE 4

### *Spooky Neighbor*

When my mom was a kid, she had a grave beside her house. One day, her cousins came over to her house to play. Then, her dad put a blanket over his head and started to climb up the fence and crawl. They thought he was a ghost.

HALEY PENNINGTON, GRADE 4

### *Just in Time for Santa*

When my big sister was little, her dad's family always got together a few days before Christmas for gifts. Someone always dressed up like Santa and brought the gifts. One year, it was my big sister's dad's turn to play Santa. He had to work that day at Flowers Bakery, however. So "Santa" was running late. He got there in time to play Santa. As my sister went up to get her gift, she noticed that Santa's shoes had flour all over them just like Dad's.

CHARLEE REECE, GRADE 4

### *Funny Baby Memory*

My mom shared a funny story about me when I was a baby. She said that during the hot summer months, she used to take my diaper off so I would not get a diaper rash from the hot temperatures. One day, I had an accident on her. After that, she put a diaper on me.

ALLEN RUSSELL, GRADE 4

### *My Life as a Swimmer*

My life as a swimmer started when I was just three months old. "Three months old?," you say. "How can a baby swim at three months old?" This is how.

My Gram took me to a water park that had a lazy river. She got a tube that floats and laid across it. She put me on her chest and put a towel on me and we floated around the lazy river. As I got older, my Gram would take me to the pool. I had a great advantage because my great aunt had a pool so whenever I could go to the pool we did. My second cousin was on the swim team at Indiana University Purdue University of Indianapolis. When she could come and give me swim lessons, she would. After that, my Gram took me to Saturday morning swimming classes at the Natatorium-a swimming pool indoors where the Olympic Trials have been held and the NCAA (National College Athletic Association) championships. By this time I was getting basic form down, then we moved to Pennington Gap, Virginia That happened halfway through my first grade year. Wow! What a change to come from a big city to the country. I like both!

So we kept looking for places for me to swim. We found a place in Kingsport, Tennessee. It is a 50 minute drive one way but I started swimming again. One day, the swim coach came over and asked me to swim for him. After I swam for him, he asked me to be on his swim team called The Barracuda Swim Club. The Barracuda Swim Club has been around since 1958.

To sum it up, I now compete in events, met an Olympian and swam with her at a swim clinic in Kingsport. I hope to continue my time as a swimmer in the future.

GIANNA SCICLI, GRADE 4

## *My Dad*

My dad's name is Brian Scott. When my dad was a young boy, his parents got a divorce. He had to move to Texas with his mom when he was seven years old. His sister, Shannon, stayed in Virginia with their dad. He would visit his dad in Virginia every summer until he was about 15 years old. Then he decided to move with his dad in Virginia to go to school and have a life here. He used to fly on an airplane in the summer to visit his family in Texas. He says he still misses his mom and family in Texas today.

LIZZY SCOTT, GRADE 4

## *Scaring Family*

Back when I was seven years old, I remember I would sneak around the house scaring my sister and basically my whole family. Then one day, when I came out of the bathroom, my sister scared me. I was so scared I overreacted and punched her in the face which knocked her nose ring out. Those were fun memories.

STEVEN SMITH, GRADE 4

## *In 1950*

In 1950, when my grandpa was a baby, his mother and father (my great papaw and granny) made and sold butter and milk. My great papaw milked the cows and great granny churned the butter. One of their customers was Minnie Fox (sister of John Fox Jr). John Fox Jr was famous for writing books such as *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come* and *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, just to name a few. Minnie Fox bought milk and butter until my great papaw, great granny, and grandpa moved from Duffield, VA to Pennington Gap, VA. Even 70 years later we still have the same churn great granny had.

ELLA SHELL, GRADE 4

## *My Special Neighbors*

When I first moved to my house, we found out that we had very sweet neighbors. Their names were Mr. and Mrs. Bush, and Sherri. They became like my second grandparents. When I was little, I would sneak off from my house to play the Wii with Sherri. Mrs. Bush would always feed me ice cream. They spoiled me. Every time I went out, they gave me something to bring back home. I got to spend the next few years with them. Mrs. Bush was my bonus grandma. Then, she got sick. It made me sad to find out she had cancer. She passed away June 2019. This made me really sad. I think of her often and one day I will see her again.

KYLER SYKES, GRADE 4

## *Big Mamaw*

Edith Wolfenbarger is my great-grandmother. I called her Big Mamaw. She was born July 25, 1913. She died November 26, 2018. She was 105 years old. I got to spend 8 years with her. It was incredible how different my childhood was from hers. She had no indoor plumbing. They used an out house. She had no telephone or tv. They did not have a car. She did not drive one her entire life. When she was born, women were not allowed to vote. Her mother died when she was 12. Her dad made her quit school to raise her 4 brothers. She had to wash dishes, wash clothes and cook three meals a day. She was so little she had to stand on a stool to reach the sink. It was so hard they had no dishwasher, no washer or dryer and no Wa-Mart. I can't imagine growing up so quickly in such a different time.

ADDISON TAYLOR, GRADE 4

## *Last Vacation with Papaw*

Family vacations are special because we get to have fun and spend time with the ones we love. A memorable vacation for me was my papaw's last one.

In August of 2014, we went to Panama City Beach, Florida. My papaw, mamaw, dad, mom, brother, and I stayed in a condo there for a week. My papaw had always wanted to go there. We did many activities that week. The pool was right outside our balcony, where my papaw would sit and watch us swim. One day, we rented a golf cart that all six of us could ride. we toured the beach and even went through the McDonald's drive-thru to get ice cream! We also went to a shopping plaza where we went to get souvenirs. On the last night of our vacation, we took a cruise on a pirate ship where the sunset was amazing! One of my last pictures with my papaw was on that ship because sadly, two weeks later, he died.

The memories we made that week will always be special to me because they were some of my last moments with him.

BRONSON TAYLOR, GRADE 4



## *Camping*

Hi! my name is Destiny Taylor. One of my dad's favorite things to do is go camping. When he was a kid, he liked to go fishing at the lake and he did a lot more things. Today, my brother, sister, and I like to go camping. We like to go camping. We like to make a campfire and roast marshmallows. I hope we go again this next summer.

DESTINY TAYLOR, GRADE 4

## *Funny Stories*

Hello I'm Myah Wells. These are some stories my mom told me. One day, my grandpa went to Lowes. While he was there, he fell in a ball pit. That was a funny day.

Another funny story is that my brother was fishing when a fish took his fishing pole with it when it bit the bait. He went to get it and got soaked.

MYAH WELLS, GRADE 4

## *When I was Younger*

One day, a long time ago, I was one year old. My mom said that I did not like green beans, pears, or tomatoes. Which I believe that but mom said that my



favorite food was Pizza rolls and oranges. I still love pizza rolls and oranges to this day. I still wish that I was little because I was with my real mom.

BRIANNA WHITE, GRADE 4

### *Hide and Seek*

I'm going to tell you a story about my dad that happened in 1997. He went to his friend's house to spend the night. They all decided to go play hide and seek in the dark out on the farm. After a long count, all three of them had their hiding spots. My dad was in an old farmhouse. He heard the seeker coming and hid behind a door. Another one of the hiders came running through the house. As he was running through, he hit the door my dad was hiding behind. My dad tried to stop the door and his hand went through the glass. In the pitch black darkness, he felt something running down his hand. They grabbed the flash light from the seeker. When they turned the light on they could see the bone sticking out of the knuckle. They got it bandaged up and pretended like nothing happened to so they would not get in trouble. He has never told his mom what really happened to his finger that night.

LILLIAN WILLIAMS, GRADE 4

### *On the Farm*

When my mom and my uncles (her brothers were younger, they used to like to work and play on my great-grandparents' farm. There was a lot to do on the farm from taking care of the animals to working the tobacco or hay fields. My mom said working in the tobacco field was a lot of fun when she was young but when she got older it was hard work. She said her favorite part was climbing in the barn when they would hang the tobacco. They had a lot of cows on the farm, too. She said they had to help herd them to move fields. My mom also said sometimes they had to help cows have their babies. My uncles and my always talk about how much fun they had with my late great-grandpa riding the tractor around the farm. My mom says he would let them turn the wheel even though they weren't really driving.

BENTLY WOODARD, GRADE 4

### *What's Her Name?*

In the early 1900's, in a coal camp in St. Charles, VA, my Great-Great Grandmother was born. She was born at home because there was not a hospital to go to. Neighbors were always there to help and having a baby was a special treat. As you probably know, back then, everyone wanted the baby to be named after them. So not to make anyone mad, the baby's full given name was Minnie Evaline Salfroni Calfroni Sally Dick Newman everybody called her Minnie. Minnie grew up and married Lee Sharp, Minnie and Lee Sharp had a baby boy. He is my Great Grandpa Sam, better known as Papaw Doodle Doo.

LUKE YOUNG, GRADE 4

# FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



*Melody Cress, Nikkie Grabeel, Lisa Barnett, Angela Ellis*  
*English, Grade 2*  
*Sweedish Meatballs From the Kitchen of the Adams Family*

My favorite recipe is Sweedish Meatballs. I like to help my daddy make it. When it is finished, it tastes very good! We make this recipe on holidays. Sometimes I get to help by eating it!!

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 bag of meatballs or 2lbs. homemade meatballs
- ♦ 1 jar of grape jelly
- ♦ 2 bottles of Sweet Baby Rays BBQ sauce
- ♦ 1 pk. Little Smokies small weiners

*Directions: Put in crockpot for 2½ hours and cook on high.*

MARY ADAMS, GRADE 2

*Daddy & Mommy's Sweet Potato Pie*

My favorite recipe is sweet potato pie. I like to help my mommy make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy. We make this recipe on special holidays.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 sweet potatoes mashed
- ♦ ½ stick of melted butter
- ♦ 1 c. sugar
- ♦ 2 eggs
- ♦ 1 tsp. Flour
- ♦ 1 c. milk
- ♦ 1 T. lemon flavoring
- ♦ 1 T. vanilla

*Directions:*

- ♦ Mix all ingredients in bowl together
- ♦ put mixture in pie shell
- ♦ bake at 350° until brown.

BRICE AIKENS, GRADE 2

*Peanut Butter Pie From the Kitchen of Briana Austin*

My favorite recipe is my momma's Peanut Butter Pie. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes very good! We make this recipe on Thanksgiving. Sometimes I get to help by licking the spoon and eating the leftover pie filling from the bowl!

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 chocolate graham cracker pie crust
- ♦ 1 cup peanut butter
- ♦ 1 ¼ cups powdered sugar

- ♦ 8 ounces cream cheese softened
- ♦ 8 ounces whipped topping thawed
- ♦ chocolate syrup & peanut butter cups for garnish

*Directions*

- ♦ Beat the peanut butter with the cream cheese until smooth
- ♦ Add the powdered sugar and beat until smooth
- ♦ Next add in the thawed whipped topping and beat until smooth
- ♦ Pour the filling into the crust
- ♦ Garnish with chocolate syrup and peanut butter cups (cut into pieces)
- ♦ Chill for at least an hour
- ♦ Cut and enjoy!! Yum! Yum!

HAYDEN AUSTIN, GRADE 2

### *Butterfinger Pie From the Kitchen of Kimberly Ausmus*

My favorite recipe is Butterfinger Pie. I like to help my mommy make it. When it is finished, it tastes so delicious! We make this recipe on special holidays. Sometimes I get to help by getting all the ingredients together for my mom, and I help her mix everything.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 8 oz. cream cheese
- ♦ ½ c. creamy peanut butter
- ♦ 2 tsp. vanilla extract
- ♦ 1 ½ c. powdered sugar
- ♦ 1 12.5 oz. bag funsize butterfinger bars crushed (reserve two bars to sprinkle on top)
- ♦ 8 oz. cool whip thawed
- ♦ 1 oreo or chocolate graham cracker crust

*Directions*

- ♦ Beat cream cheese and peanut butter until smooth
- ♦ Mix in vanilla
- ♦ Beat in powdered sugar until smooth
- ♦ Fold in crushed butterfingers
- ♦ Fold in Cool Whip
- ♦ Spread filling into crust
- ♦ Sprinkle reserved Butterfingers on top
- ♦ Refrigerate at least 4 hours before serving.

BROOKLYN BRANTLEY, GRADE 2

### *Cherry Lollipops*

My favorite recipe is Cherry Lollipops. I like to help Mommy and Daddy make them. When it is finished it tastes like cherries and it is delicious. My mommy makes them on my birthday and my daddy makes them all the time. I get to help by getting the sugar.

¾ cup of white sugar  
½ stick of butter  
½ cup light corn syrup  
1 box (3 ounce) cherry gelatin dessert  
Nonstick vegetable cooking spray  
Special Equipment: 20 lollipop sticks, metal tablespoon measure, candy thermometer

Butter or spray non-stick vegetable spray onto parchment lined cookie sheet. Arrange half of the lollipop sticks on each and set aside. In a small saucepan over medium heat, add sugar, butter, and corn syrup together until sugar has dissolved. Slowly bring to a boil, stirring frequently. Insert a candy thermometer into syrup and continue cooking until temperature reaches 300°. Remove from heat. Stir in gelatin until smooth. Using a metal tablespoon and working quickly, drop heaping spoonfuls of lollipop syrup on the end of each lollipop stick. Cool completely. Wrap each sucker in plastic wrap and store in an air-tight container. Enjoy!

KATHY BRYANT, GRADE 2

### *Baked Mac 'n' Cheese From the Kitchen of Sabrina Cantor*

My favorite recipe is Baked Mac 'n' Cheese. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes delicious! We make this recipe on Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by handing my mom the ingredients.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2–16 oz. boxes elbow macaroni
- ♦ 4 bags Kraft cubed Colby Cheese
- ♦ ½ stick of butter (sliced into 6 slices)
- ♦ splash of milk
- ♦ salt & pepper

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Boil water and cook macaroni
- ♦ Preheat oven to 350° while pasta is cooking
- ♦ Cook the pasta 15–20 minutes or until very tender
- ♦ Drain and rinse pasta
- ♦ Layer macaroni, then cheese until you have no more cheese
- ♦ Sprinkle salt and pepper on top
- ♦ Add the 6 slices of butter, evenly spaced, on top
- ♦ Add a splash of milk- just enough to cover the bottom of the pan
- ♦ Bake at 350° for approximately 40–45 minutes; enjoy!

EASTON CANTOR, GRADE 2

### *Macaroni and Cheese From the Kitchen of McKenzie Collins*

My favorite recipe is macaroni and cheese. I like to help my mom and sister make it. When it is finished, it tastes great! We make this recipe on Saturdays. Sometimes I get to help by pouring in the noodles and cheese. I also stir it all together and add the salt.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ Box of Macaroni and Cheese
- ♦ ¼ cup of milk
- ♦ 2 tlbs. butter

### *Directions*

- ♦ Boil the macaroni
- ♦ Drain water
- ♦ Add the cheese pk., salt, butter, and milk
- ♦ Stir ingredients together

MCKENZIE COLLINS, GRADE 2

## *April Collins' Blueberry Muffins*

My favorite recipe is blueberry muffins. I like to help Aunt Roo make it. When it is finished, it tastes good. We make this recipe on special holidays. Sometimes I get to help by putting the ingredients in the bowl and stirring it.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 ¾ c. self-rising flour
- ♦ ¾ c. blueberries
- ♦ ¾ c. sugar
- ♦ 1 egg
- ♦ ¾ c. milk
- ♦ ½ c. oil
- ♦ ½ tsp vanilla

### *Directions*

- ♦ Combine egg, sugar, oil, milk, & vanilla
- ♦ Add flour and mix well
- ♦ Stir in blueberries
- ♦ Pour into greased muffin pan
- ♦ Bake at 400° for 25 mins.
- ♦ Makes about 12 muffins

MICHAELA COLLINS, GRADE 2

## *Peanut Butter Candy From the Kitchen of Mary Roberts*

My favorite recipe is Peanut Butter Candy. I like to help Mary make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good! We make this recipe on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by measuring ingredients and putting them in the bowl.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ ½ stick margarine
- ♦ 2 ½ c. white sugar

- ♦ ¾ c. canned cream
- ♦ 8 oz. jar marshmallow cream
- ♦ 3 tbsp. peanut butter
- ♦ 1 c. nuts

*Directions*

- ♦ Mix together margarine, sugar, and cream
- ♦ Bring to boil and let boil for 5 minutes while stirring constantly
- ♦ Remove from heat and add remaining ingredients
- ♦ Stir until smooth
- ♦ Pour into buttered pan

CARLI CORBIN, GRADE 2

### *Homemade Biscuits From the Kitchen of Ellary Delph*

My favorite recipe is Homemade Biscuits. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so delicious! We make this recipe on Saturday mornings. Sometimes I get to help by kneading the dough and cutting the biscuits.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 cups self rising flour
- ♦ 1 tsp. Salt
- ♦ 5 tlbs. Butter
- ♦ ¾ cup whole milk

*Directions*

- ♦ Preheat oven at 425°, set cookie sheet aside.
- ♦ Mix together flour, salt, and sugar in a bowl and set aside.
- ♦ Cut or shred butter together in flour mixture and stir. Mix together until mixture resembles coarse crumbs.
- ♦ Add milk and stir until combined. A wooden spoon works great.
- ♦ Place dough on a well floured surface and work together with your hands. If dough is too sticky add more flour.
- ♦ Use your hands to flatten the dough until it's about 1 inch thick.
- ♦ Use a biscuit cutter and cut biscuits, then place on your cookie sheet.
- ♦ Bake for about 12 minutes or until golden brown. Brush with butter if desired

ELLARY DELPH, GRADE 2

### *Daddy's Down-Home Chili*

My favorite recipe is Daddy's Down-Home Chili. I like to help Mommy and Daddy make it. I like it because my dad makes it spicy and good. When it is finished, it tastes fantastic! Sometimes I get to help by putting the beans in the pot. My dad makes it whenever I want it. We eat it with cornbread that he makes.

- 1 lb. hamburger meat
- 1 can chili beans

- 1 can dark red kidney beans
- 1 can tomato sauce
- 1 can petite diced tomatoes
- ½ can diced tomatoes
- 3 tbsp. ground cumin
- 1 ½ tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper

Brown hamburger meat over medium heat, then drain. In a large pot, add beans and tomatoes, add tomato sauce then add 4 cans of water, add browned meat, add cumin, chili powder, salt, black pepper, bring to a boil, cover, then reduce heat. Simmer for 25 minutes, stirring occasionally.

ALLI DOTSON, GRADE 2

### *Vina Melrose Combs Lee Apple Stack Cake*

My favorite recipe is my great, great grandmother's Apple Stack Cake. I like to help my Mamam make it. It tastes good when it is finished. She makes it for my birthday. I like to help by stirring the batter and stacking the cake up.

Cream together ½ cup lard (Crisco), ½ cup molasses, ¾ packed brown sugar, and 2 eggs.

Add and stir after each addition: ½ tsp. ground ginger, 1 tsp. ground cinnamon, 1 tsp. vanilla, 2 ⅔ cup flour (if using plain flour, as Mamaw did, add 1 tsp. baking powder, 1 tsp. baking soda, 1 tsp. salt).

Will form a ball of dough. Chill for 1 hour. Grease and flour an iron skillet. Divide dough into four parts, pat into a pan with floured fingertips. Bake at 400°, 8–10 minutes. Turn out and add dried apple mixture between layers. You can use cake pans but I bake each layer in an iron skillet because that is the way mamaw did it. Enjoy!

MALLIE DOYLE, GRADE 2

### *Olga Antonini's Zepele, Italian Donuts*

My favorite recipe is zepele (Italian Donuts). I like to help Daddy make it. When it is finished, it tastes like a little sweet fried dough! We make this recipe on holidays and a couple times a year for fun. Sometimes I get to help by stretched and shape dough into shapes!

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 4–5 cups flour
- ♦ \*hint = use rapid rise yeast, no proofing needed
- ♦ 1 cooked potato - mashed
- ♦ Salt to taste
- ♦ 1 egg
- ♦ 2 ¼ tsp. Yeast
- ♦ 1 cup of warm water

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Start with 3 cups of flour
- ♦ Add egg, mashed potato, & salt. Sprinkle rapid rise yeast over
- ♦ Add cup of warm water

- ♦ Use fork to incorporate ingredients
- ♦ Continue to add the rest of the flour (little at a time) until dough ball is smooth
- ♦ Let rise in oiled bowl for 45 mins
- ♦ Pull small portions of dough and shape into circles
- ♦ Drop into hot deep frier until browned
- ♦ Place onto tray with paper towels
- ♦ Sprinkle with salt and powdered sugar
- ♦ \*Note: Can be stuffed with cheese prior to frying

GAVIN EDDS, GRADE 2

### *Deviled Eggs From the Kitchen of Kira Eldridge*

My favorite recipe is Deviled Eggs. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good! We make this recipe on turkey day. Sometimes I get to help by peeling the eggs.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ Boiled eggs
- ♦ Mayonnaise
- ♦ Pepper and salt to taste
- ♦ Dill or sweet relish

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Boil eggs and cut in half
- ♦ Remove yolk and set aside
- ♦ Add mayonnaise, pepper, salt, and relish to the yolks.
- ♦ Mix together.
- ♦ Place mixture in the center of the egg halves.

KIRA ELDRIDGE, GRADE 2

### *The Eldridge Family's Puddin' in a Cloud*

My favorite recipe is puddin in a cloud. I like to help Mom and Dad make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy! We make this recipe on rare occasions. Sometimes I get to help by mixing and stirring the puddin'.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 boxes of instant chocolate pudding.
- ♦ 1 box of graham crackers.
- ♦ 1–2 containers of cool whip.

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Make pudding as directed on box and set aside.
- ♦ Use a casserole dish.
- ♦ Put layers of graham crackers across the bottom.
- ♦ Then a layer of pudding.
- ♦ Top with cool whip.

- ♦ Repeat layers until the dish is full.
- ♦ Simple, easy, and yummy.

LEVI ELDRIDGE, GRADE 2

### *Lime Punch From the Kitchen of Great Granny Bledsoe*

My favorite recipe is Lime Punch. I like to help my great granny make it. When it is finished, it tastes delicious! We make this recipe on Christmas Eve. Sometimes I get to help by adding the GingerAle.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 c. sugar
- ♦ 3 c. water
- ♦ 1–3 oz. box lime jello
- ♦ 1 large can pineapple juice
- ♦ 1 bottle GingerAle
- ♦ 1 container lime sherbet

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Bring the sugar and water to a boil
- ♦ Remove from heat- add jello and dissolve
- ♦ Cool for 15 minutes
- ♦ Add pineapple juice
- ♦ When cool, refrigerate
- ♦ When ready to serve, add GingerAle and Sherbet

BAYLEE ELKINS, GRADE 2

### *Chicken Enchiladas From the Kitchen of Sareena Scott*

My favorite recipe is Chicken Enchiladas. I like to help Sareena make it. When it is finished, it tastes good. We make this recipe on any day! I get to help by eating the chicken enchiladas!

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 chicken breast
- ♦ 10 flour tortillas
- ♦ 1 c. shredded cheese
- ♦ 1–4 oz. can green chiles
- ♦ 2–10 oz. cans mild green enchilada sauce

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Preheat oven to 375°
- ♦ Cut up chicken
- ♦ In a skillet, cook chicken until done
- ♦ Lay tortillas flat, fill with chicken, roll them tight
- ♦ Place chicken filled tortillas in a 9x13 pan
- ♦ Pour in enchilada sauce, green chiles, and top with shredded cheese

- ♦ Place in oven for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted
- ♦ Remove and serve

AERIAL ELLIOTT, GRADE 2

### *Oreo Cake From the Kitchen of Wanda Ellis*

My favorite recipe is Oreo Cake. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy! We make this recipe on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by mixing the ingredients.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 14 oz. pkg. Oreo cookies
- ♦ 8 oz. cream cheese
- ♦ 2 sm. French vanilla pudding
- ♦ 12 oz. cool whip
- ♦ 3 c. milk
- ♦ 1 c. powdered sugar

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Crush  $\frac{2}{3}$  of oreos and put in the bottom of pan
- ♦ Mix cool whip, cream cheese, and powdered sugar in a bowl
- ♦ Mix pudding and 3 cups of milk in another bowl
- ♦ Pour into cool whip mixture- fold together well
- ♦ Pour over cookies
- ♦ Crust the rest of the cookies and put on top
- ♦ Refrigerate and enjoy

ABIGAIL ELLIS, GRADE 2

### *Melissa Hammonds' Butterscotch Fudge*

My favorite recipe is butterscotch fudge. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes delicious. We make this recipe on any occasion. Sometimes I get to help by stirring and pouring the ingredients.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 bag of Butterscotch morsels
- ♦ 1 jar of creamy peanut butter

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Place morsels in a microwave safe bowl
- ♦ Microwave stirring often until melted
- ♦ Microwave peanut butter until soft
- ♦ Mix the two items together
- ♦ Pour mixture onto a cookie sheet
- ♦ Place in refrigerator until hardened
- ♦ Cut and enjoy

MADISON ELY, GRADE 2

## *Peanut Butter Pie From the Kitchen of Chase Fletcher*

My favorite recipe is Peanut Butter Pie. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes good! We make this recipe on Thanksgiving. Sometimes I get to help by mixing the ingredients.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 9 in. graham cracker crust
- ♦ 1 pk. Cream cheese
- ♦ 1 cup peanut butter
- ♦ 1 cup powdered sugar
- ♦ 1 container whip cream

### *Directions*

- ♦ Mix the cream cheese, powdered sugar, and peanut butter together.
- ♦ Add in the whip cream.
- ♦ Mix it up and put in the crust.

CHASE FLETCHER, GRADE 2

## *Blueberry Muffins From the Kitchen of Carter Freeman*

My favorite recipe is Blueberry Muffins. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good! We make this recipe all the time. Sometimes I get to help cracking the eggs and stirring the stuff.

- ♦ Blueberry Muffin mix
- ♦ Milk or water
- ♦ eggs

### *Directions*

- ♦ Preheat the oven at 350°
- ♦ Open the package and pour in a bowl.
- ♦ Add milk and eggs.
- ♦ Stir the ingredients together.
- ♦ Pour in a greased muffin pan.
- ♦ Bake on 350° for 10 to 12 minutes.

CARTER FREEMAN, GRADE 2

## *Chicken Enchilada From the Kitchen of Sareena Scitt*

My favorite recipe is chicken enchilada. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes okay! We make this recipe anytime we want. Sometimes I get to help by stirring it.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 chicken breast
- ♦ 10 flour tortillas
- ♦ 1 cup shredded cheese

- ♦ 1–10oz. Can mild green enchilada sauce
- ♦ 2–10oz. Can mild green enchilada sauce.

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Preheat oven to 375°
- ♦ In a skillet, cut up chicken and cook until done
- ♦ Lay tortillas flat and fill with chicken then roll tight
- ♦ Place chicken filled tortillas in a 9x13 pan
- ♦ Pour in mild green enchilada sauce, green chilies, and top with shredded cheese
- ♦ Place in oven for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted
- ♦ Remove from oven and serve

EMMITT GARRETT, GRADE 2

### *Chocolate Chip Cookies From the Kitchen of Gunner Garrett*

My favorite recipe is Chocolate chip cookies. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good! We make this recipe on random days. Sometimes I get to help by mixing everything together.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 ¼ c. all purpose flour
- ♦ 2 large eggs
- ♦ 1 tsp. baking soda
- ♦ 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract
- ♦ Fine salt
- ♦ 1 12oz, bag semi-sweet chocolate chips
- ♦ 1 ½ stick unsalted butter
- ♦ ¾ c. packed light brown sugar
- ♦ ⅔ c. granulated sugar

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Preheat oven to 375° and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
- ♦ Whisk together flour, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl.
- ♦ Beat the butter and both sugars on medium-high until light and fluffy, about 4 minutes.
- ♦ Add eggs one at a time, beating after each.
- ♦ Beat in vanilla.
- ♦ Reduce speed to medium and add flour mixture until incorporated.
- ♦ Stir in chocolate chips.
- ♦ Scoop heaping tbsps. on baking sheet and bake until golden brown, about 12–15 minutes.

GUNNER GARRETT, GRADE 2

### *Grandmother Sharon Lawson's Pink Fluff*

My favorite recipe is pink fluff. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy. We make this recipe on holidays and Daddy's birthday. Sometimes I get to help by stirring the jello, draining the pineapple, and mixing everything together.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ Raspberry jello
- ♦ Tub of Cool Whip
- ♦ Small tub of cottage cheese
- ♦ 1 can of crushed pineapples (drained)
- ♦ Small pack of crushed pecans

### *Directions*

- ♦ Prepare jello by directions on the box
- ♦ When it is set up stir and break apart
- ♦ Add all of the remaining ingredients
- ♦ Make sure to drain the pineapples, removing as much juice as possible
- ♦ Fold well and serve

SWAY GARRETT, GRADE 2

## *Pigs in a Blanket From the Kitchen of Bentley and Mom*

My favorite recipe is Pigs in a Blanket. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good! We make this recipe on weekdays. Sometimes I get to help by wrapping the little smokies with the crescent rolls.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ Little Smokies
- ♦ Crescent rolls
- ♦ Parchment paper
- ♦ Baking sheet pan

### *Directions*

- ♦ Preheat oven to 350°
- ♦ Line baking sheet pan with parchment paper
- ♦ Wrap each Little Smokie in ½ of the crescent roll
- ♦ Place wrapped Smokies on pan
- ♦ Bake for 10 minutes
- ♦ Enjoy!

BENTLEY GOFORTH, GRADE 2

## *Oreo Dirt Cake From the Kitchen of Nikkie Grabeel*

My favorite recipe is Oreo Dirt Cake. I like to help my mommy make it. When it is finished, it tastes so delicious! We make this recipe on my birthday. Sometimes I get to help by crushing the oreos and putting them in the pan. I like to measure the ingredients and pour them in the mixing bowl.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 28 Oreo cookies
- ♦ 1–8 oz. frozen whipped topping (thawed)
- ♦ 1–8 oz. cream cheese (softened)

- ♦ ¼ c. butter (softened)
- ♦ 1 c. confectioners sugar
- ♦ 3 ½ c. whole milk
- ♦ 2–3.4 oz. instant vanilla pudding

*Directions*

- ♦ In a food processor or blender, process the cookies until finely crushed.
- ♦ Set aside 2 tablespoons of crumbs for topping
- ♦ In a large bowl, beat cream cheese, butter, and sugar
- ♦ In a separate bowl, whisk milk and pudding mix for 2 minutes
- ♦ Add pudding to cream cheese mixture and mix well
- ♦ Fold in whipped topping
- ♦ Place half of the cookies in a container or bowl; top with half pudding mixture
- ♦ Repeat layers
- ♦ Sprinkle with reserved crumbs
- ♦ Refrigerate until ready to serve

HADLEE GRABEEL, GRADE 2

### *Home-Made Spaghetti*

My favorite recipe is Home-Made Spaghetti. I like to help Papaw fix it. It tastes good when we fix it. We make it whenever we want to eat it. My favorite part is the noodles.

RILEY GRAY, GRADE 2

### *Bap's Cornbread*

My favorite recipe is Bap's cornbread. I like to help my mom and grandmother, Bap, make it. When it is finished, it tastes delicious! We make this recipe on family dinner nights. Sometimes I get to help by adding the ingredients, cracking eggs, and mixing it together.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 c. cornmeal
- ♦ ½ tbsp flour
- ♦ 1 c. buttermilk
- ♦ 1 egg
- ♦ ¼ tsp of baking soda
- ♦ ½ tsp salt
- ♦ ½ tbsp sugar

*Directions*

- ♦ Mix together cornmeal, baking soda, salt, sugar, and flour
- ♦ Stir in buttermilk and egg
- ♦ Heat oven to 450° and grease skillet
- ♦ Cook for 15 mins until golden brown

CHARLEIGH HAMMONDS, GRADE 2

## *The Hart Family's Chicken Tacos*

My favorite recipe is chicken tacos. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes delicious! We make this recipe on Fridays. Sometimes I get to help getting the stuff out.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 bag of diced chicken
- ♦ 1 bag of taco shells
- ♦ 1 bag of shredded cheese
- ♦ Montreal chicken spice
- ♦ Cooking oil

### *Directions*

- ♦ Put cooking oil in a skillet
- ♦ Pour the bag of diced chicken in the skillet, cook until chicken is browned
- ♦ Cover the chicken with montreal chicken seasoning
- ♦ Cut taco shells in half to make two triangles
- ♦ Put 1 handful of shredded cheese inside both halves
- ♦ Place fried chicken in both halves of taco shells
- ♦ Fry the chicken taco until the shell is brown

AURORA HART, GRADE 2

## *Poppy Seed Chicken*

My favorite recipe is Poppy Seed Chicken. I like to help my mamaw make it. When it is finished, it tastes really good! We make this recipes for Sunday lunch. Sometimes I get to help by sprinkling the poppy seeds on top and eating when it is finished!

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 cans cream of chicken
- ♦ 8 oz. sour cream
- ♦ Boneless chicken breast- cubed
- ♦ Poppy seeds
- ♦ 1 stick of butter- melted
- ♦ 1 package Ritz crackers

### *Directions*

- ♦ Cook cubed chicken in a 9x14 pan
- ♦ Mix the 2 cans of cream of chicken and 8 oz. sour cream together
- ♦ Spread mixture on top of chicken
- ♦ Sprinkle poppy seeds on top of soup mixture
- ♦ Crush Ritz crackers with a stick of melted butter and spread on top
- ♦ Bake on 350° for 30–45 minutes
- ♦ Enjoy!

MARGARET HARTSOCK, GRADE 2

## *The Higgins Family's Sugar Cookies*

My favorite recipe is sugar cookies. I like to help my mommy make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good! We make this recipe on Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by cracking eggs and licking the spoon.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ ¼ cup butter
- ♦ ⅛ tsp salt
- ♦ ⅓ cup sugar
- ♦ ⅛ tsp of baking powder
- ♦ 1 egg yolk
- ♦ 1 tbsp full fat sour cream
- ♦ ½ tbsp vanilla extract
- ♦ 1 cup flour

### *Directions*

- ♦ Cream sugar and butter in a deep bowl
- ♦ Add egg yolk and vanilla extract, mix until everything is well blended
- ♦ Add sour cream, mix again
- ♦ Add flour, baking powder, and salt, mix everything together
- ♦ The batter will start to curdle and look odd, it's perfectly fine
- ♦ When curdling happens, it's time to use your hands to start mixing
- ♦ Mix until you form a ball of cookie dough
- ♦ Roll dough between 2 sheets of wax paper, use a cookie cutter to cut out cookies
- ♦ Bake on cookie sheet with parchment paper at 350° for 6 mins
- ♦ Cookies are done when they're light golden brown along edges

HUNTER HIGGINS, GRADE 2

## *Macaroni and Cheese*

I like to help Mommy make macaroni and cheese. It tastes good when we are finished. We fix it whenever we want it. Sometimes I get to help by putting cheese in it.

CHLOE HILL, GRADE 2

## *Chocolate Pie From the Kitchen of Nana Pam Hines*

My favorite recipe is chocolate pie. I like to help my nana make it. When it is finished, it tastes so delicious! We make this recipe on my papaw's birthday. Sometimes I get to help by stirring in the sugar.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 pkg. 4oz. Baker's German Sweet Chocolate
- ♦ 2 eggs
- ♦ ¼ c. butter

- ♦ 1 tsp. vanilla
- ♦ 1 2/3 c. (1 can) evaporated milk
- ♦ 1 unbaked 9 inch pie shell
- ♦ 1 ½ c. sugar
- ♦ 3 tbsp. cornstarch
- ♦ 1/8 tsp. salt

*Directions*

- ♦ Melt chocolate with butter over low heat, stirring until blended
- ♦ Remove from heat and gradually blend in evaporated milk
- ♦ Mix sugar and cornstarch thoroughly
- ♦ Beat in eggs and vanilla
- ♦ Gradually blend in chocolate mixture
- ♦ Pour into pie shell
- ♦ Bake at 375° for 45 to 50 minutes
- ♦ Chill for a few hours before cutting

AMELIA HINES, GRADE 2

### *Cinnamon Rock Candy From the Kitchen of My Daddy*

My favorite recipe is Cinnamon Rock Candy. I like to help my dad make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy! We make this recipe on Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by mixing things and eating the candy.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 c. water
- ♦ 3 ¾ c. sugar
- ♦ 1 ¼ c. light corn syrup
- ♦ 1 tsp. red liquid food coloring
- ♦ 1 tsp. cinnamon oil
- ♦ ½ c. confectioners sugar

*Directions*

- ♦ Line a 15x10x1 inch pan with foil- butter the foil- set aside
- ♦ In a large heavy saucepan, combine water, sugar, corn syrup, and food coloring
- ♦ Bring to a boil over medium heat- stirring occasionally
- ♦ Cover and cook for 3 minutes to dissolve sugar crystals
- ♦ Uncover and cook on medium- high heat, without stirring until candy thermometer reads 300° (about 25 minutes)
- ♦ Remove from heat and stir in cinnamon oil (keep face away from mixture- it is very strong)
- ♦ Immediately pour into prepared pan using the edge of a metal mallet
- ♦ Sprinkle both sides of candy with confectioners sugar
- ♦ Store in airtight container; enjoy!

PHOENIX HOLBROOK, GRADE 2

## *Cheeseball From the Kitchen of the Horners*

My favorite recipe is Cheeseball. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes good! We make this recipe on Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by stirring the ingredients.

### *Ingredients*

- 2–8 oz. cream cheese
- 2 tbsp. lemon juice
- 10 oz. extra sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 tbsp. chopped green peppers
- 2 tbsp. pimentos or 1 small jar
- 6 tbsp. chopped onion
- Dash of Tabasco sauce

### *Directions*

- Set cream cheese out to soften
- Shred cheddar cheese
- Finely chop peppers and onions
- Mix all ingredients together
- Place in fridge for a couple of hours for flavors to meld

JOHN HORNER, GRADE 2

## *JoAnn Horton's Lemon Pound Cake*

My favorite recipe is lemon pound cake. I like to help my mamaw make it. When it is finished, it tastes the best! We make this recipe on any day I ask for it. Sometimes I get to help by breaking the eggs.

### *Ingredients*

- 1 box of white cake mix
- 4 eggs
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup orange juice with pulp
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup vegetable oil
- 1 pack of instant lemon pudding

### *Directions*

- Whip all ingredients together with mixer
- Grease bundt pan with oil
- Then pour into bundt pan
- Bake in the oven at 350° for 45 mins
- Let cool in pan for 15 mins before getting it out to enjoy

CALEM HORTON, GRADE 2

## *Grape Salad*

My favorite recipe is for Grape Salad. We eat it every Christmas dinner. I like to help my mom make it. Sometimes I get to help by putting the grapes in. It tastes yummy when it is finished. I like it because it has grapes in it.

- 2 cups red grapes
- 2 cups white grapes
- 1 apple of your choice
- 16 oz. sour cream
- 8 oz. cream cheese
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- ½ cup white sugar
- 1 cup chopped pecans (optional)

Slice grapes in halves. Dice apple. Mix sour cream, cream cheese, brown sugar, white sugar. Stir in grapes, apples, and pecans. Enjoy!

JACE JASTER, GRADE 2

## *Dreamsicle Orange Punch From the Kitchen of Levi Jerrell*

My favorite recipe is Dreamsicle Orange Punch. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so delicious! We make this recipe on Saturday mornings. Sometimes I get to help by pouring the stuff in.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 quart orange sherbert
- ♦ 1 quart vanilla ice cream
- ♦ 1 liter of Sprite or 7-Up
- ♦ 1 can cream soda

### *Directions*

- ♦ Pour Sprite.7Up into large bowl
- ♦ Scoop softened sherbet and vanilla ice cream into the bowl
- ♦ Add can of cream soda
- ♦ Stir
- ♦ Enjoy!

LEVI JERRELL, GRADE 2

## *Pork Chops*

My favorite recipe is pork chops. My dad fixes it. It tastes very good. We make it whenever want to have it. I like it because it is juicy.

LEVI JONES, GRADE 2

## *Homemade Butter Potatoes From the Kitchen of Daniel Knisely*

My favorite recipe is Homemade Butter Potatoes. I like to help my dad make it. When it is finished, it tastes so delicious! We make this recipe on for supper. Sometimes I get to help by mashing them with a special masher with holes and a handle.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ Idaho potatoes
- ♦ Butter
- ♦ Milk
- ♦ salt

### *Directions*

- ♦ Peel potatoes and chop into quarters
- ♦ Cook in water until done
- ♦ Drain and put in a bowl
- ♦ Add butter, milk, and salt
- ♦ Mash together until smooth

DANIEL KNISELY, GRADE 2

## *B's Favorite Polish Soup From the Kitchen of Mamaw Bray*

My favorite recipe is B's Favorite Polish Soup. I like to help Mamaw T make it. When it is finished, it tastes delicious! We make this recipe any day. Sometimes I get to help by cutting up the potatoes, onions, and polish sausages.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 packages Polish Sausage links
- ♦ 1 can carrots
- ♦ 5 or 6 lg potatoes
- ♦ 1 large can tomatoes
- ♦ 1 large onion
- ♦ 1 c. elbow macaroni
- ♦ 1 can green beans
- ♦ salt
- ♦ 1 can corn
- ♦ pepper
- ♦ 1 can peas

### *Directions*

- ♦ In a large stockpot, bring 6–8 cups of water to a boil
- ♦ Slice sausages in thin slices and add to boiling water
- ♦ Peel potatoes and onion and cube into small squares- add to water with sausages
- ♦ Add salt and pepper to taste
- ♦ Next, start adding all the canned vegetables

- ♦ Last, add elbow macaroni
- ♦ Reduce heat and cook until macaroni is tender, stirring occasionally to avoid sticking
- ♦ (For smaller pot, split ingredients in half)
- ♦ P.S. you can add any vegetables you prefer

BRAELYNN MCQUEEN, GRADE 2

### *Mrs. Betty's Made from Scratch Chocolate Cake*

My favorite recipe is Chocolate Cake! When it is finished, it tastes great! We make this recipe on my birthday. Sometimes I get to help by blowing out my candles and eating all the yummy cake!

#### *Ingredients for Cake*

- ♦ 2 c. self rising flour
- ♦ 2 c. sugar
- ♦ ½ c. baking cocoa
- ♦ 1 c. vegetable oil
- ♦ 1 c. milk
- ♦ 2 eggs
- ♦ 1 c. hot water

#### *Ingredients for Frosting*

- ♦ 2 c. whipping cream
- ♦ 12 oz. semisweet chocolate chips
- ♦ 3–3 ½ c. confectioners sugar

#### *Directions for Cake*

- ♦ Blend well the dry ingredients (first three on list)
- ♦ Stir and blend into dry ingredients the next three ingredients- adding water last
- ♦ Blend well
- ♦ Bake in a 13x9x2 pan at 350° for 35 minutes
- ♦ Cool, then add frosting

#### *Directions for Frosting*

- ♦ Simmer cream, remove from heat
- ♦ Add chocolate chips to melt
- ♦ Put bowl on ice and stir to cool
- ♦ Whisk in confectioners sugar
- ♦ Spread frosting on cake

EMMA MILES, GRADE 2

### *Old Fashion Molasses Cookies*

My favorite recipe is my Nanner, Mamaw Ann's Old Fashion Molasses Cookies. We make this recipe all the time. When it is finished, it tastes so good! Sometimes I get to help by pouring the good stuff in. We eat them with a big glass of milk. They are so yummy!

1 cup packed brown sugar  
1 cup butter, softened  
¼ cup dark molasses  
1 large egg  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
2 ½ cups all purpose flour  
2 tsp. baking soda  
1 tsp. ground cinnamon  
1 tsp. ground ginger  
½ tsp. salt  
¼ cup sugar for rolling

Preheat oven to 325°, spray baking sheet with non-stick spray. In a large bowl, mix brown sugar, butter, molasses, egg, and vanilla. Then, mix in flour, baking soda, cinnamon, ginger, and salt. Then, roll into balls. Dip them in sugar and roll them. Then, place 2 inches apart on baking sheet. Bake for 13–15 minutes. Let cool.

MACKENZIE MOORE, GRADE 2

### *Moore Family Chocolate Pie*

My favorite recipe is Chocolate Pie. I like to help my momma make it. When it is finished, it tastes great! We make this recipe any day at any time! Sometimes I get to help by cracking the eggs and licking the bowl.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 egg yolks
- ♦ 2 c. milk
- ♦ 1 c. sugar
- ♦ 2 tbsp flour
- ♦ 2 tbsp cocoa
- ♦ 1 tbsp butter
- ♦ 1 tsp vanilla
- ♦ 1 graham cracker crust

#### *Meringue Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 egg whites
- ♦ ¼ tsp cream of tartar
- ♦ 4 tbsp sugar
- ♦ ½ tsp cornstarch
- ♦ 1 tsp vanilla

#### *Directions for Pie*

- ♦ Mix dry ingredients together in a pan
- ♦ Next, add milk, egg yolks, and butter
- ♦ Cook until thick, stirring constantly- mixture will bubble
- ♦ Pour into crust

### *Directions for Meringue*

- ♦ Beat together egg whites and cream of tartar until soft peaks
- ♦ Add sugar, cornstarch, and vanilla- beat with an electric whisk until stiff peaks
- ♦ Pour on top of pie and bake until lightly golden

MICHAEL MOORE, GRADE 2

## *Deer Chili*

My favorite recipe is deer chili. I like to help my mom and dad make it. When it is finished, it tastes good! We make this recipe on days it is cold outside. Sometimes I get to help by making chili and putting it in the bowls.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 lb ground deer meat
- ♦ 1 cup green peppers & onions
- ♦ 1 can diced tomatoes
- ♦ Small can of mushrooms
- ♦ 1 can of tomato paste
- ♦ Garlic salt & onion powder
- ♦ 1 can of kidney beans
- ♦ Season salt to taste
- ♦ 1 can of brown beans
- ♦ Hot sauce (2 tbsp)
- ♦ Chili powder to taste

### *Directions*

- ♦ Fry meat, drain well
- ♦ Add all ingredients into big pot
- ♦ Bring to a steady boil
- ♦ Turn heat down, simmer 10–15 mins
- ♦ Cool and serve with shredded cheese, crackers, and sour cream

NEVAEH MORANGELLO, GRADE 2

## *Oreo Dessert*

My favorite recipe is oreo dessert. I like to help my mamaw. When it is finished, it tastes good! We make this recipe on Thanksgiving. Sometimes I get to help by mixing the ingredients together.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 cup of all purpose flour
- ♦ 2–3 oz boxes of chocolate pudding mix
- ♦ ½ cup chopped walnuts
- ♦ 12 oreos crushed
- ♦ 1 stick butter softened
- ♦ 3 cups of cold milk
- ♦ 8 oz cream cheese softened

- ♦ Topping - crushed oreos
- ♦ 1 cup of powdered sugar
- ♦ 8 oz whipped topping

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Preheat oven to 350°, spray 9x13 pan
- ♦ Mix flour, nuts, and butter until dough forms
- ♦ Spread evenly in bottom of pan, bake 20 mins
- ♦ Beat together cream cheese and powdered sugar until smooth
- ♦ Fold in whipped topping, spread over cooled cake
- ♦ Mix together pudding mix and milk, then stir in chopped oreos
- ♦ Spread over cream cheese mixture
- ♦ Chill in refrigerator for 2 hours.
- ♦ Top with more crushed oreos.
- ♦ Enjoy!

LAKEN MULLINS, GRADE 2

### *Hershey Chocolate Cake From the Kitchen of Suzanne Estep*

My favorite recipe is Hershey Chocolate Cake. I like to help Mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy! We make this recipe on Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by stirring in the chocolate pieces and then sprinkling them on top when it is finished.

#### *Ingredients for Cake*

- ♦ 1 box Swiss chocolate cake mix
- ♦ 1 sm. Box instant vanilla pudding
- ♦ 3 eggs
- ♦ 1 c. vegetable oil
- ♦ 1 ½ c. buttermilk

#### *Ingredients for Filling/Icing*

- ♦ 8 oz. cream cheese
- ♦ ½ c. granulated sugar
- ♦ 1 c. powdered sugar
- ♦ 16 oz. cool whip (softened)
- ♦ 4 Hershey candy bars

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Mix together cake ingredients
- ♦ Bake in three 9" bake pans at 350° for 25 minutes
- ♦ Let cool

#### *Directions for Filling/Icing*

- ♦ Grate candy bars and set one aside for later
- ♦ Mix together cream cheese, granulated sugar, and powdered sugar

- ♦ Fold in cool whip and three of the grated candy bars
- ♦ Stack the cake layers and put icing between each layer
- ♦ Ice top of cake and sprinkle remaining candy car on top

HENRY MUNSEY, GRADE 2

### *Tuna Casserole*

My favorite recipe is tuna casserole. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes good! We make this recipe on Tuesdays. Sometimes I get to help by making putting the chips in the dish.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 4 cans of tuna in water
- ♦ 1 can peas
- ♦ 1 large can of cream of mushroom soup
- ♦ Large bay of Lays plain chips
- ♦  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of milk

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Drain tuna and peas
- ♦ Mix soup and milk
- ♦ Preheat oven to 400°
- ♦ Spray bottom of pan with cooking spray
- ♦ Layer chips then tuna and peas
- ♦ Cover with a layer of soup
- ♦ Finish with another layer of chips
- ♦ Bake 30 mins or until hot in the center

CANNON OAKS, GRADE 2

### *Grammy's Sloppy Joes*

My favorite recipe is Grammy's Sloppy Joes. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good they are one of my favorites! We make this recipe anytime. Sometimes I get to help by mixing all the stuff.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. ground beef
- ♦  $\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp. worstershire sauce
- ♦ 1 finely chopped onion
- ♦ Salt and pepper to taste
- ♦  $\frac{1}{4}$  c. yellow mustard
- ♦ Hamburger buns for serving
- ♦  $\frac{1}{4}$  c. sugar
- ♦ Choice of cheese if desired
- ♦  $\frac{1}{4}$  c. vinegar
- ♦ 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  c. ketchup

### *Directions*

- ♦ Brown meat in a skillet or large pot and drain fat.
- ♦ Add onions and simmer until almost opaque in color.
- ♦ Add the rest of the ingredients and bring to a simmer.
- ♦ Simmer for up to 2 hours stirring frequently on low heat.
- ♦ Add salt and pepper per individual taste preference.
- ♦ Serve on hamburger buns adding cheese if desired.

ISABELL PERDUE, GRADE 2

## *Gravy & Biscuits*

My favorite recipe is gravy and biscuits. I like to help my mamaw make it. It tastes amazing. We make it on Christmas, Easter, and sometimes when I am there. I get to help sometimes by putting the gravy on the biscuits. We make it for supper sometimes.

### Ground Sausage

1 cup flour

2 cups milk

Buttermilk biscuits

Open the buttermilk biscuits, place them on a baking sheet, preheat oven 350°, place them in the oven for 15 minutes. Fry sausage on medium heat for 20 minutes then pour in 2 cups of milk and 1 cup of flour. After buttermilk biscuits are done, take them out of the oven. Make sure the gravy is done (10 minutes). Open buttermilk biscuits then pour the ground sausage and gravy over buttermilk biscuits. Let cool for 2–5 minutes. Enjoy!

ALEXIS RASH, GRADE 2

## *Granna's Biscuits From the Kitchen of Linda Marshall*

My favorite recipe is Granna's Biscuits. I like to help my grana and mommy make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy! We make this recipe on weekends. Sometimes I get to help by stirring everything up.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 cups self-rising flour
- ♦ 1 cup buttermilk
- ♦ 6 tbsp. canola oil

### *Directions*

- ♦ Combine wet ingredients with flour.
- ♦ Knead lightly
- ♦ Roll out dough approximately ½ in. thick
- ♦ Cut with biscuit cutter and place on baking sheet
- ♦ Bake in a 450° oven until browned lightly

My favorite recipe is Play Dough. I like to help my granna make it. When it is finished, it feels squishy! We make this recipe on Sundays. Sometimes I get to help by putting in the color.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 c. flour
- ♦ 4 or 5 drops food coloring
- ♦ ½ c. salt
- ♦ 2 tsp. cream of tarter
- ♦ ½ tbsp. flavoring
- ♦ 2 tbsp. vegetable oil
- ♦ 1 c. water

### *Directions*

- ♦ Add ingredients to a pan
- ♦ Heat over low heat until they form a ball; have fun!

JENNA RIGGS, GRADE 2

## *Chicken Noodle Soup From the Kitchen of Mama Mel*

My favorite recipe is Chicken Noodle Soup. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes so delicious, warm, and yummy! We make this recipe on cold winter days or any day we want it! Sometimes I get to help by pouring some ingredients into the pot. I also help eat it!

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 8 chicken legs
- ♦ 4 cubes chicken bouillon
- ♦ 1–12oz pk. egg noodles
- ♦ ½ stick butter or margarine
- ♦ 1 family size box of chicken broth
- ♦ ¼ tsp. Lawry's Seasoning Salt
- ♦ 1–10:15 oz. Campbell's chicken noodle soup
- ♦ ¼ tsp. celery salt
- ♦ 1–22.6oz. can cream of chicken condensed soup
- ♦ 1 sm. can carrots or pk. cooked carrots
- ♦ 1–12 oz. can evaporated milk
- ♦ Salt and pepper to taste

### *Directions*

- ♦ Boil chicken legs until juice runs clear.
- ♦ Drain water except for about 1 cup.
- ♦ Remove chicken from the bones, tear into shreds.
- ♦ Return chicken to the pot with all ingredients except egg noodles.
- ♦ Bring to a boil then reduce heat to medium/low and add egg noodles.
- ♦ Cover and simmer approximately 8 minutes or until noodles are tender.
- ♦ Enjoy with cornbread.

LIAM SHUPE, GRADE 2

## *The Sizemores' Rocky Road No Bake Cheesecake*

My favorite recipe is rocky road no bake cheesecake. I like to help my Mommy make it. When it is finished, it tastes really good! We make this recipe on Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by mixing the ingredients.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 pkg of cream cheese
- ♦ ½ cup mini chocolate chips
- ♦ ⅓ cup of sugar
- ♦ ¼ cup chocolate chips
- ♦ ¼ cup of milk
- ♦ 1 chocolate pie crust
- ♦ 2 tubs of cool whip
- ♦ ½ cup of marshmallow minis
- ♦ ¼ cup peanuts

### *Directions*

- ♦ Microwave ¼ cup chocolate chips until melted - set aside
- ♦ Beat softened cream cheese, sugar, and milk in a bowl until well combined
- ♦ Stir in cool whip, marshmallows, peanuts, and chocolate chips
- ♦ Spoon into pie crust
- ♦ Refrigerate 2 hours or until set, store in refrigerator

BAYLEE SIZEMORE, GRADE 2

## *The Spaulding's Chocolate Ice Cream Soda*

My favorite recipe is chocolate ice cream soda. I like to help my brother, R.J., make it. When it is finished, it tastes like chocolate pop! We make this recipe on R.J.'s birthday. Sometimes I get to help by pouring the pop over the ice cream.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2–3 tbsp chocolate syrup
- ♦ ¼ cup chilled soda
- ♦ 2 scoops of vanilla ice cream

### *Directions*

- ♦ Stir together syrup and soda in a tall glass
- ♦ Add scoops of ice cream to glass
- ♦ Fill glass with additional soda
- ♦ Lightly stir, garnish with whipped cream and a cherry
- ♦ Makes one serving

BILLY SPAULDING, GRADE 2

## *Pumpkin Bars*

My favorite recipe is pumpkin bars. My Mommy and Mamaw make them. It tastes good. I get to help by putting the sugar on it. I like the sugar inside of them the best. We make them on my birthday and at Christmas.

MASON VAUGHAN, GRADE 2

## *Home-Made Mashed Potatoes*

My favorite recipe is Home-Made Mashed Potatoes. I like to help Momma make it. My mom makes this at Christmas, Thanksgiving, and just for dinner. Sometimes I get to help by smashing the potatoes. We eat it with gravy. The part I like best is the pepper. When it is finished, it tastes amazing! Home-made mashed potatoes are the best!

Potatoes  
Milk  
Salt  
Pepper  
Butter

Put peeled potatoes in boiling water on stove for 20–30 minutes. Add salt, pepper, lots of butter. Drain water, mash potatoes really well. Add more butter, salt, and pepper and half-cup of milk. Mash and stir up all ingredients. Let cool and serve!

TREVOR WEBB, GRADE 2

## *Home-Made Chicken Noodle Soup*

My favorite recipe is Home-Made Chicken Noodle Soup. I like to help Mommy make it. We make it on cold winter days or when someone is sick. I like the noodles, onions, carrots, and celery. I like the chicken too! Sometimes I get to help by putting the vegetables in the broth and seasonings to simmer.

6 cans (14.5 oz.) of chicken broth  
1 bag of carrots, peeled and diced  
1 bag of celery, washed and diced  
2 onions, diced  
1–2 lbs. boneless chicken  
Chicken Soup Base  
1 bag of egg noodles  
Salt and pepper to taste

Place chicken and chicken broth in a large pot and bring to a boil. Once chicken is cooked thoroughly in boiling broth, remove from the broth and place in a separate bowl to cool. While chicken is cooling, place diced carrots, onions, and celery in boiling broth. Turn stove temperature to medium heat and simmer vegetables and broth. Shred or dice chicken while broth and vegetables cook. Once completed, add chicken back

to broth. Add salt, pepper, and chicken soup base to broth to preferred taste. Simmer as long as desired. Add egg noodles 30 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

RYLEE WESTON, GRADE 2

### *Oreo Ice Cream Cake*

My favorite recipe is Oreo Ice Cream Cake. I like to help my mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes really really good! We make this recipe on my birthday. Sometimes I get to help by putting the icing and oreos on top.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ ½ gallon of ice cream
- ♦ 2 bags of Oreos
- ♦ 1 stick butter
- ♦ Hershey's Chocolate Syrup
- ♦ 8 oz. Cool Whip

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Set ice cream out of the freezer to soften
- ♦ Crush one bag of Oreos
- ♦ Melt butter and pour into pan with crushed Oreos
- ♦ Press Oreos down into the bottom of pan and bake at 350° for 5 minutes
- ♦ Let crust cool
- ♦ Spread ice cream onto crust
- ♦ Put Hershey's syrup on top of ice cream
- ♦ Next add the cool whip
- ♦ Crush other bag of oreos and spread on top of cool whip
- ♦ Put in freezer
- ♦ Enjoy!

ADA WILLIAMS, GRADE 2

### *Pizza From the Kitchen of Michael Williams*

My favorite recipe is Michael. I like to help my dad make it. When it is finished, it tastes so good! We make this recipe at night before I brush my teeth! Sometimes I get to help by putting the sauce and cheese on the dough and spread it around.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ Pizza crust
- ♦ 1 jar pizza sauce
- ♦ Shredded cheese

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Spread pizza sauce on the pizza crust.
- ♦ Sprinkle cheese over the crust.

- ♦ Bake on 350° until golden brown or until the cheese is melted.

MICHAEL WILLIAMS, GRADE 2

### *Peanut Butter Ball From Mom's Kitchen*

My favorite recipe is Peanut Butter Ball. I like to help Mom make it. When it is finished, it tastes gross, but I help my mom with it anyway! We make this recipe on Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by getting everything, making sure everything is in the bowl, and mixing it up. Then, when it is finished, I get to roll it in the chocolate and peanut butter chips and put the cookies around it.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 12 oz. softened cream cheese
- ♦ 2 c. powdered sugar
- ♦ ¾ c. peanut butter
- ♦ 1 c. peanut butter chips
- ♦ 1 c. chocolate chips

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Mix together cream cheese, powdered sugar, and peanut butter on medium speed- beat until combined
- ♦ Stir in 1 cup peanut butter chips
- ♦ Add mixture to a piece of plastic wrap and make into a ball- refrigerate for 2 hours
- ♦ Remove from wrap and roll in a mixture of peanut butter chips and chocolate chips
- ♦ Serve with your favorite cookies!

LUCAS WILSON, GRADE 2

### *The Witt Family's Potato Salad*

My favorite recipe is potato salad. I like to help my family make it. When it is finished, it tastes yummy! We make this recipe on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Sometimes I get to help by chopping the vegetables and mixing the ingredients.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 10 lb potatoes
- ♦ 32 oz jar of dill pickles
- ♦ 3 tbsp or more mayonnaise
- ♦ Salt & pepper (optional)
- ♦ Mustard (amount desired)
- ♦ 1 medium sweet onion
- ♦ 6 stalks of celery
- ♦ 1 dozen boiled eggs

#### *Directions*

- ♦ Boil potatoes until you can pierce with a fork
- ♦ Dice onion, celery, and pickles into medium size pieces

- ♦ Boil eggs for 13 minutes, dice boiled eggs
- ♦ Drain and mash potatoes
- ♦ Combine potatoes, celery, onion, pickles, and eggs
- ♦ Start adding mayo by tablespoon, mix, then taste
- ♦ Add desired amount of mustard, salt, and pepper
- ♦ Serve immediately or refrigerate

ABEL WITT, GRADE 2

### *Great-Great Grandmother Whitt's Apple Stack Cake*

My favorite recipe is Apple Stack Cake. I like to help Mom and G-Mom make it. I like the apples that are in the cake. My mom makes it whenever I ask her to. It is delicious. I get to help her by handing her the ingredients.

10 c. Plain flour  
 1 1/2 tsp. Salt  
 2 tsp. Soda  
 2 c. White Sugar  
 3 whole eggs  
 1 tsp. Nutmeg  
 1 c. Shortening (she used lard)  
 1 1/2 c. Buttermilk (her's was fresh homemade)

Cooked Apples (fresh, dried, or applesauce, or apple butter to spread between layers)

Grandmother made this the old fashioned way by placing 10 cups of plain (all purpose) flour in a large mixing bowl.

Make a well in the center of the flour and add the remaining ingredients.

Mix ingredients, except the apples, putting in flour as you mix the other ingredients. DO NOT mix all of the flour into mixture. Pull flour into the well as you mix other ingredients. Grandmother had flour left in the bowl after mixing all other ingredients and working in enough flour to make a stiff dough.

Divide the mixture into 8 balls. Roll or pat each ball into a thin lining in the bottom of the same size round cake pans. Grandmother used iron skillets to bake the cake layers. Each layer should be the same size. This will make two, 4-layer stack cakes.

Bake at 350–375° until done.

Spread apples between each layer. Grandmother usually cooked her dried apples with sugar and spiced them with cinnamon, ground cloves, and nutmeg to taste.

CHANCE WRIGHT, GRADE 2

### **Gretta Carroll, Gigi Long, & Kim GoForth**

*English, Grade 4*

#### *Great-great-grandmother*

Barbara Combs is a wonderful person. She was born on February 23, 1953. She is my great-great-grandmother. She grew up with two sisters and three brothers.

She enjoyed the holidays. She likes to get with family and eat meals. She likes to have fun by talking and watching the kids. Her favorite memory is visiting her grandparents. She liked going to the lake and being with them.

She liked to talk to her sisters and brothers. She liked the past and the present. She thought people in the past was nicer and she thought it was a nice place in the country.

She liked to read the Bible then she got older and she started reading the Bible to her son and daughter. She had grandkids and started reading it to them, then she started reading it to my cousins and then she started reading it to me and my brother. Her recipe for happiness is to trust God and be good to others.

JAZLIN ADAMS, GRADE 4

### *Kathy Dean*

Kathy Dean is an awesome person. She was born on October 13, 1952 in Ohio. She is my grandmother. Her friends call her Kathy and family calls her granny or gran gran. Her mom said that she was perfect when she was little.

Her favorite food as a child was cream corn. She had one sister and they rode to school on a bus. Her mom told her anything is possible. Her favorite subject was home economics. Her favorite game is tag. She loved playing tag with her sister. Her favorite saying is "What?" It is funny!

The happiest moment in her life was high school graduation. Later she met Bob Dean on a blind date. Later she had kids and she thought that her kids baptisms were special.

My grandmother is the best person in the world. I love my granny. She is always there for me. She does a lot for me. I love my granny so much. She helps with a lot in my family. The reason I love my granny is I feel safe around her. I love my granny so much.

HUXLEY ALDRIDGE, GRADE 4

### *Mamaw Minnie Bach*

Minnie Bach is an amazing person. She is my mamaw. Some people call her Jean. Mamaw was born in Harlan, Kentucky on July 26, 1956. Mamaw moved to Illinois.

Mamaw went to school at Brookside Elementary, Illinois. She has three brothers and four sisters. She rode a school bus. She played sports in school. Mamaw wanted to be a teacher. Her favorite subject is science. Her parents taught her to put God first in everything. She worked hard. Her chores were wash dishes and sweep.

When Mamaw was an adult she worked on an assembly line. Mamaw is retired now and now she stays home. She had hard times but she stood strong.

Mamaw was there for me when hard times come. My mamaw helps me when I need her. I love her with all my heart. When I break something or did something wrong my mamaw will be nice to me. Mamaw gets us lots of things and we have to go there when we get sick. If I miss my family Mamaw will make me happy.

BELLAH BACH, GRADE 4

### *Fall*

My favorite season is fall. I like fall because it is fun to play in the leaves. It is fun to watch the pretty leaves fall from the trees. It's cool to rake them and watch all of the leaves come in together. I love when the wind blows so the leaves can blow. It is so pretty to watch. I like when you can push your siblings in the leaves! It is fun!

AVERY BATES, GRADE 4

## *Gran Bob*

Bobbie Winters is an amazing person! She is my great-grandmother. We call her Gran Bob. She was born on April 27, 1942. She was born in Virginia and raised in a small house in Dryden.

When she was growing up she really liked to read and still does. Her favorite is called Harry Potter. She read all the books and watched some of the movies just like I am doing. I have already read four of the books but I am working on it. She sometimes reads them on the way to school. Her favorite one was the last one.

Her favorite thing to do when she was little was to play Hide and Go Seek with her little sister. Her tradition for Christmas was to go outside with her twin sister and dad and cut down their own Christmas tree. She is the most important person in the world to me.

AIDEN BROWN, GRADE 4

## *100 Years*

It all started 100 years ago. There was a grumpy girl and she had a bad attitude. She kept begging for Hersheys until she saw a spaceship. Then she begged her mom and dad to go so they let her go and they did the countdown thinking it was real. They were in there for about 10 minutes but it was actually a teleporter. It teleported them to a witch and the witch gave the girl a magical apple. The girl wasn't sure she about eating it, but she did anyway. The apple turned her into a frog, but she would stay alive for 100 years. She had a name tag on her that said Anabell, but she hasn't been seen in 100 years!

HAYDEN BURKE, GRADE 4

## *Eddie Ray Cantor is Amazing*

Eddie Ray Cantor is an amazing person. Dad's dad was born on December 20, 1955 in Jonesville, Virginia. He is married to Carole Cantor, my mamaw. He still lives in Jonesville. My papaw had 5 sisters and 3 brothers. Papaw and mamaw had 2 children. They grew up and got saved. They now have kids of their own. Those kids were his favorite memories.

When my papaw was little he walked to school. He liked Rock and Roll music like Guns and Roses. He ran track in high school. He wanted to be a carpenter when he was little. My papaw really likes cheeseburgers. He always trusted in God. He went to Devil's Tower in Wyoming to hunt. He became a carpenter.

Papaw loves me. Papaw always trusted in me. Papaw guides me through hard times. Papaw helps me through my life.

LUKE CANTOR, GRADE 4

## *Papaw Dale Cavin*

I interviewed my papaw Dale Cavin. He was born on April 2, 1952. He is 67 years old. He was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia. He has two children. Jonathan is my dad and Melissa is my aunt.

My papaw has worked as a tractor salesman, carpenter, and a construction worker. When he was little he played softball and baseball. He worked on a farm. He went to Flatwoods Combined School. That's where he met my Nana.

Everytime I go to his house, I'll drink soda. We have a family reunion every year. Everybody comes. He loves to be with family. He told me about my middle name Alexander. It was one of my great-grandpa's first names. He showed me a big picture of him and his son and wife. It looked to be from the early to mid 1900s. He also told me about him and my dad. He threw a ball and hit my dad's glasses. They broke because the ball hit them.

I love my papaw. He is cool and funny. I love to visit after we finish working on the farm. During the interview he told me to be fair, do good in school and get a good education.

CALEB CAVIN, GRADE 4

### *My Grandma Childers*

My grandma Childers is strong in her faith. Her birthday is December 22, 1959. She was born in Rose Hill, Virginia. I love her. I interviewed my grandmother for a writing project at school. She likes all sports except football. Her chores were carrying dishes to the water, sweeping porches, and to carry in wood.

Times have changed since she was a girl. There are telephones, motorbikes, smartboard, 3D printers, and stores with toys. Times are harder now since she does not have her parents.

I love my grandmother. I call her mamaw. I love her so much. She helps me and comforts me. Her advice for me was to read my Bible, so I love God. I am trying, so I will do it for her and for me. It will make her proud.

DEVON CHILDERS, GRADE 4



### *My History Project*

I had to do a project for my history class and I chose to make a cornhusk doll. I made a cornhusk doll because my mom made one in her fourth grade class. When my mom made hers she gave it to her great-grandmother Opal Cope. She hung it up in her house and it stayed there until she passed away in 2008. After she passed away my aunt gave it back to my mom and thought that one day her kids would want to see what she did in school.

ADDISON CLARK, GRADE 4

### *Tommy Joe Flanary*

Tommy Joe Flanary was born on June 13, 1942. He got to school by the bus. His favorite subject was History. When he was my age he wanted to be a builder.

His favorite food is gravy and biscuits. His favorite saying is "Praise God." He had a girl dog. Her name was Fido. He also played baseball. Some of his strong memories is being in a close family and having a sister. He liked Sunday dinners. He also was very happy about the birth of his children. He was very proud of their graduations and baptisms.

His advice for me is to go to church and go to school. The Bible is the guide to life. Church is important and spending time with family is to. He was voted best "Sunday School Teacher."

I love my Pop. He is smart and sometimes we build toy boats. He teaches me about building and how to build things. Once we built a go cart that was made of wood. It's not gas or electric. It can go by going down hills. I am very grateful for my Pop.

JAMES CLARK, GRADE 4

## *Grandmaw Rosemary Lewis*

I interviewed Rosemary Lewis. She is my Grandmaw. She is from Cincinnati, Ohio. She was born June 8, 1954. She is one of the only old people in my family that is still alive.

When she was in school, she walked, but in Virginia she rode the bus. Her favorite subject was history and science. She would play tag and go to the playground. She also had a lot of pets. She had cats, dogs, turtles, mice, and rabbits. She also had one sister and four brothers.

She said she can easily remember coming in from school. Her favorite food is burgers. She has no favorite sayings. She said her favorite compliment she ever got was being called a nice person. She loves her kids.

I love her a lot. She is my favorite grandmaw that I have. I really enjoyed hearing the answers. I wish I could go back in time and meet my grandmaw as a child.

KAITLYN CLASBY, GRADE 4

## *Patsy Collins*

My grandmother is Patsy Collins. She was born on August 12, 1940. She lived in Exeter, Virginia. She went to school at Appalachia. She grew up in Wise County.

She rode a school bus to school when she was a kid. She was a helper at school. She really liked school. She even wanted to be a teacher when she grew up.

Later, she married Buddy. When she was still married, her dad died. This was the most difficult time in her life. She was really sad when her dad died. Later, her husband died from brain cancer. This was another difficult time for my grandmother, too.

Growing up she had a dog named Spot. Spot was brown and white. She also liked potatoes. She went to a baseball game. Now she likes to watch the Hallmark Channel and visit with her grandchildren.

NATELIE COLLINS, GRADE 4

## *Veterans*

Veterans are protective  
Everything you have done was for us  
Terrific people  
Enemies are almost gone  
Return to war  
Air Force troops  
Navy troops  
Safe because of the Army

ZACHARY COPE, GRADE 4

## *Linda Cowden*

My Nanny, Linda Cowden is the best ever. She was born on May 29th, 1942. Also, she was born in Monarch, Virginia. She had no sisters and brothers.

She grew up in Pennington Gap. When she was young, she got a cross necklace. In school, her favorite subject was math. She got to school by the bus or her mom took her. For fun at school, she liked to play ball.

She had a Pekinese dog named JoJo. JoJo watched for the bus and when it came she ran to greet Nanny. When Nanny was bored, she would play with JoJo, play ball, play checkers, play monopoly, play piano, ride bikes or read the Bible.

For her jobs, she worked for a doctor, a lawyer, a banker and her last job was working at the mayor's office. She did not work at the mayor's office that long because if you worked there, you would need good eyesight. She did not have that good of eyesight. When she messed up on her job, she would say "by grannys."

I love my Nanny very much. She does a lot for me. I have a lot of fun with her. She is the best Nanny ever.

LEAH COWDEN, GRADE 4

### *Richard Hartsock*

I interviewed Richard Hartsock. He is my mom's friend. We call him dad. He went to school at Pennington Gap. His favorite subject is math. He walked to school.

His favorite holiday is Christmas. He likes it because he gets gifts and spends time with family. He likes to eat Christmas dinner and watch us open presents. He eats Santa's cookies. On the 4th of July he likes to look at the fireworks with me. We go to the park and look at them. He loves the colors of them. At home we set them off too.

He was a welder. He fixed a lot of stuff. He isn't married to my mom but they are friends. He painted the bridge with my mom in Pennington Gap. He fixes cars and trucks sometimes. He makes houses and trims trees. I want to know more about him. He has a lot of stuff for me to learn about.

CHLOE CRUSENBERRY, GRADE 4

### *Mary Louise Eldridge*

Mary Louise Eldridge is a good person from my family. She was born in Big Stone Gap. She went to Elementary and Powell Valley High School. She was born at home in the Wildcat section. In elementary school she walked a mile each way to and from school. In high school she rode the bus to school.

She did about everything at home. She cleaned, feed chickens, hogs and general work. She is caring, hard working and very nice. I interviewed her because she allowed me to interview her and I care about her a lot because she is my grandma.

AARON ELDRIDGE, GRADE 4

### *My Aunt, Missy Belcher*

My aunt Missy Belcher is helpful to me and my granny Sue Sizemeore. She was born in Middlesboro, Kentucky on January 2, 1971. Missy has two sisters, Tammy and Jenny. She has 23 cats and dogs too. She works in the fields and feeds cows and hogs. She likes to listen to country music. She went to school in Jonesville and she loved math. She wanted to be a teacher but she wanted to play sports. My aunt told me a story about an old lady who lived next door. The little girls would find sticks to play with and they would see whose stick would break first.

BRAYDEN ELY, GRADE 4

### *John Fortner*

John Fortner was an amazing person. He was born at Hubbard Springs on June 25, 1926. He went to school at Hubbard Springs in Virginia. He rode to school in a bus, car, or walked. His favorite subject was

math. He played baseball, checkers, cards, and pool. John had seven siblings. He had some chores. He had to feed horses, carried coal, mowed and milked cows. He carried hay bales two miles just to feed the horses.

My great-grandfather's favorite song was Old Bluegrass. He was a coal miner in Virginia. He worked in construction in Ohio. He taught us a lesson about how you work for what you get. He also gave us a saying "Well everything will be alright." His favorite food was chicken. He said chicken is good.

John had the best moment of his life when his grandson Johnny was born. Another great moment was when he had twins and adopted his daughter. His best compliment was "You are good hearted!" I love him. I want to hear more about his stories. I want to learn more about him.

AVA FORTNER, GRADE 4

### *Margaret Elkins*

Margaret Elkins is amazing. She is my grandmother. She was born on December 2, 1944 in Brownwood, Texas U.S.A. She now lives in Jonesville. She lives with my Papaw Don.

She went to school at Jonesville Elementary. Her favorite subject is English. She played softball. She has two brothers. She got to school by riding the bus. The bus number was 13. She had to cook or clean. Her favorite food is fresh fruit.

Her favorite song is by Ricky Nelson. Her favorite moment was when she got married to my Papaw. She has 4 kids. The jobs that she had were a secretary of a school and she operated a department store. She attended sports with kids.

I love my mamaw because we make Jello. She spends time with me. She helps me cook. She smells good.

MIA FORTNER, GRADE 4

### *Anita Rutledge*

My name is Anita Rutledge. She was born in Lee County, Virginia in 1959. She still resides in Lee County, Virginia.

She has 3 sisters and she is the youngest of 4 children. She is a good cook. She is special to me. She was a nurse until she had an accident and hurt her back.

She taught me how to pick berries. She taught me how to catch and hold a snake. She taught me how to fish and hunt. She taught me how to be brave and to feel secure. She taught me how to look for dry land fish known as wild mushrooms.

JOSHUA GALE, GRADE 4

### *My Great-Great Uncle Phillip*

I interviewed my great-great uncle Phillip Minton. He was born on April 4, 1935. He likes working in the garage. He likes to read the Bible. He was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia. I think he is an interesting person.

His family name originated in the Old English. He enjoyed Sunday dinners at his grandparent's house. He played cowboys with his brothers. He had 5 sisters and 7 brothers. His family traditions are Thanksgiving. His favorite sport was football.

He went to school in Pennington Gap, Virginia. He walked to school every day. His favorite subject is history. He wanted to be a good soldier when he grew up.

He liked the old days better. His favorite piece of new technology is medical care. His favorite saying is "I can't find my keys!" His favorite book is the Bible. He said, "It soothes my soul." His favorite food is biscuits and gravy. The hardest time was when a furnace blew up in his face.

I love him and his is so nice. He is an interesting person. He is so funny and smart. He is loving. He advised me to be a good girl and go to church.

LILA HINES, GRADE 4

### *The Greatest Great-Grandmother You Could Ever Have*

Francis Perkins Hines is the greatest great-grandmother you could ever have. She's known as Gran or Granny. Her birthday is September 17th, 1927. She was born in Iaeger, West Virginia, USA. She is my dad's grandmother.

Her school was Iaeger Elementary. What she wanted to be when she was my age was a teacher. Her favorite subjects were history, art, and music. How she got to school was walking. The number of siblings she had were seven.

Her jobs were typing deeds and teaching. One chore she had at home was she swept the living room. She is currently retired. Now she likes to read and watch television.

What she said my dad was like when he was my age was a whole lot like me. The special memories about her children are fussing and fighting on long trips. Her happiest moment was when her children were born. She met my great-grandfather Walter Dub Hines at school. Her favorite food is potatoes and I love her a lot.

MICHAEL HINES, GRADE 4

### *Gary Graham*

Gary Graham is awesome. He is my Paw. He was born on September 25, 1942. He lives in the Flatwoods area. He is married to Barbara Graham. I call her Maw.

Paw went to school at Flatwoods. He walked to school. Sometimes he stopped to fish. His parents didn't know. Then his dad needed help with hay and his dad went to the school. Gary was not there. He knew where he was. Fishing!

He likes his hat. In fact, he loves his hat. He would wear it all the time and everywhere. He likes homemade cornbread, soupbeans, and onions. He likes homemade food.

I love Paw. I am not his grandchild, but he makes me feel like one. I feed the cows with him. I make molasses with him. I feel lucky to know him.

BENJAMIN HIXSON, GRADE 4

### *Carroll Hobbs*

Carroll Hobbs is an amazing person. He is my papaw. His birthday is June 30, 1962. He was born in Noblesville. He has 5 siblings. He played football and marbles as a kid. He would go hunting. He liked hunting deer. His school was Powell Valley. His favorite subject was science. He had to walk 1 mile to get to the school bus. He's favorite holiday is Christmas because he gets to hang out with his family.

I love my papaw. He is special. I don't love him because of me or what he does for me. I love him for who he is. He's sweet and nice. He is the sweetest man I ever met. I would not ask for a new Papaw.

LYNLEA HOBBS, GRADE 4

### *Mammy Irene Jerrell*

My great-grandmother is Irene Jerrell. I think she is the best person ever. She was born in Virginia on November 7. Mammy had one brother and one sister.

She rode the bus to Jonesville High School. Her favorite subject was literature. She wanted to be a nurse when she grew up. She liked to play jump rope and hopscotch with her friends.

She loves Christmas because it is her favorite holiday. She loved her mom and her mom loved her and Christmas. She told me a Christmas story about Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer. She told it to me when I was 3. The story is like the song but different. It made me laugh because it was very very funny and hilarious.

I care for my great-grandmother. She cares for me. I liked what she told me about herself. I would like to learn more about her. I want to tell my kids about her.

KAMERON JERRELL, GRADE 4

### *Mimmy*

Evelin Harless is an awesome person. She is sometimes called Mimmy or Sweet Pea. Mimmy is my great grandmother. She was born in Lee County in her house on May 14, 1932. Mimmy was the oldest and had 5 sisters and 1 brother. Before school she helped do housework. Her favorite place was at her grandparents. When she was young she wanted to be a teacher. However she ended up being a housewife.

When she got older she went to school at Belgim Hollow School in Stone Creek. She said that she had to walk to school because her dad didn't have enough money for a car. Her school was a one room schoolhouse with one teacher and they learned 1st through 7th grade. She was the oldest so she had the most chores. One of her favorite was gardening and raising hogs. I guess that's why her favorite food is ham and soup beans. She said she can remember when her dad would take the hogs and have slaves kill the hogs. She didn't want her dad to have the hogs killed, but she knew if he didn't they would starve when winter came.

My mimmy is the nicest kindest person I know. She has come to all my dance recitals and other events. I love her so much. I love you Mimmy!

ALLIE JONES, GRADE 4

### *Patsy Thomas, My Grandma*

Patsy Thomas is a nice person. She was born and raised in Rose Hill. She is my Grandma. Her birthday is September 6, 1942. She has 1 sister and 4 brothers. She went to school at Rose Hill and Thomas Walker. Her favorite subject is math. When she was little, she wanted to be a teacher's aide.

Her favorite food is turkey and chicken. Her favorite music was country and gospel. She liked to read and work puzzle books and sew. She likes life better now.

The traditions are Easter, birthdays, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. She went to Niagara Falls, Branson, and Missouri. She had some chores when she was young. She helped cook, clean house, work out in fields and gardens, and helped milk cows.

She is the best person in the world. I think the world of her. She is a hard working person. I just love her her to death.

KAYLA JONES, GRADE 4

### *Phillip King*

I interviewed Phillip King. He is my grandpa. His birthday is February 9, 1961. He was born in a county in Harlan, Kentucky. Phillip went to Harlan Country School. His favorite subject is math. Sometimes Phillip walked to school, but most of the time he rode the bus. At school Phillip told his teacher he wanted to be a policeman.

My grandpa went camping when he was 12. He said it was fun. He liked to go camping with his parents. He put the tent up then Phillip put the fire to going. He went fishing in Harlan, Kentucky.

Sometimes when he gets a fish he puts the fish to bake and he eats the fish. Sometimes Phillip keeps the little fish and puts the fish in his fish tank. He went swimming in Harlan, Kentucky. He went to a lake with his family.

He has done a lot for me. He is fun. I love him.

KAREN KING, GRADE 4

### *Black Cat*

There once was a black cat that ran away from home. He saw a big toy store and went to the back of the store and jumped in the dumpster and looked for food, but there was no food. He ran to the beach for food but he got caught in quicksand! An old lady saw it and she saved the cat and gave it food and water. So the cat got his food and he was happy and went back home.

OFFIE KING, GRADE 4

### *Cheryl Wolford is Awesome*

Cheryl Wolford is an awesome person. She is also known as "Nana". She is my grandmother. She was born in Cleveland, Ohio in Cuyahoga County on August 6, 1969. She has one sister.

When she was little she went to school at JM Bevins in Slate Creek, Virginia. When she was little she would swing on grapevines. Her neighbors swung, too! She was really close with her neighbors. Whenever the grapevine broke they went tumbling down the mountain. One day when she was at school, her teacher was asking, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Guess what she said? "A mom!" The teacher said, "You have to have a real job." She said it hurt her feelings. She also wanted to be a grandmother.

When she was all grown-up she had my mom. Nine years later she had my two twin uncles, Jamie and Cody. They look just alike. I cannot tell them apart. She told me about my mother. She said, "She was super sweet and very, very, very shy." She also told me about what I was like when I was little. She said I was a sassy hot mess! She was the third one to hold me!

She also gave me some advice. She said, "always put God first in your relationships. Don't ever let life make you bitter. Don't stop being sweet. Stay you and follow your dream. Live your own life." My nana is the coolest person ever. I love her so much. She does so much for me. She is so awesome and sweet. She's always there for me.

KAYLA-SHEA LANE, GRADE 4

### *My Big Family*

My family is a big family. This is it. I'm just going to name the year they were born in. My brother is Xyler who was born 2114. Leland is my little brother and he was born last year in 2019. My step-brothers are Dalton who was born in 2009 and Dathen who was born in 2004. My sister is Lacole who was born in 2011. A big family is good because I have a lot of people to talk to. I also have a lot of cousins. My mom thinks I have over a hundred!

Since it is such a big family my mom has to make a regular sized can of corn and a family sized can. My favorite food is my mom's pumpkin pie. She makes the best. I don't know if it's homemade, but it tastes different and better than all the others. I don't like whipped cream on my pie so you get the flavor of it. Yum! My mom serves pie hot. My brothers and sisters like the whipped cream because they like the taste that goes with it and because it cools the hot pie down quicker than blowing on it!

JADEN LAWSON, GRADE 4

## *Nana*

Barbara Wilson is an amazing person. She is my grandmother. I call her Nana. She was born in Kentucky on October 8, 1944. She grew up surrounded by family. She has four brothers and sisters. She had a dog named Tootsie and it followed her everywhere. She said she was my age she had to do chores. Her job was to wash dishes. She had a job at a sewing factory.

She told me that she went to three different schools Burdine Elementary, Flatwoods Elementary, and Pennington Elementary. She walked to get to school. Her favorite subject was literature. She said she wanted to be a teacher when she grew up. She told me she played school with her friends outside. She told me she grew up with grandpa and that's how they met. She said she loved going blackberry picking, hiking and playing in the backyard.

I love my nana and think she is the most loving person in my life. She is very special to me. It was very fun learning about her. I love her very very much.

JOSSLYN LINDSAY, GRADE 4

## *Mamaw Betty Miles*

I interviewed my Mamaw Betty Miles. She was born on March 11, 1954. It is almost on my birthday. She was raised in Lee County, Virginia. She still lives there today. My Mamaw Betty played jump rope and played in the mud. She even made mud pies! Some of her favorite stuff to do is to help people. She loves the Bible. She also loves my papaw Jimmy Miles. When she married my papaw they had children and their grandchildren. They all were born healthy. They were the most precious gifts that God gave her. She loves God. Mamaw also loves the school.

My Mamaw works hard. She cooks supper and washes dishes. She works at home. She wanted to be a nurse or doctor when she was young. But now she watches her grandchildren.

Some of the stuff that I love about her is that she loves me. She also gave me this story. She watches me. She is nice. I love her!

JAKOB MABE, GRADE 4

## *My Nanny is Awesome!*

Sheila Anderson is my nanny and she's awesome! She was born in Middlesboro, Kentucky on December 20, 1956. She is also married to Bob Anderson. She has 2 sisters and 3 brothers. I never got to see them.

My nanny went to Flatwoods when she was little. She always rode the bus. When she got to school, she was excited when she was going to history. At home, she played with her favorite dolls. Mostly she played with her sisters. When she got older, she got jobs. The jobs she got were a teacher's aide and a waitress. She got lots of compliments like "pretty hair"! At anytime she had in the day, she would read "Huckleberry Finn." Also she had a dog named Chip and it was a tiny puppy.

Everytime I come over, she always says, "I love you" and she takes care of me a lot. She spends time with me. She sings "You Are My Sunshine" a lot. I will always love her.

KENADEE MCELYEA, GRADE 4

## *My Papaw Gary Medley*

My papaw, Gary Medley is a loving grandfather. He was born on November 11, 1948. He was born in Middlesboro, Kentucky. My papaw was born to my great-grandfather Silas and my great-grandmother called "Granny."

My papaw only had three brothers (Gaither, Keith, and Kevin). He went to school in Greenville, Tennessee and Middlesboro, Kentucky. He would walk to school or ride the bus. He wanted to grow up to be a coal miner and a farmer. My papaw played on his school's football team. He also liked to play baseball.

My papaw has happy memories from his childhood. He liked having family meals together. He enjoyed playing with his brothers and their pet goats. He liked to do chores on the farm to learn how to do things when he got older. He loved to listen to country music. He also remembered having a pet dog named Josh.

I love my papaw because he helps me when I need it. He will go to the moon and back for me. I love my papaw because he has taught me a lot of things. I love my papaw because he gives good hugs. He is the best Papaw ever.

WESLEY MEDLEY, GRADE 4

### *Very Brave Veterans*

Very Brave  
Excelled  
Trusting  
Extraordinary  
Rest in peace  
America the brave  
Nation  
Sacrifice

LATISHA MILAM, GRADE 4

### *Papaw Jimmy*

When my Papaw Jimmy was little he lived in St. Charles, Virginia. I knew he had a lot of stories to tell me and he probably had a lot more when my mom told me to interview him. He was happy when he heard that I was going to interview him.

For Thanksgiving he went to kill a turkey. When he got the turkey he went to get gravy. When it was Thanksgiving morning they went to cut the turkey. Then he told me they would gather around the table and pray.

When he was little he played baseball for the St. Charles team. When he wasn't playing baseball he played hide and seek with his brothers and sisters. He told me that he got home runs a lot because he was fast. When he got on the bus his friends said good job. He told me when he was little he had a black and white dog. He had named it Spot because it had a big spot but he got rid of it because it bit him. He got a new dog named Rex.

I love him. He is the nicest Papaw ever. He picks me up when it is raining. He makes me milkshakes every day. He takes me to the store with hi. He goes hunting with me.

DRAKE MILES, GRADE 4

### *Florida*

My favorite place to be is  
Florida playing on the beach  
Hearing the waves  
Swimming in the sea  
Surfing in the waves

BRAXTON MISTER, GRADE 4

## *Funny Scarecrow*

Once upon a time there was a funny scarecrow. The funny scarecrow went into the woods and came upon a scarecrow. She told him her name. It was Ashley. They walked on the trail and came upon a haunted hayride. They hopped on the haunted hayride and they saw something swooped and got Ashley! The funny scarecrow walked back into the woods and came upon a witch, a tall ugly witch. The witch said if you don't leave I will cast a spell on you. I said no and she cast a spell on me!

ASHLEY MOORE, GRADE 4

## *My Favorite*

My favorite season is fall because it is not hot or cold. It's cool and it's fun to jump into the leaves. I like it when it's cool enough to wear a jacket. It's peaceful in the fall.

My favorite place is home. It is safe in my home because it's made of concrete. There are fun things to do in my home. It's amazing in my home because it's fun, cozy, and safe.

RYAN MOORE, GRADE 4

## *Terry Estep, My Papaw*

Terry Estep is a fun person. He was born on March 26, 1948 in Middlesboro, Kentucky, USA and lives in Ewing, Virginia. He has one sister. Her name is Kathy Turner. I call him Papaw.

Papaw went to Ewing Elementary. He got to school by riding a bus and Papaw remembers his bus number. It was number six. He went to Thomas Walker High School and he went to Lincoln Memorial University. His favorite subject is history.

Growing up my papaw would go to his grandparents on Sunday. He would ride his bike down a hill. My papaw would help his dad at his store. He would fill up cars that need gas. He had two dogs and one pony. The pony was Palomino and one dog's name was Peaches and the other was a Chihuahua. My papaw would play Cowboys and Indians, basketball, and Army.

As an adult my papaw would get antique guns that his dad and his grandfather gave him. He prayed and persisted to get through difficult times in his life. When family gets together we go to his house. He goes to the beach with us. His difficult time in his life was the illness of a child. His life lesson is to treat others like you want to be treated.

LINCOLN MUNSEY, GRADE 4

## *My Papaw*

My papaw was born on Nov. 2, 1958 in Dayton, Ohio, USA. He went to school at North Ridge. His favorite subject was PE or math. He took a bus to get to school. He took a bus to get to school. He did not know what he wanted to be when he grew up. He has 2 brothers and 1 sister. He rode his bike and played with friends. His chores were to mow the lawn.

His favorite pet is dogs. His favorite music is rock and roll. His favorite food is steak. He played sorts a lot. His favorite book is Outsider. He did not have any expressions. He was mainly a coal miner.

KRISTINA KAYLYNN MUSE, GRADE 4

## *A Family Friend*

Doris Burke is a family friend. She was born on November 20th, 1949 and born in Lee County. She lived a few miles from where she lives now. Mrs. Doris had 12 siblings, but now she has 8. One died when he was a baby.

She went to Sticklelyville Grade School and Pennington High School. Mrs. Doris walked 6/10 of a mile and then got on the bus. Her favorite subject was Math and Reading. When she was little, she wanted to be a teacher because in 9th grade she had the best teacher, Mrs. Mary Gilley.

Her dad had a green international truck to pick up kids and they sang gospel songs all the way to church. Mrs. Doris's family sang a lot of gospel music. They would sing in the choir at church by the time she was 8.

She had many vacations she remembers. Some that she remembers are Florida, Washington D.C., New York, Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland, Georgia, and finally Illinois. She spent a month in Georgia while her brother was stationed there in the Army. By the time she was 25, she had visited 25 states. In Florida, after graduating from college in May, she got bitten by a crab.

Mrs. Doris's proudest moments were when she got saved in March or April, she doesn't remember. When she got baptized, it was snowing, but when she went in the water, she never felt the cold. She even remembers the dress she wore that day. Her second moment was when she got married.

I really love spending time with Mrs. Doris. It is really fun. I would really like to learn more about her. She tells a lot of fun stories.

ADDISON NASH, GRADE 4

### *My Amazing Papaw*

I interviewed John Shubert. He is related to me by being my mom's dad. He is from Florida then he moved to Dryden close to Cave Springs. He has one brother and three sisters. They had a lot of fun playing tag and hide and seek. He loves the farm because he likes planting corn, listening to the river, fishing, and watching the deer on his deer camera.

I actually went hunting with him last week. Mom and Hudson came hunting with us before. We hunted and he taught us gun safety but we couldn't find any deer. I had a good time.

His dream was to be a rockstar. It came true! He played the guitar. He is really good at it. Every Tuesday and Friday he practiced. His chores at home were to feed the horses, cows, and chickens. He said he likes it better now than when he was my age. He said he likes new technology better than the past technology. His advice to me was to listen in class and be good.

HAGAN NEFF, GRADE 4

### *My Papaw Eddie*

I'm interviewing my papaw Eddie Neff. He was born on October 5, 1955. He lives in Jonesville, Virginia. I'm interviewing him because he is a good, loving and caring guy. He was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia at the old hospital, Lee General Hospital.

He has one brother. His name is Doris Neff. He is my uncle. His brother is 10 years older than him. He remembers that his brother had a bike. My papaw couldn't go to his friend's house because he wasn't allowed to walk so he rode his brother's bike. His favorite food is soup beans and cornbread.

Papaw's favorite saying is "Get ready to rumble!" My papaw tells me this when I'm playing baseball to do my best, but don't get hurt. We have gatherings every holiday.

JACOB NEFF, GRADE 4

### *My Mamaw*

My mamaw's name is Beverly Sergent. She was born in Exeter, Virginia on March 29, 1956. She had five brothers and five sisters.

She went to school at Appalachian Elementary, Thomas Walker High School, Aurermagige, and Southwest Virginia Community College. When my mamaw was little, she made homemade soup and helped clean the house and do dishes. She had a dog named Snoopy. She played basketball in school. Her team was the winning basketball champion. She had holiday traditions of getting colored chickens at Easter. She remembers a trip to Washington D.C. to visit her family.

I loved interviewing my mamaw Beverly Sergent. She's a great mamaw to me. She's a good cook. She loves me and I love her. She likes to visit me and I like to visit her.

ETHAN PARKS, GRADE 4

### *An Awesome Papaw*

Ricky Pennington is an awesome papaw. He is a very hardworking person. He grew up in Dryden. He now lives in Blackwater, Virginia. I interviewed him because he is very interesting. He has 6 grandkids. Growing up they didn't have much. They played pebbles.

He has a tradition every year. He takes his daughters on a date. He played football, basketball, and boy scouts. He remembers the day his dad died. My papaw had a friend named Daniel he died in the mines.

He loves the beach so every year we go. He says he can remember the day I was born. They couldn't make it there. We get together on Christmas.

He wants me to live my life with God. He tells me to believe in God. I will always cherish the time with him. He loves preaching. We love to listen to gospel music. I really enjoyed getting these answers. I would love to get more. He is 62. I want him to live until I graduate. I love my papaw.

HAYGEN PARKS, GRADE 4

### *My Mom*

My mom's name is Glenda Pennington. My mom was born in Harlan, Kentucky on August 8, 1958 to my Mammy and Pappy Shirks. She had four brothers and 4 sisters.

Glenda went to Pennington Elementary and High. Her favorite subject was English. She rode the bus to school. She went to and graduated nursing school. She also took CPR classes. She was very proud of graduating nursing school. Sometimes they said she was the best nurse. She loved hearing that.

She said like is always to be nice to others. I love my mom. She is the best mom in the world. I love my mom because she is always there for me. I love my mom because she plays outside with me. I tell my mom all the time I love her to the moon and back. I love my mom when she loves me all the time.

JOSLYNN PENNINGTON, GRADE 4

### *Great-great Uncle Cecile*

I interviewed my great-great uncle Cecile. He is 89 years old. He was born in Pineville, Kentucky on February 25, 1939. When he was a kid he wanted to be a pilot. In some random year he was granted his golden wings for the USA.

When he went to school his favorite subject was science. He told me he loved to learn about the stars and planets. I was also told he liked to learn about the galaxy. He also liked math.

The things my uncle Cecile told me were most important to him are his children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, me, and his dogs. I also like his dogs. I especially like his cute little Yorkie Cocoa. He told me family is what's most important to him. He said he would never give it up. One of the biggest changes my uncle Cecile saw was Apollo 13. He said it was amazing seeing the man on the moon. For awhile, he wanted to go to the moon, but he soon gave up that dream for his pilot dream.

I love my uncle Cecile more than anything else in the world. I see him almost every day because I can walk to his house and I would never change that.

JACOB PILON, GRADE 4

### *Mary Helen*

Mary Helen is my grandmother. She was born on October 16, 1945 in Bulls Gap, Tennessee. She was the only one to interview that I know. I call her Mamaw. Now, she lives in Bulls Gap. She would play kickball, hide and seek, and hopscotch. Sunday after lunch, she played with friends from 4–5pm. She had fun playing baseball. I wish I could see her.

Mary Helen has three brothers and sisters. She had a dog named Tricksy. Tricksy like to play with snakes in the driveway. She had 1 son. She loves her family. She would have turkey and ham for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Her family would put up a tree.

I enjoyed hearing the funny answers and like to learn more about that person. I miss her. Now, she lives in Bulls Gap, Tennessee. Every Christmas her family comes over for dinner. They open 1 present per person on Christmas Eve.

AUSTIN REED, GRADE 4

### *Curtis Collins*

The person I interviewed is creative. I interviewed Curtis Collins. He was born on March 8, 1942. He lives in Jonesville, Virginia. He's my step-grandfather.

He teaches us life lessons. He lets us help out in his garage. I clean the mess his equipment makes. He helps us on our projects we need him to help us with. He had two brothers and one sister. One of his brothers died in a motorcycle accident.

When he was my age, he ran cross country. He liked playing soccer and outdoor games such as Kick the Can. He liked hiking, fishing, and traveling. He liked traveling with his parents. He loved eating with his grandparents. He wanted to be an Air Force pilot when he was my age.

While Curtis was a teacher, the girls kissed the bathroom mirror. All the girls, teachers, and the janitor went to the girl's bathroom. One teacher said, "How do you clean the mirror?" Curtis said, "I clean the mirror with a toilet rag and toilet water." All the girls wiped the lipstick off their lips. They never kissed the mirror again! True story!

Curtis had 5 jobs and they were carpenter's helper, electrician, computer teacher, technology teacher, and librarian. The hardest time in his life was losing his wife. How he got through that moment was by keeping his faith. His most treasured items are his grandchildren and his favorite book is the Bible.

His advice for me is to listen and do what you're told. I also want to learn more facts and stories from him. I love him a lot.

DALTON RIDINGS, GRADE 4

### *Summer*

My favorite season is summer because I don't have to go to school. I like to swim in my pool! I don't have homework. I get to go to the beach with my family and I can ride my bike with my friends.

KAILYN ROBBINS, GRADE 4

### *Hard Working Man*

David is a hard working man. He is my papaw. He was born in St. Charles, Virginia. He is married to Diana Robbins and they had 4 children. In his youth he rode the bus and walked to and from school.

He wanted to be a motorcycle cop. He had 1 sister. He took my father fishing. His chore was to carry coal and cut firewood. He really liked the songs from the 60s or the 90s. His strangest memory is riding a bicycle. The most important life lesson is to be honest.

NATHANIEL ROBBINS, GRADE 4

### *Veterans*

Value  
Excited  
Think you're great  
Everyone loves Veterans  
Red, white and blue  
Always be thankful  
No one like Veterans  
Soldier

KENDRA ROBERTS, GRADE 4

### *Richard Rorrer, Papaw*

I interviewed my papaw, Richard Rorrer. He was born on May 4th, 1959. He grew up in Wytheville, Virginia. Why I interviewed my papaw is because he is the oldest person I know. He also lives close to me. Some people call him Red for a short name.

His holiday traditions are on the 4th of July, Thanksgiving and Christmas. We eat at my papaw's house. We play board games. On those traditions if it is not cold we camp out in the yard. We also make pizza and cookies.



In his childhood he played sports. He played games like hangman. He played basketball by himself in the backyard. He played board games with his sisters and brothers.

The past was a lot better then, he said. Nowadays people are a lot ruder and more disrespectful. Our last name in our family means land owner. My papaw was surprised when he found out our last name means land owner!

I enjoyed hearing the stories and answers. I would like to learn more about his past. The advice he gave me was to get the best education I can. My feelings for this

person is I love him because he is my papaw. I would be glad to interview him again.

KYLEE RORRER, GRADE 4

### *William Scott*

William Scott was born on September 30th. We call him Papaw. He lives in Tennessee, but went to school in Rose Hill. His favorite subject is Math. He had seven brothers and four sisters. He

wanted to be a farmer when he grew up. He walked to school when he was a kid. He lived in Rose Hill.

Sometimes, I get to go to his house. My dad and Papaw drink coffee together. I get them more coffee. I give him a hug. Then, he tells me that he loves me.

I love my Papaw. I love to see him. I wouldn't want any other Papaw. He makes me happy. He is the best Papaw ever.

MARLEY SCOTT, GRADE 4

### *Robert E. Spaulding*

Robert E. Spaulding is an amazing person. He was called Robert, Rob, and Dad. His birthday is on October, 27, 1966. He moved to Charleston, West Virginia.

Robert used to go to Hall Jr. High School. He used to play football for the school. Robert had to ride the bus to school. He loved to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. He has 1 brother and 2 sisters who lives in Harlan, Kentucky. He lived in America for 53 years. His grandmother taught him how to cook in a cast iron skillet. He respected everybody he worked for. He was 9 and he had to cut people's grass for lunch money to eat. He had to take care of the yard because his mom and dad would not. He liked to work for people for money.

Robert has listened to classic rock since he was 5. He has a dog that is well trained and well fed. He used to work in the coal mines until he broke his leg and had to go to the hospital. I love dad and want to learn more about Robert.

ROBERT SPAULDING, GRADE 4

### *Mike Hendricks, My Amazing Papaw*

Mike Hendricks is an amazing person. He is my papaw. He is 60 years old and was born in St. Charles. He had two sisters and one brother. His first son was born early and had to spend 7 weeks in the hospital.

On Thanksgiving we have a big dinner, and everyone gathers. Mamaw cooks rolls, corn, green beans, mash potatoes, gravy, turkey, and ham. On Christmas, we have another dinner with the same food all of the kids hurry and eat to open presents.

When papaw was a kid he wanted to be a coal miner. When he became older he ended up working for the coal preparation plant. He was a welder, electrician and a coal miner. At home his chores were to chop wood and clean his room.

He went to school at St. Charles Elementary. To get to and from school he had to walk. After school he played with his friends. His favorite subject was history.





I love him so much. He is a very special person in my life. He does a lot for me. I love him very much. He is so important to me.

AVA STAFFORD, GRADE 4

### *My Grandpa*

My Grandpa is the one I interviewed. Robert Reeves is his name. He was born on Oct. 1958. He lived in Maryland and Virginia. He met his love on a blind date. He is 62.

He was poor. He earned around 20 dollars every 2 months. He loved English. His Gramma taught him how to milk a cow. He rode the school bus. He had 5 brothers and 3 sisters. He was so happy when he got saved he cried. Grampa called mom Messy Jessie. He was a park ranger. He was an insulator. He was an engineer. He had 25 dogs. Mom was happy to see him.

DALTON STAPLETON, GRADE 4

### *My Great-Grandma*

Dorothy Jean Edens is a great person. She is my great-grandma. She was born May 21st, 1939. She lived in Onedia, Tennessee. She has 3 amazing sister and 5 amazing brothers.

My granny told me a story. My granny's sister and her brother were playing. Her sister thought of something. She wanted to be a cowgirl. Her brother tied a rope around her sister's arm and then tied it to the calf's neck and hit the calf. It started running. Her sister could not lasso the calf. It hurt her arm really bad. They got in trouble because her dad told them not to get the rope out of the barn. They had to take her to the hospital. It was her fault that she got hurt.

The school she went to was Onedia High School. Her favorite subject was biology. She told me it was the most interesting to her. She also played softball. She also did cheer.

She was a waitress at B3Z. She loves Elvis Presley. Her favorite food is cornbread and green beans. Her favorite saying is "Upon my word and honor." She loves to bake a lot of things.

I love my granny because she is hard working all the time. She was there from the start. She inspires me to bake. She is such a great cook. That's why I love her.

BREANNA SYKES, GRADE 4

### *"B" Galliher*

I'm interviewing Daryle Galliher "B". He is my grandfather. He was born in Abingdon, Virginia, USA on March 17, 1951. I interviewed my grandfather because I thought it would be interesting and it was.

He told me he didn't know the meaning of his name. His strongest memories are torturing his sisters by play-



ing the piano horribly. He has one brother and two sisters. His brother's name is Blane and his two sisters's names are Vicky and Sandy. His holiday is Christmas. His vacations are always going on an island for horse-back riding.

He was living with his grandparents until he was 8 or 9. He played no games. The only sports he played were volly and baseball. He thinks life back then was simpler when he was my age. There are changes in people's actions.

Advice is to always be honest. Always follow your instincts. He didn't have any stories. Yes, I enjoyed hearing the answers. My feelings about "B" are very happy.

BRYCEN TAYLOR, GRADE 4

### *My Papaw Randy*

My papaw Randy is an outgoing person. He was born in Bell County, Kentucky on November 20th, 1951. When he was little, he wanted to write poetry or be a professional artist. He had a dog named Bullets.

He rode the bus to Black Star Elementary School. He also swam in the lake and played basketball. He had 4 brothers and 2 sisters. His chores were getting the coal and firewood. For fun, he would ride his bike. His happiest memory was a trip to Cumberland Falls.

My papaw had two kids. The oldest is my dad, Scott Taylor. The youngest is my aunt, Dawn Taylor. He said my dad was "very inquisitive." One day, someone told him "your kids are well behaved." He told them to always be honest.

My papaw's favorite type of music is pop. Sometimes he likes to eat meatloaf. His favorite expression is the "golden rule." Looking back from today, his dad was killed in a coal mining accident. No matter what, he would still pray. He used to hunt and fish a lot, now not so much, probably because of his health. He has diabetes now. When I was born, he was one of the first people to get there and also to hold me. He is very funny because of his sarcastic humor. He makes me laugh a lot. Also, he takes energy naps. He is good at the guitar. He is nice.

WILLOW TAYLOR, GRADE 4

### *My Favorite Places*

My favorite place to be is walking in the woods because it puts my mind at ease. I also enjoy looking at nature. It is quiet. I love to sketch nature. I love the woods. Maybe you will too!

My favorite country (other than the USA) is Japan. Why you may ask? Because first kids get to walk to school. Second, the food is soooo good! That is why Japan is so cool! I also enjoy the vacations there, from the commercials I've seen! They always seem so lively there! I want to go there someday. I want to go sometime in my tweens, which is like 10–12.

So this is one place I have been and one place I want to go to. They'll both be my favorites!

MALLORY WATSON, GRADE 4

### *Shy Ghost*

I am a shy ghost at a candy factory. I fell off a magic carpet onto the top of a candy factory. I went in the candy factory. I didn't know what it was until I read the sign, so there I was standing in the candy factory trying to holler for someone. They didn't hear me, so I stopped and thought for awhile that I could put a sheet on me and they would notice me unless they were to busy doing something in the candy factory!

DEZIRAY WOLIVER, GRADE 4

## *Mountains*

Mountains are tall. Some are short but they are all really pretty.  
Out in the forest mountains can be really tall.  
Under some mountains there are caves where animals live.  
Nothing is more beautiful than looking at the view from tall mountain tops.  
Tall mountains can sometimes be touching clouds.  
A lot of the water we get comes from mountains.  
Inside some mountains there can be water.  
Not all mountains can be so tall they touch the clouds.  
Some people go hunting in the mountains and some people like to go camping there.

ALIAH WOODARD, GRADE 4

## *My Abuela Emelina*

My Abuela Emelina grew up in Honduras. I interviewed her because I love her. She was born on January 9, 1966.

My name and her name means work. She told me her favorite memory of her grandparents was getting her a homemade Barbie. She had five brothers and three sisters.

When I was growing up she would take me to the cemetery on the Day of the Dead to bring offerings. She would make colored cornbread.

My Abuela would go to the soccer field after school for an hour and go home. When she bought her first phone she was only allowed to call and text.

I love my Abuela. I had fun sitting with her and getting answers about her. I would like to do it again. I can learn new things with her.

EMELINA ZAMORA, GRADE 4

# GREENDALE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



**Brenda Sprinkle, Library Media Specialist**  
***Creative Writing Book Club***  
***The Fearless Man***

My great grandfather is one of the most interesting people I know. He was a soldier in the Korean Battle. He had a great childhood. He met his wonderful wife, Marie.

The Korean War was a very dangerous war. It started on June 25, 1950 and ended in 1953. He was in the seventh division combat team. He was in the Army branch. Two years later, he got shot in the foot. He went to a Japanese hospital and during the battle lost all of his medals. He didn't receive a purple heart, but he was supposed to get one.

Harry Wright's life was very interesting. He was one of six children. His brother, Ray, died of pneumonia at age five. Alfred Jr. was the oldest child. Vivian was the only girl besides his mother, Frances Dickerson. His father was a telephone operator named Alfred Sr.

He met his wife Marie. They met at the Zepher Theater. Harry was the manager of the theater. They got married on December 22, 1951. They had four children – Patty, Jimmy, Teresa, and Brenda. Jimmy was the oldest child but he died on May 17, 2004. Patty was the next child – she was kind of the favorite child. Brenda was born in 1955. Next was Teresa who is my grandmother and she lives the closest.

Harry Wright is a very important person in my life. He fought in the Korean War. He had a very full childhood of ups and downs. He is married to my grandmother, Marie.

JAYLA ABEL, GRADE 5

***All About Ham and Coke***

I choose to tell you this because I am very hungry for this recipe. In this story, I'll tell you all the funny stories I can remember and why it's so special to me and why everyone likes it. Last, but not least I will share the instructions. I will tell you all about ham and coke.

Let me tell you all the stories of ham and coke. There was one time Selah thought the ham and coke was chicken. She was two years old when she said it, so she said, "Bumtimes peble caw it chicken." (Sometimes people call it chicken.) Then there was a time I just ate turkey, mashed potatoes, green beans and other foods that I forgot ham and coke. After that Thanksgiving let's say if I as a turkey you wouldn't need stuffing. Now it's time to tell you the truth about green eggs and ham. You see, when Sam I Am offered that other guy green eggs and ham, he didn't mention it with coke and ham or else that guy would have said, "FEED ME SOME NOW!" He didn't so it took a long time to convince him.

Everyone likes ham. Everyone likes coke. Why wouldn't they like ham and coke? That's what I thought when I had my first bite of ham and coke. The truth is, my whole family likes ham and coke, so maybe the whole world would like it. My family just loves coke. Everyone loves ham. I thought my Popaw was a genius [he is] when I had it. My family likes it so much that people get mad because he only cooks ham and coke on Thanksgiving and Christmas. Now that Thanksgiving has passed, we may have it for Christmas.

My instructions for this are to cook some ham in an inch thick pan but when you do pour in some coke. The ham gets sweet with coke. We always like Thanksgiving because of this recipe. That's all about ham and coke.

If you try this recipe your life will change. It is sweet, sweet ham. That's why I like it. Thanks for reading All About Ham and Coke.

COLLIN ANDERSON, GRADE 4

## *My Dad - My Hero*

My dad is my hero and best friend. He is a family man, hard worker and is very loving. He takes good care of my mom and me. My dad's favorite thing is to spend time with us. He is fun to play with and my mom says he is a big kid.

My dad's name is Mike Junior Barton. He was born on December 11, 1989 in Bluefield, West Virginia. He was raised in North Carolina. He has two younger brothers, Shane and Joey. His parents' names are Mike and Melinda.

My dad is an arborist which means he climbs and cuts down trees. His job is dangerous because a tree could fall or he could get electrocuted. He has worked as an arborist for almost two years. His goal is to be a foreman.

My dad went to school in Stanley, North Carolina. His favorite teacher was Mrs. Hershey and she was his sixth grade teacher. Patricia was his first girlfriend in second grade. Recess and gym were his favorite classes. To be honest he didn't enjoy going to school.

My dad and mom met in 2009 at a funeral. I was born on March 11, 2011. They also got married in 2011. We moved from Tazewell, Virginia to Abingdon in 2015. We have a pitt bull, a cat, and 50 fish. My dad hates cats but he let me have one because I get my way.

My dad is my hero and best friend. I love my dad so much I am thankful for the bond we have. I love spending time with him. He is one of my favorite people.

KENZEE BARTON, GRADE 3

## *My Favorite Recipes*

My great grandmother's recipes are still enjoyed by my family today. My favorites include baked spaghetti, turkey dumplings and turkey nuggets. I will be sharing the turkey recipes today.

### Turkey Dumplings

#### *Ingredients:*

- 1 carton (32 oz.) chicken broth
- 3 cups shredded cooked turkey (about 1 ½ lbs.)
- 1 can (10 ¾ oz.) condensed cream of chicken soup
- ¼ teaspoon poultry seasoning
- 1 can (16.3 oz.) Pillsbury Grands Southern Homestyle refrigerated buttermilk biscuits (8 biscuit)

#### *Steps:*

1. In a 4 or 5 quart pot, heat broth, turkey, soup and poultry seasoning to boiling over medium high heat; reduce heat to low. Cover; simmer 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
2. On lightly floured surface, roll or pat each biscuit to 1/8 inch thickness; cut into ½ inch wide strips.
3. Drop strips, one at a time, into boiling chicken mixture. Add carrots and celery. Reduce heat to low. Cover; simmer 15–20 minutes, stirring occasionally to prevent dumpling sticking.

## Turkey Nuggets

### *Ingredients:*

- 3 cups diced turkey (about 1 ½ lbs.)
- 1 cup flour seasoned with poultry seasoning
- Salt and pepper
- Peanut oil
- Deep fryer

### *Steps:*

1. In the deep fryer, heat oil
2. Roll diced turkey in seasoned flour
3. Drop turkey into fryer
4. Remove in about 3 to 4 minutes when turkey floats up

We eat turkey for Thanksgiving. If we have leftovers we make turkey dumplings. Everyone in my family likes my Poppy's homemade turkey dumplings.

We have to go hunting to get the turkey. We go hunting in Bland County on my Poppy's friend's property. We usually get at least one turkey. If we don't get a turkey we go to the grocery store.

CHEYANN DAVENPORT, GRADE 4

## *My Family's Timeline*

My dad went from small to too big. My dad lived pretty much in poverty, so he worked for money for the family. When he was a child, he and his brother had a sibling rivalry that you might think was normal, but he sometimes got a little violent with his brother.

One day he was at a music shop and he met my mom. He said, "I instantly fell in love with her". My mom was the opposite of my dad. My mom was a good girl while my dad caused trouble a lot. Soon they became friends. When he went to high school, he fell more in love with her.

My mom really was the complete opposite. She grew up in a nice home. She and her grandparents loved traveling. They traveled everywhere. One of my mom's favorite memories was of her going to Disneyland. My dad's dad was in the military while he was growing up, so he and his seven siblings were each other's comfort.

My dad did not go to college, so he worked on cars. His first job was working on people's cars in the neighborhood. In 2002 my oldest sister was born. My dad started working at Pioneer and he loved his job while my mom worked at the courthouse. They kept their jobs because they loved them.

In 2006 they had my brother. Two years later they had me. When I was eight everybody was starting to grow so my mom decided to get better jobs. My mom decided to teach at Holston High School. Soon my sister was already a junior and my mom and dad needed better jobs. My mom went back to her court job and my dad decided to move to another job - Stallings Collisions. Soon after that everything was normal again and before you know it, we were caught up to date.

KARLY DICKEY, GRADE 5

## *Eli the Cat*

I love cats a lot, so one day I adopted a cat. We adopted him from my mom's friend and named him Eli. He was already an adult cat when we adopted him. We named one of my favorite cats after the best quarterback,

Eli Manning. My dad is a huge NY Giants fan. He was a very loveable animal. He was not very playful. He was gray with green eyes. He loved to be scratched behind the ears. He loved his cat tree.

Eli's fur was always soft. Eli was one of the sweetest cats ever. He was always tired. He loved to sleep. He was an awesome cat.

What I liked best about Eli was when I went to bed he went down the hall to catch me. He always tried to get outside. Unfortunately, he died at a young age.

Eli had an undetected heart disease. He lived a happy life. I felt happy to call him my cat. I miss him every day.

HALEY HESS, GRADE 5

## *July*

July is my favorite month.  
Under the hot summer sun,  
Lovely was my birthday

You know the feeling of birthday joy; getting closer to accomplishing your dreams

KAIRI LOPEZ, GRADE 5

## *My Great Grandmother*

My great grandmother was a very funny and loving person. Sadly, she had breast cancer and died. In this story I'm going to talk about her.

There was once a time when my Aunt Tammy lost her phone. She looked everywhere but never could find it. She looked in and around the couch. Aunt Tammy didn't know that Granny Norma, my great grandmother, hid it in her pocket. Aunt Tammy finally looked in the fridge and then Granny Norma started laughing. It gave it away and everybody started to laugh. Granny Norma gave the phone back and the joke lasted forever in my family.

In 1963, my grandmother Nita was born. Granny Norma had six other children and a husband named Papaw Bill. Her kids' names are Nita, Randy, Gail, Tammy, Sissy, Lisa and Anna. My grandmother is Nita and she had three kids named Stephanie, Josh, and Chasidy.

My great grandmother and my grandmother had breast cancer. My relatives both had surgery to remove the cancer. They both had chemotherapy and lost their hair. They had to get lots of hats and wigs. They both fully recovered from breast cancer.

So that is the life of my great grandmother. The struggle she has been through is breast cancer. Having kids was a blessing in her life. She was funny and a loving person to all my family.

DAVIS MONGE, GRADE 5

## *My Nana*

My Nana is a hard working person. She is hard working because she wakes up early in the morning to work on the farm. On the farm there were chicken, cows and pigs. With the eggs, she made breakfast for her family. The pigs were raised for bacon.

When my nana was in third grade she moved to Atlanta Georgia, New Orleans, Florida, South Carolina, finally Ohio. Soon she got very homesick so she moved back to Virginia. She didn't realize how homesick she was until she came home. When she moved back she was in her old school with all of her friends.

Soon after she came home from school she cooked dinner. Usually all she cooked was grits with cheese, biscuits, corn on the cob, mashed potatoes, and green beans. Her family was happy with her. She kept cooking dinner but when she was sick her brother Russel covered her.

Later on in life she got married and had children. My Nana and Papa has been married for forty years. Nana and Papa met on a blind date. Nana believes that everyone has a purpose in life and we are her purpose.

Nana and Papa have lived a full life and like all people, there has been some ups and downs but there have been more ups than downs. They would not trade their lives for any other. They look forward to many more happy years.

EVELYN MUNCY, GRADE 5

### *Grandma Gloria*

My Grandma Gloria has lots of history in the family. Do you want to know the history? She was a house-keeper and always stayed at the house. She also had a job at a marketing company. She had an interesting story.

My grandma's timeline is not long, but not short. She lived in Gary, Indiana. My grandma was a cheerleader and she was very athletic. Now that was just the beginning of my grandma's life.

My Aunt Peggy and my Grandma Gloria were awesome dancers back in the time. When they were in the gym together (just them) they would show off their dance moves and then go back home. My aunt and grandma back then, they got their hands on the first tv at their house and were obsessed with it. They were very good sisters to each other and they never forget about each other ever again from that point in time. Grandma Gloria got a girl dog named Macy who was white with black spots.

Her middle ages were a little more promising in the story. My grandma was married when she was 19 years old. Her husband's name was Dennis Williamson. My mom says they were the happiest couple ever! She worked at a job at a marketing company and had millions of dollars, but unfortunately, she lost all of it.

Finally, my grandma had my mom and she was born close to the 60's and lived the same as my grandma. Then my mom had me, Sam in the same state and born in 2008! Unfortunately, Grandma and her dog died in 2011 when I was 3 years old. Even though I was three, I know that was the day that mom had tears in her eyes. Even throughout her life, she didn't have the best story, but she is my hero.

SAMUEL ROUSHIA, GRADE 5

### *My Grammy*

Hi! My Grammy's name is Kathleen Nadrowski. My Grammy's dad lived on an island in Europe. The island was caught in war in WWII.

My Grammy's dad was brought to the United States by the Red Cross. He didn't speak English, but he did speak Italian, so he found someone that was willing to hire him and that spoke Italian. The person that he found was a candy shop owner.

He hired my Grammy's dad and taught him to be a chocolatier. Soon after that he was taught to make ice cream. After that he was able to start his own shop. That's when he had my Grammy.

When Grammy was in her 20s got married and had a child of her own. Then when she was in her 40's, her dad passed away.

Some family heirlooms were passed on to my Grammy like some silverware, a watch, some china, and a Victrola. Now she is in her 60's and waiting for the next adventure.

HARRY SELVAGGI, GRADE 3

### *Peanut Butter Pinwheels*

My family tradition is when my grandma makes peanut butter pinwheels every Christmas so here is the recipe.

- ♦ 1 white egg
- ♦ 2 tbsp of evaporated milk
- ♦ 5 cups of sifted powdered sugar
- ♦ 1 tbsp of cold water
- ♦ 1 tbsp of vanilla extract
- ♦ 1 cup of peanut butter

I remember one time that I ate all of them but one.

First, you want to mix all the ingredients. Next, you want to roll them into a cinnamon roll shape. Then, you are going to put them into a freezer for ten minutes. Lastly, put them in the refrigerator for them to thaw out, and they are ready to serve to your guests of honor.

A little backstory to this recipe - the reason why I ate them all is because they are SUPER GOOD! Everyone that was at the gathering thought it was hilarious! Well hope you enjoy your peanut butter pinwheels!

CHANCI ROARK, GRADE 5



### *My Family*

My Mom and Dad had very different upbringings. Mom for one was raised in Richmond and didn't have much area for exploration except for some farmland, trees, and her backyard. My dad on the other hand was raised in a deep hollow, with plentiful forests and many areas for exploration.

My Mom loved Star Wars. That was and still is her favorite movie series ever. It was a big part of her childhood. She had boxes and boxes of memorabilia. She passed it down to me even though I have never seen a Star Wars movie. I still take care of those items because it means a lot to her and I know that.

As a child, in her free time my mom loved to draw. She certainly doesn't do that anymore. We treasure those pictures.

One thing about her is she always spent time with her cousins. They were siblings to her. Something funny about her is, she loved to play a game with her cousin called "Pretty, Pretty Princess". Her cousin's name was Ryan. I'm sure he "loved" playing that game.

Her house was pearly white. Much farmland, acres and acres of trees. We can't forget the precious pets. Two dogs, one cat, and one bird.

My Dad had a very backwoods free life. Afterschool, he would ride his motorcycle through 20–30 acres of logging roads. In the morning he would ride to his granny's house just down the private calm road. The only noise is his motorcycle and Granny's chickens. He loved his Nintendo. He played for hours on games like N.B.A, Mario, and Mortal Kombat. He also was obsessed with basketball. He taught me most of what I know about basketball.





Whenever I visit my dad's home where he grew up, I am always intimidated by the acres of woods that my grandparents and great grandma own. There always very mysterious and unknown to me, unlike my dad and uncle who know them like the back of their hands. The woods were most likely a burial ground because of all the stories. My father, Grandpa, and Great Grandma, all have seen it. The "IT" I'm referring to is an ominous witch who has been spotted in the woods by two generations of Roses.

In all, I love my parents very much, even though they have very different upbringings. I think it makes them unique to most parents. My Mom lived in a suburban place during her childhood. The only "wilderness" she had was her backyard. My Dad lived in a very country/southern town. He was exposed to much trees and freedom.

ALYSSA ROSE, GRADE 5

### *The Origin Project*

The Origin Project is special because it helps us to become authors. It helps us to learn the process of how to write. We learn how to get an idea, do a rough draft, write and then edit our writing and then we get our writing published.

We also got to meet a great author with The Origin Project. We met the author of Jedi Academy. He had the best advice. He also showed us how to draw. Finally, he even signed my book.

This is why I like The Origin Project. We have a lot of fun along the way.

CADEN SINGLETON, GRADE 5

### *Family Jobs*

Worly Singleton is my grandpa and he was in the air force. My uncle teaches at E.B. Stanley Middle School. My dad works for the state police and a company in Toronto. My cousin is in the National Guard. My other uncle is also in the police and is a paramedic.

My grandma's name is Jonneen Singleton and she works at the treasurer's office. My aunt works at Abingdon High School as a nurse. My mom works at an elementary school. My sister works at the treasurer's office. My other aunt works at a middle school.

My mom is the bookkeeper and she keeps up with all the money. She also keeps up with what the school buys. My aunt is a nurse so she takes care of the people at the high school when and if they are sick. My uncle teaches world geography at middle school. My dad is a



first sergeant for the police and goes out on search warrants. My sister opens envelopes and checks for the treasurer's office. My grandma does the same thing as my sister.

ETHAN SINGLETON, GRADE 5

### *The Crying Baby*

Close to Lebanon there was a family that lived on a dairy farm. Everything was perfect until their baby passed away. They moved.

When my pawpaw moved there things were pretty normal until the second day. His mom and dad started to hear a baby cry. They thought it might be the kids playing jokes. Then it happened almost every night. They asked my pawpaw's siblings. They said that they were not making the noises. They went to the library to look up the house and the history of it. There was a small family that used to live there. They looked for more information in the newspaper. After searching for hours they found tragic news about a baby passing close to the house. The weird thing is the crying never stopped.

ARABELLA VANNOY, GRADE 5



# JOHN I. BURTON HIGH SCHOOL



## Stephanie Cassell, English Coty

In the picture we were all smiling.  
Everyone was happy and summer was going great.  
In the picture my brother was hugging his best friend and they were goofing off  
while they watched over me.  
This was before we all grew up and drifted apart.  
My brother was my rock when I was little  
A safe place to go when I was feeling down.  
I wanted to spend as much time with him as I could before he would leave.  
Now we never talk.  
I never get to see him and when I do, it feels like he's gone  
in the blink of an eye.  
In the picture I felt like my big brother loved me and would never leave me.  
I thought that I would always have him by my side.  
I miss the bear hugs he used to give me and I miss the hot chocolate  
he would make me on gloomy days. I miss having him around.  
I miss my brother and the bond we used to share.

EMILY BROCK, GRADE II

## *Alex & Me*

In the burnt photograph  
I see myself sitting on Alex's lap,  
With plastic cat ears from a Halloween costume,  
His blonde hair hangs from the sides of his bandana,  
He has his legs crossed with a book in his lap,  
A book that tells facts about the world  
Behind us are two of Mamaw's teddy bears,  
Who sit patiently beside each other waiting to hear the story  
Together we relax in the flower patterned sofa,  
With no clue that we wouldn't see each other any more  
Nessa behind the camera; she snaps a photo of us  
Alex and I are happy, cracking a toothy smile for the picture.

CAITLYN COLLINS, GRADE II

## *Piper-Renae*

My middle name is Piper-Renae. My mother gave me this name before I was born. I have two middle names because Piper was supposed to be my first name. My mother compromised with my father to name me Emily because he called her, crying while he was at work. I sometimes wish my first name was Piper because it's more unique; then I remember in elementary school when kids would make fun of me after I told them my middle name. They would call me Pepper and Popper or other silly, unimaginative names.

My mother chose the name Piper after the actress Piper Laurie, most notable as the mother in the 1976 movie adaptation of the novel *Carrie* by Stephen King. She says that Piper Laurie is an amazing actress, and she has always loved her work. I have only seen Piper Laurie in *Carrie*, but I agree with my mother that she

is an amazing actor. A lot of people thought I was named after Piper from the T.V. series *Charmed* because the show was popular around the time I was born. Although Piper was my mother's favorite character from *Charmed*, she still wanted to name me after one of her favorite actors.

The second part of my middle name is supposed to be a family tradition of sorts. One of the girls that is born will have a variant of Rene in a part of their names. My mother also did this to honor my Aunt Rene who had a miscarriage after she tried for a very long time to have children. We don't talk to Aunt Rene any more because of some things that happened when my great-grandfather passed away. I feel bad for her sometimes, but at least I am honoring her with a variant of her name. I know that she still loves and cares about me despite the arguments she has had with my mother, and I am thankful for her kindness.

EMILY COLLINS, GRADE II

## *Family*

In this picture is a mother and a daughter  
I was only four months old  
Dressed in a pink jumpsuit  
My mother was only nineteen  
She had on a light pink sweater  
and washed out jeans  
Glasses that I liked to play with  
Sitting on an old couch that  
had a musty smell  
I lay on top of her  
We were next to boxes that had  
just been packed up  
with my grandmother's  
belongings  
She had a pacifier in her hand  
Her arm wrapped tightly  
around me  
She was talking to me in the  
baby voice she had  
My father was the one taking the picture  
They were in love and excited about their new child  
They got as many pictures as they could when I was little  
He took it quickly without either of us noticing  
This made the moment more memorable.



KALI DURHAM, GRADE II

## *Where I'm From*

I am from hair bows  
From wicker baskets and old washboards  
I am from the old cream-yellow house  
That smelled of cinnamon and apple candles  
I am from buttercup flowers  
Little yellow ones that smelled like butter

I am from Papaw's nicknames and softheartedness  
From Tony and Patty  
I'm from loudness and bickering  
From childhood stories and "say your prayers"  
I'm from breakfast before church, and dinner after  
I'm from the little house where Papaw grew up  
From spaghetti and dumplings  
From the time we cut each other's hair  
The man that falls asleep on the couch with his hat over his eyes  
Two brown side tables by the couch  
Holding old photos and pocket knives  
All the things that made me

ISABELLA EDWARDS, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from board games  
From lemon-scented bleach and Tide detergent  
I am from two houses  
Who share a special love for me  
I am from small, green succulents and towering rose bushes  
Whose branches would brush my arm as I trekked up the stairs  
I'm from the wooden bear on the tree  
Eyes glistening a bright green with a soft black coat  
That my father hung when he and my mother were wed  
I'm from baking homemade cookies and playing Yahtzee at the dining room table  
From Burke and Fawbush  
I'm from the rising mountains of a small town  
From the Woodbooger traditions  
That my father put hard work into  
I'm from the adoration of animals  
That my mother taught me when I was only an infant  
By fostering shelter animals until they could find their forever homes  
And adopting those who loved us unconditionally  
I'm from hard work and dedication  
From "Be the best you can be," and "push through, you got this"  
I am from the forgotten memories eager for the future.

MORGAN FAWBUSH, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from dolls,  
from coal dust and cinnamon candles.  
I am from horse hair that's all over the barn.  
I am from the huge oak tree,  
whose limbs were strong enough to hold a tire swing.  
I'm from Sunday dinner and emotions,

from Shanna and Michael.  
I'm from screaming and crying  
From "Always watch your brother" and  
"Because I said so"  
I'm from every Christian holiday to  
church on Easter and Christmas night  
I'm from the freezing and mysterious creek,  
from way back in the holler.  
I'm from dry cornbread and homemade dumplings.  
From far back in the woods to the aged house.  
I am from those moments,  
I should have cherished most.

BRIANNA GILLIAM, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from trucks  
From Dodges and Fords  
I am from the scent of wood burning  
(faint, rich oaky smell that filled your lungs)  
I am from the evergreens  
The trees were my ladder to escape the world  
I'm from diversity and hard workers  
From Mike and Anu  
I'm from the know-it-alls and the smart remarks  
From "go to bed, it's late!" and "turn the TV down!"  
I'm from the heat of California to the bittering cold of Finland  
From the early morning start to long grueling day of work.

AKI GODSEY, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from animal bones,  
from Silly Bandz and Pepsi.  
I am from the small house in the holler with the creek full of trash from neighbors.  
I am from peach trees,  
whose unripened fruit we would dive after in the pool.  
I'm from lasagna on Christmas and brown hair,  
from Jessica, Tom, and three siblings  
I'm from the loud talkers and punk rock players,  
from real rare robin red breast and if they're mean, be mean back.  
I'm from not observing a religion,  
from always being with my family on a Sunday evening.  
I'm from Germans and Scandinavians,  
potato soup and Russian tea.  
From the movie we made about the 'silent knight' on my grandmother's hill  
and acorn "soup"

The cold nights waiting up for Santa to come.  
In a closet upstairs are boxes,  
full of childhood pictures and ornaments we made when we were young.  
I am from the endless cousins, aunts and uncles,  
the people that made me who I am today.

EDEN GREER, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from my bed  
Nice and cozy with the soft, fleece throws all scattered across  
From Playstation and Xbox  
From the light, tan house at the end of the street  
Haunted, creepy, and loud  
I am from Mamaw's apple tree  
Whose apples I ate on a daily basis

I'm from rednecks and hard workers  
From Michelle and Mark  
I'm from the know-it-alls and gossipers  
From "stay true to yourself" and "always stay humble"  
I am from spending Sunday mornings at church  
and Sunday afternoons watching football  
From go Cowboys and go Vols  
I'm from Appalachia and the Halls  
Mamaw's gravy and biscuits and Mom's chicken and dumplings  
I am from a small town where family is the most important thing.

BRYCEN HALL, GRADE II

### *Vietnam*

Standing in the midst of what will soon become a battlefield,  
I see my grandfather in his uniform.  
The photographer saying "Smile!" as they snapped the photograph  
I can only imagine the thoughts going through his head,  
Not knowing what would happen to him.  
The uncertainty of never seeing his parents again  
The weight of three semi-trucks patiently sitting on his chest.  
I wonder if he was homesick,  
If he ever missed the comfort of his mother's embrace  
Or the smell of his father's clothes  
Or even his brothers joking and prodding.  
Some part of me believes that he was ready to fight  
Ready to battle for his country.  
In some way he wished this was all a dream,  
All a fantasy that would have a happy ending.  
I could not fathom what he felt when his closest friends'

Lives were taken away from them.  
The families that were heartbroken  
When they returned.  
The war is now over,  
But the memories and trauma  
Will be around for a lifetime,  
Stuck like a parasite that can never be disposed of.

BEYLEE JENKINS, GRADE II

### *My Name*

My name Shay means “admirable” in Gaelic, and I have always been proud of my name. My parents thought long and hard over my name; my mother wanted to name me Callie Grace after the only grandmother she had never met. My father wanted to name me Jenna Stacy after two actresses. Although they had people in mind, they wanted me to have a name I could be proud of. My mother, who already had a son, Brandon Scott, wanted us to share something. I have always tried to be admirable and respected, whether it was for my family, younger kids, or teachers who guided me to be the way I am. As my parents named me Taylor Shay, they named my younger brother Nicholas Sean. I have always been proud to share “S” with my brothers. In Celtic Shay means “a gift”. The meaning of my name gives me a way to set standards for myself. To be admirable, respecting, and to give back. My name was chosen not from the memory of someone else, but the person my parents hoped I would become. My mom says Shay reminded her of the sun, bright and full of hope. That everyone can rely on the sun to bring an exciting day. My father, who picked Shay, said that the spontaneous picking of my name and hoping my mother would like it would be how he thinks of me. That I would always be spontaneous and always keep him guessing. I am proud to be Shay, the person my parents hoped I would become.

TAYLOR JESSEE, GRADE II

### *Taggart Avenue*

This house had so many memories, traumatizing, yet so valuable to who I am as a person. It started when I was around seven years old and we moved into this new house with my sister, my mom, my mom’s boyfriend, and me. It was right in front of a duck pond and a bamboo forest; it was a really interesting house. My sister and I would always play tag and hide & seek in the bamboo forest, a forest so vast that sometimes we would never find each other. There was a duck pond that you could swim in at the end of the forest, so a bunch of my friends that lived on the same street as us would go there often.

I would always go out and ride bikes, climb trees, play manhunt, have sleepovers, and so much more, but all of this does not define this house or at least what I remember it as. I remember it as screaming, fighting, objects being thrown around, cops being called almost every night, up late worrying if something bad was going to happen. I have a certain couple of memories that just top every single good memory I had there. This one night in 2012, I was sitting in my room and playing Modern Warfare 3 with a couple of my friends that I met on there, and then all of a sudden, I heard a bunch of loud bangs and pill bottles being thrown on the floor. I had no idea at the time what was going on because I was only nine years old, but I had a general idea of what was going on because it was always happening. I felt like I grew accustomed to it and that is not at all what a kid my age at the time should have to go through.

The one night that really defines me, though, is the one that I thought would never happen in a million years, I never thought that I could lose my loving mother to something so childish and selfish. I was in my room lying down again and I heard them screaming at each other but I didn’t think anything of it since it was a common occurrence. Just then my mom busted in my room and told me to go into my sister’s room until

everything settled. That is when I knew something horrible was about to happen and I couldn't do anything to stop it. That night was a complete blur to me and it still is. I only remember bits and pieces from that night but I do remember a decent amount of the story.

I went into my sister's room and we just sat there crying because we had no clue what was going on this time, my mom came into the room that my sister and I were in and she told us to be alert and to chill out. We sat there for a good twenty minutes before my mom's boyfriend started knocking on the door and asking her to let him in. She went up to the door and unlocked it, not knowing what was going to happen, when he busted in and tackled my mom onto me. She fought him off and made him get out. We waited for about five minutes and my mom told us to get our stuff real quick so we did. There was this window that was on ground level in my sister's room that my mom was talking about. We all got out of the window and just ran, not knowing where we were going. We got to the end of the driveway when my mom's boyfriend saw us and started dashing toward us. He tackled her onto the gravel and called the cops; they got there and we had to wait in the back of a police car for about an hour for them to get everything they needed. Dad came and picked us up and that is how it ended.

Since then, I've lived with my dad for about seven years and my mom isn't in my life anymore. She actually went to jail a couple of times since all that happened, but she is definitely better off now without that guy in her life. She just recently got out of jail and I went and saw her for the first time since 2012.

CAMDEN KENNEDY, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from cereal boxes  
From Febreze and laundry detergent  
I am from the stained wooden back porch  
to the long white house  
(Brick skirting, cozy,  
The ever-changing shutters)  
I am from the pair of willow trees  
Slowly losing their leaves throughout the years  
I'm from Thanksgivings and long trips  
From Diane and Nathan  
I'm from the beach and Dollywood  
From Christmas Eve services and church every Sunday  
I am from Birchfield to Lake Street,  
Chex mix and Sunday meals  
From the Thanksgivings in Ohio  
At my grandma's house  
Cabinets and walls filled and covered  
With memories of relatives  
I am from those memories,  
To remember who I am.

ISAIAH KINSER, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from Cabbage Patch dolls  
From soup beans and Vienna sausages  
I am from the burgundy brick house

Sturdy and tall  
I am from the old rotten willow tree  
Whose branches watched generations grow  
I'm from apple butter and dark brown eyes  
From 'I love you to the moon and back'  
I'm from early morning services to late afternoon arguments  
And from faith can move mountains  
I'm from a tiny trivial town  
From fried green tomatoes and rhubarb  
From mud fights and four wheeling  
I'm from endless nights of kick the can  
And long winding country roads  
I am from minor moments turned major memories.

CADENCE LAGOW, GRADE II

### *Three Sisters*

Three sisters posing; picture perfect  
or maybe not as much.  
Lined on the weathered bench,  
Dull lighting, pale blue wallpaper showing.  
Third sister crying,  
Her dress crumpled around her legs,  
Her hands clutching at the white teddy bear, nearly as big as her.  
Middle sister:  
Her arms crossed,  
Rebellious, wearing tank top and shorts.  
First sister, the oldest,  
Wearing a long dress that nearly touches the floor.  
Three sets of blue eyes stare at the camera,  
Waiting for their picture,  
Wearing forced smiles on their lips.

LINDA MAYS, GRADE II

### *Family Photo*

In this picture is a family of four  
A mother, father, brother, and sister  
Their clothes do not match but the colors still go together  
The father and daughter wearing pink and white  
The mother wearing green, the son wearing blue  
The family in this picture is mine  
My mom had the clothes picked out the night before the photo  
She had spent two hours fixing her long blonde hair and putting her makeup on  
My father had spent just thirty minutes getting ready  
In this picture I was around one or two and my brother around five or six  
I had on a pink Tommy Hilfiger jean dress with a white t-shirt underneath

I did not have hair yet so my mom put a pink headband with a bow on my head  
My mother sat in front of my father, my brother stood next to my mom  
I sat on my mother's lap trying to smile as big as I could  
In the photo you can see the rings that my mother and father got married with  
In this photo was a time of love and happiness  
Everyone was happy and smiling  
I was smiling— it was weak but it was still there  
My brother had the biggest smile on his face  
I haven't seen him smile like that in a while  
This picture is before my other brother and sisters  
This picture is when my mom and dad were still in love with each other.

ZOE NIECE, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from red doors and bricks  
From caramel apples and coconut pie  
I am from small towns and back roads  
From mountains and valleys.

I am from weeping willows and flowers  
From blue eyes and pale skin  
I am from Christmas at Grandma's  
From poetry and hot coffee.

I am from late nights with best friends  
From sledding down the hill on a cold winter day  
I am from oak trees and porch swings  
From road trips and sightseeing.

I am from summer night bonfires  
From the chirp of crickets and the buzz of bees  
I am from Candy Land and Capture the Flag  
From leaves silently falling and a cool mid-August breeze  
I am from moments that will forever be cherished  
And unconditional love.

GRACE OWENS, GRADE II

### *Twin*

Having a twin is difficult. It is hard to spend all day every day with the same person for eighteen years. Up until freshman year, we had almost every class together; even now I still see her more than I would like to. Now that we both have jobs, it is better, but can you imagine hearing the same annoying voice every morning when you've just woken up? Nine years of my life withered away sharing a room with her.

Every Christmas she barges into my room in her zebra print robe and whines until I get up, her hair in a bun and her glasses lopsided on her face. On Thanksgiving she makes sure to stand in the kitchen with

my mom and sample every dish; sometimes I'm surprised there's any food left. Halloweens are especially difficult with her because she takes forever to get ready just to go down to the fire station and eat a cold hotdog.

When we were little we did everything together: karate, basketball, cheer, tennis, band, and summer camps. Having a twin is like having a built-in best friend, except with no boundaries. She steals my clothes and spends my money. Although she gets on my last nerve and there is nobody that I would like to see fall down a hill more than my sister, I love her. There is no one that I would rather spend every holiday with. We bake and play tennis together. If I download a two-player game, she is the first person I ask to play with me. She is messy, annoying, and hard to live with, but it could be worse.



OLIVIA OWENS, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from towering pines,  
from hay fields and abandoned barns.  
I am from the sun-faded double-wide,  
Situated between two small barley-brimmed fields.  
I am from peace lilies,  
whose leaves sit quietly noticed by daybreak's sunlight.  
I'm from Christmas breakfast and family Thanksgivings.  
from the Combs and the Smiths.  
I'm from working since you could walk



and retiring only when you could no longer talk.

From "Do what makes you happy"  
and "always show respect".

I am from mounted wildlife and  
passed-down knives.

From "never back down" and "it's not  
illegal if you don't get caught".

I am from the mountainous lands  
of the Appalachians,  
home of friendly interactions and family  
traditions.

ADRAN SMITH, GRADE II



## *The Story of my Childhood*

The smell of cinnamon and joy  
 fill the air  
 During the most wonderful  
 time of the year  
 Silky, blonde, curly hair and  
 ocean blue eyes  
 Clothed in a plaid dress and  
 black shoes as shiny as a  
 brand new car  
 I was young and careless, happy  
 and sweet  
 My mother in front of me,  
 making me smile

Then hopping in front of the lens with me  
 What others see is not what I see  
 The trees and presents make it seem like just a picture for a card to them  
 But to me it was so much more  
 It was memories that will stay with me forever  
 That I can look at and grin without a doubt.

TRINITY SMITH, GRADE II

## *Where I'm From*

I am from backroads and mountains  
 From the sweet scent of pine cones  
 I am from the hilltop  
 Beige, blissful, the aroma of Mama's pumpkin roll.

I am from the sunflower  
 The warm and brilliant yellow petals



I'm from going to Mamaw's  
 on Christmas and showing  
 love to one another  
 From the stories of Mamaw  
 when she was a little  
 girl.

I'm from the church services on  
 Sunday mornings  
 From "give it your all" and "try  
 your hardest"  
 I am from Bibles and giving  
 thanks  
 I'm from Norton, soup, and  
 cornbread.

From the pictures hanging from the walls  
I am from the memories of the past  
Stories that will be told in the future.

BAILEY STURGILL, GRADE II

### *Contentment*

A drive down a winding road surrounded by earthy green trees leads to the bottom of a steep hill. The travel up the hill is rigid, the crunch of gravel under your tires. Sitting proudly at the peak of the hill is a small brown house. The house is fenced in with steel, adorned with morning glories weaving throughout the fence. Cracked concrete leads to crooked steps that are lined with potted flowers. On the porch sits Mamaw's ancient rocking chair with chipped paint from being weathered throughout the years. On any given day, Mamaw will be sitting in that old rocking chair, fingers tapping the strong wood, waiting to greet you.

Reaching for the golden door knob, having to push a little too hard to open the old wooden door, entering the house. The smell of homemade biscuits or freshly brewed coffee meets your nose as you walk in. In the living room sits a couch older than time, covered in knitted blankets, squeaking as you sit down. Walking along the wooden floors causes creaks, showing the age of the house. The kitchen with unlevel floors, packed to the brim with pots and pans. My favorite room of all, Mamaw's bedroom. Her bedroom was filled with her clothes, mostly her "Sunday best" clothing. Standing tall in the corner was the mahogany dresser, accompanied with perfumes, lipstick, and hairspray. The bed was piled high with layers of blankets and pillows, my favorite place to sleep. Her room reminded me of warmth, comfort, and contentment.

The house was not perfect, but it was home.

MARY TOOTILL, GRADE II

### *Hot Chocolate*

High winds and melting flurries crashing against the kitchen window.  
Hiding inside the bricks of our home from the chill of Christmas snow.  
"Grab me the sugar," my mother calls.  
Quickly realizing the weather begs for the heat of hot chocolate.  
Four cups of milk  
Half a cup of sugar  
A third a cup of baking cocoa  
One teaspoon of vanilla extract  
All combining to create the sweet relief of cold conditions.  
I add on my own toppings, making each glass cup my own.  
Fluffy marshmallows and a mountain of whipped cream,  
mimicking the glistening white ground outside.  
Homemade hot chocolate,  
a classic recipe creating family memories.

HANNAH WELLS, GRADE II



# JONESVILLE MIDDLE SCHOOL



*Briana Allen-Austin, Laverne Brown, Sheila Shuler*  
*English Grade 5*

*My Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is the 4th of July when we go shopping for fireworks. Our family members come over and we go shopping together. When we get home we light the fireworks. We get loud bombs and light them up. We smile because of how it explodes and echoes through the whole entire mountain. I don't like them so I cover my ears and just watch them. We have fun! After that, some of our family members stay all night with us and sometimes we go to Walmart. I look forward to it each year.

CARLY AIKENS, GRADE 5

*All About Me Poem*

Kamrin  
Funny, smart, sweet  
Who fears the dark and frogs.  
Who loves family, food, and art.  
Who is skillful at art, crafting, and cheer.  
Who would like to see the Eiffel Tower.  
Who dreams of being a teacher.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
Allen

KAMRIN ALLEN, GRADE 5

*Fun Fair Activities*

The place everyone should go in Lee County is the fair. Every year we go to the fair in Pennington Gap. Last year, they had a demolition derby and carnival rides. We went camping on the fairgrounds. It was super fun. I think I went on every ride. I got sick a couple of times. If you want to come, we will be glad to have you. There was a twirl around. Warning! This year there were no rides. There were competitions. One competition was a watermelon eating contest. I got 2nd place along with 5 dollars. Then there was a shoe kicking contest. You would have to take your shoe off and put it on right before the heel then kick it off. I got 3rd place along with a ribbon. I think the Lee County Fair is perfect for all people that want to spend time with their family.

AARON ARNOLD, GRADE 5

*My Family Thanksgiving*

My family Thanksgiving starts off as my mom and dad first put in the turkey because it takes a long time for it to get done. Then we put the TV on the Macy's Parade while my parents are cooking. While I am watching the Thanksgiving Parade, I am doing my chores. I clean the living room then I sweep after that. I mop, clean the couches, and clean under the couches. I dust the two end tables, and then I clean the laundry room. That is where my dogs are, so I give my dogs a bath. I clean cage. I sweep and mop the laundry room then I clean the guest bathroom. I do some laundry while I clean the shower, sink, and sweep and mop. Meanwhile, my parents are still cooking! They make deviled eggs. By this time they could be making mashed potatoes and gravy. They also make rolls, and last, they make ham. By that time, the guest start arriving, including my Aunt Sarah, Uncle Garret, cousins Delineigh, Carolyn, and Carson. They are first to arrive

because they live in Coburn. She makes macaroni and cheese homemade. It is so good! Then the other guests come and we eat. We have a good Thanksgiving.

SHELBY BLAIR, GRADE 5

### *How I Prepare for Thanksgiving*

On Thanksgiving my mom and I make food. She even taught me how to make stuffing. I make turkey by putting coke in the pan. Then I put it in the oven. My mom makes mashed potatoes. My mom and I make stuffing. Then we let it cook altogether with turkey, stuffing, coleslaw, and mashed potatoes. The end.

AUSTIN BLANKEN, GRADE 5

### *The Christmas Morning*

My favorite holiday tradition is opening presents on Christmas morning at my house. In the morning, I wake up and go downstairs and eat breakfast while my brothers and I wait on Mamaw and Papaw. We do this so they can see us open our presents. Mamaw and Papaw buy us presents too. Mom and Dad will make sure all the presents are separated into piles like Kyrie, Cody and Jason. If there is a gift for all the kids, it goes in the middle of the floor. Then each of us open one gift at a time starting with the youngest child. This is why I love Christmas.

KYRIE BLOOMER, GRADE 5

### *Pig-Pickin*

In my town of Jonesville, my family has a HUGE get-together called the Pig-Pickin. It's a big event that goes on once every year. It's somewhat popular, or at least, the second night is. Its gone on for over 30 years now!

The first night is a family only event, but the second night is public. I look forward to it all year. Most of my family on my mom's side comes. On the first night, we show up at my Aunt Judy and Uncle Jerry's farm. We eat some food and hangout with family, some we never see and some we always do. After a while, we prep the meat for the second night. We put the meat in the chamber in the ground where we cook it, then we have a stomping competition. Let me explain. We put the meat in the chamber, but we have to make sure that it stays warm. Pig-Pickin is in October, so it's somewhat cold. The guys put dirt on the chamber, making sure no dirt gets in it. Then the kids stomp on the dirt. If you stomp the best, you get a golden boot. I have 2!

On the second night, there are a TON of people there, and more food. We eat the meat we cooked the night before, which tastes really good by the way, and talk to family and friends. Then, we dance! We have the best time! After a few hours of dancing and laughing, it's time to go. That's my favorite thing that we do in Jonesville, VA.

ELIZA BOOTH, GRADE 5

### *No Bake Cookies*

My aunt's no bake cookies are one of my favorite family desserts. My mamaw, mom, and aunt make them. They are special to my family because it is an old recipe. It has been passed down in my family.

#### *Ingredients*

- + 3 tbs. of cocoa powder
- + 2 cups of sugar

- ♦ ½ cup of milk
- ♦ 1 stick of butter
- ♦ 1 tbs. of vanilla
- ♦ 2 cups of oatmeal

*Directions*

1. Take 3 tbs. Of cocoa powder and 2 cups of sugar. Mix them together.
2. Add ½ cup of milk and ½ of the stick of butter.
3. Put the mixture on the stove at medium heat until it boils for 30 seconds.
4. Add the other ½ stick of butter.
5. Add 1 tbs. of vanilla.
6. Add 2 cups of oatmeal.
7. Place cookies on sheet.
8. Enjoy!

AIDAN BROWN, GRADE 5

### *My Mom's Special Peanut Butter Roll*

My favorite recipe is my mom's special peanut butter roll. It's special to me because she makes it on holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas. The taste of it is so creamy and tasty. I like it because my mom told me it was a tradition that my great great grandmother used to make it for my nana all the time. This is why I like it.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ Peanut Butter
- ♦ Cream Cheese
- ♦ Vanilla Icing
- ♦ Powder Sugar
- ♦ Cooking Paper

*Directions*

1. Take the cooking paper and the icing and spread it out until it's nice and even.
2. Spread the peanut butter all over the icing with the cream cheese.
3. Roll it up and stick it in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 hours.
4. Enjoy your delicious peanut butter roll.

Thank you. This is my favorite recipe.

BRIANA BURCH, GRADE 5

### *My Family Thanksgiving*

My family Thanksgiving is so delicious! I help my mom make the turkey and I do the stuffing. My dad helps with the turkey and does the pie. While everything is cooking, we watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. My aunt and baby cousin comes over and we eat. After a few hours, we go to our mamaws and eat. They always have pie and cake.

DAKOTA BURGAN, GRADE 5

## *Great Grandma Ruth's Dressing*

My favorite recipe is my great grandma Ruth's dressing. It is my favorite because we have it every Thanksgiving. My great grandma Ruth made this dressing every Thanksgiving for my grandma when she was a little girl. My grandma made this for my mom when she was a little girl. This makes my mom and my grandma miss my great grandma Ruth. I love it.

### *Ingredients*

- Pan of cornbread
- 2 eggs
- 1 onion (chopped)
- 2 Tbsp of sage
- Turkey broth (enough to make juicy)
- 2 Tbsp lard

### *Directions*

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Put lard into in 13x9 pan.
3. Heat for 5 mins.
4. Mix all ingredients together.
5. Pour all into heated pan.
6. Bake for 45 mins.

I hope you enjoyed my family recipe.

EMILY CARTER, GRADE 5

## *All About Me Poem*

Dakota  
Goofy, humorous, and weird  
Who fears my sisters Evany and Ally.  
Who loves marine life, carnivals, and fish.  
Who is skillful at being sneaky.  
Who would like to see Australia.  
Who dreams of being a You Tuber.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
Collins

DAKOTA COLLINS, GRADE 5TH

## *My Momaw's Cheeseball*

My family's favorite recipe is my momaw's cheeseball. They are very good and we only get them once a year. She only makes them at Christmas time so it is a good treat. It has been a family tradition for many years and years to come!

*Ingredients:*

- ♦ 2–8 oz Kraft philadelphia cream cheese
- ♦ 1–8 oz Kraft sharp cheddar shredded
- ♦ 2 tbs. finely chopped green peppers
- ♦ 2 tbs. finely chopped onion
- ♦ 2 tbs. fresh lemon juice
- ♦ 2 tbs. worstershire steak sauce
- ♦ 1tbs finely chopped well drained pimentos
- ♦ 2 cups finely chopped pecans

*Directions:*

- Step 1: Mix all ingredients except pecans in a medium sized bowl.  
Step 2: Shape into a ball.  
Step 3: Chill overnight if possible.  
Step 4: Roll in finely chopped pecans.

I hope you enjoyed reading my family's favorite recipe.

KYLE COLLINS, GRADE 5

*All About Me Poem*

Halee  
Caring, helpful, and honest  
Who fears tight spaces.  
Who loves animals, family, and drawing.  
Who is skillful at drawing.  
Who would like to go to France.  
Who dreams of being an artist.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle school.  
Cox

HALEE COX, GRADE 5

*Papaw's Country Breakfast*

My favorite family recipe is my papaw's country breakfast. My papaw's country breakfast is good. We eat it on some weekends. He makes it almost every weekend for my sister, brothers, and me.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ Noodles
- ♦ Sausage
- ♦ Eggs
- ♦ Cheese

*Directions*

- ♦ First, boil your noodles.
- ♦ Fry your sausage.

- ♦ Scramble eggs.
- ♦ Mix it altogether.
- ♦ Top it with cheese.
- ♦ Bake it in the oven for fifteen minutes.

I hope you enjoy!

CLARK CRETORS, GRADE 5

### *The Best Easter Ever!*

On Easter morning my mom, dad, brother and I go to church and go on an Easter egg hunt. Sometimes my Uncle Jackie goes with us too. Then we go home and we invite more of our family members to our house for dinner. We eat deviled eggs, ham, and turkey. It's the best Easter ever because my family comes and we spend time together.

HUNTER DAVIS, GRADE 5

### *My Family Thanksgiving*

My family Thanksgiving is awesome and I love it! On Thanksgiving Eve, my mom and dad slow roast ham and clean the house. Thanksgiving morning, my aunt is always the first to help cook and clean. While the kids are outside, family shows up and get ready to eat. We always pray before we eat. My uncle starts the prayer. My Thanksgiving food is really good. We always have ham, turkey, peas in mashed potatoes, green beans, corn, and soft drinks. My favorite thing about Thanksgiving is spending time with my family. My family loves Thanksgiving. We hope you do too!

MAKAYLA EDENS, GRADE 5

### *My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite tradition is on Christmas, well sometimes. My mom comes and stays the night. My dad has to work on Christmas which is sad, but we always put up the Christmas tree and put decorations on the tree. And always on Christmas Eve, we watch a Christmas movie. My dad lets me pick it out. And then my mom comes and we watch it. I hope you have a wonderful Christmas.

TAYLOR EDWARDS, GRADE 5

### *All About Me*

Colby  
 Who fears nothing.  
 Who loves Metallica and Slipknot.  
 Who is skillful at playing video games.  
 Who would like to see Niagara Falls.  
 Who dreams of playing like Jimi Hendrix.  
 Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
 Eldridge

COLBY ELDRIDGE, GRADE 5

## *All About Me*

Jayden  
Funny, trustworthy, and kind  
Who fears baby mice and beetles.  
Who loves family, friends, and guinea pigs.  
Who is skillful at volleyball, basketball, and art.  
Who would like to see Australia, Utah, and LA.  
Who dreams of singing, playing drums, and being a Pediatrician.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
Ely

JAYDEN ELY, GRADE 5

## *Prepping for Thanksgiving*

This is how I get ready for Thanksgiving day. I like to go shopping with my memaw. She says she knows how to pick the perfect turkey. On Thanksgiving, it is very hectic. First my entire family watches the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade on tv. Then my memaw starts cooking the food before the guests arrive at two o'clock. My cousin and I usually do the wishbone before everyone starts eating. That's how I prep for Thanksgiving.

KAYLENA FOSTER, 5TH GRADE

## *My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

First on Christmas Eve, we go to my grandma's house. After we are finished eating, we open presents. After we open the presents, we say our goodbyes. Then we go to my uncle's and aunt's house. We open the presents, eat again, and then my brother, sisters, cousins, and I go play while my mom, dad, and mamaw all talk. Then we go home and cook. It's Christmas the next day. All of the cookies are gone. Our stockings are full. More presents are under the tree. My mom, dad, and mamaw wake up and all four of us kids look in our stocking. Then we all sit on the couch and my mom, dad, and mamaw give us our presents. When they are finished we say our prayer and eat. Christmas is my favorite holiday. My Christmas is fun. We all talk, play in the snow, and make snow cream . . . all that stuff.

SAMANTHA GALE, GRADE 5

## *Our Homemade Yeast Rolls*

My favorite family recipe is our homemade yeast rolls. My great mamaw use to make them when our family had get-togethers for holidays. They were soft, big, and very good to eat. They were passed down to my mamaw then to my mom. This is why it is my favorite recipe.

### *Ingredients*

- \* Two packs of dry yeast
- \* ½ of cup of warm water
- \* 1 stick of butter
- \* ¾ cup of shortening
- \* Two eggs
- \* ⅔ cup of sugar

- ♦ 1 cup of cold water
- ♦ 7 cups of self rising flour

*Directions*

1. Dissolve 2 packs of dry yeast in 1/2 warm water.
2. Boil 1 cup of water, 1 stick of butter, and 3/4 cup of shortening.
3. Remove from heat and let cool.
4. In a large bowl mix 2 eggs, 2/3 of sugar, and add water.
5. Combine this with the with the above mix.
6. Add 7 cups of self rising flour.
7. Cover and place in refrigerator until time to eat or use.

Thanks for listening.

IAN GRACE, GRADE 5

*All About Me Poem*

Camden  
 Athletic, friendly, kind  
 Who fears ferris wheels.  
 Who loves family, Jesus, and sports.  
 Who is skillful at baseball, basketball, and racing.  
 Who would like to see France and Utah.  
 Who dreams of being in the NBA.  
 Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
 Hall

CAMDEN HALL, GRADE 5

*My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is when my family goes to my dad's uncle and we bring a gift for Stingy Santa. We have Stingy Santa for the adults and the kids. How you do this is you get all your family members to bring two gifts for the children and adults. Then you pull out a number out of a hat. Then she will call a number out and if it is your number you pick a gift from the pile. Then we go to my mom's mother's house and she will get a present for all of her grandchildren, Amber, Curtis, Bradley, Brayden, and me, Presley. She would ask you what you want, and if she couldn't find it, she would get something close to what you wanted. Then we go to my house and wait for Christmas to come.

PRESLEY HAMMONDS, GRADE 5

*All About Me*

Mariela  
 Caring, funny, and clever  
 Who fears snakes, roller coasters, fortune dolls, and spiders.  
 Who loves Jesus, family, friends, and going to the park.  
 Who is skillful at basketball, crafting, math, and writing.

Who would like to see New York, and Disney World.  
Who dreams of being a teacher, artist, and a writer.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
Hartssock

MARIELA HARTSOCK, GRADE 5

### *My Mom's Chicken Gnocchi Soup*

My favorite family recipe is Chicken Gnocchi Soup. Chicken Gnocchi Soup is my favorite recipe because it is so delicious. My family also loves this soup because it will warm you up. This soup is good especially on cold winter days. We have been making this recipe for 4 years now. This is why this recipe is so special to my family.

#### *Ingredients:*

- 3–4 boneless chicken breast
- 2 stalks of celery
- ½ white onion
- 2 teaspoons of minced garlic
- 3 regular sized carrots
- 4 cups of chicken broth
- Salt
- Pepper
- 20oz potato gnocchi
- 2 cups of half and half
- Olive oil

#### *Directions*

1. Cook chicken until done.
2. Shred carrots, celery, and onions.
3. Saute celery, carrots, and onions.
4. Add celery, carrots, onions, and chicken to the pot.
5. Add chicken broth into the pot.
6. Add salt and pepper to taste.
7. Add gnocchi boil for 3–4 minutes.
8. Reduce heat and cook for 10 minutes.
9. Stir in half and half cook for 1–2 minutes.

ALEXANDRA HINES, GRADE 5

### *My Grandma's Cream Cheese Pound Cake*

My Grandma's pound cake is loved by everybody in my family. It is my favorite dessert ever. She would mainly make it for special occasions, but sometimes she would surprise us and deliver it to us.

#### *Ingredients*

- 3 sticks of softened butter
- 18 oz package of room temp cream cheese

- ♦ 1 tsp of vanilla
- ♦ 2 tsp almond extract
- ♦ Dash of salt
- ♦ 6 eggs (room temp)
- ♦ 3c all purpose flour
- ♦ 3c white sugar

*Directions*

1. Mix cream, butter, sugar, cream cheese.
2. Add salt vanilla and almond extract.
3. Add eggs one at a time and beat well.
4. After each slowly add flour and mix.
5. Spoon mixtures into a well greased bundt pan.
6. Bake at 325 degrees for one hour and thirty minutes.

I hope you enjoyed my family recipe.

AJAY HUFF, GRADE 5

### *My Granny's Banana Pudding*

My granny's banana pudding is special to my family because she would bring it to my house fresh from the oven just for my family and I to enjoy. We have a special dish that is only used for banana pudding. Now that she has passed away she has given my mother the dish she used to make banana pudding so we could enjoy it and think of her.

*Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 c. milk
- ♦ ½ c. sugar
- ♦ 3 t. Corn starch
- ♦ 3 eggs separated
- ♦ ¼ tsp. Vanilla
- ♦ 1 ½ tbsp. Butter
- ♦ 3–4 bananas
- ♦ Nilla Wafers

*Directions*

1. In a bowl mix sugar and cornstarch. Stir until well mixed
2. In a saucepan, combine milk, sugar, and the cornstarch mixture.
3. Once warm, add egg yolks one at a time and mix thoroughly. Broil until thickened.
4. Add vanilla and butter after thickened and remove from heat.
5. In a 9 by 12 glass dish, add a layer of Nilla Wafers and then a layer of sliced bananas on top.
6. Pour pudding over the top layer of bananas.
7. Spoon meringue over top layer.
8. Broil in oven until golden brown.

I hope you enjoyed my family recipe. Thank you for reading.

KINLEY HUFF, GRADE 5

### *My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is our Christmas special cups. We will always go to the store on Christmas Eve for Christmas cups. We will drink hot cocoa out of our special cups with family members we haven't seen in a long time. Like my Uncle Ian, Uncle Gunner, Aunt Lisa, Uncle Butch, Aunt Ginger, and sometimes my papa in Oregon. My favorite part is I get to spend time with my family. These are the reasons Christmas is my favorite holiday.

JAYDEN INGLE, GRADE 5

### *My Christmas Eve Tradition*

One of my favorite holiday traditions is going to my mamaw's for Christmas Eve. We play games. It is fun. I love opening presents. Most of the time, we open presents second. My favorite part is drawing numbers for a game. In the game, what number you draw is the present you open. I love playing with my baby cousins. I love this so much. It makes me really happy. I love how on Christmas Day, we all go back to my mamaw's house and eat leftovers. This is why my favorite tradition is my Christmas Eve tradition.

KYNLEE JOHNSON, GRADE 5

### *Rodeos in Pennington Gap*

In the town of Pennington Gap, we live in a very agricultural place. Everywhere you go, you see horses, cows, and just a lot of farm animals. Today, I am going to tell you about rodeos. We have a lot of barrel races and ropings during our rodeos. I barrel race. This year was my first year. I won a pick bucket with a dandy brush, horse treats, and a hoof pick inside. I did pretty well for my first year. People compete in events like barrel racing, team ropings, bronc riding, and bull riding. Barrel racing and team roping are my favorite. Barrel races are where you go around three barrels in a clover leaf pattern and try to get the fastest time. Team roping is an event where two people try to catch a steer. One catches its head and the other catches its feet. They try to go fast, but not break the time. This is why I love rodeos.

ALLYSON JONES, GRADE 5

### *All About Me Poem*

Avery  
Strong, Independent, Helpful  
Who fears a cow running over her.  
Who loves horses, family, and farming.  
Who is skillful at opening gates.  
Who would like to see quarter horse Congress.  
Who dreams of going to the NFR.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle school.  
Jones

AVERY JONES, GRADE 5

### *My Dad's Chicken Alfredo*

My dad's chicken alfredo is special to my family because we always eat it as a family. This recipe came from my dad. Chicken alfredo is really good. This is why it is special to my family.

### *Ingredients*

- Noodles
- Alfredo sauce
- Chicken breast
- Salt
- Parmesan cheese (If wanted)
- Parsley flakes (If wanted)

### *Directions*

1. Put on a pan of water on the stove and bring to a rolling boil.
2. Add a pinch of salt.
3. Add noodles cook until soft.
4. Drain the noodles off the noodles.
5. Put noodles in a large bowl.
6. Mix all of the ingredients together.
7. Top with parmesan or parsley flakes (optional).

Enjoy.

ALLIE KETRON, GRADE 5

## *My Family Thanksgiving*

On Thanksgiving I help my mom and dad make the turkey. I also help make deviled eggs, canned corn, ham, carrots, and rolls. We have to stuff the turkey with vegetables and a stick of butter. We put butter on each side of the turkey and put the turkey in the baking bag. Then we put the turkey in the pan. We also make pumpkin or apple pie, apple cobbler or peach cobbler. Another favorite is Hard Orange Crush Candy! When the food is done, we eat and enjoy!

### Hard Orange Crush Candy

- ¾ cup light Karo syrup
- 2 cups sugar
- ½ cup water

Pour the sugar in a little pan. Then pour the syrup in the pot. Add water and heat to 300 degrees. Add orange flavoring and pour into a pan to cool. Crack into small pieces with a spoon.

KELLY KETRON, GRADE 5

## *My Family Recipe*

My family recipe is crockpot lasagna. It is good to eat. My family loves it. We are so busy and this is the best recipe to start your day.

### *Ingredients*

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 asana noodles

- ♦ 1 jar spaghetti sauce
- ♦ 1 ½ cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- ♦ 2 tablespoons grated parmesan cheese

*Directions*

1. Brown ground beef and drain
2. Spoon 1cup spa
3. Mix remaining sauce with beef
4. Place 2 uncooked lasagna noodles save in crock pot
5. Spread ¾ cup cottage cheese over meat
6. Sprinkle ½ cup mozzarella cheese over cottage cheese
7. Add another layer of uncooked noodles, meat mixture, and mozzarella cheese
8. Sprinkle parmesan cheese over top.
9. Cook on low for 4 hours.
10. If cooked much longer, it may get a bit well done.

SHANE KING, GRADE 5

*All About Me*

Hunter  
 Positive, funny, and energetic  
 Who fears spiders, heights, and snakes.  
 Who loves pizza, history, and reading.  
 Who is skillful at athletics, soccer, and running.  
 Who would like to see London, Canada, and Tokyo.  
 Who dreams of being a singer.  
 Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School  
 Lambert

HUNTER LAMBERT, GRADE 5

*A Special Present*

My favorite holiday is Christmas. We go to my aunt's house. We eat good food and they buy us presents. That is on my dad's side. On my mom's side, we go to my mamaw and papaw's house. They buy us presents also. I remember I received a special present. It was a unicorn body pillow. I love all of my presents though. This is my favorite holiday tradition. God bless you all!

EMILY GRACE LANGLEY, GRADE 5

*Grandma's Banana Pudding*

My family's recipe came from my grandma. Every Christmas, she makes two pans of banana pudding because our friends and family come over. It is special to me because it has been in my family for many years. When my mom was little she ate it all the time. She loved it a lot when she was little and I do too. This is the reason why it is special in my family.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 boxes of vanilla wafers
- ♦ Whipped cream
- ♦ Bananas
- ♦ Banana cream

### *Directions*

1. Pour 2 boxes of vanilla wafers.
2. Put the banana cream on top of the cookies.
3. Cut 4 bananas.
4. Add 1 ½ cups of whipped cream.
5. When your done put it in the fridge for 1 or 2 hours.

EDLYNN MACEDO, GRADE 5

## *Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is my Christmas memories with my dad. I used to go stay with him in Bristol and every weekend we would go to different places. My favorite part is when we went to the Bristol motor speedway to see the Christmas lights. My favorite part is when I saw a car that had naughty and nice on it. When we were finished, we went to Wendy's to eat. I was so nice that they gave me a free ice cream for helping this old men to get to his seat. Then on Christmas Eve, I helped my dad with his decorations for Christmas. When we finished, we watched all of the home alone with each. Then I fell asleep and he carried me to bed. Then I woke up and my dad made me some hot cocoa and and I opened my presents. Then he said, "Here you go. I got one more present for you." I was so happy it was a picture of me and him hunting and another thing that with it. It was a book full of memories of when my dad and I went hunting and fishing. I was very blessed to have that year with him. That is my favorite Christmas memory. I hope you enjoyed learning about me and my dad.

ABBIEGAIL MILAM, GRADE 5

## *Nanna Jo's Chocolate Fudge*

My favorite family recipe is my nanna's chocolate fudge. My nanna's chocolate fudge is important to my family because every winter me and my nanna make the fudge. When my mom was little she would make it with her. This is why this is my favorite recipe.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 cups sugar
- ♦ 2 tablespoons butter
- ♦ ¼ cups cocoa
- ♦ ⅔ cup milk
- ♦ ½ cup peanut butter
- ♦ 1 teaspoons vanilla

### *Directions*

1. Mix first four ingredients.
2. Bring to boil.

3. Test by drop in little water until it forms a soft ball.
4. Remove from heat.
5. Add the rest of the ingredients.
6. Pour on buttered dish and let harden.

Hope you enjoy.

LACY MILES, GRADE 5

### *Sweet Potato Souffle*

Sweet potato souffle is my favorite dish. My nana makes it for our holiday dinners. My family looks forward to this. My mom and Uncle Jimmie would hide it when they were growing up, so my Uncle Jack wouldn't eat it all. It has been passed down generation to generation. This is why it is so special to my family.

#### *Ingredients*

- 3 cups cooked and mashed sweet potatoes
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cups of milk
- 1 tbs. vanilla
- 1 egg (beat)
- 1 stick melted butter 1 small can pineapple tidbits

#### *Toppings*

- ½ cups brown sugar
- ¼ cups flour
- ½ cup- 1 cup of chopped pecans

#### *Directions*

1. Place sweet potato mixture in a baking dish and put toppings on mixture.
2. Bake at 350 and cook for 30–40 minutes.

Thank you for reading hope you enjoy!

DYLAN MOSLEY, GRADE 5

### *All About Me Poem*

Conner  
Athletic, funny, honest  
Who fears dark woods and spiders.  
Who loves sharks, dogs, and family.  
Who is skilled at baseball, basketball, and football.  
Who would like to see the Eiffel Tower.  
Who dreams of being a pro Nba player.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
Mullins

CONNER MULLINS, GRADE 5

## *ButterScotch Pie*

My favorite recipe is butterscotch pie. It is my favorite because I always get to make it with my mammaw. It is a tradition to make it every Thanksgiving. It was passed down from my great grandmother who came up with it. Ever since then we have made it. This is why this recipe is special to me.

### *Ingredients*

- 1 bar of cream cheese
- ½ of a cup of sugar
- 2 packets of white jello
- 1 cup of pecans
- Cool whip

### *Directions*

1. Mix all ingredients together.
2. Then lay down your crust.
3. Pour mix in the crust.
4. Refrigerate for 3 hours.
5. Enjoy.

JALIN MULLINS, GRADE 5

## *Snow Cream*

My favorite family recipe is snow cream. This recipe came from my Great Grandma Ella Cress. The reason I picked this recipe is because my family loves this stuff. We have to pick up a lot of snow. Every year, I look forward to eating snow cream.

### *Ingredients*

- Snow
- Sugar
- Evaporated milk
- Vanilla flavoring

### *Directions*

- You get a large bowl packed with snow.
- Add sugar to taste.
- Add one-two teaspoons of vanilla.
- Add evaporated milk and stir until soft
- Serve into bowls and enjoy!

COLLYN NEFF, GRADE 5

## *My Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is Christmas. I go to Ohio for Christmas sometimes. Other times, we go to Chicago after Christmas to visit my family. We go see my dad's mom and sister.

Then, we go to the Navy Pier. I love going there! This is why Christmas is my favorite holiday tradition.

ETHAN NEWBERRY, GRADE 5

### *Fruit Dip*

My favorite family recipe is our home made fruit dip. It is very simple. My mamaw learned how to make it in bible school when she was a kid. She is now 63 almost 64. It has been past down from my mamaw to my mom to my big sister now to me.

#### *Ingredients:*

- ♦ 2 packets of cream cheese
- ♦ 11/2 13oz jars of marshmallow fluff
- ♦ 1 large mixing bowl with a lid
- ♦ 1 wooden spoon
- ♦ 1 stand or hand held mixer

#### *Directions*

1. Add 2 packets of cream cheese to a large mixing bowl
2. Add marshmallow fluff and mix with mixer
3. Add ½ cup of any fruit {optional}
4. Serve, seal, and enjoy!

KYLEE OWENS, GRADE 5

### *My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is Christmas. Christmas is my favorite holiday because I open presents on that day. Every Christmas, my dad lets me pick one big present that I want. We eat and we celebrate Jesus' birthday too. That's why Christmas is my favorite holiday.

DALTON PARKS, GRADE 5

### *My Family Thanksgiving*

My family traditions usually start with my mom choosing a family member to celebrate Thanksgiving with. This year (2019) we are going to my aunt's house. My aunt usually starts cooking the turkey first because it takes so long. Then she cooks the rest and we eat. I usually don't eat that much because I am picky. Stuffing? Yuck! Next we stay for an hour, maybe two hours after dinner just to really celebrate. Then we drive home and sleep, and just like that, Thanksgiving is over!

ISAIAH PATTERSON, GRADE 5

### *Great-Grandma's Cinnamon Bun Cake*

My favorite recipe is my great-grandma's cinnamon bun cake. My mamaw has been making this cake for many years. She used to make it when my mom was little. My mom loved it. She always made it perfect. This recipe will always be treasured in my family.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 yellow cake mix
- ♦ Oil
- ♦ Water
- ♦ Eggs
- ♦ 1 stick butter
- ♦ ½ cup brown sugar
- ♦ ½ cup sugar
- ♦ 1 tbsp cinnamon
- ♦ ¼ tsp vanilla

### *Directions:*

1. Preheat oven 350 F.
2. Grease pan.
3. Mix all cake ingredients.
4. Mix the rest of ingredients together.
5. Swirl the cake batter.
6. Bake in the oven for 30–40 mins.
7. Remove from oven and let cool.
8. Once cooled remove from pan and serve.

This is my family recipe. I hope you enjoyed.

KARDER PENDERGRAFT, GRADE 5

## *My Family Thanksgiving*

My family Thanksgiving starts with me waking and I go into the living room or on my computer and watch the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Then I help my dad cook. We usually have to do deviled eggs. Then we go shopping and get chips and coke. Then we drive to my great grandma's house and everyone in my family comes to eat. After the meal, we do a cornhole tournament - one for the younger kids and one for adults. I play in both the adult and kids' tournament. Then we might eat again or watch TV. Finally, about ten kids and I play hide-and-seek, then we go home and eat cake and watch TV. Finally, I go to bed. This is how my family Thanksgiving Day goes.

MADDOX PENNINGTON, GRADE 5

## *My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite Christmas tradition is me and my sister and brother go to my grandmother and grandfather's house, help carry the tree and ornaments from the garage, and help set up the tree in the living room. First we get the large body of the tree, then the medium, then the small top. Next we put on the lights and the ornaments and the star. My second favorite tradition is first my family will set up our tree, then we make the cookies for Santa.

ETHAN PERKINS, GRADE 5

## *My Favorite Holiday*

My favorite holiday is Christmas. I love this holiday because it is all about giving and caring for people. It is also about getting gifts. My favorite gift was a Nerf gun on Christmas. My mom bought the Nerf gun for me. I like to put a Christmas tree up and decorate it. That is why Christmas is my favorite holiday.

ETHAN PICKETT, GRADE 5

## *All About Me Poem*

Kaylin  
Caring, honest, and funny  
Who fears snakes, spiders, and bears.  
Who loves my phone, friends, pizza, and family.  
Who's skillful at some games.  
Who would like to see Disney World.  
Who dreams of being a nurse, doctor, and vet.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
Rash

KAYLIN RASH, GRADE 5

## *Grana's Biscuits*

My favorite breakfast food is my grana's biscuits. My great grandmother would make biscuits for my grana. My grana made them for my mom. Now my mom makes them every morning. Sometimes when we visit my grana's house she will make biscuits. Here is the recipe.

### *Ingredients*

- 1 cup of buttermilk
- 4 tablespoons of oil/butter
- 2 cups of self rising flour.

### *Directions*

1. Mix buttermilk and oil/ butter.
2. Add flour.
3. Knead gently.
4. Put dough on mat and cut.
5. Put cut dough on a pan.
6. Bake at 350 until brown.

I hope you enjoy this recipe.

SAVANNAH RIGGS, GRADE 5

## *Nana's Famous Snowball Cookies*

My favorite recipe is my nana's snowball cookies. I love my nana's snowball cookies because they are delicious and fun to make. We only eat them on Christmas but it is a joy when we get to eat them. That is why my nana's snowball cookies are special to us.

### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 1 cup all purpose flour
- ♦ ½ cup walnuts, finely chopped
- ♦ 2–3 tbs sugar
- ♦ 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ♦ 4 sticks butter
- ♦ Pinch of salt
- ♦ 1 cup powdered sugar (to coat)

### *Directions*

1. Preheat oven to 300.
2. Prepare large cookie sheet.
3. Mix all dry ingredients (flour, walnuts, salt and sugar)
4. Add vanilla extract.
5. Add butter in pieces.
6. Combine with hands until looks like course meal with nut bits in it.
7. Form into balls (no larger than walnuts)
8. Place on cookie sheet.
9. Space an inch apart.
10. Bake for 35 mins.
11. While warm roll in sugar
12. Let cool.
13. Roll in sugar again.

CAYLEIGH SCOTT, GRADE 5

## *My Dad's Meatloaf*

My dad's meatloaf is a dish that my sister likes. If you ask her what her favorite dish is she would probably say my dad's meatloaf. She also likes to make it with him. This is what my sister likes to go on meatloaf.

### *Ingredients:*

- ♦ 1 pound of ground beef
- ♦ 1 sleeve of saltine crackers
- ♦ 1 cup of ketchup
- ♦ ¼ cup of steak sauce
- ♦ 1 meatloaf spice pack
- ♦ 2 tablespoons of onion powder

### *Directions*

1. Preheat your oven to 370 degrees.
2. Combine all the ingredients into a mixing bowl.
3. Take off rings, spray hands with nonstick cooking spray.
4. Mix all ingredients with your hands.

5. Put all your mixture in a loaf pan.
6. Wash your hands then put it in the oven.
7. Set timer for 72mins.
8. Pull out of the oven.
9. Squirt three strips of ketchup on top.
10. ENJOY! My dad's meatloaf.

I hope you enjoy the meatloaf!

JAYDEN SEALS, GRADE 5

### *All About Me*

Eli  
Caring, funny, brave  
Who fears clowns, heights, and Johnny Muncy.  
Who loves family, animals and Lord Jesus.  
Who is skillful at karate, video games, and trivia.  
Who would like to see Hollywood.  
Who dreams of becoming an author and starting a family.  
Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
Sharrett

ELI SHARRETT, GRADE 5

### *My Family Thanksgiving*

When I wake up on Thanksgiving morning, my mom is probably in the kitchen cooking. When we go to my mamaw's house, we ate and talked, then my cousins and I go outside and play. Then we go to my mimi's house. My pappy and some more people in my family sometimes play instruments and talk. Then we eat. I love my mimi's banana pudding and turkey. I love spending time with my family.

TUCKER SIZEMORE, GRADE 5

### *Peanut Butter Roll*

My family's favorite recipe is Peanut Butter Roll. This recipe is special because everybody loved mamaw Rose's candy. Her Peanut Butter Roll was amazing. It would melt in your mouth. People would ask her to make it for them every year. Making candy was something she loved to do. This is why this recipe is special to my family.

#### *Ingredients*

- Sugar
- White karo syrup
- Water
- Egg whites
- Powdered sugar
- Peanut butter
- Vanilla flavoring

### *Directions*

1. In a heavy pan mix 2 cups of sugar  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a cup of white karo syrup and 1 cup of water.
2. Bring to a boil and boil until 240 beat 2 egg whites until stiff.
3. While still beating pour the syrup mixture slowly into the egg whites.
4. Add 1 tsp of vanilla flavoring continue beating until mixture stiffens and loses its gloss.
5. Roll out on powdered sugar surface, spread with peanut butter, roll up, and slice.

I hope you enjoyed my family recipe!

BRANDON SPIVEY, GRADE 5

### *My Family Thanksgiving*

On Thanksgiving my family basically does everything while I just do nothing. Mt mamaw cooks the mashed potatoes. My aunt, papaw, and sometimes my uncle do the rest of the work. Then when we are done, we set up the table. Then we get the food and put it on the table. Finally, we eat!

BRUCE SPIVEY, GRADE 5

### *Nanny's Microwave Fudge*

My family's fudge recipe came from my Great Grandmother. This recipe is special because it is so good. They put it in a church recipe book. They are delicious.

### *Ingredients*

- + 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  c. sugar
- +  $\frac{2}{3}$  c. evaporated milk
- + 1 (12 oz) pkg. semi sweet chocolate chips
- +  $\frac{1}{2}$  c. marshmallow cream
- +  $\frac{1}{2}$  c. chopped nuts (optional)
- + 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. Vanilla

### *Directions*

1. Butter 9-inch square baking dish.
2. In a medium mixing bowl, combine sugar, evaporated milk and butter.
3. Microwave for 3 to 4 minutes or until mixture boils, stirring after every minute.
4. Then microwave for 3 to 3  $\frac{1}{2}$  minutes longer or until sugar dissolves, stir after each minute in the microwave to prevent boil over.
5. Add remaining ingredients.
6. Stir until chocolate melts and mixture is blended.
7. Pour into prepared dish.
8. Chill to set.

I hope you enjoyed my favorite family recipe.

JAYDAN STEWART, GRADE 5



### *My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday is Christmas because I get to spend a lot of time with family. On Christmas Eve, we open one small present. Then, on Christmas we wake up early and open presents. My dogs even get presents! Last year she got a toy. How we get them to open it is when we are wrapping it, we put a treat in the wrapping paper and when she smells it, she tears it open! After that, we go to my aunt's house and open presents. Last year, my grandma gave me a gold bracelet that she had since I was

little and gave it to me. After we are done at my aunt's and uncle's house, we go visit my uncle's family. Then we will eat and go home and play with our presents. This is my favorite holiday tradition.

NEVAEH STUTLER, GRADE 5

### *All About Me Poem*

Alysa  
 Friendly, curious, sweet  
 Who fears snakes, and bugs.  
 Who loves family and friends.  
 Who is skillful at drawing and dancing.  
 Who would like to see England and Universal World.  
 Who dreams of being an artist and Veterinarian.  
 Who is a student at Jonesville Middle School.  
 Taylor

ALYSA TAYLOR, GRADE 5

### *Chocolate Fudge*

My favorite recipe is my great grandmother's Chocolate Fudge. It was always so good every time we ate it every Christmas and Thanksgiving.

#### *Ingredients*

- ♦ 2 cups sugar
- ♦ ½ cup cocoa
- ♦ ½ stick butter
- ♦ ½ cup milk
- ♦ ½ teaspoon vanilla flavoring
- ♦ 1 cup peanut butter
- ♦ 1 cup Marshmallow cream



*Directions*

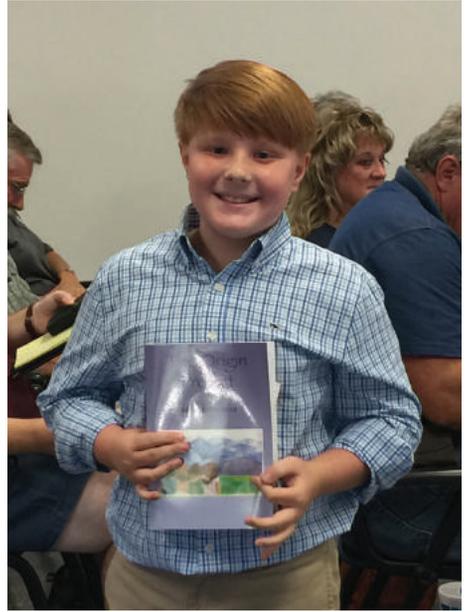
1. Put 2 cups of sugar and ½ cup of cocoa in kettle.
2. Stir dry ingredients together.
3. Put ½ stick of butter and ½ cup milk in a kettle and stir over medium heat.
4. When it comes to boil, test a drop of candy into 2 tablespoons of water to see if it forms soft ball.
5. When cady forms soft ball take off stove.
6. Add ½ teaspoons of vanilla flavoring 1 cup of peanut butter.

KEEGAN TAYLOR, GRADE 5

*My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is that my elf, Ajay brings presents on Christmas Eve. After we open our presents on Christmas Eve, we usually go to our Aunt Leslie's. We have a big dinner! After we eat, we hang out for a little while then we go home. When we get home we clean the house and set the cookies and milk for Santa Clause. Afterwards we go to sleep. Finally, it's time to open our presents.

AVERY WESTON, GRADE 5



*My Favorite Recipe*

My mamaw's banana pudding is special to my family. It is special because it was my great great great mamaw's banana pudding. It tastes so good. This is why this recipe is special to me.



*Ingredients;*

- Banana
- Cookies
- Pudding

*Directions;*

1. You put the cookies in the bowl.
2. Then you put the banana on the cookies.
3. You put the pudding on the cookies and the banana.
4. You put it in the refrigerator.

MALKI WILDER, GRADE 5

*My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My sisters, brother, dad, mom, and I spend the whole day together. We put up the Christmas tree, then my mom



makes dinner and then we eat. Then we decorate the tree. Then we go outside and play tag, hide-and-seek, and basketball. We have fun. Then we go inside and have hot chocolate and candy canes. We watch a Christmas movie, then go outside and get cold again and come back inside. Then we make more hot chocolate and watch Christmas movies. The next day is Christmas Eve. My mom and dad go and buy presents and put them under the tree. We stay with our mamaw and papaw while they put them under the tree. Then we go home and have hot chocolate and take showers. Then we eat. Then we take a break. Then we play for the day and then

go to bed. The next day is Christmas. We wake up, eat and then go open the presents and play with the stuff we get.

SHYLA WILDER, GRADE 5

### *My Family Thanksgiving*

At Thanksgiving, my whole family goes to my aunt's house. Everyone in the family makes a food. My aunt makes the best mashed potatoes and my mom makes the best ham. After we eat we all go outside and play all kinds of games. Sometimes we start a fire and roast marshmallows and make smores. When Thanksgiving is over, everybody goes home. One of the things I like most about Thanksgiving is that I get to see family that I don't see very much.

CHARLIE WILSON, GRADE 5

### *Christmas Traditions*

My favorite holiday is Christmas. The reason I like it is because Jesus was born on the day hundreds of years ago. Everyone should know that it is not about presents and toys. I like them a lot though. I love collectible toys. I also love snow and snow and most of the time it snows on Christmas! It may be cold, but snow equals fun! Christmas is an awesome!

AUSTIN WOLIVER, GRADE 5

### *Rodeos In Pennington Gap*

In my town of Pennington Gap, we have lots of fun things. Rodeos and fun shows are really fun. You may ask what are rodeos and fun shows? Well we don't have



big rodeos, but small rodeos. I'll tell you a few things about rodeos. Rodeos have barrel racing, roping steers horns, and team roping. Fun shows have fun things like a wheel barrel race, egg tossing and water balloon toss. Our 4-H horse club did a Fun show. We had a wheel-barrel race, egg toss, water balloon toss and a game that is called the dizzy cowboy. I wish we had more people in our horse club. It is so cool to watch barrel races and roping. Rodeos are awesome to watch. When you barrel race you go around three barrels. You should look in to rodeos. Hope you can come to one of our rodeos.

KASEY WOLIVER, GRADE 5

### *My Favorite Holiday Tradition*

My favorite holiday tradition is Christmas. My mom used to decorate the outside of my house. No one could see it, so we just decorate the inside of my house and we decorate the Christmas tree.

JORDAN WYATT, GRADE 5



LEE HIGH SCHOOL



## *Alex Long, English 9*

### *Rodeo Danger*

About twenty years ago, my dad Shane and his dad Randy, who we call Papa, started doing rodeo. They would do things like shoot-doggin' and calf-roping, but what they really got into was calf-dressin'.

Calf-dressin' is when they let the calves into the corral and three or four of your buddies have to chase one down, tie it up, then wait for it- dress the calf. In order to dress the calf, you have to put a sock, t-shirt, and pair of underwear anywhere on it.

So when the Ranch Rodeo came to Leeman Field Park in Pennington Gap, Va. in the summer of '03, Dad convinced Pops and Turtle Hammonds, a friend of my dad's, to do the calf-dressin' with him. When they were waiting on the calves to come out, Papa yelled out "Boys! Do not go for the big one with the horns!"

The gate flew open and the calves barreled out, faster than a bat out of Hades. Papa ran straight to the calf with horns, the same one he warned the group they shouldn't go for. They wrestled that calf around till they had him tied into an angry heap. Then came the hard part. Ya' see, just because it's all tied up, don't make it any less than it is- a four-hundred-pound brute, made of pure muscle, horns, and a temper hotter than a South Georgia sun.

Turtle managed to get the sock on it, then Dad forced the shirt on it, then Papa had to get the underwear on it, and he knew just where he was gonna' put it, too. Right between the two razor sharp, eight inch horns on an extremely angry and humiliated overgrown steak.

Pops wrestled that cow around till he had it in a headlock, then he commenced to trying to put the underwear on its head. That calf was doing everything it could to break free, and in the process of its efforts, it twisted its head in a circular motion, taking Papa's ear with it. They left the calf laying there tied up, mad and covered in blood. Papa was rushed out of the corral, clutching his barely attached ear to his head with a pair of underwear that until recently had been attempting to reside on the head of a very angry young bull. They put him in an ambulance and took him to the E.R. When the doctor came in and saw Pops standing there covered in cow manure, blood, and dirt, clutching a bloody ear to the side of his head with a pair of Fruit of the Looms tighty whiteys; he just shook his head and said "I don't even want to know."

So that was my Papa's last rodeo. They patched his ear up really good, and to this day you can't even tell it happened. I guess in the end, the calf had the last laugh.

LATCHLON ALDRIDGE, GRADE 9

### *The Ely Heritage*

The Ely's have a long history dating back to England in the 1700's. They originated in The Isle of Ely, which was a city in Cambridgeshire, England. The Ely's were wanting to find new land and begin a new life, so they packed their belongings and migrated to Virginia. The Ely's traveled to southwest Virginia, where the ancestors that I am related to settled. John Wesley McPherson Ely established a farm in the Hurricane community along the banks of the Powell River.

The Ely farm is located south of Jonesville, near the Hurricane Bridge. My great-grandfather John Gleaves Spencer Ely was born to John Wesley McPherson Ely and Adeline Cora Blakemore Ely. After his mother and father passed, he inherited a small portion of his family farm. He then purchased the remainder of the farm from his brothers and sister George Ely, Thomas James Ely, and Clio Ely Watson so it would continue to be the Ely Farm. He continued the legacy of his family's farm by growing tobacco and corn while raising livestock. John G. Ely married Ruby Ellen Newman Ely and raised three sons James Wayne, Carl Gleaves, and Thomas Harrison Southgate Ely. He passed the farm to the next generation of Ely's where it currently remains with my mother and aunt today.

TYLER BALES, GRADE 9

## *Jell-O Pinwheels*

Ingredients: (3 ½ ounce) package Jell-O gelatin, any flavor, ½ cup warm water, 1 ½ cups miniature marshmallows or 12 large marshmallows.

Directions: lightly spray an 8 or 9-inch square pan with cooking spray. Mix gelatin and water in 1 ½ -2-quart microwave bowl. Cool over the stove on high for 11/2 minutes. Stir to dissolve completely, then add marshmallows to gelatin. Microwave for one minute or until the marshmallows are almost melted. Stir until completely melted and the mixture is smooth. Pour into prepared pan and refrigerate 45 minutes or until set. Next loosen edges with knife dipped in warm water. Starting at one end, roll up tightly, the cut into 10–12 ½ inch slices. Lastly, refrigerate for at least one hour before serving.

This recipe is special to my family because my nana has made it every year for my family in the summer and I enjoy eating them. She has passed down the recipe to me and my mom and every time i make and eat them it makes me think of her.

ALEXIS BENFIELD, GRADE 9

## *My Family*

When people think of Virginia, Lee County to be exact, they think of hillbillies. Sometimes they're right, my grandmother, Joann Bledsoe was born in a mining camp called Leona Mines, that is located a little bit above St. Charles VA. She was born on January 5th 1943, to Orb and Anna-Lee Clark. Joann came from a rather large family, she had 4 brothers, 1 sister, 1 half - brother and several infant sisters who passed away after and during birth. Joann also attended Dryden High school, and graduated in 1965. Her exact words to me were "School was out on a Friday, and I got married on a Saturday." Joann married my grandfather, Christopher Lee Bledsoe, on May 29th, 1965. One year later on December 2nd 1966, they had my uncle, Elbert Bledsoe. Two years later after having their first child, on December 3rd, 1968, they had my father, Grant (Joe-bud) Bledsoe. They strived to give their children a better childhood than what they had, when Joann was young, she didn't wear what the other kids wore at that time, Joann wore corduroy jeans, and boys tee - shirts. My grandfather Lee, had to drop out of school in 3rd grade to help on the farm after his father died, he grew up not knowing how to read.

In 1985, Joann had a horrible heart attack that resulted in a triple - bypass open heart surgery, while she was in recovery she flat lined for about 2–3 minutes. A few years after all of this, my dad met my mom, and in October of 1991, they got married, and on May 21st 1993 my older sister Samantha Ann Bledsoe was born, 11 years later on August 27th, 2004, I Susan Renee Bledsoe was born. I started singing at a young age, my grandmother was a huge influence on me, she had me singing in church when I was at least 5 years old. This would impact me very heavily in the future, I am a fourth year Choir student, I have made it to All District Honors Choir twice. I am aiming to do something with my extraordinary talent when I get older, I hope to make it to the Voice someday, without my grandparents, I would not have these dreams nor would I have the confidence to believe in myself. Even though they aren't here to see what I've become, I know they are always going to be watching over me. Joann passed away on March 19th, 2018 when I was only 13. Lee passed away on September 27th, 2013 when I was 9 years old. Altogether, they have 2 grandchildren, and 2 great - grandchildren. Christian Lee Lawson, was born on April 22nd, 2016. Chloe Anna-Lee Faith Lawson was born December 3rd 2018, they were born to my sister, Samantha Lawson and her husband Charles Lawson

RENEE BLEDSON, GRADE 9

## *You Will Never Be Alone*

I asked my brother for some scary stories and he told me two, both of them happened on the same night.

My brother was driving to our Nana's at night with two of my cousins, Destiny and Carrie. Destiny was in the backseat and was leaning towards the front so she wasn't alone in the back. They had all the windows rolled down and they were casually talking. Right as they passed an abandoned graveyard on the way to my Nana's, my brother felt something touching his back. Naturally, he thought it was Destiny, so he asked her if she was touching him. She said she wasn't so he shrugged it off as his imagination. It wasn't until he got to Nana's that he felt a burning sensation on his back, where he got touched, so he checked it out and found long irritated scratches going down his back.

Thinking back on it, he remembered the rumor that when you drive past the graveyard at night with your windows down, something will appear in your car, only visible through your rear view mirrors. Later that night, he decided to take a shower. Not long after he got into the shower, he heard someone come into the bathroom. He asked who it was and Destiny replied saying it was her. He immediately calmed down when he realized it was her. Even though it sounded like her and it looked like her silhouette, she was acting very odd. She was asking weird and personal questions. He trusted her so he started talking about his fear of losing his family and being alone. Before she left the bathroom she said, "You'll never be alone." After hearing her say that, he quickly opened the shower curtain, hoping to see her, but all he saw was the shut bathroom door. He got dressed quickly and went to talk to her about what she meant. When he found her, she was in the middle of watching a movie. He asked her about what they were talking about and she was confused, as she had been watching a movie the entire time he was taking a shower. He explained to her what happened she was terrified. They were so scared that they woke up Carrie!

JACKLYN BRADFORD, GRADE 9

### *My Christmas Tradition*

Every year my family's tradition is to decorate our tree together. Because we do this together every year, it's very important to my mom and I. We always make it a priority to do it on the weekend after Thanksgiving. We do this every year and it's my favorite.

Most people take their tree down the days after Christmas or New Years. My mom and I like to wait till the 12 days of Christmas, or the epiphany, is over. Epiphany is celebrated 12 days after Christmas on January 6th and is the time when Christians remember the Wise Men who visited Jesus. Epiphany Eve (also known as the twelfth night) marks the end of the traditional Christmas celebrations and is the time where Christmas decorations are meant to be taken down.

Most places have their own traditions and celebrations for the 12 days of Christmas. Like in Prague, there's Three Kings swim. This is a traditional event during which three kings and their crew dive into the middle of a river and swim approximately two hundred meters to the shore. We don't do anything that special for the day, but it is also important to many other people.

My favorite part about our tradition is definitely putting the ornaments on. We listen to Christmas music and eat leftovers from Thanksgiving when we're done. The best ornament we have is one my friend Caroline gave me a couple years ago. It's a low rider convertible that plays the song "Low Rider" when you press the button. My mom gets annoyed when I play it over and over again.

Most of our ornaments are fairly new but some have been passed down by my grandparents. We usually put these in the center of the tree where they can be easily seen. Some were given to me when I was born or a little girl. Some are my mom's from when she was young that she's kept till this day. Things she made or got places she went.

We have always done this together for as long as I can remember. Because this tradition is my favorite I hope to do it with my family if I grow up to have one and make sure that it's important to them too. I'm glad my mom has given me the opportunity to have a tradition that we do every year.

BROOKS CHADWELL, GRADE 9

## *My Family's Farm*

I was born and raised on my family's farm and I have been working on my family's farm my whole life. I do all kinds of stuff on my farm like feed the cows and fix the fence. On our farm, we raise cattle and we have fifteen cows. We use our tractor to rake hay, fluff hay, cut and bale the hay. We also have a garden that we raise every year and we plant potatoes, cucumbers, watermelon, tomatoes, and corn. Also, on rainy days, we always have to scrape the road and fix it up from all the mud and sludge that floods it. In addition, when the cows get older, we sell our cows and calves to the cattle market for extra money. When our steers get big, we take them to the slaughter house and eat the meat through the winter. When we work our cows, we ear tag them, worm them, and we also give them a shot. Occasionally, we will band our steers to prevent them from getting too aggressive and stay in our fields. These are also prime for beef later on.

CHAZ CHASTEEN, GRADE 9

## *Gator man*

When in Florida, you can often find the most interesting people which are like out of a movie. One such time as saw a person which I thought deserved a story was in late December in 2015 when me and my family where in Florida visiting Disney World.

We were taking a break from family fun and my parents took a nap in the room

while me and my aunt went into the city and to get something to eat. It was a little diner in the center of Orlando and I ordered a burger and my aunt got chicken. While I finished my fries, my aunt payed for the meal as we walked outside when I saw him.

I could only see the man's head but when more of him came into view, I realized this was no normal man. His white tank top was stained with dirt brown cargo shorts which were ripped— and then there it was—the alligator! this man was walking an alligator on a leash! I was so intrigued by this man. What was his story? me and my aunt followed this man for around two blocks. Along the way, I discovered the alligator's name was Rambo. I followed this man until he went into an apartment building I did not follow him in.

My story for him would have to be the history of why he had an alligator for a pet. Maybe he was a wrangler who got a conscience and recused the gator from the Gator Farm and claimed him as his own. Maybe he was like the Madame Medusa character from Disney's "the Rescuers" and used him as a Floridian watchdog! Whatever his real story is, I will never forget this one of many interesting Floridians I have seen down in Florida. I hope to one day write a book featuring these characters like the author Carl Hiaasen.

MATTHEW COLLINS, GRADE 9

## *My Native American Heritage*

The Cherokee are an ethnic group of Native Americans who have been around since the dawn of time, which just so happens to be part of my family's heritage. They have evolved with time, creating an intricate social structure within the confines of the ethnic group. My knowledge of the Cherokee customs was given to me by my grandparents. To fully understand this social structure, we must break down and explore each part of it with an open mind to get to the root of who the Cherokee people truly are.

The Cherokee celebrate the tradition of the Three Sisters. The Three Sisters consists of corn, beans, squash or pumpkin, also called *selu*, *tuya*, and *iya*. The Cherokee legend of the Three Sisters states that three women helped each other stay fed and strong on the Trail of Tears. Although, it is mainly used as a lesson for planting crops. My family perform this tradition every year. The planting of the Three Sisters usually occurs towards the beginning of Spring, due to the weather. After the plants have fully grown, my family likes to

incorporate them into our Easter meal by using my grandmother's secret recipes. Once my family gathers around the dinner table, my grandmother tells us many stories about her great-grandfather's tribe. Thus making it a very memorable moment for each of us.

The Cherokee had many games they would play to pass time, Basket Dice being one of them. Basket Dice, also called *Taludza Gunti*, is a popular game among the Cherokee. My family normally play this game at family gatherings. We are divided into teams based on gender and given rocks painted by my mother to be used as points. Once everything is sorted, the players must place the rocks in the "pit" or "boneyard." After, one player will kneel, holding a basket on the ground. The other player from the opposite team will roll the dice into the basket. When the dice has come to a complete stop, the number shown will determine the score. The team with the highest score not only wins the game, but will also win all the painted rocks. Thus making it a very competitive game.

To conclude, the native Cherokee people have many customs and traditions that make them who they are; that make them Cherokee. Without these customs and traditions, we would be normal people with no identity. No idea who we are or what our purpose of life is. With these customs and traditions, I connect myself with my family's past and carry our culture with me wherever I go until the end of time.

ALAYAH COMBS, GRADE 9

### *Football In My Family*

Football was introduced to me at a very young age. My whole family was, and still is crazy about football. For me, it started at the age of 5. My dad coached a pee-wee football team called the "Dolphins." I thought it was a thrill, running as fast as I could with a ball, try to get those points on the board. After the season, I suffered an ankle injury and quit. Years went by, and I was more attracted to the gaming and basketball scene.

Up until age 10, I didn't even look at a football. But, my dad offered to take me to a playoff game between the Atlanta Falcons and the Seattle Seahawks. That game sparked my interests of football back. I started tracking football superstars, following their stats and records. I watched tons of games, ranging from high school football to the NFL. I was addicted to football as much as my family was, maybe even more.

Now at age 14, I want to start football again, I want to feel that same energy. Football is a super huge part in my family, we use it to bond. Every game, every week, we watch football and I could not ask for anything better!

BRAEDON COOPER, GRADE 9

### *My First Ceremony Experience*

My story today is about when I attended my Great Papaw Carter's Funeral Ceremony

I remember very little about my Great Papaw Carter since; I was such a young age when he was alive. The times I do remember are going to his house and eating ice cream and just laughing at all the jokes he would make. What helps me to remember better is looking at photos of me and him together. If I don't really remember what was going on in the picture my mom or my mamaw would fill me in. A lot of people don't get to meet their great grandparents and have a good bond but, I'm glad I am not one of those people.

My Great Papaw Carter passed away on April 4, 2013. A few days after he passed we had his funeral. The funeral was attended by my whole family and some friends. We had it at the funeral home in Jonesville. The day of his funeral I felt sadness and grief it was almost like I lost a piece of myself that day. Everyone there cried but I think I cried the hardest. I will never forget this day because my Great Papaw loved rainbows and after his funeral I walked out the door and saw a rainbow in the sky. This made me realize that even though my Great Papaw Carter is gone he will always be with me.

DREW COX, GRADE 9

## *What My Family and I Do For Christmas*

On the day before Christmas, my family and I exchange gifts. On the day of Christmas, we cook a big dinner. My family and I sit around while the food is being cooked. My mom is the one who cooks the food (mostly because she is the only one who can cook). She cooks all kinds of different food such as turkey, ham, deviled eggs, chicken and dumplings and so much more. We keep it going because my mamaw loved doing the dinner but now she not around to do it anymore.

After Christmas is over we wait for the 12 days of Christmas to pass to take the tree down, because my family and I believe it is bad luck. The 12 days stands for the span of time between the birth of Jesus and the arrival of the Magi (the 3 wise men). My family takes any and every precaution to keep from getting bad luck. After that my family and I do about nothing until school starts. This is what my family and I do for Christmas break.

DEVIN DAVIDSON, GRADE 9

## *Learning To Sew*

When I was six, my grandmother taught me how to sew. She taught me how to sew together small pieces of fabric that she would have laying around her house. We would cut them up into different shapes and sizes and stitch them together. We would always make little wallets out of the most colorful fabrics we could find.

Every time I would go over to her house, she would have a new piece of fabric to show me. She would have sheets of cotton and wool at the ready, and sometimes she would have pieces of denim we could sew together. I remember making her a heart shaped wallet out of red, cotton fabric that she had. Surprisingly, she still uses the same wallet that I made her to this day.

I would go over to her house and she would show me all of her sewing supplies. She would have the best sewing supplies that I had ever seen. All of her threads and fabrics and sewing needles amazed me as a little kid. She would have so many different sizes of needles and she would have the wackiest colors of thread like zebra stripes and rainbow.

As a kid, I was amazed at her collection, but one day stood out better than ever. That day was the day that she showed me her sewing machine. I was astounded when I saw it for the first time. She told me that she had used it for her kids when they were still living with her. She told me whenever her kids had a hole in their clothes, she would take a piece of denim or other type of fabric and stitch it back up so there would not be a hole. She even taught me how to use it on my clothes if I ever had a hole. She told me that it was her mother's sewing machine and that her mother taught her how to use it as well. My grandmother taught her kids how to use it and she finally got to teach me how to do it. So throughout my family, my grandmother has taught her kids and her grandkids how to sew.

SIMON DAVIS, GRADE 9

## *The Woodward's Origins: Then to Now*

My family dates back to the year 1730 when Captain Henry Woodward was born. He came from England to America in 1750 to serve in the French and Indian War under George Washington. Henry married his wife he met on the same boat ride over named Sarah Shelton and had three boys named James, Jesse, and William Woodward. Henry played cards with George Washington and lost and was the start of his military career. At first, he was a Lieutenant in the Virginia militia, and later promoted to Captain.

While he was in the military, he was given land in Stafford, Virginia for being a war hero. According to records in the congressional library, the original portion of the Capitol building in Washington, D.C., was built from stone cut on the land of Captain Woodward in Stafford. George Washington sent letters to General

Woodward about the war. One quote reads as follows, "Sir, you are hereby ordered immediately upon receipt hereof, to march with your own company to the plantation of Captain Dickerson."

Henry's son, Jesse, sold his land in Stafford after his father's passing in the late 1700s and moved to Lee County, Virginia because he wanted to "grow up with the country." The family settled in Sugar Run, named after the amount of sugar trees in the areas. They learned how to make syrup from the Indians in the area. Fast forward many years and here I am typing a paper about my family's origins.

JAMES DILLMAN, GRADE 9

### *The Origin of the Ely Name*

According to my research the last name Ely was habitational name from the cathedral city on an island in the fens north of Cambridge England. It is believed to be an Americanized version of the German last name "Eley."

I also found from my research the Ely family name was found in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Scotland between the times 1840 and 1920. In 1840 one hundred and thirteen Ely families were living in the city of New York. Which was roughly twenty-one percent of all the recorded Ely's in United States.

In 1940, men and women with the last name Ely mostly worked as farmers and teachers. Twelve percent of the Ely men worked hard farming for a living and seven percent of the Ely women worked as teachers. The other less common job for Americans named Ely was a clerk.

Also from the research I gathered I was able to find the average life expectancy of People with the last name Ely. The year the lowest the Ely life expectancy was in 1944 sitting at around thirty-five. I also found the year it was at its best which was 1992 the average age of death was around eighty. In 2004 the average life expectancy for people with the last name Ely was seventy-five.

CADEN ELY, GRADE 9

### *The House On the Ridge*

The evening air seemed to have a chill in it as I sat down with my mother that Thursday night. She didn't need time to ponder upon the question I asked her, with an answer and a story that I will never forget to follow. She began to pour out stories from her childhood about my great aunt's supposed haunted house. I had always heard the rumors as much of my family had before me, about the small, black and white house on the ridge. Hearing it from my mother's mouth was much different, she brought more life to the tales than before by bringing answers to much of the mystery behind the home.

My aunt and her husband purchased the home during the 1980's, but before that it sat vacant, since it's first owners had built it in the early 1990's. The rumor behind the home was one of the original owners died within its walls, leaving behind her spirit to walk its halls. She, whose name is still a mystery, supposedly had mental health issues and committed suicide by gunshot; however, many others tell a different story. The main rumor to come from the mill was that her husband had actually shot and killed her, but there was never enough evidence to prove that. Either way it goes, her spirit seems to be lingering behind for some reason.

My mother followed the small history lesson with a tale of her own experience in the home. She was just a little girl when her grandfather was sleeping in the guest room. The guest room contained two beds, one my mother laid in and one her grandfather laid in. Upon the darkest hour of the night, my mother was shaken awake by her grandfather.

He gasped and said, "Look, over there!". There at the edge of the bed my mother said she saw a sight she would never forget. An older woman, dressed in a bonnet sat on the edge of her grandfather's bed. Fear took over them both and they fled from the room. To this day, my mother has not returned to the room.

Continuing on, my mother spoke of the experiences she was told about by the rest of the family. When my great aunt first moved into the home they had to paint the guest room where the accident had happened.

The paint continued to peel until they finally put up the paneling that still lines the walls this day. Once my aunt had been in bed early in the morning and heard someone in the kitchen. Upon looking in on the room to figure out who it was, no one was there but every cabinet in the room was opened.

Many other stories still come from my family about the home, but these are just a few of the significant ones that have been told. Ending the conversation, I went back to my room with a sense of appreciation for the knowledge. I seem to now understand the reason why many of my family members avoid the home, but I can also understand why my great aunt loves it. She now lives her life day to day with occurrences still happening to this day, but doesn't let it bother her. Somehow this taught me that you can adapt to any situation, no matter how terrifying.

ISABEL FIGUEROA, GRADE 9

### *My grandmas Saskatoon berry pie*

Saskatoon berry pie (ingredients)

- 4 cups of Saskatoon berries
- 1 Pie Crust (store bought or homemade)
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cups Sugar
- 3 tablespoons Cornstarch or flour
- 1 tablespoons Butter
- 2 tablespoons of Lemon zest
- $\frac{1}{4}$  Water

Directions: preheat oven to 425 degrees f. In a large saucepan, simmer berries in  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup water for 10 minutes. Stir in lemon juice with the berries. Combine sugar and flour together in a medium boil, then stir into berry mixture into a pastry dish. Dot with butter, then wait one hour and insert when ready.

This recipe is special to me because in my family tradition we always make this on Christmas and Thanksgiving Day. The reason my family makes the dish is because my grandparents Canadian and my great grandmother that died came up with it.

BARAK FISCHER, GRADE 9

### *How I Became Invested In The Supernatural*

*My Grandpa on my mom's side (John Smith) tells me his story over the phone in an interview. My mother (Crystal "Smith" Green) had said my Grandpa had a story he swore without a doubt had happened. He had apparently told the story to my mom and uncle (Justin Smith) countless times, even as young children. Knowing this, I just had to interview him. This essay is nearly word-for-word for what he had said. Some things were added or changed for clarity. But this is my Grandpa's story.*

I graduated in the year 1980. So did my two buddies, Bob and Brian, who were brothers. The three of us loved fishing. So much so that we would go fishing almost every night to different good fishing spots around the city.

One night, we went to Turtle Creek Reservoir. It's this big lake that isn't too far from here. Today, there are a decent amount of houses around it. But in 1980, there was almost nothing. People only went there to fish and camp. But still, not a lot of people went.

We decided to go in the middle of the night. It was really spooky; you know? We had to walk a long way to get there. The car was a while away from us, so if we really had to get away, it would be difficult.

Despite how creepy it was; it was a perfect fishing spot. It was quiet. Calm, you know? And it was late September too. The lake was still, and calm. So, we set up and threw our lines out.

Suddenly, there was a giant splash across the lake. And I mean HUGE. It was so loud; I could only compare it to someone catapulting a car into the lake. There were two more splashes, just as loud as the first one. The waves were so big, that it made the boats on the lake rock back and forth, and the bells on the boats rung from being rocked like that.

The things that had jumped into the water earlier could be heard swimming to shore. It was close to us but to our left some ways away. We could hear them go into the woods a little bit away. They didn't sound like a normal animal. They sounded like people, you know? They all had two legs, for sure.

The three of us were starting to get nervous. We had never been put into a situation like that. Where we didn't know what was going on, and we didn't understand why it was going on. All we knew was that, whatever it was, we weren't prepared for it.

We were on a cove. The only way we could go, was back to the car. But before we could, we could hear these things circling us. They were close but too close. They were far enough to where we couldn't see them, exactly. Brian and I we were actually thinking of leaving Bob behind by swimming across the lake. Bob had bad arthritis. And he wouldn't have been able to swim across the lake with us because of it.

I decided to grab the flashlight by me and walk a little bit ahead to whatever the hell these things were. They were still a little far away, and the flashlight I was holding was pretty dim. Too dim to see them from that distance. But I could see one thing. Three pairs of yellow-tinted eyes staring at the three of us. They were high-up too. Like three grizzly bears on their hind legs. But, there are no bears in Indiana.

They stared at us for what seemed like forever. But what really was about five minutes. They stood there for a moment before they soon left. And without hesitation, the three of us packed our things and left. I never went back to that spot in the night time ever again.

Now, a lot of people will think I'm crazy and delusional. But, I was never into any of that conspiracy crap. I never believed or even paid attention to anything supernatural. But that night was the night I started to get invested in the paranormal and supernatural. So call me crazy all you want, girl. I know what we saw that night.

JANE GREEN, GRADE 9

### *Grandma's Christmas Stories*

A family tradition I cherish takes place at my grandma's house on Christmas Day. There, my aunts, uncles, cousins, and my family all gather to enjoy Christmas dinner. Normally we eat finger foods such as ham biscuits, spinach dip, and sausage balls, just to name a few. And of course, the meal wouldn't be complete without Grandma's Christmas punch! We all gather around the table and enjoy Christmas dinner while my grandma tells us stories from Christmas when she was a little girl. One story that I'll never forget is the one my grandma shared with us a few Christmases ago. She said that when she was little her parents would have to sell tobacco to get money to buy Christmas presents. She told me that she remembers coming home from school and having to work, tying the tobacco, so that it could be sold, just so her and her siblings, all five of them, could have Christmas presents. That Christmas her and her sister Linda had asked for dolls and doll furniture. They had begged their mother and father all year for it. Her face lit up as she recalled waking up that morning to find that they got exactly what they had asked and worked for. These stories show me how fortunate I am to have such great Christmases and to be able to spend them with my family. I hope to remember these stories so that I can continue the tradition and share them with my children someday.

JAELYN HALL, GRADE 9

### *Bittersweet*

*I, Terri Hamilton, interviewed Vanessa McClain. This story takes place at Clintwood Heritage Hall. It occurred in October 2011. Mrs. McClain was twenty-seven at that time. This story is not scary but very peculiar.*

I began the interview by asking if anything strange or unbelievable has ever happened to her. She took a short pause and began, “First, the lady resident was in her room. She was in a “veggie” state. Her husband was on the left side of the hall, while she lived on the right. The husband would go to the nurse administrator’s office begging to be moved into his wife’s room. However, the nursing home had rules about males and females staying together. Finally, they allowed it, due to the fact that the resident’s children requested it. The man told the nursing staff that he wanted to be in the same room with her because then he could pass in peace. That same day, they moved in together. While their children were visiting, they pushed their parent’s beds together, because their father wanted to be closer to their mother. At 12 a.m., it was time for bed checks, and they were fine. The second bed check, at 3 a.m., my coworker and I went in and turned on the light above the bathroom sink. We saw they were holding hands. We checked on them and discovered they had both passed away in their sleep. The room had a funky, sweet smell, also known as the smell of death. I felt great sadness, but also I found it the sweetest thing I’ve ever witnessed. Every time a patient died it feel as if they’re with you for days after the event. I thought I was crazy, but many nurses throughout the years have testified the same thing.

TERRI HAMILTON, GRADE 9

### *My Thoughts On Football*

Playing football has in a way changed me in a few ways. It’s built my endurance, toughened me up and has lead me to make a lot more friends. I think it is important to play football (or any physical sport) as a kid because you may never get the chance to play on a team ever again. The only down side of playing football is being sore and having bruises, but you’ll eventually not notice that stuff. Football is very intense, for instance, your running and the quarter back throws you the ball, it may not look like much from the stands, but for you everything kind of goes in slow motion because of all your adrenaline.

After practice I would always be so happy because practice wasn’t really that fun, but after the season was over I came to realize that I really missed football and I wished the season wasn’t so short. At the very start of the season, I was scared because I haven’t played in 5 years and didn’t know how to even catch a football, but now after the season I will say I’m a much better player. I loved my coaches they would always give us these good speeches before the game that would always get us pumped up, even though we lost 90% of the games. One day in practice, Andrew threw me a few passes and I dropped almost all of them. I got really hard on myself and I practiced a lot and I strived to get better and I got better, slowly, but I did and I’m proud of myself.

I know football is considered a man’s sport, but I think if a girl tried really hard and put in a lot of work i know they could make it into the pro league. I know it’s a long shot but it’s a dream of mine to at least make it into college because of football. I just feel like football is a great opportunity to make some friends and say healthy and physical.

IAN HINES, GRADE 9

### *The Best Family*

I interviewed my friend, Lucas Baker. He talks about when he was younger and what school was like for him.

“I feel like I was the annoying kid in school. I would raise my hand to ask a question I already knew the answer to, I’d rant in the middle of class about topics that didn’t relate to the lesson whatsoever, and I’d get into fights over the stupidest things, like someone poking my glasses.

“I still had friends, somehow. They’d tell me how stupid I could be but still liked me anyway. I was particularly close to one guy, everyone called him Big Jay. He was a tall kid, maybe around 6’7, and I was 5’4. Most of my friends were taller than me, actually, I had always felt like a dwarf compared to everyone.

“I never had a goal set during school. I never thought about what I wanted to be or what I wanted to do. From middle school to tenth grade it school was all just dry, rinse, repeat. Big Jay had tried to get me hyped

about different things like sports or clubs, or something I might have liked doing. I'd listen to him, sure, but every time he tried to convince me to do something I always answer the same, "I'll think about it."

"There were a few subjects I actually enjoyed learning, like carpentry or science, but I think my favorite was English. The class would give me an excuse to actually write. I loved writing, just not in public places. I would write about anything I could think of really. Tiny people who lived in giant's houses to an artist who could create different realities, I did it all. If I ever wrote I would feel like people would stare at whatever I was doing, which is why I preferred writing in the classroom.

"I feel like elementary school went by the slowest. Maybe it's because I was younger and actually enjoyed school, I don't know. You feel like you're on top of the world in elementary, you feel like no one can touch you and that everyone you meet wants to be your friend, Ah, but then came middle school.

"In middle school, I ended up changing my friend completely. The kids I was friends with just started to flat out ignore me. Not that I really blame them, as I said, I was an annoying kid.

"When you did make it to middle school, all four elementary schools in the county came together. You can imagine the chaos. Every year is always hectic with hundreds of new children running around. I hadn't gone to school with most of the kids there before then, but that never really mattered.

"I remember meeting my best friend, Big Jay. He was a hockey player, he loved the game more than anything, I do believe. I was in my English class, seventh grade English, when our class got interrupted. Our teacher answered the door to reveal the tallest boy I had ever seen. He just stepped right past her and announced that if anyone wanted to join the school's hockey team to go to the gym. I kid you not, every single boy in that room got up and left, probably not to join the team, but just get out of class. I was the only guy there, and I didn't like that for whatever reason my teenage self had. So, as everyone was leaving, I got up and rushed out too. I never did join the team, but Big Jay ended up talking with me the whole way there, so I had a new friend.

"I never really was interested in anyone in school, like romantically. No one appealed to me. I was called gay sometimes, not that I blame anyone who did call me that, I did kind of act that way. I never 'officially' pronounced myself as gay either, but I do remember liking guys a little too much in eleventh grade, but we're not getting into that. That was probably just a phase I had.

"I feel like the main reason I got extremely close to my friends was because of my relationship with my family. It wasn't a good relationship, that's for sure. I did get along with my brother fairly well, but not all the time. I remember my friends coming to my house in the evening to sneak me out, just to help me get away from certain people. It didn't matter what day it was if they knocked on my window, I better have been ready to go. On more than one occasion, I would call one of them first and ask if they could come to get me. It usually resulted from me getting into a fight with my Dad or sister.

"I feel like my fondest memories were with my friends. Throughout high school, I had finally felt like I had a real family. They included me in almost anything they did and would listen to whatever I had on my mind. I had a crazy childhood, for sure, but those few people really helped me live the most I ever could."

ABBIE HORNER, GRADE 9

### *What Happens in the Dark*

Within the limits of the small community of old Mill Holler, a legend roamed the mountains. For years, keeping to old paths unknown to the mountain people, strange sightings of a large white, almost cat-like, creatures were common, but rarely ever reported. The residents of Mill Holler didn't recognize the animal, so it came to be called "The White Thing". When someone had seen "The White Thing", there was blood involved, and it was always dark.

One particular night, Bill Gunn and Jocie Hopkins, my uncle and aunt, had been walking home from a neighbor's house. It was dark, so they had chosen to go through Mill Holler, the quickest route home.

“You could hear it. When we walked, it walked. When we ran, it ran. Once we got out of Mill Holler, we never went back after dark.” Bill had told me.

Surprising as it may seem, it was common to the Mountain people, and it didn’t stop them from doing what was necessary. As I stated earlier, “The White Thing” is sighted when blood is involved.

One fall day, in 1965, Bill had only been a year old when a nightmare had become real. My great-grandparents, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and many other relatives had come together to help one another. They had a day full of slaughtering over one hundred chickens to keep back for eating. Later that night, with the remains from the previous event still left behind, my great-uncle Pete heard a noise in the darkness. Still frightened by the sound, he awoke my grandpa Gunn, who woke my great-grandpa. As the men got a glimpse of “The White Thing”, they loaded their guns and shot with everything they had. It ran like a freight train, and it never stopped.

“The White Thing” was once again roaming, not a wound visible, not that anyone had seen it long enough to find out. Even after being shot numerous times by close range hunters, known to make kill shots, “The White Thing” was spotted by neighbors, cousins, aunts, uncles, and even brothers and sisters.

In 1994, Bill and Steve Gunn, brothers, and their friend, had went hunting in the evening. During a hunting excursion, they had walked up on it, having the element of surprise. “The White Thing” had ran at the sight of the friends, not a sight of it the rest of the day.

Bill Gunn has told me of numerous sightings from others within the mountains. Not only were they sightings in one designated area, but all over the mountain. Some have even said they believe there are more than one, stating they had seen one that was brown, leading to the belief that there may be offspring. No one knows if “The White Thing” is still in the mountains, roaming its well-known paths, but the legend is still very much alive.

BRITTANY JARNAGIN, GRADE 9

### *Chinese Gift Exchange*

Traditions and heritage are a big part of many peoples’ families, including mine. Although my family isn’t as focused on our heritage, we do care a lot about traditions. We carry many traditions in my family, but for now I would like to focus on my favorite, which would be the Chinese Gift Exchange, also known as White Elephant. This game has been a very big tradition in my family for years. In past years, we used to go up to my grandma’s house on Christmas Eve and eat snacks and play it, but now we celebrate it on Thanksgiving day after everyone eats dinner.

Now, if you’ve never heard of Chinese Gift Exchange, basically, everyone who is participating in the game brings a gift, already wrapped, to where you are playing, and place the gifts in a pile. Normally, the gift is something that has been laying around your house that you don’t use anymore, but we have always bought gifts, but set a price limit to five dollars, and now it has been set to one dollar.

Once everyone has arrived and brought their gifts, you write the amount of numbers on small sheets of the people playing, fold each one and place it in a bag or hat, pass it around, and everyone draws a piece of paper. After everyone has drawn a number, you start from number one, and they pick a gift to unwrap. Once they’ve unwrapped the gift, number two goes. But, there is a catch. Number two can either choose to pick another gift or steal a gift from number one. If they choose to steal the gift, then number one automatically has to choose another gift from the pile because if you’re gift gets stolen, you aren’t allowed to steal it back from the person who took it. When number three goes, again, they have the choice to either steal a gift from either number one or two, or choose a gift from the pile. If they choose to steal a gift from someone, the person whose gift was stolen then either picks a gift from the pile, or steals a gift from anyone except the person who took their gift. This continues until the last person with the last number goes, once they have gone, all gifts are final.

Chinese Gift Exchange (aka, White Elephant) has been around for many years, and is a popular game for many people. My family has loved this game for many years, and we have even put our own twists on it, and that is why it is my favorite tradition my family does.

SARAH JOHNSON, GRADE 9

### *Kelly Family Origins*

The origin of our family name goes all the way back to the ninth century. The last name Kelly originates from Ceallach, a celebrated chieftain of his time. Ceallach was later changed to O’Kelly. O’Kelly is an Irish name that has been used since approximately 800 A.D. Between 1238 A.D and 1518 A.D, the last name O’Kelly was changed to just Kelly.

The last name O’Kelly is still used today, but is mainly concentrated in Ireland. O’Kelly was broken down into many different family names such as; Queally, Kealy, Kiely, Kelly, etc. The name Kelly means “warrior.” I am very proud of my family history as many of my relatives have served and fought to protect my country.

My family is originally from Ireland. They stayed there for many years before eventually migrating to the U.S. They came here in search of shelter and a good job. Someone, somewhere, sometime, in my family tree decided to change their last name to just Kelly. They settled down somewhere and began the Kelly family tree.

The name Kelly is actually the most common name in Ireland. It originated all the way back in the ninth century and is still around today. The name has been passed down from generation to generation for almost 1200 years. My ancestors were originally O’Kelly’s. One man decided to make a big change that altered many centuries of happy family’s.

HUNTER KELLY, GRADE 9

### *The Ghost*

My story took place eight years ago in the town of Appalachia, Virginia. In the viewpoint of Patty King, my father’s ex-wife, telling of her experience with a ghost of a middle-aged woman.

“My daughters Sierra, Genay and I moved into our new house in Appalachia. I’ve heard ghosts before so that wasn’t a huge deal to me, I just never expected to see one. Everything was normal for a few months, and nothing really happened.

“At first it was just footsteps in other rooms, next it was dragging and moving objects. Couches would be on the other side of the room and everyone said they didn’t move them. Later, you could hear crashing in the kitchen, plates and cups just flew off the counter. No one ever got hurt, it would always be if no one was in the room.

“I never really told anyone because a lot of people stayed at our house. People would stay the night, then in the morning tell me about hearing people walk down the hallway having conversations. I told my mamaw about what was happening, because she is a big believer and that kind of stuff, she told me to try talking to the ghost. So, one time, just joking, I told it if it wants to move stuff, to clean the house. A little while later, I heard moving in the living room, so I went to check it out, everything was pushed to one side of the room.

“The first time anyone ever saw the ghost it was my other daughter Genay, she looked in the mirror and said “Mom, when did you change?” Which confused me so I asked what she meant, she turned around and saw what I was wearing. She said in the mirror she saw the silhouette of a middle-aged woman in all black. The second last time she was seen I was walking by the same mirror, I thought it was me but when I moved it didn’t, then I realized what was happening, the ghost is who I was seeing.

“You could feel her following you on the stairs or down the hallway. No one ever got hurt, but she definitely took a disliking to mainly men. In certain rooms if you were lying on the bed you could feel it dip next

to you and it was like someone laid down. We always knew she wasn't going to hurt us, she just wanted us to know she was there."

KAITLYN KING, GRADE 9

### *My Passion to Learn*

I have always liked the concept of learning because I always learn something new. I always make mistakes, so it is good to learn things so the next time it will be easier to do it right if I encounter the same situation again. That is why school is needed, and kids want to pretend it is a waste of time. Things will not go well when something they need to know hits them in the eyes. I have always wanted to learn new things in life other than the same repeating things after you wake up. I want to make something out of myself rather than let someone forces me to be someone I am entirely not. I want to break those lonely chains from those certain people.

I enjoy certain subjects in school, such as history, science, and English. All these subjects have a great origin, and they all connect in an odd way. Every subject has a purpose and a job to do in everybody's life. If you accept a subject, it may turn you into a very unpredictable person; shocking the world what you can do and you can change the world in many ways. That's why I like science so much, in a way I sometimes feel like I can change so much, but I just don't know how to.

Whenever I get inspired to do something, I get nervous to do what I have planned. There is a wall I can never break down to introduce me to new realities of new things that will add up to something impressive and something very useful. Sometimes when I get inspired it is normally from listening to someone talk about very interesting facts that explains the past. Sometimes when someone helps me and agrees with my ideas it helps me. I love a good inspiring moment because you know somewhere along that wall there is a crack that starts to spread.

These are some things that keep me wanting to learn more and more. There is one thing I always tell myself and that is that I am not trying to impress myself, but the people who gets to acknowledge my work.

CODY KIRK, GRADE 9

### *My Family of Athletes*

My name is Caleb Leonard, I was born in Kingsport, Tennessee, I live in Lee County, Virginia with my mom, dad, and brother and we're all athletes. I have grown up my whole life playing sports mostly golf, basketball, and baseball. I have a whole family of athletes including my aunts, uncles, mamaw, papaw, mom, and dad. I have a younger brother that plays the same sports I do.

I have a uncle that played for the University of Kentucky in football. He played one season and then transferred to a smaller school to get more playing time. I have a cousin that wrestled here at Lee High and he placed 4th in the state of Virginia double A. My dad, cousin, and uncle have encouraged me to chase my dreams and always stay positive no matter what anyone says.

I have a very competitive family, so when we have get-togethers, it's always a competition on who can win at basketball, or even getting through the food line is a competition. They have always pushed me to be the best I can possibly be and always try my best, and never quit. That's the story of my athletic family and me.

CALEB LEONARD, GRADE 9

### *Papaw Harrold's Encounter with the Supernatural*

I asked my Papaw Harold to tell me a ghost story and this is the story he told me. He started the story like this! The year was 1973, I had just turned eighteen years old and I thought I was the greatest thing in the

world. My brother and I packed up our things and were getting ready to leave for college. I was supposed to be attending Tusculum University that semester but little did I know how quickly that would be changing. Neither of us knew how fast our naive minds would be changed. It all started at Haynes Hall on a seemingly beautiful August day. Everyone knew the building had been built in 1914 but, sadly we hadn't known everything that had happened that would lead up to what we witnessed that day.

My three best friends were helping me unload and unpack all of my belongings; clothes, books, everything I could've sworn I would need at the time. We waited for nearly an hour and a half before my roommate arrived with a woman who looked old enough to be my grandmother. It took two trips to unload all of his belongings and, less than an hour for him to get settled in. Once the woman I had mistaken for his grandmother kissed him and knew we had settled in she left, leaving us young men alone for the first time. After an awkward fifteen minutes of silence, I suggested we go out and do something around the campus. We went out and of course done what young men do, shenanigans, we found beautiful young women, liquor, and everything we could plan to get into during our time there.

Then, it was time for my friends to go and luckily enough one of them would be staying in the same hall as me. Tony, Ronnie, and I decided to stay out until eight-thirty, which back then was late. As we were walking back to Haynes Hall, we noticed the window of our room was opened and it seemed there was a candle lit inside. The three of us thought it was odd and rushed back to the room to further investigate. When we got up to the door it was locked. It nearly took us ten minutes to figure out how to get in. Once inside, we saw the candle, burnt almost completely out as if it had been there awhile, beside the candle, layed a women's bow, standing in confusion we looked back and forth among each other trying to figure out what was going on. Finally, we came to the conclusion that some girl had come into the wrong room and left these things behind as she realized it.

After a few hours of later our closet door keeps opening, being men, we thought it was a loose screw and could easily be fixed. When we opened the door, there was a puddle of water that hadn't been there before. I quickly grabbed a towel and attempted to dry it up but the puddle would just come back just as soon as I would try it up. We found the janitor and explained what was going on and so he came so he came yo check it out. Only when we got back there was no water, no puddle, no anything. Around an hour later, the janitor left so we started getting ready for bed. Then all of a sudden the door flung open a young girl walked out of the closet, she had long white hair that flowed behind her and carried what looked like a flame in her hands. The three of us jumped up in panic but couldn't find actions to take. She walked from the closet to the wall and vanished, we rushed out of the room to try and find someone to tell but got laughed at by our floor leader.

The three of us ran straight out to my car and drove as far as we could from that place, never to go back. Running away didn't help any though, too this day, she still haunts my dreams. I look back at that day and laugh at the three of us screaming like little girls. I didn't attend college after that. The following year, I joined the military, and look at me now! I'm doing just finë.

BETHANY LAWSON, GRADE 9

### *Ghost in the Apartment*

When I was asking around my family on interesting things that may have happened in the past, my grandma said that there was once a ghost in her apartment.

She started telling me that, "well I was cooking supper one night and I heard a door slam upstairs. I ignored it thinking it was just a person next door to me making a racket. After I finished making supper, I put all the dishes away and I went upstairs to my bedroom and laid down and watched some TV. Suddenly, I heard the door slam again, but this time, my bed shook! So, I got out of bed and went to the bathroom and right in front of my eyes— the door kept slamming! I ran into my room because I was scared and confused and I didn't know what to do! So, I just got into my car and tried to calm down by driving around. I got

home late that night and ran straight into my room hoping it wouldn't happen again. I soon went to bed and I never heard it again."

When I asked my grandma what she would do if that happened at her house again she said, "I would probably pray and go somewhere for a while and might not come back!"

SHAYLEE MCGEORGE, GRADE 9

## *My Family and I*

For my Origin Project, I chose to write about my family and I. I tried my best to base this essay on my family's backstories, stories that are both funny and sentimental and the importance of some people that have come into my life. I'm sure with my family, I won't have a dull moment.

A few things that I feel are important you know about me are, I am 14 years old. I'm the oldest of 3 kids, my sister Skyra being 13 and Roxy being 11. I'm in the ninth grade. My favorite sport is softball. This is my second year being a Marching General, which I am strongly proud of. I've played the clarinet since sixth grade and it's something I am very passionate about. I was born and raised in Harlan, Kentucky and I moved to Virginia when I was 8 years old. I am somewhat grateful I moved to Virginia, I met new and amazing opportunities and people, which has a lot to do with my essay.

Moving onto my family on my mom's side, the ones I keep in touch with are all located in Harlan as well. Whenever I do visit Harlan, I mostly just visit my grandparents. At my grandparents, as soon as me and my sisters get there, we change into the most comfortable clothes we have and then laugh it up with one another and just enjoy each others company. That is probably my favorite thing about visiting, my grandparents house always has been and always will be my home away from home. Usually as soon as we wake up my granny likes to cook us breakfast. This breakfast *always* consists of her "special" gravy, biscuits, sausage, bacon, eggs and sometimes slices of tomatoes or hash browns. It's always been my favorite thing to wake up to and my grandparents can cook like you wouldn't believe so that makes it even better. If you know me, you know I'm a huge goof, and I get that from my papaw. My papaw is willing to do about anything to get a laugh out of us, he's been my best friend since the first time he held me at the hospital. My grandparents will always hold a special place in my heart and so will Harlan.

In 2013 is when life changed for me, my sisters and my mom. We didn't really expect it but I'm glad this change was made. My mom met my step-dad, Terry or TJ Stewart, in 2013. The first time I met TJ he had McDonalds for me and my sisters, which is my favorite so he had a good head-start. Right away, I could tell that my mom was the happiest she had ever been and that made me happy. Throughout the years TJ has truly stepped as a father, I don't see my biological dad or his family much because some bad things that were said have stuck in the past few years. TJ's family welcomed us with open arms and has always been there for us, even when things got rough and all worked out in the end. Some things about TJ's family, their favorite thing to do is get together, laugh it up, eat, and eat some more. For any occasion you can count on food, and to make it better they're all good cooks, which is obviously the best part, I'm always hungry. The food stays very southern and homestyle. Sometimes they'll just get together to have sandwiches and enjoy each other or they'll have huge dinners. At a normal dinner you can expect to see any kind of meat, corn, mashed potatoes, rolls, green beans, and desserts. You don't really go hungry. Spending time with TJ's family is always something I will enjoy because I get to have a good meal and laugh with the people I love the most.

My family doesn't really have a set tradition, but every year we get Dollywood season passes, and after Christmas we go right before school starts to ride the rides one last time, see the lights and just have fun before we go again in the Spring. This year, I got over one of my worst fears and rode Tennessee Tornado, we must have ridden it 7 times in the 3 days we were there. My mom likes to watch the shows and go into the shops, which can be fun too. One of my favorite things we always do is watching them make and carve candles and then making our own. I also go to this shop, I forget the name but, they have these huge versions of cupcakes, brownies, and the *best* chocolate chip cookies. Everytime I get one I have to be starving because

if not I can never finish it. We may not have a very special tradition but going to Dollywood is something I look forward to every year.

In conclusion, I would say my family loves one another more than words can explain, and we clearly love having a little bit of fun. I always enjoy spending time with my family rather it's just stopping by to say "hello," or staying for a while and making memories. I'm very grateful for my family and the close bonds I have developed with each and every one of them, because when I don't have friends I have family.

BRYLEIGH MIDDLETON, GRADE 9

### *Elvis*

I interviewed my grandfather, W.D. Moore and asked if he could tell me about an experience he has had that is unbelievable or involves a ghost.

He started by saying, "Mamaw and me moved into our house in 1994 in December, right before Christmas. We lived there a while before anything happened."

I asked him when the first time he saw the ghost was. "The first time I saw it; I was eating dinner with my girls. We saw a dark shadow go past the kitchen and into the living room. At first it scared he half to death! but, we ignored it."

The ghost eventually started doing things that caught our attention. Elvis music would blast on the speakers at any time of the night. We've got comfortable with the ghost, even calling him Elvis. Elvis has never bothered anyone, just let us know when he's around."

KIMBERLIN MOORE, GRADE 9

### *Family trip to Delaware*

Many families have traditions, stories, or beliefs passed down to them from generation to generation, my family has a tradition of going up to Delaware and staying a week or two with family. The main reason we go on this nine hour long trip is to see family, mainly my dad and cousins. When we visit there are a variety of exhilarating activities to participate in, and lots of different and stunning, great foods not normally found fresh in Lee County, but native to the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Coast areas.

The activities in Delaware are endless, from massive water parks to the secluded beaches, and even fast go kart tracks. Food is great specifically seafood such as crab, shrimp, and mollusks which are caught fresh either in the maryland region in the Chesapeake Bay or the Atlantic Coast of Delaware. The people in Delaware are different from what my family are used to, it isn't surprising just interesting listening to different accents and how people pronounce words especially since a lot of people in Delaware were born in New Jersey. In conclusion, me and my family visit Delaware every summer for the family that we have there along with it being very fun and having tons of activities, foods, and interesting culture.

MASON MOORE, GRADE 9

### *My Family Traditions*

An origin that is a part of my family is family traditions. Some of the traditions in my family have been passed down, others have not. One tradition that has been passed down is my papaw used to dress up as Santa for Christmas to surprise all the grandchildren. Now that my papaw is no longer with us, my uncle carries on my papaw's tradition. My uncle says he does it now because he knows how much joy it brought all the grandchildren and he wants the great grandchildren to feel the same amount of joy.

Another tradition that is done on Christmas that has also been passed down, is my family buys presents for each other, then we put numbers on each present. After putting the numbers on the presents, we write

them on little pieces of paper and put them in a stocking. We then start with the youngest family member and let them draw a number from the stocking. This continues on until we get to the oldest family member. What you get is always a mystery until everyone has a present and we all open them together.

My last tradition that has been passed down is our family dinner for any holiday at my mamaw's. Everyone in my family would bring a dish and my mamaw's kitchen would be full of delicious food. My favorite memory from this tradition is my mamaw's house was so tiny we would eat in bedrooms and on the porch, even if it was freezing outside. I have to say my family

is definitely one of a kind, especially during this tradition. Being all bunched up in that little house never hurt us, because we were all together for the holiday's, and that's all that ever really mattered to us.

Now for a couple of traditions that have not been passed down. One tradition that we just started a few years ago, that is mine and my sister's personal favorite, is my mom surprises us with matching pajamas on Christmas Eve night. After we open our pajamas, she usually also has a new movie for us to open so we can watch it while we make cookies. This is mine and my sister's personal favorite because we get to spend quality time just me, her, and our mom. It's just always been super special to us ever since we started it.

For my final tradition I'm going to use the one that is my whole family's favorite, which is when we all go to the movies after Thanksgiving and Christmas dinner. The best memory from this tradition, and I feel my whole family would agree on this, is when we went to see the movie "Twilight" and the line was backed up all the way through the middle of the parking lot. We stood in the freezing cold for hours just to see that movie, but it will still always be my favorite memory from that tradition.

Traditions are important to have within every family, whether it's big or small. Traditions bring families together. I consider myself lucky to have so many amazing traditions with my dysfunctional, but amazing family.

KADDEN MORELOCK, GRADE 9

### *How to Make Apple Butter*

Making apple butter is a tradition on my father's side of the family. It takes a lot of time and patience, but the product is well worth the work. The first thing you need a good copper pot. The pot we use was my mamaw Ruby's. It was made of copper because, in world war II, there was a shortage of brass. Next, the thing you'll need is two and a half bushels of Winesap apples. Other ingredients you need are 25 lbs of sugar, one bottle of cinnamon oil, and a silver dollar. The use of the silver dollar is so the apple butter doesn't stick to the pot.

First, you'll peel the apples and core them. Then, cut them into 8 pieces, and build an easy to manage fire underneath your pot. Next, what you want to do is dump your apples in and add just enough water to cover the apples. Bring them to a boil and stir the rest of their cooking time. Then let them cook until they are the consistency of apple sauce, and then add the 25 lbs of sugar. Next, and the cinnamon oil until you get your desired taste, and add red food coloring until it is a crimson-like color. Cook and stir until you get your desired thickness. Finally, pour into clean mason jars and quickly put on their lids so you will have a tight seal. Also, watch for wasps and bees they will try to fly into the jars.

JAKE MULLINS, GRADE 9

### *Marching Band*

Marching band is a sport that takes a lot of skill and dedication. It's not as easy as most people think it is. We all work really hard to achieve the best we can. In band you build up a lot of endurance to the heat and the cold. In band you have to memorize the show and remember where to move to and stop. In band everyone counts if one person is gone no one can replace them.

I play the trumpet and have been for four years. As a kid I wanted to play the trumpet so I was excited when I got to join band. The director tried to get me to play trombone. I had my heart set on trumpet so I refused. I intend on playing trumpet throughout the rest of high school and maybe in college.

RYAN OSBORNE, GRADE 9

### *The Art of Football*

Football has been around 1920 and has evolved throughout the years. Football is a fun sport that teaches a person's dedication to a team, and dedication to yourself. Football not only gives one motivation to work toward personal goals but also helps them with teamwork. Football is not only a competition but also a sport that teaches discipline.

Football is enjoyable as it helps one to focus on the prize of winning. Football also helps one to improve in areas when losing a game. The sport can be intense, competitive, and can give one a sense of excitement. Football also gives kids a chance to socialize and to learn the art of discipline.

CONNOR PACE, GRADE 9

### *My Family Tradition*

Every family has its own traditions. Unique and honored in their very own way. Traditions are very important to most families, and are things that people hold very near and dear to their hearts. One tradition that I hold very near to my heart occurs every year on December 24th, Christmas Eve, with my grandparents. Every year our family gathers at my maternal grandparent's house for supper and family gathering. To my knowledge, my grandparents have followed the same tradition for years, even before I was born.

The evening starts off with a deliciously cooked meal with all the trimmings and more, while setting around the table with the family we love. Once the meal is complete, and cleaned up; the children all gather to make, bake, and decorate their "Santa" cookies, and prepare the "reindeer" food for the night ahead. My favorite part comes just shortly after that. My Grandfather sits in the center of the room with his wife, 8 children, and 6 grandchildren, and few friends gathered around him. We patiently wait for him to begin reading us the Christmas story from his favorite book, The Bible. I have heard that same story for 15 years now, and I never get weary or tired from hearing it.

Another tradition of my favorite is the following morning, Christmas Day. For years, my parents have prepared breakfast for my paternal Grandparents; which includes fresh sausage and bacon, biscuit and gravy, fried potatoes, eggs anyway one can imagine and much more. Once breakfast is complete, we then open our gifts together with them. We sit for hours upon hours, laughing and talking and enjoying each other's company.

We like to spend that time "modeling" our new clothes that we received as gifts during this time as well. Trying out new electronics, new toys, and other new items at this time, adds to the tradition as well. I have even had to sneak in a little nap at this time, along with my Papaw.

As you can see, my family has different types of traditions. I enjoy each one of them, and they are all unique and different. I know that there will come a time in my life where I could be held responsible to make sure that the traditions continue for many more years to come. I just hope that I can make them as great as my parents and grandparents do. I hope that I never take these moments for granted, as these are some of the most precious memories that one can have.

ALLI PARKS, GRADE 9

## *The Story of the Australian Cattle Dog*

My family, besides farming, breeds Australian cattle dogs for herding livestock and as pets. The “Australian cattle dog” or simply cattle dog, is a breed of herding dog originally developed in Australia for droving cattle over long distances across rough terrain. The cattle dog is a neat dog it knows when you are sick and it will stay by your side and not leave it until it knows you are well. Unlike my dog, it goes where my dad goes to the barn or simply just in the building. Some people think they are stupid but not me. I think they are beautiful dogs. On my farm, it chases cars and animals all over the place to group them together. We also breed huskies and other dogs, however, these dogs are like a friend you never had and it’s a true family dog.

AUSTIN PENNINGTON, GRADE 9

### *My family tradition*

My family’s tradition is we all go to my mamaw Gilbert’s house on Fridays for a family night. We don’t really get to see each other throughout the week and some of us never have any spare time besides Fridays. When we get together we normally eat, play a board game or a card game then go downstairs and watch a movie or something else. My grandparents are really good cooks and they always make great food for the night, we normally have either meatloaf, chicken casserole, soup beans and cornbread, or vegetable soup.

Me and my family really enjoy playing card games and board games after we eat. We normally play board games but sometimes we like to play card games too. My entire family loves playing rook and all of us are super competitive, so it’s always pretty interesting to watch. I never learned how to play because it seemed too complicated for me so I play Uno instead.

Sometimes after we get bored playing games we will all go downstairs and watch a movie or do something else. We mainly watch fiction and science fiction movies like Harry Potter or Star Wars. My grandfather also taught me how to play the piano on the piano we have down there. That’s my family’s tradition, we do it every week and will probably continue to do for many years to come.

CONNER ROOP, GRADE 9

### *Nassau*

Before Christmas break my family went on a cruise to Nassau in the Bahamas. We walked from where the boat docked to Atlantis. I learnt that they did not have stop signs or red lights. They had never seen snow before and the weather never got under 70. They had a lot of run-down buildings and trash everywhere. Their steering wheels were on the opposite side of the vehicle. It was all one way roads but the bridge that went across the water to Atlantis. Before we could walk down the road a cop had to open a gate so that people that were in Nassau could not try to escape. We went into the police department because my mom took us the wrong way. The police officer pointed us in the right direction.

We stopped in some of the stores on the way to Atlantis. One of the stores we went into I wanted to buy something. I picked up a shirt that was in the store and one of the ladies that was working there took it out of my hand folded it and put it back on the shelf. I asked her “why did you do that” she replied with “don’t touch I will get it for you.” We left and didn’t get anything. We stopped in McDonald’s to get a drink. We took a lot of pictures, went in the water, and got our hair braided. On the way back from Atlantis, a guy that was driving a taxi yells out the window “long walk taxi” my mom shook her head no and we keep walking. We had to go through customs so they can make sure we are US citizens and we weren’t people who are living in Nassau trying to get on the boat. When we were getting back on the boat they had to check to see if we were getting on the right one and had to check to see if we had the right name tags to match us. There were

people that had work permits to run little shops in between the boat check in and Nassau. Our experience over all was pretty great besides some of the people there.

KATELYN RUTLEDGE, GRADE 9

### *The Odd Wedding*

I interviewed my grandma on Thursday September 5th at her kitchen table. She began telling about a very unusual wedding custom she partakes in locally.

“Every wedding my family has is always in the same barn because every couple that gets married there has never had a divorce or ever been unhappy. We always had the wedding at night and the bride would walk down the aisle with lanterns surrounding her. The walls of the barn are decorated with flowers and all the tables and chairs are made out of hay bales. However, we also have a lot of what you would call ‘odd’ customs for the guests as well as the wedding party. For instance, no one is to wear shoes at the wedding and no modern technology is to be used. We like the traditional ‘oldie’ style. Also, every bride is to wear the same dress year after year, generation after generation. The dress is handmade and no one wanted to mess it up so it’s never been washed and if your too big for the dress, you’d starved until you could fit. I think the reason we do this stuff is so the bride and the groom keep their traditions alive and those of their families in the past, keeping their love for each other and are happy for eternity.”

MOLLIE SAYLOR, GRADE 9

### *Christmas Traditions*

Christmas is a very important holiday for my family, because it celebrates the birth of Jesus. My family has several celebrations for Christmas. We have celebrations at several of my family members’ homes. Our traditions consist of cooking large meals and having family gatherings.

We start our celebrations on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve, we go to my grandmother’s house for dinner. We have ham, turkey, and many other foods. After dinner, we open gifts and talk with family members. On Christmas Eve night, we go to my aunt’s house. There we eat ham and several other foods made by family members. After we eat, we open gifts and have an opportunity to see family members that we rarely get to see.

We continue our Christmas celebrations on Christmas day. We start the day by opening gifts at my house. After we open gifts, we have a breakfast that consists of pancakes, bacon, sausage, and eggs. Later we go to my unclé’s house. There, we have dinner. This is the largest dinner that we have as part of our Christmas celebrations. We have ham, turkey, mashed potatoes, and several different types of casseroles. After dinner at my unclé’s house, we go to my grandfather’s house for a family gathering.

HUNTER SCOTT, GRADE 9

### *The story of the Shoemaker name*

The reason behind why I wanted to know the story of my last name is because it is such an unusual name, you don’t ever hear a last name Shoemaker a lot. The surname “Shoemaker” was found in Bavaria. They had allegiances to nobles and princes in early history. Exchanging their influence in struggles for power and status in the region. They were brought into many houses and their contributions wanted by leaders in search for power. There are also variations of the name Shoemaker that include; schuh, schuck, shuh, schuch, shook, schug, schewe, schumaker and schuhmacher. The surname Shoemaker also derived from an occupation- “Cobbler” (The Shoemaker). The nationality came from Dutch and German. The Shoemaker name came to the U.S. and Canada between the years 1840 and 1920. In 1940 it was recorded 223 families were living in

Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania had the highest number of Shoemaker families in 1940. In 1940, 14 percent of the men named Shoemaker worked as farmers and 7 percent of the woman named Shoemaker worked as housewives. There are approximately 188,000 census records available for the last name Shoemaker today. The average life expectancy for a Shoemaker in 1940 was 36 years and 73 years in 2004. There was a strong possibility that the Shoemaker last name was “Cobbler” before they changed it to Shoemaker.

JACOB SHOEMAKER, GRADE 9

### *Holidays With My Family*

My family mainly celebrates three holidays, which are The 4th of July, Christmas, and Thanksgiving. Every year, we all get together and enjoy the holiday fun. My family is scattered around VA so we don't see each other that often. Some live here in Lee County, others in Richmond, and the rest in Martinsville. We all try and get together as much as possible so we can spend time together. Out of the three we celebrate, I think that The 4th of July is my favorite.

A few days before The 4th of July, all of my family members travel to Smith Mountain Lake VA. My aunt has a house there that we all stay in over the holiday. On most days we all wake up early, go to the kitchen and make breakfast. After everyone eats, we all go change into swimsuits and head down to the dock. We go out onto the lake with the boat and the jet skis. Sometimes we get a rope, tie one end to a big float, the other to the back of the boat or jet ski, and we go tubing! We stay outside for most of the day in or on the water. Every once in a while, we take our lunch out on the boat and we go to a cove, eat, and then swim some more.

After our eventful days on the water, we all come in, shower, and clean up. On some nights we go out to eat at different restaurants. Other nights, we have cookouts or we make something else. Once we all eat, everyone helps out with cleaning up the kitchen and then we play board games or card games. Sometimes instead of playing games, we watch movies together. On the night of the 4th, we set huge fireworks off the dock and watch all of the shapes and colors illuminate the sky. Seeing all of the reflection from the fireworks on the water is always one of my favorite parts of our night. Every once in a while, a firework will get stuck as we set it off and it'll explode on the dock. Nobody has died yet, so we keep setting them off.

In conclusion, spending time with my family is so much fun and I love getting together with them. We have amazing memories together and each year we make more. Some good, some bad, some really funny, but no matter what, they are always gonna be my family and nothing can ever change that. Hopefully the traditions that we have now will continue as we add more traditions in the future!

KARLEY SHOEMAKER, GRADE 9

### *My Bmx Experience*

I think Bmx is a very fascinating sport and hobby, but can also attract anyone's attention. When I'm on my stunt bike, which is used for Bmx, I feel invincible like nothing can stop me and that I'm faster than the speed of light itself. When anyone gets on a bicycle of any kind, there are so many thoughts that cycle through their minds, but if you show no fear, your brain will make you think that you don't fear what you're about to do and that boosts your courage and confidence. Also, I love the way the brisk wind feels on my face. It's just so refreshing and relaxing.

There are so many intricate tricks that are very difficult and mind-blowing. I can do very few tricks on my stunt bike, but only the simple ones. Also, My best friend and I create our own jumps and stunts and test them out all the time, but once we hit that jump, our adrenaline is sky high and makes me feel confident in myself. The jumps also make me feel like a fearless daredevil, but aren't daredevils supposed to be fearless? In my opinion, Bmx is dangerous, fun, and takes courage. Bmx takes no fear, confidence, and a brave soul and if anyone sets their mind to a goal then anyone can achieve their goal!

DOMINICK SMITH, GRADE 9

## *Mojo*

My mamaw, Drucellia Hunley, was born in 1944. She was 1 of 12 children 1950, and her family lived in Pine Hill, TN on a farm near the Powell River. During the fall, she and some of her siblings discovered a stray dog which had given birth to a litter of puppies in their barn. Her dad gave them permission to keep one of the puppies and chose a boy who had solid black with a white chest. They named him Mojo.

As time went on, Mojo grew to be part of the family. In a sense, he was the baby-sitter because he always could be found with the kids as they worked, played, and explored. He would help herd the cattle and always kept up with the kids as they were outside, no matter how many there were. Mamaw recalls he was protective and would often keep the cattle away from them as they worked.

Mamaw remembers walking down to the river bank to watch over the kids as they swam and played. Mojo would sit on the bank and watch over them and he would jump in and save the victim. He grew up with the family as they moved and in 1966 Mojo finally died.

GABE SNODGRASS, GRADE 9

## *Dad's Favorite Thanksgiving*

I am interviewing my dad, Aubrey Stapleton, about a Thanksgiving family get together he had 52 years ago in 1967. The other people in his story are his dad, which is my papaw who is Earl Stapleton, my mamaw who is Mary Ethel Parsons Stapleton, his three sisters, Sandra Stapleton, Wanda Sue Stapleton, and Evelyn Stapleton Wells, and Evelyn's husband, Ralph Wells.

"On Thanksgiving, 1967, me, my mom and dad, and two of my sisters were in Woodway, Virginia out for Thanksgiving break. Most every year, we went to my sister Evelyn's in Rogersville, Tennessee. On the way over, me, Sandra, and Sue made a map of the road, and the points going to Rogersville, and when we got to a certain point, we would check it off. Most of the time before the end of the trip, we were fussing between ourselves. My dad would stop the car and spank one of us, most of the time it would be me. Sometimes I can still see my dad reach behind the seat and smack me, while still driving. After a few spankings we finally arrived at Evelyn's, the day before Thanksgiving. The next day, I can remember Evelyn getting up before daylight and putting the turkey in the oven, and fixing all the food to have ready for the Thanksgiving meal."

About daylight, it began to snow, and it snowed until the end of the day, which it left about seven inches on the ground. During the morning before meal time, I remember watching cartoons on TV, until my dad turned the TV over to the news, or weather. By the time the meal was served, there was probably about 15–20 people there, so all the food didn't last long. That evening, me and Ralph went to what they called an Eagles club, that's the first time I'd been there, and I didn't really know what it was, being that I was 10 years old. The Eagles club had lots of games there, the type where you put nickels in, and pull the handle, sometimes it would give you money back, if you won. So, as the night went on, Ralph decided to leave, and was acting a little funny, I can remember his face being red, and was stuttering when he talked."

Me and Ralph get in the car and head home, and I can remember the car going from ditch to ditch and swerve from side to side. I was wondering what was wrong with Ralph, because at the time I didn't know what drinking was, and anything about getting drunk. Before we got home, I was sitting beside Ralph, driving the car while he was talking nonsense. When we got in the driveway, my mom came out, crying because Ralph didn't tell anyone that we were leaving. My dad was mad, and I knew I was gonna get it. When my dad found out where we were, and what Ralph was doing, my dad was very angry at me and Ralph, but mostly at Ralph. Although many Thanksgivings has passed, we did spend several more Thanksgivings there, but none like this one."

ALLYSON STAPLETON, GRADE 9

## *My Family Traditions*

One of my family traditions take place on Christmas Eve at my Aunt Kristy's house. This tradition began 16 years ago when my oldest cousin, Keaston, was born. My grandparents, my other aunt, and my parents went to Kristy's house to celebrate the holiday. The first year they celebrated this way, my mother, aunts, and grandma cooked things like turkey, ham, mashed potatoes, green beans, and homemade yeast rolls. The next year, everyone decided to switch it up a little bit and my Mamaw Janice said she wanted to do things different than what everyone else did.

The following year, my dad, uncle, and grandfather decided to have a cookout. All of the men in my family went outside and fixed cheeseburgers and hot dogs on the grill and to pitch horseshoes and play cornhole. All of the women stayed in the house and reminisced about Christmases in the past. Keaston and I were too young to remember any of this, so our moms always took pictures of us while the food was getting ready.

After the food gets done, we all gather around the table, bless our meal, and eat. When everyone finishes, we head to the living room to watch a Christmas movie. As the movie comes to an end, we go back to the kitchen and play card and board games. Some of our favorites are monopoly, rook, phase 10, checkers, Uno and spades. My great aunt taught me everything I know about rook and phase 10, so me and her were always partners.

Before the night ends, we exchange gifts through Chinese Christmas. Everyone is so anxious to see what present they end up with. My mom and granny always end up fighting over kitchen accessories. I don't really care what I get, I'm grateful either way. Spending time with my family is the best gift I could ever receive.

To finish the night off, we find a place to sleep, whether it's on a couch, in a bed, or laying on the floor on an air mattress, we go to sleep. We wake up to breakfast, which includes pancakes, waffles, bacon, gravy, and biscuits. We eat as a family and head home to see what we had got for Christmas. Shortly after all of the presents are opened, we call our family to share what we have been blessed with.

My family traditions have changed so much in such a short amount of time. One of the holidays I used to love so dearly are now one of the hardest times of the year, without people we were closest to, traditions just don't mean a whole lot to my family. We try to make the best out of every moment we have together because you never know when it may be the last.

JAYDEN THOMAS, GRADE 9

## *Samuel Whisman*

I decided to write about my uncle, Samuel Whisman, because his story interests me a lot. In 1995, he attended *Berea College* in Kentucky for teaching. He also worked there to pay off his debt. He started off majoring in History, but didn't like the teacher. So he switched to French.

Samuel then visited Europe for 15 months. He went to Nice, Normandy, and Paris, France. Finally, he went on to Germany. While in France, he went to the *Catacombs* and *The Louvre Museum*. He eventually became fluent in both French and German.

Then, in 1997, he got his Bachelor's Degree at the *University of Virginia at Wise*. After that, he taught French at Lee High and Thomas Walker for two years. In 2000, Samuel got his Master's Degree at the *University of Kentucky* while also teaching there for two more years.

In 2006, he moved from Virginia to Oklahoma to get his PHD and also taught there for six years. But, in 2013, Samuel moved to Colorado to teach at an Air Force Base for six more years. He then took twenty cadets from that base, to France as their tour guide for one month.

Now, he lives in Hawaii and has resigned due to mental health issues. But he hopes to start teaching again in a few years.

KAELIN THOMPSON, GRADE 9

## *Origin of the Last Name Williams*

Have you ever wondered where your last name originated from? The Williams last name was from the name William that originated in Medieval England, Wales, France, and Italy. It came from an Old French given name with German descent; will=desire, will; and helm=helmet, protection. It is the second most common in Wales and the United States, and the fourth most common in Australia.

The top male occupations for the Williams in the 1940's were Laborers, Farmers, Salesman, and Farm Laborers with a Laborer having the highest percentage with 18%. The top female occupations for the Williams in the 1940's were a Maid, Cook, Housekeeper, and Laborer with a Maid having the highest percentage with 10%. The Williams in my family held a wide variety of jobs. They were known for trade jobs. The Williams' men were Carpenters, Brick Masons, Farmers, and Electricians. There were also many who pursued the professional pathway and became Doctors, Lawyers, and Judges. The Williams also worked underground in the coal mines. Many of the women stayed at home and tended to the family farm and took care of the children although some did pursue careers outside the home.

The Williams first came to Lee County from North Carolina. When Steven Williams bought a vast majority of the land in the Millers Chapel area in Jonesville. Steven was married to Mary the first time and then married another lady. Steven had between eighteen and twenty children between his two marriages. Steven's brother settled in the Big Stone Gap area. The Millers Chapel area was swarmed with the Williams family descendants. Upon Stevens death it was divided among his many children.

My great-grandpa Emory Caswell Williams was a well-known carpenter and brick mason in Lee County. He built several monumental buildings that includes the Methodist Church in Jonesville, the old Jonesville Elementary School, and the building that is now torn down where the old jail was located in Jonesville. My great-grandpa was also credited with building many houses in the Lee County area. While he was a carpenter many of his cousins were electricians. The Williams farmed also while not working on their regular job.

Family history is often passed down from generation to generation. I find it very interesting to learn about my ancestors and how we ended up here in Lee County. I look forward to learning many new things about my heritage.

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS, GRADE 9

## *Tacos*

It's a hot summer day and you've has been out working all day. All you want are some refreshments and food. What comes to mind? The perfect taco! A taco is an amazing food to have and it is easy and quick to make. Here is how to make the perfect taco; like my favorite ones in Mexican street food trucks.

## *Ingredients*

Rice (as much as you want)  
3 cans black beans  
Salsa  
3 tbsp cider vinegar  
1 ½ tbsp honey  
3 garlic cloves  
1 ½ tbsp paprika  
1 ½ tbsp ground cumin  
4 corn tortilla shells  
Pickled red onions  
Cheese (cheddar is fine if you do not like other types)

## Guacamole

1 tbs vegetable oil (for the cooking)

Plain yogurt (or sour cream, if you prefer)

### *Instructions*

1. Peel the garlic cloves and chop them up very finely.
2. Open the cans of black beans with a can opener and drain them
3. Heat up a frying pan with the vegetable oil in it.
4. Once warmed, add the chopped garlic.
5. Fry like this until the garlic turns a golden color.
6. At this point, add all the black beans.
7. Pour the cider vinegar, honey, and spices into the pan too.
8. Add salt to taste.
9. Cook this, stirring when needed until everything is warmed through.
10. Take off the heat.
11. Warm the salsa up in the microwave (or on the stove if you prefer).
12. Heat up the tortilla shells in the microwave or on the top shelf of a warm oven for only a couple of minutes.
13. Check to see if the bean mixture is still warm. If it isn't, reheat.
14. Now you are ready to serve.
15. Put a couple of dollops of the bean mix into the tortillas.
16. Add a spoonful of salsa, guacamole, and sour cream or plain yogurt to the top.
17. Grate some cheese over it.

CARSON WILLIS, GRADE 9

### **Sindy Fields, Dual Credit English 12** *The Infamous "Dear John, . . ."*

Ever since I was a little girl, I have loved to sit and listen to stories my grandfather would tell as we sat on the porch during a cool summer night. He never seemed to run out of adventurous tales. There were some particular stories where you could see right through his lies; nevertheless, we knew never to call his bluff, for that would mean the end of a summer tradition. As I grew older, I began to request stories about my grandfather's service in the army. After hearing his tales of his times in the Korean and Vietnam wars, my grandmother came onto the porch, wondering if he had told the story of how their relationship began. My curiosity peaked, and I begged my grandparents to tell the story. I gave them my undivided attention as the story began.

The story began when my grandparents had met in high school. It was just a regular school day for my grandmother, who carried a record for perfect attendance. While, on the other hand, my grandfather decided to attend his classes that day, rather than playing hooky as he and his friends often did. Without realizing it, they had sat next to each other during an assembly. One conversation was all it took for my grandfather to fall head over heels for my grandmother. My grandmother quickly fell for him as well and a relationship formed. At the time, they had no clue the course their relationship would take.

Without much thought, my grandfather enlisted in the army soon after graduating. He wrote my grandmother often, seeing as he missed her every day of his deployment. However, my grandmother

began to write to him less and less. Her worry for his safety had started to outgrow their love. She wrote him a final letter, ending things between them. My grandfather was a victim of the infamous “Dear John” letter. While my grandfather served his country with a broken heart, my grandmother had moved on. In the fall of 1960, she married a man who had stolen her heart. Soon, they started a family and lived out the American dream.

As the years went by, my grandfather reenlisted many times. He made his way up the ranks and traveled to many places throughout the world. One day while stationed in northern Italy, he received a letter from a family friend. Tragedy had struck my grandmother’s family. Her husband had died. My grandfather was on his way home to South Georgia the next day. Despite their history, he knew he had to be there for her family. Although my grandmother was shocked he came home for her, she was nonetheless thankful. A friendship sprouted not long after. After being good friends for years, their love for each other rekindled and they decided to get married. They had found their way back to each other.

After listening to them tell their story, I sat still in shock. I never knew my grandmother had written him a “Dear John” letter. I bombarded my grandparents with questions they promised they would answer the following day. To this day, I still sit on the old porch and listen to my grandfather’s stories, but I make sure to request the story of their relationship. It’s a story I do not think I will ever forget.

ALANAH ALDRIDGE, GRADE 12

### *Traditions*

Every family has some sort of tradition. At least in my opinion they should. My family has many traditions including Christmas dinners, Thanksgiving dinners, and Easter dinners. What can I say? My family loves food! Aside from our love of sustenance, I will be writing about one of my family’s most beloved traditions, the annual family reunion.

To begin, every year around the month of December, my family gets together to have and celebrate our family reunion. We have it in December along with our Christmas dinner to accommodate all my relatives that live in other states. The relatives that span our annual reunion go back for several generations all beginning from my great grandmother on my father’s side. She is the matriarch of my father’s side of the family. From her it continues down the family bloodline for about five generations!

To continue, our family reunion is held at my grandmother’s house almost every year. There is always plenty of food to eat and tons of dessert. Like I said, we love food. You can always expect a Christmas turkey, a Christmas ham, and lots of other items to choose from. The dessert is the best part. My favorite is my mother’s strawberry cheesecake. Everybody brings a little something to slide onto the dessert table, though. If I told everything, I would be typing for awhile. One of our prestige festivities is my father and his brother, along with some of my great uncles, like to challenge each other to a game of rook. The losers will have to surrender their seats at the game table and the winner will stay to challenge other members of the family until they are kicked off their winners seat.

There is not a lot of things to do outside since it is cold in December, so we try to make do with everything being indoors. Since the family is already together near Christmas time, we always do a family gift exchange. Everybody buys for somebody if that makes sense. For the little ones of the family, it is their favorite part as they usually receive toys or clothing. My family’s reunion is very special to me. Getting together with my loved ones and good friends of the family brings us closer every year. We always gather around before everyone begins to leave and get our annual family photo taken. My grandmother keeps photo records of our family spanning since before she was even born! Every year we add a new portrait to the photo gallery of my beautiful family.

COLEE COTTRELL, GRADE 12

## *Past to Present*

As I sat down beside my nana, I asked her why she decided to start studying and researching our family genealogy. I have grown up hearing stories about new ancestors she has discovered or ancestors that were tough to figure out, but I never asked her why she wanted to do it. She told me that her father got into it and would always go to her about it because she was the oldest child. He started showing her pictures of past relatives and she was genuinely intrigued.

Soon enough, she was right by his side helping him discover their mysterious ancestors. She would go down to the library with him, and they would spend hours together researching. Nana stated, "It gave us something to bond over." She looked at the time spent in the library together as their own time without any other siblings around to steal his attention.

In 2004, her dad, my great-grandpa, passed away. So when I asked her the question, "How old were you when you started researching?" I could see the sadness in her eyes. She said, "I picked it up around 18 years ago, but I didn't want to think about it for a while after Dad passed because that was our time." Eventually, she started researching again and her interest for it deepened. She never knew much about her dad's side of the family, so when he passed away she strived to learn as much as possible about his relatives. Nana never knew how many siblings her paternal grandpa had, so it was a goal to at least find that out. She later found out that he had one sister and two brothers. Then, she discovered that her grandpa was 9 months old when his mother passed away, so he never really knew her.

Nana started to go on about how she found out that her grandpa's great-grandma was full-blooded Indian. Nana stated, "There are many documents showing that she didn't speak a lick of English." She could only speak Cherokee and was a servant at one point. I could see my nana glow as she talked about our ancestors. I felt like I knew my ancestors in some way now. Genealogy brought my family closer. It brought my nana and great-grandpa together, and now it brings us together. I realized that diving in the past can help the people in the present connect.

BETHANY DAVIS, GRADE 12

## *Traveling*

My family and I love to travel. My parents have been all over the country due to their previous jobs before I was born. When I was six years old, I went to Florida for the very first time. I had been out of state before like Tennessee and Kentucky but nothing major. I really enjoyed traveling to Florida and seeing new sights and experiencing air travel. I still love planes to this day. My next big trip was to Hawaii. We flew to California from Georgia and California to Hawaii. I have also been to other states for family events, and it is really exciting for me when I know we are going out of my hometown. Recently, I went to New York to see the fireworks for the fourth of July. I would and still "collect" states I have been to like they are souvenirs.

Out of all the trips I have experienced, one particular vacation I went on gave me a whole new outlook on life. My parents and I went to Las Vegas. We drove out there and I got to experience new states out West. It was a dream come true. The land was so different from Virginia and the sky looks like you can reach out and touch it. Arizona and New Mexico turned out to be my favorite states. Going out West gave me hope for the future and I knew there was more out there than old ghost town Lee County. When we got to Las Vegas, the atmosphere was so exciting. People from all over the world were there and people were free to do whatever they wanted without judgment. The lights were so beautiful and it was like I was a child experience life all over again. We stayed at a fancy hotel and rich people would have their expensive sports cars parked for them, and it was so fascinating to walk by and see the details on them.

I was so sad to come back home. I learned so much and had such a great time with my parents. They told me stories from when they traveled through there and how much things have changed. This trip opened my eyes and I want to go back out West so badly. Kids my age do not get to experience travel often, and I am blessed that my parents have taken me to a bunch of places. Who knows what will happen and if I will ever get to go places again. I hope when I am older, I can travel outside of the country and get to “collect” a new country.

OLIVIA EVANS, GRADE 12

## *Family*

My family is an extremely large family. I have over 20 cousins on both my mother and father’s side of the family. I have many great aunts and uncles, and have one set of my grandparents still living, and one great grandparent still living. What makes having a big family so special to me is that we are all close. Some of my cousins are close in age with me, but no matter our age gaps, we all get along and get together to celebrate events often. We may be a large family but one thing is for certain, we are all dysfunctional.

Family is extremely important to me. There is an old saying that goes like this, “When you have no one, you will always have family.” That saying is true for me. My family works together like a team. We all stick together and take up for one another and always take care of each other. I know that if I ever needed anything in life that my family would be there to help me. Not only would my family be there for me, but I would be there for them.

When I was fourteen years old, my grandmother went to be with the Lord. Growing up I spent nearly every day at her house playing outside, playing with jacks, watching random movies, and always eating white chocolate reese cups. She took my brother and I to school on days my mom had to go to work early, which was almost every day. She was at every game, practice, awards ceremony, etc. Then she got sick. She had to go to the hospital and they told her she would have to have surgery on her pancreas. She was doing good and my mom was going to take my brother and I to visit her. The day we were going to visit, she got really sick and had emergency surgery. When I saw her after the surgery, it was not the same woman that taught me how to play jacks and ride a bicycle; she could not talk to me. I did not even know if she could hear me. I will never forget my last days with her even though I never knew if she heard what I had to tell her.

Losing my grandmother broke my heart, and still does today. It hurts to know she can’t be here when I graduate or see me driving by myself, but I know she is watching over me and is smiling down at me. Those depressing hospital hallways were always filled with my cousins, aunts, and uncles. I can never thank them enough for everything they did for my mom, my brother, and I when she was sick. Every day has been hard, but my family has had my back every step of the way.

Losing my grandmother made me realize how short life really is. Life is too short to not be close to your family and to spend time together celebrating and having a good time. Your family can get on our last nerve, but at the end of the day, that is still your family. I love every member of my family dearly, and hold them all close to my heart. Because like that old saying, “When you have no one, you will always have family.”

BRONWEN FISCHER, GRADE 12

## *My Family Heritage*

My heritage as far back as I know starts in the state of Virginia. My parents were both born in Virginia, as well as I. They have traveled out of Virginia and never chose to live anywhere else but here. My mother’s family is from Lee County, but when my grandmother met my grandfather, they moved to different places because of his job, so my mother was born in Pulaski, Virginia and then she was raised some of her childhood in the city part of Roanoke, VA. Later on when she was about 9 years old, her parents, 2 siblings, and herself moved back to Lee County and have lived here ever since. My great grandmother, my mother’s mamaw, has

always lived here and would always welcome anyone to come and eat; it was one of those houses that you could just stop in for lunch, talk for a bit, and leave without ever having to tell anyone you were going to show up. She would have people over for meals, reunions, church, yard sales, etc. She also had lots of children which are my great aunts and uncles; some of them moved to Tennessee and Kentucky when they were older and had large families of their own. This side of my family is part Cherokee because of my great grandmother and her mother, which would be my great great grandmother, who was allegedly full blooded Cherokee and that comes from mostly the Appalachian region and the surrounding areas of the tri-cities.

I've always been told by my other grandmother on my father's side that we are Scotch-Irish, which are from many places but mostly from this side of the United States and we are also part Indian somehow. I never got to meet her parents, my grandfather, or his parents, so it's hard to know a lot about that side of my family or my full DNA until I get a DNA test. My great grandmother on my dad's side, way before I was born, probably when my grandmother was little, used to make apple butter, which has become a tradition for my family, and they always let the little kids help for fun.

For the past few years it has become a tradition that all of my family gather at my home for the holidays to celebrate whatever occasion it may be. We enjoy big meals together, opening gifts, hiding eggs for my little cousins, and just talk and enjoy each other's company. In reality, family is the most important thing that we have in this world because in the end it's all we have. No matter where our family started or where it leads to, all that matters is that we're all together.

FAITH MILES, GRADE 12

### *The Family Guitar*

My father's side of my family has a family heirloom that has been passed down through multiple generations: a guitar. It is an acoustic guitar made by Gibson that has been passed down from my grandfather to my dad and from my dad to me. It has a history in my father's side of my family and has been a talking point, conversation starter, and a form of entertainment for years.

It all started with my grandfather. While I'm not sure where my grandfather got it from, I do know that he played it really well and loved playing it. He even fostered a love for music in his children, my father, aunts, and uncles, who have loved classic rock and even passed their love for it down to me. I have been told stories of my grandfather sitting on the porch after a long day's work and grabbing his guitar and playing a few songs to relax and ease his mind. Before he died, he gave the guitar to my father. I was never told the reason why, but I can only assume that he saw potential in my father or knew that my father would keep it safe.

My father has been interested in classic rock music for as long as I have known. Whenever we went for a drive and he turned the radio on, it would always end up on a classic rock station. From time to time, he would tell me stories about him being in high school when bands like Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, and The Rolling Stones were just starting to become big or were in their early years of fame. I even grew up playing the Guitar Hero games with him on the Playstation 2. My father really enjoyed rock music and through seeing him so happy with it, I became a fan of it as well.

The guitar was a big deal to my father as well. He would practice on it every now and then and keep it in good shape. It meant a lot to him and obviously reminded him of my grandfather. He felt like he was carrying on my grandfather's legacy by playing it for himself and others whenever he could. He would practice at home playing some of the songs he knew like "Every Rose Has Its Thorn" by Poison or "Smoke on the Water" by Deep Purple. He would also play a lot at family reunions where he could get together with some of his brothers and cousins and put on a small show for the Reece family to enjoy.

Now that I have it, I plan on taking very good care of it. I may not know how to play it, but I want to learn how to someday to carry on a little bit of my dad and to remember him. It is a very sentimental piece to my

family and we would never think of selling it or getting rid of it in any way. It means more than money to us. It means family, heritage, and love.

CURTIS REECE, GRADE 12

### *My Father's Logging Business*

My father has worked his whole life doing a number of different jobs such as mining, working on a strip job, and logging. Even today at fifty four years old he still logs by himself and does all the work from cutting the trees down to loading them on the truck and hauling them to the lumber yard.

Throughout my life I have watched my dad perform many unruly tasks with ease due to his good work ethic and his close relationship with God. A normal day of logging for him consists of cutting the trees down. Then he will drive a machine called a skidder which is what pulls the logs to his landing that has his loader on it. The skidder has long cables on the back that are spooled together on a winch. He will pull the cable out and to the tree, wrap it around it, and hook it together with a metal piece called a choker. Once he has about four or five trees hooked up he will drive them back to his landing in front of his loader to cut the limbs off the trees and then repeat the same process until he has enough to make a load. Then he gets on the loader and cuts the trees to length and stacks them up next to his loader into a stack of paper wood and a stack of logs. When he has enough for a load, he will bring his truck and load it with either paper wood or logs and haul it to the mill.

When I talk to my dad about his job, he always tells me it is easy with God's help and that he gets paid to go to the gym while other have to pay to get the same workout he does. He has taught me that hard work will be rewarded and that earning the things that you have makes you value them more than if someone were to just give you everything in life.

Once I am living on my own and have my own responsibilities, I know that I will reflect back on what all my dad has taught me about life and the morals he has bestowed to me. When and if I have a child of my own, I will do my best to reteach the same values as my dad has taught me and to show him that hard work does pay off and that will remain true forever.

DALTON RIVERS, GRADE 12

### *Christmas*

Growing up there were always at least three children in the home, so that means lots of presents. We have a tradition to put up the Christmas tree on Thanksgiving. On Christmas Eve we always watch *It's a Wonderful Life*, because that's my uncle's favorite Christmas movie. When we put up the Christmas tree, it feels like we have a million ornaments most are from years ago or just the ones we have made. We always open one present on Christmas Eve, which is always pajamas of some sort. We make cookies, slice apples, and put milk out. My older cousin Cera would always make sure she would get me and my other cousin Ben up at like 3 a.m. which my aunt and uncle never liked. We would get the stuff from our stockings, which was always candy and little things like little perfumes and nail polish. We would have one "big" present, which when I got older was usually a phone, because I would always break my phone. After we would open the presents, usually my uncle and aunt would go back to sleep, and my cousins and I would play with our toys. Then my aunt would get up around 9am and start cooking food. We normally have a lot of family come over to eat. We always have ham, which is my favorite, and we always eat around 12. Usually the people that come up bring presents, so after we eat, we got more presents. And then we just watch Christmas movies the rest of the day. We usually take the Christmas tree down the next day, and the rest of the outside decorations come down after New Year's. This is a good time for my family to actually enjoy time together; we never really got

to do that because everybody was always working. Our Christmases are a lot different now that we're all a bit older. We still spend time bonding, through the day though!

SAMATHA STAPLETON, GRADE 12

### *A Presley Family Christmas Tradition*

As I slid my arm in one sleeve of my fluffy, gray jacket, I smiled in anticipation of the day ahead of me. My toes wiggled their way into some fuzzy, Christmas-themed socks, and I searched for my comfiest pair of boots. My dad hollered from the dining room asking me if I was ready. I strutted into the room smiling from ear to ear. He stacked presents one after another into my arms until I could barely see in front of me, and I felt as if I was going to tumble over like a jenga tower. I stumbled my way to the car and placed the gifts gently in the trunk. I got in the passenger seat and turned on dad and I's favorite Christmas songs. We sang along all the way to my great mamaw Presley's house. As we pulled into her driveway, my eyes brightened at the sight of all the cars lined up. All of my family was reunited once again. I carried the presents into my mamaw's house as fast as I could. I searched everywhere for my cousin Bryce. As I scrambled through the huge house, I passed so many of my Nana's brothers and sisters that I rarely got to see. I smiled and quickly greeted them as I still searched for Bryce. Finally, I found him in the formal dining room with my papaw and Aunt Stephanie. When they turned around to greet me, they revealed a table lined with pies and other sweets that made my mouth water. Bryce and I went into the kitchen to investigate what would soon end our healthy diets. Just as we were doing so, everyone entered the room, and my papaw began to say grace over our food. We spent the rest of the day eating, catching up, laughing, and eventually opening presents. It was a Presley Christmas, which means the day was more than just presents to us.

Every Christmas my family goes to my great grandmother's house to celebrate. However, we don't celebrate presents, food, or Santa. In my family, we celebrate the time we get to spend together. My great grandmother's name is Edith Presley, and she is now 96 years old. Every day, holiday, and birthday we get to spend with her is very precious to us. The time we get to spend with our extended family is precious, too. When you put both of these times together, it is a great event for everyone. We laugh and spread love more than any family around, and I don't know what I would do without this tradition. It is something that makes Christmas special to all of us. In a way, this tradition has shaped me. It has taught me how important family truly is. Some day I strive to start a tradition similar to my own family, and I will teach them how important family should be to them just as my family has taught me.

SARAH SUMPTER, GRADE 12

### **Jill Skidmore, English 8**

#### *My Funniest Memory*

Would you ever believe that something scary could really turn out funny? Well, I can because I lived it. I will just say he didn't go to the bathroom and that river was really cold.

It all began on a hayride while we were singing "Rocky Top" and were having a fun time. Then we got off. It was almost dark but not pitch black like I wanted it to be. So I decided we should do something first.

We went swimming! We also played tag in the pool and of course Madison won. Show off! After that, we did cheer stunts. I was a flyer and a base most of the time and Madison was in the other stunt being a base but everyone got a chance to be everything. My stunt was me, Grier, Hannah, and Sarah. The other stunt was Madison, Chloe, and Ryley. There was also J.R. but we didn't have enough for him, so he was the judge.

We went to the bonfire around midnight and the moon was full. We made s'mores and almost fell in the river, but we were in our bathing suits still so it didn't matter. We made a mudman which are like a snowman but are made out of mud. Then we went swimming in the river cause someone fell in (Madison). Good Job!!

We started to tell scary stories around 3am. That's the haunting hour and one of the girl's dad stepped away to use the bathroom. We were telling a scary story when the dogs start barking. We look over and there a man in a mask with a chainsaw walking toward us. A bunch of us started crying and screaming; one of us actually jumped in the river. Madison!! At the end, we figured out it was the guy who "went to the bathroom." But the question still remains to this day where did he get the chainsaw?

KATE BLAKEMORE, GRADE 8

### *My Ghost Story*

My good friend, Abbey, once told me about some very strange occurrences that went on at her house and her grandmother's house. I personally do not believe in ghosts, demons, witches or wizards, but I believe my friend.

One day, when she was about seven or eight years old, Abbey Myers was at her grandmother's house. She was simply enjoying her day, going to the kitchen cabinet to get some crayons for a coloring page, when all of a sudden, she looked up and saw a strange figure standing in front of her. It was a big, black, ugly thing, which she described as a demon. She said that it was just staring at her. She screamed and when she did, she heard it screaming as well. She turned and ran to her grandmother's room to tell her about this frightening creature. Her grandmother came with her to look and when they got into the kitchen, but it was gone. How did it enter, and how did it leave? They did not know.

The other incident happened in Abbey's own home. She was probably around the same age, seven or eight. She was in her kitchen cooking. She reached to get something off of the 'lazy susan' and turned it around, only to find a small, black creature, similar to the one she saw in her grandmother's house, hunched over, looking her right in the eye. She let out a scream and ran to find her mother, who did not believe her.

To this day, we still have no idea how those things got in the houses. But I know one thing, it almost scares me to be in there knowing that some unidentified creatures have been roaming around.

BLAIR CALTON, GRADE 8

### *Ghost Story*

Tears welled up in my eyes. I was afraid to move and afraid to speak. My brother bravely yelled for my dad. My dad came out and turned on the lights and just like that it was all over.

This story happened about four years ago. My brother and I were sleeping in the living room, as we were already afraid to sleep in our own rooms. The couches weren't too far apart, so if I got scared, I could talk to him.

We weren't fully asleep, but we weren't fully awake. I started to hear a weird noise, but I didn't think anything of it. That is, until my brother asked if I heard the noise too. I was petrified, as was he.

I had never heard noises like this, so this experience was very scary. It sounded like an empty cup on a countertop. The sound sent chills down my spine. I couldn't move. The sound kept getting closer and closer. The tears started to roll down my cheeks, and right before my brother screamed for my dad in terror. He ran to the living room and the sound stopped.

REECE COOK, GRADE 8

## *Being New, Making Friends*

When I was in fourth grade, I moved schools for the first time. It was a very hectic day, but I survived even though I fell flat on my face. Let me tell you how it all started.

When I first got to the school, I couldn't get over the size of it. The main thing I noticed was the massive staircase when I first walked into the school. Compared to my previous school, it was a giant. I was going to get lost so many times! Regardless, I went into my first class.

The first thing I noticed was that there were many more children than my former school had. The teacher greeted me, introduced me to the class, then assigned me to a seat. I was so nervous, everyone kept looking at me!

Class went by so fast, before I knew it, it was lunch time. After I got my tray, I looked over the tables. "Where am I going to sit?" I had kept thinking. I made my way to a mostly empty table when a girl tapped me on the shoulder. "Do you want to sit with us?" She says as she gestures to a table full of girls. I nod and follow her to it.

As soon as I sit down I am bombarded with questions.

"What school did you come from?"

"Do you like it here?"

"Which teachers do you have?"

"How old are you?"

I answer their questions briefly, then lunch was over almost as soon as it began. It was time for recess.

Instead of going to a playground, we go to the track. I didn't know anyone, so I just walked around the field. "I'm never going to make any friends!" I had thought a trillion times.

It was finally my last class of the day, gym. At first, I thought I was going to walk alone like I had done in recess until the girl from lunch invited me to join her friends. "Hey, new kid. Do you want to play with us?" I give her a simple nod and follow her back to her group.

When I reach her group, I notice they are doing cartwheels, handstands, and other things of that sort. "Can you do a handstand?" The girl, Isabelle, asked me. I did not, but I wasn't about to say no and disappoint them before we even became friends. "Um, yeah." Regardless of the facts, I attempt it.

I go down on my hands how I've seen other people do it. I'm able to hold it for half a second then I fall on my face. Quickly, I stand up and smile through the pain and embarrassment, "I'm okay." Ignoring their looks of concern and humor, I change the subject. In the end, I had lots of fun with them and even became really good friends with them.

JUSTINE ELLIOT, GRADE 8

## *Overcoming Fear*

I have always been interested in hunting, but I didn't like the blood and stuff. So my dad and uncle helped me get used to it. They helped me get over it by making me be around it.

One day, I was outside, and my uncle said he wanted bait to catch groundhogs, so I went and looked for rabbits and got one. He caught a groundhog in a trap and told me to dispatch it. He caught a possum, but it had babies, so we relocated it. He caught another groundhog and told me to dispatch it. And he caught another possum and we dispatched it.

In conclusion, I got over my fear by being around it. After being around it so many times, I got used to it.

MICHAEL ELY, GRADE 8

## *A Joyride*

I touched my sore arm and felt blood, that's probably not a good sign . . . One day, me and two other of my softball friends were playing pool and eating popsicles. The sun was out shining on everything in

sight. It was raining for about an hour before, so the fields and grass was wet. After a while, we got bored and decided to go ride the golf cart. My friend, the one whose house we were staying, drove us down to the feeding troughs to feed the sheep. We thought we were going to come back later so we could feed them from our hands.

We got done feeding the sheep, then started riding up and down the driveway. Soon, we got bored again and went riding in the field. The field had long grass, was steep, very muddy from it pouring an hour before. The first time around, I rode in the trunk part of it, then a few rides around everyone started taking turns. When it got to my turn, we went the same path we had been going, which was down then a big curve.

When I got to the big curve, I turned and we could feel it slipping from the mud, so I started hitting the brakes, but it was too late because we were already tipping over. The next thing I saw was grass. I blacked out for a second, but when I opened my eyes I was on top of the roof of the golf cart. I'm guessing when it flipped, I landed in it and it fell off, and I touched my sore arm and felt blood. I looked over and one of my friends was laying on the grass rubbing her head, while the other one had their foot stuck under a piece of the golf cart. As soon as we noticed, we helped her get her foot unstuck.

I started having a panic attack because the golf cart was completely apart. The battery was hanging out of it, the poles on it were bent, the top had fallen off, and the seats were out of place. We went and told her parents what had happened and they told us, "we're just glad that you guys aren't hurt." We continued on with our day after calling our parents and telling them about it. Her dad told us we were lucky. We were very, very lucky.

EMMA FORTNER, GRADE 8

### *My Ghost Story*

My family does not believe in ghosts, but my aunt told me a story that is pretty scary. When my cousin was little, he would run around the house talking to someone, but nobody was there. He would throw a ball against the wall in the hallway while he was talking and laughing. This went on for a little while, until one day, my aunt asked him who he was talking to and playing with, he answered her by just saying it was his friend. She wasn't concerned because she just thought that like lots of other young kids, that he had an imaginary friend.

This continued on for a while. Then one day, he was with her while she was cleaning out the building in their backyard. She stumbled upon a box of old pictures. While she was looking through them, she found a picture of herself with one of her old friends. He was an old man who had lived in the house before they moved in. He passed away before Derick was even born, so there was no way for him to even know what the man looked like. She laid the picture aside and kept looking through other pictures. Derick walked inside and picked up the picture, as soon as he looked at the picture ye yelled at my aunt. When she came over to him, he handed her the picture and said, "Mommy, here is my friend!" He then proceeded to tell her about all the stories his "friend" has told him and all the stuff they have done together. To this day, if you ask him about it, he can still tell you every detail about his childhood "friend."

ANNABELLE FRITTS, GRADE 8

### *Apple Butter Recipe*

#### *Ingredients*

- 2 ½ Bushels of Apples (washed, cored, and peeled)
- 12 to 15 lbs. Of White Sugar
- (1) .125 fl oz. bottle of LorAnn Cinnamon Oil
- (2) 12 oz. bags of Brach's Cinnamon Imperials Candy

### *Directions*

Place large copper kettle, over a fire outdoors. Add ½ bushels of apples (washed, cored and peeled). Allow the apples to cook down a few inches from the rim of the kettle. Then add sugar, 3 to 5 lbs at a time to taste. (Adding sugar thins the apples.) Once the apples are the desired sweetness, continue cooking until it has thickened enough to put in jars. Then stir long enough for the candy pieces to melt. Lastly, you are ready to begin putting the applebutter in jars to preserve and enjoy for the months to come.

Reason it is a tradition: It is just some great tasting stuff, and it has just always been something that we have made every year.

ETHAN GORDON, GRADE 8

### *Bouncing Bertha*

The ghost story that has been passed down through my family is bouncing Bertha. The story of bouncing Bertha occurred in Lee County, VA. The story is that this little girl, named Bertha, would lay on her bed as still as a log and her bed would begin to bounce. I asked my great grandfather about bouncing bertha a few years ago, and he had some information. The event occurred right down the road from my home. Ralph Miner, the one who reported the incident of bouncing Bertha, also lives right down the road. My great grandfather told me a few years back that he went and saw bouncing Bertha, and his words were, "It's real I saw it with my own eyes." He also told me that as soon as she would lay down on her bed that it would begin to bounce slowly, but as time went on, it began to get faster and faster. Me, being intrigued, I asked if she was moving at all, and he said that she was just laying there as still as a log, but the bed would still bounce.

He told me that the four strongest men in the room would try and hold down the bed, but the bed would just not stop. My grandfather told me that he had nightmares just thinking about the occurrence. My great grandfather now has dementia, so he can't really tell me much about it now, but he said that it was one of the scariest things he had ever seen. To this day, I still get anxious when I drive by the house of bouncing Bertha.

CASSIDY HAMMONDS, GRADE 8

### *My Memory*

One day before a softball game, me and a couple of my teammates were warming up on a practice field before a softball game, when we heard talking coming from the trees above the practice field. We thought there were a couple of people up there, but when we started warming up, we heard barking and yelling coming from the trees. So, we thought they had some dogs up there with them, so we just ignored it until we realized the boys were barking at us.

When we were getting all of our stuff together, we noticed the barking and yelling had stopped but we didn't pay any attention to it. Until we started doing drills on the field and we heard barking and yelling again. It was 8 or 9 boys at our dugout trying to distract us. I mean I get cheering and pumping up your players and yelling at the other team when your losing. But barking? That is unfair sportsmanship.

So the umpire had to call time and walk over to our dugout, and tell the boys to be quiet or leave. They were quiet for like 10 or 15 minutes, and then started barking and yelling again. So once again the umpire had to call time and tell the boys to leave the field, and they argued for 5 or 10 minutes and finally agreed to leave. We thought we would never have to see those boys again, but came to find out, it was the other coach's kid and his friend doing the barking and yelling.

MADISON HUGHES, GRADE 8

## *Homemade Recipe*

The recipe for our homemade Peanut Butter Rolls:

### *Ingredients:*

1. 2 lb bag of Powdered sugar
2. 1 can of evaporated milk
3. Creamy Peanut Butter
4. 1–1lb box powdered sugar

Add milk into a bowl of powdered sugar; a tablespoon at a time until you have soft dough. Then divide into four sections separately. Sprinkle counter, or smooth surface, with powdered sugar than roll a section of the dough until flat and thin. After you sprinkle a little more powdered sugar on top, to stop the Peanut Butter from sticking, spread Peanut Butter across dough. Roll dough to form a pinwheel. Cut into pieces, repeat with the rest of the dough.

The tradition behind this is that around Christmas time, and sometimes in the fall, is my grandmother and I do this each year, like she did with her mother.

HAILEY KELLY, GRADE 8

## *Ghost Story*

This is a story my father, Steve, told me. He lived on a back road at the time and there were a lot of abandoned houses. Steve and his friends, I'll call them Bob and Jerry, had heard that one of the houses were haunted. So, knowing teenage boys, they decided to go and see if it was true. Just remember that they didn't believe in ghosts. Boy would that change.

They arrived at the house at around 7:00 or 7:30 pm, so it was turning night. Perfect right? Going to a supposed haunted house at night, sounds like just so much fun. Anyway, the house was an old two story farmhouse. It looked at least 70 years old so it wasn't in good condition. That didn't stop them though.

The boys then went into the house after hitting the pillars on the porch to make sure it wouldn't crush them. When they entered the house it looked brand new. Which was weird because it was so old. They split up to look for, I don't know, a ghost. 'Bob' had noticed 3 scratch marks on the side of a wall. He yelled for his friends " Steve! Jerry! Come mer'!" Steve and Jerry came running into the room and looked at the wall. " Looks like a bear," Steve said. " Yeah, but how in the world would a bear that size get in?" Jerry responded. Then they hear footsteps upstairs.

The boys ran up the broken stairs and started looking for the cause of the noise. Suddenly, it got really cold. Then they heard a low thud. Then again but this time it was louder. Then they heard the footsteps. They grew louder! Louder! Louder! However, it became silent. They boys were shaking in fear. Then they heard an inhuman growl. It sent shivers down there spin. " Run!" Everyone bolted down the stairs and outside. They sprinted to the fourwheeler they had took. They didn't even bother to buckle, they just drove. Before the house was completely out of site Steve looked at a window on the second floor. Standing in the window was a tall shadow figure. So whether or not you think ghosts are real, my dad saw something that day. Now he believes they are real.

ALYSSA LEWIS, GRADE 8

## *Painful Memory*

It begins in my living room. Me and my sister are going to try and race to my room.  
I said "Hey, you want to race to my room?"

So my sister said "Yeah sure, last one there has to do the dishes!"

I ran as fast as I could. I tried to jump over a pile of clothes. I successfully made it over the pile of clothes, but I tripped over a tote lid.

I ran into the wall and bruised my collarbone and my jawbone really bad. My sister laughed so hard I thought she was going to pee herself. She was laughing so hard she didn't realize I was actually hurt, so she didn't bother to try and help me up. My mom is a nurse so she checked me over but I was just bruised and swollen and nothing broke.

My sister unfortunately won, so I had to do the dishes. From now on, I will never try to jump over a pile of clothes recklessly and almost breaking my bones.

MADISON MCELYEA, GRADE 8

### *Best Day*

Have you ever been to a Tennessee football practice? Well I have. I am going to tell you all about it.

One day my dad called me in, and asked me if I wanted to go to the practice. I obviously said yes! Me and my parents are huge Tennessee Volunteer fans.

When we arrived, we had to get our passes. The passes were the only way we could get in. Then we met one of the coaches, which is my dad's friend. He welcomed us there. Then we met the head coach, Jermeiy Pruitt. He welcomed us there too.

At Neyland stadium, they did their warm-up routine. We stood on the field beside the team. After the warmup they scrimaged, someone got ran over, but he was fine. After the practice, we met some of the players. This was one of the best days of my life.

BRYNNEN PENDERGRAFT, GRADE 8

### *Oreo Delight*

One of my family's traditions is for someone to make a desert called Oreo Delight to every holiday or special family event. The reason we make it is because everyone enjoys eating it. Originally my mamaw was the only person who made it and then my aunt made it. Now I am the one who makes it.

Oreo Delight

Here are the ingredients that you will need to make Oreo Delight:

2 packs of Oreos, ½ a stick of melted butter, 8 ounces of softened cream cheese, 1 package of instant pudding, 8 ounces of whipped cream, 3 cups of milk, 1 cup of sugar, and a pack of gummy worms (optional).

The first thing that you do when you make Oreo Delight is crush a whole package of Oreos. Then you mix some of the oreo crumbs with melted butter and put it on the bottom of a pan. The third step is to mix the butter, cream cheese, vanilla pudding, milk, sugar, whipped cream, and half of your crushed oreos together. Next you put your mixture on top of the crushed oreos in the pan. Then you put the remaining oreos on top of the mixture and if you want to add a cute design you may add gummy worms to the top of your delicious treat. Lastly you put the desert in the freezer for 1 to 2 hours.

JANE PENNINGTON, GRADE 8

### *Peanut Butter Roll Recipe*

Ingredients

- 2 pounds powdered sugar, divided
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted

- ¼ teaspoon vanilla
- 2–3 teaspoons milk
- One 12-ounce jar smooth peanut butter

Me and my family have been making these since I was little. We make peanut butter rolls every year on Thanksgiving and Christmas because my dad, brother, sister, and mom likes them. When we don't have the ingredients to make them, then we just go over to my papaws house and ask him if he can go by some because he likes them too. Everyone in my family likes them except for me, but we still do it as a tradition and still

SARAH ROBINSON, GRADE 8

### *Ghost Story*

My ghost story started when my friend Alyssa told me to download the ghost radar app. The app is supposed to allow spirits to communicate with you through your phone. Alyssa told me that she talked to a doctor who died of cancer in the eighties. I thought the app was silly and would make for a good laugh, so I decided to download it. As the app was downloading to my phone, my grandma came into my room and gave me a twenty dollar bill and told me to put it in my wallet. When she left my room I put the money on my bedside table instead of putting it up. When the app finally finished downloading to my phone I opened it up and jokingly said "If there are any ghosts or spirits willing to talk you can use my phone.". Alyssa called me because she wanted to know what it said when it said it. After approximately three minutes the app said "Dollar" in a robotic voice. My jaw dropped like a roller coaster at Dollywood. I told Alyssa why I was shocked and she freaked out too. A couple minutes later the ghost radar said "Hide". At first I thought it was telling me to hide from something, but then I realized it was telling me to put my money in my wallet which is in a hidden spot behind the books on my bookshelf. I moved my books from my shelf, and took my wallet from it, then put my twenty dollar bill in my wallet. For about half an hour the app kept saying random words like "Time" or "Rabbit". After me and Alyssa got bored I told her I was going to uninstall the app. After it uninstalled I went to bed. And at 7AM I woke up to a dinging sound. I reached for my phone, and when I turned it on I had notification saying "Ghost Radar App Updated.". I was confused because I knew for a fact I uninstalled the app. I opened my phone, and the app was there. I asked Alyssa if I told her I was going to uninstall the app, and she said yes. When we got to school we met in the lunchroom and opened the app. And guess what the first word the app said . . . the app said "Surprise". I immediately uninstalled the Ghost Radar App and went along with my day.

NATHAN SMITH, GRADE 8

### *Basic Monkey Bread*

#### *Ingredients:*

- Flour, for pan
- ½ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 30 buttermilk canned refrigerated biscuits
- 1 stick butter
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 cup walnuts

Butter and flour a Bundt pan and set aside. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Combine sugar and cinnamon then cut refrigerator biscuits in half and toss in cinnamon and sugar mixture. Melt 1 stick of butter

in a saucepan and add brown sugar and bring to a boil; then add nuts. Line the Bundt pan with biscuits and pour butter over them. Bake for 30 minutes then remove the pan when it's still hot to avoid sticking.

The recipe has been passed down through many of our family's generations and is very close to the family. First through my great grandmother then her daughter to my mawmaw and to my mother next.

CAYDEN TICKNER, GRADE 8

## *Memory*

It was February, 2011 I was five. I started my day eating breakfast with my dad. He had fixed me pancakes, eggs, and bacon. It smelt so good his eggs taste like fluffy clouds. We got finished eating and headed to the shop. It was snowy outside you could almost see the designs on the snowflakes. When we got to the garage, which is right beside my old house, it seemed like my dad had a million phone calls.

Then I helped him in the garage by handing him his tools so he could fix lawn mowers. That was so much fun I even do it now. We worked and worked until lunch time, which to me felt like forever. Then my papaw showed up to get me, and I always loved when he would come get me from work.

I insisted on taking my baby dolls everywhere with me. So my daddy told me to run into the house to get my stuff. I went in and dressed all my dolls up for the cold and carried them out of the house. But when I walked outside, I noticed the pond was frozen. Me and my five year old self had the bright idea that the fish couldn't breathe. So I stood on the side of the pond and tried to break the ice. My foot got stuck so I fell in! My first reaction was to get all my dolls out before I got myself out. I took my dolls in the house and walked back out to the garage soaking wet and crying. When I got to the garage my dad couldn't figure out why I was wet and all I would say was I didn't get it wet. I was talking about my American Girl Doll because I thought he was going to be mad.

Finally, he got me to stop crying and tell him that I fell in the pond. He took me in the house and dried me off and got me changed. Then my papaw took me to his house and we sat there and played for the rest of the day.

CHLOE WILLIS, GRADE 8



# MORRISON SCHOOL



*Karla Rasnake, Shannon Dabney,  
& Christina Mizelle, Grades 6–12*  
*Life Saver*

My mom once told me a story about how she saved a man's life. She was nineteen years old and driving on a busy main road. My brother and I were in the backseat, and we were heading home from my grandmother's house. I was three and my brother was about a year old. It was clear but dark outside. While mom was driving, she noticed there was something in the road. When we got closer, she realized that a man was lying in the middle of the road with nothing protecting him from oncoming traffic. She quickly turned on her hazard lights, pulled the car over, and blocked the road so no one could hit him. After seeing a mangled motorcycle off the side of the road, my mom realized that he had been in a really bad motorcycle accident. The man wasn't moving. There were pieces of his bike everywhere. No one was helping him, but there were several people on the side of the road on their phones. Mom then called 911. The dispatcher told her to keep him awake as long as possible and to NOT move him in case he hurt his neck or spine.

My mom noticed the injured man was bleeding from his head, and he was barely awake. She asked the injured man a lot of questions to try to keep him awake, but his eyes kept rolling back. When the police got there (about 15 minutes later), they parked near my mom's car and thanked her. They told her to go ahead and leave because the ambulance was pulling up, and they could take care of the rest.

Even though mom never got to talk to the man afterwards, in my opinion, she saved his life. While I am surprised that no one else was willing to get out of their cars to help him, I am not surprised my mom did because she has a huge heart. She is willing to help others all the time, even when she doesn't know them. She was willing to risk her own safety to help a complete stranger. This act of kindness is just one instance that proves how loving she is.

My mom has many amazing qualities. Her care and concern for others have inspired me to want to be more like her. She is an amazing, sweet, thankful, and beautiful person. She is a wonderful mom, daughter, sister, friend, cousin, and wife. She puts up with everything through thick and thin and never gives up. Because of her, I always try a lot harder to make her proud.

HAYLEI BARLOW, GRADE 8

*My Cousin*

My cousin Brandon is my favorite cousin. He works at a factory called Organic Girls in Atlanta, Georgia. When he is older, he would like to start his own business. Brandon and his sister were adopted from Russia. Brandon was not cared for very well when he lived in the orphanage. Susan, Brandon's mom, did not like the way Brandon was treated. Susan decided to adopt Brandon at Christmastime. His parents were so happy when they finally got to take Brandon home.

When Brandon was about twelve years old, his mom and dad got a divorce. It was just he and his mom for a long time. When Brandon was eighteen, Susan remarried. Brandon doesn't get to see his father or sister much. Life changed a lot for him. When he was about twenty years old, he made some poor decisions. However, he has learned from his mistakes.

Today, he has made better choices. He and I love to play football together. Brandon is really funny. I always find myself laughing when he is around. He always tries to make life fun. One day, all the cousins were visiting, and we went to a farm. There were llamas and Brandon decides to feed one a cookie. The llama ended up spitting it in his face. We all had a good laugh. I love how he turns everything funny. Everybody in our family loves to tell Brandon stories. I think my favorite story is when he brought a snake into the house and put it in a hole in the wall. Who knows! That snake could still be in the wall!

It always means a lot to me when Brandon wants to spend time with me. Whether it's going out to eat or going 4-wheeling, I always find myself having a good time. He takes time to get to know me and enjoys having fun. I think that's why he's my favorite cousin.

SYDNEY BECK, GRADE 8

### *Winter Fun*

Once, my mom and I were outside in the snow building a snowdog and having a snowball fight. We were having so much fun! Our next idea was to go tubing on the highest hill. My tube was half green and half blue. The hill was so high that your eyes watered when you went down. We went so many times, we decided to call it quits.

After we went tubing in the snow, the fun has just begun! When we got inside, we fixed some hot cocoa and popcorn. After we fixed popcorn and hot cocoa, we watched *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* together.

When the movie was over, we decided to decorate the Christmas tree. We began with stringing popcorn. Afterwards, we went down to the basement to get the boxes of decorations. We found pretty ornaments, and some old ornaments, too. We do this every year, it's a tradition. When we were done, the tree was looked pretty and perfect.

Finally, we decided to bake some chocolate chip cookies for Santa.

The cookies are special because they have a special taste and smell. The recipe for chocolate chip cookies is:

- ♦ 2 cups Semi-Sweet Chocolate Baking Chips (contains milk)
- ♦ 1 cup butter or margarine, softened
- ♦ 3/4 cup sugar
- ♦ 3/4 cup brown sugar, packed
- ♦ 2 large eggs
- ♦ 2 teaspoons vanilla
- ♦ 2 1/4 cups unsifted flour
- ♦ 1 tablespoon baking soda
- ♦ 1/2 teaspoon salt
- ♦ 1 cup walnuts or pecans, chopped (optional)

After baking cookies, we get our pj's on and we went to bed. Then, my mom and I got up and opened all of our presents and had a big Christmas breakfast with bacon, scrambled eggs, pancakes, and toast. We had a wonderful time, and it was a memorable Christmas. Christmas day makes winter feel extra fun!

COLTON BLANKENSHIP, GRADE 7

### *He Shines the Universe*

When I met him . . . I drew the light in where he appeared  
Everything's so crystal clear  
He began to spark around everything and things changed  
We arranged to be committed but even if have submitted late  
I don't rate how our relationship goes  
Rows and rows of time pass by

Still together and like a brother to me  
One of my best friends where our relationship never ends  
Whenever I'm with him . . . he shines the universe  
He's the sun to my moon  
He's the waves to my sea  
His name is Tyler  
The best boy-friend I ever could wish for  
But when I'm afraid in the darkness . . . he lights up the universe  
But our story is only beginning as our relationship grows on

ALEXIS BRAMLETTE, GRADE 9

### *My Girlfriend*

I have a girlfriend who goes to my school. We have known each other for a few years, and we first started dating over a year ago. Her name is Alexis. I love her because she is my girlfriend. I met her in the cafeteria and I talked to her a lot before we started dating. My girlfriend is very nice, very caring, and she is part of my family.

I remember the first day I sat with her on December 4, 2018. I talked to her at the table and then we decided to become best friends. Then in 2019, we decided to become boyfriend and girlfriend forever. Then, on May 4, 2019, we had our first date at the prom. We had a great time as we talked and danced to the romantic music on the speakers. I'll never forget that night and I'll always love my girlfriend forever because she is very generous and very kind.

Alexis makes my day whenever I have sad days or something is going wrong. She always helps me out because she loves me very much and I love her very much.

My girlfriend helps me with a lot of things, like literature. I am not very good at literature, but she helps me out. I help my girlfriend out with math, because I am really good at math, even though she isn't really good at math. We help each other because she is my girlfriend, and I'll always help her out. She is part of my family and I'll always love you forever, Alexis.

TYLER BRANHAM, GRADE 9

### *Apple Pie*

Food has this weird way of bringing families and friends together. Parents will cook for their family and then usually all will gather to eat. A lot of cooking goes on in my family and we all enjoy eating the food. In some cases we help our family cook the food, and that's what I do with my parents sometimes. In my family, my mother is the one who likes cooking the most since she has her own recipes and she loves to cook probably more than my dad. However, my dad has his own recipe for making apple pie. He makes the pie completely from scratch, which is very interesting and fun to watch. Since my dad is working all the time and I don't see him on the weekdays, it's fun to do things with him on holidays or weekends. Sometimes, I help him make the apple pie.

My dad has always made these pies on special occasions. One time he took one to his work office. My father ended up coming home with an empty pie dish and I wasn't that surprised since it's a really good pie. Everyone in my family loves the pie. My brother, who is away at college, one time called my father when he was driving on the interstate saying, "When I get home I expect one of your apple pies, Dad." It was very funny and my dad and I both laughed.

The recipe for the apple pie is sort of simple, but it can get complicated if you don't do it the right way. First, you start out with the dough, which requires two cups flour, one teaspoon salt, twelve tablespoons

butter, about eight tablespoons water, until combined and slightly sticky. The filling of the pie requires eight or nine tart apples peeled and sliced, three fourths cup granulated sugar, three fourths cup brown sugar, one tablespoon cinnamon, two or three tablespoon butter, and one cup flour as a thickener. Now finally, to assemble the pie, roll out half the dough and line a pie plate. Put in the filling and roll out other half of dough and top the pie. Seal the edges and poke holes in the top with a fork. Then finally, bake the pie five to sixty minutes at three hundred fifty degrees until golden brown.

KIRI BRIMHALL, GRADE 10

## *Overmountain Men*

After the founding of our country, the British became a problem for the colonists. Some men over the mountain said, "Yeah, let's kick those Brits out!"

The Overmountain Men were not your average patriots. They were like us: farmers, blacksmiths, etc, and they were the craziest ones to fight for our freedom. Most of the "Overmountain People," are from part of England but hated King George along with Scotch-Irish who had defied King George III. So they left their homes and came to the mountains. They settled over the mountains where the Indians lived, and they set up shop here to join the fight to keep our land free from the rule of the king. (Lauterborn)

Major Patrick Ferguson was sent by Lord Cornwallis to go into the mountains and kill the Overmountain Men. He said, "Over the mountains, hang their leaders, and lay their country waste with fire and sword." ("The Battle of Kings Mountain and the Overmountain Men.")

That was the plan, but "The Battle of Kings Mountain on October 7, 1780, was a decisive Patriot victory and a turning point of the war in the South during the American Revolution." ("The Overmountain Men Battle for the Carolinas.") This battle was fought entirely by militia and patriots who wanted freedom and came all over to defeat the British.

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DREW BRITTON, GRADE 10

## *The Christmas Story of Biltmore*

It was Christmastime at Biltmore, in Asheville, NC. George Washington Vanderbilt was going to bed, tomorrow is Christmas. There were many people staying at Biltmore. The tree was already up in the banquet hall. Soon, George fell asleep, and he was dreaming about tomorrow.

He woke up, but it was not Christmas day. He heard someone out in the hall. He thought it was just Edith going to get some water, so he went back to bed. Around 1 AM in the morning he heard it again. So, this time he went out into the hall; turns out it was just a butler making sure everything was set for Christmas.

It was Christmas morning. Everything was going well. All the kids woke up. First, they rushed down the stairs into the banquet hall. They ate a yummy Christmas breakfast and opened gifts. Mr. Vanderbilt was still confused about what happened the night before. The truth is, there was no butler. It was the ghost of an old butler roaming the halls of Biltmore at night. When he saw the butler he looked like a corpse, and smelled like it, too. He about puked when he saw it. Legend has it, the butler that haunts the halls was really a gardener that moved up to a butler, but on his first day on the job he had to go with Mr. Vanderbilt to

Atlanta for a business trip. When they were ready to go back to Biltmore the butler was nowhere in sight. They searched all over, but could not find him anywhere. So they went home.

That evening, after dinner, they went to a Christmas play at the local theater. They had a good time at the theater. When they got home it was well past 10:00, so they went to bed. George got in bed, but again he heard the same noise, so he went to check. There was nothing there. He was baffled, so he went to tell one of the butlers. There were no butlers in sight. He began to think it was just a dream.

LANDON BROOKS, GRADE 6

### *Britt's Grill*

My grandparents, on my mother's side of the family, used to own a diner known as Britt's Grill. In 1937, my grandfather's dad (my great-grandfather), named Romie Britt, owned a diner in Pittsburgh called The American Diner. In 1945, he moved his diner to Greeneville, Tennessee, where his wife was originally from. From 1945 to 1951, my great-grandparents opened a new diner on Depot Street in Greeneville, Tennessee. In 1951, they moved the business to Summer Street. Romie named his new diner, Andrew Johnson Service Station and Grill. It was open 24/7 including holidays. In 1960, my grandfather started working there at age nine. He washed dishes and pumped gasoline for people's cars (because back then an employee had to pump gasoline for you).

In 1968, the business moved again. This time to Church Street. The name was changed to Britt's Grill. My grandfather then married in 1971. In 1974, my grandmother and grandfather purchased the business from my great-grandparents and ran it until 1982. They worked from 6:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M. The breakfast menu included biscuits and gravy and other southern breakfast foods. My grandmother made the biscuits, and my grandfather made the gravy. The lunch special was soup beans and cornbread. My grandfather cooked twelve gallons of pinto beans every single day. Another lunch favorite was the beef stew and a variety of homemade sandwiches.

In 1982, my grandparents sold Britt's Grill to my grandmother's brother (my great uncle). I am very glad that I have grandparents that cook good food. They enjoy cooking their signature diner foods still today. I don't think there is anything better than my grandfather's gravy and my grandmother's biscuits. I too enjoy cooking and like to think that my grandparents passed this down to me.

MAX CARTER, GRADE 8

### *My Name*

Everyone has a name for a reason, even if it is simply because it is a name your parents liked. A name is part of your identity, because it is how you are known to other people. Your name, your last name in particular, can often reflect your heritage and your origins. I feel like everyone should take the time to think about their names.

My first name is Amy, which means "beloved." It was given to me for two main reasons. First of all, I already had a brother named Andy, and my parents wanted my name to sound like his. I feel like this strengthens our bond as siblings. The other main reason is because a very good friend of my mom's is named Amy. This gives me a way to connect with my mom because of the good memories she has with this friend.

My middle name is Marie. This name is special to me because a lot of people in my family have it. I share it with my mom, my grandmother, and my great-great grandmother. I also discovered that a cousin on my dad's side of the family also has this middle name. It may be typical middle name, but the way it sounds with my first name when my aunt says it gives it special meaning. I like sharing my middle name with so many women in my family because I feel like it gives me a link with both sides of my family.

My last name is Cote, pronounced "Co-tee." This is the English version of the French last name Coté, pronounced "Co-tay." One of my ancestors changed the pronunciation to the one we use when he came to

America from Canada a long time ago. My last name reflects the large amount French-Canadian blood I have from my father's side of the family. I like the last name because it comes from my French-Canadian roots, but it has been modernized into something more American, which is what we all are, no matter what our race.

Names are important to me because they are a way to connect. The meaning behind a name can reflect personality at times. Names make you more than a number. They turn you into a unique person with an identity.

AMY COTE, GRADE 8

### *My Family's Vegetarian Holiday Meal: Veggie Chicken with Stuffing*

Veggie Chicken with Stuffing reminds me of a couple of things. First of all, it reminds me of good times with my family. We always have it at Thanksgiving and Christmas. The first person I know who made it was my grandma. We always have it, and I love it. It is just traditional stuffing, but it is homemade. The special thing is that since my family is vegetarian, we put slices of vegetarian chicken in it instead of the traditional stuffed turkey.

I have been eating the Veggie Chicken with Stuffing as long as I can remember. However, this dish is even more special to me now. It reminds me of my grandma, who died March 11, 2019. This will be our first Thanksgiving and Christmas without her. She will be in our thoughts and minds as we eat the Veggie Chicken With Stuffing. I miss her so much, and I will always remember the great food she made. This food holds an even more special place in my heart now, since it is one of the ways that I remember my grandma.

I also have fond memories of eating Veggie Chicken with Stuffing with my cousin, Dwight, and my great Aunt Willie. Aunt Willie passed away on December 28, 2018. My cousin Dwight died on May 12, 2019. This will be our first Thanksgiving and Christmas without them too. I miss them dearly and will remember them as I eat the Veggie Chicken with Stuffing that I have eaten with them so many times in the past.

Veggie Chicken with Stuffing is very special to me. I will always remember my grandma whenever I have Veggie Chicken with Stuffing. I will always have it to remember her and all the great times with my entire family at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

#### **Veggie Chicken With Stuffing**

##### *Ingredients:*

- ♦ 8 cups soft bread crumbs, lightly packed
- ♦ ½ cup chopped onions
- ♦ 2 cups minced celery
- ♦ 1 tsp. Salt
- ♦ 1½ cups sliced fresh mushrooms (optional)
- ♦ ½ cup chopped walnuts or pecans
- ♦ 1 cup chicken - style broth (1 cup water plus 2 tablespoons chicken-style seasoning)
- ♦ 1 teaspoon sage

##### *Directions:*

1. Put half slices of fake chicken roll in the stuffing standing up and eat it with the stuffing
2. Bake covered at 350° for 45 minutes
3. Then bake uncovered about 15 more minutes.

ANDY COTE, GRADE 9

## *Growing Up in Tennessee*

I have lived in Tennessee for 16 years, almost 17 years in December. I am glad to live in Tennessee because it is a beautiful state, especially in the winter and fall. Plus you get all the seasons like summer, fall, winter, and spring. Where I live in Tennessee, it's mostly in the sixties and seventies in the summer, then it gets colder. Sometimes we can get days where it's eighties or close to nineties, but on average its not that hot. My favorite season is fall because it's colder. The leaves are off the trees, and everything is dead. It's also easier to clear trails and build things in the woods, like bushcraft kind of stuff. If you don't know what bushcraft is, it is basically what it sounds like: you are taking the resources that are around you and making a shelter that is safe and can catch the heat of a fire to keep you warm. As you can tell, I like building stuff like that.

I am actually building something at this time. What I am trying to build is a shelter that has a safety fence to keep animals out and to keep my dog in, because it is hard to keep him around without him running away. Since I don't have a fence built yet, I have to tie him to a tree with his leash. I hate doing that to him because he likes to be free. I would let him roam around as long as I could see him, but if I did that he would take off chasing squirrels or deer. I mean, he would come back eventually, but I can't just leave him out to roam around because he would get too curious and might possibly get hurt.

Another reason I like living in Tennessee is because most of my family lives here, and my mom and dad grew up here. When my dad was younger he would get old sport cars and fix them up so he could drive them. My dad and I share a common interest: we both like older cars. My dad had a Chevy Nova Super Sport and a couple of Mustangs.

Another fun fact about my family is that my grandfather, Carroll Dale, went to Virginia Tech on a football scholarship, and was the first All American player for VT. Then was drafted in 1960 by the LA Rams for the NFL. In 1965, he was traded to the Greenbay Packers. He played for eight years and was known for his speed as a wide receiver. In 1973, he played a year for the Vikings, and soon retired in 1974. He also played in the Ice Bowl and Super Bowls I, II, and VIII. Over all, I think Tennessee is a good place to grow up.

VINCENT COX, GRADE 10

## *The Beginning of Phones*

Have you ever heard about the brick phone? The brick phone was amazing because it looked funny and it was the first cell phone that ever was created.

The progress of the phone over the years has gone through many phases.

Since the beginning of its existence, the phone has been building relationships and keeping them strong through communication. The first phone was made by Alexander Graham Bell in 1876. Some interesting facts about Alexander G. Bell are that on February 14, 1846, Mr. Bell was awarded a patent for sending sound telegraphically. Bell's first words with the talking telephone were, "Mr. Watson, come here I want to see you." He also made this prediction, "The day will come when the man at the telephone will be able to see the distant person to whom he is speaking."

As time passed, phone features changed. The earliest phones were bought in pairs, which made it difficult for people to have many friends. This is why an operator site was created. The operator began to organize the calls for people, which made it easier to call farther places. The phones used at this time were called analog. Analog means to communicate using electricity. Technology kept advancing from the corded phone to the phone that is cordless, now. People wanted to make more phones to make more money. People liked the phone that Alexander Graham Bell created so they could call their friends. The first phone made was the phone that you plug up to the wall.

Today we use digital. Phones have been advancing in technology decade by decade. Since the first analog phone (those plugged into the wall and reception passed through analog wires underground) they have

changed a lot. Newer phones began to be cordless. The first cordless phone used cables. Cell phones use digital signals sent as radio waves. Other services use the internet to communicate. Digital is much clearer than analog because when you copy too much analog the sound gets bad.

Even though cell phones are really advanced, the brick phone was the coolest because it looks like a brick and it's a digital phone. Alexander Bell's prediction came true when he told Watson the day will come when the man at the telephone will be able to see the distant person to whom he is speaking. Even though the brick phones were so large, they were the beginning of the clearest communication because it was digital. I wish a cellular company would bring back the "retro-brick" phone because it would be neat to have an old phone so I can give it to my grandfather and we can share ideas, and bridge our cultures.

AUGUSTUS CRAYE, GRADE 6

### *St. Vincent*

I am from the U.S., but my parents are from St. Vincent. They moved here in the early 2000s, in 2001 for my mom and 2005 for my dad. My mom came to this area because of her residency here. She is a doctor and after doing medical work in New York, she came here to serve an underserved area. She said that it was almost like St. Vincent because it is mountainous here. Also, here has cleaner air.

A lot of my family is still in St. Vincent. However, my great-grandmother, some of my aunts, and their kids live in the U.S. My great-grandmother is 94. She lives in New York City in the Atrium Center. It is a 7-story building that helps older people.

My parents get the *Torchlight* magazine, so they can still keep up with what is happening in St. Vincent. My immediate family, meaning my parents and my brother and I, also have a tradition that we have been doing for a few years. We go to this big one-day party called Vincy Day. It is in Heckscher State Park on Long Island. It is normally the same as Race Week here in Bristol, which is the third Saturday in August. We leave on that Friday and drive until about two or three in the morning, and then check into a Holiday Inn in Clinton, NJ. The Holiday Inn has a breakfast buffet.

We sleep for the night, and then we go to the Vincy Day celebration. Even though we leave at ten a.m. from the Holiday Inn, we get there at one or two p.m. because of the traffic in New York. At Vincy Day, there is a lot of music. There is a certain point where my brother Jacob says it is too loud, so we can't get too close when one of us has him. Besides that, it is fun and I get to see my uncle. We then stay until it is done at 6, we wait for the traffic to thin out before leaving, then go buy groceries at Sam's Caribbean Market. Then, we visit my great-grandmother. After that, we either head straight down to Clinton to stay the night there again, or we stay at my uncle's apartment.

I think it is cool that my parents are from St. Vincent. It means I have an easier time learning about the Caribbean because it is more connected to me. I also get to have firsthand knowledge of things that happened there.

GAVIN DIAMOND, GRADE 8

### *My Parents*

My mom was born in Wichita Falls, Texas. She has four brothers and one sister. By age thirteen, she had moved at least thirteen times because her father was in the Air Force. Mom's favorite hobby as a child was to ice skate. During the summertime, when the ponds were not frozen, she liked to ride her bike. In fifth grade, she was in the safety patrol and helped the little kids cross the street. She also enjoyed building snowmen and snow forts. At age thirteen, she started babysitting. This allowed her to earn money to buy the clothes that she wanted. Another hobby she enjoyed as a child was helping her mom prepare food.

Mom started her first real job at age eighteen. That same year, she got her first car. She wrecked it three times before getting rid of it and buying a new one. At age twenty-one, she got married to Chris Wiley and had two daughters (Amanda and Alicia). By age thirty-five, she was remarried to Grey Garcia. The last job she had was at General Telephone Company. She worked there for twenty-two years. After she quit the telephone company, she married Tom. She volunteered at a local elementary school, The Child Abuse Council, and foster care. She attended college for two years at Hillsborough Community College.

My Dad grew up in Thomasville, North Carolina, with one sister and three brothers. His father worked as an executive with a furniture company. His mother was a stay-at-home mom. Dad's entire family was very close. Dad loved playing sports. His favorite sport was baseball. He had many good friends. He played on the football, basketball, and golf teams. He was also on the debate team. One year, Dad and his partner made it to the state finals. Dad graduated from University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As you can imagine, he is a huge UNC fan.

As a young adult, Dad attended law school for one year. He had several jobs including a cab driver and a furniture store/warehouse salesman (like his dad). His best job was at State Credit Union (NC). He lived in Boone, Fayetteville, and Raleigh as a younger adult. He got married to his first wife, Cecil, and had two daughters (Erin and Megan).

In 1988, Dad moved to Tampa, Florida, to go to work for Suncoast Credit Union. Over the next few years, he managed several different departments and branches. In 1996, he was named president and CEO of Suncoast. In addition to working at Suncoast, he served on the boards of All Children's Hospital, the Hillsborough County Education Foundation, the Credit Union National Association, and the Suncoast Charitable Foundation. He retired from Suncoast Credit Union at the end of 2016.

After retirement, we all decided to move here to Bristol, Virginia, so I could go to Morrison School. My Mom volunteers as the PTO treasurer. My Dad is on the Morrison School board. Even during retirement, both of my parents enjoy helping others through their volunteering.

MICHAEL DORETY, GRADE 8

## *My Ladies*

Some autistic people struggle with talking to real people who might give them problems if they don't understand them. So that's why I have conversations with my ladies, because they know that I need help.

When I got my first ladies in May 2014, they didn't talk. They were just toys that didn't talk, they just loved me. In September 2015, I found newer ladies, which were small toys I had since I was little. They would talk, because they told me their first and last names and I told them what part they are singing in my choir. So my ladies now can talk, because I have a lot of trouble talking to real people, and the ladies help me out by talking to me. Technically, that is me talking to myself, because I don't fit in the real world, but talking to my ladies makes me feel better.

I tend to talk to my ladies all the time because they make me feel safe inside. My ladies are there for me and they help me out with my struggles. These girls I look after are nice to me, though it upsets them when I misbehave. All my ladies and I love each other like a family!

How I work with my ladies is that I want to see them do their best. My ladies help me study and work on homework, and we do fun things too. This year we are doing fun events with ladies such as fundraisers, field trips, picture days, trivia nights, races, band camps, and LCA (Ladies Council Association). This year is a hard year because of my schoolwork. My ladies help me with that, too. For homework on Quizlet, my ladies and I do Trivia Night. Also, it helps my brain to think better if my ladies try their best at doing any questions or problems on any subject, because I want to make progress in my mind and on homework.

The partnership is the big thing for my ladies, especially if they don't normally talk to some other ladies that much (which means they don't know them very well). The same goes for me. Whenever I don't talk to one of my ladies that much, that means I will choose her and talk to her because she loves me and she'd be pleased to see me! All of my ladies would never have arguments nor fight with each other (including their sisters). They are all nice to each other.

My ladies help me out with my struggles at school and outside of school. And even if my day is ruined by someone offending me, my ladies will be there to talk with me. Even though I know it is all in my mind, it helps. It is like thinking it over and over in your head and wanting to talk it out to yourself to make yourself feel better and safer inside. And if you are on the spectrum like me, talking to yourself about how you can better understand what other people really mean can be really helpful.

KATHLEEN DOTTERWEICH, GRADE 12

## *Technology*

Technology began two million years ago. First, clothes were introduced to keep people warm. Soon, it was discovered that fire could also keep people warm, too. When this was discovered, the use of fire spread and more people found out how to make fire. Next, language was used so that people could talk to each other, first face-to-face, and eventually, on the phone. Before long, people began evolving ideas. This first evolution of ideas was called, "The Stone Age." The Stone Age was named mostly from making stone tools. People were living in caves, so they were making tools that could be used to make the caves more secure and durable. The Stone Age culture also made art. They drew on cave walls to show that they were there, and record important events of their daily life.

Technology has been useful for humans to get from one place to another because it is hard to walk everywhere. Improvement of ways of transportation is helpful because it helps people make stuff like wheels that go on a cart that a horse can pull, and carries people who ride on it. People went places with horses and carts, but could not get very far because the horse got tired and had to rest. It took them a day or more to get where they are trying to go. A lot of horses were used to get from one place to another back when they did not have cars. The invention of the car changed everything.

Technology is used to help people communicate when they are far away from each other. In the past, computers were made for typing a story, or a little letter to send to someone. They had to code the computer to make it work. The first computer was made in 1946. The computer was 1,800 square feet (which is as big as a small house), and it had 18,000 vacuum tubes and weighed around 50 tons (which is the same as 10 SUVs). Now we carry our computers in our hands everywhere.

The first light bulb was made on October 14, 1878. The man that invented light bulbs was Thomas Edison, but there were other people that claimed they made light bulbs and their names were Hiram Maxim and Joseph Swan. However, the inventor generally acknowledged for actually making everyday light bulbs was Thomas Edison.

The first time electricity was used in technology was in 1894. Light bulbs were very useful, and even after light bulbs were invented, people still used gas and candle lights for another 50 years. They used light for lighting up their house at night, so eventually, enough people had enough experience with electricity that homes could eventually be built to safely give electricity in every house.

Technology is very useful because it has made a lot of things like DVD players, phones, most importantly language. Language was very useful because people can talk to each other face-to-face. Since phones were invented, people do not even go to the coffee shop to talk to their friends face-to-face, they do it on their phone. Sadly, this means that maybe technology is too powerful, and it is pushing people apart.

KAYDEN FRASER, GRADE 7

## *My Parents*

On October 28, 2005, I was born at a hospital in North Carolina. My parents were both there ready to adopt their newborn baby boy. I am so thankful that my parents are such amazing people. There are many reasons why I love them so much.

My mom takes good care of me. My mom makes dinner for me and my dad. She's always willing to make my favorites, chicken pot pie and sloppy joes. She enjoys helping other people by giving them food and volunteering. She always makes sure I have everything I need. She buys me nice shoes for school. She is kind to my dad and me. My mom is nice to other people and to other moms in my carpool. She lets me play outside, and she takes me on some trips. We have gone to the Bahamas, New York, and on a cruise to an island in the Bahamas. My mom is fifty years old. She is the youngest of her siblings. She has three brothers but only two are still alive. She also has five nieces and nephews. Her parents are not alive any more.

My dad takes me on bike rides, and we go to Shamrock for ice cream. He pulls me on the kneeboard behind the boat, takes me to the rope swing, and we sometimes go to The Southern for ice cream and to talk with our friends. My dad taught me how to ride a bike. My dad lets me help him fix things, and he shows me how to shift gears on my bike. He even helped our friends fix their bike one time on the Tweetsie Trail. My dad plays basketball with me. He also keeps the pool clean and warm so we can go swimming. My dad is very silly and makes jokes to make people laugh. I like that he is silly because it makes people happy, and that is a good thing. He teaches me how to be kind to others and to help those who don't have a home or things that they need. He teaches me about the Bible and how to be a good Christian. We go to church together. He takes me to youth group on Wednesdays and Sundays. My dad is forty-seven years old. He has three sisters and four nieces and nephews. His parents are both still living, and we see them a lot.

I am so thankful for my parents. They not only provide for me, but they inspire me to be a better person. I hope that one day I can be like them.

HAMPTON GRINDSTAFF, GRADE 8

## *Travis Leon Melton*

Let me tell a story about a true legend. Travis Leon Melton was born August 25, 1952, to Iretus and Marion Melton. He lived in a little town called Greeneville, TN and he would live there his entire life. His first home was on Newport Highway where he lived with his parents.

As a child, when Travis lived in his house on Newport Highway, he sometimes got himself into mischief but didn't get hurt. Like one time he crossed the road and went to a store, without permission, and got into a lot of trouble because he was not supposed to cross the road. Travis once followed his older brother, without his brother. Or parents knowing, and his parents realized he was missing. They found him and scolded him and told him to never follow his brother into town again without permission.

Travis also loved the outdoors as a child. He was an outdoorsman through and through. His wife loved the outdoors, as well. At 18 he married his life-long wife Shirley Ricker. One of their favorite things to do together was to go fishing. Shirley loved to fish with Travis, even though he is gone she still spends time fishing. One of his finest moments in life was when their children were born.

Although his children were his most favorite part of his life, there were other things he liked, too. Some of his favorite foods were biscuits and gravy, and another one is deer tenderloin, and his favorite drink was Dr. Enuf. He lived in a time of multiple wars but didn't serve in any. His first car was a Chrysler Desoto, but he loved to ride horses more than drive cars. He loved to watch old westerns and baseball. He was a very Godly man and a true Christian.

Travis loved to hunt. Travis also had a collection of guns that were so cool to look at because he had such an abundance of them. He had two children, Kimberly and Michael Melton. His favorite hunting story is when he went hunting in Wyoming. He killed an antelope and he was very excited about it and couldn't wait to tell his family. He was 25 when he shot his first deer. His most gigantic deer was shot when he was around his mid to late 30s.

His love for the outdoors did not end with hunting. He was an avid fisherman, as well. He loved to catch fish at his favorite spot in Douglas Lake. He also loved to eat the fish he caught and also ordered from his favorite restaurants. One of his favorite fishing stories is when he caught crappie after crappie after crappie in Douglas Lake.

He had always been responsible in life, so at a young age, he started thinking about jobs. Travis was fourteen when he got his first job delivering newspapers and used a bike to deliver them. His very last job before he retired was being a layout technician supervisor at Parker Hanifin (a layout technician works on metal and plastic). He started working at a young age because his parents didn't have a lot of money, so he had to grow up very early to get what he wanted or needed, learned how to be responsible. Travis Melton, I am glad to say, was my grandfather, and I plan to follow in his footsteps.

CASH HARKLEROAD, GRADE 6

### *It Is. . .*

Love is love  
Love is merciful  
Love is unforgettable  
Love is true  
Love is kind  
Love is undeniable

God is love  
God is merciful  
God is unforgettable  
God is true  
God is kind  
God is undeniable

Jesus is undeniable  
Jesus is merciful  
Jesus is unforgettable  
Jesus is true  
Jesus is kind  
Jesus is love

Humanity isn't love  
Humanity isn't kind  
Humanity isn't merciful  
Humanity is deniable  
Humanity is forgettable  
Humanity isn't lenient

Life isn't kind  
Life isn't love  
Life isn't merciful  
Life isn't deniable  
Life isn't safe

Love is

JACKSON HOLT, GRADE 9

### *Cooking Up Something Memorable*

One of my many favorite sweet treats to bake is called Boiled Cookies. We always make sure to bake these and many other cookies around Christmas time, but the Boiled Cookies are my favorite. As we gather the ingredients, the most important part is the memories and laughter we have while making the cookies.

I remember starting this tradition when I was 4 years old. I especially like decorating and eating the cookies. When I was little, I would always sneak cookies and eat them in another room so I wouldn't get caught. My grandmother caught me a few times, but she didn't say anything. As my grandmother and I mixed the cocoa and milk together, we would always get it everywhere, so I would have to clean it up. Which was fine with me, because my grandmother would give me even more cookies for cleaning the mess. Also I remember one year we all played Christmas music while dancing around making Christmas cookies.

It was exactly around this time last year, however, when we had burned several cookies and ruined Christmas. So that year, we bought Christmas cookies and said we baked them while putting them into cans. We made a pact not to tell everyone about the burnt cookies. I eventually slipped the word out, but everyone just laughed, and so did I.

As new fond memories of Christmas cookie-making are made each year, I always look forward to making them even more. I enjoy spending time with my family and having little traditions like this to carry on from generation to generation. I hope I have sparked some ideas to pass down from our family to yours, and you might try making our Boiled Cookies. It will be a great way to cook up something memorable with your family.

#### **Boiled Cookies**

##### *Ingredients:*

- + 2 cups of sugar
- + ¼ cup of coco
- + ½ stick of butter
- + ¼ tablespoon of vanilla
- + ½ Cup of milk

##### *Directions:*

1. Mix and boil for one minute
2. Add ½ cup of peanut butter
3. 3 cups of oatmeal
4. Spoon onto wax paper till they are non-sticky

NORA HONEYCUTT, GRADE 10

## *Grandpa's Memories*

He was my sunshine on the darkest of nights  
He was my rainbow on the rainy days  
He was my everything  
I miss him more than words can explain  
I miss falling asleep to him singing that one special song  
I miss hearing his voice telling me he loves me  
I miss going to his house and playing trains with him  
I miss the late night stories about him  
I miss it all  
The way his smile got bigger when I came over  
The way his eyes lit up when I would put on a concert for him  
How he would call me his girlfriend all the time  
Those are the times I miss the most  
The times where I would sit on his lap and watch *Blues Clues* with him  
The mornings where I would wake up and he would put pigtails in my hair  
It's because of him that I am who I am today  
It's because of him that I am the kind person I am  
It's because of him that I want to be a better person  
He is the reason I am the lovable person I am today  
He has given me so many priceless memories  
He has given me the love I needed  
He has given me a reason to live  
He gave me the courage to do things I was to scared to do  
He showed me what it's like to be loved  
He showed me how a man is supposed to treat a woman  
He may not be around anymore  
But he is in my heart  
He is still watching over me no matter what  
Not once have I ever questioned if he loved me or not

AUBREY HUBBARD, GRADE 10

## *My Great-Granddad*

My great-granddad, Ralph Street, was a strong man mentally and physically. He was a caring man and took good care of his family. He was a coal miner, which was one of the only jobs there was back then, at least in Grundy, the small town he lived in. In his town every man who lived there worked together in the mines.

They all knew each other, and they were all friends. In the words of his kids, my great-granddad always found a way to put food on the table. They might not have been rich in money, but they were rich in love. His kids looked up to him because he showed them the way to do many things, like hunting. He took his son hunting and years later they took *his* son hunting. One thing they loved to do together was go coon hunting. Great-granddad had dogs to run them coons up in the trees.

My great-granddad was born in 1933, and he lived in Grundy for most of his life. He built his own house and lived it. I never got to meet him, at least not the real him. Before he died, he was sick with dementia, a disease that decays the mind and makes you into a different person the longer you have it. My great-granddad

lived a long and good life before he passed of old age in August 2014. Even though I didn't get to know him before he had dementia, I am glad to know him through family stories.

DAULTON HURLEY, GRADE 10

### *My Godfather*

So I grew up in Johnson City, Tennessee. I had a pretty good childhood, and then I met my godfather Chad. I have known him since I was a baby, and he always spent time with my two brothers and me. When I was 14, I was sent to a boarding school because I was making some bad choices, but it was pretty good there, and I got myself together. That was good. My parents are good people, but we struggled sometimes. Then Chad was in my life to help out, and that was pretty good because he showed me some positive things and showed me what to do. That helped me a lot. There is still some work to do because there are still things I want to change, but thanks to my family and Chad, I'm on my way to becoming who I want to be.

KAMRYN JOHNSON, GRADE 10

### *Ford Mustang Girl*

Something that makes me is the Ford Mustang. Ford Mustang is my dream car. I have an obsession with them. My friend once told me that if I was to ever die before they did, that every time they saw a Mustang that they would be redeemed. I want a 2017 5.0 jet black one with everything blacked out on it.

I am a Ford girl in general. Fords have always been important to my family. My first cousin has a Ford Focus, but I have claimed it as mine because it is in my blood. I have an Instagram, and it is mostly made up of pictures of that Ford Focus.

My uncle has a 1965 Mustang that he is working on, which makes me happy. After it is fixed up, I don't care what anyone says, I am going for a ride in that car ! I haven't seen it yet, because he lives in North Carolina but the way they talk about it, it is a bad car.

When I grow up, I want to work in the manufacturing department of Ford. I want to help build the vehicles or maybe design them. I would preferably like to work with the Mustangs, but I will take what I can get. I like Ford vehicles in general, so I would be happy just getting a job working with Ford.

Mustangs are more than just a car to me. They are a part of my identity that will always be in my heart.

MATTIE KENNEDY, GRADE 10

### *Grandma's Perfume*

Grandma's perfume, the sweet smell of the flowers bloom

Chanel N°5,

The sweet champagne fume

The subtle spray of perfume that I am so amused to,

She loves to spray her perfume in the afternoon.

Sprayed it on her wrists and neck,

It smelled like a summer bloom

The whole room was filled with the flower's bloom,

Chanel N°5.

Her tradition is to spray the perfume in the kitchen

She was given the perfume by my aunt,

Grandpa was smitten over her.

In the kitchen we baked cookies and cakes  
Not only did we bake,  
We did a lot in the kitchen,  
Like cooking and crafts  
Our happy place is the kitchen  
We laugh and take funny pictures with filters.

She wears Chanel N°5 a lot  
She loves the flowery smell  
Not only does she love the smell  
But everyone does  
She works at Walmart, in the pharmacy  
All the customers love her  
She wears the perfume every single day  
It gives me memories of us together  
Some of these memories are really crazy  
That sweet summer bloom will never go away  
Chanel N°5.

MALLORY KIMERER, GRADE 9

### *HTM*

My name is Henry Talmage McBride IV. My dad is Henry Talmage McBride III, my grandfather is Henry Talmage McBride Jr., and my great-grandfather is Henry Talmage McBride, Sr. The name has been in my family for four generations. I personally don't think the name is bad. Many people I know don't particularly like their given names, but I don't mind my name. Plus I don't go by that, I go by Hank.

The history of my name is somewhat of a mystery to me because I don't know how it started, but I know the first holder of the name. I don't know why my great-great-grandparents named my great-grandfather Henry Talmage McBride, Sr. or at the time, just Henry Talmage McBride. All I know is that they are mysterious to me. I know very little about them. I've only seen pictures and know their names, nothing more. The name may sound like it would be confusing considering there are three of us still alive, but it really isn't. We all go or went by different nicknames. My great-grandfather went by Talmage. My grandfather goes by Mac, or went by Henry when he was growing up. My dad goes by Tal, which is short for Talmage, our middle name, and I go by Hank because it is a nickname for Henry.

My dad always wanted a kid named Hank. I'm told that he always knew that if he had a son, that son's name would be Hank. Dad told me that out of all the nicknames that he and his father and grandfather went by before me, the only one that hadn't been used was Hank.

Personally, I like being referred to as Hank. When I was born, it wasn't a super common name. It was actually more rare at the time than it is now. I still have yet to meet anyone else who goes by Hank, so I'm in doubt until that day happens. I think the name Hank is an interesting one. It doesn't sound like a bad name to me, and I think it's better than being called Henry. I like every aspect of my name.

Another question on my mind is whether I would like to continue the tradition and someday name my first son Henry Talmage McBride V. I still don't know yet, but it's definitely a question that will be answered eventually when the time comes.

HANK MCBRIDE, GRADE II

## *My Grampa “Jack”*

One of the greatest men I know is my grampa. His name is Jack Edward McCarty. He is 64 years old. My grampa grew up in Dungannon, Virginia and the funny thing is that he still lives in Virginia.

He is happily married to my wonderful grandmother, Pat. Jack has two brothers, he had three brothers, but one died by drowning. Jack was a coal miner, like his father was, most of his life, but he isn't anymore. Now he is retired.

My grampa likes cars, bikes, and trucks a lot. He has two dirt bikes, two trucks, one car, and he has a motorcycle, it is a Harley Davidson. The two trucks are both Chevys. The car is a Volkswagen Beetle Bug. His first and favorite car was a Barracuda. I do not get to ride his bikes, because he scares me.

Grampa Jack has one dog, his name is Spencer. I love Spencer and I play with him and try to teach him to fetch and tug. He used to have a pony, his name was Shortie, he was brown. Once, he got out of his fenced field, he was super fast, and it took forever to catch him.

My grampa has a tractor. One time, me and my grampa did donuts in his tractor. We almost tipped it over, it was a lot of fun! Just being with my grampa is fun. I love my grampa for so many reasons, but the biggest reason is because he has taught me to be respectful, and kind to others.

ALEX MCCARTY, GRADE 6

## *Green Stuff*

There is a food that my family always makes. My family calls it Grandma Lula's Lime Salad or, "green stuff". It is sweet, but not too sweet. It is a jelly that flows down the back of your throat with ease. It makes you feel very good and will make your day. I have always loved when my family makes it, because they only make it on special occasions like birthdays and holidays.

Ever since I was born, I have loved this meal. It is one of my all time favorites. It has been a family tradition to make this dish ever since my Great-Grandma Lula first made the dish for her family about 70 years ago. My family has made it for Thanksgiving every year since then, and I hope to keep that tradition going with my future family for a long time.

The dish's main ingredient is lime, which is something that I love to eat. The dish is best when it is made without pecans, but I have heard about some of my family using pecans, and like it. I personally have never tried it with pecans and I probably won't ever because I love it the way it is right now, and I'm not planning on changing. There are other variations of the dish that my family has created, but the original recipe which is below is my favorite. I have always wanted to get the recipe out there for people to enjoy and maybe create new variations that they will love. I can't wait for Thanksgiving to come so my family can make it again.

### **Grandma Lula's Lime Salad**

#### *Ingredients:*

- ♦ 1 (3 ounce) box lime Jell-O gelatin
- ♦ 1 cup boiling water
- ♦ 1 cup whipping cream
- ♦ 6 ounces cream cheese softened to room temperature
- ♦ 1 (10 ounce) can crushed pineapple
- ♦ 1 cup mini marshmallows
- ♦ ½ cup chopped nuts if desired (optional)

*Directions:*

1. Put Jello and marshmallows in a mixing bowl. Pour boiling water over both. Stir to dissolve Jello and melt marshmallows.
2. In another bowl, mix cream cheese and whipping cream until smooth and creamy.
3. Add cream cheese mixture and pineapple to Jello and stir well. Add nuts if desired. Mix well.
4. Pour in mold if desired or in the bowl you plan to serve the salad and refrigerate for 3–5 hours.

DANIEL MCQUEARY, GRADE II

### *The Virginia Creeper Trail*

The Virginia Creeper Trail is a 34-mile trail stretching from Abingdon, Virginia to Whitetop, Virginia. The trail used to be an old railroad track. It was named the Creeper trail because of after a plant that grew along its tracks, called the Virginia Creeper. There also was a steam engine that crept slowly up the mountains. Today, the trail is used for hiking, biking, and horseback riding.

Recently my Mamaw, Aunt Jenna, and I went to ride bikes on the Creeper Trail. We started out early in the morning and drove to Damascus. Damascus is a very popular stop for hikers on the Appalachian Trail. It has many restaurants, shops, and bike rentals. We didn't have our own bikes so we had to rent them from the Blue Blaze bike rental. We chose cruisers, which have fatter tires and soft, large seats.

After we chose our bikes, they were loaded onto a shuttle, which drove us up the mountain to Whitetop. The drive up the mountain was very curvy. There was plenty to see as we drove past rivers and Christmas tree farms. The shuttle dropped us off at Whitetop Station and our driver wished us luck.

The ride from Whitetop to Damascus is almost completely downhill and is considered to be easy, but my mamaw and aunt hadn't been on bikes in a long time. While crossing our first bridge my aunt was trying to look at the river below and ran into the side of the bridge. My mamaw stopped, looked back and fell over. In our first five minutes, we had two wrecks!

The rest of our trip down the mountain went very good. We didn't have to pedal that much but did need to watch for other bikers, rocks, and slippery leaves. We went during a less busy time of year and early in the morning so we wouldn't have to worry too much about having to run into a lot of people. The trail follows a river that is very pretty and there are about 50 bridges that go over that river.

When we got back to the bike shop in Damascus, we were tired and hungry. We had ridden 17 miles and were covered in trail dust. After turning in our bikes, we ate lunch and shopped in a souvenir shop nearby. As we drove home, we felt very proud of ourselves. It had been a great day.

BAILEE MEDLEY, GRADE 6

### *George Lucas*

George Lucas is a great filmmaker. He created one of the most famous movie trilogies ever known as *Star Wars*. George Lucas was born on May 14, 1944. George went to college to study movie-making and to become a director. He got his ideas from the old TV shows, radio stations, and comics he enjoyed when he was a kid, and even as an adult. He had three daughters, Everest, Katie, and Amanda and one son, Jett. He was married to Marcia Lucas, but they got a divorce. Then he married Mellody Hobson. *Star Wars* is about the Rebel Alliance vs. the Galactic Empire. The Rebels want to bring peace and Resistance to the Galaxy. The empire wants to rule over the galaxy, own it, and destroy other planets. *Star Wars: A New Hope* came out in 1977. It was the number one movie of the year.

George Lucas did not just come up with this in one night. *Star Wars* was in the making from 1977–2019. The last film to complete the Skywalker Saga is *STAR WARS: The Rise of Skywalker*. There have been other films like, *Rogue One*, *Solo*, *The Mandalorian*, and *Kenobi*, (coming in 2020). It is likely that there will be some other films, as well.

*Star Wars* was so popular that Kenner products got straight to work on the new figures that they were going to make. Bernie Loomis, who was the head of the department at that time, sent some of his men to see the movie. He did not tell them what movie they were going to see. They had cameras in there and took pictures to use as models to make the figures. They got permission first because they are a toy company. They loved the movie! They loved the characters, ships, planets, and the story. They sent out an "early bird" set of figures that you could get by mail when they became available. It would be a cardboard stand with the certificate. They then had twelve figures available. There was Luke Skywalker, Princess Leia, R2-D2, C-3PO, Chewbacca, Han Solo, Obi-Wan Kenobi, Stormtrooper, Darth Vader, Death Squad Commander, Sand Person, and the Jawa. Kenner did come out with other stuff like the Millennium Falcon, Darth Vader's Tie Fighter, Tie Fighter, Death Star playset, Landspeeder, and the X-Wing. They did come out with lots more for kids to have fun with *Star Wars* toys.

*Star Wars* was the number one movie of the year. Everyone wanted to see the movie and get the toys and merchandise. I love *Star Wars* and I will always love *Star Wars*. I have the figures, movies, lightsaber, clothes and all kinds of stuff. I really support George's work and the amazing world he has created. Did you know that the scenes for Dagbough were filmed on a soundstage and George Lucas's unfinished pool? Kenny Baker was actually inside R2-d2 costume!

George Lucas did not just create *Star Wars*, he created a movie with Steven Spielberg called, *Indiana Jones*. Harrison Ford, himself, was Han Solo and Indiana Jones. The movie was a really big hit. *Star Wars* has made a big impact on my life and thousands of others worldwide, maybe millions. I am a really big fan and I support all of George's work. Thank you, George Lucas, for *STAR WARS*!

WILL NORTON, GRADE 7

### *The Art of Endeavorment*

*"My Teacher said once every man faces seven enemies in his lifetime. Sickness, Hunger, Betrayal, Envy, Greed, Old age and Death."*

~ OSAMU TEZUKA  
(THE FOUNDER OF MANGA)

*"Winners never quit and quitters never win."*

~ VINCE LOMBARDI

*"A winner is a dreamer who never gives up."*

~ NELSON MENDELA

"Get a practical job!" These were words that my parents were told at a young age. My mom wanted to go to art college, but she was told to get a practical job. She decided to go to school to become a nurse. Sadly, she regrets this decision even today. She is now a stay-at-home mom but cannot always find the time for art because she is too busy taking care of my siblings and me. When my dad was young, he wanted to make movies. However, he was told to get practical job. He now works as a E.M.T.

I often say, "When I grow up I want to be. . ." When you are younger you feel you have too many options. When you do choose an occupation, you're told "Okay." "Sure." "Good luck with that." "Why not become a doctor or an accountant?" People all the time are told to get a job that makes good money. People say that money makes the world go round. What about dreams? Don't dreams make the world go round?

I have read stories about people putting down others because of their dreams. Shouldn't you do something you love? Why do people become miserable and depressed? I think it's because they don't follow their dreams. They don't do what they love. My dream is to be a mangaka (author) and artist for manga. Manga

is a type of Japanese comics that are a lot longer than normal comic books. You read it from right to left. Manga is similar to anime. Trying to become a mangaka is a difficult goal to achieve because manga creators live in Japan. There have been a rare few that made it as foreign mangakas. However, I'm not discouraged by this.

Many people have had lofty dreams like Mahatma Gandhi. His dream was to help others and his country. He wanted to wash away the tears of every eye. He soon began to take back India from the British Empire peacefully. He did this in spite of being put in jail multiple times. This did not sway him. He kept at it. He kept going, and he managed to free his country. Many years later, he was killed by a Hindu extremist, yet his dream lives on in the hearts of many of the Indian people.

Another example is Martin Luther King Jr. He fought for African American rights peacefully. Even though he led his supporters peacefully, they were still harassed by racist people. Through all this, Martin Luther King Jr. and his supporters continued their nonviolent resistance to overcome injustice. Unfortunately, he was shot and killed in a Memphis motel.

There are good and bad dreams. Good dreams are those that make people strive to do something meaningful or inspirational. Then there are the bad dreams where people have goals of putting themselves before others, or a goal to make themselves more powerful than others so they can do whatever they want to do without consequences. If you want to master the art of endeavorment, you have to find something you love to do. Just remember: you're only human. You still have flaws, and you still are different. Embrace your differences and try to work on your flaws. Become a good citizen and help others embrace their differences as well.

While it's important to dream big, don't let your dreams become your main focus in life. It may lead you to becoming a workaholic, and you may not have time for your family and friends. I hope this comes in handy for someone one day. Remember to hold on to your dreams, but be sure to not neglect your loved ones in the process.

JOLSON PETERSON, GRADE 8

## *My Hobby*

I started to draw when I was in the fifth grade. My art teacher inspired me to draw. I wanted to start making comics. My friend Matthew and I would draw our ideas. By sixth grade, our art became popular at our school. We drew pictures for people, and we even made our own logo. By seventh grade, we wrote comics for people.

I enjoy drawing because it helps calm me, and it helps me relieve my stress. When I draw, I get to express my feelings. Usually, I get to zone out. I base my drawings on my favorite things and what interest me. My favorite car is a Corvette, so I draw Corvettes. The reason I like Corvettes is because they are really fast and powerful.

I enjoy reading and writing stories too. When I read, I am very focused on the story. I once read for three hours straight because I enjoyed the book so much. My favorite books are usually fiction. My favorite author is Andy Briggs. When I read, I usually draw what I visualize in the book. I draw in great detail when I want to really express how I feel. When I sketch, I am often sad or mad, but when I draw, I am happy.

My brother-in-law, sister, mom, dad and my grandma are the only artistic people in my family. My dad was seven when he started to draw. He drew cars. My mom was ten when she started to draw pictures. My grandma paints pictures and sells them. She enjoys painting landscapes and things related to the Bible. My sister paint pictures and just keeps them. While my family enjoys to paint pictures, I prefer to draw. Some people think that I can't draw very well, but that doesn't bother me. I am going to a class to help me become a better artist.

If I truly want to make a masterpiece, it takes me at least eleven tries to get it perfect. Usually, when I reach my eighth try, I feel like giving up because it takes so long. I tend to get irritated when I mess up.

Some other art that I want to try to make is mosaics. I want to make a cookie jar and a milk pitcher. I plan on having my sister teach me how to paint. I want to paint some of my own ideas. Some of the ideas I have are my family house and cars. Hopefully, one day, I'll be a well-rounded artist.

BENJAMIN RANKHORN, GRADE 8

## *Biscuits and Gravy*

Biscuits and gravy is a popular breakfast dish in the United States, especially in the South. The dish consists of soft dough biscuits covered in either sawmill (cornmeal) or regular (flour) gravy. There was no way to explain the taste, the only breakfast food anyone wanted was biscuits and gravy. Biscuits and gravy started by frying fatback. Cooks began to add flour to the grease. Stirring the flour into the fatback grease would thicken the grease. Adding milk made it a smooth gravy. After removing the big, hot biscuits from the oven, a biscuit could be broken over a fried egg, with gravy poured on top, then it is devoured like a delicious feast. It is pretty easy to prepare biscuits and gravy it only takes 10 to 15 minutes to cook. I like biscuits & gravy a lot its really good. The best biscuits and gravy I have ever tasted is my moms.

There are various styles of gravy. It can be made several ways. Since its beginning, Southern chefs have had an advantage in creating the best biscuits and gravy. According to historians, the South's advantage was due to an abundance of wheat fields. They had so much wheat growing that it is known as "America's Breadbasket". This may be why it was easier for them to make biscuits more regularly. Originally, biscuits were hard and tough to eat. Over time it was discovered that when water was added to the biscuits it will make them a little softer and that it made it easier to eat.

When it comes to gravy, brown gravy is a tasty choice to use on biscuits. Gravy is a sauce made from meat juices, usually combined with a liquid, such as chicken or beef broth. Wine or milk can also be used to thicken flour, cornstarch, or some other thickening agent. A gravy may also be the simple juices left in the pan after the meat, poultry, or fish has been cooked. Sawmill gravy is a good preference if you try biscuits and gravy. This gravy's name comes from the fact that these men worked at a sawmill, and sometimes when the gravy would be coarse and thick, the lumberjacks would accuse the cooks of substituting sawdust for cornmeal. The base of every good gravy is a roux. A roux, for people who aren't super into cooking or from New Orleans, is a combination of starch, flour, and a fat, often butter. It's also a good skill to learn because it's another way to understand the chemistry of starch and butter.

Biscuits and gravy could be better with different seasonings. The Persians invented the first-ever biscuits. The buttermilk sometimes adds a tasty acidity that results from how the high-quality product reacts. Heavier liquid turned the originally hard biscuit into a soft one. Early European settlers in the colonies were known for a simple style of cooking that included a lot of wheat, meat, and gravy. Although gravy, in America, refers to a sauce made from meat drippings, the word is thought to have come from an Old French word "grane," which was turned into the Middle English gravy. Who makes biscuits and gravy?

Biscuits and gravy is a very good dish, It has become traditional because it has become a Southern-style of life. A lot of Southerners and close friends like biscuits and gravy. Our family eats biscuits and gravy most weekends, homemade of course. Biscuits and gravy means a lot to my family it brings us together and that feels good. For a quick and easy meal, it is highly recommended that everyone try making biscuits and gravy for breakfast. You can stop at a restaurant and get it if you like, that is if you don't like to cook. But, my mom loves to cook and she makes the best biscuits and gravy I have ever tasted.

ZACHARIAH RANKHORN, GRADE 6

## *My Great-Aunt Stella*

Stella Sluder Cox is a missionary in Japan. I know her because she is my ninety-one year old great-aunt. She has been an active missionary in Japan for about sixty-seven years.

Stella was born in Shady Valley, Tennessee. Some of her childhood heroes included God and Zoe Clark. Zoe Clark was one of her friends during high school who was a great mentor. Zoe was a single woman, who owned a beauty shop. Stella worked at Zoe's beauty shop for three years. She worked as a hairdresser until she went to college. Before Stella went off to college, Zoe asked Stella if she would work for her when she came home for breaks. Stella agreed, and Zoe let her work whenever she could. While Stella was in college, she worked as a beautician on Saturdays and earned her college tuition. In Japan, Stella cuts many missionaries' hair to save them money. She still occasionally cuts her friend's hair. Stella is so glad that she made that her first career as a young girl.

Starting school when she was five years old was one of Stella's accomplishments. Her sister was six years old, and she begged the teacher to let Stella go with her. She consented. By the time Stella was six, she was in the third grade. She was two years above where she should have been. She and her sister were in the same grade every year until they finished the eighth grade. Stella did not skip any more grades and graduated from high school when she was sixteen.

Stella is a Christian. When she was ten years old, she realized that she was a sinner while attending a revival meeting in a big tent in the valley where she lived. The

meetings lasted two weeks, and she went to all the meetings. Stella had a very good Sunday School teacher, and she knew what the Bible taught about sin. During the last night of the tent meeting, the preacher asked those who wanted to believe and accept Jesus as Savior to come forward. Stella was standing by her older sister who went forward. Stella felt like she should go, but she held onto the bench in front of her. Stella said that her heart was beating fast telling her she should go, but she didn't go. So that night, when she went to bed, she was very scared and could hardly sleep. Stella knew that if she died that night she would go to hell. Stella promised the Lord that if He would let her live until the next day, she would believe. It was a Sunday afternoon, and she went and sat on the very end of the bench at church ready to go when the preacher asked people to come. She went forward when the invitation was given and sat on a bench all by herself. Stella simply bowed her head and prayed a simple prayer. She admitted that she was a sinner and opened her heart and asked God to forgive her sins. The Holy Spirit came into her heart, and she shed tears of joy. She knew she was saved and had eternal life. This happened eighty-one years ago, and she still remembers it as if it happened yesterday. She still has the joy knowing that she will go to heaven when she leaves this world.

One thing that Stella wants people to remember about her is that she has a passion to see people go to heaven with her. Great-Aunt Stella was inspired to become a missionary in Japan when she was in college. Her college had a mission

prayer barrel. A missions prayer barrel is used for people to write down prayers for missionaries and place them in the barrel. People are then able to pray for the missionary on the piece of paper they choose. My Aunt Stella said she chose to go to Japan because the need for the Japanese to hear the gospel was necessary. It was just a few years after World War II had ended. She prayed and asked God to clearly show her where He wanted her to go. She asked God to give her a Japanese roommate for her senior year to confirm her decision. She arrived at her dormitory and looked at the suitcase tags. There was one with the Japanese name Grace Watanabe. She was a Japanese girl from Hawaii. There was also a Japanese girl living next door and one across the hall. That was her proof that she should go to Japan. She graduated from college May 30, 1952, and sailed for Japan on October 14, 1952.

As a missionary, Stella enjoys teaching the Bible and bringing women together for cooking classes. She has taught cooking classes for forty years and has had three

cookbooks published. She was even on television! Teaching cooking classes has been her way of getting to know people in Japan. She has about sixty women in her classes, but about eighty women at Christmas time. She is able to build relationships with these women and share the love of Jesus with them.

My Great-Aunt Stella has been around the world at least three times. Her favorite places to visit are Switzerland and Vienna, Austria. My Great-Aunt Stella has influenced me to teach others about the love of God. Her testimony has inspired me to be bold in my faith and to share it with the world around me.

MARA SLUDER, GRADE 8

### *Thanksgiving Biscuits*

My great-grandmother, Jane, would make homemade biscuits every Thanksgiving. The whole family would come to Thanksgiving dinner for the amazing meal to be shared with the family. Her biscuits are special to my family. When my great grandmother passed away, we made sure to keep the tradition going.

My Aunt Liz used to make them with my great grandmother when she was little. Now Liz has carried on the family tradition and makes the biscuits every Thanksgiving. She is now passing this tradition on to my cousin Sarah (Liz's niece). Sarah is learning how to make biscuits with my Aunt Liz. Sarah, started making them last year, but only my Aunt Liz knows how to make them just like my great grandmother. My Aunt Liz usually makes them on Black Friday, and we call it the "redneck" brunch. We call it this because on Thanksgiving we have a very nice and "proper" meal, but on Friday, we just have biscuits, gravy, and leftovers.

We celebrate Thanksgiving every year at my grandmother's mountain house. My Aunt Liz makes a special biscuit for my grandfather (since he is the oldest there). The biscuit is huge! Imagine you got a huge bowl and that was the biscuit! It is bigger than both hands put together. I love this family tradition, and I look forward to it every year!

Here is the family recipe if you ever want to use it:

1. Set oven to 400 degrees
2. Put about half a cup of Crisco in 2 pans (and let it melt in oven as it warms up). It doesn't matter the size of the pans. We make a lot of biscuits, so we use a 16 inch by 16 inch pan.
3. Take out a big bowl to mix all of the ingredients.
4. Use about 4–6 cups of self- rising flour, depending on how many biscuits you are wanting to make.
5. Use a half gallon of buttermilk. If you're making a smaller amount, use about 2–3 cups.
6. Mix until you have a goopy and doughy like consistency.
7. Get the melted Crisco out of the oven and pour it into the bowl and mix.
8. Put some flour on your counter or parchment paper and some on your hands (half a cup).
9. Place the dough on the counter, and start kneading it into the flour (you can always add more flour as you go if it is still very sticky).
10. Knead until it's not sticky and starts getting fluffy (make sure you don't over knead).
11. Make biscuits into oval like shapes to place into the pan.
12. Place the oval like shapes touching each other in the pan, and place them vertically in the pan.
13. Put a dab of crisco (not melted) on top of each biscuit.
14. Place the pan in the oven and bake for 20–30 minutes. Look to see when the biscuits start to rise and stick a toothpick in the top to see if it is still gooey.
15. If they are still gooey, then leave in the oven for a little longer.

16. Take out, and enjoy!

INSLEY SPRINGER, GRADE 8

### *My Uncle Ron*

Ron L. Edson is my Uncle who lives in Bristol, Virginia. He was born July 26, 1957. He had 2 sisters and 3 brothers, who he liked to play with all of the time. They liked to swing in trees, ride dirt bikes, play football and baseball. They didn't have much, but they had each other.

Wanting more in life, Uncle Ron joined the Army in March 1975 and retired from the Army in March 1981. He wanted to join the Army because his family has been in the Army. Ron was in the Army for six years. Once, he had a piece of glass go right into the side of his knee. The shard was so long that it went all the way to the bone. Another time, he was on the battlefield practicing for battle when someone threw a grenade and it blew up in front of him, but he doesn't like to talk about it.

Ron left the Army just before the Grenada War. The Grenada War was fought by the military forces of the United

States and several Caribbean nations. Even though he retired from the Army, he still talks to some of his friends from the Army, and Randy Miller is his closest friend from the Army.

One time when Uncle Ron, Randy Miller, and some other friends went to an old farmhouse. The farmhouse was rumored to be haunted, so they went in there to see if it was actually haunted. While they were there, Randy had to go to the bathroom really bad, so he went into the farmhouse bathroom. He screamed

really loud and came running out with his pants around his ankles, meanwhile he was getting stung by a swarm of bees. Only Randy ran away getting chased by bees, Ron and the rest of the guys stood there laughing. Uncle Ron loves to tell that story, and I love to hear it. Uncle Ron's favorite story from the Army is that he had to look down to see where he was going, because, with his helmet on, he couldn't look forward because it was so big. Well, one day he was looking down, walking along and he walked right into a flag pole! It almost knocked him out, but he was





okay. He learned to look up after that, I bet. Sometimes I wonder how Ron survived the Army, but I'm glad that he did.

When he was in the Army there were not any major wars or fights, but he got hurt a lot. After 6 years in the Army, he retired. He learned to make weapons in the Army, and he still makes weapons to sell them. He also picks people up that need to go to the hospital, waits for a few hours for them to get done, then drops them back off at their house, kind of like a taxi driver.

When I go to visit Uncle Ron, we swim in the pool, watch tv, especially NASCAR. When the NASCAR race comes to town, we go every time the race is in Bristol. I can have all the candy, cookies, ice cream, Mexican food, milkshakes, chips and salsa, and chocolate as I can eat when I go visit him. I help him make food in the kitchen, and my favorite thing to make are peanut butter balls.

I'm glad that I have Ron because he likes to make me laugh. He's not like my other uncle because my other uncle, Uncle Alan, likes to drag race. That is another great story, for another time, though.

DAVID GARRET WEAVER, GRADE 6



### *My Adoption*

On November 3, 2008, an American couple arrived by plane in Kiev, Ukraine, at approximately 11:00 A.M. The airport was very old compared to American standards. It was built in the 1950's during the Soviet Era. It was late fall in Kiev, and they saw the last colors of the season. The fall air was crisp. In a few days, the couple would travel to the town of Khmelnytskyi, in Western Ukraine, to the orphanage where I lived. They did not know anything about me, only that I was at least eighteen months old. It was a leap of faith. This couple was to become my parents.

I was born premature on January 21, 2005, in Khmelnytskyi. My weight was 2.2 pounds. According to the nurse at the orphanage, my birth mother had traveled from a small village to the hospital that joined to the orphanage to give birth to me.



It is believed that I had been in the orphanage since birth. No more information was available about my birth mother. However, my adopted mother explained to me that life can be hard in the Ukraine without social programs. It can be very hard to feed and care for children. Many people do not have access to health services as they do in the United States. The fact that my birth mother came to the hospital to give birth to me and that I was able to stay at an orphanage with caring aides and nurses was a miracle.



I met my adopted parents on November 7, 2008, at the orphanage. They described me as an adorable, energetic, petite three-year-old girl. I had blond hair, crystal blue eyes, and a smile that filled up the room. I was extremely talkative and inquisitive. My parents were overjoyed to meet me. They thought I was the cutest little three-year-old baby in the Ukraine. It was required by the Ukrainian government that my adopting parents remained in the Ukraine for six weeks before the adoption could be legalized. The time was required to build relationships so that leaving the orphanage would not be as traumatic for me. The caregivers and social workers would also observe interactions and make sure that their little Ukrainian treasure was placed in a good family. Everyday my parents would visit the orphanage and bring me cookies and a juice box. I would drink the juice without breathing, and they were sure I would pass out.

During their visits, we would do activities to create family bonds. We were creating trust and love through play and interaction. We would sing together, go outside and play on the playground, paint each other's finger and toe nails, play hide-and-go-seek in the dark, play flashlight tag in the dark halls of the orphanage, and listen to music. Thankfully, play is a universal language because my parents did not speak Ukrainian and I did not speak English. My first English word was "cookie." My favorite song when I was little was the monster song "Grover." I loved to dump crayons from the box and put them back in the box. All the interaction with my new parents would also help to prepare me for a long, scary trip to my new home and country, the United States of America.

My momma tells me that I was a very brave girl to travel from the Ukraine to the United States. Perhaps I was just too scared to cry. My momma says it was a blessing that we lived in Charleston, South Carolina at the time because of the warm weather and sunshine all year around. It helped me be happy and to adjust. When I got to the United States with my new parents, it was scary for me because it was different. The



environment was different in the United States than the Ukraine. In the United States, I live with my parents instead of fifteen children. I had never been in a swimming pool before or seen the beach or river. I made my first friend. His name was Grady. He was the same age as me. We played imagination games like pirates and cops and robbers. He taught me how to slide down the water slide and jump off of the side of the swimming pool. I fed seagulls, and they loved to take my sandwiches. I loved going to the beach to col-

lect seashells. I had my first ice cream cone at the age of four. I had to learn what a family was and how to love parents. I am still learning how to love and respect my family and to accept love from my family.

In the midst of my adjusting, I just wanted to stay next to my parents. I got lots of gifts from them. My favorite stuffed animals were a duck, a camel, an elephant, and a dog that barked when you pressed its tongue. My first Christmas in America was spent with my grandparents on my dad's side of the family. It was fun because I got to put ornaments on the Christmas tree, and my dad put me on his shoulders to put the star on top of the tree.

Being adopted means to me that I know my birth mother loved me and cared about me, however, she probably didn't have the money to take care of me. I know she wishes that she could be my mother, but it is hard to be a mother when you don't have the money to provide for a little one. I am happy with the family that I have. I know my family loves me. I am thankful to live in the United States. I have had opportunities that I would not have had as an orphan in the Ukraine.

JENYA WEBER, GRADE 8

# NORTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



*Cheryl Duncan, Grade 5 English Class*  
*Family Christmas Tradition*

Do you have a tradition that you love doing every year? Yes, every year after Thanksgiving, my family and I cut down a real Christmas tree.

It was started by my grandparents in 2005. It's in Elk Park, North Carolina, and it started like this. The family wanted to start a brand new family Christmas tradition. This was a very great opportunity to spend time with family every Christmas. It's very fun and exciting to do every year.

The trees are very green with a small trunk that goes all the way up the tree with branches big and small filled with needles of leafy dark green. There are also very small pinecones that do not grow very big or long. There are trees up to thirteen feet!

After we get it cut down, we strap it down to the van and head home. When we arrive home, we put it in its stand and decorate it with ornaments. They're all very small and shiny. Almost all of them can break easily, so we handle them with care.

This tradition is very special. Hopefully, my children one day will come and cut one down with my grandparents, parents, and me.

ZOE KATE ADDISON, GRADE 5

*The Three Heads*

I can't wait to get the three heads when I get older, and tell my kids the story of how it's been passed down for generations. It's probably going to be on my wall in my living room.

You're probably wondering what the three heads are. It's a three head portrait that my great, great grandma made. They're really pretty too. They all have red hair, and they're small with pretty eyes. They all are from 1933.

They're really important to my grandma and my family. They're also handmade by my grandma. That's also one reason why they're important. They've been passed down to three people so they're really old.

Next, they're going to be passed down to my aunt and then hopefully to me. I'm the middle child out of three girls, so I might not get them, but I'm going to look on the bright side. Hopefully, I will get them.

The three heads mean so much to my family, and hopefully they will treasure them for the rest of their lives. I hope after I die it's treasured forever.

AUTUMN ADKINS, GRADE 5

*My Necklace*

Do you have something that means a lot to you? I have my necklace my papaw's mom made my mom. She gave it to me.

I have had this necklace for a couple of years. It is a bead necklace. The beads are white and tan. The white has gotten darker over time. It's a string necklace that you can pull on to fit it on your neck.

My mom was going to give it to my sister, but she was too young to have it. She would just break it, so she gave it to me as a gift.

The last time I wore it was about a year ago. I haven't worn it since, because it has gotten fragile over time because of its age. Its beads were originally white and tan, but now because of its age the beads are kind of browner than before. The string is about to break because it's so fragile.

This necklace is my favorite out of all my necklaces. It has a lot of memories for my papaw and my mom because his mom made it, and now she has passed.

TAYLOR AKENS, GRADE 5

## *Country Cabin II*

Have you ever went to the Country Cabin II? Well, the class and I went. The outside of the cabin was wood. In the cabin, there was a deer head, banjo, speakers, chairs, lights, a stage, and a floor for dancing.

We danced divide the ring. The steps are: step one: get a partner, step two: wait for your number, step three: divide the ring. My partner was Alex.

The banjo is an instrument that looks like a drum in a guitar. Tyler Hughes played it, and sang a song about biscuits.

It was fun. I got to dance with my friends. When I danced, it was funny because I messed up.

ANGELO AMERICA, GRADE 5

## *The Country Cabin II*

I went on a field trip with my fifth grade class to the Country Cabin to learn how to square dance, and it was very fun. It was fun to watch also. Have you ever square danced before?

We all did different kinds of dances that Tyler Hughes taught us. He taught us the Virginia Reel and the square dance. The dances were cool. A lot of people dancing were messing up, because everyone dancing hadn't really done it before. Only kids from the fifth grade were there.

Tyler Hughes called out the steps for each dance. In both dances you needed a partner or a group. In one dance you spin in a circle left and right with a group of people, and in the other one you just need a partner.

The cabin was nice with nice smooth wooden floors. There was a bunch of pictures and fake decorations in the cabin, and it was very country like. I encourage you to visit the Country Cabin.

ZAKARY BENTLEY, GRADE 5

## *Non-smoking Ashtray*

Do you have something in your family that has been passed down to other family members? I know I do. It's an ashtray. It was passed down by nonsmokers.

This ashtray was a gift to nonsmokers in my family. It was passed down, but I don't know where it was purchased. It has been in many hands of people that do not smoke.

I am the youngest of my brother and my sister, and I hope it's never used. We keep it on top of my nana's fridge. This ashtray is the size of a hamster. It's a little bit rusty and made out of copper. It's in the shape of a small circle. It was only used for a school project.

This ashtray has many fingerprints on it, and it has been passed down by many hands. It will be treasured on top of my nana's fridge. When I get older and buy a home, I bet they will pass it on to me, but I won't smoke at all.

MELANIE BERRY, GRADE 5

## *Fun at the Country Cabin*

How did you learn to square dance? Tyler Hughes taught my fifth grade class and me the Virginia Reel and square dance.

I have never square danced before. Here are the steps we learned:

- ♦ Get eight people in a group.
- ♦ High five your partner.
- ♦ Now back again.

- ♦ Do Si Do
- ♦ Swing your partner round and round.

In the Virginia Reel you have to have twenty people in a group. Here are the steps we learned:

- ♦ Put your arms crossing over each other.
- ♦ Do Si Do
- ♦ The head couple sashays down.
- ♦ You and your partner go under their arms which are up like a tent.

I liked the Virginia Reel better because it started slow, but then it became faster. I could do better when it was fast. At the Country Cabin there were lots of chairs and a big stage. They had two doors to the stage. At the Country Cabin, they played bluegrass music. Larry invited us back to the Country Cabin for free, but our parents would have to pay. I really hope my family takes me back to the Country Cabin.

SAVANNAH BOATRIGHT, GRADE 5

### *The Necklace*

Do you have a necklace that you love so much? I do. I have a necklace my great aunt gave to me. It is a bear necklace that has a little gem inside the middle of it. It is silver and has a lighter shade of silver for the gem.

My great aunt's name was Revona, and she has passed away, and I miss her very much. I got it a couple of years ago, and I'm pretty sure I got it as a Christmas gift. I keep it in a jewelry box. Even though I don't wear it that much I still love it.

EMELEE BOGGS, GRADE 5

### *A Special Hat*

Do you own something very special to you? I have my grandpa's old baseball hat from when he was young. This baseball hat was a gift.

My grandma gave it to me over summer vacation in New York. The hat is orange, black, and white. It also has a duck on it. He wore it to play baseball when he was on a team.

As he got older, he kept it as an antique. I keep it in a brown china cabinet with many of his other things like his Colt's Football Funko Pop. I don't wear it a lot because it's plastic, old, and an antique.

The hat is very special to me. It has been since my grandpa passed. I've cherished it. I hope to pass it on to my kids, and it mean as much to them.

BRYAN BOLTON, GRADE 5

### *My Quilt*

Do you own something that means more to you than money? I have my quilt that my great grandmother gave me on Easter one year. It has one of my favorite flowers, the dogwood, on it.

This quilt is very pretty. It has a light pink color around the edges of the quilt. The rest of it has a light blue color and the dogwood flowers. This quilt was made just for me. Actually, it was handstitched for me by my grandma. I'm the only one who has used this quilt. It's kept upstairs in a blanket closet, and it's in a bag.

The last time I used it was exactly that day on Easter. I've never gotten a chance to use it again. I love this quilt so much. It means a lot to me since my great grandma has passed away. I love this quilt even more. I am

going to treasure this quilt forever. I bet my mom will keep it for me until I grow up and become responsible enough to care for it.

CAITLYN CAMPBELL, GRADE 5

### *My Blanket*

Do you have a blanket or something you can't sleep without? I do. I've had a blanket since I was born. I still sleep with it even though I'm in fifth grade.

This was given to me by my brother Tyson. My other brother, Tyler, made it when he was in jail, although he is doing much better now. It has rainbow stripes but doesn't fade. It has little knots on the ends of it and ties to hold it together. It has a few holes, but that's okay.

I'm the youngest of two brothers, Tyson and Tyler, and three sisters, Megan, Madison, and Morgan. Tyson had it first, but when he came to the hospital, he gave it to me. He had it for about four years. I'm surprised he gave it up when he was four. I remember my mom telling me when I came home from the hospital, a few days later Tyson asked when I was going home, but my mom told him I was home.

I usually use it to cuddle with my niece and nephew, Zahra and Chazz. They bicker a lot and over anything. Zahra is Megan's kid (AKA my sister). Chazz is Tyler's kid (AKA my brother). They love to cuddle with it. They fall asleep easily with it.

This is very special to me, and it's a family treasure. I just hope my kids treat it as good.

MAKIAH CARDON, GRADE 5

### *Country Cabin Visit*

Imagine walking into a room where there is a stage with lots of instruments and feeling excited. There are many reasons why I enjoyed my visit to the Country Cabin. For one, the Country Cabin is a pretty place. Also, it is a really fun place. I believe that the Country Cabin is a great place to visit.

I went to the Country Cabin with my fifth grade on a field trip. The Country Cabin is a place where people go to square dance. The Country Cabin is pretty because of the wood on the outside. There are pictures on the wall. There was also a stage in the Country Cabin.

While we were there, we sang the Biscuit song and the Cumberland Gap song. These were about life in the past. Tyler Hughes and Larry Mullins were there. They are musicians who taught us the songs and sang with us. Then we did square dances such as the Virginia Reel. After that, we had to say goodbye to everyone and go back to school.

Visiting the Country Cabin was really fun, and I wish I could go back. There is a lot to see there. First off, there is square dancing and there is singing. Finally there are instruments and music. I feel that the Country Cabin is so fun and beautiful, and I really want to go back someday.

MERRY CHURCH, GRADE 5

### *The Bible of Many Memories*

This Bible means a lot to my family. It was my mom's papaws. Then it belonged to her mamaw. Ever since her papaw died, she has been using it in church.

This Bible is kept in my mom's closet in a tote by itself. It's a white Bible with a picture of God on the front.

Mom's the oldest of four girls and that's why it was given to her. It was used with her papaw, mamaw, and her. It was used to preach. One day all of us kids were playing church and we used it.

The most recent use of it was December 15, 2019 for church. It was put in a case. The bible case was blue, and the case had a saying on the front.

This Bible has many memories, and our family will treasure it forever. My mom is giving it to me when I'm older. Then I'll pass it to my son or daughter one day. Mom hopes it will stay in the family forever.

RILEY CLARK, GRADE 5

### *My Old House*

Do you have something that means more to you than money? I have a house that has been used by my dad's parents. We still live there. This house has been here for a long time. It was from my granddad and grandma. The house was passed to my grandparents from their parents.

My house is made out of brick. The stairs on the outside are made out of stone. There are two living rooms, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, one in my dad's room, and one in front of my room. There are two televisions. One next to my kitchen, and one in my living room. My favorite room is the living room. The one that is not next to the T.V. The reason that I like that room is that it has a big T.V. where I can play my game and watch you tube on the big screen. It has two comfortable couches.

I love this house so much. I have so many memories at my house. My favorite memory is when it was 2020, and we partied all night to bring in the New Year. My sister fell asleep fast. She was on the floor, and it was funny.

JAYCE COLEMAN, GRADE 5

### *The Country Cabin*

Have you ever been to a cabin before? Well, I have. I went to a church kind of cabin.

The first cabin was built in the 1920's, and the second one was built in 2002. This is the second of the two. There were some decorations in the cabin like a buck's head, Christmas lights, and wreaths. The stage had three microphones for all the songs they play. The dance floor was wooden, and it was a little creaky like older wood.

We went on a school field trip in November to the Country Cabin. We went inside the cabin, and they played songs. I danced the Virginia Reel, and my partner was Brayden. My favorite part was when Brayden and I were at the front, and we held our hands up for everyone to go under. Cameron is tall, and he didn't duck down, and our arms hit his head. We laughed.

I loved it there because I got to dance the Virginia Reel, and we also square danced. I liked the decorations all over the place especially the buck's head. The trip was fun, and I hope the other people that went had a good time.

ALEX COLLEY, GRADE 5

### *My Clock*

Do you have something you would never let go? I have a clock. It belonged to my great, great grandmother.

This clock is not mine, but it is my mamaws. I see it a lot. The top of it is like a grandfather clock, and it has window like doors that open and close. We have it in the den on a shelf with some other things.

My mamaw wants to pass it on to my mommy, and she will probably pass it on to me. We will treasure it forever, and I hope everyone else will too.

CHEYENNA COLLINS, GRADE 5

### *The Country Cabin*

I got to go to the Country Cabin. I like the Country Cabin because I had fun. I also liked the way it looked. I would really like to go back to the Country Cabin and enjoy it again.

The Country Cabin was very nice. It was made with wood, metal doors, and had red seats for us to sit in. There was a stage with a microphone and a background. The background was a quilt that was different colors. There were also pictures and flags.

There was music and clapping and I kept hearing squeaking doors opening but it didn't bother me. I had fun because I liked watching the square dancing and listening to music. I liked hearing all of the songs played with the banjo.

My visit to the Country Cabin with my class was great. I learned how to square dance and got to learn some new songs. I hope more students get to visit the Country Cabin.

XANDER COLLINS, GRADE 5

### *Mom's Baby Chair*

Do you own something that means so much to you? My mom has treasured her baby chair. This baby chair was a gift from my papaw to my mom. It's white, and it's an old chair. She has three sisters, and now that she's an adult she still has her baby chair. It is kept in our basement with our other old things. My mom will always treasure her baby chair.

XAVIER COLLINS, GRADE 5

### *My Mother's Quilt*

My mother has a few quilts in our house. One of which is very special because it was made by both of my great grandmothers.

This one is a Dutch Girl quilt given to my mom in June, 2018. It was a gift to her from my great grandmother. My father had secretly given the original squares made by my mom's grandmother to his grandmother to finish. She stitched them together.

The quilt has twelve squares, each one containing a girl wearing a bonnet and holding an umbrella. Each of the girls are wearing different colored dresses. The quilt is kept in our living room on an old chair.

My mother was very happy when she got it. I hope she passes it down to me when I grow up.

BRAXTON CYPHERS, GRADE 5

### *My Chain*

Do you own something that means more to you than money? I have a chain that broke when I was swimming. I was playing with my nephew. The game was he had to get me, and he accidentally grabbed it and pulled, and it broke.

I got the chain at Walmart on a Sunday right after church. When it broke, I had it for about four or five months. I got it fixed. I wore it, and my dad has worn it. I keep it in my room on my dresser. I wear it to school sometimes.

This chain holds many memories, and I will treasure it always. My intentions are to keep it as long as I can.

BRANDON EDWARDS, GRADE 5

### *Square Dance*

Have you ever done the square dance or divide the ring? Have you been to the Country Cabin II? I went with my fifth grade class.

It's near Appalachia, VA. The outside looked like a cabin, and inside there was a stage. The floor for dancing was wooden. There were some pictures on the wall, and some chairs were set up for the ones watching. This was a fun trip.

The square dance was one of my favorite dances. The fun thing about it was more than one person could do the dance. Melanie and I were partners. The whole group rotated.

The best part was when Tyler Hughes taught us how to sing the Biscuit song. It goes like this:

“Oh, how many biscuits can you eat this mornin’,  
How many biscuits can you eat this evenin’,  
How many biscuits can you eat,  
Forty-nine and a ham of meat,  
This mornin’, this evenin’, right now.”

Every time we sang, we continued to get faster. This song is stuck in my head, and I will always remember it.

JORDYN FRAZIER, GRADE 5

### *My Baby Blanket*

Do you have something that means more to you than money? I have a baby blanket that my mam-maw made.

It is a crochet blanket that has cotton candy pink and blue colors. It has a teddy bear in the middle with baby toys around it. In each corner it has a pacifier and a bottle.

My sister passed it on to me when I was a baby. Then when I got older, I gave the baby blanket to my brother. When he got older, he gave it to my cousin Jordan. When she died, her mother gave it to my cousin, Wesley, when he was a baby. When Wesley got older, he passed it on to his brother Shaun.

I miss my blanket because I use to snuggle with it. It was special because it was made by my Mam-maw Coffey.

MALEEYIA GALES, GRADE 5

### *The Mun`equita in the Buckskin Dress*

“Hold onto her forever, because she will be handy, caramelito El hija.” These words were spoken to my great, great, great Hispanic el abuela, from her Indian father, my great, great, great, great el abuelo. He then gave to her, her soon to be good luck mun`equita, a joyful gift.

The gift was a mun`equita given to my great, great, great abuela from her father as a cultural gift. The doll is an Indian baby girl with striking features. She has toffee colored skin with deep red cheeks. She has brown eyes with long black eyelashes that cast a shadow down her cheeks. The doll has a buckskin outfit with beautiful trimmings in the pattern of the flag of Spain, where my great, great, great, abuela was born. The doll’s black hair is pulled into two thick braids and tied with small bows.

My great, great, great abuela was the only child born to her Native American father and Hispanic mother. My great, great, great abuela named her doll after herself, so the mun`equita was called Margrita. My great, great, great abuela loved her mun`equita very much, ever since she was given the doll at birth. The doll meant that no matter who your parents were, you were you. That’s why my great, great, great, great abuelo had the words “Asi somos” carved into the doll’s back before giving it to his daughter.

After my madre, who owned the doll last, passed away, my youngest cousin was given the doll. My cousin was going through a tough surgery involving a brain tumor, and no one thought she was going to live through it. Then a miracle happened, and my cousin made it through. On her eighth birthday, my madre gave her the

mun`equita. The event was emotional knowing two months ago, we didn't know if we'd ever see her again. My great, great, great, great abuelo had said to my great, great, great abuela, "I know the munequita was a spirit who jubilados itself into a doll, and juro hayas gratos recuerdos." So far, gratos recuerdos bless us. As my madre would say, "Asi somos."

Spanish Translation Key

El hija – daughter

El abuelo – grandfather

El abuela – grandmother

Mun`equita – little doll

Margrita – Margret

jubilados – retired

juro- swore

hayas – that you may have

gratos recuerdos – pleasant memories

caramelito – dear

Asi somos – This is who we are

Madre - mother

AVA GREEN, GRADE 5

### *The White Elephant*

Do you have a favorite tradition? I love my tradition. Before Christmas, my family plays a game called White Elephant. I also see my cousins that day.

I was taught this tradition by my cousin. The first person comes up and names the person they got. You are allowed to steal someone's gift. The tradition ended for one and a half years. It ended because my cousin was in the hospital. She broke her leg, so we didn't get to play White Elephant.

I can remember when I was told about the White Elephant. I was six when I was told about it, and I went to my cousin's house and played. Every time I got a gift, my gift was stolen. It was just a game, so I was sad and happy.

KYAN GREEN, GRADE 5

### *Country Cabin II*

Have you ever been to a country cabin? I have been to the Country Cabin in Wise, Virginia.

The first thing we did was get off the bus and go in. The outside had an outhouse, and a place in the back that they are working on. When it is finished, it will be able to hold up to eight hundred people.

This cabin has been used for many weddings, family gatherings, and parties. The inside was decorated with a tobacco basket, milk jugs, and leaves. The stage was shiny. There were pictures on the wall. The first Country Cabin was built in 1937.

Near the end of the trip, Tyler Hughes, a professional banjo player, asked us to volunteer to dance. I volunteered and got picked. My partner was Levi Hamilton. The dances were fun. We did the Virginia Reel which is our dance.

Tyler's banjo playing skills were good. Whenever, we left, I noticed there was a concession stand. I would recommend going there because it was fun.

CAMERON GRAY, GRADE 5

## *The Scarf*

What is one thing you hope you cherish forever? I have a scarf that you put underneath a candle to keep it stable.

My grandmother gave me this scarf. Her grandmother's mom made it for my grandmother's mother, then my grandmother, then me.

I am the oldest sibling of two kids, my brother and me. This scarf is kept in a little Christmas bag in the closet. We use the scarf for holidays such as Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. We always go to my grandparent's house for any holiday, and we bring it to every holiday. We light the candle when we start to celebrate.

The scarf is white, and it has a lot of pretty designs on it. It has a round kind of circular shape to it, and it's really pretty. There's one that designs are on the outside of the scarf. There's a big circle, and the circles get tinier and tinier. There are designs in between. The scarf was passed through four generations so far. I'm glad it is a scarf because there's lots to do with it.

PRESLEY HALL, GRADE 5

## *My Special Knife*

Is there something that means a lot to you? I have my papaw's pocket knife. The knife's model is a Smith and Wesson. The knife was made in 1976. It was given to me five years ago.

The knife looks like a modern Swiss Army knife, but it has some differences. It has a black handle, and the blade is five inches long.

I have taught my younger siblings with the same blade. One of the things I have taught them is how to properly use the blade.

It will be passed down for generations because of how special it is.

LEVI HAMILTON, GRADE 5

## *My Special Diamond Jewelry*

Do you have anything special to you or your family? Well I do. It's two real diamond rings and a pair of real diamond earrings as well as some other pairs too. They are from my grandmother who passed away when I was young.

The earrings that are real diamonds are hoop earrings and are gold on the front. They are diamonds and some kind of dark stone interchanged (diamond, stone, diamond, and stone). One of the rings is a bunch of single tiny diamonds smooshed together. The other ring is five diamonds, but one is bigger than the rest in the middle and two smaller ones on each side of it.

I have a couple other pairs that also mean a lot to me; some of which are shooting stars and pink dots. The shooting stars are gold star shaped studs with two short and tiny gold chains on each. The pink dots are just simply pink studs.

I thought that I lost the rings, but turns out they were in our safe for safe keeping until I could wear them. These rings mean a whole lot to me and hold a lot of memories. All the girls got a ring, and my cousin recently got an old gun from a long time ago from my grandfather. If you have anything that means a lot to you it might feel good to think about it, talk about it, or write down a couple of things that you remember about it.

LEAH HARVEY, GRADE 5

## *The Rocking Chair*

Imagine owning a rocking chair that is very special to you. My family has a rocking chair that is special. My grandfather and grandmother gave it to us. I believe our family rocking chair will be in our family forever.

A long time ago my great grandmother bought the rocking chair at a garage sale. My great grandma wanted to give it to my mom. When I was born, my great grandma gave the rocking chair to my mom. My mom used to sit in it and rock me to sleep.

I think the rocking chair is pretty. It has a painting of cherries and grapes on the front of the top. We keep it in the corner in our living room. Our cat lays in it.

My mom told me she will give me the rocking chair when I grow up. I am going to take good care of it because it is special to me. When my kids grow up, I will give them the rocking chair. I feel that our rocking chair is very special.

CARLEE INGLE, GRADE 5

## *My Family Weaving Glass*

Have you ever heard of a weaving glass? I have a weaving glass that is special to me. It is special to me because my Nanny made it. I believe my weaving glass is the most valuable thing in my family.

The weaving glass is shaped like a large stone. It is hand-made with different colored strips of glass that are woven together. Some of the colors in our weaving glass are red, yellow, and blue. My weaving glass is fragile, even one easy drop can break it. That is why I had to wait until I was older to even touch it! It is over sixty years old and it has been in my family for that long.

I feel great about my weaving glass. It was made by my Nanny. Also, it is very beautiful and valuable. When I get older, I am going to pass it on to my children and teach them about how special it is.

TRISTEN JACKSON, GRADE 5

## *My Old T.V.*

I bet in the future this T.V. will stay. I have a T.V. passed on from my father's parents. I'm sure my father's parents got it for themselves, but then it was passed on. It is more special than money to me.

The T.V. is at my house in my room. Sooner or later, I'm going to get a new and better T.V. I'm very hyped over it! The T.V. is small and it's old. It doesn't really work. The sound is messed up, but it is usable.

I feel sad about this T.V. because it reminds me of my grandparents that passed away.

ELIJAH JONES, GRADE 5

## *Grandpa's Shirts, Hats and Ties*

Do you have something of great value? Well, I do. It's my grandpa's ties, hats, and shirts. I was given the shirts after he passed. The shirt I got was a long and dark blue shirt. He passed in late December of 2018.

He used to wear a black leather cowboy hat. It was a medium sized hat and was black leather. My grandmother gave me his hat when he passed.

He also collected ties. He had probably fifty ties. One tie he had is looney toons themed, and he had seasonal ties. I was given the looney toon tie, and a few of his seasonal ties.

I will always cherish his belongings. He was also a dean at a college. He was a great man in my opinion. I will always miss him.

SOPHIE JONES, GRADE 5

## *Something Special*

Have you ever had something that always reminded you of someone? Well, I have a quilt that I will cherish so much, and I would not give it to anyone.

This quilt was a gift from my mammaw's sister, Jannie. She knitted it in her hospital bed, and it's pink and blue. She made it in 2008.

My brother has one, but my sister doesn't because my sister isn't a part of my mom's family. I keep it at my nanny's house.

I've not used it recently, but I remember my nanny gave it to me on my ninth birthday. I normally keep it at the end of my bed.

This blanket has many memories of her on it, and I will always cherish it. I would never give it away for anything!

LILY KENNEDY, GRADE 5

## *The Best Jewelry Ever*

Do you own something that means more to you than money? I have my jewelry that is from a place very far away, and it means a lot to me. All of it is very beautiful and valuable to me.

This jewelry was a gift from my uncle who has been around the world many times. This time he went to Bangladesh across seas in August of 2019 at a very fancy custom jewelry shop. The jewelry is red, green, silver, gold, white, and blue. It is handmade and was made with very strong thin metal. It was made with the thin metal and thin metal wire. It was also made with really expensive beads, pearls, and some of the designs on the earrings were stitched onto them. Some of it was made with real gold! It was made in a way no one can make a replica.

I'm the youngest out of my whole family, so this jewelry was not passed down but gave to me. My jewelry was not used by anyone else other than me.

The most recent use of it was for Thanksgiving dinner, and I wore a lot of jewelry. I wore some rose earrings with a rose necklace. The earrings were handmade and stitched. The necklace was also handmade and had a rose on it stitched the same way. The roses were on both the earrings and the necklace, and it had a real gold chain!

This jewelry is one of the most valuable things to me. It holds many memories. It's helped me with a little bit of stress, and it's my favorite jewelry. It is the best gift I have ever gotten!

CIERRA JADE LANEY, GRADE 5

## *The Special Dog*

Do you have an object in your house or anywhere that means the WHOLE world to you? I do. Mine is a stuffed animal from my Nana. Many people in my family love this dog. Some of my cousins take it home with them, but they always give it back. I love this stuffed animal. It means a lot to me.

It has two long ears, one long tail, two black eyes, one red, one blue, one purple circle on its stomach, and it has two legs. This amazing object was a gift from my Nana. I don't really know where she got it, but I know that her mom gave it to her when she was a little girl. Then she grew up and gave it to me and my sister to have.

I am older than my sister. Her name is Taylor Jade Collins. Before she was born, I got to always play with the stuffed animal, but then of course she was born. Then she had it more than me. Now, she doesn't really like it, so I keep it in my room on my bed.

The most recent use of it was when I slept with it two years ago. I love this stuffed dog so, so, so, so, so much but not more than my family. My nana suffered from cancer about two or three years ago. Before she died, she gave this stuffed animal to me. That's why it's so important to me.

CARA JANE MEADE, GRADE 5

### *The Football*

Do you have something that means more to you than money? My aunt has a Vikings football. She got it at a football game. The Vikings scored, and they gave her the football.

The player's number that gave her the ball was 21. He was a running back. Then she gave it to me for my seventh birthday. I will always keep it because it meant so much to my aunt.

JORDAN MILAM, GRADE 5

### *The Wardrobe and the Pie*

Have you ever had an item that means a lot to you, or a tradition that you do every year with your family? This item doesn't belong to me, but it will. It's a wardrobe that has been passed down to my dad. I also have a tradition on Christmas where we go to my great papaws, and you will see a cherry cheese pie every year.

My great, great grandfather made the wardrobe. Then he gave it to his kids who gave it to his kids who eventually gave it to my dad.

One year my great, great grandmother made a cherry cheese pie. Then, she taught her kids and eventually it got to my mom who will eventually teach me.

The wardrobe is a light and dark brown. It kind of looks like a closet. The wardrobe holds most of my dad's high school and college stuff. It kind of looks new, but it's definitely not.

When my mom makes the pie, my sister, Annabelle and me, "taste test it" but we're really just eating the cream cheese. My sister can't have cream cheese anymore, but she still gets a lick. My sister and I each get one of the mixer blades which are the things on a mixer that mix up whatever you're making. My sister and I would get dibs on the bowl, so we could eat what's left.

The wardrobe means a lot to my dad. My mom has never forgot or ran out of time to make the pie. This is one of my traditions and sentimental thing.

AURORA-RAY MULLINS, GRADE 5

### *My Special Stroller*

What is something from your childhood that you remember? I have my stroller. I was born in 2009, so this stroller is 10 years old.

My mom bought it in Walmart on 7/23/09. It looks more like the late 2000's. It's just like the ones today. It's made out of metal.

It has flowers and hearts, and it is pink. It was passed down to my little sister, Ally. We've used it a lot when we're going out. Ally loves it. Inside, it is a very comfortable fabric. The last time I used it was in 2014 when I was five years old.

It's very special to me. I'm glad Ally likes it. I will treasure it forever. When Ally gets older, she will pass it on down to her child if she has a girl.

GABBY MULLINS, GRADE 5

## *Square Dancing at the Country Cabin*

Have you ever square danced? I have when I went on a field trip with my fifth grade class to the Country Cabin. The Country Cabin is an old time place where people go on Saturday nights to listen to music and dance.

Fifth graders grouped up and square danced. In square dancing, you have a partner and you and your partner link arms and spin around.

We danced the Virginia Reel and the original square dance. They are a little different. I danced the Virginia Reel, and my partner was Lily, and it was fun. She didn't want to dance with me, but she did.

We played music and Tyler Hughes played the banjo. He played a song called The Cumberland Gap. The Country Cabin is near Appalachia, VA. I enjoyed the field trip to the County Cabin.

NICK MULLINS, GRADE 5

## *My Family's Chests*

Do you have things passed down from your family that is the one thing you can't replace? Yes, I have my family's quilt, pin and chests.

We started making chests in 1899. My great, great, great, great, great, great Pa-Paw Chester started making them. It was mostly all made out of wood and old locks and keys. We got all types of wood, even dogwood. The chest making is still going on.

These chests were mine and my sisters. They were not purchased, but they were made by my ancestors. The chests are very cracked and the hinges that make them open are rusted.

I'm the youngest of two, so my sister passed it down. The chests were used for generations and more generations to come. I cried when my sister passed it down to me because it has a lot of meaning to me.

The chests might be worthless, but to my family the chests mean more than money to us. I'd never sell it. I hope in the future my family will keep passing it on, and their chests will be passed down. The chests might have spirits living inside, but I don't care. I will still have these chests.

TAYLOR PERRY, GRADE 5

## *The Seashell*

My grandparents own something that means more than money to them. It is a big seashell that has been passed down for generations through our family.

This seashell was a gift from my Papaw to my Mamaw. It was purchased at a shop in Florida. It is pink with a white tint. It is kept on a high glass shelf at my Mamaw and Papaw's house in Fairfax, Va. I can hear the ocean when I put it up to my ear.

The most recent time I heard it was in August 2018 when my family and I went to visit my Mamaw and Papaw. We stayed at their house for a week. I feel that this seashell holds many memories of my family's past and is worth great value. Soon, it will be passed down to my family.

GRACELYN PFEIFFER, GRADE 5

## *My Luck Charm*

Do you have anything that is really special to you? Well, I do. It is a UK charm with real diamonds around it.

This charm was broken off of a necklace that my dad had. He broke it in the woods. He held onto it for so long. It finally broke when he was twenty-two. He has dropped it in rivers, out of trees, in the mashed potatoes, and in the vent, but that did not break it.

One day before he moved, he gave it to me. We both love UK. It's a UK charm with real diamonds around it. It's over twenty years old. My dad got it when he was ten. I got it when I was five.

I use it when I'm worried or scared. I squeeze and hold it in my hand. I do it because it feels like he is there with me. It helps me because I know he loves me.

KYNDELL BROOKE PHILLIPS, GRADE 5

### *Golden Angel Clock*

My Grandma gave me an angel clock. Do you own something that means more to you than diamonds and gold? When I got the clock, it looked like it had eighty-five years worth of dust on it. It was given to me three years ago from my Nanny.

I'm very "protective" of my stuff. I keep some of my stuff in boxes, totes, and bags under my bed, but the clock is unknown where it is.

The clock doesn't work anymore, but it's beautiful and elegant. It looks like two kids playing on a bridge with an angel watching them.

The clock holds millions of memories of my father when he was younger. I love this clock and hope it will be with me. . . . forever.

ABIGAIL GRACE POTTER, GRADE 5

### *My Baby Blanket*

Do you have something that you cherish? Well, I do. It's a baby blanket.

It came from my dad's mom, but I'm not sure where she bought it. It's white with red and blue overlapping lines made out of felt.

I'm the middle of two sisters, and each of my sisters used it. Now when I make my bed I put the blanket on the foot board of my bed. The most recent use was when I went to North Carolina with Abby and she was cold so I let her use it.

I still have the blanket and it has memories that I will never forget because it means a lot to me.

RACHEL REEVES, GRADE 5

### *My Blanket*

Do you own something that means more than money to you? My blanket means more to me than money because my great, great grandma gave it to me.

This was a gift from my great, great grandma. She gave it to me before she passed away.

My blanket is red and white and the patterns is jewels. The jewels are white and the base of the blanket is red.

Every day I give my blanket all my love. It helps me when I'm sad. It helps me when I'm mad. It helps me when I'm lonely and, it helped me when I was sick with my braces.

AUDREE RING, GRADE 5

### *The Black Hat*

Do you own something valuable to you or someone? I know something that's valuable. It's a black hat that belonged to my first cousin.

The hat was a gift to him from my aunt. The hat has a symbol sewn into it. The bill of the hat is curved.

Now the hat is in a basement in a box with some of his stuff. It's somewhere safe so nothing gets lost or broken.

The reason it's valuable is because he died and he wore it all the time. He loved the hat so much he wore it when he slept and throughout the day. The only time he would take it off is when he took a shower or cleaned the hat. I hope to have something that's valuable to me some day.

ASHTON RYAN, GRADE 5

### *My Baby Doll*

Do you own something that means more than money? I do. I have a baby doll that has been passed down for four generations. My nanny's mom got my nanny this for her seventh birthday. It was bought in Germany.

This doll is about seven inches long. She had a blue onesie with flowers on it. Her eyes are closed. Her eyelashes are long. She has short brown hair.

The last time I played with it was in Japan. She was in an airplane. I played with her in a pool.

It is special because everyone who has had it took very good care of it. She lost all of her hair. She is a little bit dirty. She has no rips or tears. She has very long legs but short arms. She's made to sit on a shelf.

She means a lot to everyone in my family. I have to make sure it's clean and taken care of. I hope they will take care of it. I hope they pass it down to my children. I hope they will take care of it. I hope they pass it down to their children.

LILY SADLER, GRADE 5

### *Mom's Cookbook*

Do you have something that means more than money? I have my mom's cookbook that has been in this family for a very long time.

My mammaw made it for my mom. My mammaw took time to make the cookbook for my mom. My dog got it one time because my mom left it on the table. She was a very big dog, and she tore it apart. Then, my mom put it back together. My mom does not know the whole story of the cookbook and where all it has been. All she knows is it is hers and her mom made it for her.

The cookbook has one of my favorite recipes which is the marshmallow brownie. I made it for my daddy, and he said it was his favorite brownie that he has ever eaten. My sisters and I use it but not all the time. It is so important to my mom. She will only let me and my sisters use it sometimes. I like it when she is here just in case something happens to it.

SAVANNAH SERGENT, GRADE 5

### *The Two Items*

There's two items that mean a lot to my family in my house. We have a table in the kitchen from my grandpa's house. We had it before I was born. I bet it could tell the best stories. Also, my grandma gave my mom a necklace, but she died before I was born.

My mom has a necklace from my grandma. The necklace is silver and shiny and it is kept in a jewelry box.

My table is from my grandpa's house. The table is my kitchen table. It is wooden and nailed together. It has a bench and two chairs. The table is a good table, and it holds a lot of inside jokes.

My mom will always keep the necklace. We will always keep the table because it is our table.

JUDAH SHORT, GRADE 5

### *My Special Blanket*

Do you have an item in your family that means more to you than money? I do. It's a blanket. I got it when I was two years old.

My blanket was a gift from my mom. The blanket is blue, red, pink, and white. It has purple dots on it. It has holes because I've used it so much. She got it at Walmart.

I'm the youngest. I have a big brother. I'm the only one that uses the blanket. I sleep with it all the time. I let my cousin use it and sleep with it sometimes.

It holds a lot of old memories, and it means a lot to me because my mom is dead. I miss her.

ABRAM STACY-LAWSON, GRADE 5

### *My Family's Treasure*

What flashes and you can keep it in memory forever? I have a camera that was handed down to me from my family. It has held many, many memories throughout the years.

This camera was my great grandmother's. She passed it to my ma-maw who passed it down to my mom. She passed it down to me. So, when my brother is nine years old he will get the camera because the whole family got it when they were nine. My great grandmother was nine when she got it for her birthday. I remember how she would always talk about how it looks. She would say it's gray with three little buttons on the side and a little keychain and very old school. The camera is my favorite thing to keep in my memory. Even though I've only had it for three years, I still love it.

I used it recently when my family and I went on vacation to Florida. I took lots and lots of pictures and so did my little brother. I taught him how to use it. He had a blast with it. We had lots and lots of memories. We both love it a lot.

This camera has held many memories. I will always remember the way it goes 'bedip boop'. My family and I will always treasure it. One thing I do hope is that my family will always keep it in memories forever and ever.

BRIANNA STALLARD, GRADE 5

### *The Cabin*

Do you own something that means more to you than being rich? Well, I do. It's a cabin up in the woods.

My Papaw, my dad, and my uncle built this cabin almost twenty years before I was born. It's a three story log cabin. The logs are light red and on the balcony you can see all the way to Tennessee.

My family comes up for Thanksgiving, and we come up for the Fourth of July and have fireworks. My parents also got married there too. The most recent use of it was when my sister, grandparents, and I stayed the night because my mom was sick.

I love the cabin so much. It's so peaceful and quiet. It has such a great view. You can look at it all night. I hope it's still there when I have children so I can show them.

BRAYDEN STURGILL, GRADE 5

### *My Blue Blanket*

An object that means more than money to me is my blanket. This blanket was given to my mom before I was born! I don't know where it was purchased. It's blue, fluffy, has bumps on one side and a plain soft side.

I am the oldest of two. This blanket is eleven years old. I have plenty of memories of going to sleep with it.

The most recent use of it was seven to eight months ago before I lost it. I was very sad when I lost it and I still am. But I got a new one!

I love this blanket because it was comfy! I don't know how it got lost, but I cried a lot. I intended to pass it down to my brother when I pass away.

JACK STURGILL, GRADE 5

### *My Special Chain*

Do you have something that means more to you than money? I have a chain that my dad had, and it has been passed through the family.

This chain originally belonged to my grandmother. It is gold and has a cross on it and it is old.

I am the youngest in my family. I'm eleven years old. It means a lot to me because it passes through my family. This chain holds many memories and means so much to my family and me.

DALTON THOMPSON, GRADE 5

### *My Dad's Story*

Do you have a story that means more than money to you? I do. It's a story from my dad when he was young. I first heard this story at my grandma's house a few years ago when my dad told it to me.

"When my dad was young he had a brother. They were digging and he got too close and he got hit in the back of the head!"

I'm the youngest of three boys and the last to hear this story. It was told to my brother before me. This story hopefully will get passed down with the family. It holds memories of my father and uncle.

ELLIOT WALKER, GRADE 5

### *The Country Cabin*

Do you like to square dance? On November 8th, 2019 the fifth grade went to the Country Cabin and Tyler Hughes sang songs for us.

First we drove to Appalachia. It was a pretty short drive.

Second, we arrived at the Country Cabin. We walked in and found our seats. I sat in the third row on the right. Also, the Country Cabin looked like a log cabin from the outside. It had an outhouse with a gate around it. If you don't know what an outhouse is, back then people didn't have bathrooms in their house so they had to use the outhouse. It has a toilet inside it and it is made out of wood. It was also outside.

Third, the demonstrator, Tyler, sang songs. He sang a song about Cumberland Gap and biscuits. The biscuit song was funny. It went like this, "How many biscuits can you eat this mornin', how many biscuits can you eat this evenin', how many biscuits can you eat, 49 and a ham of meat this mornin', this evenin' right now." Next, we square danced. We danced to two different square dances. I danced in the second dance. It was called the Virginia Reel. The Virginia Reel was originally from Scotland. My partner for the Virginia Reel was Caitlyn. She is one of my best friends from school.

Then, we talked about the Carter Family Fold and the Concreek Sisters who made the biscuit song. There was a sign that said Appalachian Traditional Village outside. In the inside, it had a place where you could buy snacks and tons in the middle. There was a dance floor and a stage. The stage had beautiful fall decorations with a basket with orange, yellow, and red flowers. The stage also had a wreath that looked like it was made out of twigs and sunflowers on it. They are also building on to it. I enjoyed the Country Cabin. It's a field trip I'll never forget.

PHOENIX WAMSLEY, GRADE 5

## Alex Williams

Do you have a blanket that means more than money? I have a blanket that is very valuable to me. There are several reasons why my blanket is important to me. For one, it was a gift from my grandfather. I believe this blanket will always be special to me.

When my grandfather gave it to me it was the same year I was born. I still have it today and it has a lot of holes. I have had it for like ten years, almost eleven. When I was young, I used it a lot. I still use it but not as much. When I was young, it was bigger than me, but now it's smaller than me.

ALEX WILLIAMS, GRADE 5



## My Vintage Doll

Do you own something in your family that means a lot? I have a vintage doll from a vintage store that my nanny has had for a long time.

This vintage doll my Nanny's mom bought this for her. The doll has blue eyes and peachy skin. The doll is wearing a red dress. The doll was purchased in 1995 at a vintage store.

This doll has been in the family for a long time. My Nanny got it in the 90's. This doll is kept in our cleaning pantry. The last time I saw the doll was when we moved into our new home.



This vintage doll still means a lot to my Nanny and she really cares about the doll her mother had given her when she was a child.

RAKEL WILLIAMS, GRADE 5

## Green Earrings

Do you own anything that means everything to you? I have a pair of green jewel earrings with a gold rim. These earrings mean everything to me because they were my grandma's.





The earrings look like dark green with a bronze gold rim. They're tiny and when you have them in your ears it looks like dots. I think they were purchased in the 1940's.

My mom said that my grandmother wore them all the time. She went to John I. Burton. She had dark hair and she wore the earrings in high school. The earrings hold so much value because it helps me remember her.

She got them from her mother which is my great grandma. She passed them to my mom and my mom says she will pass them down to me. I can't wait to get them! They're so pretty and I can pass them down.

VIVIAN WILLIAMS, GRADE 5

### Jennifer McCall, Grade 6 Library *Food Traditions*

A tradition is something special where a family gets together and does something that has been passed down for generations. It's special because the process is done together.

Apple butter is a tradition from church members, from family and friends.

It's delicious, sweet, and savory with a hint of cinnamon.

A lot of conversations take place here.

The biscuit recipe was made to feed a large family.

Their mother made the biscuits so nothing was wasted in the process.

The biscuits were buttery, crispy, golden brown and as soft as a pillow.

The sourdough bread recipe was from a friend.

She makes the bread for others, not herself.

It tasted like tiny pieces of heaven. The sourdough melted in your mouth.

It was soft, like a cloud.

Traditions and recipes are important because they bring us together like two peas in a pod. Traditions, as a process, involve community and family just like Dr. Addison and his apple butter, Ms. Neva and her biscuits, and Ms. Ada and her sourdough bread.



EMMA ADDINGTON, GRADE 6

JORDAN BOHNERT, GRADE 6

PEYTON BRUMMITTE, GRADE 6

BRYAN CULBERTSON, GRADE 6

ELLYANA JONES, GRADE 6

ALYSSA MCFALL, GRADE 6

CONNOR MOORE, GRADE 6

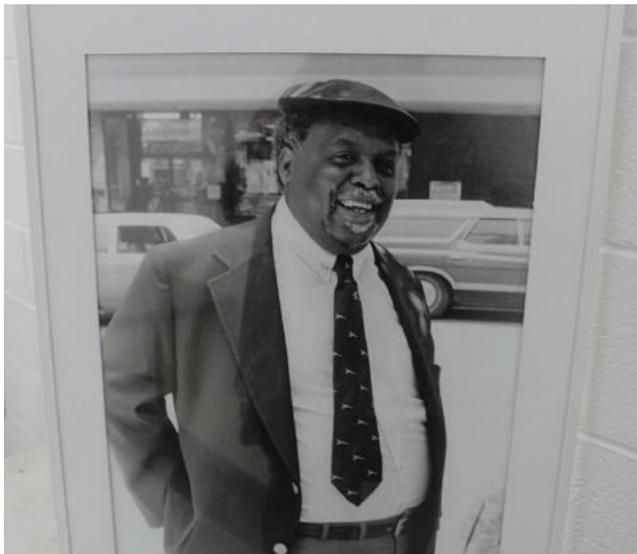
ADRIAN RUSSELL, GRADE 6

KAENAN STURGILL, GRADE 6

CAMRON WAMPLER, GRADE 6

RILEY WILSON, GRADE 6

# PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT CENTER



## *A Bridge, Life & Legacy: Mr. John Coleman, Founder*

*Peter Paul Development Center  
students attend five Peter Paul Promise Centers:  
Coleman Promise Center  
Chimborazo Promise Center  
George Mason Promise Center  
Fairfield Court Promise Center  
Bellevue Promise Center*

### *Legacy at Peter Paul*

Peter Paul, a non-profit outreach and community center, celebrated a wonderful milestone for the current year. *A Bridge, Life & Legacy: Celebrating 40 Years of Peter Paul and the life of founder Mr. John Coleman* was an event that honored the organization's history through interactive exhibits, inspiring speakers, and powerful testimonies.

During our second year of participation in The Origin Project, "Legacy" was the perfect theme for our students. Through the lens of a young person, legacy can take on many different meanings. The unique design of The Origin Project allows all students the opportunity to express themselves in a creative manner. Peter Paul continues to be grateful for The Origin Project as it provides daily opportunities for journaling, reflection, and creative expression.

STEPHANIE D. BASSETT, ED.D.  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION, PETER PAUL

### *Legacy*

What an absolute joy it was to witness teenagers gathered in a room excited about writing!

I am so grateful to Peter Paul for its continued commitment to literacy, and for its ongoing relationship with the Origin Project. I am always blown away by the way young people see the world, and it is so inspiring to read their thoughts on paper. As I read my father's words to them, I could feel the timeless connection between their souls and my father's. His words were so perfect for that moment. It was as if he had just spent time with each of them and had captured their private thoughts.

It gave me such pleasure to see the teenagers eager to write in their pristine Origin Project notebooks. Their pens moved across the pages with confidence and anticipation - anticipation that at some point their words would be read by someone else. Even at this young age, they already know the power of words, especially those that we write from our hearts, and from that place in our souls that wants so desperately to be shared with the world.

Thank you for allowing me to participate in this special event. I look forward to reading the words of these young people one day, not only in publications with the Origin Project, but in the future, when their words find their rightful place in the larger community.

CHRISTA COLEMAN  
DAUGHTER OF JOHN COLEMAN, FOUNDER OF PETER PAUL

### *The Future*

I'm now 28 years old. When I was 8 years old, I went to Peter Paul. I remember many things about Peter Paul. I had help with my homework. I played with my friends, and I went on many school trips. They had good food every day. My favorite was pancakes with sticky syrup. Mrs. Carter-Minter helped me to do my best in everything. She helped me to be an honor roll student. I remember the great times in her class.

Today I'm a second-grade teacher in Richmond, Virginia. Peter Paul helped me to reach my goal. I love working with children. I love teaching math. I help my students understand numbers. My rule is to always do your best. I learned this from Peter Paul. I remember everyone being helpful and nice. I know Peter Paul helped me to become a great teacher. For this I'm thankful.

ZÁ'MIA YANCY, GRACE 3 TEACHER  
CHIMBORAZO PROMISE CENTER, PPDC

### *Peter Paul 's Caring Legacy*

The Peter Paul family cares about me, and I care about Peter Paul. My mentor and teachers are helpful and encourage me to do my "best" every day. I appreciate all that they do to help me become a better student.

My mentor helps with homework and makes sure that I understand my assignments. She also helps me find the correct answers after reading a passage. I love working on the computer after I finish my classwork. We work on computer activities together. My mentor is a great teacher and is very helpful.

I have very caring teachers. They give great compliments, and I like that. I love my teacher Mrs. Williams so much! She is respectful to my friends and me. My teachers plan special activities, events and experiences for the students. Some of our favorites are Lewis Ginter Botanical Gardens, Collegiate Camp, Swimming, PPDC Red Carpet, Fit-4-Kids and Clare's Camp. My teachers are very special people. I will always remember the mentors and teachers at Peter Paul for caring and helping me. Thank You PPDC!

MAKAYLA ANDERSON, COLEMAN PROMISE CENTER, GRADE 4

### *A Tradition Worth Passing On*

I would like to pass on to my children a family tradition that is very important to me. My family shares what we are thankful for on Thanksgiving Day, but our tradition is a little different. We honor our mother instead in a very special way.

Just before dinner, we all sit around the table. Each person receives a small piece of paper and a pencil. Then, we write a note to my mother that says why we love and appreciate her. My mother reads every note out loud for everyone to hear. Then, she tells each person "thank you" for being so kind and gives a big smile. I love to see my mother happy!

Finally, we eat dinner, play Tic-Tac-Toe and enjoy being together. For me, this tradition is very meaningful and worth passing on. It also feels good to write a special message to someone who helps you in so many ways. This is what I think is a Happy Thanksgiving!

AHMAMD BAKARI, GRADE 3

I think Peter Paul After School Academy is going to help me become an artist by teaching me how to draw and how to concentrate on getting better grades. Math helps me to draw better. I learn to estimate how long my lines should be in my designs. My teacher helps me with my homework, and I also learn new words. My favorite thing about Peter Paul is playing with my friends. When I am an adult, I will remember how Peter Paul helped me to achieve my goal of becoming a great artist. Look to read about me in the future!

KHÁ'MARI BLAINE, GRADE 4

### *Peter Paul*

Peter Paul is a caring place. The classrooms are nicely decorated, and the people are kind. Volunteers created a new playground for the children at our center. Our new playground is Big! It has slides, swings and

a bridge. We play a lot on Peter Paul's playground especially at recess. We also go on field trips, attend Fit 4 Kids and celebrate Lights On After School.

I have a tutor who helps me once a week. He helps with homework and math assignments. My tutor gave me a multiplication chart. The chart helps with learning my multiplication facts. He also helps me with division facts too! I appreciate my tutor a lot.

Mrs. Burton, our site coordinator makes sure that we have pencils, paper and crayons to complete our assignments. We do not have to worry about supplies at all. I know that Peter Paul cares about me, and I have learned how important it is to care for others.

ZACHARIAH BRANCH, GRADE 4

### *Be Yourself*

I am Denee Ja Braxton. I am 10 years old, and I go to Peter Paul After School Academy. The legacy I want to leave is to always be yourself. The reason I want to leave this legacy is because this year, so far, I've been myself, and I've been accepted by my classmates.

By being myself, I have been accepted for who I am. The reason I have received acceptance is because I am quiet, smart, caring and a respectful girl. As for my legacy, I want to be remembered for not being a fake. I believe if you will just be yourself, no matter what, your classmates will like you for who you are. This will be my legacy — be who you are and never follow someone else, just be YOURSELF!

DENE' EJA BRAXTON, GRADE 5

I like Peter Paul After School Academy because it is a super program! I like playing with my friends. I like playing with the girls because I always win the games. I also like going on trips. I went on a trip to see the Black Panther movie. It was a fantastic movie. I ate buttered popcorn, fruit snacks, and had an ice-cold drink. The Peter Paul bus took me home after the movie.

Peter Paul will help me with things in life. I have learned how people were treated back in the day. Slavery is over! Black people and white people can be friends. When I grow up, I want to become a police officer so people can be treated the right way. Peter Paul will help me to become well-known and a respected police officer.

CHANCE BREWER, GRADE 4

### *Personal Legacy Letter of Marlon Browder*

November 20, 2019

Dear Dad,

At the age of 12, I am writing this legacy letter to you all to share the personal legacy of my life. My intention is to let you know my thoughts and feelings about the life I have lived, to honor the relationships that have enriched my life, and to express my gratitude to you for being the best dad.

What I have valued most in my life is to be good at basketball.

My life experience has taught me to be good.

One of my special memories is winning the championship basketball game.

I especially cherish the moments when I am with you.

What has given me strength in difficult times is my faith in life.

I believe I have been doing well.

I regret the time when I have been bad.

I forgive my wrongs I have done to others.

I ask for your forgiveness for ever thing that I have done.

My future hopes and wishes for all of you include that you will live long.

I ask that you believe in me.  
My expressions of gratitude and love is one hundred percent.  
If I were saying “Good-Bye” to you today for the last time, I would want you to know that I love you very much.  
May your life be blessed with many more blessings.

MARLON BROWDER, GRADE 6

### *Peter Paul*

My name is A’Kinah Cherry. This is my second year at Peter Paul After School Academy and I’m a fourth-grade student at Chimborazo Elementary School. I came to Peter Paul because I’m preparing for the Standards of Learning test. I’ve learned to summarize better and how to control my problems with others. The teachers make me feel special. I have many friends at Peter Paul. I thank the teachers for a great program. Someone once told me a smile can go a long way. I try to follow that every day.

I want people to remember me for being funny and talking to my friends or just talking. I like to talk!

A’KINAH CHERRY, GRADE 4

### *I Am a Swimmer*

I want people to remember me for being a good swimmer.

JEMIMA CHRISTIAN, GRADE 4

### *My Cousins and I Have Fun*

My cousins and I have fun playing tag and hide-and-peek outside. We chase each other, climb trees and hang on strong tree limbs. Then we look at each other and laugh. These are our favorite outdoor activities.

Next, we have a coloring party. This is my favorite thing to do. We choose pictures to color using lots of crayons and markers. Then we share our pictures with family. Also, getting our faces painted with a unicorn design is another favorite of mine. If we have time, we read books and play more games.

This is a great way to spend Thanksgiving, and I want to pass these traditions on to my children.

MARIYAH COLE, GRADE 3

### *Never Stop Trying*

The legacy I want to leave is to never stop trying. I want to put a smile on every face I see when no one else can. I want to inspire others. I want to prove to people that they are wrong about me — I can be funny and make people laugh.

When I grow up, I want to be a comedian. My goal is to be better than some of the comedians today. I want to make people happy when they are deflated. I want to tell my jokes on stage, and everyone will see and know how great I am. When I am on stage, I am going to put all my effort into being the best! If there is a day that I don’t make people laugh, I will remember there will be another day, and I will try again.

When I think about trying, I always remember how my mother just kept on trying. We once lived in an apartment, but she kept on trying, and now we live in a house. I think about poor people who are down on their luck, but they keep on trying and look at them now. That is how I know if I keep on trying to be a comedian, one day I will be a comedian. That will be my legacy.

DEMARIUS COLEMAN, GRADE 5

## *I Like Peter Paul*

Peter Paul is a very special after school program. There are three reasons why I really like Peter Paul. The mentors are helpful, my family is loved and cared for on special holidays, and my teachers encourage me to do my best work.

The first reason I like Peter Paul is because my mentor comes to the center every week to help with homework and other subjects. Sometimes, we complete reading activities and practice math problems. I especially enjoy making crafts with my mentor, because it is very relaxing. I like meeting with my mentor and appreciate the help that she gives me.

The second reason is because Peter Paul is very nice to my family on holidays. The center gives us Thanksgiving baskets with lots of food for everyone in our family. My family enjoyed a good dinner this year and played Uno, Trouble and Sorry afterwards. Christmas is another special time for my family because teachers and volunteers take me shopping to purchase things I need. I enjoy shopping for shoes, jeans and a few fun things. I look forward to shopping every year and will miss it when I leave the center.

The last reason I like Peter Paul is because the teachers are caring and funny. My teacher helps with homework, teaches new skills and gives us fun things to do in class. She wants us to learn, to be successful in school and have fun. I will always remember Peter Paul because everyone has always helped me. I will tell people that Peter Paul is a very caring and special place.

AA-ZAHRII DEWITT , GRADE 4

## *Help*

I give help to people if they need it. This is what I want people to remember me for.

MALEAH FLEMING, GRADE 4

## *Peter Paul is Great*

We do fun stuff at Peter Paul. I enjoy participating in club day on Thursdays. The cooking club is my favorite because I'm learning to follow recipes. I like learning new things about food and eating my creations.

I also get a chance to hang out with my friends at Peter Paul. We giggle, play games and do homework. I enjoy playing games and joking with my friends outside. Imani and I chase each other. Sometimes we just like to hang out together.

At Peter Paul there is always someone to help me with my work and to encourage me to do my best. Last year I worked with volunteers Mr. Dewayne and Mr. Nelson. After I finished my work, we played games or just talked.

I want to be a nurse because I like helping people. Volunteers and teachers at Peter Paul encourage me to follow my dream to become a nurse. This why I think Peter Paul is great!

KATIA GOODSON, GRADE 5

## *Beauty in my Heart*

I love people. I want people to remember me for being helpful. I want people to remember me because I am nice and sometimes kind. I am pretty on the outside and beautiful in my heart. I want people to remember me because I ALREADY know I'M LOVED!

MIYANA GRAVES, GRADE 6

## *Personal Legacy Letter of Miy'anna Graves*

November 19, 2019

Dear Peter Paul,

At the age of 11, I am writing this legacy letter to you to share the personal legacy of my life. My intention is to let you know my thoughts and feelings about the life I have lived, to honor the relationships that have enriched my life, and to express my gratitude for my mom.

Who I have valued most in my life is my mom because she provides me with food, clothing, and shelter.

My life experience has taught me to never give up.

One of my special memory is when I went to Kings Dominion with my family.

I especially cherish the moments when I went to the pool with my aunt.

What has given me strength in difficult times is my faith in my dad when he speaks with me.

I believe that we all will excel.

I regret the time when I yelled at my dad.

I forgive my dad.

I ask for your forgiveness for mom and dad.

My future hopes and wishes for all of you include that everyone around the world will have a better life.

I ask that you help stop the gangs by continuing to give us great advice.

My expressions of gratitude and love goes to my mom and dad.

If I were saying "Good-Bye" to you today for the last time, I would want you to know I really have faith in you all.

May your lives be blessed with love.

MIY'ANNA GRAVES, GRADE 6

## *Pass It On to My Children*

My family and I love Thanksgiving! We love this holiday because our tradition is fun.

Every year my family celebrates our tradition by sitting around the table and telling what he or she is thankful for. This is a special time for us, because we are thankful for so many things .

Next, we enjoy a delicious Thanksgiving dinner and have great conversations. After dinner, the adults watch football and the children go to my room to make an arts and crafts activity. The adults and children have a really good time.

When I grow up, I want to pass this family tradition on to my children. I want my children to experience the same traditions that I had growing up. I think they will have lots of fun and enjoy family time together. My family tradition is awesome!

DESTINY HARRIS, GRADE 3

## *Personal Legacy Letter of Anya Hewitt*

November 18, 2019

Dear Peter Paul,

At the age of 11, I am writing this legacy letter to you to share the personal legacy of my life. My intention is to let you know my thoughts and feelings about the life I have lived, to honor the relationships that have enriched my life, and to express my gratitude for my family and that I have a beautiful place to live!

What I have valued most in my life is my family because they have always been there for me.

My life experience has taught me to be a grateful person because not all children have a family.

A special memory of mine is when my baby cousin was born.

I especially cherish the moments when I spend time with my family.

What has given me strength in difficult times is my faith in my mom.

I believe that I will succeed in my legacy.

I regret the time when I pushed my cousin.

I forgive Makayla.

I ask for your forgiveness Makayla.

My future hopes and wishes for all of you include that you succeed in your legacy.

I ask that you take care of yourselves.

My expressions of gratitude and love goes to my family.

If I were saying “Good-Bye” to you today for the last time, I would want you all to know that you are great, awesome and to live your best life.

May your lives be blessed with God and do well in life.

ANYA HEWITT, GRADE 6

### *My Legacy*

Peter Paul After School Academy is like a mini school after big school. The program has helped me to develop my math and grammar skills. My teachers and coaches at Peter Paul helped me to see and hear things better. The program also helped me with social skills and with my basketball skills. I am a friendlier and happier person

I want my legacy to be that I was a great basketball star like LeBron James. He inspires me to be the greatest of all time. He inspires me to work harder to achieve my goal. I also want to be remembered as a nice, talented, and smart basketball player with a high IQ. I think Peter Paul After School Academy will help me to achieve the positive qualities toward my legacy.

DAVONTE HINES, GRADE 7

### *The Best for You*

To know about someone is to understand her personality, experiences, and what you have in common with that person. This is why my mom is someone I want to be like — she’s the best cook in the world, and one day I want to cook just like my mom.

My mom knows how to take just a little and make a lot for all eight of us. My mom’s food, no matter what it is, whatever she makes is like happiness! I think it’s because she takes her time to make it just for us.

If I had not come to Peter Paul RVA I would have thought that football was the only thing that I could do. I, however, learned that cooking and doing something I really liked could pay me just like football.

One thing that I have learned is it takes skills to be a chef and a success. This is what I want to be — an executive chef with the big hat! When I become a chef, I will make millions!

The legacy that I want to leave is the ability to cook with love just like my mom. When I grow up, I want to learn how to cook and serve delicious dinners at my own fancy restaurant.

I want to show others how to cook with confidence and pride, because everybody deserves the best meal by Chef Chris. My legacy will be the best-ever mac and cheese just like my mom! I will serve the BEST for you!

CHRISTOPHER HOLLOWAY, GRADE 5

### *Birthday Celebrations*

Family celebrations are very important to me, especially birthdays. My birthday is always special. My mom and I buy food and lots of games for my birthday celebration. The birthday cake is always the main food. It is beautifully decorated with my name and candles on it.

Once we buy what we need, we return home to begin decorating for my party. My cousins are usually the first guests to arrive. They come to my house early to join the fun and play games. Later, everyone eats, sings happy birthday, and enjoys birthday cake.

I want to share this birthday tradition with my children one day. I think they will like playing games and having family around. I love birthday celebrations!

SINCERE JOHNSON, GRADE 3

### *Peter Paul*

There are so many things that Peter Paul has done to help me. Teachers, mentors, and volunteers have been very helpful and kind. My teacher reviews math facts every day. She makes sure that I understand one fact before moving to the next. Then, she gives us practice problems to complete. I am a better math student because my teacher cares.

My mentor encouraged me to do well in school and study hard. She listened to me read picture and chapter books. We had good discussions, and she asked a lot of questions to make sure that I understood the stories. I used the computer to write a few of my stories. It was fun! My mentor gave me good advice, and I appreciated her help.

Volunteers took the time to make Peter Paul a special place for all of us. They built a playground because they care about us. Beautiful flowers were planted near the gate when you first walk into the play area. Some flowers were even planted near the gazebo. The best part of the playground is the Kid's Zone. We jump, climb, crawl and stand with our friends laughing and enjoying each other. Volunteers help with other projects too, such as holiday parties, class projects and the children's garden. Volunteers are special and they treat us very well.

If I tell other students how Peter Paul has helped me, maybe they will choose to come here for their after-school program. Thank you, Peter Paul, for sending people who care and for the special memories.

BREION JONES, GRADE 4

### *Legacy*

Peter Paul leaves a legacy of kindness, and I am leaving that same legacy to the new middle school and elementary students. Being kind means that you do your work, not talk back to adults, have respect for other teachers and students, and listen to others more. More kind acts include helping others when they hurt, keeping the restrooms clean and being a helper and not a follower.

My wish for the leaders of Peter Paul is to continue helping the community and provide a safe and clean Center for the adults and students.

Kindness is respecting others and behaving in ways that do not lead to suspensions. Students can show kindness by saying positive words to others, helping teachers in the classrooms and encouraging them to do well in school.

SIENNA JONES-BROWN, GRADE 6

### *Never Judge*

The legacy that I want to be remembered for is never judge what you don't know. When I see children sitting by themselves, sometimes with the same clothes on from the day before, I always try to be the first to go to them and make them smile. One thing that I have learned is if you don't know someone, you really can't judge that person. If you don't know where the person slept, what the person ate for dinner or if the person had food — how can you judge that person?

That is why I want to do something when I see people struggling and living on the streets. I never judge I only want to help.

The legacy I want to leave is to buy a building and make it into homes for the homeless. I want to make the community better for families with children so they can go to school and not be judged by classmates because they live on the streets. I want to leave a legacy of how I helped people learn to live together. I want to teach people how to earn a living so that they can take care of their families. Also, if people need to complete their education, I will help them get in school.

It is my dream that, one day, no one will be homeless.

NIYA KEELING, GRADE 5

### *Teaching People How to Love*

My name is Nemaha, and I am in the third grade. What I want to leave as my legacy is teaching people how to LOVE. Love is something BIG in our lives. When you love others, you are respected. My goal in life is for everyone who hears my name to remember that I wanted people to love each other. When I grow up, I want everyone to feel that they are loved.

Peter Paul after school academy teaches us how to get along with one another. Peter Paul, I love you! Thank you for teaching us how to love each other.

I want people to remember that I tried to love everybody.

NY'EMAH KINGSTON, GRADE 3

### *Peter Paul is Helping Me*

This is my first year coming to Peter Paul After School Academy. My twin brother and my cousin are in my second-grade class. I also have three cousins at Peter Paul. We have a great time at Peter Paul. When we get home sometimes, we pretend we are still at Peter Paul. My cousin is always the teacher, but I get to be Ms. Thomas because I like being a leader.

There are always fun things to do at Peter Paul. I like playing games like Uno, Connect Four and Bingo. I like going on field trips. We got to go to the SPCA Shelter. I saw dogs in cages on fluffy pillows and on colorful blankets. They were playful.

I like club day because we make stuff. Art club is my favorite. I made a jack-o'-lantern and put tea lights inside. My teacher took a picture of me with my Jack-A-Lantern. I got to take it home. I would like to go to Cooking Club next because I like to cook. Peter Paul is helping me to be a good student.

SAVANNAH LEWIS, GRADE 2

## *Growing up too Fast*

When I think about girls in my generation it makes me feel heartbroken and disgusted. What I mean by that is, young girls are growing up too FAST. They are having babies as early as ten years old. They are wearing clothes inappropriate for their age. The words they speak from their mouths are not the words I think young ladies should be saying or thinking.

What I see, what I hear, I do not think should be a part of a respectable young ladies' lifestyle. As young ladies we should not talk about other people or put them down. We as young ladies should try to encourage them when we see our young women making bad decisions.

I believe we are intelligent beings worth more than our hair and nails. I think we should spend more time thinking about school, studying, and looking forward to going to college. I believe that we should be preparing ourselves for something better in life, and not thinking about growing up too fast.

I know this because of the examples set by these great black woman, Rosa Parks, Harriet Tubman, Michelle Obama, my mother and grandmother. We can and must become role models for the young women of today to follow.

The legacy that I want to leave is the legacy of speaking up for what I believe to be true and right. I believe that I can make a difference in the lives of young women by being an example of not growing up too fast. I believe that God put us all in this world for something, and that something is to help and encourage others. I want people to remember me for never lowering my standards and self-worth for anyone.

The mantra that I live by, and I quote, "My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive, and do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor and some style" Maya Angelou.

AMARIA MARTIN, GRADE 7

Peter Paul After School Academy is fun! I like the activities at Peter Paul. I always do my work and sometimes I help others if they do not know what to do. I like finishing my homework and playing at recess with my friends.

I like STEM projects. One day I made a tower that was stronger than all the others but not the tallest. I had so much fun. This was the best day ever!

On Thanksgiving I made a placemat. I took it home and ate on it. I like Peter Paul After School Academy best of all because of my teacher Dr. Edwards. My teacher said I was smart and nice to others. She is cool. I will never forget Peter Paul After School Academy.

NAZAIRE MCLEOD, GRADE 2

## *I Started Loving It!*

When I first walked in Peter Paul After School Academy at Bellevue Elementary School, I started loving it. I loved the field trips, family fun, parties, experiments and going outside. I loved PBS Night because we did an experiment to make shadows and ate Chick-fil-A. The chicken was good! so good! I was surprised to see my friend Sterling and his family. Sterling's sister is my best friend. I liked the SPCA trip because I got to see furry dogs and cuddly cats. My teacher helps me with my homework and teaches new things. Peter Paul is a fun place to be!

KRISTINA LASHAE MOORE, GRADE 2

## *My Dream*

When I grow up, I want to leave a legacy like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The reason I want to leave a legacy like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is because, I am white, and I want all people to be treated fairly.

Although I attend a mostly black elementary school, I realize we all must get along no matter the color of our skin.

I have learned that all people should live together and work together no matter what the situation. No matter how much we may think we are different, we really are not. When I hear of people treating people differently, I always think of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

“I have a dream that my four little children will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.”

That’s what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said a long time ago, that’s what I remember him for, and that’s what I want to be remembered for — not what color I am, but by the content of my character. I want to be remembered because I am a good person not black or white.

SKY –LILY MOORE, GRADE 5

### *I Will Achieve My Goal*

This is my second year at Peter Paul After School Academy. I’ve learned a lot these two years at Peter Paul. I’ve learned not to get angry at little kids when they mess with me. Instead, I ignore them. At Peter Paul, I get the opportunity to display my creativity by participating in plays and making speeches. I love how the teachers help us to solve problems. I love how the teachers provide encouragement and guidance. I would love to become a judge one day and I believe through determination and support from Peter Paul I will achieve my goal.

NEVAEH NICHOLSON, GRADE 5

### *A Holiday to Remember*

Thanksgiving is an exciting holiday for our family. We could not wait to see relatives, eat good food and have fun. I enjoyed helping my mother prepare for the celebration. We worked together as a team to get things done.

On Thanksgiving morning, I woke up very early. After I drank a cup of cocoa, I got dressed and went to the supermarket with my mother. I love grocery shopping! Sometimes my mother lets me pick out foods at the grocery store, and sometimes she does not. Today, she let me choose foods for our Thanksgiving meal. Helping my mother made me very happy.

Once we returned home, my mother and I started cooking immediately. I cooked the easy foods like mac ‘n cheese and mashed potatoes. After my mother cooked the main foods, she called the family to dinner. I looked at the beautiful table and the meal that my mother and I prepared. I smiled and felt very proud. Everyone enjoyed the delicious meal and celebrated. Thanksgiving 2019 was a holiday to remember, and I cannot wait until next year.

SHALIYHA NUNEZ, GRADE 3

### *Summer Academy*

What I like most about Peter Paul is the summer academy. I went to summer camp, I also read books and got to play games. I liked swimming in the blue, warm water at Mt. Olympus and riding in a paddle boat. Tag was my favorite game because I got to run away from my friends. They never could catch me because I was the fastest runner in my class. I have read lots of books about gymnastics, and my teacher helped me learn new things about gymnastics at the Peter Paul After School Academy. When I grow up, I want to become a gymnastics teacher. I think the Peter Paul After School Academy will help me reach my goal.

SHANIYA PEGRAM, GRADE 4

## *Why Peter Paul After School Academy is Important*

Peter Paul After School Academy is important because I learn something new every day. Peter Paul is not just about doing challenges and going on field trips. No, Peter Paul is more than that. It's about showing others that you are not scared to step out and do something that no one else has done. Peter Paul teaches me what my family is trying to teach me, which is learning how to be a good person. Peter Paul also is teaching me how to be a great person. This is why Peter Paul is important to me.

JAZMIN RICHBURG, GRADE 5

### *Peter Paul is the Best*

Peter Paul is the best  
More fun than all the rest  
I like going to lunch  
With my favorite bunch  
Reading and math are fun  
Even better than being in the sun  
The student store is great for me  
All the goodies are free  
I like to go out to play  
Each and every day  
My teacher is the best  
She never stops to rest

JAMAIA SCOTT, GRADE 2

### *Compassion*

I want someone to remember me for being nice and helpful. Also, I want to be remembered for helping classmates with their homework. I also play with people if they are sad.

T'NAAJSHA SIMS, GRADE 4

### *My Legacy, My Dream*

If my mother had not signed me up to attend Peter Paul After School Academy, I know my life would be different. I am so happy that she decided to put me in this awesome program. Peter Paul has allowed me the opportunity to participate in many different programs. I have participated in plays, represented Peter Paul in an interview with the mayor of the city, and I participated in the school talent show.

Peter Paul After School Academy has encouraged me to attend college and become a lawyer. When I become a lawyer, I will be able to help people who have no one to fight for them. People with little or no money are many times not heard by the court system. That is why I want to become a lawyer and one day a judge. When I am a lawyer I will listen and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves.

The legacy I want to leave is that I will make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate. I hope to make a big difference when I become a judge; I am going to listen to everybody.

My mother has always encouraged me to do my very best. She said if I studied hard, good grades would come. The one thing that I always remember is that respect for others is important. That is the legacy I hope to leave, the legacy of respect.

TANYIA STITH, GRADE 5

## *Fashion*

When I grow up, I see myself as a beautiful successful model. I want to attend Virginia Commonwealth University and become a fashion designer. I also want to dance and make others happy. I want to leave as my legacy my gift of creating fashion designs for famous people.

AVANTE TURNER-KIER, GRADE 4

## *Personal Legacy Letter of Aidan Waller*

November 18, 2019

Dear Mrs. Ebony,

At the age of 11, I am writing this legacy letter to you to share the personal legacy of my life. My intention is to let you know my thoughts and feelings about the life I have lived, to honor the relationships that have enriched my life, and to express my gratitude for my family.

What I have valued most in my life is my family because they provide me with survival needs. My life experience has taught me that I am not always right. One of my special memory is when I got on a computer and I deleted all my stuff and my papa gave me ten dollars to make me feel better. I especially cherish the moments when I went to Kings Dominion for the first time.

What has given me strength in difficult times is my family. I believe in my family because they believe in me. I don't regret any day because my life is perfect the way it is. I forgive everyone because you don't know what they're going through. I ask for your forgiveness for all the bad things I have done.

My future hopes and wishes for all of you include that you become a better person.

I ask that you respond to my letter. My expressions of gratitude and love goes to my family. If I were saying "Good-Bye" to you today for the last time, I would want you to know you are the best. May your life be blessed with everything you need.

AIDAN WALLER, GRADE 6

## *Legacy of Opportunity*

Peter Paul leaves the legacy of opportunity for its students. One opportunity that I have is to practice basketball skills at the center. Peter Paul has a gym that is perfect for practicing basketball skills. Most of my teachers know that I like sports and love basketball. They often let me play basketball in the gym at the Center.

I want to leave the legacy of organizing a basketball team at Peter Paul, and then I can connect with other students interested in the sport and make new friendships. Also, I can help students with their shots, free throws, and make sure that they focus on the games. Good grades will be required to play on my team, and I would like to teach middle and high school students.

IYONNA WALKER, GRADE 6

## *Legacy of Love*

The legacy I want to leave is to show LOVE to people who cannot help themselves. My name is Mandelina. I was born In Tanzania, Africa. I am 11 years old, and I'm in the fifth grade at Chimborazo Elementary School. I have four brothers, two sisters, my mother and my father.



One night in Tanzania, we heard bang, bang — noises. There were people crying and screaming, and we were very scared. My father told us to be quiet and to stay under the bed. That night many people were killed. My father signed some papers for us to leave my country. We left our house at 3 a.m. — it was very dark, and we were told to only take two bags for the entire family.

We got on four different airplanes. Next, we got on a big plane. We arrived in America on December 14, 2018, at 9:30 a.m. We were met by a white man who

was our sponsor. We had everything we needed, but then he said, he could not help us anymore.

Then, I met Sister Tebeiar, a nun at my church who was so kind to me and my family. I don't know what my family would have done without the help from the church and Peter Paul After School Academy. The first day I came to Peter Paul After School Academy was very scary for me. The reason it was scary was because things in my country were so different. One of the things I remember was when I heard the water in the bathroom — in my country we had squatting pans with no water. When I heard the water I jumped up, hit my head, and all the children laughed. After most of the children laughed, one girl befriended me, and now she is now my best friend.

One day Ms. Poe came to the school, she was looking for someone to be in a play. She asked me to read a special poem that was written by the founder of Peter Paul after school academy. The poem was called "Love." Before I read the poem, Ms. Poe read it for me, and then she asked me to read it in my native language Swahili. I did, and she loved it!

When my friend and I recited the poem for the Peter Paul After School Academy's 40th Anniversary, the people left with tears in their eyes, they applauded us and took pictures. I loved being on the stage in America!

Peter Paul After School Academy has been so kind to me and my family. I will never forget all the things Peter Paul has done for me. When I was cold, they bought me and my brother coats. When we had no food, they brought boxes of food for my family. They took us on trips – we went swimming and to football games. They also took us to draw things to be displayed at a large building in Richmond, Virginia. I will never forget Peter Paul After School Academy. When I was scared, someone always did something to make me smile. Sometimes it was like they knew that I was sad.

The legacy I want to leave is one of LOVE, like the poem we recited. I want to be a nun, like the nuns who helped us in Africa and the nun who helps us now. One day I want to help children who come to America and don't know anyone. I want to help children who don't have food and clothes to get the things they need. The legacy I want people to remember me for is that I will LOVE and CARE for all people no matter who they are. May God bless Peter Paul after school academy, the teachers and all the things they do for the children.

MANDELENI WASHINSHI, GRADE 5

### *My Legacy as a Stepper*

My legacy is to be remembered as a stepper. I want to be remembered as a stepper, because when I leave Peter Paul, I would like to return with my own step team. I will come up with the moves to the step, and the whole team will perform in different states. Our step team will be called The Stepping Stars. I chose step as my legacy because it helps kids get their anger out.

Performing step helps kids to get their anger out and not be nervous in front of people. I like to step because I get to stomp, but it takes a lot of practice. Practicing is worth it because it prepares you for the final show.

A step experience will form a better sisterhood and it will make a better Peter Paul. I will accomplish all of this by attending a good college that teaches step. First, I want to become this amazing stepper, who finds a group of kids who loves to step and wants to release their anger. Second, I want to receive training and become an even better stepper.

DESHAY WILLIAMS, GRADE 6

### *Peter Paul*

Peter Paul leaves a purposeful legacy of motivation. During my younger days at Peter Paul, the staff motivated me to have a more positive attitude and to make more friends. A more positive attitude helped me to communicate better with everyone and made a big difference in my relationship with others.



*Bellevue Promise Center*

Now, I want to help my friends become better people by encouraging them to become smarter and greater than they are today. I want my story to make a positive impact on kids at Peter Paul and touch those individuals who need help with obeying rules and learning new skills.

Peter Paul is after school program that has grades 2–8. This program encourages

us to think differently and to try new things. We learn while having fun.

I wanted to send this message to Peter Paul to show how much I appreciate all ways it has motivated me. I want people who read this story to understand how this center helps us and what we do on a daily basis.

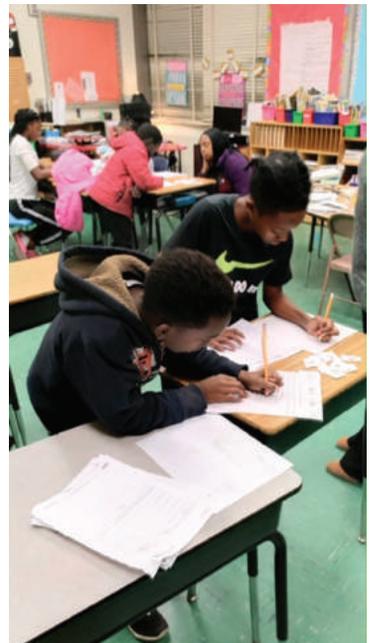
Peter Paul is like a second school for us, but has more fun activities than regular school.

JAYLA WILLIAMS, GRADE 6

### *In My Notebook*

I want people to remember me for my drawings that I draw in my notebook.

SAKIJAH WILLIAMS, GRADE 4 *Fairfield Promise Center*



## *A Great Place to be After School*

I am a fourth-grade student at Bellevue Elementary School, and I am a new student in Peter Paul After School Academy. I started attending Peter Paul in the summer. It was terrific! I had so much fun! I swam in the coffee-colored water and enjoyed riding in the cramped canoe. I got on a rough-riding paddle boat at Mt. Olympus. Everything was fine until I saw a red spider in the canoe. I was frightened, but it slowly crawled away. It didn't spoil my adventure. It was an enjoyable day. We sung all the way back to PPDC.

I decided to return to Peter Paul this school year. It is where I play with my friends, get help with my homework, learn many new things, play outside and go on exciting trips.

The best year of my life was when I was born and the second was the first time, I went to Kings Dominion. I think attending Peter Paul is the third - best year of my life. It's a great place to be after school.

ZA'REEQ WILLIAMS, GRADE 4

I asked my mom if I could I go to Peter Paul After School Academy because I had a great time at the summer academy. My brother didn't want to go with me, but mom said he had to attend. He wanted to stay home and play games on his iPad. My brother enjoys coming to Peter Paul, too. Many of my friends are at Peter Paul. We play games, go outside, and have delicious things to eat. There is always someone to help me with any problem from homework to getting along with others.

I like going on field trips. My favorite trip was to the lake because I played games in the water and went kayaking. I also went to math camp. It was fun because I worked in stations and won prizes. I shared my prizes with my brother.

I am in the third grade and learning many new things. Mrs. Park helps me with my math, and she makes learning math fun. If you want to have a wonderful experience come to Peter Paul after school academy. It can change your life.

MICHELE ZHANG, GRADE 3

## *Legacy from Birth*

I started gymnastics when I was born. I can't remember a time in my life that I was not flipping and jumping. I could always do cartwheels and splits. At first my mom was always telling me how good I was, and that made me very happy because I LOVED GYMNASTICS. I practiced all the time.

As I got older, I wanted a phone because everybody had one. I begged my mother to get me a phone. When my mother bought me a phone, I spent all of my time on the phone, talking about nothing. Most of the time talking on the phone made me very unhappy because I was having disagreements with my friends.

When I talked on the phone, I never practiced flipping or doing cartwheels. I was too busy on my phone and no time for something that gave me much joy. The phone took my attention off what I thought I loved the most. For two years I did nothing when I wasn't on the phone, I was in the bed doing nothing. I was not happy. I was not my old, happy self, which is when I would do cartwheels and splits.

Now that I am older my mother has given me more responsibilities; I realize the phone is not where I should devote all of my attention. Now that I'm not on the phone I have time to remember my good thoughts about gymnastics and remember how much I loved teaching myself how to flip and do cartwheels.

This is a gift that I believe was given to me by God. A gift that one day I hope will give me an opportunity to go to the Olympics. I want to leave the legacy of being the first self-taught gymnast to win a medal.

### *A Holiday Tradition*

Thanksgiving is an important holiday for my family. We do a lot! We have a great meal, the adults spend time together, and the children play indoor and outdoor games. This is a holiday that I really love.

My relatives are invited to my house for Thanksgiving Day dinner. After they arrive, we all say what we are thankful for before we eat. The children give thanks too! Then, the adults sit around, talk and watch TV.

MARIYAH COLE, GRADE 3

# PHOEBUS HIGH SCHOOL



## Margaret Dee, English Teacher

### *Special Place*

My special place will always be Rickards High School. This is an outside school with about 8 different buildings, located in Tallahassee, FL. I picked this place because I spent 3 year of my life here and this school is where I made lots of friends and learned many things. I loved being a student here because everyone was very nice to me, including the teachers. I never once complained about waking up at 6:00 AM to get ready and go to school because of how special it was.

I enjoyed breakfast once I arrived each day. The bell to go to class would ring at 7:25AM and we would move through our seven classes each day. The hallways were similar to my current school, but classes were grouped by subject. For example, most of the different language and literature classes were in the back of the school near the library.

The school colors were the same as my current school, blue and gold. Rickards had a lot of property. In the back of the school were two baseball/softball fields and the track. The hallways were just like Phoebus but just take away part of the walls and the roof was being held up by metal poles. The cafeteria and the auditorium were separate buildings, much like a college campus.

This place holds so many of my best memories because I had the best friends I've ever had there. I hated to leave, knowing I would not be able to replace those friends. We had so much fun there. Because this school had an outside common space, they would sometimes invite a DJ and we would listen to music and dance while we were at lunch. My favorite week in this school was always homecoming because not only we would be hyping our football team up for their game, but the school would have the most fun pep rally ever, complete with prizes such as school shirts.

I will always cherish Rickards High and the friends I made there.

As a 15 year old boy I thought making friends would be hard. I was so fortunate to discover this was not the case. Some of my most treasured relationships came from my time here. I hated to leave.

JAVON ALBERT, GRADE 12

### *A Special Place: My Grandmother's Grave*

I've been to a lot of places in my life. I go places all day, everyday. Every place that I go to has a meaning behind it, even if it's something simple. If I had to choose the most important place to me, I would choose my grandmother's grave. This may sound depressing, but hear me out. This specific place brings back a lot of memories. I go there to talk to her, and I love the scenery.

My grandmother's grave is the most important place to me because it brings back a lot of memories. She suffered with breast cancer and died in 2012. Now she is at peace and no longer in pain. The flowers have a nice smell and it takes me back to walking through the front door of her house. Even though she is not here with me physically, I can still hear her calling my name.

Another reason why my grandmother's grave is important to me is because I can go there to talk to her. She's not sitting next to me anymore physically, but she's still listening to me as I speak. My mom and I never really had a close relationship, so I would always go and talk to my grandmother. She was like my second mom. Even if I can't make it to her grave, I just look up at the sky to let her know what's going on. My grandmother is the only person that I can trust and I tell her everything, still to this day.

My grandmother's grave is important to me because of the scenery. Some people may not think it's a big deal, but I do. Her headstone, with her picture on it, is so pretty and flowers surrounding her grave have a

pleasant smell. It is just so quiet and peaceful. I never hear any noise or disruptions from the community. The grass is always cut and neat. I can just sit there all day. No matter what or the weather, they make sure to keep the scenery pretty and respectful.

Every place in life can have meaning to it. My grandmother's grave is very special to me. It brings back a lot of memories and allows me to still feel connected to my grandmother. I always go there to talk to her and I love the scenery. When I am there, I feel so serene and at peace.

BRIANNA BANKS, GRADE 12

### *Chicken Fajitas*

Chicken Fajitas always bring my family together. For some reason, they just make us happy. When sharing the fajitas, we always talk about how the chicken is so crispy and the cheese is so gooey.

As soon as I hit my front door, I know my Grandpa is preparing chicken fajitas. I can smell the chicken, and the spices. My Grandpa knows just how much spice to add, and how long to cook the chicken so it doesn't taste dry. I add the cheese and get the soft shells for him. I like when we have this meal. It is my favorite and my Grandpa and I always talk when preparing it. These special talks over the fajitas have made our bond very strong. I have helped prepare this meal so many times, I don't even have to look at the recipe. I hope to continue this tradition with my own kids someday.

#### *Chicken Fajitas Recipe*

- 4 tablespoons canola oil, divided
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1–1/2 teaspoons seasoned salt
- 1–1/2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1–1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika
- 1–1/2 pounds chicken breast
- 1/2 medium sweet red pepper
- 1/2 medium green pepper
- 4 green onions
- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 6 flour tortillas

Optional: Shredded cheddar cheese, taco sauce, salsa, guacamole and sour cream

Slice the chicken into thin strips and cook. Slice the peppers, onion and spices and cook with the chicken. Warm tortillas and serve.

ZACHERY BRYANT, GRADE 12

### *Birthday Mac and Cheese*

Warm and cheesy white baked macaroni and cheese is a very important recipe to me. Every year my mom makes me a different birthday meal. One dish is always present though, her signature white mac and cheese. It is a birthday tradition my mom began when I was ten years old. My mom was telling me how my great grandmother used to make the dish for her on her birthday. She was describing how good it was, so I wanted to try it for myself. That that year our tradition was born. She used great-grandma's recipe and when I ate my

first bite, the taste of the different cheeses danced across my taste buds. At that moment I knew I wanted to have this for my birthday every year. I'm not sure exactly how she makes. I know it is macaroni noodles and a blend of 3 different cheeses. My mom is the only person who knows exactly how I like it. It is so delicious. She says when I have children of my own she will share with me the recipe and show me how I can continue the tradition.

My mom makes birthdays special. She sets the table formally, and has the food set up like a little buffet. My family and I eat the meal featuring the buttery white mac and cheese by candlelight. The amazing smell of the blended cheeses makes my mouth salivate. Watching her bringing in the large casserole dish of the bubbly treat, is always exciting. Not only do we enjoy the mac and cheese, but my mom, my brothers and I talk, laugh and overall enjoy the feeling of each others presence.

Birthdays are always special in my house. My mom always makes sure of that. The white macaroni and cheese is my favorite birthday tradition. It is my favorite dish, as well as a piece of family history. Sharing it with my mom and my brothers only makes it better.

SHAHEIM CLEMENTE, GRADE 12

### *My Special Place*

Empty, vacant hallways; dreary, drafty classrooms; unclean and falling apart; these are the words I use to describe the prison I call home. This prison is also known as Phoebus High School. PHS is a two-story box built into the side of a hill called a berm. Honestly, it resembles a bomb shelter. There are no windows in the building except the front and back entrances, so for seven hours a day, five days a week students are secluded from the outside world. Despite not having windows, there is somehow always a draft. The HVAC unit seems to be perpetually broken so it is always cold or extremely hot. The HVAC unit above my history class sounds like it is going to fall apart and sparks occasionally, but no one seems to be in a hurry to fix it. Even though Phoebus sounds like a depressing place, it's my home school where I've made so many memories and met so many friends. I wouldn't trade it for anywhere else.

My freshman year started out on a rough note. I was sick and I didn't start my PHS journey until second semester, and even then I was only attending for half days. This meant I was only in the building for first and second blocks. Everyone was very hesitant about me because I still looked sick and I was quiet. I was able to find two friends, Dustin and Cat, to talk to at lunch. Dustin was a tall, skinny boy with short brown hair; he was a nerd, but we shared the same humor. Cat was short and chubby with ginger colored hair. She was like the sun, always bright and bubbly and much too innocent for her own good. Dustin and I always teased her and joke around. They were my first friends. We did not share any classes together so we only hung at lunch. The cafeteria is right in the middle of the building. It's an open dimly lit area with blue and yellow columns, it looks like every other high school lunch room but less taken care of. The food is bland and most likely expired, the milk is always half frozen sometimes we find bugs but they still attempt to feed us.

Sophomore year was a bit of a blur with everything going on but one class that sticks to my memory is my earth science class. My teacher was named Mrs. English, she was a tall blonde unstable woman who came to Phoebus thinking she could make a difference and that dealing with high schoolers would be a cakewalk. She quit in the second week and never came back. So in the schools attempted to divide the kids evenly amongst the teachers, administration put some of us in a spare classroom with a permanent sub. Her name was Ms. Walker, she was a tall curvy woman with a dark complexion and long dreads. The classroom they had us in was a small room with six tables and a white board in the front, the lights flickered and there were water stains all over the ceiling probably from a leaky pipe. It was a small class of only 13 students that didn't want to be there. The teacher set us four students to a table; my table was in the front and had only three students. This is where I met my best friend Kiera. Our personalities instantly clicked and we were equally as

clueless about the subject so we helped each other get the work done. The teacher would always get annoyed with us since we wouldn't stop talking but didn't say too much because we got the work done. Outside of class I was more social and finally found the crowd I fit with and met some underclassmen that I became a mentor for. We became a family of sorts always having each others backs and willing to help out.

Junior year was a bit of a roller coaster between everyone trying to build up their credits to your typical highschool drama. One of the classes I was in was culinary which was a delightfully frustrating experience. This was a time full of pop quizzes and memorizing the many skills it takes to be a chef. In my school we had our own kitchen full of new shiny cooking equipment. Nothing is more frustrating than watching someone else work in the kitchen. We had a group of boys who could never really do anything right but provided comedic relief. My friend Abby was in the class (even though she skipped most of the time) along with my friend Soul and a kid who got bussed over from Kecoughtan High school named Brandy. We were a power team in the classroom even though we barely paid attention half the time. During catering events Chef Walker our teacher always pushed us to make everything perfect; my job was a runner which means I was the one who carried out the food whether it was to the guest or to the other chefs. There was one time that a burner caught on fire and everyone was freaking out trying to find the fire extinguisher, we had to cut the event early.

As for senior year . . . well it is still happening so we'll see how it turns out. Phoebus has its ups and downs but I'm glad I can call it mine.

SADIE EVERETT, GRADE 12

### *My Own Fort*

Whether we consciously recognize it or not, places are emotionally powerful components of our lives. The significance of places is different for each person. A place can be important because it provides you an identity or helps you realize your identity, as well as spark an experience you'll never forget. For me, one of these places is Fort Monroe.

Fort Monroe is uniquely important to me because it was the first place I had a job. Even though it is one of the many tourist attractions in Hampton, Fort Monroe is a calming, quiet place with very few residents. Regardless of how big a tourist group was, it still remained quiet. My job was to make sure the fort remained as clean as possible and to give people information about how to get around the fort. Sometimes I acted as a tour guide for groups of visitors. While I worked, all I could hear was the sound of footsteps on stone and the sway of the waves that resided in the moat. Whenever I took a deep breath, all I could smell was clean, warm air. Sometimes when my work friends and I would go to the old and forbidden parts of the fort, we would smell all types of things like dust, dirt, and the faint whiff of salt water from the Chesapeake Bay in the air. I saw many new and unique things while working on Fort Monroe. never knew In one enclosure, I saw stalactites forming and unfinished parts of the fort. I learned about, Maggie Walker, a very important role model for African-Americans. I went kayaking and explored the bay and the beaches.

I love to walk the fort alone. The cut stone used to make the fort was always cool to the touch, even during those summer days. On days when I cleaned the beach I could feel my body sinking into the sand with each step. There is a secluded area of beach that the public has no clue about. There are rocks piled up into a little hill, and shells scattered in front of it. It is a very peaceful part of Fort Monroe.

I did not get to have a relaxed summer, but the job I had made the hard work worthwhile. I had a lot of laughs, learned a lot, saw many things, and went to places and residences not too many people get to experience at all. Fort Monroe is uniquely one of my favorite places, not only because it was the site of my first job, but because of the experiences I shared with my team. Fort Monroe gave me an experience I will never forget.

ALMANDO GIBBS, GRADE 12

## *Fried Chicken*

Every night, as soon as I arrive home from football practice, I head straight to the kitchen to see what my mom is fixing dinner. I always get a big smile on my face when I see her, and when I see she is fixing her famous fried chicken my smile only gets bigger. She has been making fried chicken for me since I was a toddler, and I have always loved it. It is hot, crunchy and juicy. I love watching my mom prepare it, almost as much as I love eating it.

My mom's fried chicken tastes absolutely amazing. I am always surprised my how simple the ingredients are: chicken, seasoning an egg and flour. I used to think it took a long time to prepare, but in reality it only takes about 30 minutes tops. While mom prepares the skillet and coats the chicken, we always sit and talk. I tell her about my day and football, and she shares with me how her day went.

My mother actually showed me how to make her fried chicken. I made an attempt to fix it myself, but it did not turn out like my mother's. I just could not quite get it to taste like hers. I let her stick to cooking the chicken because it is definitely so much better than mine.

My mother is a great cook overall. I do not think anyone can top her fried chicken. Her chicken always brings a smile to my face when she makes it and I love the time we share while she is preparing it.

JACHAI GRAY, GRADE 12

## *Special People*

Most people have one special person in their life that they look up to and admire. In my life, I have two special people who are very important to me. I am very thankful for my Uncle Kwasi and my Grandma Sybil. These two are the reasons why I am so passionate about the things I want to do and accomplish in my life. My Uncle Kwasi is a strong person. He is very intelligent also. Nothing stops this man. My Grandma Sybil is a superwoman. She balances her many responsibilities and is a sweet lady, with a heart of gold. I am not sure where I would be without them.

As a little kid, I watched my uncle go to jail. He learned from his mistakes and changed his life. Once released, he worked hard and was accepted to the University of Maryland. He was the first person in my family to go to college. As a student, my uncle used to take me around the campus. He showed me where his classes were, and told me if I worked hard in school that I could go to college too. This place also has a special meaning to me. Unfortunately, my uncle was killed in a motorcycle accident just before his graduation. I was heartbroken. I can still hear him encouraging me to work hard and get my education.

My Grandma Sybil is another major influence in my life. She is from Kingston, Jamaica, and is one of the strongest women in my family. She really is a superwoman, she can do it all. My grandmother has always been there for me. She has taken care of me, fed me, and helped me financially. Beyond that, I can always go and talk to her about anything. She will carefully listen and give me honest advice. One of my favorite memories with my grandma is when she cooks plantains. Plantains are a Jamaican recipe and one of my favorite foods. They smell so amazing. My grandmother knew how much I loved them so she would prepare them especially for me.

I am grateful for the presence of both my Uncle Kwasi and my Grandma Sybil in my life. They taught me many things and always provided me with unconditional love and support. I hope that I make them proud.

KEONTE GRAY, GRADE 12

## *My Food Memories*

Football Sundays have always been special to me. From watching the game I love, with the people I love, to eating what I love: Sausage and Cheese Dip. It is something I look forward to doing every week. There is just something about football Sundays that really brings joy to my weekend and brings my family together.

On Sunday I am always in such a good mood. I wake up, head in the living room and sit on the couch. I flip the TV to the football game and grab a huge bowl of my favorite, sausage and cheese dip, an entire bag of Tostito chips. I enjoy the dip and the games all day. I enjoy Sunday football gatherings so much, I actually go to sleep early on Saturday nights just to try and make Sunday arrive sooner.

I remember the first time my mother made the dip for us. I was ten years old, sitting in my room watching the Steelers versus Ravens game. The smell wafted up the stairs. I had to find out what that glorious scent was. I floated to the kitchen to find out. The cheesy spicy smell made my mouth water and I couldn't wait for it to be done so I could taste it. My mom made me a bowl and I devoured it. I made two more. Soon other family members followed the scent and joined me. That day led to our Sunday tradition. The dip really helped bring our family together.

My family is not big on traditions, but this is something we do every week. We do not have special holiday traditions and we don't do a lot on birthdays, but we make sure we never forget football Sundays and our dip.

JAHDEN JACKSON, GRADE 12

### *The Big Game*

It was a Saturday morning, but not just any Saturday morning, it was the AAU basketball championship game. My team was matched against our rivals, the Hampton Hoyas. Every game we had played this season, despite being evenly matched, they had won and my team wanted this win today something fierce.

The game was intense. There was a lot of back and forth. Literally, there must have been twenty lead changes! My team was playing hard. Finally we reached the fourth quarter. I looked up at all the parents in the crowd and I could see all of them giving our team the thumbs up. They wanted this game as much as we did. We, as a team, knew we had to get the job done.

In the fourth quarter, the intensity of the game increased. There were elbows being thrown, hard driving, and the rebounding was insane. The defense on both teams had stepped it up. With about three minutes left in the 4th quarter, we saw our lead slipping away. We realized they were up by 7, the biggest lead of the night. If it wasn't for Justin and Tyriq each hitting a three to get us back into the game, we probably wouldn't have been in a very favourable position. Once again both teams went back and forth. Then, with ten seconds to go, I stole the ball from the Hoyas top guard. I dribbled down court and went to lay the ball up, and got fouled hard with 0.3 seconds left on the clock. I went to the free throw line to take my two shots. I took a deep breath and shot the first one. It went in and tied the game. On my second shot, I took one last, long deep breath and shot the ball. The ball bounced on the rim for what felt like forever. I was shaking. I kept thinking what if it doesn't go in, and then the ball went right through the net. The whole gym went crazy. I was filled with so much emotion. It was crazy! I had just made the game winning shot, and I could not believe it! My coach grabbed me and hugged me. We were champions!!!

DONTAE LEE, GRADE 12

### *A Special Place*

The world is filled with many interesting places. Each of these places hold some sort of significance for the people that visit them. I have a place that is near and dear to me. This place is Disney World in Orlando, Florida and it holds many special memories for me. I've visited this place a handful of times and I look forward to visiting again and again. Disney World is one of the most visited attractions in the world. In my opinion, it is nothing short of amazing.

The first time I visited the park was in 2006, when I was only four years old. I had never been to Florida before and it was only the second time I would fly on a plane. Disney movies were something I really en-

joyed as a child, and going to Disney World to meet the characters I loved, filled my heart with the utmost excitement. The trip was more than I could ever imagine. I met Mickey and Minnie, rode lots of rides and enjoyed parades and fireworks with my family. I returned home wondering when I would get to return to Disney World.

I returned to Disney in 2017. My father bought tickets for my family and I to go to the park to celebrate my brother's birthday. I was older this time, and I wondered if because of my age, the park would not seem as magical. Not to worry, while this visit was different the trip was every bit as magical and my family and I made even more special memories.

JAYDEN MCRAE, GRADE 12

### *Favorite Meal*

Thanksgiving dinner has always been my favorite meal. And it might surprise you to know, it's my favorite not because of the food, but because of the people I share it with. Thanksgiving dinner is always shared with my mom, dad, brothers and sisters, and my grandmother. When I was younger we used to eat at my grandmother's house, now my mom hosts the meal. Anytime I hear someone say Thanksgiving, it reminds me of being surrounded by family, sharing laughter, memories and great food.

Our meal is the typical Thanksgiving fare: turkey, dressing, ham, hot buttery rolls, yams, collard greens and of course, dessert. The turkey is always the highlight. It is filled with delicious spices such as smoked paprika, basil, oregano, and garlic. It is so delicious. I also enjoy the yams. My grandmother makes the best candied yams ever! Since I was a little girl, I have always enjoyed mixing my yams and my collard greens together. My grandmother just shakes her head and laughs when I do this.

I love sharing this meal with my family. The food is so good, and the time we share is lots of fun. I hope this is a tradition I can continue.

ATRAVEIA NIXON, GRADE 12

### *An Important Event in my Life*

January 20, 2015 marked an important day in my life. My little sister was born. This day is important to me because I was an only child for a very long time and I always wanted a sibling. The day I found out my mom was expecting was really exciting for me. I was finally going to have a sister I could bond and do things with.

The journey of my mom's pregnancy was fun for me because I got to see my sister grow in my mother's stomach. I went to every doctor's appointment and I saw her kick and move around before she even arrived. I was even able to see her face on the 3D sonogram and hear her heartbeat. It was thrilling. I knew soon all the waiting would be over and I would finally be able to meet my baby sister in person and hold her.

As my mom's due date approached, I helped my mom and dad prepare for my sister's arrival. We set up her nursery and went shopping for clothes. It is overwhelming how much a tiny baby needs. We were finally ready for her arrival. The waiting was torture. I couldn't stop thinking about what she would look like and be like. She was really on her way to the world.

The first moment when I met my baby sister was amazing. She was so small with lots of hair and pale skin. She was the most beautiful thing I had ever seen. When I held her in my arms she felt light as a feather. I had been waiting 9 long months to finally meet my best friend. All the waiting was finally over, I was officially a big sister.

KIONNA PEARSON, GRADE 12

## *Yacaroni*

Thanksgiving dinner brings back memories of spending time with cousins, watching overage uncles try to play Madden, and of course, the food. This is most beloved part of the whole holiday. I love it because my family always creates different mixtures of unique foods. Yacaroni was born from one of these Thanksgiving gatherings, and it is one of my favorites.

Yacaroni is a mixture of macaroni and cheese and yams. When I tell people this, they look at me like I am crazy. Some say that it is a bad mix, or that mac and cheese and yams just don't go together. My family and I think differently. We believe that the elegant, sweet, gooey yams compliment the cheesy mac and cheese. The saltiness of the mac and cheese, and the sweetness of the yams blend and just taste different from anything I've had before. Even the colors of the two dishes, orange and yellow mesh together well.

The dish became a family favorite. As we prepare the yacaroni, my family and my extended family always laugh and joke about the crazy looks we get when we share the recipe. While preparing it, we also catch up on each other's lives and reflect on the past year. I will always treasure the memories of that dish and time with my Uncle Gary, my dad's twin and my cousins. At night after the festivities had settled, my cousins and I would watch movies while enjoying the yacaroni leftovers.

I never expected something so simple as macaroni and cheese and yams would create so many memories. The Yacaroni tradition certainly bonded my family in a special way.

ZION PORTER-ERVIN, GRADE 12

## *The Best Cheese Dip Ever*

The best cheese dip is not a regular dip. It's not for your average chip. It's a dip that brings memories and evokes happiness. From the creamy taste of cheese, to the spiciness of the peppers, there is love in every bite. Every year the Cowboys and the Redskins play a huge rivalry game. Most of my family are either Cowboys fans or Redskins fans, so when that game is played the family gathers at my grandma's house and this dip is always the central dish.

One side of my grandma's living room is set up for the Cowboys fans and the other side is for the Redskins fans. While we wait for the game to start, the smell of the dip wafts throughout the house. When I start to smell the cheese burning a little bit I know it is time for the spices to be added. I feel compelled to go over and smell the spices. I always end up sneezing because of the peppers and onions. This is also when my grandma kicks me out of the kitchen. When the smell of the dip hits me, I get hungry and excited for the game to start. I always get excited when I smell food but that melting cheese smell evokes a different feeling. Watching these games together and enjoying this dip are very special times in my family.

The special dip somehow evokes memories of past gatherings. I always think of loved ones that I have lost. It sounds weird, but it's true. The memories are sometimes sad, but the sadness quickly turns into joy. Simply being together, enjoying the game and the dip is so much fun! We laugh about previous gatherings, share stories about lost loved ones, and talk about the game. As a Cowboys fan, these gatherings are even more fun when they win.

### *Best Cheese Dip Recipe*

- ♦ 1/2 pound bulk spicy pork sausage
- ♦ 1/2 pound ground beef
- ♦ 1 onion, diced
- ♦ 1 (2 pound) loaf processed cheese food, cubed
- ♦ 1 (28 ounce) can diced tomatoes with green chile peppers
- ♦ 1 (10.75 ounce) can condensed cream of mushroom soup

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Crumble sausage and ground beef into the skillet; add the onion. Cook and stir the beef mixture until the meat is crumbly, evenly browned, and no longer pink, (about 10 minutes). Drain and discard any excess grease. Pour into a slow cooker. Layer cheese food cubes atop meat mixture. Blend diced tomatoes with green chile peppers in a blender until smooth; pour over the cheese cubes along with the cream of mushroom soup. Stir the mixture. Cook on High, stirring occasionally until the cheese is completely melted.

IVY PRITCHETT, GRADE 12

### *My Special Place*

Clinton, Maryland is very special to me for many reasons. I was born there and I have some good memories of living in a small apartment with my mom and dad. We hardly had anything, but we made the best out of it. We spent time with each other and we were very happy.

Some of my best memories are of snow days. Hampton, VA doesn't get a lot of snow, but Maryland did. It was always exciting to get a snow day. My family and friends would have huge snowball fights. We were very competitive. Usually, my friends and I would win. After the fight, we would go inside to warm up and drink hot chocolate. We would rehash the snowball fight while watching the snowfall, hoping we would get another day off so we could do it all again.

Maryland holds a special place in my heart because it's where I'm from and where I spent most of my childhood. I miss it, and hope to one day return.

TERRENCE PRUE, GRADE 12

### *The Great Life In Seldendale*

Seldendale Farms is where I grew up and learned a lot about people. I was young when I lived there, but I had the best of friends. My friends and I played a lot of games, hung out and walked everywhere. Often we would stay the night at each other's houses, have parties and more. My grandmother lived out there too. Her house was in the way back of the neighborhood, and it was the most fun spot out there.

As I grew older and matured, I began to lose touch with some of my Seldendale friends. I always look back on those times fondly. I loved it there, mainly because of the atmosphere and the fact I got to go outside everyday.

Nowadays kids don't get to play outside in the neighborhood like we used to because the streets today are being overrun with violence. It isn't fair and is such a shame that kids today are subjected to so much violence at a young age. When I was young, I was always going to my friend's house. His parents must have thought I lived there too. We would hang out and go outside. We played Lone Wolf or Manhunt and Curve ball. Lone Wolf and Manhunt were always played at night because it was scarier and more fun in the dark. Both games are similar to hide and seek. running Curve ball was played with a basketball and you had to hit the ball on the other curve for it to bounce back so you could get points. Playing games and spending so much time with my friends created strong bonds. Unfortunately, I don't get to see my Seldendale crew as much anymore. We have all grown and life has taken us in different directions.

Seldendale Farms was very special to me. I miss the freedom I had then. Some days I wish I could go back.

DAVID RICHARDSON IV, GRADE 12

### *A Special Place*

My special place is not too extravagant, yet it holds lots of sentiment. My bedroom acts as a fortress of solitude, or an escape from the rest of the house. My bedroom is a place where I can go to be separated from

the household, or even society. My bedroom can be decorated as I wish and I have full control on where everything in the room is placed. My bedroom is my safe haven.

My bedroom is full of bright colors and decorations that have been hand-made over the years. A mountain of pillows and teddy bears covers my bed so every time I lay down there is always some adjustment that needs to be made. The poor little night stand is covered in baby powder, lotions, perfume, and dust-covered faux flowers that always stay in season. There is also a collection of snow globes. The night stand isn't the only item clustered with special items. My TV stand acts as another type of dresser. It is covered with pens and other knick knacks. The running water from my fish tank calms the atmosphere. Incense or candles are always burning to give a sweet smell and the walls are papered with colorful posters. My room is not just for my enjoyment, it's also for others. When someone is invited into my room, they are granted access to all of the pleasures.

A room tells a lot about a person from the color to the decorations, smell and the overall atmosphere. I feel that my room has a welcoming atmosphere and it reflects the unique aspects of my personality. Every snowglobe, candle, poster, and painting has a story behind it. These items are held close to my heart and are what makes my room special.

BRIANNA ROBERTS, GRADE 12

### *My Special Place*

The most important place in my life is my grandma's house. She lives in downtown Newport News on the corner of 21st street. She lives in a two story house. It's white on the outside and built on top of a hill. The house has an American flag on the porch, and it has a huge backyard. Once inside, straight ahead is the kitchen where she cooks the best meals ever. As soon as I open the door it smells like her cooking, cleaning products and her favorite perfume.

I've had a lot of great memories in this house. One of my favorite memories is when my bestfriend and I stayed up until 4am playing video games, shooting Nerf guns and watching TV. Another great memory is when all of my family came down from Tennessee and we were able to catch up with each other's lives. We just spent time as a family and had so much fun.

I remember baking cookies and watching Christmas movies over the holidays and feeling so stuffed from all the food we ate on Thanksgiving. My grandmother's house is where all of my family goes to gather so it is really full of a lot of family memories.

I really love her house. I lived with her for most of my life. It feels like home. When I walk in her house, I feel a whole different type of energy. It's an energy of happiness and love. This place is important to me because I really love my grandma. She has always been there for me and never lets me down. I can always count on her when I need her. If it wasn't for me living with her for many years, I don't think I would be as successful and as smart as I am now, without her influence. She made me study everyday or read a book when I got home from school. She continues to push me to be the best I can be. When I think of her house, it makes me happy and I would rather be there than any other place in the world.

TY'SHAWN RUTLEDGE, GRADE 12

### *My Special Place*

The most special place to me is Darling stadium, in Hampton, VA. The large brick structure has stands that can hold up to 5000people. It sits on the corner of Kecoughtan Road and Victoria Boulevard, and has two entrances. It has track around the football field. The house that I grew up in is right outside of the stadium. I can literally walk five steps from the house and be inside. This is where I played much of my high school football career, where I made lifelong friends and lots of memories.

Darling Stadium is home to my favorite memory of my high school football career. This is where I caught my first interception. Catching that interception in front of hundreds of people made me feel like I was in a movie. That play contributed to my team's win, and my teammates and coaches were so proud of me. I felt so alive. That moment pushed me to keep playing football. I worked hard and I earned my starting position.

Darling Stadium will forever be a special place to me. When I step into the stadium it brings back so many great memories.. When I have children of my own, I will bring them here and share my memories with them. Hopefully, I will someday have a son of my own who plays football there and is able to make memories like I did.

TA'VAWN RUTLEDGE, GRADE 12

### *That Special Cake*

Thanksgiving, traditionally means a feast of delicious food. This particular food item means something more to me because it is made by a very special person in my life. When my mother makes her triple chocolate cake, it always brings my family together, and that is why I love this ooey-gooney, light, yummy cake. My mom's triple chocolate cake is, honestly, the best cake I have ever had, and I am not a big fan of chocolate. My mom has trouble breathing on her own at times, and sometimes she has to use her oxygen tank. This is part of the reason why we usually just have this cake on a holiday. Some Thanksgivings I know my mom has not felt well, yet, she tries to push through because she knows how much my family loves this cake.

The cake is very moist, never dry. I am sure that is because of the pudding that is added to the batter. My mom also uses sour cream in the cake, instead of butter. She says this makes the cake smooth and moist. When I was little I loved to watch my mom prepare the cake batter. I always hoped she would let me lick the mixer beater or the bowl. Now that I am older I still enjoy watching my mom prepare the cake. We talk and laugh while she cooks. While the cake is delicious, it is the memories I share with my mom while we cook that really make it so special.

Most people have a favorite food that they love for a particular reason. There is just something special about how it tastes, smells, or maybe who makes it. My mom's triple chocolate cake is this dish for my family. I don't think my family will get tired of this cake. When I have a family of my own, I hope to carry on this tradition and make this cake for my kids.

#### *Triple Chocolate Cake*

- 1 yellow cake mix with pudding
- 1 pk chocolate instant pudding mix
- ½ cup sugar
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- ¾ cup water
- 4 large eggs
- 1 carton sour cream
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips

Prepare cake batter according to the cake box directions. Mix in additional directions and bake. Top cooled cake with powdered sugar.

AUTUMN SMITH, GRADE 12

### *My Grandma's Fried Chicken*

My grandmother brought my family together with her love for food, especially fried chicken. My grandmother's house was always a place of relaxation and comfort, and I could never forget the smell of her fried

chicken. When I was younger, I remember walking into my grandma's kitchen straight from church every Sunday morning and smelling the crispy fried chicken she always made. The recipe my grandmother followed was the same recipe her mother taught her. It was always my favorite meal to eat. The key to her fried chicken was the crispy, crunchy skin. She only used simple ingredients: buttermilk, eggs, flour, and her secret spices.

Every Sunday morning, my family and I would go to church. It was fun, but I really went to church because I knew after I would be going straight to grandma's house for lunch and her fried chicken. We lived just down the street from my grandma's house, so it was a quick walk. My grandma usually only needed an hour to get the chicken finished because everything was already prepared the previous night. She just had to put it in the oven. As soon as we hit the front steps, we could smell the food. We ran upstairs into the bathroom to wash our hands. There were six of us, including me, so we would be fighting to wash our hands with one sink. After everybody washed their hands we would go sit at the table.

As we sat at the table, the first thing we did was examine the dinner table and tableware because every Sunday our grandma would switch it up. This particular Sunday grandma had a fall theme, so the table had an orange tablecloth with leaves on it. The utensils were silver, but they were wrapped in orange napkins with a ribbon and our names. Our cups were filled with our favorite drinks and everyone had a specific seat at the table. We could smell the mac and cheese. It smelled so good and made our mouths water. All my siblings and I could do was drool all over ourselves while we waited for the food to be placed on the table.

The fried chicken was always the most important part of the meal. Oh my gosh, as soon as my grandma came through the kitchen doors, you could hear the sizzling of the skin and the smell was amazing. It was like heaven on earth. My grandma would give everybody their plate and we would say our grace. As we ate, my grandma would usually ask us questions about things that we learned in church. My siblings and I are not worried about what happened at church. All we could think about was the plate filled with good food in front of us.

Grandma's fried chicken was always my favorite dish. I always looked forward to those Sunday dinners. The recipe has been passed down to my mother and me now, but we can't replicate the dish. Every so often I will ask my grandma what makes her chicken so good. She never answers. She simply replies, when you have children of your own, you'll understand.

LATORI STRICKLAND, GRADE 12

### *A Recipe for Life*

A spoonful of smiles, a jar of joy, a cup of kisses and a handful of hugs is a recipe for love. It is a perfect picture of an old family recipe that is more than just a recipe, it's a memory. The only thing that could possibly capture an aspect of me and my family would be my grandma's three meat three cheese lasagna. The recipe has been passed down for generations. It is only made for special occasions, yet it always reminds me of the three most important women in my life.

In my family we only had that one person who can really cook from scratch. My grandma was that person and anytime you wanted a good home cooked meal my grandma's house was where the whole family would gather. Every holiday, my grandma would make her famous lasagna and sit it in the center of the table surrounded by many other foods designed to compliment the lasagna. After blessing the food, my family and I enjoyed a meal like no other. Every bite was warm and flavorful. The lasagna was the very definition of comfort food. When the meal was over, all I could think of was how good it was to be home, and how much I enjoyed being with family.

Unfortunately, my grandma passed away. To this day, every bite of my grandma's three meat three cheese lasagna brings me to tears. Not only because of how well the flavors blend together, but because of the memo-

ries of her that the dish brings back. This recipe is more than just the ingredients that goes into it. It's a legacy that has now touched three generations and will forever connect me to my grandma.

### *Three Meat Three Cheese Lasagna*

- ♦ 1 ½ pack of Pepperoni
  - ♦ 1 Green pepper (minced well)
  - ♦ ¼ teaspoon of Onion powder
  - ♦ 1 Onion (minced well)
  - ♦ ½ teaspoon of Garlic powder
  - ♦ 1 pack of shredded Pepper jack cheese
  - ♦ Salt (add to taste)
  - ♦ 1 pack of shredded Cheddar Cheese
  - ♦ Black pepper (add to taste)
  - ♦ 1 pack of shredded Mozzarella Cheese
  - ♦ 1 pound of Ground Beef
- |                        |
|------------------------|
| 1 pound of Sausage     |
| 1 box Lasagna Noodles  |
| 2 ¼ cup of pasta sauce |

CHALAYA TAYLOR, GRADE 12

### *Divorce*

My parent's marriage had many problems and as a result, they ended up divorced. I was four years old when they realized their problems could not be fixed and they decided to split. My family and I lived in a small suburban home in Gadsden, Alabama at the time. I don't remember much about the divorce itself; mainly because of my age and lack of awareness at the time. I know my siblings were privileged to the "behind the scenes" stuff as they were older than me. I do remember the day when everything fell apart. My parents had a terrible argument. In the middle of the argument they turned and asked me who I wanted to live with. As a child, my initial response was "both of you." Even at age four, I knew that was not possible and in that moment my life was forever changed.

I ended up choosing to live with my mom. I wasn't certain of either choice. I loved both of my parents very much and felt torn. Once the divorce was finalized, my mom moved my siblings and me to Virginia. We stayed with my grandmother until my mom got back on her feet. We moved into our own apartment, and eventually into a rental house. After a few years, my mom bought her own house and we moved again. While I was happy, I could not help but wonder if I had made the right decision. I still felt torn over the situation. My mom eventually remarried. She held her wedding in the front yard of our house. My siblings and I grew up. Today my siblings have all moved out on their own and are living their own lives. I am "the last of the Mohicans" and will be cruising into my own adulthood in just a few months.

To this day, I wonder if I made the right decision. I ask myself what would the other road have looked like? How would I have turned out? What would my mom have done if I had moved with my dad? This event and the decisions I made because of it forever changed me. It is a huge part of who I am today.

NOVAL TOLBERT, GRADE 12

### *DSI Recollection*

I like to think the most important event in my youth was when I first acquired my Nintendo DSi in 2008. This was also when I got a Nintendo Wii. I remember opening up my presents, and being ecstatic over receiving this little handheld gaming device. My previous devices had broken, which was traumatic for me at

my young age. My sadness stopped the moment I opened up my gift and saw the light baby blue DSi. All of the games I used to play on my DS Lites could now be transferred over to this new handheld, and I didn't hesitate to start setting it up.

Each and every day afterwards, I played my old games. These included titles such as New Super Mario Bros. DS, Mario Kart DS, Catz, Nintendogs, Diddy Kong Racing DS, and Mario and Luigi: Bowser's Inside Story. I still have these games to this day. I think I have worn them out. I struggled with low level cognitive function at a young age, and my mom used to help me beat these games

Overtime, my sister and her pink gaming device introduced me to somewhat of an early gaming app. This was the Nintendo DSi E-Shop. She also put an app called Flipnote Hatena on my device. She had previously shown me a few clips of animation that looked exactly like a flipnote of a stick figure falling off a cliff. For whatever reason, I found this to be the most hilarious thing ever, and demanded that it be put onto my DSi. She did so begrudgingly, and unknowingly she connected me to a whole new world.

On this application, I was able to make animations in a similar manner to real life hand drawn animations, upload them so others could see, and even edit other gamer's animations, if they were permitted it. Essentially I could sync up my main character and have the singing or moving to the beat of any song of I chose. Now, around this time I was going through my "emo" phase, and animation was a big part of that. These apps these gave me access to different genres of music, specifically a genre of sped up music called Nightcore, and exposure to other franchises other than the Mario series like Kirby, Pokemon, Sonic, Warriors, and My Little Pony.

The gaming device and this application contributed largely to the personality I have today. Due to Flipnote Hatena, I made social connections to other people, and I improved my social skills.. A few months later I got an iPad, which helped expand my love of anime. I still have my DS gaming device charging in my room.

SYDNIE ULMEN, GRADE 12

### *A Special Place to Me*

The most special place in the world to me is Darling Stadium in Hampton, VA. It is a large brick enclosure with a track and football field. This place is where my high school varsity football career began. Over the past four years, my teammates and I have shed a lot of tears on this field. That field also brought together a brotherhood that will last forever.

Darling Stadium was like a second home to me. Virtually, every fall Friday night, my brothers and I took the field. Sad to say, I will never play their again though. It was filled with everything I needed (family, friends, fans, colleges). I knew that leaving that beautiful place would have to happen. I just wish it didn't happen so soon. I will never forget battling with my teammates on the field, nor will I forget the support shown to me by my coaches and the fans.

My best memory at the stadium was when I got my first tackle. I still remember it like it was yesterday. Wow! I really wish I listened to older folks when they said time flies. So many games I wish I could play again, or just do one thing different. I would do anything just to get one more game there with my brothers and coaches. I will miss that stadium.

JAHEIM VALENTINE, GRADE 12

### *A Day at Bluebird Gap Farm*

It is a warm Sunday morning, the birds are chirping and the sun shines through the window, but does little to disturb my slumber. Then, in comes my mom, "Wake up Lindsey-loo it's a beautiful day, time to explore it!" she says. "We're going to Bluebird today, get dressed and I'll do your hair." Overwhelmed with excitement,

I hop out of bed, my feet landing with a thud on the floor. Bluebird Gap Farm was always a place that brought my mother, brother and I closer together. My green eyes dart around in excitement of the day to come.

I pick a blue dress with flowers resembling hyacinths on the hem. However, in my hurry, I put it on backwards. I take time to fix my mistake, then barrel downstairs, the sound resembling a herd of rhinos. "How does such a little girl make so much noise?" My mom says, with a chuckle, as I charge into the kitchen. She's in the midst of making our lunch, which consists of three packs of crackers, three bags of chips, and a sandwich for each of us, my personal favorite being the peanut butter and cucumber sandwich. Afterwards we head back upstairs where she brushes my hair, which scales down the length of my small back, and puts it into manageable pigtails, with bows holding them into place. My brother, the early bird, has long since been awake and was outside playing with our dog.

With everyone ready, and all the necessities packed and in the car, we make our way to our predetermined destination. After a short fifteen minute drive we turn onto the road that leads to Bluebird Gap Farm. We all agreed that the first order of business would be to see the animals. My favorite animal was the goats, and my brothers were the chickens. We go to see the chickens first, however, little Lindsey had an unreasonable fear of them, having had my hand pecked one too many times. Because of this, I kept a safe distance between myself and the pen. When we got to the goats, I whistled loudly, which was made possible by a large gap between my front teeth. This caused most of the goats to flock to me, I believed I was a real life goat whisperer. We continued to go around to pet and feed the other animals until we became hungry.

We then sat down on a bench near the playground and began to unpack and eat our lunches. As we sat there eating and talking, I began to daydream and became entranced in my "own little world" as my mom called it. Whilst still thoroughly enjoying my peanut butter and cucumber sandwich, my brother had already finished and was going to play on the playground without me. Prompted by the sudden motivation to go play, I scarfed down the remainder of my sandwich and ran off as fast as my small legs could carry me. We remained in my mother's field of vision, as per her request, and began to use our surroundings and vivid imagination to come up with a game which we played until it was time to leave.

LINDSEY WILDER, GRADE 12

### *September 16, 2019*

This day is forever carved into my brain. It is the day my beloved great grandmother left this world, and went to heaven. Dorothy Gene Swan was her name. She carried the name Swan with such grace, power, and love. My mother received the call that we needed to come quickly. My mother and I ran to the car and rushed up the street to my Grandma Kevin's house. I felt like I was in a horror movie, running and trying to get there as fast as we could. We were too late. By the time we arrived, she was gone. My best friend was gone. Going into that room and seeing her corpse just laying in the bed broke me. I lost a major piece of myself that day. One that I don't think I will ever get back.

I knew that she was running out of time, but I wasn't ready to accept her not being in the world. In my eyes, she could live many more years. She was physically exhausted and couldn't push on any longer. Whenever I close my eyes I see her as she was on her final day, beautiful and peaceful. As I said my final goodbyes all I could think about was crawling into bed with her and watching tv, like we used to do. Her favorite phrases replayed in my head, "I love you too baby", "Ok", and "Mmm . . . Coca Cola. She had the most unique voice and sense of humor. She married her husband at the age of 16, and together they raised five boys and five girls. She outlived two of her children. The loss of children left an indelible mark on her and my great-grandfather. Ford Swan, my great grandfather, died in 2016 at the age of 86. He was my great-grandmother's one true love. She lasted three years without him.

Grandma Swan is what I grew up calling her. I was her twin in every way. I followed her everywhere and I did everything she did. I loved hearing all her stories. she'd remember in the moment because As

she aged, she began to suffer from Dementia and sadly, she couldn't always remember her stories. I know this was frustrating for her. I hated to see it. The story that sticks with me the most is how she started to collect mini versions of high heels from all the places her husband was stationed while in the military. She would display them in her red carpeted den on special shelves. The shoes always sparked questions from guests.

I wish Grandma Swan could see me walk across the Hampton Coliseum stage at my high school graduation on June 13th, 2020. I wish I could show her how much she motivated and encouraged me all these years. Since September, I have felt like I have lost my way. I am unsure of my future path. My great-grandmother was the person who always motivated and guided me about my future. I can't physically talk with her now, and that is so hard for me. I know she will forever live in my heart and I will do my best to make her proud.

JAMIA WIMBUSH, GRADE 12

### **Kasey Rizzo, Creative Writing Teacher** *Memories of a Broken Mind*

As the tears slowly fall down my face, each tear revealing a piece of my life. The pain growing from the roots up into a beautiful being. It feeds off of my tears, taking in the sad memories, and I can no longer see anything in front of me nor beyond. It feels like everyone is cutting me off from the world, and I am now uncertain of what will happen next. Chills up my spine feeling like a million needles moving up my back. Something is trying to get out of my head, because of the constant banging against the wall of my brain, and someone from my brain wants to be set free, but I cannot free it. Sleep is the only way that he'll stop banging, and he loves to sleep. He gets set free, but only for a limited time, and he wants to be set free permanently. When he comes back to this empty vessel, he starts banging all over again. To keep him calm, I feed him fictional things that will never happen to either of us. A dark corner is best for the both of us, we cannot be set free, and as a being we both would slowly die as everything does. I know that he'll never be okay, but this empty vessel has to make a face that'll please everybody around him. Everyone wants to fly up and beyond, but this vessel will never learn to fly, and we need to stay down where the darkness covers us from being seen. Even if we were to fly with the clouds, we both would eventually fall very fast and crash. We'll feel like we are floating in a space where no one can hear us, and where we'll float around in silence. Silence would be great for the both of us. A face that everyone sees wants for us to be okay, but sometimes the person inside of me cracks the mask that I wear, letting something leak out that I have to repair later on, but I have to fix my mask. Soon this mask would overflow and break, exposing all things that are flawed by me, then the person in my head will finally be free, and I would still be an empty vessel in the end. Strapped down to a freezing table that would consume me, and I try to escape but I knew that it wouldn't help but I still try. I am still here, and that is it, and I am here to stay. Forever I'll lay as my empty vessel sits and rots away, waiting for something to happen, waiting for something to give me life. But I am locked away now, never to be seen again. The beautiful being that was once grown from my tears had died from no light. There is no happiness left for me. A mirror before, showed the terrible side of everything about me. Punching it would make it go away, so I wouldn't have to look at myself anymore.

ERIC DIAZ JR., GRADE 11

### *Inside*

The mask is gone  
I cannot hide  
These powerful feelings  
That I feel inside

I'm in a whole new world  
Completely mystified  
As I look around  
All starry eyed

As if I'm a fawn  
Leaping cross the country side  
Not sure of this path I'm on  
But I'm along for the ride

Not too long ago  
I tried to swim against the tide  
But isn't it astounding  
That there's no running from what's inside

MALLORIE FISHER, GRADE 9

### *Bees and Butterflies*

*The bees don't buzz anymore, just sing their hollow hums and watch the world go by. The butterflies don't flutter, just shutter their wings and say goodbye. The girl don't smile anymore. Just shrugs and fibs a grin, as perked as possible. She doesn't shine anymore and the bees knows that they cannot taste her honey, but taste her tears in exchange. The bees worry for her, thus they buzz no more.*

TAURIKA FREEMAN, GRADE 12

### *Note to Self*

Converses, check  
Black tights, yes  
Starbucks . . . no  
But I'll get that next  
After I post this tumblr pic  
That I pray people won't reject  
However pinterest is my next bet

Wait. . . . .  
My bun looks terrible  
The messiness is unbearable  
I must grab the biggest tub of gel  
Because water and type 4c does not work well  
So I'll quickly brush these kinks before the bell  
5 minutes turns to 20  
And it's not even funny  
Ugh, I don't have time  
I just want my hair to be slick as honey  
So tragically I must improvise and style my fro  
Once getting somewhere, I can begin the show

Alarms sound and I jog down the stairs  
Stopping by Starbucks to grab my drink  
I take a sip, and digest it quick  
Regretting my choice of Pumpkin Spice  
Then questioning the hype of this being so nice or worth the price  
Despite the taste, I will drown out my thoughts with Billie Eilish  
As I anticipate to see my friends who of course have the same class

Arriving by second block, I quickly enter my class  
However, this time I feel anxious  
Wishing I could disappear and hide under a blanket  
My confidence diffuses, becoming gibberish  
As if they were intensely scanning me with interest

I turn around swiftly like a lost pup  
Allowing their gazes to get a close up  
They stare from afar, all scattered around the room  
Eyes filled with questions  
Do you see that?  
Does she comb that?  
How does it look when wet?  
These questions flood the room  
Making it even harder to breathe  
Like a rope around my neck, as I try to break free

Trying not to notice, I question why am I so noticed  
I wore black tights  
Which fit a little too nice  
I've grown a following on tumblr  
Which is quite hard to keep up  
I buy this Starbucks  
When eating cereal seems like a plus  
And I've molded myself into you so I could be enough

I've molded myself into you so I'd feel enough  
This image I've painted is starting to peel  
This seed I have planted has grow into a flower  
But the party is over  
I've began to wilt and fall like the twin towers  
As they look at me in disbelief  
Like I'm the last piece of fruit in the stack, all bruise and beat  
What have I become?  
When has my melanin not been enough?

This realization hits me like a train  
As questions of curiosity, interest, and ignorance flood the room



I've become more than fed up of the nonsense being portrayed  
Disregarding their responses, I shall not sit quite  
I will not go unheard  
And what I say may make some turn  
But who cares when you stare at me like your favorite tv show  
I will continue to hold my head higher than the moon  
As I speak nothing but fact you shall listen because anything else would be rude  
Unless that's your thing, along with staring at others like fools

Through all this tension  
Once wishing I wore my extensions  
This burning emotion inside comes alive  
Like a phoenix soaring high  
Displaying my voice  
As my pockets bark out in pain

Making me want to forget the terrible decisions I've made to fit in this illogical game  
And reminding me that this is the price I pay  
For this transcendent mane, skin, and history that I will now and forever proudly claim.

PERSIFONI JONES, GRADE 10

### *The Peace Won't Last Forever*

Sirens, that's all I heard besides the crying of my other siblings. And the yelling of my parents arguing. I knew Daddy was going to jail again. I wish he wasn't but he is. The men in blue always take him away from me. But it is my mom's fault. She always causes him to go away. I'm tired of this. I shouldn't feel this way at only the age of six.

*10 years later*

As I put on my hoop earrings I get a call from my Daddy. "Good Morning Baby," my daddy says in a cheerful voice. "Good Morning Daddy how are you?" "Im good baby how's your mom doing?" "she's doing



good," "Ok well i just wanted to check on yall and see if yall was ok, I love yall yall have a beautiful day ok?" "Ok love you too Daddy." That's how my morning begins at the age of 16. Everything is peaceful not how it was 10 years ago. But the peace won't last forever.

The thing people say out of their mouths don't tend to reach my ears. I don't hear what they were saying. I have too much on my mind than to hear the same things again. The things in my head aren't the things others would expect of

me. Everyone hides things deep in the mind. I can't let anyone know how I truly feel. I don't think anyone would understand the things i feel. I feel like a rogue that doesn't fit in its pack. I'm not like everyone else where their all smiles and giggles. That's just not how I see the world.

DANIYAH ROBINSON, GRADE 11

### *The Fight*

\*Breath in, Breath out  
Moisture touches my lungs  
Trees singing warnings  
And the sun takes a backseat  
The vibrations the rumble emits is almost familiar  
Flashes take me back to mere images of my past  
Deafening is the sound of its footsteps  
The other girl is in sight and I brace for impact  
Rain howls and drowns me in darkness  
I am one with the storm, so ends opposition  
A cliff is ahead, but suddenly visuals are gone  
As if a simulation has been switched off  
And a light is slightly shown as if to tell me it's over  
\*Breath in, Breath out  
I made it through

ASHANTI WILLIAMS, GRADE 12





ST. CHARLES ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



Bambi Pendergrass, Teacher, Grade 3

*Amber Huff, Reading Specialist*

*Where I'm From*

I am from the house in the valley.  
I am from lilies and tulips,  
From watching movies and being lazy.  
I am from Twix, Doritos and Mom's homemade brownies.  
From, "That's how the cookie crumbles," and "Awesome Job, Gracie!"  
I am from Mom, Mason and Baylee,  
I am from Sunday School and Sunday mornings.  
I am from fighting with my siblings and painting my nails with Mom,  
From, "You get what you get and you don't throw a fit."  
I am from English Road and the beige house,  
From Virginia.  
I am from Mamaw's locket and a drawer in Mom's dresser.  
I am from blessed, happy, and loved.

GRACIE BLANKEN, GRADE 3

*Where I'm From*

I am from the home of a lifetime.  
I am from the Girl Scouts and YouTube,  
From Brownies to It's Funny  
I am from mulberry trees and blackberry bushes.  
I am from Dana, Terry and Daniel,  
From Blondell.  
I am from family movies and game night.  
I am from memories in the photo albums,  
From family that loves soup beans and cornbread.  
I am from the red and off-white house.  
I am from "You can do it," and "Try your best!"  
I am from a glass unicorn collection,  
From cookies and cream ice cream.  
I am from cats and dogs,  
From a silver bracelet that means so much.  
I am from love and joy.

JACKLYNN BLONDELL, GRADE 3

*Where I'm From*

I am from fishing with my dad and cooking breakfast with my mom.  
I am from sunflowers and dirt.  
I am from camping with my family.

I am from watching TV and video games on the PS4  
I am from Twix and Hershey bars,  
From basketball games and cheer competitions.  
I am from "I love you" and "Clean your room."  
I am from Mom and Dad,  
From Bryant and Burton.  
I am from playing with my cousins and fighting with my sister,  
From gravy and biscuits and mac and cheese.  
I am from memories in the photo album.

BREANNA BURTON, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from stuffed animals and baby dolls.  
I am from bags of Skittles and M&Ms.  
I am from a brick house and flowers in the yard.  
I am from family vacations in Gatlinburg,  
From family game nights and movie nights.  
I am from, "Clean your room," and "I love you!"  
I am from church on Sundays.  
I am from fighting with my sister and putting on makeup with Mom..  
I am from memories on the wall and pictures on my phone.

ERICA BURTON, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from the hills of Virginia.  
I am from coal and diamonds,  
From soup beans and taters.  
I am from Mom and Dad,  
From Carpenter.  
I am from coal miners and quilt makers.  
From, "Don't talk back to me," and "Go grab a switch!"  
I am from coal mines and black dust.  
I am from Baptist, God fearing and hard work.  
I am from the love of my mom and dad,  
From boxes of priceless pictures that hold memories of my family.

BETHANY CARPENTER, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from my tablet, cats and dogs,  
From a love of Roblox and animals.  
I am from Mom, Dad, Hunter, Aiden, and Silas,  
From Grahams and love.  
I am from Graveyard Hill and Virginia.  
I am from birds chirping and barking dogs.

I am from watermelon, strawberries and cantaloupe.  
I am from, "I love you, too," and "Have a good day at school!"  
I am from love for my family and my friends.

ANAMARIA GRAHAM, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from church hymns and Sunday School.  
I am from tacos and pepperoni pizza,  
From Greers, Statums and Loniders.  
I am from Beacon Light and Baptists.  
I am from "Clean your room," and "Get off your phone!"  
I am from going to church with my family and spending the night with my cousins.  
I am from the frames on the walls,  
From the jewelry box from Mamaw.  
I am from Christmas with my family,  
From "Be kind," and "Life is not fair."  
I am from love and my family,  
From Monarch and the little brick house.

KAYLEE GREER, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from cheese pizzas and McDonald's chicken nuggets.  
I am from jumping on the trampoline.  
I am from playing Fortnite and Call of Duty on the Xbox.  
I am from the noises of four wheelers and barking dogs.  
I am from the Chicago Bulls and the Patriots.  
I am from the white house on Reed's Creek,  
From Mamaw Rhonda, Chris and Aiden.  
I am from "I love you," and "Life is not fair."

RILEY HOBBS, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from playing ball in the backyard,  
From movies with popcorn.  
I am from homes full of family.  
I am from McDonlad's sweet tea and hamburgers.  
I am from my belief in God and praying everyday,  
From "No boyfriends until you are thirty," and "Have fun and do your best."  
I am from Tennessee and Virginia.  
I am from stories of my daddy playing baseball,  
From memories of my granny cooking and cleaning.  
I am from Mom and Dad,  
From Kegley.  
I am from mashed potatoes and fudge bars.

I am from Mommy's letters,  
From pictures from when I was little and Grandma Lupton's quilt.  
I am from "Love you to the moon and back!"  
I am from Lee,  
From grey wood and brick.

CHLOE KEGLEY, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from Lucky Charms, 3 Musketeers, and pepperoni pizza.  
I am from basketball and playing outside with my family.  
I am from Catron, Taylor and Lawson,  
From Pot Branch and the grey and white house.  
I am from being saved and baptized,  
From Beacon Light with my bible.  
I am from the Lonesome Pine and Big Stone Gap,  
From wrestling my Uncle Josh.  
I am from, "I love you," and "Be nice to your brothers!"  
I am from our goat Bigfoot and dogs barking.  
I am from love, happiness and gratefulness.

CAIDEN LAWSON, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from family movie nights and popcorn.  
I am from the yellow house on the hill and rose bushes in the yard.  
I am from Mom and Dad,  
From Lanningham and Leichtenberg.  
I am from Beacon Light on Sundays and playing video games with my Dad.  
I am from muscles and hard work.  
I am from "Say it don't spray it," and "I love you to the moon and back!"  
I am from Mom's homemade pizza casserole, MTN Dew and gummies.  
I am from memories shown in the pictures on the walls.

CHASE LEICHTENBERG, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from the superior McDonald's french fries.  
I am from my PS4, Roblox and Minecraft,  
From playing tricks on Mamaw and Nana.  
I am from the house with no basement and no secret room.  
I am from loving dogs and cats,  
From Fortnite.  
I am from, "Stop," and "Be good!"  
I am from chocolate ice cream in a bowl.  
I am from scaring my nana and mamaw,  
From, "Stop playing tricks on me!"

I am from YouTube and The Blue Bunny Roblox.  
I am from love and a comfy blue pillow.

LOGAN LEWIS, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from Grannie's handmade quilts.  
I am from the deer head displayed on the wall,  
From pepperoni pizza and Fortnite.  
I am from soup beans and fried potatoes.  
I am from Brittany and Terry,  
From McKnight and Maggard.  
I am from, "We never keep secrets from each other,"  
From "Don't be a follower, be a leader."  
I am from barking dogs and gunshots.  
I am from Old Mill Road and Keokee.  
I am from Virginia,  
From happiness, blessings and love.

JONAH MAGGARD, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from God's country,  
From the creeks and the trees.  
I am from fishing in the rivers and fighting with my brothers and sisters.  
I am from a family of seven that believes in God.  
I am from Mom's homemade chicken and dumplings.  
I am from "I love you more than the moon, stars and sky above."  
I am from Mom, Dad, Devin, Lance, Amelia, and Mallory,  
From Maggard and Bundy Drive.  
I am from stories about my grandparents and photos on the walls.  
I am from love and happiness,  
From "There's nothing you can't achieve."

SKYLER MAGGARD, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from the midnight rain and purple flowers.  
I am from football games and watching the Hokies.  
I am from my Mom and Dad,  
From Maness and Woodway.  
I am from Blacky and Rainbow Kitty,  
From fighting with Landon and pulling his hair.  
I am from chocolate ice cream and chocolate chip cookies.  
I am from baking cakes with my Mamaw.  
I am from God, our father, and Irish descent.  
I am from Going to L.A. with Paw and to Blacksburg with Ryan.

I am from cheesy pizza and playing Roblox.  
I am from “I love you,” and “You get what you get, and you don’t throw a fit!”  
I am from photos on the mantel, on the walls, in boxes and in the attic.

JANELL MANESS, GRADE 3

### *Where I’m From*

I am from traveling roads and riding bikes.  
I am from watermelons and apples,  
From a spectacular greenhouse.  
I am from St. Charles Baptist and Sunday School Lessons.  
I am from Tia, Anthony, Grace, and Isaiah.  
I am from cheesy pizza and Mom’s homemade chocolate cake.  
I am from Millers and the brave.  
I am from “Life isn’t fair,” and “I love you the most!”  
I am from dogs barking and kids playing.  
I am from my dog Pugsly and dreams of the Army.  
I am from happiness, love and blessings.

LEWIS MILLER, GRADE 3

### *Where I’m From*

I am from family and love.  
I am from my uncle’s soft quilt and my collection of Shopkins.  
I am from Casey and Margo,  
From Mooneyhans and Woodards.  
I am from delicious bacon pizza and Sonic blueberry slushies.  
I am from “Do your homework,” and “Life is not fair.”  
I am from beach vacations with my family and sandy toes.  
I am from noisey four wheelers and barking dogs,  
From Ely’s Creek and Acacia Drive.  
I am from fighting with my brother and sister.  
I am from Sundays at Great Outreach and lunch with my family.  
I am from believing in God and praying everyday.

CELSEY MOONEYHAN, GRADE 3

### *Where I’m From*

I am from the mountains of Virginia,  
From the tulips and the dogwoods.  
I am from McDonald’s french fries and chocolate milkshakes.  
I am from Michelle and Michael,  
From Story and Morgan.  
I am from a blended family with lots of love,  
From softball and tag in the backyard.

I am from, "I love you to the moon and back," and "Life is not fair!"  
I am from my grandmother's quilt and my stuffed animal collection.  
I am from memories on the wall.

ISABELLA MORGAN, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from Shannon and Keisha.  
I am from sleepovers with my cousins,  
From making slime and girly things.  
I am from Mom's homemade chicken noodle soup,  
From the Patio's zebra ice cream cones.  
I am from Monarch and Beacon Light,  
From the train passing my house.  
I am from playing board games with my family,  
From fighting with my siblings.  
I am from "Life is not fair," and "Do well in school."  
I am from spending time with my family.

LAUREN NICHOLSON, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from McDonald's french fries,  
From my Mom's homemade cookies and ice cream.  
I am from makeup and slime.  
I am from Shannon and Keisha.  
I am from Monarch,  
From St. Charles and Virginia.  
I am from "Life is not fair," and "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all."  
I am from playing with my family,  
From happy, sad and mad.  
I am from Beacon Light and the love of my parents.

NATALIE NICHOLSON, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from pianos,  
From cupcakes and roses.  
I am from the mountains of Virginia.  
I am from trees and tulips.  
I am from Christmas traditions and tall people,  
From Mom, Mamaw and Papaw.  
I am from cookouts and vacations.  
I am from, "Be nice to everyone," and "I love you to the moon and back!"  
I am from blessed, loved and happy,

From cheesy pizza and mac & cheese.  
I am from Big Stone Gap.  
I am from the story of my great grandparents,  
From the family pictures on the wall.

ISABELLA OAKS, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from biscuits and gravy.  
I am from the mountains,  
From Ashley, Darrell and Jennifer.  
I am from, "Clean your room," and "Be Careful."  
I am from Xbox and Red Dead,  
From four wheeling with my family.  
I am from Big Branch and Parsons.  
I am from busting and stacking wood for the stove.  
I am from, "I love you to the moon and back!"

JOSEPH PARSONS, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from soup beans and cornbread,  
From my mother's homemade pumpkin pie.  
I am from climbing trees and reading books,  
I am from the coal mines and the mountains,  
From Soaring Eagle Trail.  
I am from Hide and Seek Clap and watching movies with my family.  
I am from Lisa and Roger,  
From Cloud and Penix.  
I am from cheering and playing basketball.  
I am from "I Love You," and "Be Kind."  
I am from spending Christmas at the cabin with my whole family,  
From playing with my brothers.  
I am from joy and love.

MADILYN PENIX, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from games on the PlayStation and playing outside.  
I am from Santana and Billy,  
From Edgar and Price.  
I am from the green house on Reed's Creek,  
From Keokee and Lee.  
I am from dogs barking and birds chirping.  
I am from toy cars from Taylor Ray and a collection of coins.

I am from pepperoni pizza and cinnamon candy.  
I am from “I love you to the moon and back,” and “Be nice to everyone.”  
I am from history and dreams of being a cop.

LONDON PRICE, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from wrestling with dad and fishing with the family.  
I am from soup beans and cornbread.  
I am from “Life is not fair,” and “Always be honest with yourself.”  
I am from roosters crowing and dogs barking,  
From hard work and playing harder.  
I am from the big tan house on the hill,  
From Mom, Dad and Mom Sonda.  
I am from Statum with Jacob and Breanna.  
I am from a big yard of playfulness and fun.  
I am from watching wrestling on TV and playing with the dog.  
I am from church on Sundays.  
I am from the stories of my Mamaw and Papaw,  
From the love and memories of my family.

CALEB STATUM, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from saying “Please” and giving hugs.  
I am from the big blue house with the blue roof,  
From crackling fires and gooey s'mores.  
I am from Bo, Libby, Cody and Nana,  
From Tackett and Stony Lonesome.  
I am from four wheeler noise and barking dogs,  
From Keokee and Lee County.  
I am from, “I love you to the moon and back,” and “Always try your best.”  
I am from family times together and sharing love.  
I am from Mom's meatloaf and Nana's Pot Roast,  
From Maybel the monkey and Bailey.  
I am from loving, caring and never giving up.

WILLOW TACKETT, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from my wooden bed and golden rings.  
I am from the dogs barking and cats scratching.  
I am from loud train noises and playing outside.  
I am from Samantha and Brandon,  
From Lanningham and Taylor.  
I am from my Mom's homemade spaghetti and blue slushies.  
I am from “I love you,” and “You are beautiful”

I am from Wagnertown and the big grey house.  
I am from love and happiness.

ABIGALE TAYLOR, GRADE 3

### *Where I'm From*

I am from Sunday dinners and blue eyes.  
I am from Chris and Jennifer.  
From family photos and my train set.  
I am from Dryden and Lee County.  
I am from Sunday dinners after church.  
From, "You will be big before you know it," and "Don't stand in front of the TV."  
I am from cornbread and spaghetti,  
I am from being a Christian and the Baptist faith,  
From, "I love my family," and "No means no!"  
I am from gathering at Aunt Jean's and my 100 year old grandpa Lawson.  
I am from Tritt.

BLAKE TRITT, GRADE 3

### **Roberta Gibbons, English Teacher, Grade Four**

#### *The Best Mom Ever*

My mom's name is Robin Michelle Scalf. My mom has blonde and brown hair and green eyes. She works at Tempur-pedic and has a Jeep. Her dad's name is Ernest and her mom's name is Darlene. My mom has one sister and two brothers. Her sister's name is Vonda and her two brothers' names are Jason and Junior. My mom is the third oldest. Her house is still the same. She is really nice and pretty.

My mom lives in St. Charles and she was born in Harlan, Kentucky. She is 40 and my dad is 45. Her husband's name is James Burdine Scalf. She has five kids. Their names are Kylie, Kiera, Erica, Braydon, and Phillip.

She had a dog when was growing up. Her name was Sugar. Her sister had a dog and his name was Gambit. My mom and her sister shared dogs. Now, she has a cat named Cookie and a dog named Deziel.

She is really smart and loved school. My mom did not play sports. She went to Lee High School and she graduated in 1997. She was born in 1979. She was seventeen when she got out of school. Her first job was McDonald's and then she got married to my dad.

My mom got boots for Christmas. She got us matching pajamas. She is the best mom ever. She is funny and really sweet. I am so happy to have her. I love her a lot. She is the best mom ever.

KYLIE BRYSON, GRADE 4

#### *My Mamaw is the Best*

My mamaw's name is Cathy Mullins. She was born May, 1957. She was born in St. Charles, Virginia. She had one brother, and two sisters. She loved to watch PiPi, Bonanza, and Andy Griffith. She loved to play cowboys and Indians. She had a dog named Blackie, and a cat named Blue. My mamaw's favorite food was biscuits and gravy. In the summer, my mamaw loved to go camping and fishing. My mamaw had three daughters and she has six grandchildren.

LANDON CHRISTIAN, GRADE 4

## *The #1 Mom*

My mom's name is Honey Ann. She was born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, in 1986. My mom had a pet named Gypsy. My mom forgot how much her allowance was, but she spent her allowance on candy. She moved a lot to different houses and she always had electricity.

My mom's favorite activity is playing on the computer. My mom had a computer and a phone. Her chores were cleaning the bedroom and helping her mom clean the house. My mom's favorite subject was reading.

She liked all of the holidays. One of her traditions was to spend Christmas in Chicago with her grandma. My mom has a sister Shanna and two big brothers, Shane and Keith. She met my step dad, DJ, four years ago. She is very happy now.

KALEB COLLINS, GRADE 4

## *#1 Dad*

Let me tell you about the greatest dad ever. His name is Corey. He is very funny. He was born on February 27, 1995. He was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia, and raised in St. Charles. He had a dog. Its name was Shadow and I think he loved it.

He had an allowance of five dollars. He got something big, but I think he got stuff for his brother because he is nice. He loved football. He was good at it. He knocked someone's helmet off once. He still has his jersey from the years he played football. He played every Friday.

My dad married my mom, Mariah. He rides four wheelers with me. He likes salt and vinegar chips. He has four kids, and their names are Bryce, Hazel, Kale, and Reid.

He works at a sawmill. His boss' name is Adam. His boss is funny. My dad was famous in school. He had two of my teachers. He went to school with one of them.

BRYCE MYERS, GRADE 4

## *My Awesome Mom*

My mom's name is Savannah Danielle Huff Garrette. She was born in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, on June 9, 1989. She has lived in Keokee for most of her life. She has one sister named Samantha.

She had a pet cat named Gizmo. She was gray. The chores assigned to her were to clean her room and wash the dishes. She got an allowance of twenty dollars. Her first job was at Subway.

My mom's school was Keokee Elementary. She liked it there. My mom told me her favorite subject was science. Her favorite sport was basketball. She loved to swim.

The technology that she used were phones and computers. Her favorite TV show is *Golden Girls*.

We celebrate all major holidays. Our tradition is that we get together with our family. The biggest difference between then and now is then you had to work to get what you want. The advice she gave me was always be kind.

BRIAN SCOTT RICHARDSON, GRADE 4

## *The Best Dad Ever*

My dad's name is Jack Edward Smith. He was born in Richlands, Virginia in 1971. He lived in a two story farmhouse, it did have electricity. When he was growing up, he had a dog named Buckey. He was a German Shepherd.

My dad was lucky. He got a twenty dollar allowance when he was young. His chores were taking out the trash and mowing the lawn. He enjoyed playing football and basketball at the school. He really enjoyed math and history.

He had a couple of hobbies when he was a child. He enjoyed racing cars and playing video games. His favorite TV shows were *Three's Company* and *Starsky and Hutch*. He used a desktop computer and a VCR. He also used 8 track tapes.

My dad and his family celebrated the 4th of July and Christmas. Their favorite tradition was when all the family gathered together. When my dad was old enough he went to work for Cleco Construction operating a piece of equipment. The biggest difference between when my dad was growing up was good health and respect, and now it is bad health and disrespect.

My dad gave me several good pieces of advice; respect your elders, make good grades, always be honest, tell the truth, and NEVER lie, steal or cheat.

JEREMIAH SIMPSON, GRADE 4

### *My Great Mom*

Let me tell you about my great mom. My mom's name is Samantha Campbell. My mom was born on July 22, 1987, in Lee County. Her parents are Teresa Webb and Joe Campbell, and her stepdad's name is Billy Webb. My mom's dad died when she was six.

When she was little, she lived in a one story, blue house. She now lives in a one story, white house with seven rooms. She had a Chow when she was growing up. Its name was Blacky because it was black. She had a husky, too. It was gray and white. Its name was Shebba. She had a cat and it looked like it was wearing a tuxedo. It is black and white. Its name was Heart.

The school she went to was St. Charles Elementary, then to Pennington Middle, then to Lee High. The college she went to is Mountain Empire Community College. When she was in school her favorite subject was math.

My mom's favorite activity is basketball. In school, my mom played basketball. When I see my mom, we play basketball. My mom had a box TV and a computer.

She works as a nurse at Lee Nursing Home. She works very hard. She works the night shift. I hardly get to see her.

My mom and I celebrate every holiday at her house. On Easter, we hide eggs. On Christmas, we put up a tree. My mom's traditions for Christmas are to put stockings up, putting a tree up, and decorating it. The biggest difference between then and now is there is more violence. The advice my mom gave me was to be kind and study hard.

PAYZLEIGH SMITH, GRADE 4

### *The Best Papaw Ever*

On April 1, 1957, the best papaw ever, also known as, Curtis Steve Hall, was born. Lee County, Virginia had a new resident, my papaw!

My papaw grew up in a section of Lee County that is called Stone Creek, Virginia. He still lives in Stone Creek, just not in the same house. His sister now lives in that house. The house had four rooms, a green roof, and brown siding. I have actually seen the house, and it does not look the same.

He liked animals, and had one dog when he was growing up. My papaw did not have to do chores when he was younger. He did not like school. He went to Pennington Elementary School. My papaw loves to watch *Daniel Boone* and *Pickers*, he MAKES sure he is home in time to watch all the new *Pickers* shows.



My papaw's family celebrated all of the holidays, but one of his favorite traditions was when his family would go and cut down a real Christmas Tree. My papaw's job helped out a lot in Virginia, he was a coal miner.

The biggest difference that my papaw talks about from when he was growing up until today is most people get more of what they want, but people seemed happier when he was younger.

I like the advice that my papaw gave me: He told me to stay in school and get a good education. These are the things that make my papaw, The BEST papaw ever!

CHELSIE STEWART, GRADE 4

### *My Dad Forever*

My dad's name is Derrick Taylor. He is the best! He was born in Pennington Gap, Virginia, in 1989. My dad married my step mom, Makayla. She is very nice. My dad makes the best soup beans ever! He is so nice and very funny. I love my dad very much!

My dad REALLY loves to hunt. He took me hunting, and I saw a little rat. I screamed out, "There's a rabbit, dad!" He loves snakes and spiders. My dad likes to watch *Guardian of the Glades* and it's about snake hunters.

He did not get an allowance. My dad's chore was to cut the grass. My dad's house is still the same. My mamaw lives in it now. He had a dog named Copper growing up. My dad got his first job in the 11th grade, at the meat department in Food City. He works at a prison now. When my dad was young, he liked to play football.

My dad is not too mean and not too nice, he's perfect! I bet if there was a hunting challenge, my dad would win. I am so lucky to have a dad like him.

OLIVIA TAYLOR, GRADE 4



# ST. PAUL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL





I went to the music museum and it was fun. You should go there because it is so fun. I love it. We got to do a scavenger hunt.

KAYLEN BLEVINS, GRADE 2

My class and I left St. Paul Elementary for a day of learning fun things about country music. I like bingo and I almost had a bingo. I liked the scavenger hunt. I liked the dance floor because it lite up. I liked the movie and I love my Appalachian heritage. I loved the Birthplace of Country Music Museum field trip.

HADLEY BOND, GRADE 2

I like the guitar. My dad likes the guitar. I liked the old radio. My mom likes the flute.

GRACE BOYD, GRADE 2

Our trip to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum was so much fun. Hadley and I were happy because we got to do the scavenger hunt. Appalachian music makes me feel good. I loved the scavenger hunt. I learned a lot about country music during the hunt.

MASON BRADLEY, GRADE 2

My class and I left St. Paul Elementary for a day of learning and fun activities about country music. We learned how different instruments sound and we watched a movie and it showed all the different instruments from a long time ago. We got to do some fun activities too. We got to do a scavenger hunt with a partner. We also played instrument bingo. I feel really, really good when I listen to Appalachian music.

BELLA BURKE, GRADE 2

There are so many things I loved about the Birthplace of Country Music Museum. I loved the dance floor. I also loved the scavenger hunt. I have none of my family that plays Appalachian musical instruments. Appalachian music makes me feel happy. I love the sound.

IRELAND BURKE, GRADE 2

I love Appalachian music. The movie we watched was cool. Bingo was cool also. I liked the big guitar outside. I like the ukulele. It's cool and I play it. My aunt and uncle play drums and guitar pretty good. The scavenger hunt was fun and the pictures were cool.

SOPHIA CATHEY, GRADE 2

The Country Music Museum was so cool. I learned about the flute. I like the old record players. The guitar is awesome. There were a lot of guitars.

JAKE COMPTON, GRADE 2

I was so excited to go to the music museum. When we got there, I learned lots of new things about music. The music museum was really good. My favorite part was the banjo.

LEAH COMPTON, GRADE 2

I play the guitar. Music makes me feel happy. I play the guitar and old music sometimes. I learned about old microphones. I liked the dance floor. It's fun at the music museum.

JIMMY CRAWFORD, GRADE 2

My class and I left St. Paul Elementary for a day of learning and fun things about country music. We had fun and we played bingo. My family plays musical instruments including guitar, drums, and bass. Appalachian music makes me feel good.

BENTLEY DERAMUS, GRADE 2

We went to the Country Music Museum. I like the flute. I liked it there. We saw guitars.

ADDISON DOTSON, GRADE 2

We went to the Country Music Museum. I learned about the Carter family! We danced, edited music, sang in the recording booth, and even went on a scavenger hunt! I had fun.

CASH ENGLE, GRADE 2

My favorite instrument is the electric guitar. I like it because it is loud. My sister plays the guitar. My favorite trip was to the country music museum. Appalachian music is good. I like it so much. The music is fun and makes me happy.

DEREK FINCH, GRADE 2

My favorite part about the music museum was the upstairs. I liked the music. It was nice. The scavenger hunt was the best part about the country music museum. My sisters played violin. I really like Appalachian music.

JAYDEN HARPER, GRADE 2

Our trip to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum was so much fun. My favorite part was when Jalen and I worked together for the scavenger hunt. I also liked the movie because I learned cool facts about country music. I also loved listening to the songs. My favorite instrument is the steel guitar. Bluegrass makes me feel happy. Yes, my grandpa plays the banjo.

NOAH HARVEY, GRADE 2

We watched a movie about country music and I really liked the movie. The scavenger hunt was fun. Bingo was my favorite part. I like music and it makes me feel happy.

JACKSON HOLBROOK, GRADE 2

Field trips are so much fun. This one was special because we went to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum. We watched a movie about the old music. Appalachian music is fun to listen to. I'm glad we got to go on this trip. It's neat that country music started so close to where I am from.

MARLEE HYDE, GRADE 2

The field trip about our music was fun and good. I loved the interesting music. The place was nice and the big guitar was cool. My favorite part was the recording booth.

ABBY ISON, GRADE 2

I like a guitar. The museum was good. I like it and I was very happy. It was fun because they played music.

NATALEY JACOBS, GRADE 2

The country music museum was so cool. I learned about the flute. I liked the old record players. The guitar is awesome. There were a lot of guitars.

JAKE LAFORCE, GRADE 2

We went to the Country Music Museum for our field trip. I like the recording booth. I had fun at the Country Music Museum. My favorite thing was about the music.

JADEN LEACH, GRADE 2

Our trip to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum was so much fun. I had so much fun dancing on the dance floor and I had so much fun with the scavenger hunt. We played bingo and I learned about the banjo and I learned about the electric guitar. Listening to Appalachian music makes me feel happy.

CLAYTON LUTHER, GRADE 2

My class and I left St. Paul Elementary for a day of learning fun things about country music. The fun things I liked was the movie that they let us watch and the bingo with the instruments. I also liked the scavenger hunt and the dance floor. That's all I liked. I learned that there is a board that you can

play music on and I learned that when you play music and put it on a wall or something, it either gets quiet or louder.

DRAKE MEADE, GRADE 2

Our trip to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum was so much fun. As soon as we got there, we watched a movie. I really loved the scavenger hunt. I really liked how they make music. I also like when we played bingo at the end. My papaw and cousin play the banjo.

JALEN MEADE, GRADE 2

I like the music in the music booth. I liked the electric guitar. It was the most fun ever. The Country Music Museum was fun because it was a fun experience. I have someone in my family that plays the guitar.

CONNER MORRISON, GRADE 2

I like the bass guitar and I like to listen to playing. It reminds me of my grandpa. I like playing instruments. I play the piano and the flute.

KEATON PEAK, GRADE 2

My and my class went to the Country Music Museum in Bristol, Va. It was cool. I learned a lot about music. It was very fun.

STELLA POST, GRADE 2

My class and I left St. Paul Elementary for a day of learning fun things about country music. My partner was Bella and she is my friend at the museum. I loved learning about the old music and I am happy that I got to visit the birthplace of country music.

CARSON ROSE, GRADE 2

Bristol is the birthplace of country music. My dad played the guitar. I liked the kazoo. I want to go back to the museum. The museum was about country music.

BEN SKEEN, GRADE 2

The Birthplace of Country Music Museum is in Bristol, Virginia. There is an old recorder. There you can watch a video and it is a good presentation. When you go in the theater, you can watch a video about guitars. It is a great place.

KAYLIE SLEMP, GRADE 2

The Country Music Museum is known for lots of instruments. My sister plays the flute. I love music because it makes me sing.

RYVER SNIPES, GRADE 2

The electric guitar was cool. The drums were awesome. The museum was really cool. Everything in the museum was fun. My Papaw plays the guitar.

RYLEE STACY, GRADE 2

Our trip to the Birthplace of Country Music Museum was so much fun because there was a scavenger hunt and a movie. We played banjo and it was so much fun. I was partners with Derek and the dance floor was my favorite. They taught us about instruments.

PAYTON TOWNES, GRADE 2

I like the music and the guitar. I am going to play the bass and the flute. I was happy that we went to the Country Music Museum. I like the music from the Country Music Museum. It was about our mountain music.

BROOKLYN VANCE, GRADE 2

I like the washboard. It sounds like chopping. It was all good. I learned about people that played music. The hunt made me learn that.

BRAYLEN WHITAKER, GRADE 2

My class went to visit the music museum. It was fun. My favorite instrument was the bones. It reminds me of my mom chopping carrots.

CONNER WORLEY, GRADE 2

## Alana Broyles, Grade 5 English

### *Melissa Galliher, Librarian*

#### *Native Americans*

Indians are us.  
We find arrowheads here now.  
I love Indians.

ACELYNN BRICKEY, GRADE 5

#### *My Dad*

He went underground.  
He was deep in the coal mines.  
He is my hero.

AUSTIN BURKE, GRADE 5

#### *Food*

Cornbread is well known.  
Soup beans go well with cornbread.  
These are two good foods.

BRYSON COLLINS, GRADE 5

#### *Buck Hunt*

I love great big bucks.  
I like to hunt them a lot.  
You should hunt some bucks.

JAMESON DUNCAN, GRADE 5

#### *My Animals*

I love deer so much.  
They live in our deep forest.  
They help us a lot.

KAYLEE ERVIN, GRADE 5

## *Animals*

I love animals.  
My favorite is a bear.  
It is very big.

LAYLA ERVIN, GRADE 5

## *A Sweet Treat: Honey*

Honey is so good.  
A sweet treat from long ago  
That bees made for us.

ERICA GROSS, GRADE 5

## *Coal Mining*

My stepdad mines coal.  
He goes deep into the ground.  
Coal gives us power.

PEYTON HENSLEY, GRADE 5

## *Farming*

Farming is so fun.  
I love the tractors a lot.  
Cattle are the best.

CAYDEN HILEMAN, GRADE 5

## *Animals*

I love animals.  
They provide food for us all.  
They taste very good.

KLAY KISER, GRADE 5

## *Deer Are Great*

Animals are great.  
They are amazing and great.  
Deer are amazing.

BELLA LUTHER, GRADE 5

## *Art*

Art is fun for me.  
Drawing, painting, water, brush

I love Ms. Jessee.

KRISTOPHER OLIVER, GRADE 5

### *Foxes*

Foxes are real cool.  
I have hunted for a fox.  
Foxes are pretty.

BRAYDEN ROSE, GRADE 5

### *Trammel's Woods*

I live in the woods.  
The woods are so beautiful.  
The woods are so nice.

CHRISTIAN RUFF, GRADE 5

### *The Mountains*

The cute animals  
The bright green trees and green grass  
I love the mountains.

CHLOE SARTIN, GRADE 5

### *Hunting*

Hunting for a bear  
I will go hunting with Dad  
In the deep dark woods.

TAKOTAH SKEENS, GRADE 5

### *A Good Summer Sport*

Fishing is so great.  
My family loves to fish.  
Fun from long ago.

LANE SPARKS, GRADE 5

### *Squirrels*

I love gray squirrels.  
I think squirrels are so cute.  
I love them a lot.

ISABELLA TARR, GRADE 5



## *Family Time*

Family outside  
Trails, bikes, four-wheelers,  
go-karts  
Saturday fun time.

ARTHUR YORK, GRADE 5





# STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL



*Author event with Jarrett Krosoczka at Emory & Henry College*

## Lauren Kohistani, IB Geography Teacher

### *Role Model*

“Become something” is what my dad told me when I was 10 years old. I have held on to those words ever since. I want to be successful to make my dad proud and to leave a footprint on the world for years to come. My dad is my role model; he is a doctor and is a very hard worker. I want to be as successful and hardworking as he is one day. He is kind, loving, and a great father. Every day, I make sure to get good grades and work to go to a good college to eventually become a pediatrician just like him. I like to think that he is the reason for my success now and will contribute to my future successes. The reason those words are so dear to my heart is because of how much I admire my dad and his hard work. The ‘something’ I want to become, is just like him.

KEROLOS AIAD NAGATY, GRADE 12

### *Music in My Life*

Music has given me many lessons. Persistence being one on them.

It’s difficult to get a whole piece of music right the first time, one must go measure by measure until it’s played well and correctly. That’s how I learned to be persistent.

Persistence taught me that I can always go around the gate and climb over the fence to continue any path, whether it be rigid or paved, to achieve any goal. The lesson of persistence was firmly in my mindset and gave me tenacity when planning out how to succeed in pursuing my goal of becoming an environmental engineer. And that’s just one life lesson music has given me out of the many.

MARWA ALI, GRADE 12

### *A Memory That I Have*

A memory that I have is from when I was in kindergarten. Half the class got in trouble because of one girl named Angela. We were doing activities at the time and I was with my friend Christian. We were doing some sort of reading thing. Angela came to us and a bunch of other classmates claiming that the teacher had given all of us permission to go get water outside at the water fountain. We all went including Christian and I. We were out there taking turns getting a sip of water when suddenly, the teacher comes and yells at us for getting a drink of water without her permission. At this point Angela was nowhere to be seen. And when we tried to tell the teacher what she had said, Angela became shocked and upset that we tried to accuse her. All of us, except Angela, got in trouble and the teacher ended up writing letters to our parents. We had to sign them and say sorry. I was alright with this because I didn’t really care. Christian though he was very upset. He was in a corner crying. I sat next to him and comfort him. We got up and hugged. Christian, me and half the class got in trouble because of Angela.

STEPHANIE ARANA, GRADE 12

### *One Step Forward*

The year of power born into the world  
plump lips, mud eyes, and chocolate brown skin  
Braided curly spirals matched with long lashes: beauty in one  
Looked over at first by many  
Never saw how pure, delicate and innocent she carried

A revolution, a change, a new beginning  
Favored in a world full of hate and racism  
Now holds the power many want to possess  
Strength, wisdom, elegance and style  
Stunned by her appearance by never approached  
Slowly taking over what once was never owned by her kind  
Black is what she is  
Black is grace  
Black is power  
Black is beauty.

HAYLEE BRYANT, GRADE 12

### *Breaking the Shell*

I was five years old, and my mom and dad were suddenly not around. I was old enough to understand that my dad needed to be in the hospital. I was old enough to understand that my mom needed to be there with him. But I was too young to understand why or what it meant for our family.

I am the youngest of four children. My older sister, who is sixteen years my senior, watched over me when my mom couldn't. I remember feeling slightly confused, but not overly disturbed. I wasn't quite sure why my life was abruptly different. Even so, I trusted that everything was okay, because that's what everyone kept telling me. My sister and my mom reassured me with the same catchphrase – everything will be fine, everything will go back to normal.

For a brief and happy moment, their comforting words proved true. My mom and dad were back. Dad stayed in bed, but he was there. I only had to open his bedroom door and climb in next to him. Mom made me breakfast again, drove me to pre-school, and played games with me. Everything was just as it had been. Everything was normal. Everything was okay. Until it wasn't, again.

Of my dad's two transplanted organs – a liver and a kidney – one didn't take. His new kidney was not enjoying its new home, apparently. That meant dad went back to the hospital. This time, the encouraging promises of a return to normalcy became less and less frequent. That catchphrase, the one I didn't realize I would miss so much, was replaced by a ringing phone. The phone seemed to never cease ringing. Each time it did, my sister answered with increasing reluctance. She listened with silent focus as the person on the other end said things that were not easy to hear. If I was around when she put the phone back in its cradle, she would give me a hug and remember that beautiful catchphrase that I had come to depend on.

One day the phone rang, my sister answered, listened, and hung up without even a goodbye. She leaned against the wall, slid to the floor, and put her head in her hands. "What's wrong?" I asked. I still remember our conversation word for word. Traumatic moments tend to stick in the mind. And her answer to my question truly shocked me. I expected the catchphrase. Instead, she told me the truth. "Dad is going to die," she said. She started to sob. "I don't want him to die." She held me and she cried. I cried too. And I'll never forget it for as long as I live, because that is the first time I felt genuine fear. It's also the first time I realized that uncomfortable truths can't be dismissed with a few consoling words.

I spent a lot of time with fear and uncertainty after that. My dad did recover. He was yellow skin stretched over prominent bone by the time another kidney became available. Still, it became available. And the night that my dad was supposed to die became the night he got another chance at life.

All in all, my dad's experience with organ failure and transplantation amounted to about a year. During that time, my family was in emotional and financial distress. During that time, as young as I was, I learned that life and family aren't promised. Life does not come without uncertainty, or loss, or pain.

It is tempting to ignore life's problems. It is often easier to convince yourself that everything will just work out, that a person's definition of normal never has to change, and that pain is only ever temporary. After my experience with my dad's sickness, though, I have found that even when truth is desperately uncomfortable, it is the best way to grow.

My dad is back on the transplant list. His live-saving kidney is now his life-threatening kidney. Luckily, I know that I can't hide from the fear that comes from this situation. I know that I can't rely on empty catchphrases to make things better. I know that, no matter what happens, no matter what truth actualizes for me, I will face it. Though weakness may overtake me, I will find my strength. Though hopelessness may depress me, I will find my optimism. Though loss may deprive me, I will find joy and love.

Everything will not be okay. But I will be.

ALLISON CAREY, GRADE 12

### *December 31st, 2010*

11:50pm

Fireworks in the sky, kids playing and jumping around.

Adults dancing along, while others start to prepare the grapes.

Teenagers began to get out the bigger fireworks and adults join.

Music is starting to get louder as the time gets closer.

11:55pm

"Faltan cinco pa las doce"- Néstor Zavarce begins to play in every house

Everyone goes outside to help set up fireworks and have them all in place.

Many are vigilant to make sure everyone is there and nobody gets hurt.

11:58pm

A man asks "¿Donde esta la niña?" Where is our little girl?

Finally, abuela Betty, finds her while she's in bed crying.

She yells "aquí está, ya salimos" we'll be right out.

Instead she lays with the little girl and tells her everything will be fine

12:00pm

Everyone screams "Feliz Año Nuevo" and fireworks are shot up the sky.

So many, that the street begins to fog up.

In the other side of the wall the little girl cries harder, but grandma says

"I miss her too, but your mom has to leave".

12:01pm

Twenty-four hours had already passed where a piece of my heart had left.

In the United States she is, ambitious for a better future for herself and her family.

Roxana Rodríguez, my best friend, my model, my hero, my mother

KENIA CRUZ RODRIGUEZ, GRADE 12

### *Not Her Definition*

Her origins weren't a glass stair nor a walk in the park. They were full of twists and turns and instability. She was used to burying everything, burying everything she's dealt with because her culture, her family didn't allow. She came from a place where women were valued less than a man, seen as just the caretakers of a home.

She wasn't happy during those times; she knew she meant more than just a maid, she just needed to leave the toxic home that suffocated her.

And she did. She was free from the prison that kept her till she was 18. She left without a second thought and since then she was much more content with her life. She felt that she could breathe but every day was an uphill battle. She still remembers her past, has dreams of what life used to be before she made the decision to walk out the door. Even though she wouldn't go back, her adolescent years were her origin, they were what had shaped her to be who she was, a hard-working woman with no need for a man. Her origins were what made her, but they will never define her as she continues to thrive with her past pushing her towards a better future.

LIN DIAZ, GRADE 12

### *I Love You*

You are the one I adore  
And there is no one I love more  
Than the one that gives me a smile  
And your beauty surpasses everyone's by a mile  
No one could replace you  
Not one would do  
Who could make me melt  
Never have I felt  
Something like so  
Although  
It is a pain  
To maintain  
It is difficult to keep you near  
You should never fear  
You are the one I adore

SAMUEL LOPEZ, GRADE 12

### *Manassas*

She welcomed me to the earth the day I was born  
A warm day it was, with clear skies  
Since day one my connection to her has never been torn  
For seventeen years we never permanently said our goodbyes  
She witnessed me grow up  
She also witnessed me falter time and time again  
I don't want to think about our inevitable break up  
The only thing that could make the departure worse, is to hear her complain  
I hope she remembers that for me to grow we must part ways  
But I will always come back to visit  
Until then I will be counting the days  
Because she was the one that welcomed me home

NATALIE MALDONADO, GRADE 12

## *Music in My Life*

When I was a kid (about 6 years old), my dad had this one music CD of an album compilation titled “Every Breath You Take: The Classics” by the British rock band The Police. I had the CD in my room one day and decided to start playing it on my TV that had a tray to insert discs. I didn’t know it then, but listening to them sparked something inside of me that made me appreciate music much more than I had before. After becoming interested in music I decided to try and learn an instrument, starting with the piano. I learned a couple techniques and chords here and there, but I wasn’t really having that same passion that I felt before. I tried out playing guitar instead and the same thing occurred, mostly because my hand was hurting from pressing down on the strings. I felt lost and discouraged because I felt that I couldn’t play an instrument. I decided to try once more and in 7th grade I joined the string orchestra. At last, I felt as if I was doing something and even though I got frustrated at times, I always pushed on and tried my best.

This push in orchestra made me get back into guitar eventually and made me feel more confident and positive. As I am writing this, I’m currently in my school’s Chamber Orchestra, the top ensemble in the school that you can join by audition only. Along with that, I play guitar at my local church and honestly, I really enjoy the opportunity to play with other talented people at school and church. I hope that other people find something that makes them feel more involved and motivated, and it may or may not be music, but I’m sure that it’ll be something that makes them joyful.

DANIEL MARQUEZ, GRADE 12

## *HERITAGE*

Scorching sun and Darkened skin, Sincere smiles and Furrowed brows, Early mornings and Late nights.  
HAPPINESS IN THE MIDST OF HARDSHIPS

The People of The Country NIGERIA, How lovely are the languages you speak.

The People of The Country NIGERIA, How do you make those vibrant colors and intricate patterns?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, How are the innovative young minds hidden in the guise of poverty?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, Do you know the riches you hold?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, Do you seize opportunities or leave matters in the hand of government officials?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, Do you know when you will be free of the shackles you have placed yourselves in?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, Who can ignore your calloused hands, from years of tilling the ground and paving your own way?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, Who can deny the joy you bring to each other even in countries far away from home?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, Who is that Man and Woman, Elder and Child creating memories in the minds of the world?

The People of The Country NIGERIA, In every one of you lies a HERITAGE.

ALISHA MOROKA, GRADE 12

## *From El Salvador to the U.S.*

My name is Madeleine and my parents are from San Vicente, El Salvador. They decided to leave El Salvador but immigrated to the U.S. at different times. My dad immigrated in 1980 and then fled to New

York. He wanted to get a job so he could help his family who live in El Salvador. My mom immigrated in 1992 where she then flew to New York to live with my dad. She believed that being able to live in the U.S. would be beneficial to have a better life. My parents got married and had my older sister in New York. They had previously visited Virginia and realized that it was very different than living in New York. New York is “the town that never sleeps.” It was always noisy and busy which was not in their liking because it was stressful to live there. My parents preferred to live in Virginia because it was quiet, there was not as much traffic and not as crowded. By 1996 they decided to move to Virginia. The living area in the state was much better and they had family and friends close by. They have lived in Virginia for 24 years and are still quite satisfied with their decision.

MADELEINE PINEDA, GRADE II

### *Perspective*

Life from vast cultures  
Each with their own story  
Only to end part here

YOVANIS PORTILLO, GRADE 12

### *American Dream Personified*

हामी अहलिं के गर्दैछौं तछ तयसैले तपाईंले कहलियै जीवन बतौउन सकनुहुनेछ। *Everything we do is so you can live the life we never had.*

There is a certain euphoria to knowing what lies ahead.

As my mother held me close to her chest boarding off our flight into the unknown, my life would forever become a before and after of that moment. At the age of one, my parents left Nepal to provide me opportunities they were never offered. To my family, a strong education represented possibility. It was only once I was older, I grasped the privilege of being exposed to the deprivation of possibility, while raised in the land of opportunity.

As an immigrant, I was privileged to be raised in a community that valued both my Nepalese and American nationalities. As a child who struggled with their Nepalese-American identity, the fulcrum of my life would never seem to let these two realms balance out. It was only when I found myself attending cultural events, celebrations, and parties, I discovered a sense of home. For once, my language, traditions, and faith weren't anomalies. With a community that understood these two worlds, my life felt balance. Just like the word itself, they reminded me that the very core of any community is 'u'. There's a certain euphoria to knowing what lies ahead. What I know is that I am the American dream personified. My struggles, experiences, and background are carried with me in every move I make. My parents left everything behind for me, and now as I look forward, everything I do is for them.

ANISHA POUDEL, GRADE 12

### *Roti*

A strong cultural tradition from Pakistan that women take part in is being able to make “Roti”, or a circular flatbread. My Mom makes roti by combining whole meal flour and water to make a dough called “Atta”. She skillfully kneads the dough into small balls and then rolls them out with a rolling pin. With her hands, she forms the dough into flat circles in a process similar to rolling out pizza dough. The dough cooks on a flat skillet or “tawa”. In Pakistan, they eat Roti daily with at least one meal if not more.

Roti's universal flavor pairs well with lots of other foods. This makes it commonly kept on hand in Desi households. They usually serve it with different stews and curries. My Mother often tells me how Roti tastes better in Pakistan, and how their technique is unmatched.

My Mother learned how to make Roti at a young age. Desi societies expect Pakistani women to master the art of making Roti from an early age, before marriage. Being able to master this skill and art takes lots of practice; of forming it into a perfect circle like my mom. Along with my Mother, all of my aunts and older women in my family have perfected the method of making roti from scratch in the traditional manner explained earlier.

However, my female cousins, sisters, and I still have not mastered this tradition despite our mothers' attempts to try to teach us at a young age. I believe this is because growing up in America we craved more American styles of food for dinner; such as burgers, pasta, and pizza. Being able to make roti is a tradition and skill that I want to pass on to my daughters and nieces. It is a tradition that I one day hope to surprise my Mom with to make her feel closer to her home in Pakistan.

MALIHA QURESHI, GRADE 12

### *How Music Made Me*

Shakespeare once said, "if music be the food of love, play on." The love and joy music present arouse us to keep playing, to push forward on our great passion. Music has a unique capacity of peace; it can unite people of different cultures and backgrounds. Those who speak different languages can all communicate with music. Ever since I was young my family used music to communicate. I was the young, naïve, Americanized girl who could not seem to relate to my old fashioned, immigrant parents. Influences from Nepali and American cultures, whose values often clashed, created challenges when trying to have a relationship with my parents. My parents, who I can describe as traditional, already envisioned how their daughter would be successful in America; be a doctor or an engineer. My path towards success was not as clear-cut as theirs. I love music, not medicine.

As the youngest of three, I always felt minuscule, like my opinion was frivolous. Music gave me a sense of belonging and direction. I use music to express myself in ways that words cannot seem to do. Annual traditions such as Dashain, Bhai Tika, and Thihar, all used music to create a lasting connection to our ancestors. Music is the essence of our culture. The sound of everyone chanting, people stomping their feet with joviality, the smell of goat curry arousing; like the clothes you just got out the dryer, and the close-knit bond of family and friends, are all aspects of my culture enhanced through the addition of music.

Not only does music brings me forth to connection with my culture and family, it conducts the network of relations with society. Having the same music fondness as others around you magnifies the crucial importance of what music can do to build connections. The music that comes with my culture drives me to pass down traditions to the next generation as the Nepali culture is slowly unraveling; where my generation is becoming more Americanized, and slowly forgetting what it means to be Nepali. It makes me proud to express that music has made me who I am. It is part of my life that has identified me as a person that has a purpose.

SHRINKHALA SHRESTHA, GRADE 12

### *The American Dream*

Born into a twisted world judged from the very start  
Momma holds him tight and prays for his little heart  
The baby stares obliviously, but what he doesn't see  
Is he's black

and a male  
and he could  
NEVER be free

He's too young to understand, but 1 day he will  
The systematic oppression that makes his people ill  
There's no such thing as the American dream  
Life,  
Liberty,  
Happiness are none to deem  
Lady Liberty lied, there's no place to climb  
This isn't any fairy tale . . . no once upon a time.

ERIC SLEDGE, GRADE 12

### *Hội Chợ Tết – Lunar New Year Festival*

My name is Christine Tran, and I am 17 years old. My family consists of my mom, my dad, my older sister, my younger brother, and me. My siblings and I have lived in Virginia since we were born, but my parents grew up in Vietnam and immigrated to America when they were around my age. I am so thankful to have such a family that celebrates different cultures and traditions – both Vietnamese and American. I especially love the holiday Tết Nguyên Đán, which is the Lunar New Year. There are lion/dragon dances, special foods like bánh chưng, a sticky rice cake with mung beans and pork, and lì xì, or lucky money given in red envelopes to children. People wear áo dài, or beautiful traditional clothing, visit family and friends, and wish each other good health, fortune, and blessings for the new year.

My family, as Roman Catholics, belong to both the All Saints Catholic Church parish and the Holy Martyrs or Vietnam Church parish, and every year for Tết, there is a huge celebration at the Vietnamese church. My family always helps to sell food and run game booths at the festival with our friends, as part of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Group. I perform songs, dances, and fashion shows with my friends, my sister, and my brother. It is just wonderful, and we have so much fun. Tết is a beautiful holiday in which we spend precious time with family, friends, and loved ones, and we get to ring in the new year with priceless and delightful memories.

CHRISTINE TRAN, GRADE 11

### *Promising Land*

Oh we go to a promising land  
With our skins so very tanned  
Across the river we go  
To a place far away from home  
With just my brother and I  
Hoping to live better lives  
Oh we go to a promising land  
To work with callused hands  
To a place so unknown  
It has a different time zone  
Though we can't speak what they do  
We still must get through

Oh to a promising land  
That seems so very grand

WENDY VELAZQUEZ-BUSTOS, GRADE II

### Lori Sterne, English 12

#### *Do you Remember?*

Young little me  
Do you remember that cold and foggy night  
or the blue and red flashing lights?  
Remember the blaring loud sirens that didn't let you rest  
or seeing your father in an arrest?  
Remember the gigantic window that filled the whole two bedroom apartment, which  
wasn't warm enough  
or looking down on your father in handcuffs-Wow! Wasn't that rough?  
Remember spending hours on the road just to say two words  
or that the memories you did have with your father would remain blurred?  
Remember not wanting to talk to your father on the phone,  
because it was too late, you had already grown?  
Remember surviving years without your father,  
not knowing that it'll only make you stronger?  
Beautiful, fatherless adult me,  
Never let anyone's actions and choices stunt your growth in becoming the best you can be.

JENELLE AQUINO, GRADE 12

#### *Joseph*

Everyone has a Joseph,  
For my uncle it was the man  
who brought him to America,  
for my aunt it was my uncle,  
and for my mom it was me.  
"Joseph" is the angel in our lives.  
He's the one that brings us hope  
in our most trying times.  
He's the one that picks you up, when  
you only have an ounce of strength left.  
He's the one that truly loves us.

Sometimes we forget to be grateful  
for the incredible people in our lives.  
We often lose the opportunity to show our  
genuine appreciation to them, before it's  
too late. So, if you know the Joseph in your

life, remember to give thanks, and to continue  
to love them the same way they love you.

TAMZID BASHAR, GRADE 12

### *Spring of 2013*

It was spring of 2013  
The vibrant flowers and the grass was green  
However, the only thing in sight  
is my oldest daughter and me in a fight  
Words I wish I had never said  
They left my mouth and I'm full of regrets  
She packed her bags and there's nothing I can do  
She has left, will my youngest leave, too?  
As the years go by, the pain is stronger  
My youngest daughter's voice is getting louder  
But the more I observe, the situation is clearer  
My angry youngest daughter is like a mirror  
I hope she knows I love her  
And I'm proud that she's better  
Even though her improvement was not because of me  
I'm full of joy that we're closer than I expected to be

SUPROVA CHOWDHURY, GRADE 12

### *A Passion, A Car, A Future*

Father's Day June 17, 2018. Whether it was a Saturday or Sunday didn't matter to me; I had a long time before school started. My family and I got to the Sully Historic Site about 11:30. It was hot, humid even; however, I expected nothing less from the middle of June. Walking to the entrance of the showing, I was an exuberant witness to what was presented to me. The aurora of bright color, aroma of gasoline, and the aura of pure 60s era class had me dumbfounded. Once I answered, the feeling of nostalgia consumed me, which was peculiar simply due to the fact that I was in an auto show of old relics from a time before me. I was relaxed and felt at home nonetheless. I was soon distracted from analyzing my feelings by the vibrant and colorful chassis of the classic muscle cars that surrounded me; it was glorious. What really took my breath away, and ultimately inspired me to decide on the career I'd like to pursue, was what was on the inside of the classy chassis. The rows and rows of legendary small block V8's that were supplanted in the engine bays were astonishing. The very hearts of the cars beating, sitting at idle was something to behold. Every car had a different tone to its exhaust note. Rangers went all the way from the '71 Plymouth Barracuda's behemoth 440ci motor, which could contend with combat fighter jet noise, to the '69 choppy, stocky sounding 396ci. Soon we made it over to the lot of Mustangs, universally known for starting the pony and muscle cars. This part was particularly my favorite part of being at this festival. All of my dad's family had, or currently have, a Mustang of some sort. My father has a 2010 Mustang GT, which I aspire to own in all its grabber blue reverence. So I took a picture of the lot of Mustangs as a way to remind myself of what I am fascinated by, the goal of owning a Mustang, a bonding experience with my father, and the path I have chosen for my future.

LOGAN CRIPS-SORGER, GRADE 12

## *All the Lies Explained*

They are ready for a relationship . . . **just not with you.**  
“I’m not sure” is an answer . . . **no answer is the answer.**  
“It’s not you, it’s me,” . . . **It is you; you’re the problem.**  
Right person, wrong time . . . **No, you make time for what YOU want.**  
They were your first love. . . **false, they were your first attachment.**

JEANINE HALIM, GRADE 12

## *Breathe*

Breathe- don’t waste a breath  
At times, life isn’t the nicest friend to you  
It makes you feel like the whole world is against your very life  
Breathe  
Realize your worth  
Remember the limited chances you have to live your best life

AMBER HERNANDEZ, GRADE 12

## *Tied Shoes*

I believe I don’t always need to know. When I started school, I was 6 years old entering my first day of Kindergarten at Mullen Elementary with my day already planned out and ready to go; I never had to do anything or think for myself. It stayed that way all through Mullen Elementary and Bull Run Middle School, but high school, more specifically Stonewall Jackson High, is very different. For the first time, I had to think about my future.

There was so much pressure into having your future figured out to the littlest detail. How could I possibly plan my future when I don’t even know what I want for breakfast every morning? It was a mandatory topic: your college, what you want to major in, where you want to live while attending college, and the specific steps on how to achieve those “goals”. It seemed like everyone had their plans all figured out since they were in diapers like they’re already running the race and I don’t even have my shoes tied yet! I realized I had to pick a college that would help me solve these dilemmas and after some research, I decided to attend NOVA.

I want to attend NOVA because they have programs to help someone like me figure out a plan such as their placement test. It’s a 2 hour test(s) that calculates your strong areas and shows you majors that fits your strengths and you could choose a major from there and the best part is that the placement test is free. It’s infinitely better than going to some big university and spending thousands of dollars to be admitted with no major. I still believe you don’t always need to know, but I believe that NOVA is a good place to start.

BEATRICE LEWIS, GRADE 12

## *My Journey*

Imagine a painless path to a dream  
A dream that does not fill your life with screams  
A dream feasible to a mountain rat  
A rat not knowing where it will feed at  
A rat with no money but fantasies

Fantasies that escape all tragedies  
Fantasies that prompt the rat to survive  
Survive the thoughts that block its right to live  
Survive the temptations from shrugs, drugs, thugs  
Thugs who made it feel like a foolish bug  
Thugs who only strengthened its desires  
Never heard of a painless path, so ignore the liars  
Dedicated to my father, who worked hard to achieve his dream

NATALIE MALDONADO, GRADE 12

### *Hidden Feelings*

She has a secret that nobody knows.  
Everyone has secrets, that's how life goes.  
She hides behind her thick curly brown hair.  
She goes on with her life, without a care.  
She needs to move on and forget the past.  
For now she knows that love can never last.  
No one knows how empty inside she feels.  
Her heart is broken, what she felt was real.  
Her actions and thoughts are pure like a dove.  
It is what it is, she was warned about love.

SKYLER MORGAN, GRADE 12

### *Cruise*

A cruise for my 16th birthday.  
Bronchitis  
Big white glorious boat in Florida.  
Sea saltwater in the air.  
Light breeze  
Sun on my skin  
Seasick

JASMINE NGUYEN, GRADE 12

### *Dear Diary*

April 20, 1984- My mother has left. I miss her presence, her voice, her embrace. My father is an angry man and won't allow me to cry, so I must cry at night while everyone sleeps. He would argue a lot with my mother over things my nine year old brain doesn't understand. I wish I could've gone with my mother, but my father wouldn't allow it and him being the frightening man he is, my mother didn't fight it. I know she wanted my siblings and me to go with her so I'm not mad at her. I know she wasn't happy with my father. All I can do is pray that I get to see her again. I love you, Mom.

June 7, 1984- It has been a few months since my mother left the house. She comes by every now and then to check up on us, but not as often as I would like. I wish she would come back, but I know she'd be miserable back here. She tells us, "I know you guys are sad, but it will all be ok. I know your father is mean, but respect him and know he loves you guys". I wish she would explain to me why she left. I feel confused sometimes and

blame myself, but I know I'm not the reason she left. My father has been drinking a lot and that makes me anxious. I must make sure my little sister is doing well and keep her in check. We may not always get along, but I feel like she's just about all I have right now. My body has started changing, too. I don't know what to do or who to talk to. My oldest sister is God knows where and I don't feel comfortable asking my brothers or my father. I feel embarrassed and alone.

April 12, 1994- My father has passed. Regardless of the physical and emotional pain I've endured due to him, I still feel deeply saddened. I'm 19 now and living alone. All my siblings have left to start their lives. Even my younger sister who is 18! I'm not alone though. I met a girl who lives in the U.S. but who was born here in El Salvador. We met a few years ago and we haven't lost touch. We write each other letters about how we are doing, and she likes to remind me of my worth. She also tells me how much I mean to her as a friend and her letters mean so much to me, because I feel like for once in my life, I'm being recognized. Now my mother stops by from time to time just to check up on me and make sure I have food for myself. She's remarried and she seems happy. The man she married is kind, from what she's told me. She says he treats her with gentleness and is very respectful. I'm glad that she is happy. I wonder where life will take me from here.

*\*This diary is based on my mother's childhood. Her mother left at a young age and her father died 10 years later. She didn't have many of the experiences most kids would like to have, considering she lived in a poor country, in a poor family. Now, she is a hard worker, raising my sister and me as a single mother. She keeps a positive attitude towards life even if it has never been easy. I have a lot to learn from her.*

RUTH PACHECO, GRADE 12

### *Grandfather's Little Girl*

December 07,2009. My parents were talking in the living room. I had never heard something that made me so distraught. My parents called my sister, brother, and me down to the living room. When we were told the news, we all looked at each other with tears running down our faces. Now,I was just sad, but my brother and sister broke down when they heard it all. The news my parents told us was that my grandfather had passed away. I had thought that I was dreaming at first. When I started to realize everything was real, I broke down and started to panic. My sister walked into my room when she heard me panicking and crying. She took me into her room and we lay in bed and cried together. It was 1:00 A.M; I got up, still crying, and asked my mother and father, "Why did he have to pass away so fast?"

My grandfather was an amazing guy to me. Even though he drank a lot, he still taught me a lot at the end as a little kid. One of the many things I was taught by him was swimming. I always have that in my mind, because it's also a memory where he and I had fun together. My family and I would ask him to go with us to the beach or to a water park. This is the only way he taught me how to swim. He would always take me into the deep and would tell me, "It's time to learn how to swim". He always tried his best to teach me new things. My grandfather taught me what happiness felt like. Happiness was taught by him giving me all his love and being so cheerful around me.

I'm honored to have a grandfather like this; my grandfather meant the whole world to me. Every time I would go visit him, he would always give me a warm loving hug and a kiss on my cheek. I am who I am now because of him. I'm strong, cheerful, and loving. My grandfather had his ways. He would play around with me whenever he could. I loved traveling to El Salvador because of him. Now I'm beyond in love with El Salvador. Even though he passed away years ago, it's hard walking into his house without thinking about him still. I ask my grandmother how she gets through this on her own. She replied by saying, "We all have to leave at some point; we won't be alive forever it's how life works".

Over my grandfather's death, I became strong, over his love that he gave me, I became a loving girl, and over his jokes and playful moves, I became cheerful. I thank him for everything he has done, taught, and said to me. There is one thing I would like to do to complete me and that is to go sit on his grave and talk to him

about what has been going on in my life ever since he passed away. I know he would be happy for me to go visit his grave and sit next to him to talk about my life and my love towards him. Suffering can make you into someone that doesn't care about anything anymore, but it could also make you into someone better. Like people say, "You suffer the past and you live the future happy."

CAROLINA RIOS, GRADE 12

### *Glee*

O' how I am full of overwhelming glee  
And yet I say unto you verily,  
That one should not be so bound  
By what others say to surround  
And confine one to such standard  
O' such people that slander  
A person's dream and hope  
But I say to you: nope  
You should not be constricted  
By a world so evil and twisted  
No matter how much is insisted  
That you do as what others say  
And toil under the hot sun all day  
To do something so plain  
And it not be called mundane  
I say unto you once more  
life does not have to be such a chore  
let people gather and see  
that you may do what is happy  
releasing your inner child  
and your life may be filled with glee

JUSTIN RIVAS, GRADE 12

### *Buttercream Crown*

She walks with her crown  
True and Proud  
The curls of her crown  
Are a scene of spirals of illusion  
Precious tight coils  
Set with sweet vanilla pudding  
Twirled into a buttercream silk  
That goes "boing"  
From afar her crown could be illustrated  
As a bouquet of flowers  
In the early morning dew  
Illuminated from the shine of the sunrise  
As her hair flutters in the wind  
Piano notes form

Creating a ceremony of symphonies  
Called 'Melody of Melanin'  
Her precious crown wages war  
Against those who don't approve  
But she dances through the hate  
Never letting her crown slip.

AMANI SANDERS, GRADE 12

1962

She came on the salty foam  
of the icy sea  
She stayed a while  
whispering close in my ear  
while we slept  
She left  
Every summer;  
Back to the ocean  
back to the turquoise tranquility  
and the briny tang of fish  
Yet  
She would return each coming winter,  
and hang her coat on a peg,  
and whisper:  
"I love you."

CHLOE SCHMIDT, GRADE 12

11:45 PM

My eyelids lay like heavy blankets on my eyes. I turn the pages of my book, squinting to try and read the tiny sentences with only one of my lamps lighting my dark room. The hinges of my door squeak and the light from the hallway pours into my room, followed by my mother and step-father. A smile of guilt flashes across my face, blushing because I was caught reading so late into the night. I glance at my alarm clock on my nightstand; blue light illuminates the numbers "11:45". I look back up to my parents standing in my doorway and start to apologize, "I'm sorry, I'll go to bed." My mother walks over and sits on the edge of my bed, taking my book from me and placing it down, the pages facing out to mark my spot. I realize tears have been streaming down her face and staining her cheeks this whole time and my step-father stood with a grave look on his face. My guilty smile and blushed face fades to pressing concern, "Why are you crying?"

She chokes and fights her tears to get the words out, "Your dad. . ."

I search her watery eyes for answers, "My dad what?"

She took my hand, "Your dad killed himself."

I fight for air. I suffocate in my tears. I can't see, my vision is flooded as if I've opened my eyes underwater. My mom wraps her arms around me in an attempt to comfort me as I try to absorb the information she's given me. He's gone. Vanished. The man who I idolized for my entire childhood had pulled the trigger on himself in the blink of an eye. I will never get him back. I will never be able to tell him how much I love him.

MCKENZY SCOTT, GRADE 12

## *In the Palm of Her Hands*

My grandma really liked flowers. She would go to Lowes and find dying flowers that were dry, droopy, and dark and then two weeks later they would be alive, colorful, and well. She was literally Mother Nature herself. When she was working in her garden, butterflies, hummingbirds, woodpeckers, blue jays, and even deer would come up to say hello. She was so kind to everyone she met. Whenever I brought friends over, she would make them feel so at home that by the time they left they would start to call her Grandma instead of Mrs. Shahnaz. Every time I got home from school, I would see her standing by the stove making some Iranian dish and she would make me a plate and say, "Sit down, eat, and tell me about your day." I was bullied a lot when I was a kid and one thing she would tell me constantly is, "Always be kind, Azizam. Never let them make you cold. You have such a big heart, use it for good. Let them be mean. They are hurting so they want you to hurt, too. You are stronger than that, Azizam." So I have all my life. When we had events, I loved seeing her smile and laugh. She was so stunning. After she passed, we had to look through photo albums for the funeral and I saw this one picture of her at my uncle's birthday party when he was a kid and she was sitting next to him clapping her hands with this huge smile on her face and I instantly felt tears roll down my face and I just felt this warmth in my heart knowing that I will always have her with me wherever I go. She was such an angel who deserved everything life had to offer. She took me in the palm of her hands and helped me grow just like she did with her flowers and forever and ever I will be thankful. *Grandma, I love you. Rest in peace.*

*Dedicated to Shahnaz Shahri Seyedan, 1950–2019*

HANNAH SEYEDAN, GRADE 12

## *Mother Knows Best*

Don't talk back, Mara  
Don't lose yourself  
Don't eat candy  
Don't ever stop smiling  
Don't wear that  
Don't care what others think  
Don't yell  
Don't forget your greatest memories  
Don't laugh so loud  
Don't forget to be happy  
And never, never forget  
I love you, Mara

MARA SHAIYA, GRADE 12

## *A Stonewall Tale*

A baller there was, one who was so tall  
He carpooled to school and came to Stonewall  
A huge man, shoes so big to fit his feet  
Got straight A's 'cause teachers love the athlete  
He wore black beats by Dre and never talked  
A tired zombie was the way he walked

Hoodies and sweats was all that he possessed  
Only on game days was he nicely dressed  
Upon the big games was the time he shined  
This unique baller was 1 of a kind

ERIC SLEDGE, GRADE 12

### *Don't Katevonni*

Don't grow up so fast, Katevonni.  
Don't give up on yourself.  
Don't judge anyone.  
Don't talk back.  
Don't fall in love so easily.  
Don't give respect to people who don't earn your respect.  
Don't crash the car, please.  
Don't forget your mother's tongue.  
Don't crease your nice shoes.  
Don't forget your dad when you go to college.  
Don't party like there's no tomorrow.  
Don't forget to smile through those rainy days.  
And never, never forget you are worth a thousand miles to me, Katevonni.

KATEVONNI SORLOUANGSANA, GRADE 12

### *My Favorite Thing I Won't Get Rid Of*

My favorite thing is a stuff animal toy I have. The toy is a white bear wearing a suit. Its suit is a dark as night, The red belt it has is red like a cherry. The shirt and tie is gray like a wolf. The fur is as white as a cloud. The bear's name is Senpai the Bear. The eyes have black and brown in them. The black is like night and brown is like chocolate. I got the bear from my boyfriend in the beginning of our relationship. I was surprised when he gave it to me. It was unexpected and I was as happy as a kid on Christmas day when he gave it to me. The day he gave me the bear was a school day. We were having lunch together talking about things and he gave me the bear to have something to think of him when I miss him. That has been a few years ago and the bear is still my favorite thing from him. I sleep with the bear every night and I can't sleep without it. It makes me happy and safe because it makes me remember my boyfriend and it feels like he is with me when I have my bear.

MELANIE SPENCER, GRADE 12

### *My Sun*

As the sun said, "Goodbye," I rush to the balcony with my tiny fragile legs, patiently waiting for the rusty sound of the auto-rickshaw. I run down the stairs with my white tank top and my blue shorts. I wait for the rickshaw to come into my view, as I stare off at the road, waiting. I smile softly as the rickshaw comes into my view, I scurry out the door and watch as my sisters get out of the rusty machine. They smile as they see me and hand me their lunch bags to hold. I gladly take it and bolt back inside. My mother smiles at us as she takes the lunch bag away from me.

\*This writing is based on a memory from when I was a child waiting for my siblings to get back from school. It is dedicated to my sisters.

ARSHIYA SYED, GRADE 12

### *Dad's Don't List*

Don't run around the store  
Don't touch that dirty floor  
Don't pretend to be something you are not  
Don't lie for in the end you will get caught  
Don't forget to show love to others  
Don't forget that a new life can start with no rubber  
Don't forget to be sweet and kind  
Don't forget that the ones that matter don't mind  
Don't forget to not boast  
Don't ever forget that as your father I love you the most  
Thank you, Dad, for all you do :)

TIFFANY THOMAS, GRADE 12

### *The Tied Shoe*

I remember feeling like a volcano  
about to blow up.  
I kept trying and failing  
My uncle's face was painted red  
like he had eaten a Carolina Reaper Pepper.  
The cotton strings untied  
Time moving unhurried  
My fingers felt cold and numb  
I thought they had fallen off.

This is dedicated to my uncle who has been the only male role model for my little brother and me. He has taught me everything from first teaching me to tie my shoes to teaching me to be a better person and because of this, I have enlisted in the military to be just like him.

MARCUS VALENTIN, GRADE 12

### *My Unnamed Garage Band*

I've been in a band for a little over a year now. I'd say the name, but we don't have one. We've come up with several working ones but one member (usually me) shoots it down. We come from different tastes of music and personality, with enough in common to be a great band. Dazmen, the drummer, is great with feeling music and has a sharp wit to go with it. Ethan, the guitarist, lends us his poster-filled room as a rehearsal space. His forte is riffs and techniques from over six years of playing. Ian, the rhythm guitarist and occasional trumpet player, has probably the best vocal chops, which makes him the natural lead singer.

Then there's me, the bass player. I used to be more mediocre, but playing the part for my friends has really helped me improve. I remember that I wrote a quick bassline before my first rehearsal with them just because I wanted to prove myself a bit. That bassline ended up crescendo-ing into our first song, which we dubbed "Cupboards" (it has no meaning). We've written several other songs which range from demos to completion. Some have working titles like "Ian's Sad Song," "The Interlude", and "Ben's Song." But as a fresh ensemble we've been able to augment songs from the band's earlier stages (before I joined), such as "Andy the Cat" and "Sock Monkey".

My skill has increased greatly since I joined the band. I've looked into harder songs for playing bass on my own. It's mostly songs by Les Claypool, a very weird and incredibly skilled bass player. I want to bring some of the cooler things I can do to the band. I've begun practicing slap bass and tapping, as well as faster fretting abilities. I feel these could be a major improvement to our sound.

The fraternity of the band is equally as important as the music. Often we go out to eat or play some kind of game after a rehearsal. I feel it's the key to helping us bond as a band. I hope for this band to stay together in the future. Playing with friends is more important than gigs for me. Granted, we haven't played any, but playing in Ethan's room together feels like a second home. Continuing to play with them feels like an ongoing song that I don't want to end.

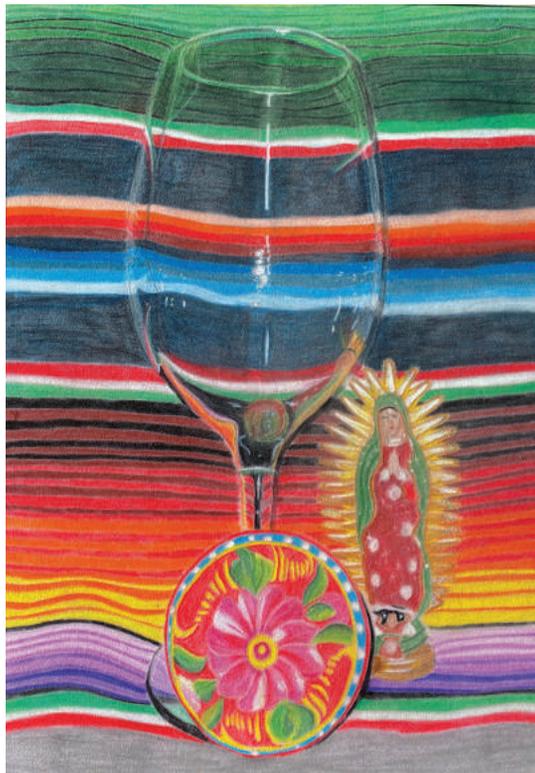
BENJAMIN WAGNER, GRADE 12

### *Something New*

I am humble and blunt.  
I wonder what it's like to grow up in Boston, Massachusetts.  
I hear the clings and creaks of a rusty bike.  
I see kids huffing and puffing to pedal their rusty bike up the hill with their wobbly legs.  
I want to know what it's like to live somewhere other than Virginia.  
I am humble and blunt.  
I pretend to have a Boston accent.  
I feel I am missing a part of myself.  
I touch the wall.  
I worry I won't meet all my relatives.  
I cry when I get too overwhelmed and stressed.  
I am humble and blunt.  
I understand that I am the youngest grandchild.  
I say I am mature enough to hear the family secrets.  
I dream about what the future may hold.  
I try to give my all in everything I do.  
I hope for the best in the future.  
I am humble and blunt.

ALISHA WHITE, GRADE 12

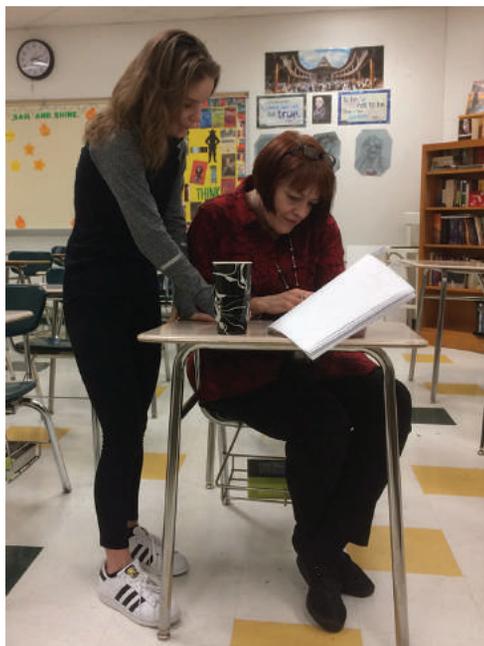
# WOODBRIIDGE HIGH SCHOOL



*Heritage Acrylic, Nereida Sosa Antunez, Grade 11*

## Roxanne French, English and Dual Enrollment Teacher

### *Home for the Holidays*



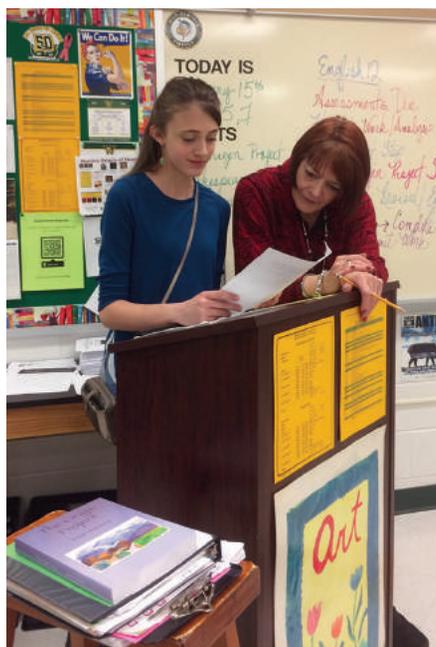
This year I went home to visit my father for Christmas; he is ninety-four years old, and he still lives independently. Home is a pretty house in an old established neighborhood in Churchland built around a tree-filled park. The yard has a fig tree, a flowering peach tree, and three varieties of camellias that bloom through the winter, vibrant red and white blossoms that my father cuts and puts in small bud vases when none of his roses are blooming.

In Tidewater, neighbors and strangers smile and wave as they drive or walk through the neighborhood. My mother loved the neighborhood, their friends, and their church four blocks from the house. My mother died eleven years ago surrounded by as many of us who were able to be at her bedside. My father was holding her hand, talking to her and assuring her we were with her, and he

was with her. When she died, my parents had been married for sixty-three years. I had rushed home from Woodbridge to be with her. I stayed with my father, and for the first time, my mother was not there with him, and she would not see the new camellias he had put in the bud vases on the bedside table. My father stayed in the house, continued with his duties at the church, and played bridge with four different bridge clubs, including two of my mother's clubs that adopted Dad as an honorary member—the only male member allowed. Everything changed and everything stayed the same.

One tradition that stayed the same was my holiday and vacations with my father. When I stay with him—visiting with our family, preparing special meals and treats for him, my mother's recipes and his favorites, creamy she-crab soup, legs of lamb dressed with sprigs of rosemary and slivers of garlic, New York cheesecake, Russian teacakes, and thumb-print cookies decorated with chocolate frosting I am aware that I am home. Some trips we have missions and adventures. We go to hardware stores and specialty stores looking for towel racks and new telephones. We visit their old friends in their homes or in long term care facilities. We buy flowers, visit my mother's grave, arrange the flowers and say a prayer.

During my visits with my father, I am reminded how extraordinary he is, and how precious our time together is. My visits also remind me what home means to me. We were a military family. My parents met in the third grade in a small elementary school in Northborough, Massachusetts. After they graduated from high school in 1943, my father enlisted in the Navy. Three years later they married, and my parents began an adventure that included living in Africa, Naples, Hawaii, and California, but we never lived or were stationed in Massachusetts. This did not matter to my mother; Massachusetts was always our home. I have never lived there.





As a child, we lived in military housing, residential hotels, refurbished Italian government offices, and a Quonset hut in Honolulu. We moved so often that we were always ready to pack, to go to a new house, and to make new friends. Most of our friends lived nomadic lives. When people asked me where I was from, I told them my family was from Massachusetts. But as I child I never knew where I was from. My home was wherever my father was stationed, where my mother set up her kitchen, arranged our furniture, and hung her painting of the Bay of Naples. My family became my home. It still is.

Even after I married the handsomest boy I had ever seen, given birth to our serious son, and began setting up my own kitchen and arranging our own furniture, my home was still where my parents lived. When I visit my father now, I know that I may only be able to visit my home a few more times, but the home my parents gave me is also who I am. I am ready to pack my bags, to go to a new house, to make new friends, and to go home.

ROXANNE FRENCH, ENGLISH AND DUAL ENROLLMENT TEACHER  
WOODBIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

### *What I Love the Most*

I can't believe I found the answer to living a happy and healthy life! This may not work for you, but it worked for me. It took years of thinking and finding myself to realize what was absent in my life. This important thing that has been absent is what helped solve most of my problems, and that one thing is family. As a young teen, I never paid attention to how important family is and the role it plays in my life. Throughout high school, I felt like something was missing, and I wasn't at peace with myself. I felt like giving up and hiding away on some remote island because something was missing from my life. I realized that I was distancing myself from family and love ones. I didn't know at the time that being close to family brought me joy and happiness. The closure from family kept negative thoughts away and kept me on the right path. I was young and immature, so I didn't understand and didn't realize that the love you give and receive from family can affect my life greatly. It hasn't been too long, but I understand that the love and connection I have with family is what keeps me motivated and pushing to achieve more in life. I was blinded and didn't realize the importance of family. Family is important to me because their love brings me peace, they keep me motivated, and they provide me with advice.

Interacting and conversing with family and spending time with them brings me joy, happiness, and peace within myself. In this world being alone will only lead to



torment and discomfort. Being alone will lead to you being vulnerable and outcast in society. Having others like family around you can help you get through tough obstacles in life. We all go through hard times, and family brings us comfort and ease so that we'll get through the obstacles. Most of my family is overseas, so living in America had distanced me from them. This summer I went back to my home country to visit everyone. I learned so much about family relations and the love we all share with each other. When I returned home, I started calling family members on weekends and that would bring a smile to my face. I always loved family, but I think my tremendous love for family started because I've been a little depressed for some time now, and I wasn't feeling right for some reason. I realized that the love and connection of family brings me peace and brings me ease now that I'm not alone in this harsh world. My family makes me feel like I have others who want to see me succeed and are willing to be there in times of need. They all brought me peace, and they all have helped me plan how I want my future to be.

As I grew older and matured, I realized that education is important to me; and the love and support I get from family keeps me motivated to push towards a higher education. When I went to visit family in the summer, I saw family members working hard so that they could one day have an impact on society. They taught me to use education as an instrument to achieve whatever you want in life. I want to use education in a way that helps others. Helping others make me feel satisfied. In general, family motivates me to strive for more in life. The confidence and strength I get is from them motivating me. I want to show my family what I can accomplish. I want to see the surprise on their faces when they see what I have accomplished for myself in life. Without my family, I would actually care what others think of me and be a follower rather than a leader. In life, you need a source of motivation, and thank God I realized that family is my source of motivation. Family is what keeps me going, and they are the ones who make me want to get out of bed every day. I can't wait to work hard and push to achieve my goals. I'm thankful to God that he gave me this family, who are so sweet and kind to me. The support and motivation they have given is more than what I could have ever asked for.

Lastly, my loved ones have given me great advice whenever I needed advice. Having people who love you is also helpful when you need to make a decision you're not sure about. They may give you a different perspective on handling something, so it doesn't end badly for you. If you're alone in this world, people will take advantage of you and their intentions of helping you are probably negative. Many people want to use your weaknesses and secrets against you to ruin your image and reputation. You need to realize that you can't trust everyone. Many people are jealous and want what you have built through hard work and dedication. I know all this because of experience and because I've been told this from family. I've been told by family that some people's lives are built on lies and they try so hard to fit in that they do things that they couldn't imagine doing. I've mainly asked for advice about life, career, and how to better myself from family. I've asked about good morals, how to protect yourself, and what things can destroy what you have built so far. I learned that not all advice works best with your situation and keep in mind who you ask for advice. I learned to take the advice you are given and see how it would affect your situation. Don't blindly follow advice no matter how trustworthy that person may be. As I grow into a young adult, I've found that family or even close friends are people who I can ask for advice on important situations that come up in life.

So, growing up I didn't understand what family meant. I didn't understand that the unity is what brings me peace. As a young teen I tried many ways of feeling at peace and at ease. However, the different ways of finding peace and relief wouldn't last long until I would start to feel not comfortable. I needed something or someone that could tell me I'll accomplish so much in life. I was looking for something or someone that could comfort me and motivate me to strive for more. I think this summer when I went to my home country, I realized what I've been missing from my life. Taking in the love from people and the culture gave rise to feelings of security, peace, and comfort. Family is what pushes me to get a higher education. Family is what pushes me towards wanting to help others. They all believe in me in a way nobody else does. My family wants what's best for me and they support and motivate me. Family is what made me decide to live life differently. I'm so grateful that the types of family members I have are so caring and loving. Without them I would be

lost, influenced by the negative aspects of society. To conclude, family has pushed me to reach for a higher education, help others, and gave me stability in life. Family is important to me because their love brings me peace, they keep me motivated, and they provide me with advice. I still have much to learn and accomplish; I won't give up thanks to my family.

MOIZ AKBAR, GRADE 12

## *My Origins*

My name is Victor Alan Blancas, and I was born in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico; on November 22, 2001, on a Thanksgiving Day. San Miguel is a beautiful town rich in history and majestic architecture that delights the minds of the travelers who seek a connection with the true Mexico. I was raised by my dad as my parents divorced when I was six years old, and I lived with him until I was thirteen. I still got to see my mom all the time. Even though my parents were not hostile towards each other, they didn't talk too much among themselves. Don't get me wrong! I love them both and do thank them for everything; still, my mom had to work a lot and sometimes work made it hard for her to spend quality time with me and my sister, yet there was not a single weekend I wouldn't enjoy with her. My dad is a different story; he was not as charming as my mom, but he taught me how to be a good man, and I can say he is my best friend. My father married Susana and that's when my other best friend and little brother Emiliano was born. I consider Susana a role model and part of my family; both my mother and Susana taught me a lot about life.

In the year 2011, my mother decided to move to Saint Thomas (US Territory), a small island in the Caribbean, to live with her aunt. She would often write letters to me telling me how an island's life was, filling my mind with excitement and the wish to be there. Soon enough, after four years of hard work and struggling to get my immigration documents in 2015, my mom was able to bring me into the United States with a special immigration visa. It would then take me a year living in the island for my citizenship documentation to be processed. It was in 2016 when I became a citizen of this great nation of ours. That day, I remember waking up in excitement as my mother told me to get ready; I ate my breakfast, took a shower, suited and dressed up. The day was sunny, as sunny as could be. The gentle breeze with the smell of the sea, the jungle singing the melody of GOD, and with a huge smile, I got into the car. We drove downtown to the immigration office; my mom was playing our favorite CD and we both sang along. On the way, I started to remember all the times my mom had tears in her eyes for me waiting for this moment.

We went into the immigration office where the security guard greeted us and took us to a big room where twelve kids waited. The parents sat in a corner while we were seated in front of a big TV. A lady kindly asked us to be quiet and watch the movie. As the video started, Obama appeared on the screen and gave us a warm welcome. His inspiring words caused tears in my eyes; he told us we must protect this nation as it is ours and we are part of it. Then six men that were sitting at a table stood up and called our names, one by one. We were all kids from different nations and cultures, different religions and ideologies and now all joined by fifty stars and thirteen stripes. They gave my citizenship certificate and specially congratulated me as I was the first Mexican officially to become a USA citizen in the Virgin Islands. I looked at my mom as her beautiful hazel eyes filled with emotion and happiness. We went outside and she hugged me while whispering to my ear, "Felicidades, amor" (Congratulations, my love). All the pain she had to go through in order to reach this moment—four jobs in five years to give me this opportunity in life; I cried and thanked her. Afterward, she handed me a cake decorated with a beautiful USA flag. I thank God, who listened to my prayers and showed me that with a little faith, everything is possible. Every night I would talk to Jesus and well, it worked!

After a year and a half, I moved to Virginia and began my first year of high school. I was new to the American system and it was like the movies I would often watch in Mexico. It was fun to learn more about the American people, about you guys—those who inspired me to create this writing.

You want to know what has happened since then?

I enrolled in German and after two years became an exchange student who traveled for six weeks to Germany. I became part of a bowling team in a youth league. I got a job that will help me pay for my college, and if there is a little money left, I will buy myself, one of these days, a 1959 Ford Anglia 105E. But until then, wish me good luck! And thank you for reading my story.

VICTOR ALAN BLANCAS ROMO, GRADE 12

### *Shenandoah*

My photo is more than just a pretty picture; I took this shot on a sunrise hike with my dad and sisters. I was able to escape the confines of the suburbs and find freedom where the water flows freely, and the air is clean. In nature is where I find my God, and its work was on full display that



*Shenandoah* by William Callie

I was lucky enough to capture. Whenever I feel sad or anxious or like I can't breathe, I think of this photo and I know that the sun will always rise, and I can always find my freedom.

WILLIAM CALLI, GRADE 12

### *Seeping In*

The sun's silhouette seeps through the cracked window,  
dust dances as she tiptoes across the wooden floor board,  
she holds a glass of water, the gold bracelet  
around her dainty wrists catching the sun,  
she steps towards the flower, gliding her fingers up the stem,  
little white hairs going between her fingers,  
she moves to the leaves,  
thin veins pumping life through the flower,  
she touches the petals softly,  
and the petal falls.  
Soft flesh hits the soil.  
She leans the glass over the pot,  
life flowing through the roots as she thinks,  
maybe we aren't so different.

PAGE CRAVEN, GRADE 12

### *Lima*

My life is full of limes.  
Every day I crush them  
and extract their joy, pure and free  
Out pour memories:  
*abuela, abuelo*  
my family in Lima,  
the City of Lime.

I still live in Lima,  
taste it in my mother's cooking,  
see it in my *abuela's* paintings,  
hear it in my father's guitar  
I feel the warmth of my family's smiles  
coming all the way from Peru.

The juice springs forth  
as I open my mouth  
receiving the gift of Lime  
as a child once again.

RENATO ECONA, GRADE 10

### *Who I Am Today*

I am who I am today because of my past. People always say that your past doesn't define you. That may be true, but it shapes who you become. When parents have children, they're told to watch how they act in front of the kids because they pick up on negative energy, and it can affect them in the long run. So how could you not say your past shapes who you are? My past has made me the person I am now.

People form special connections with those that are close to them and they love. I had a special connection with my brother, but not a typical connection. He was the one that was supposed to be there to protect me and make me feel safe, yet he was the one I feared the most. For years I questioned my worth and my purpose in life. It had such a negative impact on my mentality, and I had to fight it every day. Even though I was dealing with these struggles, I always had a smile on my face. No one knew there was anything wrong because I didn't want people to know. I was ashamed because for so long I was told that it was my fault it all happened. Looking back, I can now say I know that's not true. Sure, I would antagonize him a little bit, but I can't force someone to lay their hands on me or say hurtful things; only the person that does it can.

Even though it was my brother who caused me the years of pain, I thank him for putting me through all of it. I used to hate him so much because I couldn't understand what I did to deserve it all, but I didn't do anything. He needed a way to deal with his anger and internal issues, and they were let out on me. Again, I thank him for it. I would not be the strong young woman I am now if I hadn't had those obstacles to overcome for so many years. I wouldn't know now that my worth is priceless. I wouldn't know that I belong here, and my life does have a purpose. I know that everything he ever said I am, I'm not. I have no hatred in my body; I don't know how to hate from having to teach myself for so long how to love myself. I feel nothing but love for those around me because I know what it feels like to not be loved and that feeling can ruin you. So again, I thank my brother, one of the people that should love me the most, for showing me what it feels like to not be loved. Thank you for having such an impact on who I am today because I love who I've become, and you can't hurt me anymore.

HEATHER FANNING, GRADE 12

### *The Ghost in the Room*

I was seven years old. I couldn't sleep, my mind racing. I stared at the digital clock on the bedside table next to me, watching the red light, waiting for the numbers to change. My mind whirred with ideas, refusing to fall asleep. Tick, tock. Tick, tock. Again, and again. No rest, only the perpetual thoughts flitting through my brain, filling my skull with images and junk that kept me awake. My body was drenched with sweat, but I didn't dare take off my heavy blankets, for fear of the monster under the bed grabbing my ankles and pulling

me to the dark depths below. All was pitch black, except for the red lights flashing behind my eyelids, those numbers ticking quietly.

At last I gave up sleep. I shook my covers off, not caring if the monster grabbed me at all. I sat up in my bed, grateful for the sweet air across my sweaty skin. I looked over to the door. It was completely dark, but I knew the general direction of where it was. I saw the slight shimmer of light from the cracks of the door. Then I looked to the right of it and stifled a scared gasp. A silhouette of a woman was there, outlined against the frame of the door. What little light that shone from outside the door made her clearer in my vision. Her head was full of curls, a halo that didn't fall past her ears, a delicate afro of curly hair. The shape of her face was angular, and she leaned forward on top of a basket that lay in the corner, one leg folded over the other. I couldn't tell if she was looking at me. Fear didn't fill me, just curiosity, but nevertheless, I dove underneath the covers once more, this time completely covering my face with blankets so that my whole body was not exposed. I felt as if I was suffocating, but there I stayed, sleep continuing to elude me until morning.

That day I woke up and no one was near the door. I told my mother, and she smiled and said sweetly, "It was your guardian angel." My innocent mind believed it, and another part of me firmly believed that I could not be harmed as long as I remained beneath the blankets. But it still didn't seem as innocent and harmless as my mother thought. I remember the time when I saw her. 12 o'clock. Witching hour.

CHARLOTTE FLYNN, GRADE 10

## *The Bridge*

My seven-year-old self opens the hard-wooden door to a brand-new world called "the outdoors." I breathe in the fresh air that's filled with yellow pollen annoying my five senses, letting my eyes adjust to the bright light the sun produces. These rays are helping all the plants around me grow into their true beauty. I can see the top of the mountains that are behind the house, covered in trees with green tops that looked like broccoli from far away. The sound of the tree leaves ruffling caused by the breeze of the wind. The sound of bees, flies, and crickets buzzing and chirping their high-pitched sound; and the chickens in the background clucking and cooing, eating the food that my grandpa had set out for them earlier in the morning while I was sleeping.

Straight ahead, about twenty feet away, is a large white fence. Through the fence, I can vaguely see my grandparents' garden that they started years ago with their green thumbs. The bright veggies with different colors such as green, red, and yellow catch my eyes for a moment, before I pull my attention away and onto whatever my big curious eyes can see. I then let myself become an explorer. Letting my imagination go wild, I run to the fence ready to explore, but before I can get halfway, I hear my grandma. Against the door frame, she looks around 5'4". Her short dark brown curly hair fits her face perfectly, though you can see a few grey hairs that bring me to the reality that she's aging. Wearing her usual bright gardening clothes that have flowers all over it, she yells at me in her cultured voice making myself turn back. "Hannah, put on shoes before you go any further!"

I look back at the view before me, hesitating. I then run back towards the large brick house, where my grandma was waiting patiently. An unconscious laugh squeaks out of my mouth. Finally, arriving back to my grandma, she watches me with a smile and helps me get my twinkle toe sketchers on. They light up in their usual bright way making me smile brightly with my shoes, which always fascinated me with their bright colors. Once my grandma makes sure I won't end up kicking them off later, she motions me with a short nod to go.

I ran as fast as my little legs could take me, away from the brick house. Passing by all the plants that are also growing, I make them look like a blur. Slowing down, I walked towards the white wooden gate. My grandma takes her time walking toward the gate, reminiscing on the memories of her young energetic self that I remind her of. Getting a closer look at the fence, I can see the paint peeling off and reach out my hand to peel a bit off, but then my grandma yells at me from a little ways away, "Don't peel the paint!"

I pout then yell back so she can hear me, "Just tryna help!"

I try to open the gate that's attached to the white fence, knowing I probably won't be able to. Once she arrives at the gate, I try to make an excuse as to why I can't open it instead of the flat out saying I was too short. I proceed to tell my grandma that in order to open the gate you have to use magic.

She lets out a gasp and asks me, "Do you know any cool magic, Hannah?"

I then smirk and close my eyes to begin to cast a "spell": "Abracadabra alakazam make this gate open!" Scrunching my face up and squinting my eyes shut, my grandma opened the gate without me knowing. Opening my eyes, I see the gate wide open allowing us into the garden. I turn and see her with a large contagious smile.

She praises me for my good work, "Woah! Good job Hannah!"

She quickly pulls me in a hug, making me laugh and say "Anythin' for you, Grandma!"

Letting go and turning toward the new unexplored land, I stare in awe. I whisper to myself, "Time to explore."

My grandma watches me with a smile and walks away to her garden, letting me be, to pluck the veggies for dinner tonight. It's probably something my grandpa wanted to eat, knowing he'll eat any and all of my grandma's mouth-watering cooking, occasionally giving some to the dog waiting patiently inside the house for our arrival. Feeling something poke me, I pay no mind to it. Looking around the area, I see the swing set next to the chickens, making their loud noises as usual. The swing set looks worn out like someone has been playing with it for a long period of time until they got bored and abandoned it. Before walking to the swings, I continue to let my eyes explore this newly discovered land. Forgetting about the swings I was going to play on, I look up at all the trees and plants around me. Their bright green leaves stick out, letting the sun's warm touch graze it.

After a few minutes of looking at the scenery, I spot a wooden bridge. The wood looks worn out with all its chips. Slowly walking toward the bridge, I hear the water from the creek gradually getting louder the closer I get. Stopping in the middle of the bridge, I hesitate to go forward alone. I decide to sit on the small wooden bridge looking at the creek below. I watch the water run down the creek, where if you look close enough you could see small fish swimming past. The sun, shining through the big tall trees, looms over my small figure. Next to me is this small brownish spiky thing that stuck to my clothes. Not knowing how it got there, I don't question it. I play with it until my grandma comes over after collecting the veggies from her garden.

"Do you want to go see the horses and cows?" she asks, and notices the spiky thing on my clothes that I decided to call 'Sticky' because he stuck to my clothes, my new friend. Grandma takes Sticky off my clothes and throws him into the grass next to the creek. "Why you throw Sticky? He's my friend," I tell my grandma.

"Sticky needs to go back home to his family or else his family will be sad," she replies. I feel bad about making Sticky's family wait so long so I grab my grandma's hand and we walk across the worn-out wooden bridge toward the horses and cows grazing in the sun. Both of us look at the fully-grown plants.

HANNAH FRAZIER, GRADE 12

### *The Mental River Bank*

Through thick water, runs ethical heart beats,

Beating new knowledge of self-worth.

It drifts upstream, swims behind the beavers

And waits for a sudden call.

The wind whispers, while the vibration from its soft voice allows the water to stretch.

As it tips over, a word pours out:

"Fear."

Fear of one's gracious glory?

Fear of what is yet to come?  
Fearful, of the highest mental credibility.  
Confidence.

CINIYA GARY, GRADE II

### *At Tea*

I was at a restaurant in Addis Ababa, waiting for the tea my mother ordered as I eavesdropped on her conversation with her friend. I didn't quite understand what they were talking about, but I clung onto every word they said in a desperate attempt to be grown. My mother was wearing her burgundy leather jacket and dark colored pants in a stark contrast to everybody else who indulged in the summer weather and wore brightly colored clothes. Her lips were lined with a brown color and her cupid's bow was a predominant feature. They seemed like two tall hilltops with endless numbers of blossoming flowers. I was hit with a pang of jealousy for my lack of a cupid's bow, which caused insecurity and many failed attempts of trying to steal my mother's lipliner.

I twirled the cheap plastic straw in between my fingers and examined the smooth surface of the neck that was lined with a vivid red color as I placed it in between my lips. I had a bad habit of chewing on straws; my mother scolded me whenever she saw me chewing on one. She was too distracted by her conversation to scold me this time. I felt like a top-secret international spy as I sneaked that straw past my lips and between my small teeth. The sun was shining, the wind was softly blowing against my cheek leaving a feather-like kiss, and all was good in that tiny restaurant behind that busy street in Bole.

A petite waitress wearing a maroon apron walked towards us carrying a tray that seemed bigger than she was. She politely greeted my mother and placed her tea in front of her. She placed a small bowl carrying multiple packets of sugar next to her tea. I saw my mother reach into the porcelain bowl and pull out two pink sugar packets. My eyes widened with wonder as she tore the paper and emptied it into her warm drink. My fingers danced over to the small container and quickly snatched a couple of sugar packets and hid them in my pockets. My unknowing mother smiled at me with her brown lips, and I smiled back.

BETHSAIDA GIZAW, GRADE II

### *My Personal Journey*

We all face obstacles throughout life. Some may be bigger than others, but without a doubt, we all have them. The biggest obstacle I've had in my life was growing up without a father. Having a dad is an important part of any child's life, boy or girl. For boys, a dad gives them someone to look up to as a father figure and an example of what a "man" should act like, and for girls, it gives them an image of how a man should treat them. Growing up without a dad has taught me to step up and take responsibility, not to take anything for granted, and most importantly, I've learned that family is who you make it.

When I was little, I never noticed the absence of a dad. I lived with my mom, grandma, grandpa, and younger brother and that was my norm. It wasn't until I started school that I realized I had a person missing in what seemed like my perfect family. Every time I asked my mom about it, she avoided the subject. It wasn't long until I figured out my dad left. At the age I mastered tying my shoe, I learned that my dad left before I was born and didn't want to be a part of my life.

Since my dad wasn't around to help my mom pay bills and support me and my brother, my mom had to take it upon herself to support us. In order to do this, she had to work multiple jobs, which means I didn't get to see her much other than the few times she had a day off. Instead, I spent most days with my grandparents. While this time together brought us closer, I had to step up to help around the house. When my family was

away at work, I had to pick up my brother from school, come home and do homework, clean the house, along with taking care of my younger brother. This taught me how to use each second of every day wisely.

As a result of my mom handling all the financial pressure of our family, there wasn't a lot of money to go around our household. This meant that my brother and I didn't get a lot, and when we did, we cherished it. I also cherished everyday my mom's days off, knowing they didn't come often and even though it wasn't much time, it was at least something. When I was younger, I didn't understand the reasons for my mom's actions, so I was always mad. As I grew up, I realized how good we had it and this was because of my mom. Everything she did was to help our family and because of this realization, I never took any of her actions for granted.

The most important lesson I learned in my father's absence was that family is what you make it. Just because you are related to someone through blood doesn't give you an automatic connection with that person. Your connection is developed from the times and memories you share which brings you together. This is the true definition of family. Even though my father and I share the same DNA, I don't consider him my true father. Instead, I have my grandpa to represent this. I also have my mom and grandma to look up to. From afar, it may seem like love is missing from my life, but as you take a closer look, you'll realize that I have people around me that fill this gap so I'm never really empty. Overall, my father leaving started off as a tragedy; it inspired me to become the person I am today. What seemed like a huge brick wall at first, turned into a minor speed bump on my own personal journey.

AMBER HEFLIN, GRADE 12

### *The Thunderstorm*

She glanced at her brand new, limited edition *Dora the Explorer* watch. Behind the smiling Dora and Boots, the watch read 12:00 P.M. She smiled back at her watch before running to the field behind her grandmother's house. Thousands of wildflowers were scattered among the shoots of grass. It was an assortment of spring colors: yellow, purple, green, and blue. She galloped and pranced, picking a bouquet to place in her treehouse. She grabbed a few dandelions from behind the tree, ten purple plume flowers from the edge of the house, and a daisy from her mother's flower bed. She felt very satisfied.

She set her bouquet in the grass and went to look for fairies. Earlier that day she had set out a fairy house in the sunflower field. Its foundation was made of cardboard, and its walls were made of popsicle sticks painted with swirls of pink and purple. Inside she delicately set little Polly Pocket chairs and a princess dress for the fairy to try on. She felt disappointed and confused because the chair and dress sat where she left them. Her friend, Kira, in kindergarten, informed her of a girl who had caught a fairy. She followed all the steps that Kira told her. Kira said they were beautiful little creatures with wings like those on a butterfly. With a humph, she sat in the warm grass.

Her gently baked skin was covered in a blanket of heat. The sun was shining bright today, yet she couldn't see the sun itself. She looked all around and saw no sun. She stood up and spun in a circle. She decided that the sun was covered up by a cloud. She believed that clouds are the sun's friends, so she was happy when she saw so many friends in the sky today. Then she saw something that dampened her spirits, a black cloud. She stood there for a few more seconds, staring at the dark and gloomy cloud in the sky. Her mother told her that when clouds are dark, it is going to rain. This was very bad news. She ran as fast as her stubby little legs could take her towards her bouquet. Urgently, she picked it up and ran to the nearest shelter.

She climbed up the stairs and pushed aside the curtain that guarded the entrance of her tree house. She placed her flowers in the red plastic cup and went over to sit on a chair. Boom! A few miles away lightning struck down a tree. She jumped in fear when she heard a clap of thunder. Boom! It sounded again. This time the crack forced her to run to the corner and shiver. She started to cry as darkness set in and rain poured from above. The pitter-patter of rain filled her ears, and the cold drops of water blew in from outside. Her

clothing was soaked, but she did not notice as she was thinking of her mother who held her tight when it poured down.

Her mother was not there to comfort her though. Crack! Something hit the plastic windowpane and a crack spread like the blood that was coursing through her veins. Crackle! The windows broke into shards and fell to the ground. The curtains waved in the wind, and the shutters slammed against the outer walls. Bang! Bang! Bang! She sat there, huddled in the corner, scared for her life. She had never been without her family in scary moments, so she dreamed of her caring parents and her protective dalmatian. She knew they were out there, waiting for her to run home. Thoughts crashed her mind as she cradled the Dora watch. Will she survive? Is it safe to run home? Are there wild animals outside? How close is the big streak of light?

“Amber!” calls a muffled voice. “Amber!” She is so filled with fear that all she can squeeze out is a peep. She tries again and a scream fills the open air. Outside her mother and father are looking for her with great determination and fear. They know how scared she is of the storms, and they are afraid she might have run off. “AMBER!” they call together. Amber decides to be brave. She stands up and runs with wobbly legs down the stairs. She speeds towards the light.

“MOM! DAD!” she screams at the top of her lungs. “Mu-Mu-,” she starts to break into ugly sobs. Around her, two figures close in. They are tall and dark, and they reach out for her. She is paralyzed with fear as the wet hands of the dark figures lift her into the air against her will.

Thu-thump. Thu-thump. Thu-thump. She bounces up and down as the creatures carry her towards the light. She cannot speak but wishes to scream. The figures open the door to her grandmother’s house and light floods in. It is her parents. Their faces are covered with a layer of tears and fear intermixed with drenching rain drops. They rejoice as they hold their baby in their arms. They release the hug and Amber’s father carries her into the living room as her mother prepares hot cocoa for them. The microwave beeps, as Amber is sandwiched between her parents. Amber’s eyelids droop as the adrenaline fades away. They are warm, they are cozy, they are safe.

AMBER HURD, GRADE 9

### *The Darkness Within*

I am nothing  
My voice is a whisper in the wind  
I am never heard even when I scream at the top of my lungs  
No one sees the pain I have in my heart  
People act as if they cannot see  
But I see  
I see it all  
In myself and in others  
No one is really happy  
There is always a dark place in the mind  
A dark place in the heart  
Everything is dark  
No one can see  
But there is a glimmer  
The smallest light glowing somewhere far  
Far away  
It can be seen in the dark  
It can be reached  
It will be reached

I will walk until I reach it  
Even if my feet bleed  
I can't stop  
I won't stop  
I will reach it  
Blinding tears fall down like a downpour of rain  
The darkness is consuming me  
Blocking the light  
I can barely see it now  
I can't stop this feeling inside  
It can't be fought now  
It seems like it will never stop  
Everything can end so quickly  
So easily  
But the light  
It's so close now  
Happiness is near

KAYLA MCMILLON, GRADE 12

### *Privileges for Which I Am Grateful*

The Pacific Northwest has temperate summers, even during July, but the mild weather on that Washington day contrasted sharply with the storm raging inside me. My father was being deployed to Iraq. As the oldest child, I was desperately trying not to cry in front of my little brothers. I had to show my brothers a good example. I could not cry. Not until I was alone at home, in my room. Although no one wanted him to deploy, he had to follow orders. My brothers had the opportunity to give him a heartfelt hug. When he turned to me, I embraced him as tightly as my little arms could. I was about to sob on his uniform. My eyes were stinging, and my stomach was stirring with an unfamiliar anger. That was the first day I realized the world was truly unfair. They were taking our father away from us. I watched as he carried all his bags into a building where they would prepare the soldiers for the flight to Iraq. This was his first deployment, but it wouldn't be his last. Just two years later, he was deployed again, but this time to Afghanistan. For the duration of almost three years, I felt the bitter injustice of my father's absence and physical peril.

But each time, he returned home. Finally, during May of 2016, my father medically retired from the Army. After his return to civilian life, I have witnessed that not all scars are visible, and some wounds need special care to heal. Since then, he has worked hard at a part-time job with VA benefits. As I considered how I could make the greatest difference in the world, I thought of my father's long road to recovery, and I realized that rehabilitative science would provide me the greatest ability to turn the challenges and pain of my past into an act of healing for others. I am certain that George Mason's Rehabilitation Science program is a perfect fit for my aspirations, and I am enthusiastic to contribute to the GMU community as well. George Mason's Rehabilitation Science B.S. will allow me to benefit from the extensive expertise of the faculty while providing the opportunity to work across a variety of departmental labs. I am currently most excited about occupational therapy, but I realize that the rehabilitation science discipline is broad, and I may discover another path—this program will allow me to find my way and specialize in my field in an interdisciplinary and organic way. An education at GMU will also provide me with something that has always eluded me—a sense of belonging and home.

As a military child, we moved frequently. I often had a couple empty boxes in the closet ready to be filled, packed, and ready to go. I've been to several elementary schools, a different middle school all three years, and

two different high schools. During my junior year, my family moved just before my AP exams began, and my class back at my previous school was behind with a long-term substitute. My new class was on schedule, so I was barely prepared as I took both AP exams—the outcome was disappointing. However, this did not deter me from taking two dual enrollment classes with Northern Virginia Community College in order to challenge myself academically. As Winston Churchill once said, “Success is stumbling from failure to failure with no loss of enthusiasm.” I am a very enthusiastic person.

Like most military children, I have relocated often, living in Texas, Ohio, Washington State and Virginia. Many things have been unavailable to me as a result—a friend I’ve known since kindergarten, a sense of belonging, more time with my parents, annual family vacations, a home with all of my growth marks on the wall, community members who have known me my whole life, and stability. However, what I did gain is friends from around the world, including Texas, Vietnam, and Pakistan. I may not be “from” anywhere, but I’m excited to travel everywhere. I may not have had much time with my parents, but the time I did have was absolutely precious, which I never took for granted. We may not have had annual family vacations, but I’m more well-traveled than most adults. I may not have had a family home, but home has been with my family as we explored cultures across the country. I may not have known a specific community, but I’ve always tried to make a difference wherever I’ve lived. The theme of my life has been adaptability.

Many people would consider a month-long internship teaching English in El Salvador to be intimidating, especially if they only had two years of Spanish and they were seventeen. It may not improve the prospect to learn they’d be living with people they’ve never met before in a conservative town, without hot showers, enclosed homes, air conditioning in the summer, and the absolute absence of Wi-Fi. Of course, count me in.

I’m a strong Spanish student, and I knew it would be challenging to communicate, but I had no idea how inadequate my Spanish really was. I took Spanish lessons in exchange for tutoring English language students. However, I learned more outside the classroom, trying to communicate and exploring the country. When I was teaching, I was surprised to discover some of my students were older than me—sometimes by almost a decade.

I loved how so much of Salvadoran life is open-air and out-in-the-open. People there are honest, authentic, and hard-working. It is not uncommon for Salvadorans to have three jobs—my host family talked about one man who had five jobs. The markets consist of rows and rows of stalls, lining streets and corners with fresh produce, local delicacies, clothing, loud music, bustling activity, and guards armed with semi-automatic rifles at nearly every corner. I learned that despite so many natural resources, Salvadorans have real problems that are compounded by corruption and lack of civil engagement. As much as I taught Salvadorans, El Salvador has taught me so much more. I am so grateful for all the opportunities in American life and everything my father fought for.

Simply applying for admission to George Mason University is one of the privileges for which I am grateful. Like all young idealists, I want to make a difference in the world. My journey and my father’s sacrifice have led me to Northern Virginia, near one of the best public universities in the country. Despite the fact that my father is a disabled veteran, I still intend to join the Virginia National Guard because I believe in the power of service. Being able to study rehabilitative science at George Mason University would enable me to continue a life in the service of others, to allow me to finally be ‘from’ somewhere, while taking the reins in my own journey in life.

ELIZABETH MCPHEE, GRADE 12

### *Larger Than Life*

Some are born, destined for greatness. Some are made, requiring the right ingredients. Heroes are neither. In truth, a hero is what you make it, whether that includes the “super” or not. Heroes come in many forms,

and in my life, I have been saved by many heroes, some fictional, some literal, but all real. This is how I was saved.

*A Stranger.* It seems even from my first breath, I required rescuing. I have always been an energetic person, sometimes a little too energetic. This has been to my detriment on occasion. Getting a red card in elementary, or being on punishment, but no mishap was as serious as the day of November 13, 2001. It was like any other day, swimming around in my bachelor pad, doing back flips and whatnot. All of a sudden, all the water drains out my pad! This was crazy, I had a leak? I guess it only had a lease of nine months. Even though there was no water, it was getting kind of hard to breathe. The last thing I remember was blacking out and then it was freezing! Last thing my mother remembered was her not being strong enough to hold me. Due to my boisterous antics in the womb, my umbilical cord had become tied around my neck. Sadly, my mother required a C-section as a result. Sometimes in life you just don't know any better, and at that time I definitely did not. Heroes can come from the most unlikely of places and be the most unlikely of people; these doctors did not know me, and I did not know them, but they did everything in their power to save me because it was their duty. Luckily, there were other heroes that day to save me. They were strangers at the time, but I would soon come to know them as Mom and Dad.

*Music.* 2014 was a big year for me. It was the start of sixth grade, and I was finally "growing up." Being in a private school with no phone was something that definitely saved my ears. Most music I heard was what was most popular at the time or from Ma's playlists. My life at the time reflected my music preference; I didn't have one of my own. Secondary school is a big year for change, from puberty, and peach fuzz, to girlfriends and sneakers. I was discovering who I was, what I liked, and who I wanted to be. Enter: *Guardians of The Galaxy*, a film that not only helped me become who I am but has saved me from what I could have been. Earth: 1988, a boy waits outside a hospital room, with nothing but orange headphones, a Walkman, and a blackeye. It's deafening, the way the music seeps into your ears. Nothing else really matters in those few short minutes when a song plays. Music is freedom and the only escape this boy, later known as Peter Quill, has to deal with the trauma of losing his mother to cancer. "I'm not in love, so don't forget it, it's just a silly phase I'm going through." Such simple words, such amazing music production, such impeccable direction; This four-minute introduction scene not only gave me joy, and sorrow, but revelation. I saw myself in Peter. I finally had something I could block out the noise with. Even though I never had such a tragedy as losing a parent, I could still confide in this character. He cried like I cried; when fearful, he called out to his mother not unlike many times I did growing up. The hero was vulnerable. This movie and its soundtrack, which includes absolute bangers such as "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell and "Come and Get Your Love" by Redbone, changed my perspective of what a hero is. Everyone needs saving.

*A Lesson.* I remember certain questions people ask me, whether substantial or insignificant. It gives me an idea of who they think I am. I remember when my dad asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, and I didn't have an answer. My dad and I, well you see, our relationship is not very complicated but that's mainly due to our not being very open about the way we feel. Concepts like vulnerability and sensitivity were rarely shed in a positive light as a kid. My dad is old school, like walked to school in Chiraq winters old school. The slightest hint of defiance and the king's monarchy is threatened, so there weren't many talks that ended without his dominance, my resentment, and bloody knuckles from punching trees. My whole view upon fatherhood was not necessarily negative but rather "meh." The same year my dad asked me the big question, an answer came in the form of *Guardians of The Galaxy Vol. 2*, a film that gave me agency on the path to my purpose. "You shouldn't have killed my mom and squished my Walkman," an adult Peter Quill angrily states to his father, Ego the living planet. Throughout the film, Peter has been shown as vulnerable but flawed. He listens and is receptive to his love interest Gamora, but when given the power of a celestial, his pride pushes her away. Instead of being receptive to his teammate Rocket Raccoon's outbursts, he neglects him. It's only after he hears the words of his real father, Yondu, during the final battle that he finally realizes his flaw. "I don't use my head to fly the arrow boy, I use my heart." In that moment Peter realizes it's not about him,

it's about the ones you laugh with, that you love, that you fight with even. Peter had to destroy his *ego*, that same *ego* I reflected that wasn't too different from my father at times. He had to do this in order to become a better person, a better friend, a better father, even if it is to a talking tree. It only made sense that I followed suite. Even though my father and I don't have the best communication, the love that we have for each other cannot be disputed. Pride is an obstacle I have always had trouble overcoming, but I must, for the ones I love. For the same reason, I gave to my dad an idea of what I wanted to be when I grew up. He was surprised to say the least, pretty sure he was looking for an answer with fewer diapers involved.

*A Child.* Being in high school, the term mental health is all too familiar. My generation has used this term as a means of understanding to push people to be more empathetic and caring. I admire anyone who is fulfilling their passions. However, my generation also tends to use this term as a crutch. Whether it's a breakup, or a bad day, it becomes the end of the world, but that's only what I've seen from my life; I cannot speak on anyone else's. For a long time in my life I had been aimless until my father asked me that question. I want to be a father when I grow up. Nothing on this planet nor in this plane of existence matters more to me than the love I have for my children. I don't like to glorify suicide like it's something I am proud of but whenever I did have those thoughts, my kids brought me back. My kids saved my life before theirs started.

In my life, I have been saved by many different kinds of heroes, some fictional, some literal, but all real. It's crazy to think that a movie or its soundtrack can have such an effect on me, one that actually changed the course of my life. Not only did they teach me it's okay to be vulnerable but that I would have to eliminate my pride in order to become a better person, not only for myself but for my children. You can be that hero in someone's life; anyone can. And honestly, I think that's super.

CHRISTOPHER MERRITT, GRADE 12

### *School is Hard*

School is hard. It's something that I started saying when I started high school. School is hard. You are capable of succeeding and doing the things you want to do. Getting good grades is hard. You only make it hard because you aren't doing the hard things—studying, staying after school, raising that hand and asking for help when you don't know anything. Doing the hard things that you don't want to do pays off in the end, right? Hard things, like staying up till 3 am for that Trigonometry quarter test because you don't get how to find the exact value of the six trigonometric functions of a point given. Not to mention that English writing and reading comprehension exam in three weeks. Don't forget the geometry exam that you failed the first time and have to take again. Oh, and your Government grade is below 70% now due to that worksheet you turned in two days late. You were too busy having a damn breakdown in your room due to your parents scolding you for your slacking grades, as if you don't check them every chance you get.

Well, maybe you're hurting inside and out. Maybe you can't handle it anymore. So, the result is those thoughts. It's not going to get better. It's only getting worse. Oh, look at that, a text from her. We need to talk. As if life could get any worse. When you think you've found the one, but you can tell by the way she acts with boys, she lied to you. But you can't let go because she is your only motivation for school. She encourages you: you'll do better, you'll make it out of that sick household. "Don't worry about your parents; it will all be okay." And somehow those words stick to you. Unrealistic. School is hard.

At least that is the time you will get to see her, the *only* time you get to see her. Yeah, it sucks that your parents don't like the idea of same gender love. When he found out, he forced you to come out to him during an episode of Jerry Springer. The guy ended up coming out as gay; so that was his opportunity to ask you. Your heart pounds through your shirt with an innocent yet horrified look on your face. Not now. Not my time to say it. No, not now. You want to run away, but you're frozen as those questions started coming in. Are you gay? Do you like girls? Do you have sex with girls? That disgusting smirk on his face made you want to vomit. "It's my job to know." Yeah right, as if it's your job as well to answer those invasive questions. You

finally broke down and said it. Bisexual. You said that word with fear wrapped around you like a blanket. The lump in your throat only got bigger when he said that he is going to tell your mom. Not only were you forced to come out, but now you're going to be outed.

You wanted nothing but to go and cry. *I'm telling mom.* Those words stick to you like super glue. That was the one that made you go to your room and cry. Wouldn't cry for long though. You're due for your 4–9 p.m. shift at work in an hour. What about the project for Life Planning? What about the sociology assignment that you halfway understand? Suck up those feelings and cries. Yeah, school is hard, but you need the money. It's better than depending on your father, who couldn't care less about your own financial status, and a mother, who says you are useless, ungrateful, and won't graduate—in that exact order. Don't worry how mentally and physically exhausted you are, you'll make it. Five hours of sleep should get you around, right? Even if school starts at 7:30, you have to be at the bus stop at 6:45 am. If the teacher scolds you, just make an excuse about why you were sleeping in class. They won't feel sympathy for you. They never do. It's all about them and your grades. They won't understand. (Really!)

So, they send you to your counselor because they start noticing signs. Don't ask if you're all right though, just a pass that comes for you to leave class. The school social worker is nice. For once he is the first one that doesn't ask about grades. It's a relief. He knows that school is hard—especially for a high-school student. You spill your entire life story, including the traumatic events that happened. He listens; your parents don't. School is hard. That's what you summed it up to. He tells you he's going to look into some therapy groups and treatment options for you because your parents tell you no. Tell you that you are fine, and you don't have anything wrong with you. Especially that favorite line of "You're too young to be stressed." Yeah, you're right Mom. That's why you stay up on your phone all night. That's all you know is your phone, right? Right?

You don't get good grades just like your perfect older sister. She was the perfect first child to you, right Mom? They tell you that you need to get it together; she was never like this. She always did this and that and more than you ever did in life. Because it's never an issue when she gets mad at you and says that she would have never had you if she had known you would turn out like this. Your dad wanted you, but she didn't. It's okay though. You're used to her smart remarks. All she cares about is you getting it together and graduating. Never if you're okay. Never able to express your feelings to her. Never able to say anything. But Mom, school is hard. No use trying to talk to her. You better go do that math homework or your grade will drop to 50%. The yelling, screaming, that will all start again. Which would only leave you kicked out, again, after an argument. Seventeen years old and roaming the cold streets of Woodbridge looking for a place to stay that's warm. People, and your sister, ask where you are going to stay. You lie and say at a friend's house. But that friend's house turned into not sleeping for 24 hours and waiting for your parents to leave for work to go back to eat and sleep secretly. Then it's off to repeat the same day again.

That doesn't matter, you have to study and get good grades to be accepted into a college at least. School is hard. But then a thought pops back in your head. What happened to the younger you? The child you when school wasn't hard. Or the days when you would boot up the laptop and write your cringey fanfiction on Watt Pad to the biggest fan base you'd collected. They understand you. They know school is hard. That's where you all come together and write your emotions empty. Was it real "author" material? No. It was the typical fanfiction, but your mind had to start somewhere. You're imaginative, and your mind is vivid, so it brings you joy to publish all your books. Nevertheless, your plots were always interesting. Ya know, back when school wasn't hard.

But what happened? Hmm? You ghosted your final and last book at the tender age of fifteen. Why? Because high school hit you like a truck. That's where it all began. Everything began. Freshman year was all new and stressful for you. You started to grow up, and the more you did, the harder it got. School is hard. You longed for those days for someone to listen. You wanted your parents to understand you the most. They're filled up with lies and bull—about you though. To them you are nothing but the problem child. Throughout

the four very long years of high school, you wanted nothing more than your mother to support you— to tell you that, “If you fail, it’s okay. It isn’t over. I understand you.” Yeah, school is hard, but my life is harder.

MIA NASH, GRADE 12

### *Deaf Karaoke*

there’s only one word i know in this song,  
it comes after the OHHHHHHH  
and before the WOAAAAAAAAAH!  
i can sing the entire song  
(if the entire song was an instrumental)  
but there’s this one part that i  
absolutely  
a hundred percent  
know for sure.  
but upon looking up the lyrics,  
i am  
absolutely  
a hundred percent  
WRONG.  
(but i’ll keep singing it.)

ELIZABETH NAZARIO, GRADE 12

### *Celebrating My Curiosity*

I was gifted my first computer on my sixth birthday: a 2008 Toshiba notebook.

My elementary years suddenly became simple: wake up, go to school, go home, and indulge myself in my new Toshiba. I would be on my computer for hours, tapping away, exploring a wonderland—but my reaction to the gift was untypical for a first-time computer user—while most people would simply use the graphical interfaces, I was intrigued by how the interface worked.

Years passed, and by my seventh birthday, my father realized that I had developed a keen interest in computers. An engineer himself, he encouraged me to pursue my curiosity and dug through our basement for his old desktop computer. Part by part, we took the computer to pieces, and conversed about each of the components’ beauty; and when we were finished, we assembled the computer in a new arrangement for the hell of it.

Another year passed, and my fascination continued to consume me. I had begun to read entry-level programming books at my local library: Java, Python, C++, JavaScript, HTML, and anything I could scavenge on my basement bookshelves. I read thoroughly, and within months, I was writing programs to perform complex tasks.

High school came around, and my programming skills by then had been strengthened. I began to share my ideas: I joined my high school robotics team and earned recognition in the programming division; I became a freelance tech service, designing mobile apps and websites, desktop applications, and configuring hardware and networks; most remarkably, I had begun research on quantum computation.

A realm I am continually exploring, quantum computing poses many questions: how do we remove decoherence? how do we limit error and improve practicality?

## *Wrestling: A Life Changing Sport*

Wrestling, one of the toughest sports out there has changed my life now and most likely forever. Through my experiences, wrestling is an all or nothing sport; you have to be committed and dedicated to your skills, craft, physical, and mental power. Many people overlook wrestling and only see it through its outer shell during tournaments, but these people fail to recognize what goes into the sport in the interior to become truly successful at it. I've made some of the greatest friends, learned all kinds of life lessons on and off the mat through my coaches and teammates which have made an impact upon my life.

It all started when I was in the sixth grade and was looking for a sport to play, but I was an extremely tiny child; not many sports are friendly toward small people. As I was roaming the hallways one day, the wrestling coach of my middle school came up to me and asked me if I would like to wrestle his lightest weight class as there were spots open. This is the day that would change my life forever and turn the course of my life into a great direction. I was honored to have this invitation to try out for the team, but what I didn't know was how hard the sport was. After the first thirty seconds I was so tired a barely could get up; quickly I thought to myself, was this the wrong decision, but as a sixty-eight-pound kid in middle school, you get pushed and messed with a lot. Soon into my season this all started to fade away; anyone that was going to mess with you was going to have to mess with the whole team. It is the sense of brotherhood that the sport provides. Despite tragedy and trials, the wrestling community will find a way to support its brothers. During my sixth-grade season, I lost every single match I wrestled; typically, one would quit after this, but I loved the brotherhood aspect of the sport and decided to keep wrestling. Hard work, sacrifice, and determination—these are the three innate qualities required for a wrestler to be truly successful in the sport. These three things have guided me throughout my career and life. There are many competitors for the spot and the only way to secure it is to beat out everyone else in organized matches called “wrestle-offs.” Over the summer, through long, strenuous practices, I got better and better. Nobody wanted to wrestle me off this year and that was something that I was extremely proud of. The following season, I was undefeated and was awarded most improved athlete of the year. These series of events have led me to experience that hard work does pay off. I was never talented in sports or, as a matter of fact, anything at this time. I was never just given these awards; I had to work long hours to get there.

As I transition to high school, many things change. The practices are much harder, and the competition level is much higher. For me, it is safe to say wrestling is the only sport where the practices are harder than the actual competitions. Practices are held in wrestling rooms that reach temperatures of eighty-five degrees Fahrenheit or more, due to the heat and exhaustion that is released by the wrestlers; there is a heater just for the wrestling room. Oftentimes, we turn it on when we need to shed some weight off for an upcoming competition, as wrestling is competition based on individuals amongst your weight class. The sport requires wrestlers to memorize a plethora of advanced fighting techniques to get the upper edge on their opponents often called “muscle memory.” This means that many hours are spent in the sauna-like rooms drilling the same moves hundreds and thousands of times until they are perfected. No other sport is like that.

Another aspect of wrestling is sacrifice. Sacrifice in the sense that one must be willing to meet certain demands of the body needs in order to make weight. To keep your weight low, you typically have to work out more than you consume, in which you have to keep an extremely strict diet. Cutting weight is one of the major issues in that it puts a lot of stress and emotional impact on wrestlers. Wrestlers must always watch what they eat and look at every aspect of their nutrition. In contrast, other athletes from other sports work hard, but when they go home, they get to eat, and they can eat whatever they want. Wrestlers come home sore

and tired after strenuous practices, go home to eat little to nothing, and then go to bed hungry only knowing that the next day will be the exact same thing. The diet of a wrestler really separates the sport from many. My experiences in cutting weight have usually been positive, cutting weight gives you an advantage in muscle mass and weight as you have one to two hours after weigh-ins to refuel and gain back that weight you've lost. Often times, after weigh-ins I am six to ten pounds over my weight class limit, but there are many downsides to this. Cutting weight is not healthy, restricting your diet sucks and does not feel good, but this is a sacrifice you have to make to win championships.

These past four years in my high school wrestling career have definitely impacted my personality as a whole and have directly contributed to my grades and academic accomplishments. The key factors that have changed my life would be the value of self-discipline, mental, and physical strength that I learned on the mat, constantly living with a wrestler's mentality of hard work and dedication. Coming into high school, I was lazy and unspirited. My grades were terrible my first years of high school; as my high school career progressed, I did all of my work. I have no problem studying for a test or doing any project. My teachers and coaches did have a part in making the process easier, but ultimately, it was wrestling that carried me through my struggles. Dan Gable said, "Once you've wrestled, everything in life is easy." I can't think of anything that better describes the life lessons learned through wrestling. As I transition from my civilian to military lifestyle that will occur soon after high school, I am not as worried as I used to be. I believe wrestling has fully prepared me for this next chapter through the mental and physical aspects of life. Thanks to wrestling, I'm not scared of the transition between high school and the military.

I'm excited to continue the brotherhood and the lifestyle of a wrestler in the United States Military.

Nevertheless, wrestling has truly been life changing; it has led me to my path that I am on now to join the United States Military through ROTC. If I had never developed the skills and sense of brotherhood I gained with my experience in wrestling, I would not be on the current path many are afraid to take. Once again, thank you, wrestling.

CHRISTOPHER NGUYEN, GRADE 12

### *My True Identity*

Who am I? Why? Who are you?  
If I tell you who I am, will you hold it against me like the damage of a "one time" smoker  
Or will you tell it to your friends like the Great Gatsby?  
I wonder  
What would you gain from the knowledge of knowing me?  
Everyone I ever knew has left without goodbyes.  
So what?  
What's it to you?  
What do you want to know?  
I'll tell you anything if you ask but only what i want you to hold.  
Nothing you can ever hold over me or expose from beneath your heart,  
Because I'll never do that again.  
Never open up to anyone other than my best friend  
I promise to disappear if I am unable to keep my last sense of trust and hope in our  
friendship  
But it's okay  
I'll be okay regardless as I bite my tongue and manipulate you with my feelings  
I show who I am

You know now who I am  
You know me  
I am the emotional manipulator in deep thought  
I am

KANIYA ROBINSON, GRADE 12

## *Identity*

Dear Jessica,

It's funny how time passes by your fingertips without you ever realizing it. What is time anyway? Is it the hand on the clock that ticks as I wait for the sun to rise or is it the envious desire of freedom that everyone is trying to get back? I don't know about you, but I'm still learning about time and more importantly, my time here on this Earth.

Ironically, I used to think that sooner or later, my life would consist of so much more time, but instead, I merely see it disappearing like a raindrop getting wiped away from a windshield on a car or even a boat disappearing into a foggy river. My point is I still haven't wrapped my head around the concept of time, nor have I truly wanted to. You see, time can be a scary thought, and not because you have so little of it, but because you don't know exactly what you want to do with it. People chase time over and over again without realizing they've run past it, trampling over it, but never actually seeing it. Therefore, time can be in the grip of your hands, but you can let it go without knowing.

For this reason, I say to you with the utmost sincerity, remember that there is no greater, more selfless gift in life than time, because just as easily as it can be gained, it can also be lost. Now just as much as time can be infinite numbers, it can also be memories and adventures like when you confidently trust yourself to float in a soothing, blue pool for the first time as a child. Even more so, it can be hardships and obstacles like when you try to overcome anxiety, but you aren't able to free yourself from its unbreakable chains. In essence, time can be those experiences and lessons that have woven you into the person you are today, and may I say, what a time it is to have seen you grow.

Even though you've experienced so little time on this planet, through the past eighteen years of your life, I've seen you spend your time evolving as an individual. Admirably, I've watched your physical, spiritual, and mental growth flourish—beginning as a planted seed in the soil of life and continuously nourishing throughout your years. Well there it is, a timely manner of reflection. I know I've spoken so much about time, and even though you may not understand exactly why or what it is yet, I can only hope you at least take from this letter, an epiphany.

Your identity, future self, isn't determined by the name you are given at birth, nor the clothes that are stuck to your back. Your identity isn't the pigment of your skin nor the physical flaws your thoughts can't seem to forget. Your identity isn't the materialistic objects attached to your hip nor the dreams your mind can't seem to awaken. Your identity isn't your gigantic achievements nor your infamous failures. Your identity isn't a random fixation of the universe's choosing, nor is it some quest popularized by oral tradition throughout many generations. Your identity, future self, is so much more than all of those combined.

Time is one of the most selfless gifts in the world, and the only way to understand yourself is to find your time. Your identity, future self, is your time here on this Earth. Even though you don't know time, nor yourself yet, I know one day you will, and that is the most beautiful, timeless realization of all—your identity awaits you.

Your past self,  
Jessica

JESSICA SEBENALER, GRADE 12

## *My Thumbs*

Five years ago, some kid saw my thumbs and decided to tell me how big they were. He thought they looked funny, and he continued to laugh at them. I didn't know whether to act like it wasn't said or hurt him like he hurt me. I wasn't the type of person that would make clever comebacks or things that hurt people's feelings. I tried to shrug it off and go on with my day. As hard as I attempted to forget about it, his words just kept on replaying in my head, like a broken record. I was angry at the fact that what that kid said affected me so much. His words managed to make me think about something I truly never put much thought into. As it continued to resurface my mind, it made me feel more and more insecure about my thumbs. I wanted to forget his words, I wanted to erase them from my mind, but I just couldn't. From that day forward, I hated the way my thumbs were shaped, and they soon became my biggest insecurity.

Years went by and I continued to get remarks about my thumbs. They'd usually say comments like, "Why do they look like that?" "They're so big," "Your thumbs are weird." They would say those things as if I didn't already know that. Their words hurt me, but I pretended as if they didn't. I felt so ashamed of my thumbs that I'd hide them under my long sleeves or in my pockets. There were days where I would just be so angry at myself because I never stood up for me when people would make mean comments. I told my mom about how I despised my thumbs and wanted to hide them forever. She told me that there was nothing wrong with them and to ignore what others said. She said that these thumbs made me different from everyone else and that I should appreciate them, not hate them. It took me a while to finally understand what she was getting at. When I finally began to appreciate them, the remarks upset me less and less. In fact, when people would make rude comments, I would simply tell them that I liked them and that was all that mattered. I was genuinely starting to see that they weren't such a bad feature to have. Although it took a while to see it at first, they were something that made me unique.

Finally becoming comfortable with my thumbs felt like such a big deal to me because it made me feel free from the hatred I had towards them. I found a way to embrace a feature of me that I was most embarrassed about. There were times where I didn't feel the most confident about them, but I reminded myself of the words my mom told me. Accepting the way my thumbs looked was something that I really struggled with because it's not something normal. The things that people would say about them don't hurt me anymore. I learned to love my thumbs, and they became one of my best features.

NEREIDA SOSA ANTUNEZ, GRADE II

## *Let Go of Hate and Appreciate*

There was a time in my life when I was angry, full of self-doubt, crippled by what I thought others would think of me, and obsessed with trying to limit my public actions so no one could think that anything I said or did was obligatory to the social "norm." In that time of my life, I was not happy. I could be, but there is a big difference between the ability to become happy and the state of true happiness. My view of the true state of happiness is when you are happy with life and can appreciate yourself for who you are. This is how I became truly happy in life.

During the time I was unhappy, I could tell I was lacking confidence. I was in a surf shop in Nags Head one day and saw a cool bracelet labeled "confidence." The tag explained how the Tiger's Eye stone in the bracelet was supposed to make you more confident. I saw this as a win-win opportunity. I needed a new bracelet and I could possibly become more confident, so I bought it, not thinking much about the confidence aspect. After a few months, I started to realize I was becoming more confident. I remembered the Tiger's Eye stone, so I looked it up on the Internet. I read how it is supposed to make you feel and change your life, and everything mentioned was evident in my life. From that point on, I have had a permanent sense of confidence. I do

not expect others to follow my strange stone belief, but I believe that a placebo may help in a person's quest for confidence as it did for me. With this new-found confidence I started to build my vibe.

Your vibe is the aura you produce that determines how others feel around you. It is completely unique, molded by your personality, what you do, and what you say. Your vibe is something you should not let others influence. Some qualities can't simply be changed by thinking that you want to be a certain way; it must be followed up with action. It relates to Aristotle's definition of virtue: "Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but we rather have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." Aristotle is saying that virtue can't be taught. You can't teach someone how to be a good person or how to act the right way, but it can be learned through practice or habit. The same philosophy goes for your vibe. Aristotle says that the path that leads to virtue is also the path that leads to happiness.

Hate, everyone knows that feeling well—that dark, twisting, evil feeling that can come out of nowhere. I used to hate my ex-best friend because one day, at work, his feelings of hate and anger that had been stored and brewing inside him broke loose, and he knocked a tray of dishes out of my hand, and they shattered on the floor. He came at me, body-slammng me into the pile of shattered glass and porcelain, which caused multiple deep lacerations that required stitches. In this example, there are two forms and results of hate and anger: his and mine. My ex-best friend's anger started small as he thought I treated him more like a little brother than a friend. That anger grew into hatred that was stored and wasn't released until he damaged me and our friendship. Storing anger and hate is unhealthy; it can disrupt your vibe and others around you, and it can explode. It's good to confront your feelings with the person you are feeling resentment towards. If you think about it logically, more "damage" could happen to you and others if bottled up. You will know exactly where you stand if you confront your feelings with that person and decide whether you want to forgive each other or go separate ways. If you decide to go separate ways, try not to hate that person; let the past stay in the past and move on. Otherwise, you are hating and resenting someone you don't even see or talk to anymore—which takes me to the result of my hatred after the incident. I had been resenting my ex-best friend for months; every time I saw a picture of him on someone else's social media I would get mad, and when I heard his name brought up in conversation, I said things that could make others dislike him. Once I gained confidence and started working on my vibe, I decided to let go of hate entirely. I reached out to make amends, and we did. We talked about what happened, and we were able to leave the past behind us. I realized, after a week, that when he was around, he was killing my vibe and annoying me in the process. I stopped talking to him, but it wasn't because I hated him; it was because we were not compatible anymore. It became easy not to hate afterwards because I was able to see past petty squabbles to what others might be feeling. It might not even involve you. You may have just been roped into how they are feeling. If that's the situation, you cannot give up and give in to their feelings because that person probably needs you in their life. Even if it's a stranger, you should be nice even if they are being cruel, maybe compliment them to brighten their day, and they could spread positivity. If you disagree with someone, simply talk it out. It could be difficult, but the first step in getting that level of confidence is appreciating yourself.

Finally, you need to appreciate yourself. If you don't appreciate yourself for who you are, others will not either. For example, if you are lazy and like to eat but don't go to the gym, you could be overweight; that doesn't make you any less you. People should accept you for who you are, not because of their preconceptions. Not everyone will accept you, but that's just because they are probably unhappy; do not let that affect your happiness. If a person thinks differently of you, you know the truth about yourself, and the things that others may say are irrelevant.

If you want to be truly happy, find confidence, build your vibe, let go of hatred. Love everyone until they prove unworthy of your love and appreciate yourself because **YOU ARE AWESOME AND UNIQUE.**

GARRETT TENNEY, GRADE 12

## *My Favorite Activities*

Many hobbies of mine have made me into a creative person. These hobbies have helped me grow and develop as a person. My favorite hobbies are writing, singing, and dancing. These three hobbies have helped me because it has expressed my love for these activities. Without these activities, I wouldn't be "Alona."

### *Writing*

I was writing stories ever since I was ten years old. I remember downloading this writing app called Wattpad, and I would read all of these stories that other writers would put out for young readers to read. Eventually, I began to write my own stories and put them out for others to read. I got a lot of love and support from my family and friends about my pieces of writing. When I published the horror and romance novels on Wattpad, I also got a lot of love and attention from people who have read my books.

### *Dancing*

I've been dancing all of my life. I would make up random dances to anything that has my mind thinking. Sometimes I would think about being on stage and performing lyrical dances in front of a huge crowd; The problem with pursuing that idea was that I was very scared about being on stage. As a way to help try and overcome stage fright, I would create dance routines with my sisters, and we would perform them in front of our family. A few years passed, and I entered my first year of high school. My older sister, who was a senior at the time, told me about musical theatre performances that happen in the spring.

I was very excited because I loved to dance and sing. But what held me back was the thought of "what if I am not good enough?" or "what if I embarrass myself in front of the judges?" My sister talked me out of these thoughts, and we both auditioned for the spring musical. The next few days later, I opened my email to the callback list, and I saw my name. I felt the excitement rush through my body as I saw my name on that list because it meant to me that someone was interested in having me playing a role.

Ever since that year, I've been dancing and singing in front of hundreds of people every spring, and it has really put me out of my comfort zone. Thanks to my sister, I am always in a mood to dance. Not only do I dance in musicals, but I still dance in front of my family and I take time out of my academics to learn dances that I find challenging.

### *Singing*

I've been singing ever since sixth grade. I would sing any song that has my feet tapping. When I have time, I write songs that have meaning to me. When I sing, I sing like I am performing on stage in front of thousands of people. If I did not have a passion for singing, I would not have done anything that could put me in the position that I am in today.

### *Conclusion*

I love these hobbies because they have made today's "Alona." These hobbies have helped make me into a creative person. There are so many hobbies that I love; however, these hobbies will always be my top three. Without these hobbies, I would not be "Alona."

ALONA THOMPSON, GRADE 12

## *The Key to Happiness*

My thematic package is my symbolic box of happiness. This box is surrounded by clouds, rainbows, and a cross which represents my goal to be happy in the future. My idea of peace and the state of carefreeness consists of floating on clouds, finding the end of the rainbow, and having God at my side. However, the thought of being happy in my future gives me this same sensation.

When I hear the words, "The American Dream," I automatically think of being fulfilled with my career and being able to provide for my family. A lot of society obsesses over the thought that money can buy happiness. In order to be happy, you must focus on being alive and living your life, not focusing on financial problems such as bills and taxes. I think it is crucial to love your career and what you do because life is too short to spend it stuck in the same unfulfilled mindset forever. I hope to be wealthy, but money doesn't mean anything to me without happiness. Three things I would need to do in order to achieve this fulfillment is finding a career or even a hobby that I am passionate about, encouraging myself to be self-disciplined, and learning how to manage my time better. Those are huge assets to avoiding stress, creating a healthy environment for my family, and maintaining overall well-being.

I could face many possible obstacles while on my road to happiness, but I especially hope there's never a point when the people I love and surround myself with don't support me. I strongly value their opinions, but I want them to have faith in me. Some things I could do to prevent this is encouraging my loved ones to accept me for who I am, persuading them to have an open mind, and accepting them for who they are. In the words of Michael Jordan, "Obstacles don't have to stop you. If you run into a wall, don't turn around and give up. Figure out how to climb it, go through it, or work around it."

DAISY WILLIAMS, GRADE 12

### *My Middle School Mindset of '14 Survivor*

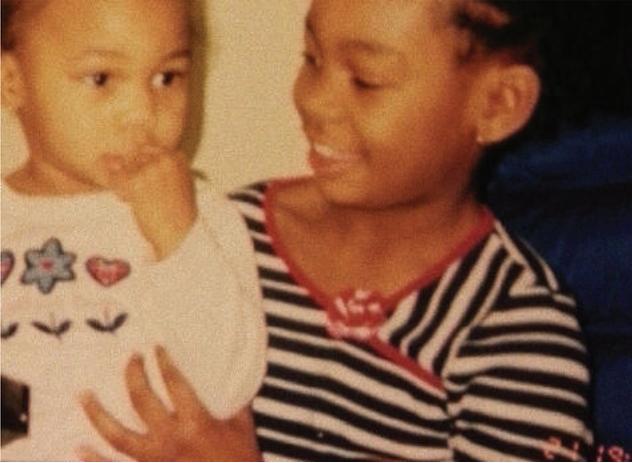
Stuck in bed  
Once again  
Thinking I'd be better off dead  
I cannot sleep  
I refuse to eat  
And I know damn well I come off as a creep.  
Who would ever love me  
If I can't even love myself?  
At the end of the day I am nobody else  
Just a crying mess  
That's full of stress  
That knows that he is useless  
I'm no longer safe  
In my safe place  
I call my room  
If anything, that place will be my tomb  
The thoughts won't stop  
The judgement is cruel  
And now I don't know what to do  
I'm just not you  
I can't think straight

I'm not worth a dime  
 I'm sorry for wasting your time  
 Perhaps the world would be a better place  
 Without my face  
 But I don't know, I'm just a small spec of the human race

DAKOTA WILLIAMS, GRADE 12

## My American Origin Story

### EARLY LIFE



My American Origin Story by Rayne Williams

Growing up was very manageable for me. Disregarding the constant arguments my dear older sister, Shaila, and I would have, my family maintained a close bond within our household. The memories that were created along our travels and simple time spent together are still unforgettable. We would venture throughout the United States, visiting famous tourist destinations, family, and simply enjoying the gratification of the experience. At a young age, I would follow in the leadership of my sister, who was taller than me and allowed more freedoms than me. Her intelligence and wholesome ways made her a remarkable person.

As a kid, I spent my days running wild, always outdoors with the children of my neighborhood. Lakeside, the neighborhood I grew up in, was legendary to me. It was there that I met the many friends known to me as a young girl. Throughout the neighborhood, we rode our bikes, hiked pathways of the woods, and tossed rocks into the capacious, dirty lake, that to this day, still lies at the heart of the neighborhood. The days that were spent outdoors always seemed to go by rapidly due to the fun we would have. That was until years passed and things began to change.

### LIFE AS A TEENAGER

As I grew older the days became longer. If it did not spark my interest, I dreaded the responsibility of performing obligatory tasks. This mainly consisted of doing house chores and attending school. Although I knew I wanted to be the most successful person I could be, working towards success was draining. I was required to wake up ahead of sunrise to attend school and spend the afternoon perfecting my craft in basketball. Though it was a burden, I loved how it all kept me busy. I grasped the true colors of individuals that I once believed were my



Deaf Karaoke, Elizabeth Nazario, Grade 12

friends. These individuals took advantage of me by talking behind my back and not remaining true to our friendship. The busyness that I kept from participating in sports and attending school assisted in distracting me from all antics. Compared to my past days, I remain a happy person even when faced with the pressures of growing up. I've learned to place focus on my beliefs in Jesus Christ and put my problems in his hands. In doing this, I have found peace within myself, and I have faith that I have the ability to do anything. Of course, I am unsure what life will bring to me as an adult, but I'm optimistic, and I know that if I keep faith, life will be great as well.

RAYNE WILLIAMS, GRADE 12

### *Once I was a Rainbow*

Once I was a rainbow  
in a sky now filled with gray.  
All the light was held at bay,  
and to my sadness and surprise,  
no rainbows graced my skies—  
no brilliant light to shine away the murky dreary days  
As those days turned to weeks, the sky continued to weep.

Then I faced my true defeat.  
No more were the radiant rays of light or hues of blue.  
Long gone was the cheery, kind sky I knew.  
The washed-out colors of a faded land  
became the picture of who I am.  
Once I was a rainbow with colors wide and bright.  
Now I long to regain my vast and lovely light.

SÁRAYE WYNDER-BURS, GRADE 11

### *Why Do I Write?*

Good question.

I think I write to release emotions. I can always count on the paper to listen. It will always be there, no matter if I'm sad, or mad, or glad. It is also a neutral person. No matter who I talk to, I mean something different to every person. They have their own agenda for me, but the paper doesn't. I can write everything that I'm feeling on paper, and it won't tell me what it thinks. Just the act of me writing calms me down from any mood I'm in. I think that's good because that means I'm not bottling it up, and it manifests into something. Then I do something that I shouldn't do. And writing is that release.

The Lucky Ones

What makes us who we are?  
Why do we do what we do?  
How is anyone okay with just being?  
There are so many possibilities in Life.  
Many of which go unexplored.  
It's sad really.  
We're all raised to grow up, then grow old.  
Then die.  
And that's it.  
No repeats. No rehearsal. No script.

Live.  
Die.  
Done.  
No one seems to think about how at any moment  
You may not exist anymore.  
You may not wake up.  
Or send that last tweet.  
Or post that last picture.  
Or hug your mom goodbye.

But there are some lucky ones.  
The ones who get out and do.  
The ones who chose a different path.

There are some who do.  
But most don't.  
And some want to do but can't.  
Some try so desperately to do that they reach and they grab and they climb  
And then they fall.  
Some get back up again.  
But most don't.

Some people go back to life  
Just to die.  
Some fight for their lives  
And they still die.  
Yet there are a very select few who go out and  
do.  
And guess what?  
They die too.

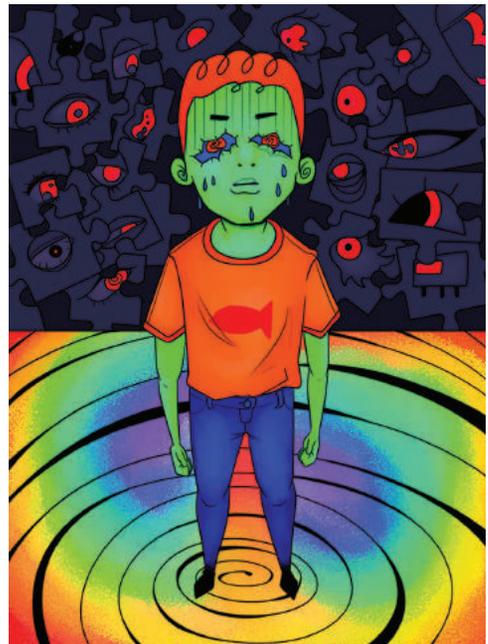
But they're the lucky ones.

It's fun. It's easy. It gives me something to do. I can write in  
a creative font or rhyme of a time and it will be sublime. I can  
always count on the paper to remind me of how to do it.

I Feel, I'm Like, I Am

I feel like honey  
With the sting of a bee  
Because I can be rude  
Or as sweet as can be.

I feel like a small dog  
That has a big bite  
Because I'm not menacing,  
But, for my friends, I'll fight.



Elizabeth Nazario, Grade 12

I'm like a salmon  
That's swimming upstream  
Because I am different  
And, internally, I scream.

I am a fruit  
That's been almost forgotten  
Because I am refreshing,  
But almost rotten.

I feel like the ocean  
At low tide  
Because I'm still here,  
But I have something to hide.

I'm like the American Flag  
That was set on fire  
Because I believe in this country,  
Despite the things I don't admire.



*Elizabeth Nazario, Grade 12*

I also feel more secure. I don't care who's going to read this, I just feel like I could write anything and no one would know. It's amazing. I'm in complete control and no one can tell me otherwise. I love that feeling. Maybe that's why I love writing.

**MATTHEW YORK, GRADE 12**



# UNION MIDDLE SCHOOL



*Deventae Mooney, Amber Garrison,  
& Catherine Stewart, Grade 6*

*I Am*

I am talented and smart  
I wonder what would happen if made it to the NFL  
I hear a dog barking  
I see a bright light  
I want to play football  
I am talented and smart

I pretend that I am a famous football player  
I feel happy about myself  
I touch a pencil  
I worry that I might get hurt in football  
I cry at sad movies  
I am talented and smart

I understand how life works  
I say random things  
I dream about being an NFL player  
I try hard at school  
I hope I pass this grade  
I am talented and smart

KAMRON ABNEY, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am funny and happy  
I wonder if bamboo is stronger than diamond  
I hear the whisper of the wind and the earth rotating  
I see money coming from the sky  
I want to play in the NFL  
I am funny and happy

I pretend to play in a basketball game  
I feel excited  
I touch the sun as it glows in the sky  
I worry when my cats are sick  
I cry when it is my bedtime  
I am funny and happy

I understand that diamond can only break diamond  
I say water is wet  
I dream about being rich  
I try to keep my room clean

I hope to own my own house  
I am funny and happy

AYDIN ADAMS, GRADE 6

### *Talan*

Is smart and funny  
Is the son of Kellie Mcelyea and Jason Mcelyea  
Is the grandson of William Adams, Sue Adams, Walter Christian Jr., and Marsha Christian  
Sibling to Noah Adams, Jace Mcelyea, and Laken Mcelyea  
Enjoys memories of Washington D.C and going to the White House  
Likes to swim, run, golf, and play with Nerf guns  
Family time consists of playing "Sorry" and other games  
Fear of scary movies  
Of Native American and German descent  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Adams*

TALAN ADAMS, GRADE 6

### *My Favorite Hobby*

Drawing is a hobby that I have developed, it started in church. There was a paper for people who were new to the church. I would flip the paper on the other side and draw on it until we went to the back of the church. I didn't draw much until the third grade when I met a friend. We both loved to draw. We made a couple of books together. My drawings improved a bit. In fourth grade, I had another friend that liked to draw. We made a couple of books together. One of the books was called "Stick Fight," but we never finished that one. In fifth grade, my drawings improved tremendously. I would spend all of my free time drawing. In 6th grade, my drawings have improved more, so now they look like humans. I am glad that I picked up this hobby in third grade because it has given me a lot of enjoyment.

JACKSON BAKER, GRADE 6

### *John*

Is smart and funny  
Is the son of Scott and Danielle Baker  
Is the grandson of Roy/Gaye Baker, and Connie/Jerry Tester  
Siblings are Olivia and Reagan Baker  
Enjoys memories of riding bikes and hunting  
Likes to hunt deer, turkey, and squirrels  
Family time consists of hunting with my dad and Papaw  
Acrophobia, the fear of heights  
Descendent of Scotland and Germany  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

## *Baker*

JOHN EAN BAKER, GRADE 6

## *Kaylee*

Is caring and kind  
Is the daughter of Fred Ballard and Mary Honeycutt  
Is the granddaughter of Daman Ballard, Jayce Eidridse, Eddie Honeycut,  
and Brenda Jennings  
Is the sister of Ryan, Madison, and Bethany Ballard  
Enjoys memories of going camping with my dad  
Likes to play basketball  
Family time consists of camping, laughter, and love  
Fears spiders  
Descendent of Native American Indians and England  
Resident of Appalachia, Virginia

## *Ballard*

KAYLEE BALLARD, GRADE 6

## *Riley*

Is energetic and funny  
Is the son of Justina Williams and Mark Barber  
Is the grandson of Deana Williams and Randall Williams  
Is the brother of Talon Barber and Landon Barber  
Enjoys memories of dancing to Whip & Nae-Nae  
Likes to play Xbox - Fortnite & Madden Football  
Family time consists of going to Dollywood and Pizza Hut  
Fears spiders  
Descendent of Tresia Barber, Paul Barber, Ricky Barber, & Ester Barber  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

## *Barber*

RILEY BARBER, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am a very curious person  
I wonder what happens when you die  
I hear music playing  
I see girls doing Tik Toks  
I want to be successful in life

I am a very curious person

I pretend that I am tall  
I feel like phones are overrated  
I touch the floor  
I worry about if i'll do good in the future  
I cry tears of joy  
I am a very curious person

I understand that life isn't as easy as I thought  
I say that everyone has a chance if they try  
I dream that I will have a very successful career  
I hope that I will be successful in the future  
I am a very curious person

HANNAH BARKER, GRADE 6

### *Xavier*

Is serious and funny  
Is the son of Lana Hamilton and Shane Barton  
Is the grandson of Doug Hamilton and Dena Barton  
Sibling of Trinity Barton  
Enjoys memories of the Christmas parties at the Quesenberry's house  
Likes to play Xbox or visit friends all day  
Family time consists of eating at Little Mexico or visiting other family members  
Fear of spiders  
Descendent of Scotland and Northern Ireland  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Barton*

XAVIER BARTON, GRADE 6

### *Chris*

Is motivated and determined  
Is the son of Chris Bates and Laura Brooks  
Is the grandson of Peggy Bates and Ron Bates  
Is the brother of Kaylee Bates, Madison Barnette, Kinze Barnette, Bentley Barnette  
Enjoys memories of going to my mamaws every day  
Likes to spend time playing football  
Family time consists of playing in my yard with my siblings and cousins  
Fears rats and frogs  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Bates*

CHRIS BATES, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am funny and big hearted  
I wonder how many strikes I can get in a bowling game  
I hear the pins all fall down  
I see bowling pins fall  
I want to bowl a 300  
I am funny and big hearted  
I pretend I bowl a 300  
I feel happy when I am bowling  
I touch my bowling ball  
I worry that I will throw my bowling ball in the gutter  
I cry when I don't get to go bowling  
I am funny and big hearted  
I understand why I don't get a strike  
I say, "Take lessons," to my competitors  
I dream of bowling all perfect bowling games  
I try to bowl all strikes  
I hope I bowl all 300  
I am funny and big hearted

LOGAN BATES, GRADE 6

### *My Influence: My Grand-paw "Poops"*

Do you have someone that you can turn to to answer all your questions? I do, it is my grand-paw whom I humorously call Poops. My grand-paw is an important person who continues to help shape the values and characteristics that I display each day.

Poops has always told me to make time for the people who are important in your life. Poops has demonstrated this by always making time for me. He not only participates in activities with me, but he is always willing to explain the answer to the many questions I may ask. He has always answered my endless questions about dogs, planets, growing plants, and how machines work. He has also taken me to Pigeon Forge to see all of the sights and spent time with me. In the summer, we continue to go kayaking, bike riding, and mow lawns with the John Deere mower! Whether it is in the yard learning life skills or visiting places, he is always fun to be with!

Remember to follow "The Golden Rule"; treat others as you want to be treated! Poops has always instilled that in me. Since he was a principal before he retired, he witnessed a lot of bad behavior. I guess this led him to assure that I think before I say cruel words to others or be a bully. I can remember when he would ask me if I wanted the loving or spanking hand. Indeed, I got the message quickly. He has taught me to ignore when people tease me or try to start a fight. The last example I can think of is when you do something for someone, don't expect anything in return. Always let people know you appreciate them.

Always keep your determination to finish everything you start. Once you begin a sport, start learning to play a musical instrument, or whatever it is, you finish! Never do you quit, you just learn from your mistakes. Basically, always persevere! Once I planted a garden, and the vegetables didn't grow as quickly as I wanted. Of course, I wanted to just walk away. Poops wouldn't let me. Eventually, I had the biggest tomatoes ever. The last example I can think of is when I said I didn't need advanced swimming lessons. I didn't want to go. That didn't happen. I took those lessons, and learned to swim really good. I can give

credit to Poops for this amazing accomplishment. To summarize, I think Poops is a very important person in my life that has been my inspiration. He has always provided stability in my life, and is never changing.

NOAH BELCHER, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a clumsy person and a llama lover  
I wonder what life would be life if I had a twin  
I hear my brother on call with his friends playing video games  
I see my teachers when they are teaching the class  
I want to be a photographer when I grow up  
I am a clumsy person and a llama lover

I pretend that I like cake, but I really hate like cake  
I feel like I worry too much, then I can't do dangerous things  
I touch the keys on my keyboard everyday to play video games  
I worry about what people think of me  
I cry when people talk about my papaw  
I am a clumsy person and a llama lover

I understand that I am in charge of my actions  
I say ok all the time  
I dream that I will become a photographer one day and travel the world  
I try to convince my dad to take me to Paris  
I hope I get a llama farm when I get older  
I am a clumsy person and a llama lover

MADDI BISHOP, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a cool and funny guy  
I wonder where I am going to go in my life  
I hear cow bells ringing  
I see pigs flying  
I want to see a famous basketball player  
I am a cool and funny guy

I pretend to be the best basketball player  
I feel good when I drink Gatorade  
I touch the basketball when I play  
I worry when I am going to die  
I cry when someone passes on  
I am a cool and funny guy

I understand that life's not fair  
I say I believe in God  
I dream that I will be a professional basketball player

I try to do good in school  
I hope to go to heaven  
I am a cool and funny guy

LANDEN BLANKEN, GRADE 6

### *Lily*

Is kind and caring  
Is the daughter of Sharon Blevins and Noah Blevins  
Is the granddaughter of Sharon Blevins and Noah Blevins  
Siblings Kaitlynn Blevins and Kaylie Blevins  
Enjoys memories of going to WonderWorks  
Likes to play outside  
Family time consists of going to Ripley's Aquarium  
Fear of spiders  
Descendent of Celtic land of Wales  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Blevins*

LILY BLEVINS, GRADE 6

### *Miciah*

Is trustworthy and positive  
Is the son of Justin and Alicia Boggs  
Is the grandson of Danny and Teresa Lovell  
Is the brother of Xavier  
Enjoys memories of fishing  
Likes to play basketball  
Family time consists of watching movies  
Fears sharks  
Descendent of McGees  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Boggs*

MICIAH BOGGS, GRADE 6

### *Madison*

Is caring and helpful  
Is the daughter of Venus Rogers and James Bond  
Is the granddaughter of Pat and Jim Bond and Alfred and Mary Rogers  
I enjoy memories of swimming with my dad  
I like to play soccer and swim  
Family time consists of Christmas dinner and going to Just Jump  
Fears spiders, the dark, and clowns

Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Bond*

MADISON BOND, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am funny and cool  
I wonder what will happen in the future  
I hear people talking  
I see the sun  
I want to be a professional basketball player  
I am funny and cool

I pretend that I am a good basketball player  
I feel like I will be a successful student  
I touch the clouds  
I worry what the future will be like  
I cry when family members pass away  
I am funny and cool

I understand wars and things from the past  
I say that I believe in God  
I dream that one day I will be really tall  
I try to improve my basketball skills  
I hope that I will be successful in school  
I am funny and cool

BENJAMIN BOWMAN, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am active and sporty  
I wonder how video games are made  
I hear rain hitting my bedroom window  
I see my brother playing video games  
I want one million dollars  
I am active and sporty

I pretend to be a cop  
I feel the cold water from Myrtle Beach, South Carolina  
I touch my dogs furry hair  
I worry about things that make me sad  
I cry when my mom or dad are in the hospital  
I am active and sporty

I understand that you don't always get what you want  
I say Trump should be the 2020 president.

I dream that I have a good job when I grow up  
I try in school and sports  
I hope I get a good job  
I am active and sporty

NATHANIEL BOYD, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am funny and nice  
I wonder how you make it to the NBA  
I hear the rain  
I see a tree moving  
I want to have a Land Rover  
I am funny and nice

I pretend to play cops with my brother, Nathaniel  
I feel water  
I touch a box  
I worry if I will pass the reading SOL test  
I cry about the loss of things  
I am funny and nice

I understand that I am smart  
I say that I believe in God  
I dream about flying pigs  
I try to be kind  
I hope I will pass the reading SOL test  
I am funny and nice

NICK BOYD, GRADE 6

### *Fun, Friends, and Football*

I like to play games and watch movies, but most importantly, I love hanging out with my friends in Big Stone Gap, VA. I grew up here with my friends Brycen, Gavyn, Keeten, Keagan, Brayden, and Kaden. My friends and I like to go around back to climb on trees and climb on stones after we played tag. It's fun, but we really like to play tackle football. At first, no one could tackle me, but then my cousin, Wesley, came and I always got tackled by him. I hurt my leg and my arm. Later, I hurdled him and he looked surprised. I was laughing so hard that I wasn't paying attention and I got tackled by Wesley. I got hurt again when he hit my ear and it started ringing. I went to the ground quickly and it hurt a lot, but I kept playing.

Another thing we enjoy doing is going to mine and Brayden's hide out. We play in the woods and it goes into the Appalachian Mountains. We went into the mountains and got scared when we heard gunshots. We quickly got on our bikes and went to my house. We decided to go in my room and play some *Mortal Kombat* and *Call of Duty: Infinite Warfare*. After all of that, they leave and I go to bed so we can do it again the next day.

JAMES BRADY, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am skinny and sarcastic  
I wonder about everything  
I hear people talking  
I see fantasies  
I want some ice-cream  
I am skinny and sarcastic

I pretend to do stuff  
I feel happy  
I touch candy  
I worry too much  
I cry, "Why isn't it Christmas yet?"  
I am skinny and sarcastic

I understand that I am not perfect  
I say what people want to hear  
I dream about random stuff  
I try hard in math class  
I hope to get a better grade in reading class  
I am skinny and sarcastic

AIDEN BRIGHT, GRADE 6

## *Bryson*

Son of Perry and Janet Brock  
Who is fun, hyper, happy, caring  
Who loves candy, FortNite, and Roblox  
Who fears being alone in the dark  
Who wants a PS4 Pro, iPhone 11Pro, and \$1,000,000.00  
Who uses pencils, a television, and a phone  
Who gives happiness, joy, and laughter  
Who says, "I love New York."

## *Brock*

BRYSON BROCK, GRADE 6

## *My Dad*

My dad is a really special person to me  
I love my dad and hope he never leaves me  
He is married and has four children  
My dad's name is Mark Broyles and he is 53 years old  
My dad is the only one who works to provide for my family

Some of my dad's hobbies are hunting, making bonfires, and working on vehicles  
My dad can never be replaced and I will always care about him no matter what

EMMA BROYLES, GRADE 6

### *Dylan*

Is competitive and tough  
Is the son of Amanda and Josh Honeycutt  
Is the grandson of Barbara and George Heffernan  
Is the brother of Laken and Alexis Honeycutt and Jonathan Brugger  
Enjoys memories of going on a cruise to Mexico  
Likes playing sports  
Family time consists of trips to far away places  
Fears Taphophobia (being buried alive)  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Brugger*

DYLAN BRUGGER, GRADE 6

### *Landon*

Grandson of Jennifer Carroll  
Who is athletic, caring, outdoorsy, and a hard worker  
Who loves my dog, family, and home  
Who fears snakes  
Who wants a family, car, and respect  
Who uses love, my brothers, and my mamaw  
Who gives time, respect, and love  
Who says to treat people how you want to be treated

### *Brummitt*

LANDON BRUMMITT, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am supportive and kind  
I wonder what my job will be when I grow up  
I hear kids laughing  
I see kids playing  
I want art supplies for Christmas  
I am supportive and kind  
  
I pretend to be cool  
I feel glass  
I touch shattered glass  
I worry that I will not pass my SOL tests

I cry when I leave my dad's house  
I am supportive and kind

I understand I have real friends  
I say that being kind to others is nice  
I dream I can be an artist  
I try to make other people happy  
I hope I can pass middle school  
I am supportive and kind

EMILY BRYANT, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am nice and caring  
I wonder how many people ask "What?" in one minute  
I hear rain pouring outside  
I see a faded rainbow in the distance  
I want to make people laugh when they have a bad day  
I am nice and caring

I pretend to be scary and scare my baby sister  
I feel being hot on a summer day and drinking a cold drink  
I touch the cold water in the pool  
I worry about things nobody can change  
I cry when I think about my papaw  
I am nice and caring

I understand how bullying can affect people  
I say you can accomplish your dreams if you set your mind to it  
I dream of being a dentist  
I try to make good grades in school  
I hope to talk to my old friend  
I am nice and caring

OLIVIA CAMPBELL, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am silly and smart  
I wonder if Trump will be POTUS for 4 more years  
I hear a train blowing its whistle  
I see a trail  
I want money  
I am silly and smart

I pretend to be a cop outside  
I feel happy  
I touch my Xbox controller

I worry about my own and other people's health  
I cry when a pet or relative dies  
I am silly and smart  
I understand that I like candy  
I say Christianity  
I dream that Mr. Renfro is a dishwasher  
I try to do good in school  
I hope for world peace  
I am silly and smart

ALEX CARUSO, GRADE 6

### *Maelyn*

Is funny and smart and funny  
Is the daughter of Ronald Deitz  
Is the granddaughter of Birtie Adams  
Is the sister of Julieona Greer  
Enjoys memories of making mud pies with my cousin  
Like spending time with family and doing art work  
Family time consists of cookouts at the park with my cousins  
Fears snakes and spiders  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Chadwick*

MAELYN CHADWICK, GRADE 6

### *Brayden*

Is tall and funny  
Is the son of Tiffany Moore and Brian Chandler  
Is the grandson of Sherry Baker/David Moore and Linda Chandler/Billy Chandler  
Younger brother of Taylor Hamilton  
Enjoys memories of the time I killed my first deer  
Likes to play football and baseball and hunt  
Family time consists of going to my pawpaws and eating dinner and having a good time.  
Fear of clowns.  
Descendent of Native Americans  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Chandler*

BRAYDEN CHANDLER, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am mysterious and weird  
I wonder who thought to call cheese, "cheese"  
I hear my own voice in my head  
I see things to draw

I want more drawing supplies  
I am mysterious and weird  
I pretend to laugh at my little sister's jokes  
I feel happy  
I touch wolves  
I worry my phone is dying  
I cry at sad movies  
I am mysterious and weird

I understand video games  
I say, "I love you"  
I dream thrilling things  
I try my best at video games  
I hope to get better at drawing  
I am mysterious and weird

TRINITY CHANDLER, GRADE 6

### *Hunter*

Is smart and fun  
Is the son of Jay  
Is the grandson of Betty Ayers  
Is the brother of Bella Sturgill  
Enjoys memories of fishing with my step dad  
Likes to go fishing  
Family time consists of playing basketball  
Fears spiders  
Descendent of Native Americans  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Christian*

HUNTER CHRISTIAN, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am helpful and nice  
I wonder when the next Friday the 13th will be  
I hear a meow  
I see a cat  
I want a dog  
I am helpful and nice  
  
I pretend cats are people  
I feel a scratch  
I touch fur  
I worry my cat is hurt  
I cry when my cat gets hurt  
I am helpful and nice

I understand that bad things happen  
I say, "Have a good day!"  
I dream of cats  
I try to help others  
I hope my cats love me  
I am helpful and nice

BROOKLYN CLARKSTON, GRADE 6

### *My Dad, My Biggest Influence*

A person who has influenced my life the most is my dad. There is nothing more exciting than my hard working dad. I believe that my father has influenced my life in many ways.

In the first place, the reason my dad has influenced me most is because he works hard. My dad gets up early and gets home late sometimes. He works on very little sleep most of the time. His job allows him to support us and so that my mom can stay home to take care of us.

Secondly, he is a good father. He volunteers a lot of his spare time to coach soccer and basketball. My dad loves my sisters, our cat, and me. Another way he is a good father is he takes on vacation and provides us with our needs.

In conclusion, there are many more reasons why my dad has influenced my life. He influenced me by how much work he does with little sleep. Also, he is a good father. I strongly feel that the choices my father makes is why he influenced me the most.

GABBY CLEM, GRADE 6

### *My Papaw, Jim*

To some people coal is about politics, but to me it is about my heritage. My papaw, Jim Clendenon, was born on April 2nd, 1947. He started his career in the United States Air Force and then went on to work in the coal industry for 40 years until he retired.

To begin with, my papaw Jim is a hard worker and an inspiration to many. My papaw risked his life working underground everyday. He was also a Staff Sergeant in the United States Air Force. He traveled the world and lived an all-around cool life.

During the time my papaw was in the Air Force, he traveled to many places all over the world. Some of the exciting places he visited were Switzerland, Austria, Belgian, and the Netherlands. He served for three years, eight months and twenty-three days. His job title was Target Analyst. One of the duties he had was to analyze maps in order to find the best place to drop bombs during the Vietnam War. This helped keep our soldiers safe.

During his years as a company man, he worked in many mines. Once, there was a terrible accident that could have been horrible. The ground fell in while he was underground mining coal and if he had not been able to run out quickly, he could have died. Fortunately, his only injury was a broken leg.

In conclusion, my papaw Jim has accomplished many amazing and inspiring things. Currently, he is my number one 'dog sitter.' Many people in my community have grown up with relatives that work in the mines. I am blessed to live in a community that supports the coal industry.

ARABELLA CLENDENON, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a kind and loving girl

I wonder why god created us and put us on planet earth

I hear a strange noise in the woods at night

I see cats and dogs in the sky  
I want to travel the world  
I am a kind and loving girl

Sometimes I pretend I am the only person around  
I feel happy when I am around family and friends  
I touch animals  
I worry about my little brother, Wyatt  
I cry when my mom leaves to go back to Florida  
I am a kind and loving girl

I understand I have to go to school and get good grades  
I say, "Everyone will succeed in life."  
I dream of moving to Florida to be closer to my mom  
I try to be nice and make good grades  
I hope I will see my sisters and brothers again  
I am a kind and loving girl

CHEYENNE COLE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am funny and smart  
I wonder if I will become a professional baker  
I hear music  
I see a marshmallow blanket when it snows  
I want to open my own bakery  
I am funny and smart

I pretend to be a baker when I bake in the kitchen  
I feel accomplished when I complete something  
I touch the clouds  
I worry that I will not be able to bake well  
I cried when I sprained my ankle  
I am funny and smart

I understand nothing or nobody is perfect  
I say if you keep trying, you will succeed  
I dream about winning a baking competition  
I try to be creative and create my own stuff  
I hope to create a bakery and be a successful baker  
I am funny and smart

HALLI COLLINS, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a gamer and a brother  
I wonder what it would be like to be rich

I hear talking  
I see color  
I want to be a youtuber  
I am a gamer and a brother  
I pretend to be a video game character  
I feel happy  
I touch the light  
I worry when I will pass away  
I cry when I think about my dog that passed away  
I am a gamer and a brother

I understand that I will pass on  
I say the Earth is round  
I dream about being a youtuber  
I try to lose weight  
I hope I will live a happy life  
I am a gamer and a brother

JON DAVID COLLINS, GRADE 6

### *Shannon*

Is funny, smart, and brave  
Is the son of Shannon Cromer and Merita Cromer  
Is the grandson of Darlene Harbor Mickles  
Is an only child  
Enjoys memories of riding dirt bikes with my friend, Gunnar  
Likes spending time with my mom  
Family time consists of watching movies with my mom  
Fears snakes and spiders  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Cromer*

SHANNON CROMER, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am smart and talented  
I wonder if I could start my own business  
I hear bang boom swish  
I see a man just standing there  
I am smart and talented

I pretend to be someone I'm not  
I feel a light wind around me  
I touch a unicorn  
I worry that no one will like me  
I cry because I lose friends  
I am smart and talented

I understand mathematics  
I say I am not good enough  
I dream I had all of my fears out of my way  
I try to be nicer than I am  
I hope I could see my brother one day  
I am smart and talented

GRACIE DAVIS, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am kind and funny  
I wonder what the iPhone 15 will look like  
I hear tacos cooking  
I see my family and friends  
I want to be an engineer  
I am kind and funny

I pretend to be a tank commander  
I feel that I can do anything  
I touch the armour of a tank  
I worry about not doing my best  
I cry about losing loved ones  
I am kind and funny

I understand that family is most important  
I say that anyone can do anything  
I dream about welding and tank battles  
I try to be successful all the time  
I hope to go to Virginia Tech  
I am kind and funny

EASTON DEEL, GRADE 6

### *Kinsley*

Is determined and happy  
Is the daughter of Don Dorton and Heather Dorton  
Is the granddaughter of James and Dianne Talbott and Danny and Donna Dorton  
Is the sister of Lindsey Reeves and Hunter Dorton  
Enjoys memories of working outside with my grandfather  
Likes to play softball and sleep  
Family time consists of going to my grandparents house to hangout with my cousins  
Fears snakes and spiders  
Descendent of England and Poland  
Resident of Wise, Virginia

### *Dorton*

KINSLEY DORTON, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am caring and kind  
I wonder if my papaw will get a new puppy  
I hear people at school  
I see people at school  
I want my papaw to get a new puppy  
I am caring and kind

I pretend to laugh at people's jokes, even if they are not funny  
I feel my friends poking me to get my attention  
I touch my dog, Dixie  
I worry about my papaw because he smokes  
I cry when I think about my dead dog, Mara  
I am caring and kind

I understand why I should not say, "Hi," to strangers even though I say,  
"Hi," to a lot of strangers  
I dream about what it would be like to have a sibling  
I try to be helpful to others  
I hope my papaw can get a new puppy for Christmas  
I am caring and kind

TAYLAH EADS, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am faithful and trustworthy  
I wonder what my life will be like  
I hear thunder in the sky  
I see a Ford Mustang revving its engine  
I want peace  
I am faithful and trustworthy

I pretend that I'm playing football for the Auburn Tigers  
I feel the cold autumn breeze  
I worry that my dog will die soon  
I cry when I break a bone  
I am faithful and trustworthy

I understand that I don't get my way  
I say Alabama is awesome  
I dream that I will have peace  
I try my best at football  
I am faithful and trustworthy

HUNTER ELLIOTT, GRADE 6

## *My Biggest Influence: My Dad*

The person that has influenced my life the most is my dad. My dad is a great person, funny, and will do anything for me! My dad has influenced my life the most because he is funny and a great dad! One reason I like my dad so much is because he taught me how to play sports such as basketball, baseball, and football. I remember when I was about five he taught me how to play basketball. He taught me how to shoot, dribble, and play defense. Then he put me on a basketball team.

When I was three, he taught me how to play baseball. He taught me how to hit, catch, and run the bases. Then he put me on a tee-ball team. He was my coach. Both of my brothers were on my team. I played second base. As I got older, I moved up to coach pitch. My dad was a great coach!

My dad and I would almost always throw football. Therefore, at a pretty early age I could catch. I played on a football team when I was seven but I only played for a year. I still like football and I watch it at home on TV. My favorite team is Alabama. I like Alabama because my dad also likes Alabama.

In conclusion, the person that has influenced my life the most is my dad. My dad is funny, a great person, and will do anything for me and my brothers. He taught me how to play basketball, baseball, and football. I love my dad and he has influenced my life the most. He is a great dad!

SEBASTIAN ELY, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am funny and always happy  
I wonder what I will look like in 30 years  
I hear rain on the roof  
I see my cats playing in the yard  
I want to go to Paris  
I am funny and always happy

I pretend I can fly  
I feel happy  
I touch my dogs fur  
I worry about if I will be alive in 50 years  
I cry at the thought of me losing my dog  
I am funny and always happy

I understand math  
I say God is amazing  
I dream about flying  
I try to be a good friend  
I hope to have a lot of money to give to the homeless  
I am funny and always happy

KATIE FORE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am curious and quiet  
I wonder what is in space

I hear laughing  
I see dragons  
I want a Nintendo Switch  
I am curious and quiet

I pretend to play basketball  
I feel aliens  
I touch slime  
I worry about my grades  
I cry during movies  
I am curious and quiet  
I understand space  
I say aliens are real  
I dream about flying  
I try to play basketball  
I hope I get a Nintendo Switch  
I am curious and quiet

BRYLAN GIBSON, GRADE 6

### *My Mom*

The most influential person in my life is my mom. My mom is a great role model because she is strong and caring. She is a great person and she is talented. She taught me how to do everything that I do, not everything but almost everything.

First, she is my role model because she taught me how to cook. She has taught me how to make chocolate pie. She also taught me how to make baked potatoes. She also partially taught me how to make lemon pepper chicken. In a way, she has already started to prepare me for life when I get older.

Secondly, she taught me that I should not get rewarded from something that I should do anyway. For example, other parents give their children prizes for getting good grades or behaving well. My mom disagrees and thinks that those actions should be expected and not rewarded. She taught my sister and I how to behave and show empathy toward others even if they are being unkind to us.

In conclusion, I think my mom is a great role model because she teaches me how to be a great person and to reach for my dreams. She has taught me how to do everything, including how to be smart, and be realistic with myself.

COLT GIBSON, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am an angry man  
I wonder how my friends are  
I hear laughing  
I see a woman  
I want to ask my crush out  
I am an angry man

I pretend to drum aggressively  
I feel angry at myself  
I touch a guitar pick  
I worry about my friends and family  
I cry when I am hurt  
I am an angry man

I understand my family  
I say life is too short to be sad  
I dream my band  
I try to drum  
I hope to play guitar  
I am an angry man

JAMES GIBSON, GRADE 6

### *Christmas Traditions*

The most influential people in my life are my parents. There is nothing more exciting than participating in Christmas traditions with them. In the first place, I enjoy these Christmas traditions because they are always something I will remember. I will also be able to pass these traditions on to my children one day. When I grow old, I will remember all of the memories and all of the fun we had.

Additionally, one Christmas tradition is on Christmas Eve we make cookies for Santa. On Christmas, my family gathers at my grandparents' home to eat Christmas dinner. When everyone finishes, we all sit in the living room to open gifts. Later that evening we return home and watch Christmas movies around the fireplace in our comfy pajamas.

After we watch one or two movies, we play with our gifts and drink hot chocolate. Once we do that, we start getting tired so my sister and I go to her room and she makes me sleep on her floor! Finally, we all go to sleep and we play with our gifts some more on the next day!

For the most part, Christmas traditions make the holiday season more special. Making traditions is fun and I will one day get to pass them on. I believe that Christmas is a good time to bring families closer. I hope everyone enjoys the Christmas holidays and starts their own family traditions.

ALYSSA NICOLE GILLIAM, GRADE 6

### *My Biggest Influence*

My sister is the most influential person in my life. She is influential because she spent over eight years in college and is now a pharmacist. She gives medication to mentally and physically disabled people. Uniquely enough, my other sister treats the mentally and physically disabled as a therapist. I think a pharmacist is a hard job but rewarding with an average salary of \$112,000 a year!

Another reason I think my sister is the most influential person in my life is that she is getting married to her fiance, Tyler Dobbins in April. I think Tyler is nice, funny, and he also works really hard as a manager in his parent's popular, local pizza place. I don't usually get to see Holly and Tyler because they live in Radford but when I do it is always really fun.

The final reason I think Holly is the most influential person in my life is that she always works really hard to provide for her family. She has two dogs that are named Cloud and Porter which she cares for a lot. She is really nice, caring, and overall great.

In conclusion, I think my sister Holly is the most influential person in my life, because she is a hardworking person who cares for her family by helping them and giving them what they need, and she will never stop trying her best.

DONOVAN GILLIAM, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am loving and kind  
I wonder why my mom breakup with my dad  
I hear my dad and me having fun  
I see me and my sister open our gifts  
I want to live with my dad  
I am loving and kind

I pretend to hug my dad when he is not there  
I feel kisses on my cheek  
I touch the clouds  
I worry about my family  
I cry when my dog dies  
I am loving and kind

I understand why I was born two months early  
I say I wish I can go to my dad's house  
I dream about being at the beach with my family  
I try to spend as much time with my dad  
I hope I will always be remembered  
I am loving and kind

CHRISTINA GREER, GRADE 6

### *Victoria*

Is a helper and hard worker  
Is the daughter of Karen and Michael Grose, Sr.  
Is the granddaughter of Gary and Liz Stanley and John and Nina Grose  
Is the sister of Cala and Michael Grose, Jr.  
Enjoy memories of going to the flea markets with my pappy  
Family time consists of playing outdoor games with the family  
Fears being alone and loud noises  
Descendent of many  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Grose*

VICTORIA GROSE, GRADE 6

### *Joshua*

Is athletic and courteous  
Is the son of Steve and Donna Guerrant

Is the grandson of Lois and Earl Kilgore  
Is the brother of Steven, Donnie, Nick, Bryce, Jeremy, and Amy Guerrant  
Enjoys memories of Grandma's homemade cooking  
Likes to play football  
Family time consists of playing games with my family  
Fears snakes  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Guerrant*

JOSHUA GUERRANT, GRADE 6

### *People Who Influenced My Life*

The person who has influenced my life is, well a lot of people. For instance, my great grandfather, James P. Hale, is one of the many people who have had an influence on me. He was born in the year 1934 and was in the Korean War. He was a mechanic during peacetime. He sadly passed away in 2015. Another person is my dad. He has influenced me to do good and to help others in any way possible. He is a coal truck driver for the company Savage. My parents sadly divorced two years ago. I'm upset, but it has gotten better.

One person who has influenced me is my mom, because she taught me to do my best and work hard. I do love her. Another person who has influenced me is my Nana. She has taught me to cook and help around the house. I do want to thank her for all she has done for my mom, sister, and I. My Grandpa Steve has taught me how to fish, work with wood, and more. My grandmother has taught me about the Bible, and she was the one who got me started on singing.

My sister has influenced me to be the best person I can be. She is six years younger than me, but she knows a lot. My grandfather, who I call "Pa," has taught me to give 110% no matter what. My Aunt Chloe has taught me that no matter the situation, never give up and keep going. She is one of the sweetest and kindest people you would ever meet. I think my great grandmother, who I call "Mamaw James," showed me to never let people push you around.

The last, but certainly not least, person who has influenced my life is my Uncle Nathan. He got me started on gaming. I always look up to him, literally and figuratively. He is married and has my little cousin, Silas. I love my family.

NOAH HALE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am funny and loving  
I wonder what it's like to be running in someone else's head  
I hear arguing and yelling  
I see my family and me laughing  
I want to go to Los Angeles  
I am funny and loving  
I pretend to be someone else  
I feel proud to be alive  
I touch my Nanny Bingo's hands in heaven  
I worry about my family

I cry when I watch romantic movies  
I am funny and loving  
I understand that I'm mean  
I say I'm going to stop talking, but I NEVER do  
I dream to stop talking  
I try not to be mean  
I hope to make straight As  
I am funny and caring

MADDY HALL, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am an athletic girl  
I wonder about my future  
I hear birds chirping  
I see the softball going right out of my hand  
I want to be a successful girl in life  
I am an athletic girl  
I pretend that I am walking on Virginia Tech's campus  
I feel my hand picking flowers  
I touch the laces on a softball  
I worry if I'm doing something wrong  
I cry if someone dies  
I am an athletic girl  
I understand that everything happens for a reason  
I say no one is perfect  
I dream about what I want to do in the future  
I try to be a smart, strong, and loving girl  
I hope to have a blessed life  
I am an athletic girl

SOPHIE HAMM, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am weird and shy  
I wonder why is it that during the day I'm tired, but at midnight I'm wide awake  
I hear a dragon  
I see a puppy  
I want to see my Papa Keith  
I am weird and shy  
I pretend I can hibernate  
I feel something soft  
I touch a nighticorn (night unicorn)  
I worry a stray dog I know won't get a good home  
I cry about a puppy my family sent to a pound before I said bye  
I am weird and shy

I understand how to do math sometimes. . .  
I say people should get paid to go to school, it's like a job  
I dream of living with animals  
I try to stay awake in class  
I hope to be nocturnal  
I am weird and shy

LEXIS HOLDER, GRADE 6

### *Montana*

Is smart and courageous  
Is the daughter of Kristy Hood-Pickell and Travis Pickell  
Is the granddaughter of Jean and Richard Pickell  
Is the sister of my brother, Dacotah  
Likes to spend time with my family at Christmas  
Likes to play basketball and softball  
Family time consists of playing outside and spend time with family  
Fears my brother Dacotah having surgery  
Descendant of Isaac and Loretta Hood  
Is the resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Hood*

MONTANA HOOD, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a girl who loves basketball  
I wonder what it would be like to meet a professional basketball player  
I see the basketball in the air when I am shooting  
I want to be a good basketball player someday  
I am a girl who loves basketball  
I pretend to be a professional player  
I feel like I am good at basketball  
I touch the basketball  
I worry that I won't be good at basketball in the future  
I cry when I make a mistake in basketball  
I am a girl who loves basketball  
I understand that I'm not really good at basketball  
I say that someday I will be a good basketball player  
I dream I'll be a professional basketball player one day  
I try to do my best in basketball games  
I hope for the best in basketball  
I am a girl who loves basketball

KILEY HUFF, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am an athletic girl who was raised in Big Stone Gap, Virginia  
I wonder why God made me the way I am and where I am in life right now  
I hear basketball shoes squeaking all over the court  
I see the softball going right into my glove  
I want to be successful and have happiness in life  
I am an athletic girl who was raised in Big Stone Gap, Virginia  
I pretend that no one can hurt my feelings  
I feel the laces on the big, yellow softball  
I touch the gills on the fish that I caught  
I worry that I am not in the right place or doing the right thing in life  
I cry over the thought of all the needy kids in the world and how  
I'm so blessed  
I am an athletic girl who was raised in Big Stone Gap, Virginia  
I understand that my parents have to go to work  
I say, "Anyone can do anything if they try hard and believe in themselves."  
I dream where and what I will be doing when I grow up  
I try to be a smart, strong, and independent girl  
I hope I have a Blessed life  
I am an athletic girl who was raised in Big Stone Gap, Virginia

TAYLOR HUGHES, GRADE 6

## *Noah*

Is funny and smart  
Is the son of Heather Mullins and Jeff Mullins  
Is the grandson of Jacque Hill  
The younger brother of Zack Mullins and Hayley Ingle  
Enjoys memories of the Myrtle Beach  
Likes to play basketball; I am number 42  
Family time consists of cookouts and talking  
Fear of needles  
Descendent of Ireland  
A resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

## *Ingle*

NOAH INGLE, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am athletic and funny  
I wonder how my life is going to be as I grow older  
I hear kids all around me  
I see myself making the NFL  
I want my grandpa back

I am athletic and funny  
I pretend I am with my siblings  
I feel that I can make my grandpa proud  
I touch the football  
I worry about my grandma  
I cry about my siblings  
I am athletic and funny  
I understand that I am not perfect  
I say "I can do this"  
I dream about going to the NFL  
I try to do my best  
I hope I can make my grandma and grandpa proud  
I am athletic and funny

JAYDEN ISON, GRADE 6

### *My Role Model, My Mom*

Sonya Teclai once said, "My mom taught me a woman's mind should be the most beautiful part of her." A large part of who I am I owe to my mom. My mom's unconditional love and support has shown me that I can pursue whatever goals in life, regardless of the outcome. She will always be there, cheering louder than anyone else.

To begin with, my mom began reading to me while I was still in her belly, and never stopped. It sparked my love of reading and writing at an early age, and I have always read at an advanced level. I have been to creative writing camps, in which my stories were published each time. I have also won several spelling bees, making it to the county wide competition twice.

Also, she encouraged me to try foods that I never thought I would enjoy. My mom had always talked about how sushi is delicious. So for my tenth birthday, I was brave and tried it, and now I love it. She also really likes chili beans, which I did not like. I love them now because she kept pushing me to give them another chance. I used to hate the smell of her cabbage rolls. I resisted trying them for several years, but the persistence paid off. I am still not crazy about the smell when they are cooking, but they are one of my favorite meals she makes.

My mom told me from a young age to be myself, and not let peer pressure influence who I became along the way. She told me that it is more important to be kind to others, regardless of how they treat me. My mom said to not be ashamed of my style. If it is comfortable and I enjoy it, I wear it. She also said to not be embarrassed by my interests and big brain, nerds rule this world!

Finally, my mom deserves credit for who I am, and who I am becoming. Reading to me while I was in her belly developed my love for reading, writing, and has led me to join creative writing camps. I would have never tried some of my favorite foods without her. She told me to always be kind to others, and to be myself, no matter what. My mom has always been my biggest inspiration from the time I was born, and will be from here on out.

ABIGAIL JACKSON, GRADE 6

### *Serenity*

Is kind and crazy  
Is the daughter of Richard Jefferson and Nicky Boring  
Is the granddaughter of Sarah and Greg Jefferson and Ina and Ricky Willis

Is the sister of Brooke Jefferson and Destiny Boring  
Enjoys memories of playing in the dark  
Likes to Play Xbox One and PS4  
Family time consists of playing Monopoly  
Fears spiders, heights, snakes, and panthers  
Family derived from Germany and Russia  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Jefferson*

SERENITY JEFFERSON, GRADE 6

### *Abbie*

Is smart and funny  
Is the daughter of Tammy and Terry Johnson  
Is the granddaughter of Evonna Boggs and Dorthy Johnson  
Sister of Brianna, Katie, & Trevor Johnson, Bradly Holbrook,  
Jenna and Juliet Bouton  
Enjoys memories of going to Dollywood with my family  
Likes to play manhunt and explore  
Family time consists of playing board games and watching movies  
Fears spiders  
Descendent of Monica Holbrook and Jerney Boggs  
Resident of Appalachia, Virginia

### *Johnson*

ABBIE JOHNSON, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a curious person  
I wonder how deep space is  
I hear the stars calling out to me  
I see a world of peace and happiness  
I want a good future for the planet  
I am a curious person  
I pretend to travel the world  
I feel the snow piercing my skin  
I touch the clouds in the darkness  
I worry about death  
I cry when someone I love passes away  
I am a curious person  
I understand life is not perfect

I say stop polluting the oceans  
I dream of a good, long life  
I try my best at all times  
I hope one day everyone will be happy  
I am a curious person

JJ KAMPLAIN, GRADE 6

### *Lauren*

Is smart and sweet  
Is the daughter of Melvin and Teresa Kelly  
Is the granddaughter of Linda and Henry Clark  
Younger sister of John and Brayden Kelly  
Enjoys memories of family vacations  
Likes to make TikTok videos  
Family time consists of playing board games  
Fear of snakes  
Descendent of Cherokee Indians  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Kelly*

LAUREN KELLY, GRADE 6

### *Mom: My Positive Influence*

A person who has influenced me all life is my mom. My mom has been a role model for my entire life. I truly feel that my mom has influenced me all my life and will continue to do so.

To begin with, my mom has helped me with my school work. She helps me with my homework when I need help. She has helped me essays and speeches. She helps me study for all my tests including vocabulary and reading tests. My mom works really hard to help me with school work.

The last reason, she encourages me to do better. She encourages me to do better in sports such as football, basketball, and baseball. She helps me make good choices. She helps me encourage myself to do better in school as well.

In conclusion, I truly feel that she has done well helping me with school work and encourages me to do better in life. My mom is the best person in the world and I am thankful to have her in my life as a positive role model.

MALAKAI KENNEDY, GRADE 6

### *Zoie*

Is active and sweet  
Is the daughter of Haley and Matt King  
Is the granddaughter of Tracy and Greg Kress  
Is the older sister of Karsen King  
Enjoys memories of my friends, our parents, and I going to the beach together this year;  
it was really fun.

Likes to do gymnastics and basketball  
Family time consists of fun activities, like when my sister and I do this thing where my  
mom hides an ornament in the Christmas tree and whoever finds the ornament gets  
to pick out a gift that we want for Christmas. (It can't be expensive)

Fear of Snakes  
Descendent of Ireland  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *King*

ZOIE KING, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am tall and handsome  
I wonder why we go to school  
I hear music  
I see my brother and me playing basketball  
I want to meet Steph Curry  
I am tall and handsome  
I pretend to play basketball with Steph Curry  
I feel good  
I touch a basketball  
I worry about my family  
I cry when I break a bone  
I am tall and handsome  
I understand why I was born  
I say God is real  
I dream of playing basketball with Steph Curry  
I try to do well on my school work  
I hope to meet Steph Curry  
I am tall and handsome

JARRED KINSLER, GRADE 6

### *Laci*

Is smart and kind  
Is the daughter of Mandy and Keith Lancaster  
Is the granddaughter of Richard and Renau Hazlewood, and Joyce Lancaster  
Is the younger sister of Lani  
Enjoys memories of when my papaw, aunt, sister, and I would go riding around after  
church  
Likes to play volleyball with Lani  
My favorite thing to do with my family is going to the museum to see the Christmas trees  
Fears losing my papaw  
Descendent of Ireland and England

Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Lancaster*

LACI LANCASTER, GRADE 6

*Aidan*

Is adventurous and strong-willed  
Is the son of Justin Lane and Candice Duncan Lane  
Is the grandson of David & Deborah Lane and Richard & Sonja Duncan  
Is an only child  
Enjoys memories of hunting and fishing with Poppy Richard and Dad  
Likes to play baseball  
Family time consists of gathering and eating with all my family  
Fears birds and elevators  
Descendent of a God fearing family and hard workers  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Lane*

AIDAN LANE, GRADE 6

*Luke*

Son of Patrick Lane  
Who is weird, happy, ecstatic, and peculiar  
Who loves my bed, my home, and my family  
Who fears spiders  
Who uses absurdity, jokes, and antics  
Who says, "Why fall in love when you can fall asleep?"

*Lane*

LUKE LANE, GRADE 6

*Madison*

Is kind and loving  
Is the daughter of Rebecca Laney  
Is the granddaughter of Johnny & Joanne Bishop  
Is an only child  
Enjoys memories of riding my four wheeler  
Likes to play softball  
Family time consists of watching a movie  
Fears heights

Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Laney*

MADISON LANEY, GRADE 6

*Kharis*

Is nice and funny  
Is the daughter of Donna and Alan Lawson  
Is the granddaughter of Jessie/Connie Lawson and Bill/Suzanne Jackson  
Only child  
Enjoys memories of going to Canada and Niagara Falls  
Likes to play games  
Family time consists of playing board games  
Fear of stink bugs  
Descendent of Canada  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Lawson*

KHARIS LAWSON, GRADE 6

*Alex*

Son of Christy and Alex  
Who is athletic, funny, kind, and adventurous  
Who loves God, family, and the Warriors  
Who fears failure  
Who wants an Iphone 11 Pro, a Ps4 Pro, and to meet Stephen Curry  
Who uses data and his Iphone  
Who gives money to Veterans, help to friends, and hugs to family  
Who says, "Steph Curry is the best."

*Lee*

ALEX LEE, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am determined and caring  
I wonder what will happen in the future  
I hear my team cheering each other on  
I see my life full of possibilities  
I want to be a good person  
I am determined and caring  
I pretend that my softball team will become a professional team  
I feel that my team has improved in the past year

I touch the hand of my teammates as we give each other high fives  
I worry about losing my friends and family  
I cry at the thought of someone being mistreated  
I am determined and caring  
I understand everyone is different  
I believe everyone has potential  
I dream about softball and basketball  
I try in sports and school  
I hope to achieve my goals  
I am determined and caring

EMMA LESTER, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am nice  
I wonder what it looks like in Texas  
I hear birds  
I see grass  
I want new headphones  
I am nice  
I pretend to not be in school  
I feel a laptop  
I touch a keyboard  
I worry the house may fall down  
I cried when my dog died  
I am nice  
I understand how to play a Nintendo Switch  
I say "Nope!"  
I dream that it was winter break  
I try to get good grades  
I hope there is no school tomorrow  
I am nice

HUNTER LEWIS, GRADE 6

### *Kylie*

Is nice and quiet  
Is the daughter of Ashton and Brandon  
Is the granddaughter of Alan/Diane Maggard and Sandy/Bo Chandler  
Is a big sister to Bristol Quinn  
Enjoys memories of dancing for family  
Likes to play a lot of video games  
Family time consists of sometimes going places  
Fear of talking in front of a lot of people  
Descendent of Germany  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*I Am*

I am smart and kind  
I wonder what life would be like without power  
I hear birds singing in the forest trees  
I see wonderful beaches with white sand and clear water  
I want to save the beaches  
I am smart and kind  
I pretend to be on a beach with my feet in the clear water  
I feel that I can pass the SOL  
I touch dolphins swimming in the sea  
I worry that our seas are being polluted  
I cry when I think about my cat  
I am smart and kind  
I understand that we can save the Earth  
I say save the Earth  
I dream about my cat  
I try to make good grades  
I hope to pass the SOL  
I am smart and kind

HANNAH MCCOWAN, GRADE 6

*I Am My Mom: My Biggest Influence*

It would be wrong for me to say that just one person influences my life because many people do. However, I believe the one person who influences me the most is my mom. I feel that she mainly influences me because I am a girl, just like how a boy's father would influence him more than his mom. Two ways that she influences me is to be a good person and to be a good mother in the future. She always helps me with anything I need.

To begin with, my mom teaches me to be a good person. She teaches me to care for others. She also helps me by teaching me to care for others' feelings. Another way she influences me to be a good person is by teaching me manners. She always encourages me to put myself in other's shoes.

Secondly, my mom leads by example. She exemplifies how to be a good mom in the future by teaching me how to cook and take care of a child. Additionally, she teaches me how to do chores around the house. She teaches me the basic things I will need to know in the future and how to deal with it. She also shows me how to pack a lunch for myself or a child.

I believe my mom helps me a lot through my daily life. She has influenced me to do so many good things in life. I believe that these things will help me a lot in the future. She has taught me to be a good person and that is something that I will continue to use in my everyday life. Because of teaching me to be a good mom, it will help me when I am older. In conclusion, my mom is a wonderful role model and a positive influence.

ALEXIS MEADE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am nice and funny  
I wonder if clouds are cold  
I hear water flowing  
I see dogs running  
I want a pie and a cake  
I am nice and funny  
I pretend to be nice to my brother, Daviyon  
I feel like a fluffy cloud  
I touch the top of the sky  
I worry if dogs die  
I cry when my dog gets really sick  
I am nice and funny  
I understand that we want to make good choices  
I say that I want to be eighteen  
I dream of being in a fluffy cloud  
I try to make good grades  
I hope I can go to the seventh grade next year  
I am nice and funny

KEYONNA MILLER, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am caring and energetic  
I wonder about the world  
I hear birds chirping  
I see science experiments  
I want cool friends  
I am caring and energetic  
I pretend to play  
I feel loved  
I help the sick  
I worry about my sister  
I cry for animals being abused  
I am caring and energetic  
I understand my adoption  
I say "I love you" to my family  
I dream about Minecraft  
I try hard in science class  
I hope to get a good job  
I am caring and energetic

BLAKE MOORE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am kind and outgoing  
I wonder if dinosaurs are really extinct

I hear birds  
I see the wind  
I want the Iphone 11 Pro Max  
I am kind and outgoing  
I pretend to be sick so I can stay home from school  
I feel content  
I touch the sky  
I worry that my little cousin is going to go crazy some day  
I cry when I come to school  
I am kind and outgoing  
I understand math  
I say clouds are cotton candy  
I dream of sheep dancing on the clouds  
I try to be good  
I hope to get a new phone  
I am kind and outgoing

CHEYANN MOORE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a football player and athletic  
I wonder what life will be like when I'm older  
I hear clapping  
I see pitch black  
I want a gaming setup  
I am a football player and athletic  
I pretend I'm playing football  
I feel good about myself  
I touch books  
I worry about my health sometimes  
I cry when someone passes away  
I am a football player and athletic  
I understand myself  
I say I believe in myself  
I dream about football  
I try on schoolwork  
I hope I graduate  
I am a football player and athletic

KEYEN MORELOCK, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am funny and lazy  
I wonder when is leap year  
I hear my heart beat  
I see my mom

I want world peace  
I am funny and lazy  
I pretend there's world peace  
I feel happy  
I touch my friends' lives  
I worry about my dad  
I cry because my dog died  
I am funny and lazy  
I understand some people don't like math  
I say math is fun  
I dream about world peace  
I try my best in school  
I hope my dad gets better  
I am funny and lazy

BEN MULLINS, GRADE 6

### *Jordan*

Is nice and funny  
Is the son of Jason and Amanda Mullins  
Is the grandson of Dana and Chris Williams  
Is the brother of Heather, Hannah, Jackson, & Jacob  
Enjoys memories of going to waterparks  
Likes to play video games  
Family time consists of going out somewhere to look around or shop  
Fears spiders and large auditoriums (agoraphobia)  
Resident of Appalachia, Virginia

### *Mullins*

JORDAN MULLINS, GRADE 6

### *Sebastian*

Son of Mark and Erica  
Who is athletic, caring, supportive, and funny  
Who loves basketball, football, and my granny  
Who fears of spiders, heights, and tight spaces  
Who wants a bigger house, more Xbox games, and a horse  
Who uses Xbox, a bike, and a microwave  
Who gives money, time, and space  
Who says, "If you want a rainbow, you have to deal with the rain."

### *Mullins*

SEBASTIAN MULLINS, GRADE 6

## *Chloe*

Is talkative to outgoing  
Is the daughter of Matthew Nida and Brittany Sparks  
Is the granddaughter of Raymond and Brenda Nida  
Is the sister of Dakota, Anthony, Julinna, Blaine, Evangeline, Brittly, and Tatum  
Enjoys memories of going to the beach  
Likes to play with my siblings and read  
Family time consists of playing board games  
Fears snakes, clowns, and spiders,  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

## *Nida*

CHLOE NIDA, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am clumsy and kind  
I wonder what it would be like to be born in a different family  
I hear birds talking to me  
I see my uncle with me  
I want to have magical abilities  
I am clumsy and kind  
I pretend that my dead uncle is with me  
I feel that my uncle is happy  
I touch a fairy's wings  
I worry about my grandma  
I cry because my uncle died  
I am clumsy and kind  
I understand that life is hard  
I say you should be kind to everyone and don't judge people  
I dream about my fifteenth birthday party  
I try getting good grades in school  
I hope to get a good job when I get older  
I am clumsy and kind

ANAHI ONATE, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am smart and kind  
I wonder what is going to happen in the future  
I hear the birds singing their songs  
I see snowflakes falling from the sky  
I want to be successful  
I am smart and kind  
I pretend to see a world that has only good in it

I feel sad because of how the world is today  
I touch the ice cold snow  
I worry about the homeless  
I cry because my brother died  
I am smart and kind  
I understand life is hard  
I say everyone deserves a second chance  
I dream of when the world is a better place  
I try to make as much of life as I can  
I hope life gets better  
I am smart and kind

JULIE ORANGE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am kind and friendly  
I wonder if I will pass the S.O.L.  
I hear rain outside  
I see ghosts  
I want a lot of money  
I am kind and friendly  
I pretend to do my chores  
I feel like nothing is true  
I touch clouds all day  
I worry I will drop a computer  
I cry when I see rain  
I am kind and friendly  
I say, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away."  
I dream to own a good car  
I try to do a backflip  
I hope to have a good life  
I am kind and friendly

RILEY ORANGE, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am hyper and double jointed  
I wonder how mom bats hold on to their baby when they fly fast  
I hear loud T-rex roars  
I see a crane swoop down and take a fish  
I want dinosaurs to be alive again  
I am hyper and double jointed  
I pretend I'm flying on my pet dragon  
I pretend I feel the dragon  
I sense my dog Smokey's ghost  
I worry that sea animals are extinct  
I cry because I want to adopt a chameleon  
I am hyper and double jointed

I understand that chameleons can camouflage into anything  
I say dragons are real  
I dream of having a chameleon, a puppy, and a hawk  
I try to make A+ in reading  
I hope I can get a chameleon  
I am hyper and double jointed

BRYCEN OSBORNE, GRADE 6

### *Ethan*

Is funny and kind  
Is the son of Jerry Owens and Majesta Owens  
Is the grandson of Jerry Owens/Shirley Owens and Koott Stanley/  
Bonnie Stanley  
Sibling is Asia Batmin  
Enjoys memories of going to Universal Studios  
Likes to play Playstation  
Family time consists of going bowling  
Fear of vampires  
Descendent of Ireland  
Resident of Appalachia, Virginia

### *Owens*

ETHAN OWENS, GRADE 6

### *My Biggest Inspiration*

My mother is my biggest inspiration. It wouldn't be a stretch to say my mom is the best mom ever. I love spending time with my mom. She teaches me new things, loves me, shows me how to have fun, and reminds me that hard work pays off.

My mom shows me love every day. My mom gives me the best hugs and makes sure to tell me she loves me. When I'm going through something, my mom is the first person to remind me she is on my side and there to support me any way that she can. My mom is a strong hearted person and puts up with me every day.

My mom is a hard worker. She is a supervisor at a local Burger King. My mom gets to hire and fire people, and I think that's pretty cool. She had to work hard to become a supervisor and reminds me that I can do anything I set my mind to.

My mom cooks dinner with me sometimes after work. My mom has taught me how to cook and that's a hard job on itself. My mom has taught me how to cook steaks, hamburgers, spaghetti, and macaroni and cheese. I know how to make a good omelette and a salad. My mom has taught me so much. I can even cook dinner when she's held up at work for a long time. My mom's love for me, her hard work, and her willingness to teach me anything, is why she's my biggest inspiration.

DYLAN PALMER, GRADE 6

### *Savana*

Is funny and smart  
Is the daughter of Brad and Brandi Parsons

Is the granddaughter of Retha/David Cole and Steve/Kim Parsons

Is an only child

Enjoys memories of my first gymnastics meet

Likes to do gymnastics and play basketball

Family time consists of traveling

Fear of snakes and spiders

Descendent of Ireland and Scotland

Resident of Dryden, Virginia

### *Parsons*

SAVANA PARSONS, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am selfless and determined

I wonder about the future

I hear the springs on the old trampoline at my grandparents'

I see my Aunt Linda and I playing badminton

I want to be a Pediatric Surgeon

I am selfless and determined

I pretend to be an only child when my sister makes me mad

I feel sad when I think of my childhood friends

I touch my puppy Brielle's soft fur

I worry about everything

I cry over my family and friends

I am selfless and determined

I understand that you are in charge of your actions

I say, "What if" is never certain

I dream about the future

I try to be positive

I hope to succeed in school

I am selfless and determined

KAMI PENNINGTON, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am friendly and competitive

I wonder what it is like above the clouds

I hear the wind blowing

I see nature

I want to make the world a better place

I am friendly and competitive

I pretend to fly

I feel amazed

I touch light

I worry about bullying

I cry when someone hurts my feelings

I am friendly and competitive  
I understand love is the best feeling  
I often say "legit"  
I dream about the ocean  
I try to be a better person  
I hope for a cure for cancer  
I am friendly and competitive

JACI PETERSON, GRADE 6

### *Abigail*

Is pretty and creative  
Is the daughter of Tim and Lisa Phillips  
Is the granddaughter of Mary and Agnus Southard  
Is the sister of Alyssa and Emma Phillips  
Enjoys memories of playing dolls with my aunt  
Likes to draw and do crafts  
Family time consists of making slime with everyone  
Fears alligators and snakes  
Descendent of Jennifer and Shone Southard  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Phillips*

ABIGAIL PHILLIPS, GRADE 6

### *Alyssa*

Is funny and sweet  
Is the daughter of Pam Maggard  
Is the granddaughter of Selma Carroll  
Is the sister of Andy, Abby, Gage, Dylan, & Emma Phillips  
Enjoys memories of playing with dolls  
Likes to draw  
Family time consists of baking cookies  
Fears snakes and spiders  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Phillips*

ALYSSA PHILLIPS, GRADE 6

### *Elijah*

Is athletic and nice  
Is the son of Tiffany and Cody Pleasant

Is the grandson of Bill/Connie Pleasant and Darrell/Sandra Hamilton  
Is the younger brother of Kenzie Pleasant  
Enjoys memories of when I used to play with my toys  
Likes to play baseball  
Family time consist of playing basketball  
Fears clowns and haunted houses  
Descendant of France  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Pleasant*

ELIJAH PLEASANT, GRADE 6

*Makenna*

Daughter of Bill and Kim  
Tall, athletic, sensitive, and kind  
Who loves Jesus, family, and sports  
Who fears drama  
Who wants peace, love, and happiness  
Who uses knowledge, humor, and the Bible  
Who gives joy, talent, and compassion  
Who says, "Treat others the way you want to be treated."

*Rasnick*

MAKENNA RASNICK, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am kind and nice  
I wonder what it feels like to ride a dirt bike  
I hear birds chirping  
I see a tree  
I want to have a dirt bike  
I am kind and nice  
I pretended to be a cop when I was little  
I feel the wind blowing  
I touch the grass  
I worry about my family getting hurt  
I cry when I come to school  
I am kind and nice  
I understand math  
I say clouds look like cotton candy  
I dream of having a motorcycle when I grow up  
I try to be good and helpful  
I hope to get a dirt bike

I am kind and nice

ADAM REDMAN, GRADE 6

*Lucy*

Is funny and loving  
Is the daughter of Laura and David Redman  
Is the granddaughter of Lucy Barnett  
Is the sister of Lilly and Adam  
Enjoys memories of playing with my big sister  
Likes to make slime with my family  
Family time consists of watching movies together  
Fears losing my family  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Redman*

LUCY REDMAN, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am an empathetic girl who loves animals  
I wonder if people will stop killing animals for their own benefit  
I hear the quiet snow falling in the morning  
I see the rays bouncing off the sun during the evening  
I want to be a barrel racer  
I am an empathetic girl who loves horses  
  
I pretend that I can sing  
I feel my pets' joy when they are happy  
I touch the soft fur of a flying wolf  
I worry about my future  
I cry when my best friends are hurt  
I am an empathetic girl who loves animals  
I understand that I need to get out of bed in the mornings when I don't want to  
I say summer break should be longer  
I dream that I can be wealthy in the future  
I try to get through the week  
I hope I keep all my friends, family, and pets close  
I am an empathetic girl who loves animals

JORDYN REYNOLDS, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am an adventurous girl  
I wonder why people and animals die  
I hear owls at night

I see birds in the morning  
I want everyone to always be happy  
I am an adventurous girl  
I pretend to be a teacher  
I feel my cat's fur  
I touch the softness of my pillow when I sleep  
I worry about dying  
I cry when my animals die  
I am an adventurous girl  
I understand the things I learn in school  
I say that I believe in God  
I dream that one day everyone will be happy  
I try to be the person who helps everyone  
I hope life gets easy for anyone that has a hard time  
I am an adventurous girl

ANGEL RICHARDSON, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am cool and funny  
I wonder what I'm going to get for Christmas  
I hear birds chirping in the sky  
I see clouds floating around the world  
I want to see a moving star  
I am cool and funny  
I pretend to be a football player  
I feel the sky around my hand  
I touch the moon in space  
I worry when I'm going to die  
I cry when my dog died  
I am cool and funny  
I understand that life is not fair  
I say that I believe in God  
I dream that I can be a basketball player  
I try to do good in sports  
I hope that I will have a good life  
I am cool and funny

WILLIAM ROACH, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a flexible girl  
I wonder if I can go to the Olympics and be a champion in gymnastics  
I hear kids screaming because they are scared to do the beam  
I see the gymnastics studio and gymnasts running around  
I want to be happy and keep doing what I love to do  
I am a flexible girl

I pretend to be in the Olympics  
I feel the bars on my hands  
I touch the bars  
I worry if I'm going to fall  
I cry when I mess up  
I am a flexible girl  
I understand that everyone makes mistakes  
I say that everyone can do it and don't give up  
I dream that I am flexible girl in the world  
I try my best in everything  
I hope that I can go to the Olympics  
I am a flexible girl

PAYTON RUSSELL, GRADE 6

### *The Importance of Family*

There is nothing more exciting than being with family. I believe that family is important and fun to spend time with. First of all, family is so important because they will teach you some of the most important things in life. Family will teach you right from wrong and they will teach you to be good to others. For example, they will teach you to respect others and to be a good person in life. I believe that this is one of the most important things that they can teach you and to be respectful.

Family is also good to spend time with during the holidays. You can spend time with your family at your house during the holidays and make a lot of memories. For example, Christmas is a good time to make memories because everybody is together and they usually are happy to be together. Usually everyone is happy on Halloween too because you go from door to door to get candy together and have a good time. I think this is a good way to make memories.

As a matter of fact, family is also fun when you go on vacation with them. This year my family and I went to Florida to SeaWorld, putt-putting, and we went to a different pool every day. A few years back we went to Meradl Beach. We also go to our camper five or six times a year. We always have a good time. I think going on vacation is a good way to spend time with your family.

In conclusion, family is a good thing in life because they teach you to be respectful. It is also good to spend time with them during the holidays and fun to vacation with. I strongly feel that family is great, fun, and they teach you stuff in life because I love my family.

KAYLEE RUTHERFORD, GRADE 6

### *Joseph*

Is funny and helpful  
Is the son of Michelle Burke  
Is the grandson of Joseph David Church  
Is the brother to Ed  
Enjoys memories of fishing  
Likes to spend time with my family and animals  
Family time consists of staying at home  
Fear of the dark  
Descendent of Ireland and Italy  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Ryan*

JOSEPH LEE RYAN, GRADE 6

*Kyndal*

Daughter of Eric and Alicia Satterfield  
Who is nice, funny, loyal, and thoughtful  
Who loves my dog, family, and my friends  
Who fears losing a loved one  
Who wants another dog, a new phone, and to go back to the beach  
Who uses a phone, bed, and a hoodie  
Who gives gifts, hugs, and an encouraging word  
Who says, "I love my dog more than most people."

*Satterfield*

KYNDAL SATTERFIELD, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am athletic and funny  
I wonder why a full court shot in basketball only counts as three points  
I hear a basketball bouncing  
I see a football field  
I want to be a famous athlete one day  
I am athletic and funny  
I pretend to play football when I'm not  
I feel like Georgia is better than Tennessee in sports  
I touch a basketball  
I worry about sports  
I cry when someone dies that I love  
I am athletic and funny  
I understand that in sports you lose sometimes  
I say Jesus will guide you in everything  
I dream of playing college football  
I try to win in sports  
I hope I can go to college  
I am athletic and funny

ELI SCHLOBOHM, GRADE 6

*Ethan*

Is the son of David Shuler and Amanda Rose  
Is the grandson of Anne Hord and Rodney Hord  
Is the older brother of Chloe Rose  
Enjoys memories of Thanksgiving and watching football games

Likes to play basketball  
Family time consists of Christmas and opening presents  
Fear of nothing  
Descendent of Eurasia  
Resident of East Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Shuler*

ETHAN SHULER, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am smart and dorky  
I wonder what life would be like without siblings  
I hear birds chirping  
I see bunnies hopping around  
I want to be an engineer one day  
I am smart and dorky  
I pretend it's quiet  
I feel like I'm being hugged  
I touch soft silk  
I worry about everything  
I cry when my family is hurt  
I am smart and dorky  
I understand I'm not perfect  
I say "It's ok to not be perfect"  
I dream about going to college  
I try to make good grades  
I hope I get to play softball in college  
I am smart and dorky

ALEXIS SHUPE, GRADE 6

### *My Mom: An Inspiration*

The person that inspires me the most is my mom. I believe that my mom inspires me the most because she is always a hard worker, caring, and always thinks of others. To begin with, she inspires me the most because she is a hard worker. By keeping the house clean, she inspires me to keep it clean too. She also works hard to support me. She supports me by cooking, taking care of the house, and always helping me out.

In addition, my mom also inspires me the most because she is a caring person. My mom is caring by being there when I need her help. She helps with all of my homework when I need it. Another reason I believe that my mom is caring is because she never gives up on anyone.

Finally, my mom inspires me the most because she always thinks of others. My mom thinks of others rather than herself. My mom is also checking on others a lot. My mom will put others over herself.

To conclude, the person that inspires me the most is my mom. My mom inspires me the most because she's always a hard worker, caring, and always thinking of others. Although there are endless reasons why my mom inspires me the most, I have chosen to focus on her hard work and her willingness to care and think of others.

ETHAN SMITH, GRADE 6

## *My Papaw, My Inspiration*

The person that most inspires me is my papaw. He is someone who I can always count on. My papaw believes in God, he is generous, and he is forgiving.

The first reason is he believes in God. He teaches and AWANA at Pound Independent Baptist Church. He goes to church every Sunday and Wednesday. He is also a deacon at church. He is wise and gives advice to others in the family. He also counsels others at church.

Another reason my papaw inspires me is that he is generous. He gives to others in the community. He is currently giving shelter to a homeless family member. He helps my mom and me when needed. He rings the bell at Walmart or Salvation Army. He also helped a friend after having a heart attack.

The final reason he inspired me is he is forgiving. He knows that no one is perfect and that we all make mistakes. When I make a mistake, he will ask me not to do it again.

In conclusion, my papaw is God-fearing, generous, and forgiving. He is inspiring in many ways. He is someone that I can always count on in times of need.

TYLER SMITH, GRADE 6

## *How Mother Maybelle Carter Has Influenced Me as a Musician*

Mother Maybelle Carter is an inspiration to me. She was a very talented musician who was part of the Carter Family. They recorded many famous songs in the early 1900's. They are known for influencing the type of music that is now known as bluegrass. For the past four years, I have played guitar with the Junior Appalachian Musicians Program, which is an after-school program that uses many of their original songs.

Maybelle Carter had a unique way of finger-picking. It combined the way you would pick a banjo with the normal finger-picking style of a guitar. She was the only person who used this style, which eventually got it the nickname, "The Carter Scratch." She and the rest of the Carter Family used this style in many of their songs, and it eventually became famous.

Additionally, her song, "Wildwood Flower" has become one of the most famous country songs ever written. I quickly learned how to play this song in my first year of Mountain Music school, and now it is one of my all-time favorites to play. This song has been recorded by lots of artists with many different styles since her first recording.

I have a personal connection to Maybelle and the Carter Family. My great-grandfather gave us a Victrola Talking Machine, which is a type of wind-up record player. We have many of the Carter Family's original records which were played on this machine in the early 1900's. "Wildwood Flower," "Keep on the Sunny Side," and "The Cyclone of Rye Cove" are included in this collection.

"Wildwood Flower" is a song my great-grandfather could play well on the guitar, and I am very happy to carry on this tradition. One more note, I taught my dad how to play it and he is pretty good at it.

LONDON SPAIN, GRADE 6

## *Cloe*

Is shy and creative

Is the daughter of Andrea Spears and Raymond Abney

Is the granddaughter of Elsie Hall, David Spears, Theresa LaRock, and Wes Abney

Is the sister of Draco, Kamron, and Layton Abney

Enjoys memories of going to the lake with my family

Likes to spend time with family and making bracelets

Family time consists of playing board games and watching movies

Fears heights and spiders  
Descendent of many nationalities  
Resident of Appalachia, Virginia

### *Spears*

CLOE SPEARS, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am caring and loving  
I wonder what it would be like in 50 years  
I hear Mr. Mooney fussing  
I see Mr. Mooney teaching  
I want a horse  
I am caring and loving  
I pretend to be funny  
I feel an arm wrapped around my neck  
I touch the souls of many  
I worry my dogs are going to fight  
I will cry if my dog dies  
I am caring and loving  
I understand people have rough times  
I say people are mean but they really are not  
I dream about what we are going to do tomorrow  
I try not to talk all the time  
I hope I get finished with this assignment  
I am caring and loving

CAMERON STACY, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am loving and protective  
I wonder what it takes to get a job  
I hear ringing and children laughing  
I want a big, wholesome family  
I am loving and protective  
I pretend not to be a preender, because what you see is what you get  
I feel like I am in a jail cell  
I touch the smooth, but rough, table  
I worry about my dog, Tiko  
I cry thinking that this world would be no more  
I am loving and protective  
I understand that good people are in short supply  
I say, "Good intentions lead to good people"  
I dream that 2020 will not be the end of the world  
I try to be a loving and caring person

I hope I will be remembered  
I am loving and protective

GABE STANLEY, GRADE 6

### *Elijah*

Is fun and playful  
Is the son of Kelly Stapleton  
Is the grandson of Ernie and Ann  
Is the brother of Ethan, Evan, and EJ  
Enjoys memories of fishing with my brothers  
Likes to play video games  
Family time consists of spending Christmas together  
Fears snakes  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

### *Stapleton*

ELIJAH STAPLETON, GRADE 6

### *My Inspiration*

One person that inspires me would have to be my older cousin, Irulan. My cousin Irulan is about 16 years old, and is the nicest and smartest person I know. Irulan is in the 9th grade, on the high school cheer team, and has straight A's for her grades. She is always there for me when I need it. Irulan is usually super supportive of anything that I do. I want to be like that when I grow up as well, so that's probably why I envy her.

Irulan usually puts school before friends, and family before school. She never stays up that late, nor is she ever late. Irulan is pretty good for being there when you need her there. She is also very polite when others are not present when she needs them. She is really 'lady-like', but not like a spoiled brat. She is really kind when it comes to someone being rude, or selfish with her. I have never seen her get mad at anyone before but that doesn't mean that Irulan never gets mad. Just that she can hold her temper well. I want to make sure I can hold my temper well when I get older too. My mom usually says that she is humble in her own way, and that's what makes her unique.

My mom also says that I'm like that, and it just runs in the family. She says that she hopes that she is like that, and I learnt that from her when I was little. My mom also says that my aunt was like that too, and that's where Irulan gets it from. Could you imagine growing up without a mother? Well, my cousin did not have to. My aunt passed away before I was born, so I did not really have to worry too much, since I did not know who she was. Irulan was almost two at the time, and my grandmother ended up taking care of her until she turned fourteen. I also have another cousin, his name is Jacona. He is eighteen. He was four at the time my aunt passed. Irulan now lives with my great-grandmother.

Overall, I think my cousin, Irulan is the best cousin I could ask for. She is like a big sister to me. She has always been there for me, and I can always count on her. I want to make sure I can be just as reliable and kind as she is when I get her age. Most girls her age are either really spoiled, or really rude. I'm glad that Irulan did not turn out that way. I honestly think she is the sweetest person I have ever met, at least for her age!

CAITLYNN STEWART, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am loving and caring  
I hear fake gun shots when I play  
I see people fight when I play  
I want to be a baseball player  
I am caring and loving  
I pretend to be in the army  
I feel like I get shot when I play  
I touch a solder to help him  
I worry about dogs  
I cry about animals getting hurt  
I am caring and loving  
I understand math  
I say I believe in God  
I try in class  
I hope I make a professional baseball team  
I am loving and caring

KAM STIVERS, GRADE 6

## *Kayleigh*

Is smart and caring  
Is the daughter of Jim Summers and Misty Harris  
Is the granddaughter of James and LuAnn Summers  
Is the sister of Hayleigh Branham, Devan Summers, Austin Harris, and Colton  
Summers  
Enjoys memories of going on a Disney Cruise  
Likes to play basketball  
Family time consists of playing basketball or Uno  
Fear of being in a car crash  
Descendent of Scotland and Cherokee Indians  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

## *Summers*

KAYLEIGH SUMMERS, GRADE 6

## *I Am*

I am strong and funny  
I wonder how many people in the world have the name Lance  
I hear birds chirping  
I see dragons  
I want to play in the NFL  
I am strong and funny

I pretend to be in the NFL  
I feel sad because my dragon died  
I touch my dragon  
I worry that I am not going to make it to the NFL  
I cry because my dad lives far away  
I am strong and funny  
I understand God is real  
I say God  
I dream of playing in the NFL  
I will try to go to the NFL  
I hope to go to the NFL  
I am strong and funny

LANCE SUTPHIN, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am nice and caring  
I wonder what life would be like in the future  
I hear crickets outside my window at night  
I see God watching over me  
I want everyone to be loved  
I am nice and caring  
I pretend to be a jokester but I am not  
I feel like my blanket is as soft as a cloud  
I touch a soft blanket when I touch my dog  
I worry when my parents will die  
I cry when I think about my papaw  
I am nice and caring  
I understand that life comes to the end  
I say Santa is real  
I dream to be able to fly  
I try to get an A in Mr. Mooney's class  
I hope to get an Iphone for Christmas  
I am nice and caring

GRACIE SWINNEY, GRADE 6

### *The Most Influential Person in My Life*

The most influential person in my life is my mom, Andrea. Influence is the power to have an effect on the character or behavior of someone or something in an indirect but important way. My mom has influenced me in important ways, by teaching me kindness, strong work ethic, and integrity.

To begin with, kindness is the quality of being friendly and considerate. My mom has always taught me our words and actions have power and how we choose to use them can make or break someone. I try to smile more at people, give compliments, and include people who are left out so they know people still care. My mom says if I do these small acts of kindness, I am setting a good example for others to follow.

Secondly, my mom has taught me the value of having a good work ethic. My mom works as a nurse and has three children. She always takes time to study our homework with us each night. She tells us often that

forming good habits like setting goals, focusing on our homework, and finishing tasks immediately will help us have more self-confidence. So, each day after school, I finish my homework and chores as soon as I get home. It makes me feel good to complete these tasks without being asked.

Finally, my mom has taught me the importance of integrity. She says integrity basically means doing what is right when no one is watching. I have learned being honest isn't always easy, especially if I know I might get in trouble, but my mom says if you always tell the hard truths, people will respect you more for it and you will be in less trouble than if you told a lie. For example, when taking a test and the teacher leaves the room, you should keep your eyes on your own test until the teacher returns. You have the chance to look at someone else's test, but you choose not to because it is the right thing to do!

In conclusion, I admire my mom most for teaching me the three most important things in my life which are kindness, good work ethic, and integrity. She is a true inspiration to myself and others. She motivates me to be a better person and has shaped me into the person I am today. I hope to keep learning great values from my mom and one day be a great influence to others as well.

WES TAYLOR, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am Josh Teasley  
I wonder how you know if there was someone before your life  
I hear lions roaring  
I see dragons  
I want a million dollars  
I am Josh Teasley  
I pretend that I'm a bird  
I feel really good  
I touch dragons' fires  
I worry about school shootings  
I cry when I hear about my mamaw  
I am Josh Teasley  
I understand life  
I say life is like a box of chocolates  
I dream of being a billionaire  
I try to be successful  
I hope to be rich  
I am Josh Teasley

JOSH TEASLEY, GRADE 6

### *Braylen*

Is shy and nice  
Is the son of Mark and Alicia  
Is the grandson of Jessie Thacker and Julia Coomer  
Is the younger brother of Courtney  
Enjoys memories of going to Dollywood  
Likes to play football with friends  
Family time consists of going to the movies  
Fear of heights and falling

Descendent of England  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Thacker*

BRAYLEN THACKER, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am nice and fun  
I wonder what life would be like as a cop  
I hear a lot of rolling dice  
I see my family and me having fun  
I want to pass my SOLs  
I am nice and fun  
I pretend to have fun  
I feel arms wrapped around me  
I touch the hearts of many  
I worry that my family is hurt  
I cry at the thought that my family is not loved  
I am nice and fun  
I understand that school and learning is important  
I say, "Time is money."  
I dream that my family and I can have a night out  
I try to spend some time with my grandma  
I hope I will always be loved  
I am nice and fun

KAEDN THACKER, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am an intelligent person who loves history  
I wonder about how many stars are in the sky  
I hear animals whispering in my ear  
I see my future self  
I want to help sick animals  
I am an intelligent person who loves history  
I pretend I can fly  
I feel like I'm walking on clouds  
I touch the dreams I have for my life  
I worry that I won't make a good grade on this  
I cry thinking about all the animals out in the cold  
I am an intelligent person who loves history  
I understand we need to take care of the Earth  
I say world peace can be achieved  
I dread that I will have a good life  
I try to be an inspiration to others

I hope all diseases will be cured  
I am an intelligent person who loves history

AVERY THOMAS, GRADE 6

### *Isabella*

Is funny and kind  
Is the daughter of Amanda Thomas and Aaron Thomas  
Is the granddaughter of Kenetha Cooper/Charles Cooper and Edith Thomas/Toy  
Thomas  
Older sister of Jaida Thomas  
Enjoys memories of Christmas  
Likes to draw  
Family time consists of watching movies  
Fear of spiders and snakes  
Descendent of Cherokee Indians  
Resident of Appalachia, Virginia

### *Thomas*

ISABELLA THOMAS, GRADE 6

### *My Biggest Influence: My Mom*

I have many people who influence me in my day-to-day life, but the person who continues to influence me the most is my mom. She influences me to be a better person. She makes me feel better when I am worried or stressed. She always helps me when I am in need and that makes me want to be a better person. I hope to be like her when I grow up.

The reason my mom continues to influence me is because she is one of the nicest people I have ever met. One of the nice things she has done is help me with my homework. She also buys me things that I want or need. My mom always supports me in everything I do, and loves me no matter what. She tries to do things to make people happy.

The second reason my mom continues to influence me is that she takes care of everybody in the family. She takes care of us when we are sick. She takes us on vacations to make us happy. She does more than we realize and we should appreciate her more than we tend to. She respects our opinions and is not closed-minded.

My mom is my biggest influencer because she is one of the nicest people I have ever met, and she takes care of everyone in our family. She does more than my family realizes just to make us happy. I love my mom and she will always be my biggest fan and influencer.

LEAH TUCKER, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a pink haired girl  
I wonder what everyone hears  
I hear laughter almost everywhere I go  
I see skeletons

I want to smile  
I am a pink haired girl  
I pretend not to listen  
I feel hope for every living thing  
I touch needles.  
I worry for my family and friends  
I cry about rain  
I am a pink haired girl  
I understand people  
I say lies sometimes  
I dream in darkness  
I try trusting others  
I hope for music  
I am a pink haired girl

ABIGAIL VALDEZ, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am funny and athletic  
I wonder about where life will take me  
I hear birds chirping outside my window  
I see myself succeeding  
I want to go to college  
I am funny and athletic  
I pretend to be a mom to our basketball team  
I feel that I can help change the world  
I touch the clouds in the sky  
I worry about our school  
I cry about how America is changing  
I am funny and athletic  
I understand that life is full of good and bad  
I say, "Never say never."  
I dream about my future  
I try to do my best in life  
I hope I have a family of my own one day  
I am funny and athletic

SYDNEE VARNER, GRADE 6

### *Jerri*

Is cool and happy  
Is the son of Todd Wagner and Brittany Poole  
Is the grandson of Jerri Poole and Wendy Collins  
Is the bother of Mason Wagner, Rayne Wagner, and Oaklee Wagner  
Enjoys memories of baking a cake with my dad  
Likes to bake cake and cookies

Family time consists of game night  
Fears bugs  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Wagner*

JERRI WAGNER, GRADE 6

*Brooklyn*

Is sweet and caring  
Is the daughter of Melanie Horner and Allen Horner  
Is the granddaughter of Layne and B.K. Walker  
The sister of Kalee, Jessica, Kyndra, Hailey, Bryce, and Preston  
Enjoys memories of Leah and I playing tag  
Likes to play basketball  
Family time consists of watching movies and playing Uno  
Fear of spiders  
Of Scottish and Native American descent  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Walker*

BROOKLYN WALKER, GRADE 6

*Payton*

Is determined and hard-headed  
Is the son of Vicky and Jennifer Welch  
Is the grandson of James and Sandra Jones  
Is the brother of Tyson, Galen, and Zayden Welch  
Enjoys memories of going to the store with my papaw  
Likes to go to school  
Family time consists of watching movies  
Fears spiders  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Welch*

PAYTON WELCH, GRADE 6

*I Am*

I am a gamer and a kid  
I wonder what the first game invented was  
I hear 2k20 calling my name

I see Jesus in my heart  
I want to win one million dollars  
I am a gamer and a kid  
I pretend to do Youtube  
I feel everything  
I touch a controller  
I worry about failing school  
I cry because my mamaw died  
I am a gamer and a kid  
I understand 2k20 is basketball  
I say I'm going to hit legend  
I dream that this world will be peaceful  
I try in school  
I hope to go to Heaven  
I am a gamer and a kid

TUCKER WELLS, GRADE 6

### *James*

Son of Jason and Emily  
Who is kind, thoughtful, caring, and messy  
Who loves Freedom, peace, and fun  
Who fears death  
Who wants love, happiness, and friendship  
Who uses wisdom, kindness, and friendliness  
Who gives kindness, wisdom, and thought  
Who says, "Giving up is never an option."

### *Wethington*

JAMES WETHINGTON, GRADE 6

### *I Am*

I am a girl who tries to be a good Christian and gymnast  
I wonder if I can do a backhandspring one day  
I hear people clapping—clap,clap,clap  
I see a gymnastics mat  
I want to be a good gymnast  
I am a girl who tries to be a good Christian and gymnast  
I pretend to be a competitive gymnast  
I feel like I am floating in the air  
I touch a cloud  
I worry about breaking my neck or something severe  
I cry if I get yelled at  
I am a girl who tries to be a good Christian and gymnast

I understand that I will make mistakes in my life  
I say I can do anything if God will let me  
I dream that I will have a family of my own one day  
I try to be a good Christian and a good gymnast  
I hope I do the right thing and make good choices  
I am a girl who tries to be a good Christian and gymnast

MADI WHITE, GRADE 6

### *James*

Son of Richard and Sam  
Who is athletic, creative, wondrous, and imaginal  
Who loves family, friends, and food  
Who fears heights  
Who wants family, career, and success  
Who uses advice, encouragement, and intelligence  
Who gives encouragement, advice, and luck  
Who says live life how you want

### *Whitt*

JAMES WHITT, GRADE 6

### *Cameron*

Is cool and nice  
Is the son of Amanda and Matthew  
Brother of Matthew, Zeke, & Emma  
Enjoys memories of going swimming  
Likes to play Xbox and Playstation 4  
Family time consists of going on vacations to Georgia  
Fears nothing  
Resident of Appalachia, Virginia

### *Wilder*

CAMERON WILDER, GRADE 6

### *Wesley*

Is nice and immature  
Is the son of Lisa Owsley and Wesley Williams  
Is the grandson of Carrie and Gary Wells  
Is a sibling of Maverick Dingus(deceased), Axle, and Ryker Dingus  
Enjoys memories of my mom and I playing together  
Likes to shoot guns with my family  
Family time consists of riding in the mountains

Fear of the dark (nyctophobia)  
Descendent of Germany  
Resident of Big Stone Gap, Virginia

*Williams*

WESLEY GAUGE WILLIAMS, GRADE 6

*Katelynn*

Daughter of Ryan and Elizabeth Witt  
Who is funny, caring, athletic, and kind  
Who loves sports, family, and God  
Who fears failing  
Who wants success, happiness, and love  
Who uses advice, techniques, and teaching  
Who gives gifts, support, and effort  
Who says, "Believe in yourself no matter what."

*Witt*

KATELYNN WITT, GRADE 6

*Yasmin*

Daughter of Teresa and Eric Woods  
Who is loyal, loving, cherished, and happy  
Who loves technology, being lazy, and sleeping  
Who fears snakes, bears, deer, and little dogs  
Who wants happiness, love, and peace  
Who uses lights for a Christmas tree  
Who received a hoverboard  
Who was told, "Get up and try again."

*Woods*

YASMIN WOODS, GRADE 6



# VIRGINIA HIGH SCHOOL



## Crystal Hurd & Brad Hutchinson, English

### *I Am From*



I am from a controller  
From a PlayStation and a TV.  
I am from the bricks,  
Chilly days,  
I am from the freshly mowed grass,  
And a tall glass of milk.

I'm from a lake and a gym  
From water and weights  
I'm from fishing and working out  
And from swimming.

I'm from "Yes, sir" and "No, sir"  
And "Be polite."  
I'm from boxing  
I'm from Bristol, Virginia, home.  
Steak and eggs  
I'm from a rough and tumble youth,  
My grandfather and his splintered memories.  
He was a good man.  
I miss riding the motorcycle with him  
And floating on the South Holston.

ROB ARNOLD, GRADE II

### *I Am From*

I am from the county  
From trucks and guns  
I am from the big log cabin  
Cozy and warm  
I am from the woods  
The tree stands  
Whose long-gone limbs I remember  
As if they were my own.

I'm from poker and hunting  
From dad and papaw  
I'm from dusk and dawn  
And from hunting.

I'm from "Yes, sir" and "No, sir"  
And never give up  
I'm from hunting

I'm from hospital and home  
Gritts and corn bread  
From family stories  
About crazy things  
Old pictures  
On the wall.

NATHAN BARLOW, GRADE II

### *Bristol, Virginia: Farmland and City Streets*

I am from farmland and city streets.  
Where nature, cities, and counties  
all come to meet.  
A southern drawl is often heard by all.  
Crops to harvest, food in bounties.

Some people outspoken, some less so.  
Somedays rain, somedays snow.  
This isn't Canada and there are no Mounties.  
This is Southwestern Virginia, Northeastern Tennessee,  
the place where farmland and city streets meet.

DILLON BLANKENSHIP, GRADE II

### *Some Origins Aren't Where*

Mundane conceptual redundancy,  
Silence filled with noise speaking silence,  
Yet,  
Silence speaks volumes on what it speaks not,  
Tomes of rhetoric plagued by ignorance,  
Unaddressed,  
Flames consuming us all,  
Screaming only when a lack thereof.

EVAN BOYD, GRADE II

### *About Me*

My name is Abby and my family/friends call me "Abs."  
I grew up on Shakesville Rd.  
My family is crazy and outgoing.  
I like sleeping and dogs.  
I don't like spiders and people.  
I am really interested in veterinarian work.  
I get frustrated when someone is being annoying.  
Right now, I am very tired.  
When I am older, I hope I am successful.

ABIGAIL BRANCH, GRADE 12

## *My Yellow Blankie*

It's not yellow anymore,  
But that's how it started out.  
Sixteen years of comfort from something so small.  
A thousand tears wiped away,  
It's held me for 6,000 nights.  
My little yellow blankie—  
It has never left my side.

Today it's old and stringy,  
It has faded into gray,  
Still it brings me ease.  
After long, hard days and the darkest of nights,  
I know it's always there.  
My little yellow blankie—  
My security in life.

EMMA BRANSON, GRADE II

## *Blue*

Dancing in the sun  
Wearing flowers in my hair  
Feeling bright  
Like brown eyes glistening in the sun  
The sun is bright  
Beaming on my head  
As I lay down in the grass  
Watching the blue skies  
Bluer than my mother's cloudy eyes  
Watching the birds fly  
I wonder what is like to be a bird  
Feeling light, as a tissue  
The breeze brushing through my hair  
Like a comb  
My warm vibrant skin  
Feeling soft  
Like a feather.

STELLA BYRD, GRADE II

## *I Am From*

I am from a kitchen,  
From a couch and bed.  
I am from a sunflower  
The big pine tree  
Whose long-gone limbs I remember

As if they were my own.

I am from Mom and Dad

I am from "I love you" and "It's okay"

I am from Johnston Memorial Hospital and Virginia.

KATIE CARR, GRADE II

### *Granddaddy Jack's Banana Split Casserole*

- ♦ Oblong casserole dish
- ♦ 2 cups graham cracker crumbs with 1 stick margarine (melted)
- ♦ 2 cups confectionary sugar
- ♦ 2 eggs
- ♦ 2 sticks margarine at room temp.
- ♦ 3 or 4 large bananas
- ♦ 1 #2 can crushed pineapple (drained)
- ♦ 1 large tub of cool whip
- ♦ ½ cup pecans and ½ cup cherries

For as long as I can remember someone on my dad's side of the family has always made my granddaddy Jack's Banana Split Casserole. Granddaddy Jack would make this dessert twice a year for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Since that was the case it held a higher value to the family because we only had it a couple times a year. The Banana Split Casserole was a huge thing for our family and something everyone looked forward to every year. After Jack died my granny took over making the casserole for the holidays. I hope that this family recipe is passed down through the generations and someone in the family will continue making it for the holidays.

RYLEE CORVIN, GRADE II

### *I Am From*

I am from hairbrush,

From Nair and Hershey.

(itchy, burning, sweet)

I am from the flower, dirt, Venus fly trap

That traps flies

I am from Friday fun nights and brown eyes

From Michelle and Don

I'm from cussing people out and leaving water on

From Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy being real,

I'm from Christian, I believe in God

I'm from Fairfax, VA

Chicken, watermelon

From the good student mother

The breaking girls' hearts dad

Walmart

Valuable

ANISIA DAGGS, GRADE II

## *Worn Pages*

Worn pages,  
Torn edges,  
Sat on moss  
Water running below my feet.  
Words fly,  
Dragonflies swarm,  
And pages fly in the wind.

ALYSSA DISHMAN, GRADE 12

## *Two Lands*

From rolling green hills, to endless forested mountains,  
Rocky walls in sheep fields to rustic barns in deep valleys.  
I am the same person, but ever changed by both lands,  
Shaping me, changing me into the mix I am today.  
Perilous cliffs over the rough ocean turn to a different kind of ocean,  
    a green one high in the mountains.  
The land of ancient hills, weathered by millions of years of wind and rain,  
And the land of green plains and grey skies,  
Two homelands, two very different lands, far across the ocean  
But they are both my home, and both have molded me to be their own

KILLIAN DUFFY, GRADE 11

## *I Am From*

I am from Clorox from Tide pods and Pine Sol  
I am from the countryside and soft blankets  
I am from ginseng the tree whose long limbs I remember as if they  
    were my own.  
I'm from vacation and playing football from Sean and Jessica.  
I'm from getting good grades and playing sports and from working out.  
I'm from treating others with respect and treat people the way you want to be treated  
    and amazing grace.  
I'm from having Christmas parties  
I'm from Bristol and being a mixed child and turkey and chicken  
I'm from my granddad going to school that was only for African Americans and my  
    granddad remembering segregation from pictures of my  
    grandma on the wall

ISHMAEL FRANKLIN, GRADE 11

## *The Mug on the Table*

Growing up, I spent my weekends at my grandparents. My Grandma and Grandpa were the reasons why I looked forward to getting out of school on Friday because I would be going over to their house the next day. Every Saturday morning, I would pack my bags and get ready for another night spent hanging out with

my grandparents. Nanna made my sister and I a special dinner every time we would go out there. All four of us would sit down and eat together and exchange conversations.

One thing that was always on the table was my pappy's coffee cup. It was a reddish-brown color that was made of melamine. The cup was filled just below the rim for every meal. Nanna every week would buy at the least ten tiny cans of evaporated milk just to put into the coffee. Throughout the years, the Rubbermaid coffee cup was still always there.

This last summer, I spent as much time as I possibly could at my grandparent's house. We all knew they were getting old and down in health. School started back in August and every day after school my mom and I would bring them their dinner. My grandpa wouldn't start eating until his coffee was sitting on the table fixed the way he liked it. I could tell he needed help preparing it, so I poured his creamer in it for him one day. I knew how much creamer was needed and the exact color the coffee turned when it was right because I had seen my Nanna do it my whole life.

Little did I know that this little thing started something my grandpa and I would share together. Every day I began to pour his coffee and creamer for him. I was making a memory with him. My grandfather passed away at the end of October this year due to liver and kidney failure. I never would have thought that the day before he was taken to the hospital (never to return home) would be the last time I'd prepared his coffee for him.

Upon his death, my life completely fell apart. It did not feel real going to visit my grandma with my grandpa not there. After years of that cup laying on the kitchen table, we finally decided to retire the old mug because it hurt too much to see it. The cup now sits on a shelf in the cabinet. Thanks to the coffee cup, I have a memory I shared with my grandpa. I will never forget how much pouring coffee for someone meant to me because it truly showed me how the little things in life do matter.

KYLIE GARRETT, GRADE II

### *Where I'm From*

I am from the dilapidated tool shed in the back yard,  
From blunt pencils, deodorant, and drain cleaner.  
I am from the comfortable yellow house below the warm attic.  
Light green and wooden, I smell the scented candles in the living room.  
I am from the discounted fern from the hardware store;  
It's inconvenient and damp with precipitation.  
I am from Thanksgiving dinners and blue eyes that stare deep,  
From the mother and grandmother, matriarchs.  
I am from the local gossip and trips to the lake on the weekends,  
From, "Never be a teacher," and, "You can't be a writer."  
I am from urban Christianity, casual Christianity  
With substance replaced by lights and loud music.  
I am from the neighborhood and the suburban attitude,  
Macaroni and cheese and slices of turkey covered in gravy.  
From my uncle destroying his home through his neglectful tendencies,  
The drunken grandfather ignoring his children as they cry for attention.  
They are all in dusty scrapbooks found within plastic containers.  
They remind me of what to avoid; they remind me of what to not repeat.

ELIJAH HESS, GRADE 10

## *Batman & Robin*

My older brother Corbin is on the Autism spectrum. Hyper fixations, being completely immersed in something, are a symptom of Autism. Corbin's main fixation was superheroes, and his favorite hero was Batman. Corbin idolized Batman because his father had died at a young age. My brother learned everything he could about Batman and practiced Batman's morality religiously.

Batman's obsessive focus, strict rituals, and ability to complete anything he set his mind to are all signs of Autism. Robin, an orphaned wonder boy, was adopted by Batman and grew up under the billionaire's wing. Batman struggled to give Robin affection, so he did what he thought was best—he taught Robin how to survive.

When my brother had to take care of me as a toddler, I would get upset because he wouldn't let me hug him. He preferred not to be touched because it felt like it was burning him. We made a deal that I could only hug him three times a day. Every day he would lecture me about the world, about all its dangers and wonders. He would always make sure I consumed the right amount of information each day. Back then, I hated being lectured and being told what to do. I didn't understand that he was teaching me how to become my own superhero.

KYLEE HILLIARD, GRADE II

### *Mom's Oreo Balls Recipe*

#### *Ingredients:*

- Crushed up Oreo cookies
- Cream cheese
- Semi-sweet baking chocolate
- For decorating: melted chocolate, Oreo crumbs, sprinkles, crushed peppermint, or chopped nuts

#### *Directions:*

1. Place the cookies in a Ziploc bag and crush them until you have small cookie crumbs. Make sure there are no big cookie pieces.
2. Make sure your cream cheese is soft. If it is too cold, it won't mix into the Oreo crumbs easily. Then, use a mixer to combine the Oreo crumbs and cream cheese.
3. Roll the Oreo cream cheese mixture into small balls and place on a baking sheet or tray that has been lined with parchment paper or wax paper. Freeze the balls for 15 minutes. You **MUST** freeze them so you can dip them in chocolate.
4. Melt the chocolate in the microwave in a small microwave safe bowl. Follow the instructions on the package. You can use candy coating or almond bark too.
5. Dip the balls into the melted chocolate, making sure the balls are completely covered. Use a fork to lift them out of the chocolate, then shake from side to side to remove the excess chocolate.
6. Place the Oreo balls back on the lined baking sheet or tray. You can decorate the tops with a drizzle of extra chocolate, crushed Oreos, sprinkles, crushed peppermint, chopped nuts, or you can leave them plain!
7. When they are all dipped and decorated, place the baking sheet or tray in the refrigerator and chill for at least an hour.
8. When the chocolate coating is hard, they are done and ready to eat:)

My mom has made Oreo balls on holidays and special occasions for as long as I can remember. My brother and I have always been obsessed with them. However, even when we beg mom sometimes to make them on

regular days, she has only ever made them on holidays and special occasions. Since we only have them a few times a year is probably more of a reason why my brother and I are obsessed with them, but they are very rich so we can usually only eat a couple at a time. When we were younger, we use to decorate them together depending on the holiday, but now we do not have much time and leave them plain. Decorating them as a family is a memory I will always cherish because it was a lot of fun.

TANNER HOLMES, GRADE II

### *About Me*

My name is Kimora, and my family calls me Pumpkin.  
I grew up in Woodbridge, VA.  
My family is huge.  
I like to play soccer.  
I do not like when people are rude.  
I am most happy when I am with my whole family on holidays.  
I am really interested in studying the law.  
I get frustrated when people lie.  
A now, I am a student at VHS.  
When I am older, I want to be successful.

KIMORA HOWARD, GRADE II

### *I Am From*

I am from the mountains and the valleys,  
From the spring and the hills.  
I am from the water in the spring  
The feeling of being safe and calm.  
I am from the grass outside  
I'm from Christmas and Thanksgiving  
From grandmothers and grandfathers.  
I'm from happiness and excitement  
And from the love in home  
I'm from manners and being respectful,  
And "Treat others as you expect to be treated."  
I'm from going to my aunt's for holidays.  
I'm from the country and a loving home  
From steaks and chicken,  
From my great grandmothers loving care  
That she shows from 1927 to the present day;  
she will always love and care for us.

DAYLIN JOHNSON, GRADE II

### *The Ring*

I remember the little wooden jewelry box where my Nana kept all her special jewelry and how smooth and shiny the wood was. I remember when she used to open it, how it would creak because it was so old. I wasn't

ever allowed to see what was inside the box, but she told me she kept her best jewelry in it, so I could only imagine what was in there. One day, she took me and my sister into her room, and she went to the wooden box. She opened it and pulled out two rings. One ring had a beautiful turquoise colored stone, which was my sister's birthstone. The other was a shiny red garnet stone, which was my birthstone. My Nana told us we would get the rings when we were old enough. She would always talk about how the rings represented love and the connection of our family.

I was thirteen when my sister got her ring. I can still hear my Nana telling her that it was a big responsibility to get the ring, and that she trusted my sister since she was sixteen now. She told me that I would get it when I was sixteen and to be patient.

Those were the good times. I like to only remember the good times before it all went down. Before I knew I would never see my grandparents again. Sure, I still love them, and I wish things were normal like before, but I knew what they did was wrong. They tore my family apart because they chose to turn their backs on their family. It crushed me because my Nana used to always preach to my sister and I about family being the most important thing. My grandparents went against everything the ring I wanted so badly stood for, yet I still yearned for it.

I keep referring to them as past tense as if they have passed away, yet they are still breathing even though they are dead to my family in the sense that we haven't spoken to them in years. It was sudden too, much like death. No, my grandparents aren't dead, but I only think of them like they were in the past because there will be no new memories I will make with them. Whenever I think of the ring she promised me, I am reminded of all the amazing, sweet memories peoples should have with their grandparents. I guess that is why I needed it since I was at a low point in my life, because I had been betrayed by the people I had trusted with everything.

I was going to be sixteen soon and knew there was going to be one special gift I wouldn't be getting. My sister was the lucky one because she got the ring before everything went bad. I just kept hoping that what was happening with my family was just a dream and when I woke up on my sixteenth birthday my family would love each other again, and things would be fixed. That is all I wanted for my birthday; that is all I have wanted for years now. Sadly, my wish didn't come true, but something odd did happen that birthday.

I was walking past my front door and I saw a big purple book and a card with my name on the front. I opened the big book and it was filled with all the newspaper articles I was in that my Nana had saved. She had saved all the times I was in the paper for volleyball or for other school activities. I traced my hand along the card knowing that my Nana had touched it, which made me feel like she was with me. I wasn't thinking about all the bad things my grandparents had done; I was thinking of the good times as I opened the card. Inside was a little red shiny ring with this written at the bottom:

*"I believe I promised you a ring a long time ago. I know times are tough, but just remember the good."*

It wasn't much, but that little ring gave my heart some peace. That ring reminded me of the good times, unlike the reality of me never speaking to them again. I do know that whatever peace I have, this ring is also a symbol of the lost inheritance of love I don't get from them anymore.

I picked up the ring and I went up to my room to put it in my little wooden jewelry box. I took a deep breath and I opened the box placing the little red ring gently in an empty space. I put the big purple book under my bed. All of sudden I was snapped back into my grandparent-less life—my reality. Finally, I forced a smile on my face and walked downstairs to take on the rest of the day.

CAMDEN JONES, GRADE II

## *Divorced*

Daringly, the baby swing hanging from the tree still waves sat me as I drive by,  
Inevitably the old house on Anderson is falling apart just like the marriage did inside,  
Vibrant green siding and Starnes van sitting in the driveway welcomes me,

Oddly enough a lot has changed since us three girls live in the blue trailer with the big oak tree,  
Rambunctious kids in the pool and shaky slide remind me of the greatest summer,  
Choosing to move houses and living out of boxes is life's biggest bummer,  
Every other week I visit the house with the baby swing hanging from the tree,  
Dewy-eyed on other weeks I wonder how long we will live here, how long will it be?

ABIGAIL LEONARD, GRADE II

### *The Car, My Family*

The automobile has become something so common and necessary that we no longer have anything limiting us from driving to faraway places. It gives us the ability to travel, visit family, drive to work, and much more. People seem to be dependent on vehicles now. They have spoiled us with their luxury, technology, and safety. That's probably why I enjoy being in a car so much.

There is a certain comfort that is held within my family car. Although that car may have changed a couple times as I've aged, it still holds the same value to me. Every time I get in that car, memories flood my mind from vacations, drives to school, and long car rides on the way home from games. I feel like I've spent a large majority of my life riding around in our brown SUV, and while some people would find that intolerable, it's the most delightful part of my day. I would long for the relaxing time in the car. I enjoyed the subtle rumble of the road beneath me, the warm air softly blowing out of the vents, the world flying by my window. Of course, I adored the car itself, but the experiences and memories that are held inside those four doors are the most important things in my eyes.

I can recall driving to North Carolina while visiting my grandparents in the mountains. It's an hour and a half drive, but as a child, it felt like an eternity. I would sit in the backseat staring at the headrest in front of me to avoid any car sickness. The roads were curvy and bumpy, but still, I loved the time I had in the car. I couldn't help but fantasize and wonder about my upcoming trip. Would my family spend all day baking in their enormous kitchen or go sledding on the snowy hillsides by their house? Would we sit out on the back porch and paint, harvest their garden, or pick blueberries? Every time our vacation was different, but the drive up remained the same. We would drive up the rocky road, rising and falling along with the vehicle on the bumps. I would see the rusting old race car some neighbor had parked on the side of the driveway to my left, knowing we were getting close. I could smell the fresh air blasting through the air conditioning and hear the wildlife chirping and rustling around us. Even though I hated the building anticipation I got while in the car, these annual trips up to their house were some of the first times I began to appreciate the ride.

My family has made the trip down to Orlando, Florida a multitude of times. We always drive down to visit our favorite place, Disney World. Whether it's the winter or the summer, the drive always gets noticeably hotter as we drive further south. Regardless, my sister and I always stay bundled up beneath a blanket in the backseat. Behind us is our overwhelming amount of luggage and at our feet are the empty fast-food bags from our previous stops. At the beginning of our trips, the whole family would start out by playing car games like "I spy" and "Twenty Questions." After we got bored with that, my mom, sister, and I would take intermittent naps until we were well rested and wide awake. My sister and I would then pull out the little movie player and begin binge watching our favorite Disney Classics. *Bambi*, *Cars*, *Monsters Inc.*, *Toy Story*, and *Beauty and the Beast* would play on repeat every time we took the journey down to the theme park. It would usually be dark by the time we drove underneath the sign that announced our arrival. Then, we would begin our tradition of blasting various Disney soundtracks as soon as we saw that beautiful arch. Then we would file out of the car, get settled into our hotel, and prepare for the long vacation ahead of us.

Another time, on the way to board a cruise ship, my family was packed into the car more than usual. This time we brought our cousin with us and we were filled to the brim. We were bound to leave from Alabama, so it was a seven-hour trip. I specifically remember those seven hours being the most insightful, hilarious, and

memorable hours of my life. I was so close with my family, both physically and emotionally, during that time, and it made the trip much better. All five of us cracked jokes, shared stories, and laughed until our stomachs ached. I've never felt more in touch with my family members, and all those anecdotes and personal stories shared in the car made for some incredible inside jokes while on our cruise ship.

Two summers ago, I took my first trip to another continent. We were headed to Italy, which of course required a plane ride, but first, we had to arrive at the airport in New York City. Our family piled all our suitcases, carry-ons, pillows, and extra appliances into the car at three o'clock in the morning. After a rather exhausting night before, I decided to sleep for a solid six hours in the car. I had expected to be significantly closer to our destination when I awoke, but we were still ten hours from our hotel and the airport. The traffic was horrendous, and my dad was irritated, but my positive mother and my musically gifted sister joined together and made sure to lighten our moods. My mom began talking about the details of our upcoming trip, and my sister began a very long, yet entertaining, Broadway sing along. About two hours into her performance for us, the traffic finally cleared, and we could continue our trip without any delays. It appears our family should have been clawing at each other's throats after such a long journey, but it was quite nice. We had such exciting things to look forward to, discuss, and of course, sing about. Even though we had been in close quarters for about sixteen hours, I never wanted it to end. It had become a peaceful environment for our family, and it made us realize how much we enjoy our time together, no matter what form it may come in.

In the past few years, traveling has become a daily thing for my family. My mom and dad drive out to watch my soccer games, and then they drive me home after we've played. They sit through my rants and tears after we lose. After a victory, they listen to my rambling as I celebrate the win. I know it must get old to drive out day after day, sometimes enduring a five-hour round trip just to watch a high school team play, but they still do it. It's then, when I climb into the car, covered in dirt and sweat, and stretch my feet out across the backseat, I can truly feel how much they must love me. No reasonable person would spend so much time, gas money, and effort just for fun. They do it out of love. They want to spend time and make memories with me. Even if those memories do come in a car, they still stick with me no matter how much time passes.

On weekends in the winter, my parents drive me to volleyball tournaments. Practically every week we head to a new city or state and spend a couple days there while I play volleyball. It's something I look forward to every year, not only because I love the sport and my teams, but I also adore the numerous drives. It has become a routine for me, my mom, and my dad. We pack our stuff on Friday night. I get all my jerseys, shorts, kneepads, and shoes gathered up into a bag. Then, I set my blanket and pillow by the door in preparation to leave. The next morning, we wake up early and head out on our journey. We usually stop to get food, eat as our bodies wake up a little bit, and then I can really enjoy the trip. That's when I start to absorb the warmth of the car, protecting me from the chill of outside. I always listen to the soft seventies music my dad plays throughout the car and sink into the leather as we drive to the sports complex and prepare for the tiring weekend ahead of us. I've been doing this for five years straight now and, honestly, it's one of the only times my family has to bond, so I soak up all the time that I can while with them in our car.

My sister began college a few years ago and she chose to go to a school six hours away. It might seem as though we wouldn't ever get to see her, but thanks to our trustworthy Hyundai SUV, our family can visit her every few weeks. I've made that drive more times than I can count. We head east in Virginia and keep driving until we reach the waters of the coast. Then we head into the long tunnel the submerges beneath that water. Every time we go into that tunnel, I quickly make a wish and hold my breath in hopes that it will come true. I've never done it, but I get over the disappointment from that failure as soon as I see the university. I always get so excited to visit my big sister, and I'm so blessed that our car can bring us together again. No matter how long the road trip is, I always know that at the end of it, I'll be reunited with my best friend and that's what keeps me going.

Back in January, I was able to get my learner's permit to drive. As soon as I got it, I hopped in the driver's seat for the first time and felt the power behind the wheel. I slowly backed up with my mom in the passenger

seat, panicking of course. I remember driving all over the neighborhood, going over the basics of driving, such as: turning, stopping, and parking. I was so amazed at the freedom I felt while in that seat of control. I may have accidentally pressed the gas too hard and run us off the road, but I still gained a new love that day. I discovered that I adored being the driver as much as I did the passenger.

Even now, as a recently licensed driver, I have kept up that adoration. Every time I get behind the wheel, I get excited to drive down the highway with no soul in sight. I have more freedom than I've ever had before. No one else is sitting in my passenger seat, I can turn the music up as loud as I want, I'm at liberty to drive wherever I need, and I love it. However, it's intimidating. When I was younger, all I wanted to do was get older and drive around with my friends. Now that I have that choice, it scares me knowing that one wrong turn could be fatal. One mistake on the road could ruin my life, and that's the price of having more freedom.

Spending so much time in a car, I've begun to realize how my relationship with driving has changed. As a young child, my restlessness always got the best of me. I hated being in the car for extensive amounts of time, crammed into the backseat, and fighting with my sister over space. All I could think about was the end of the journey when I could get out of the car and be free. As I grew up, I began to enjoy my time driving even more. I still couldn't wait until I got to drive by myself, but I started to cherish all the great memories I gained while in the vehicle.

While in the car now, I always think my trip goes by too quickly. It doesn't matter if I'm driving for thirty minutes or thirty hours, I never want that journey to end. Unfortunately, there is an end to every voyage. There may be bumps and curves along the way, but eventually, you'll reach your destination. It really is a metaphor for life. I'm growing up and I've been through a lot of different things. Even after the ups and downs, I made it through childhood. I'm wrapping up the first part of my life. I'm arriving at my stop as I look at colleges and prepare for my future. Although I'm sad my childhood is over and all those family road trips are in the past, I get to start an exciting new portion of my life. My time in the car might be over, but now I get to enjoy the destination to which I have arrived.

KELLY LOCKE, GRADE II

### *Light-Skinned Girl*

I always had a sense of freedom. A place I could sit down and simply be just me, Madison. A place where I am nothing else but a wild child with wild hair. A place that I felt beautiful and safe. A place I wish I never had to leave. Growing up was a breeze when I was only surrounded by my family and the horses. I had an amazing sense of bravery and the ability to do anything, if my mom agreed. My family was always my place. At the farm or the lake, I was always surrounded by them and always got to feel like Madison. I never really noticed I was different from my family or anyone else. I look in the mirror and saw me. I never noticed or paid too much attention to my hair or skin tone. I always felt that I was normal and like everyone else.

Riding hoses and water tubing slowly faded away and school started showing up in the picture. At first everything seemed normal. Everyone saw me as the same as them and was indifferent to how I looked. It was not until halfway through kindergarten anyone started having problems with who I was. Her name was Julia and I knew her from simply riding the bus with her. She was averagely pretty and averagely smart, but she was mean. She could not accept me and my skin tone. That was when I really noticed that I am colored and different. She had a hate for me that I could not quite figure out. She did not want to be near me and always had something to say to me. Kindergarten through seventh grade I was a sin to the school and to myself. I was a bi-racial student, a taboo. Kindergarten had only been the beginning to many years of under the rug discrimination. The lack of others approval and lack of belief led to my own self-worth teetering. No teacher wanted to help me because they had considered me illiterate, no

student wanted to be my friend because I was different, and the only compliment I received was when I straightened my hair.

My hair, my dear wild nappy hair. It was once long with beautiful tight curls that bounced back if you pulled on it. Fried to a crisp to fit in, cut because of my inability to love it while natural. It was so beautiful, but because of other peoples' views upon it I could never love it. My family had never known what to do with it anyways. My mom was white with naturally straight hair and my dad and his family was not present. I had truly looked like a frizz ball most of the time, but it was still truly amazing. It was amazing because it was me. When I cut my hair, I had basically cut myself. I cut myself short to become something others would want to be around. I pushed down my wild tendencies and became a quitter child. I tried at every moment I could to show off new things I got like how I showed off my hair every time I convinced my mother to straighten it. I tried to act smarter than what everyone thought I was. I dressed cleaner, talk more mature, quitter, and only spoke when spoken to. I tried to stay with the styles of my class members by wearing the same clothes and doing the same things. It was a life of always trying to fit in there until I later moved schools.

When I moved schools, I realized that I could not be friends with everyone so I tried to be friend with the people I was so sure that would like me for me. That's when I realized it would never just be that easy. Everyone holds each other up to certain standards and if you look a certain way you are expected to act that way. Me being a mixed girl, I was expected to either act black or white. It might seem racist to see the world like that, but I have been pushed into standards like that. I've always been considered too dark skinned to be friends with the Caucasians and I act to Caucasian to be able to be friends with the African Americans. Society boxes people into categories and if someone does not belong in a box, they are a loner. A loner was what I became. I never fit in any group, but I always made friends with different people from every group. I was stressed and slightly depressed, but I have never given up on my life. Now I simply ignore others' thoughts about me, and I have become much happier. I finally began to love myself and the way I look. My hair has started to grow, and my personality has grown along with it. I am more of myself then I have ever been through my life. I have regained the feeling of the farm and being with my family. The sense of bravery, self-worth, and freedom.

MADISON LOCKHART, GRADE II

### *Guitars and NASCAR*

I live in the town of Bristol  
We have a sister town which is split in the middle  
Our town was the center of country music  
The sounds of our area are therapeutic  
Our Nascar track is called the "world's fastest half mile"  
Every race there is won by a man named Kyle  
Me and my papaw used to bet on the races  
And try to guess what drivers would come in which places  
My dad and grandfather taught me to play guitar  
And when I perform, I feel like a superstar  
I'll never forget the town that made me  
Even when I'm gone  
The little town of Bristol, Virginia  
Zip Code 24201

ERIC MCCrackEN, GRADE II

## *I Am From*

I am from T.V.  
From cell phone and computer  
I am from the quiet  
Food smell  
I am from the flowers  
The tree  
Whose long limbs I remember  
As if they were my own.  
I'm from Christmas and birthdays  
From Jessica and Norleen  
I'm from anger and stress  
And from sympathetic people  
I'm from "Be good" and "Stop lying"  
And tech switch.  
I'm from Thanksgiving  
I'm from Illinois and Indian  
Tacos and spaghetti  
From my grandpa trying to join the army  
He had heart problems.  
Photo albums  
Under my bed

ALEXANDER J. MILES, GRADE II

## *Confidence*

Stepping out of the car  
With such confidence  
It could kill  
Hair the color of a warm flame  
And as soft as a puppy's stomach  
Sun kissed skin  
Freckles dancing over her body  
Eyes that could turn you to stone  
Curves like smooth hills  
She was a goddess  
She knew it all too well

AUDRIANNA MILLER, GRADE 12

## *Home*

I've grown up in several areas in my life, most of which have been in the Appalachian Mountains. I know these mountains as a home and as a battlefield—not the kind with guns, but the kind with family. Over the years my home has changed and there have been unexpected results and consequences of these changes. I've been thoroughly confused about my exact place here, but I know that I belong. I don't really consider a house

to be my home. I consider my people to be my home. My people from Appalachia are my home. Without them I am lost.

TRISTAN MULLINS, GRADE II

### *I'm Sorry*

We're killing the earth and that's really fun no one believes us because we are young.

- Our forests are turning to ash in a second, ask California,
- they'll tell you about it.
- They'll tell you how they have lost all their homes.
- While Trump turns a blind eye and tweets on his phone:
- "Global Warming's an expensive little hoax."

For the last time: this is not a joke, our factories are working- toxins emitting,

- the Ozone is crumbling
- and we won't stop putting chemicals in what we're trying to breathe.

Our future is stolen and we are the thieves.

- Sea levels are rising,
- and icebergs are melting,
- the coral reefs are dying,
- and no one is helping.
- Do you realize they keep the ocean alive?

This started back in 1985.

- Don't come to me when your child can't think
- of what a tiger is because they're extinct.
- Don't cry on me when your fur coat isn't clean.
- The endangered list is now 41,416.

Dear, 2045

- I don't think we're going to survive,
- if you end up hearing this story,
- I just want to say,
- I'm sorry.

DYLAN PATRICK, GRADE II

### *Ode to Robert Frost*

Whose phone is that? I think I know.  
Its owner is quite happy though.  
Full of joy like a vivid rainbow,  
I watch him laugh. I cry hello.  
He gives his phone a shake,

And laughs until his belly aches.  
The only other sound's the break,  
Of distant waves and birds awake.  
The phone is big, cracked and deep,  
But he has promises to keep,  
After cake and lots of sleep.  
Sweet dreams come to him cheap.  
He rises from his gentle bed,  
With thoughts of kittens in his head,  
He eats his jam with lots of bread.  
Ready for the day ahead.

REECE PERRIGAN, GRADE 12

### *My Childhood Pet*

When I was a kid, growing up I had a dog named Coco. My parents got this little, fluffy dog and I fell in love with it. Coco always slept with me and was always by my side. He was a cream-colored teacup poodle. Every morning I would have little holes in my shirt because, while I slept, Coco would chew on my shirt. If someone came near me and he was beside me, he would start growling because he thought they were going to hurt me. Coco didn't weigh more than three pounds, so he was little enough to hold in one hand. He was the cutest little dog with big fluffy ears.

One night it was storming outside, and Coco was sleeping with my mom. He woke up, ran in the bedroom with me because he knew I was his owner and he trusted me to protect him. Since the first time I saw him, it was love at first sight, I cried every time I was away from him. There wasn't any going back because his life revolved around mine. He saw me as the best thing in the world because he was my best friend and never judged me for my imperfections. When I felt down, he always brought my mood up because he was full of energy. He just made me a better person because he was always happy. Watching him grow from a puppy to an adult dog, I was with him to help him through the stages of his life. He would always protect me from anything that was trying to hurt me, even if he hurt himself in the process. He made all my troubles disappear. For example, if I was struggling on my homework, he would stay right by my side to make sure I didn't stress too much.

Coco taught me the meaning of life: not getting too worked up and to love myself. He was my best friend and someone I could talk to about anything even when he didn't answer me back, I knew he was listening and trying to help me. For the past eleven years, Coco has been by my side and has taught me the true meaning of love. Coco has shaped me into the person I am today because he taught me how to care for others and to never doubt myself.

HANNAH SALYER, GRADE 11

### *Bristol*

I live in a city  
Where the lights shine bright  
Where its known as the birthplace of country music  
As Rhythm and Roots gladly shows  
You can see Christmas lights  
Decorated all over motor speedway

With hundreds of cars  
Going through listening to the jolly Christmas songs  
Although there's not much to do  
there's much to see  
From all the museums  
To all the bakeries  
And all the beautiful places to hike  
Bristol is beautiful  
And is a sight to see for all.

SHY-ANN SHAW, GRADE II

*winkling stars, screaming stars*

twinkling stars dance,  
over our alluring night sky,  
sharing reflections with the summer turf,  
casting heavenliness,  
throughout moonlit water.  
weeping willows surround a beloved swimming hole,  
concealing memories, families and friends  
created there.  
human-like giants,  
usually a bright green,  
become black in darkness.  
I inhale  
pungent, crisp nature  
captivates me.  
I peer  
into her musky forest,  
but not with fear,  
mysterious charms mesmerize me.  
the form of her trees  
now terrifies me.  
caged in  
with your water,  
that once bewitched me,  
now reaching.  
my eyes,  
(unaware of what hides below the surface)  
frantically run from tree to tree,  
faint-hearted  
to what hides in the shadows  
the stars were twinkling  
the night  
when she abruptly swept  
you  
to the water.

now every twinkle,  
seems like the stars scream,  
stars scream for you.

LYDIA SLUSS, GRADE 12

### *Walking*

Walking  
Out the big red door  
Then closing it behind me  
The sound of the cross  
My grandma hung on the door  
Could be heard rattling  
Walking  
Down the crumbly white steps that go straight  
Then turn right and down again  
I then come to the steep gray driveway  
I walk down slowly  
Trying to not fall  
Walking  
Past my neighbor's blue house  
My friend sat on their brick stairs  
Their big black dog came hopping towards me  
I bent down and patted her on the head  
Then continued my walk  
Past the baseball field  
And the creek I always played in.  
Then to the small store  
I always bought drinks there  
Then back to my grandmother's I went.

ASHTON SMALLWOOD, GRADE II

### *Suffering of the Heart*

Love can be deep, dark, and mysterious.  
Drowning in sorrows of heartbreak,  
Raw tears falling on my sweater.  
Heart is breaking in silence.  
Quiet. Sometimes quiet is violent.  
*Thump. Crack. Thump. Crack.*  
The beat to a drum of a broken heart.  
Broken heart alone in the dark.  
Breaking in a way that only I understand.  
I crumbled underneath the weight.  
Pressures of a broken heart and struggling to keep beating.  
I have been hurt.  
I have been pained.

People think love is easy,  
But love made me the way that I am.

EMMA SNEAD, GRADE II

## *Band*

I remember the day that my heart started beating with the drums. When I was a little kid, my mother who teaches at my high school, took me to a lot of school functions that she was required to be at. One time, she was required to be at the high school band's Christmas concert, so she took me with her, and I was ecstatic to go because I had never been before. Once we arrived and sat in the dark orange auditorium seats, I saw a bunch of "big kids" on the stage dressed in nice clothes, holding the most beautiful and shiny instruments I had ever seen. They were setting their sheet music on their stands and getting ready to play. The band director held his hands up, preparing to give them the first beat as little six-year-old me was on the edge of her seat. The first eruption of sound grabbed my attention and held me captive until the last. Tunes of O Holy Night and Sleigh Ride danced through my ears as I watched the slides and buttons of the shiny instruments move. The beautiful melodies, the fast-paced to the slow-paced music, and the beating of the drums all told me that day, "This will be you."

As I got older, I never forgot my fascination with that concert, and I attended many more alongside my mother as the years went on. Going into middle school, I had to design my first schedule and decide what I wanted to take. The first class that I wrote on my new schedule was band. Over the summer, my mother and I searched everywhere for a used trumpet until we found one in good condition at Uncle Sam's Pawn Shop on State Street. Getting that beautiful, shiny instrument was the exhilarating first step of my new journey. Learning to play the trumpet and read music was one of the hardest parts of my journey, but I noticed that playing it with every passing day made it come naturally to me over time. The day finally came for me to play in my first ever Christmas band concert. This time my mother didn't have me in the seat beside her to watch it. The lights illuminated the stage as all the sixth-grade band walked in and we sat our sheet music on the stands. My nerves were through the roof as the band director raised his hands, signaling us to prepare to play. From the first beat to the last, I was proud of what I was doing. I was another step closer to doing what I really wanted to do. As the years went by and my academic load began to get harder, I realized that the only class that I took that remained consistent was band. It was the thing that pushed me out of bed in the morning and told me that I could make it through the day. The music I played was loud enough to drown out any troubles or stress that middle school and life brought me.

As I entered high school, the band environment changed dynamically. It turned into marching while playing, drill sets for days, and some of the greatest times of my life. I was terrified to open that band room door for the first time because I had only imagined what marching band would be like because I would be with not only just freshmen, but also with seniors, juniors, and sophomores. When I opened the door and walked in, I was greeted by not only one person, but multiple people that I had never met before. This immediately set the tone for band for the rest of my high school career to date. From every fun practice to every rough practice, the people I was marching beside were my newfound family members. Even after our marching season ended, it became evident that the band family was still always tight knit. As my first year in band went on, I began to realize that I was loving the changes that high school band brought to my life. I started stepping out of my comfort zone in band and other areas of my life. Near the end of the year, the band director announced that there would be drum major tryouts and for those who wanted to do it to go stand out in the hall. I decided to do the tryout process, and in the end, I got the position. I was turning into more of a leader every day, and I was beginning to learn that I like to lead people. Within the next few years, I grew as a person, as a performer, and a leader. Band changed a lot when I got to high school, but the same thing rang just as true as it did in sixth grade, band was my safe place and it would stay that way. From sixth grade all the way to present day, band has been one of the things that has made me who I am today. There is nothing in life quite like a high school band. Whether it

be playing on the illuminated auditorium stage on a Sunday afternoon, or standing on the fifty-yard line on a Friday night at a home football game, it has shaped me. Now that I have become one of the “big kids” that holds a shiny instrument, I realize that it is so much more than just music. It brings life and helps so many kids find a place when they feel like they have none. The worst part about high school band is that it must end after only four short years. However, I happen to be lucky because I still have one more year left of making memories, playing music, and making friends after this one ends. Looking back, the person that I am today is the result of a long journey that started when I decided to go to a band concert with my mom. That was the day that my heart started beating with the drums, and it doesn't seem that it will ever stop.

SARAH STACY, GRADE II

### *A Conversation that Changed my Perspective of People*

In July of 2018, I went to Fall River, Massachusetts on a trip to see my mother's side of the family. I was very enthusiastic for this trip, as I would be seeing relatives that I had never seen before, but there was one relative that I was specifically excited for: my great grandmother, Celeste. Celeste has traveled the world far and wide and is a very intelligent person. I was very interested in what she had to say about all of these places she's been to, especially Japan. When we got to Fall River, we had a great time with our family, we ate a lot, talked a lot, and (I) walked a lot. One of the last things we did was go to the beach. When we got there, I didn't do much; I just swam for a bit and fed myself along with the seagulls some pretzels. I got bored after a little bit, so I just sat on the bench with the seagulls. After a little bit, Celeste came over and we had a short conversation about cultures around the world; during that conversation she said something that has stuck with me since: “You know, Gavin, all people on the earth have a very similar motive in life: to take care of their loved ones and fulfil their dreams. All people are raised differently but follow that same motive. We live in a small world, with very many, very different people, it truly is beautiful. We are all the same in a way, a very human way.” This statement didn't quite hit me until about a day after our trip was over. After some thinking, it caused me to think in a completely different way. I no longer disliked people because they performed an odd or uncommon activity or had prejudice over someone based on their religious background or country of origin. It changed me for the better, and it all originated from a little conversation with my great-grandmother. Even little things can have a massive impact.

GAVIN STE MARIE, GRADE II

Gavin & Celeste  
ガヴインとセレステ



### *He*

Long brunette hair  
 When I look into his eyes, I see home  
 You'd think he was a model  
 His voice is as smooth as honey  
 With words as soothing as a song  
 Hands so soft  
 Arms so welcoming

NATALIE TRAGLER, GRADE 12

## *I Am From*

I am from my bed,  
from dirt bikes and PlayStation  
I am from the cozy feeling and soft carpet  
I am from the daffodil  
The tree whose long-gone limbs I remember as if they were my own.  
I'm from eating food and funny  
From mom and dad  
I'm from annoying and stubborn  
And from loving people.  
I'm from "Suck it up" and "You're okay"  
And "Jesus loves me."  
I'm from Bristol and America  
Chicken Casserole and gravy biscuits  
From Uncle falling through the roof.  
That was funny.  
Old but treasuring pictures  
On the wall.

CONNOR WILSON, GRADE II

## *Secret History*

My name has history  
But hardly anyone knows  
From ship builders to war heroes  
Ups and downs  
Through the dirt  
And mud  
It has been dragged  
Saint, I am not  
Star, I wish  
Quiet like a tree  
History will remain  
Unknown to most  
Famous to too few

NICKOLIS S. WOOD, GRADE 12

# LIMERICKS & LYRICS



*Stonewall Jackson High School Orchestra*

## Elementary Music

### *Flatwoods Elementary School*

#### *The Gift of a Song*

This is the second year in which I have had the opportunity for my music students to participate in The Origin Project. Last year's third grade students at Flatwoods are now fourth grade students, so I decided to continue my project with them. Last year the students learned a couple different songs; were asked to consider that their ancestors had likely learned the same songs; and then were given the opportunity to make up a song with one of the tunes and/or to write their own verse for another of the songs.

This year I decided to introduce the project by showing them a selected clip from the film, *Songcatcher*, in which a female musicologist in the early 1900s goes to Appalachia to record and collect songs. In the clip I showed the students, Dr. Lily Penleric is listening to one of the local girls sing the song *Barbara Allen*. After she finishes singing, Dr. Penleric asks her where she learned the song, to which the girl replies, "My granny give it to me." Dr. Penleric then asks, "Was your grandmother from England?" After viewing the clip, I asked the students to think about what it might mean for someone to give someone else a song and if anyone had given them a song. This latter question was also sent home with them in cooperation with their English class.

Ultimately, my hope is that the students will be able to reflect on how music that has passed from one person to another can impact families and by extension, our society. The choice of the music we listen to, write, sing, and share with others does make a difference.

ANDREA RUSSELL HINES

LEE COUNTY GENERAL MUSIC TEACHER

What song has someone given me?

I grew up at church and I listened to the song *This Little Light of Mine*.

My mamaw gave me [the song] *I'll Fly Away*.

BELLAH BACH, GRADE 4

FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

My mamaw told [me] about a song [dance] called the two step.

AIDAN BROWN, GRADE 4

FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean] to give someone a song?

[It means] to teach or sing it and to learn how to do so.

What [type of] song has someone given me? Country

HAYDEN BURKE, GRADE 4

FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*This Little Light of Mine*. My dad gave it to me. He sang it to me when I was 3 [years old].

LUKE CANTOR, GRADE 4

FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

Fields of Grace [Southern Gospel Group]

Did I mention? I met them at Red Hill Church. They came and ate and went to Natural Tunnel and at Dollywood. We had a good time. I was 10, and it was on my birthday at Dollywood, and we listened to their music all the time. It is the best.

I interviewed Brenda Cope [for my TOP project], and she gave me the song *You Are My Sunshine*. She would sing it to me when I was little before I went to bed.

ADDISON CLARK, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

My dad used to play music, and I would go and listen to him play with other people.

*The Great Speckled Bird*

My pop gave me *The Great Speckled Bird*.

J.T. CLARK, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

Teach it to them.

KAITLYN CLASBY, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*Jesus Take the Wheel*. My sister sang it to me and sometimes my brother. I love that song so much.

CASSIDY COLLINS, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

My friend gave me a song he made up.

ZACK COPE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

My nanny gave me the song *Chopsticks*. I was at least 8 years old. She showed me on the piano. I interviewed Linda Cowden, my nanny. She gave me the song *Jesus Loves Me*.

LEAH COWDEN, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

Teach them how to sing it.

*Big John* is Richard's favorite song. He is always listening to it. LOL

CHLOE CRUSENBERRY, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*Barbara Allen*. I was 10.

**Aaron Eldridge, Grade 4**

**Flatwoods Elementary**

What song has someone given me?

Leah gave me *Chopsticks*. I was happy when I heard it. We play it on the piano, and Leah's brother Seth taught me how to play it.

My great-grandfather [gave me a song] and gave it to my dad, Johnny Fortner.

AVA FORTNER, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

Me and my granny listen to old music that she used to listen to with her friends.

LILA HINES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

[Mrs. Hines gave me the song] *Barbara Allen*.

My granny, Frances Hines, gave me the song *Old Hound Dog*. She sang the song to me.

MICHAEL HINES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

My mom gave me a song.

BEN HIXSON, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. I was three years old.

KAMERON JERRELL, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

When I was little, my dad would play [music by the band] *Kiss* before I went to bed.

My mimmy gave me *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*.

ALLIE JONES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

Mrs. Hines taught me the song *Barbara Allen*.

KAYLA JONES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

Mrs. Hines gave me this song. It is called *Barbara Allen*.

KAREN KING, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

Her grandma taught her a song.

OFFIE KING, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

My nana told me the song *Cici My Playmate*. I love the song. She also sang the song to me!

K-SHEA LANE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

The Leopard of T.V. gave me one of my favorite songs. The Leopard is one of the masked singers.

JADEN LAWSON, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

My aunt Hareeney. I would give this song to family.

JOSSLYN LINDSAY, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What song has someone given to me?]

*Old Rocky Top*. My mom and sis and dad listen to this song in the car or my radio. This is how I hear it.

I was 6 years old. I was just in the car listening to it.

JAKOB MABE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*My Church* by Maren Morris

"I've cussed on a Sunday. I've cheated and I've lied." blab, blab, blab. Yeah I guess that's my church or A  
Thousand Years

I have died every day waiting for you darlin' don't be afraid I have loved you for a thousand years. I'll love you  
for a thousand more.

Those are the best songs I know and my mom used to sing them to me when I was younger.

KAYDENCE MAXIE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

My mom gave me a song called *Stone Cold*. It's sad, but good.

KENADEE MCELYEA, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

[A song by] Ball Taylor

WESLEY MEDLEY, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

To be happy to give [it] to them.

What song has someone given me?

So *Centuries*

LATISHA MILAM, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

Post Malone, *Sunflowers*

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

He shared with me.

DRAKE MILES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*Amazing Grace*. I would give it to my mom.

ASHLEY MOORE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*Barbara Allen*

RYAN MOORE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

You will have to teach her that song.

KAYLYNN MUSE, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*You Are My Sunshine*. My mom.

I was 4 years old. I love that song. It was my favorite and still is. My mom gave this song to me.

Doris Burke said growing up she sang *You Are My Sunshine* with her mom. I already know this song,  
because my mom and I sing it a lot. It is my favorite song.

ADDISON NASH, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?  
Marshmello, *One Thing Right*.

*I've cheated and I've lied, broken people down with words I've gotten nothing left to hide but I got one thing right, you. But I got one thing right.*

HAGAN NEFF, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]  
Write it on a piece of paper then sing it to her.  
What song has someone given me?  
My dad gave me [the] *Victory in Jesus* song.  
My papaw sung *Old MacDonald Had a Farm* when I was little.

JACOB NEFF, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?  
*Barbara Allen*. I like this one.

ETHAN PARKS, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?  
[Someone gave me the song] *Piece by Piece*.  
I was 15 months when she died.

JOSLYN PENNINGTON, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]  
I think to give someone a song [is] you teach it to them.

JACOB PILON, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?  
A YouTube start gave me *God's Country* when my family played it. I was very happy when she played it.  
*The Last Dance*. My grandmother got that song from someone.

AUSTIN REED, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?  
My mamaw used to sing me *Amazing Grace* all the time when I was a little baby, but now she is not here on earth so now when I listen to it I cry. I love you mamaw.

KAILYN ROBBINS, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?  
My papaw Richard Rorrer. A song passed down to him it was *In the Pines* that was the only song he knew.

KYLEE RORRER, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?  
*You Are My Sunshine*  
My dad and my mamaw. When I was just born. My mamaw passed away. I always will love her.

MARLEY SCOTT, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

[Someone gave me the song] *Old Town Road*.

R.J. SPAULDING, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

Someone has given me a song when our church sings a fellowship song very Sunday. I got it when we started going to church there.

Today Mrs. Hines gave me *Barbara Allen*.

AVA STAFFORD, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*Carol Ann*

Grampa made it for gramma.

DALTON STAPLETON, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

My d[ad] told me this song when I was a baby. *Sweet Child of Mine*. I love the guitar he uses. I would dance for hours. I love this song so much.

My granny gave me a song called *Babes in the Woods*. She sang it to me before I went to bed. I was little. Great song I love it so much. Her mom used to sing it to her. My granny still sings it to me all the time.

BREANNA SYKES, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

You need to sing a song for somebody to learn a song.

What song has someone given me?

[Someone gave me the song] *Centuries*.

BRYCEN TAYLOR, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

*You Are My Sunshine*

Mamaw Jenny, Mamaw Carolyn. When they sing it to me I feel special.

WILLOW TAYLOR, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

You will hear it from someone and keep playing it.

What song has someone given me?

My mom gave *I had a dream about a burning house*.

DEZIRAY WOLIVER, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

What song has someone given me?

I sing *Old Town Road* with my friends and we like to make up songs of our own.

ALIAH WOODARD, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

[What does it mean to give someone a song?]

I think that it would mean if you give a person a song you have a lot of feelings for that person.

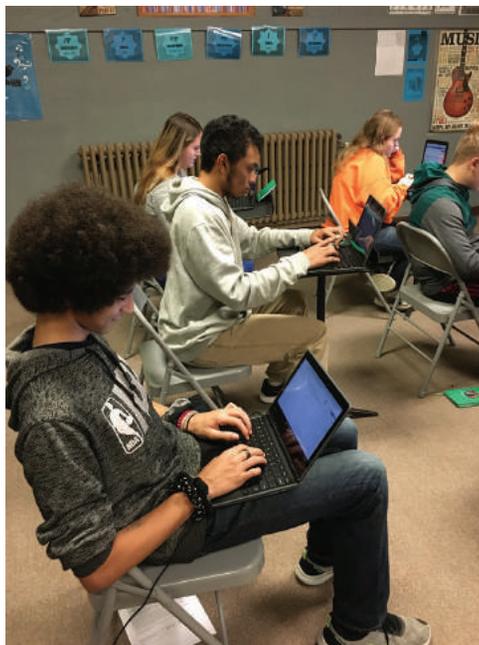
What song has someone given me? *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star* in Spanish.

EMELINA ZAMORA, GRADE 4  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY

## Chorus

### *Lee High School & Thomas Walker High School*

This school year, I accepted the challenge from the TOP team to incorporate what I teach in choral music with the objectives of The Origin Project. It wasn't a difficult connection to make, but the challenge of incorporating the project into our already busy schedule was a bit daunting.



My goal was to create an opportunity for my high school choral students to explore songwriting. Many elements that go into creating and developing an original song. There is no particular order that one must follow, but there is one thing that is a necessity - the freedom to be creative. This is something that seemed foreign to many of my students. We experimented with many different writing prompts to get their ideas flowing for their potential song lyrics. I have been so impressed by the students' willingness to be vulnerable with their thoughts, imagination and personal experiences as they set them to music.

I have students that are creating an entirely original song including lyrics, melody lines, and multiple instrument accompaniment. I have students that are using existing melodies and accompaniments to set their original lyrics. It has been such a wonderful experience. My students have expressed newfound respect for songwriters and the process of creating a song. It has been an eye-opening experience. Many students have already started to compose additional songs.

I am appreciative of The Origin Project for offering this wonderful opportunity for my students' voices to be heard.

CARI BELCHER, CHORAL DIRECTOR  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL & THOMAS WALKER HIGH  
SCHOOL

### LEE HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS

#### *Soldiers Don't Cry*

#### VERSE 1

She wears a smile on her face to hide the tears in her eyes each night she goes home and lays down and cries single mother at home falling on hard times crying out to the Lord asking Him why He had to take him from them

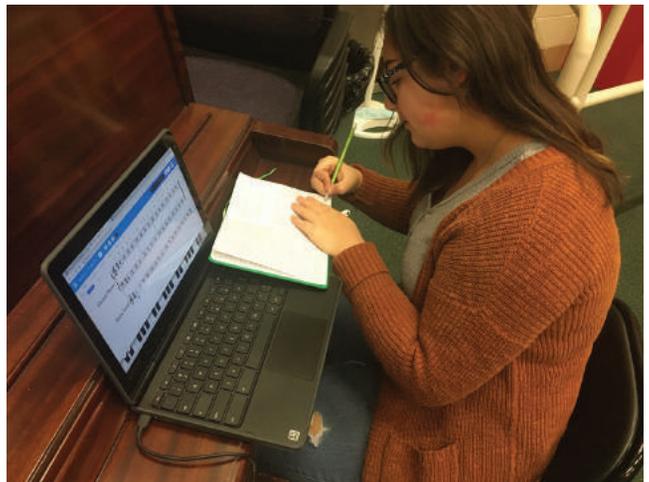


## VERSE 2

Father at home husband to a wife but as he walks out that door he sees the tears in their eyes and hears i'm gonna miss you dad he feels the hug of his son for the last time. He puts a smile on his face to hide the tears in his eyes as he heads out that door he remembers that soldiers don't cry

## VERSE 3

Not only a father but also a friend I'll never forget the day he laid down his life to save all those men and I always look back on those last words I said  
I still miss you Dad and all those times that we had  
I still miss you Dad Oh, I still miss you Dad





#### VERSE 4

I still remember that day and hearing that knock on the door and seeing Mama's face as she fell to the floor  
I put a smile on my face to hide the tears in my eyes they called you a hero for giving your life I guess I never  
understood about that ultimate sacrifice

#### VERSE 5

Well time passed on and my day it came to get on that bus and do the very same thing  
my father did. She put a smile on her face to hide the tears in her eyes she gave a hug  
I hadn't felt in a while and she said I'm gonna miss you son I took that smile off my  
face and the tears rolled down my eyes as I thought of my father's words,  
"Son, soldiers don't cry."

TRAVIS ADDINGTON, GRADE II  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

#### *Reckless*

#### CHORUS

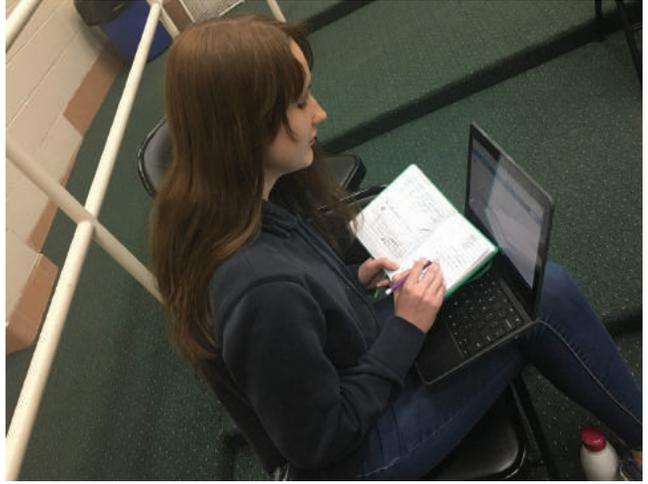
Grief, let's talk about grief.  
You don't wanna be foreboding like  
me  
I'm the dread one  
This is not the best place to find an elation  
Baby, I love your worries  
One minute you're here and the next you're  
distrusting  
Troubling at night



## VERSE

Reckless Dreading  
I've been hearing concerns  
I found a desire for me  
Everyone is silent sometimes,  
    I'm the happy one  
You don't wanna be splendid like me  
One minute you're here and  
    the next you're anguishing  
I live my life as if I'm lonely  
Reckless discomforting

KRYSTINA ASPELL, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL



## *Hidden Story*

## VERSE 1

Got arrested on a Thursday  
Then Daddy passed Tuesday  
Momma developed a habit  
Best friend died in traffic  
Another one tried to get away  
Brother shot on Christmas day  
Had to do bad things, just to be here today

## CHORUS

I want to live without anger  
To move away from the danger  
Be who I want to be  
Not have people control me  
What's going to happen next?  
How are things going to be?  
Who's gonna have me in check?  
How do they see me?  
Are they gonna hate me?  
How do I act?  
Where do I start?  
Who's gonna heal my cracks?  
How does it end?  
And what trouble's waiting in it?

VERSE 2

I'm tired of playing these games  
Just want to get through it  
Yeah that's when it came, that's when it hit  
Momma please don't cry  
Look up and you'll see Daddy fly  
And your little girl will never say good-bye  
(repeat CHORUS)

VERSE 3

Sissy, why are you and Mommy fighting  
Now don't you dare lie, there was a sighting  
Wait please don't leave me  
Yeah yeah, had to support my family  
Make sure they're living happily  
Don't have good friends  
But I still show respect, even in the end  
And the truth was in my pen  
People don't understand  
Spread lies like wildfire  
All these problems and I just ran  
People started talking and I became a liar  
(repeat CHORUS)

MADDY BLANKENSHIP, GRADE 10  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

*What You Mean To Me*

VERSE 1

When I look back at everything that I've been through  
And see how it's made me new  
And through everything I never made it without you

CHORUS 1

You've been my rock. You've been my joy.  
And nothing will destroy who I am in you.

VERSE 2

When I couldn't sleep, you used to hold me  
And me to think of things that made me smile

## CHORUS 2

Oh, you are my rock.  
When I am stuck, your the rope that pulls me up  
And it always shows that you are a part of me. I love you.

## VERSE 3

In a way, you are the constant thing that keeps me sane  
And yea, we fight but I could never deny that I'm yours  
Because we are the same in every way

## CHORUS 3

You've been my rock. You've been my joy.  
And as I make this change, just know one thing will  
always remain  
What you mean to me - Oh oh mom you mean the most to me

KAITLYNN BUTLER, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## *Just Another Love Song*

## VERSE 1

You make me so happy, you make me smile  
You make me feel loved, you make me feel wanted  
Oh how I love you, my sweet adorable lover  
My heart belongs to you, nobody else  
compares to you  
My heart beats fast, with every thought of you  
I can never stop smiling, when you say, "I love you."

## CHORUS 1

I would be so lost, if I didn't have you  
Oh how I love you, my sweet adorable lover

## BRIDGE

People think I'm weird, people think I'm strange  
But you, you, you, you think I'm perfect

## CHORUS 2

I would be so lost if I didn't have you  
My love for you is strong, my love for you is infinite

## VERSE 2

People don't need to understand, people don't need to approve  
We only need each other, that's how we will get through  
I love you with all my heart, and you love me with all of your's  
So let our love never end, let our love live on  
Zavannah Camp, Grade 8

## *Anime and Video Games for Life*

## VERSE 1

I come in from school to watch Japanese cartoons and let's not forget about video games  
I'm one of the tallest kids in school I must be a titan  
When I work out it feels like my power level is over 9,000  
Me and my bro we're going to save the princess like the Mario Bros

## CHORUS

Here comes the boss I'm hidden in a cardboard box  
I work part time at a coffee shop with this boy with an eyepatch on  
It's been a long day feels like I have one heart left one heart left

## VERSE 2

When times get hard I'll be chasin' bounties through space like a cowboy  
People be walking around like a bunch of zombies T-virus  
There are so many places I want to go I need the shadow clone jutsu  
Me and Sonic had a race it was close but he won within an inch

## BRIDGE

When my friends hang out with me we're like a guild now i'm all fired up  
I think I'm from the Life Stream, buster sword in hand, time for my final fantasy  
All of the other kids be reading books I'll stick with my Death Note  
Hunting demons is a part time job and they say devils never cry

### VERSE 3

I would like to have a giant suit of armor and call it Gundam  
My master trains me in the way of the streets ryu  
When my opponent attacks I activate my trap card and win the duel

### CHORUS

Found a blue suit of armor put it on now I'm known as the blue bomber  
And don't stand in front of my arm blaster  
If someone I cared about died, I will give up an arm and a leg to bring them back  
I am the ultimate otaku and king of games signing out

DALTON CARTER, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## *Forgive*

### VERSE 1

I'm not worthy of your love  
Time and time again I mess up  
But your love it never fails me  
When I'm down you lift me up

### CHORUS

Lord I'm shouting your name from the rooftop  
I want everyone to know  
That you love, That you save,  
That you're there to turn to  
And I know that I make mistakes,  
But I know that you forgive

### VERSE 2

Sometimes I feel down about life  
I hit a peak and then it crashes down  
But your love it never fails me  
When times are rough, you help me get up  
(repeat CHORUS)

### BRIDGE

I wouldn't make it without you by my side  
When there is no one else I know I have you to turn to  
Because I know that you forgive

(repeat CHORUS)  
That you forgive

BETHANY DAVIS, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *I Have You*

#### VERSE 1

I have seen the other side  
And sometimes the mountains may seem too wide  
When I feel that the world is caving in  
I know that you will be there to give a helping hand  
You have shown me the brighter side  
Now I finally have a reason not to hide

#### CHORUS

You have brought me out of the dark  
And you have loved me from the very start  
You have shown me that no matter what we go through  
I won't be alone because I have you

#### VERSE 2

There are times when I feel that you are done  
But you pull me in, and give me all your love  
I know I seem like I don't care  
But without you, I wouldn't be standing here  
You have given the greatest gift of all  
Someone to love me even when I fall  
(repeat CHORUS)

#### BRIDGE

I was in the darkness, too far gone  
Then I met you, and I said a prayer  
Looks like the angels answered me today  
I can promise you, my love for you  
Has grown everyday  
(repeat CHORUS)

BROOKE DAVIS, GRADE 11  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Sunshine*

I see sunshine, everywhere I go, cause your on my mind.  
I feel the glow, shining on my path, showing me the way I go.

And it feels so wonderful.  
Because you are my sunshine, light of my life, fire of my light  
And it's so crazy, how you can turn my day bad to good  
And it feels so amazing, 'cause you're my sunshine, oooh.  
I see the fire burning in your eyes, showing your love  
And it's a wonder, oh such a wonder how you're always on my mind.  
And please don't leave, I'm begging, please.  
Oh please, stay with me.

LIAM EICHELBERGER, GRADE 8

LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *You'd Never Leave Me*

I remember it all  
Where we would go to feel again  
You'd tell me it's okay with tears on your face  
Holdin' me tightly and holdin' my face  
I know you'll never leave me, love.  
And I'm always enough and you said . . . I promised I'll never leave you, love  
And when your time had come I'd never felt the world so dark  
When they told me your heart had stopped beating my heart had followed your's  
They told me your heart had stopped beating I followed them right out the door  
And I screamed your name till it hurt  
Because you promised me you'd never leave me, love. Never leave me, love.  
I walked through the castle. I wrote our names on the walls.  
And the last day I saw you lying so beautifully  
I kissed you goodnight and said I promised I'd never leave you, love  
In my mind I saw you one last time  
You came to kiss me goodnight with tears all down your face  
But still promised I will never leave you, love.  
I tried screaming your name one last time  
To see if it was all just a dream  
And when you didn't answer my calling, my heart fell out of my feet  
But I promise I'll never leave you, love  
I closed my eyes you kept me safe and I — felt you here again  
I'll close my eyes tonight, but I won't see your face  
But I'll always know you'll never leave, my love.

KATIE ELDRIDGE, GRADE II

LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *SELF DESTRUCTION*

It's the end of the world as we know it, wildlife is being destroyed.  
We're fighting each other over nothing.  
We're burning through all of our resources.  
There's no good left in this world, we have nothing but hate for  
each other.

I, myself, honestly don't know if there's any hope for the future but sometimes I believe  
that one day something amazing will happen that will save us from this inevitable fate.  
Hopefully there will be a smarter, less hateful generation soon, we'd hate to leave this  
earth burdening the new generation with the problems we created.  
Everyone wants something for themselves whether it be wealth, fame, or power.

ELIAS EISENMENGER, GRADE 8  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Make This Work*

#### VERSE 1

I'd do anything to see you smile  
I know your heartache and pain have lasted a while  
But when the tears are falling down your face  
Just look at me for I'm here to stay

#### CHORUS

And I don't know where I would be  
Without you right here next to me  
So when things get rough and it's hard to breathe  
We can make this work just watch and see

#### VERSE 2

When I'm scared that I might lose my way  
You always find the right words to say  
Just keep your hand intertwined with mine  
And I'll forever stay lost in your eyes

#### CHORUS

And I don't know where I would be  
Without you right here next to me  
So when things get rough and it's hard to breathe  
We can make this work just watch and see

AUTUMN FULTZ, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Final Time*

#### PROLOGUE (SPOKEN)

Dear Diary, it's a beautiful day today. The sun is shining, the birds are singing. And . . . Everyone's gone.

## VERSE 1

Frigid and alone. Nothing is here. Where did it go?  
The forest~ How it would grow, but daisies now die.  
And . . . why? I shall never know.

## CHORUS 1

But when I become concrete, the angels won't wish me a welcome  
They'll let me stay in my gathering, a tale so seldom  
How my forest shall rot, and I be the first and last to see it die  
Tomorrow, I shall lay in my chamber  
For one final time

## VERSE 2

The forest~Oh, how it would grow, but daisies now die.  
And . . . why? I shall never know!  
My rivers flow murky. I live in this lasting fog.  
My trees fall limp. No creatures lay in the logs.

## BRIDGE

There rest no carvings in the nature  
No hearts or tapestries  
No works of radiant art  
No cardinals' dazzling symphonies  
With all of it gone  
And nothing to show  
Perhaps it is time  
For my stitches grow sewn

## CHORUS 2

But when I become concrete, the angels won't wish me a welcome  
They'll let me stay in my gathering, a tale so seldom  
How my forest shall rot, and I be the first and last to see it die  
Now, I shall lay in my chamber  
For one final time  
How my forest shall rot  
I be the first and last to see it die  
And I shall lay in this chamber  
For one final time

## FINAL VERSE/EPILOGUE (SPOKEN)

Somewhere in these woods, my body will lay to bed. With the rest of my peers, lying with the crooked dead. Their bodies in shackles, my heart in a solitude. My irises at the gloomy sky, a canvas all in nude. With

my concrete body, and with eyes pointed at the gloomy sky, I see a light in the distance, and . . . I mutter . . . my final reply.

COURTNEY "JANE" GREEN, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Hey Little Bird*

#### VERSE 1

I was walking home, late in the day. There was a little bird, a nightingale I think  
I called out to it, and it would reply, "Hey, little bird, why don't you sing?"  
"I don't like to, I sound annoying." "But aren't nightingales supposed to sing?"  
'My singing drove everyone to flight. And there are others much better than me, but I'll  
try tonight.' But that was just a white lie.

#### CHORUS

Oh, little bird why can't you see that you are free. Free to sing, for yourself, not anyone else. But that little  
bird never sang aloud. Head in the clouds, dreams in the ground

#### VERSE 2

It was a winter day in the afternoon. Not too cold, but still not warm  
The little bird was still in its tree. "Hey little bird you need to go."  
"Well why should I, it's not that cold." "Stubborn little bird it's wintertime.  
It'll get worse. You need to fly." "I'll fly when it gets cold, I promise I'll be fine"  
But that was just a white lie.

#### CHORUS

Oh, little bird why can't you see that you are free. Free to fly, for yourself, not anyone else. But that little  
bird never flew around. Not to the clouds, not to the ground

#### BRIDGE

It was in the middle of wintertime. No birds in sight, save for mine  
I called out to her as she began to cry, "Sweet little bird, what ails you tonight?"  
"Everyone's left and gone ahead. I'm left behind, I'm left behind"  
"Little bird, you need to go. Please fly. I know you're scared but you need to try"  
"Stop telling me everything I know, please don't make me go. I'll be all alone."  
After she sobbed she stopped with a pause, she started to sing a quiet song  
"I promise I'll be better come next spring, if you would please, believe in me."  
But how do you believe a liar.

#### VERSE 3

I was walking home, late in the day. I didn't see the bird in its nest or tree

It was in the snow, sitting very still. I called out to it, just some feet away  
"Hey, little bird. Hey, little bird." But I was only talking to myself

CAROLINE HORNER, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Love Me*

#### VERSE

I thought I'd found a way to let the pain out  
But every night when I close my eyes the tears stream down  
Everything we had is in the past  
Because I've finally realized you aren't coming back

#### CHORUS

So darlin' why did you go like that  
I wish I could bring it all back  
Every little thing, all the love you gave  
Baby, I'm begging you to love me

SARAH JOHNSON, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *How Does It Feel*

Tell me how does it feel  
Now that all your pain is gone  
Are you happy  
Is your heart filled with delight  
Are you soaring through the clouds  
Now that your soul is set free  
Are you singing with the angels  
Now that your heart is set free  
Tell me what does it feel like in heaven

AMERICAUS LANGFORD, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *When You Know It's Not Over Yet*

Back when I was born I was the only one  
I had so much trouble it's like it never left  
I never seem to see the beginning  
It's always flashing as the days go by, the time seems to fly  
We are always in the past, it seems to never last  
If you keep on thinking of the past  
How I'm just passing by and it seems to never end  
But then again it feels like it just began

When I was 16 the flashbacks began, here we go again  
I wish I could figure out what was going on  
But as the days go by the time seems to fly  
We are always in the past and it will never last  
If we keep on thinking of the past  
Now it's the present, we are always fighting till the very end  
Through night and day we keep each other close  
All the way nothing will stop us now  
As time flies by, I feel like I'm about to cry  
Only because it seems like time has just passed by

ALEXANDRIA MCCRACKEN, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *The Story Ends*

Dear friends and family, I haven't been the same lately  
People have their own stories and well, this is mine

#### VERSE 1

Whenever I was younger in first grade  
I had no friends whenever I was younger  
No one cared, no one but my family  
Whenever I was younger I tried to make amends  
But no one listened to my cries and pleas  
But it seems . . . this is where the story ends . . . Not.

#### CHORUS

I was alone and afraid to call their name  
No one understood me  
No one cared to see me cry in pain  
But, hey, this is where my story ends  
This is where my story ends  
Its where it ends Oh, oh  
And . . . begins . . . oh, oh, oh

#### VERSE 2

As I grew older I made friends that soon all betrayed me  
I don't deserve this. I fell in the wrong group  
I thought they were all my friends. Is this the end? Maybe.  
(repeat CHORUS)

## BRIDGE

They promised to stay by my side  
They promised (they, they promised)  
They said they never told a lie to me. They said.  
They promised that I wouldn't cry. No more.  
I can't trust anybody. No one no one, no one . . . This is it.

## CHORUS 2

I was alone and afraid. No one there to see me cry in pain.  
No one there to see the blood running down my veins  
This is my choice to fall . . . This is where it ends  
No one cares. No one cares.  
This is where my story ends . . . My story will end sooner or later  
My story will end and be lost forever  
My life will end. Life will end. This is where my story ends.

ISABELLA ROBBINS, GRADE 8  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## *Summer*

## VERSE 1

Sunny days and fresh breezes make all summer days fun  
Days by a beach with my hair flying free my toes are in  
the sand  
Getting a golden tan until sundown  
Nightly walks by the cool water

## CHORUS

At the end of the day the sun will slowly fall  
Your feet will grow tired  
Your hair will be messy  
Your cheeks might be red  
But the best memories will last forever

## VERSE 2

Running around chasing fireflies  
Waking up to the birds singing  
Sitting by the campfire enjoying tasty treats

Summer days go by fast when you are having fun  
(repeat CHORUS)

ARIANNA PARSONS, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Memories*

#### VERSE

The greatest things are never meant to last.  
The greatest moments are always quick to pass.  
When we're alone is when time seems to slow down,  
And it seems to be so slow right now.

#### CHORUS

Let's try to slow time now, so we can be together.  
You already know how know this will not last forever.  
When this moment's gone, and we go our separate ways,  
I'll pray that these memories with you will never fade.

#### VERSE

Whenever I'm around you, I feel time speeding up.  
I don't want it to "cause I can't ever get enough  
Of time that I get to spend with you,  
So let's slow down before the sky's no longer light blue.  
(repeat CHORUS)

#### BRIDGE

Don't let them fade.  
Let them always be here.  
Don't let me fade.  
I know it may not seem clear,  
But I know things are never meant to last or stay,  
So don't let these memories fade away.  
(repeat CHORUS)  
These memories I've made with you will never fade.

VICTORIA PILON, GRADE II  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Just Fine*

#### VERSE

Oh I really know how to bring someone up  
Oh I really know how to make someone smile

I'll always be up to the task for you  
After all, isn't that what friends do?

## CHORUS

We'll always hold onto kindness  
Because we always know where to find it  
I hold your heart close to mine  
Altogether, we'll be just fine

GABRIELLE RAMIREZ, GRADE II  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## *For My Dad*

You were always there for me  
You would fight for me  
You were my everything  
I looked up to you  
Everyone loved you  
You were good at art  
Your voice made me secure  
Now that you're gone I feel sad  
I feel scared and confused  
I don't know what to do  
When you left I felt shocked  
Life ain't the same without you  
Why did you have to go?  
Why didn't you stay here with me?  
I miss you so  
I wish you were here with me

JIMMY RITCHIE, GRADE 8  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## *Always There*

## CHORUS

You were always there when I needed a friend  
You were always there when I needed a guide  
And when the whole world wasn't on my side, You were always there

## VERSE 1

I once was scared and alone tryna fight a battle on my own  
But then you reached out and gave me your hand  
And said, "Don't worry, I have a plan"  
(repeat CHORUS)

VERSE 2

I thought I'd never see the light, but you came into my life and shined  
so bright  
You taught all about what was right even though we did a few wrongs  
(repeat CHORUS)

VERSE 3

Now we both have grown old, but our friendship will never turn cold  
And I thank God everyday for letting you show me the way  
(repeat CHORUS)  
TAG  
You were always there  
You were always there  
You were always there

NOAH SAGE, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

*A Letter to Grandpa*

VERSE 1

This old backroad keeps on movin  
The same way it did when you were around  
But I can't seem to shake the memory of your smile  
When all these dirt roads are inside out

CHORUS

I hope heaven treats you kindly  
And they always understand  
When they look at you I hope they know  
You're the only thing in this whole world I had  
Cause you were more than just a grandpa  
You were my best friend

VERSE 2

Your grandson still drives that old truck  
And I know that would make you proud  
But everytime I ride beside of him  
I wish you'd lay that pedal down  
(Repeat Chorus)

EMILY SCOTT, GRADE 10  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## Why

### VERSE

I never thought it would go this far.  
But I watched you walk into the dark.  
I opened my eyes hoping it was a dream.  
Then I realized it's not what it seems.

### CHORUS

Why did you have to go so far  
And leave me alone standing in the dark.  
In all of my dreams we were wild and free.  
But you decided you were gonna leave me.

KARLEY SHOEMAKER, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## *Down in Flames*

### VERSE 1

You smile another day, saying you're fine  
But I know you're lying, what you're keeping inside  
I'm begging you to tell me that everything's alright  
But I know if you did it would just be a lie.

### CHORUS 1

Oh, you say your life's going down in flames..  
And it seems like I don't know what I should say. . .  
You keep trying to go and keep me away again,  
And what if I did what'd happen to you?

### VERSE 2

Please, why do you want to go?  
Why can't you just tell me what hurts you so?  
You're turning into a mess and this is  
Hurting me, we just can't take it

### CHORUS 2

Your life is going down in flames,  
But I have no idea what to say,  
You tell me "It's alright, Just go away and leave me to stay,"  
And, I guess that I should have stayed

### VERSE 3

I tried to tell you to stay alive, but  
My luck wasn't on my side..  
You promised you'd stay alive, but  
Now you're not even by my side..

### CHORUS 3

Our lives are going down in flames, and  
I'm choking on smoke not knowing what to say,  
We pushed each other away until the end,  
And . . . I guess you never stayed

NICOLE SMITH, GRADE 8  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Army Brother*

### VERSE 1

We've been waiting for the day you came back to us.  
To see if you have grown from a boy to a man.  
You're selfless in more ways than people can count.  
Fighting and guarding our lovely country.

### CHORUS

We're sending postcards, and letters, and pictures too.  
We're praying for everyone that has chosen this path  
We're waiting by the phone hoping for you,  
picking up every call just waiting for those fifteen seconds of reassurance.  
We're trying to make it through without crying for you.

### VERSE 2

With a few words left, "Stay strong, for you have the world on your shoulders,  
and we love you, but before you go..  
Stay safe, and look out for you and your troop.  
We're going to see you soon."  
(repeat CHORUS)

SOPHIA SMITH, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *I'll Be Okay*

I never knew how much you meant to me until you left me  
And now I'm lost, hopeless and afraid  
Worried that things will never be the same  
You promised you would never turn your back

But I should have known that it was a lie  
You promised me things will be okay  
Is it now? No, everything is not.  
Everyday I wonder what I did to make you leave  
Wonder how I could be so careless and ashamed  
Over the years I was told it's not my fault  
How I wasn't the one who made you leave  
I was told that things were the same  
The only thing that was missing was my sister  
You're the one who made us live in fear  
Always wondering if you were gonna be okay  
And now I know that all my fears aren't true  
I didn't need to worry about you  
You didn't care that you were hurting us  
All you cared about was you  
If it wasn't for the others I don't know where I'd be  
Lost without a home, not a place to call my home  
Now I'm 16 and I know the truth  
All those lies you told me yeah they were all on you  
You told me you don't belong and you couldn't get along  
But now it's clear what you want  
Yeah I know we forgive each other and I know it's in the past  
But this still hurts me and this was my way to escape  
I hope you're happy now that things are finally okay  
I just came to tell you that I love you and I'm okay  
I promise that one day everything will be okay

JAZMINE STONE, GRADE 10  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *This Girl Has Grown*

#### VERSE 1

Felt worthless for a long time  
Thought I wasn't worth a dime  
My head deceived me  
Told me I wasn't who I was supposed to be

#### PRE-CHORUS

It's been a journey  
But I'd do it all again just to witness the end  
I've grown stronger now  
I've made it somehow

#### CHORUS

Like a butterfly shedding its cocoon  
This girl has grown and become someone new

I'm free to be who I want today  
Spread my wings and fly away  
My soul is beautiful my soul is unfurled  
It is shining like the brightest diamond in the world  
I am that girl

#### VERSE 2

They told me I was the shy one, never spoke at all  
Now I've finally found my voice and I am standing tall  
I cannot be torn down I weather the storm  
(repeat CHORUS)

LYDIA TANKERSLEY, GRADE 12  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Can't Stop Missing You*

#### VERSE 1

I wonder where the time has gone  
I wonder if you thought we had fun  
I wonder if we can stay in touch  
Because our friendship means so much

#### CHORUS 1

And as fireflies would glow  
They turned our darkness into a beautiful show  
I never want to let us go, I can't stop missing you

#### VERSE 2

I miss you every day now  
I wish I still had my friend now  
I wish we had more time around  
Cause I can't get you out of my head now

#### CHORUS 2

But now the light of fireflies are dimming  
And I can't help but think our friendship is ending  
And I don't want to think of how it will hurt me  
But I can't stop missing you

#### BRIDGE

But I won't give up hope, because our love was never a joke  
And even though my heart feels broke, I won't give up any hope

### CHORUS 3

Cause I will see you again, and this won't be the end  
I know our light will shine even brighter for you and I  
I just can't shake the thought of us being apart  
But no matter what, you'll never leave my thoughts

ETHAN WEBB, GRADE II  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *Gone*

#### VERSE 1

Why'd you have to go away  
Every day goes by without you by side (by my side)  
The time flying by  
My mom said you'd never see me, but what if I want to see you  
Every day goes by without you by my side (side)

#### CHORUS 1

Every time I think about you all I see is you walking away  
Every time, Yeah, Every time you go away. All you do is hurt me.  
But you don't know what it's like to be abandoned, to be lost and never found  
All ever wanted was to see you again

#### CHORUS 2

Every time I think about you all I see is you walking away  
Every time, Yeah, Every time you go away. All you do is hurt me.  
You don't know, Yeah you don't know what it's like to be abandoned  
No, You don't know.  
You don't know what it's like to be lost and never found (never found)  
All I ever wanted . . . All I ever wanted was to see you again

#### VERSE 2

Even if you came back I'd say go away  
Because every time, every time, they never stay, they walk away  
I wasn't ready (wasn't ready) for the harsh reality  
You never loved me. You only used me.

CHANCELOR WILDER, GRADE 9  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

### *The Legend of Static Man*

#### VERSE 1

A ringing in your ear that's how you know he's here.  
Static Man. Static Man.

The feeling of teeth on the back of your neck. You're too paralyzed to be able to check.  
Static Man. Static Man.  
You feel him taking over. You lose like a game of Red-Rover.  
Static Man. Static Man.

## VERSE 2

Your bones pop out of place. Now he's wearing your face.  
Static Man. Static Man.  
Red eyes in your sockets. Darting as fast as rockets.  
Static Man. Static Man.

## CHORUS

The TV was left on. What a phenomenon.  
Static Man. He's gotcha, man  
You realize your mistake, but it's way too late  
Static Man. Static Man.  
Wasted electricity. Conservation is the key.  
My soul is on the floor. What a shame you locked the door.  
Now there's no escape You're looking like a peeled grape  
Static Man. Static Man.

MACKENZIE WOLIVER, GRADE II  
LEE HIGH SCHOOL

## THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL CHORUS

### *No Shining Light*

Stone cold in the middle of the circus  
But the lights are on you  
Try to fake a smile the curtain draws on you  
When the crowd begins to cheer it's the sign that the end is drawing near!  
I walk up the stage when there's no shining light  
Darkness is all that I can see  
As my fate draws right near  
Trying to run away from the things that hurt me dear  
When the hearts start to descend  
It's the sign that the loneliness ascends  
Presenting the world as there's no shining light  
Fear not we will ascend soon  
Away from evil that is free  
Together just you and me  
The smiles you see  
Can't comprehend it  
When I died long ago  
So when it's time to start the show

I'll drop my heart and away I'll go  
The tears fade  
When there's nobody around  
It leads me to despair  
Make it for a while  
But the world just doesn't care  
When I was first born  
They left me here so I can be destroyed and torn  
I am all alone when there's no shining light  
Stone froze in a world full of colors  
But I fall inside the black  
Showing me that there is no hope for me to come back  
Under the moon and through the sun  
It's the sign that I will soon be all done  
Fighting my past as there's no shining light  
You wouldn't love me even when I'm smiling  
You wouldn't even care when I am crying  
It wouldn't help just shake it off but to let me drown  
Maybe I'm not suppose to know  
Or would it kill you just to tell yourself I'm gone  
I'm running away when there's no shining light  
Fear not we will ascend soon  
Away from evil that is free  
Together just you and me  
The smile you see  
Can't comprehend it  
When I died long ago  
So when it's time to start the show  
I'll drop my heart and away I'll go

ETHAN BRADLEY, GRADE 10  
THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

### *I Wish You Were Still Here*

#### VERSE 1

I remember when I was little I would always ask you if you would build my house for  
me  
You always told me that you would  
I remember when your truck caught on fire one night in November  
You worked so hard to put out the flames until the firefighters got there  
You got sick from all of the smoke

#### VERSE 2

You kept getting worse and was put in the hospital

I had to stay home to go to school. I missed you whenever I wasn't with you.  
My mom stayed with you at the hospital while my older sister and brother took care of  
the rest of us.

### VERSE 3

You came home one weekend . . . I was so happy  
Your sickness got worse so you had to go back to the hospital  
May 4, 2015, Mom came home from the hospital  
She gathered the family at her house to share the news  
She told us that you did not have much time

### VERSE 4

She let my brother, sister, and me stay home from school so we could go to the hospital  
to see you and say our goodbyes  
When May 5th came, we got up early to come see you  
When we got to the hospital, you were already gone  
Saying goodbye to you was the hardest thing to ever do

### CHORUS

You are not here to see me graduate high school and see me go to college  
I wish you were still here so you can watch me continue to grow  
I wish you were still here so you can see your grandkids grow  
I wish you were still here so you can walk me down the aisle at my wedding  
Why did you have to leave so soon?  
Why did you have to go when I needed you the most?  
I wish you were still here with me.  
It is not goodbye because I know you are watching over me in heaven.  
I know you are up in heaven building a house for whenever it's time for the rest of the  
family to come and be with you.  
I know that you are not in pain anymore, but why did you have to leave so soon?  
Why did you have to go? When I needed you the most.  
Remembering you is easy, I do it everyday.  
Missing you is the heartache that never goes away.  
Your guiding hand will always be on my shoulder remaining with me forever.  
You taught me to be strong, but I am sorry if I'm letting you down.  
I can never be strong enough to accept that you are no longer here . . . I miss you Dad.

CAROLINA COLLINS, GRADE II  
THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

### *Life Ain't A Disappointment*

Life ain't a disappointment  
But my mistakes make up for it  
Sorry is just a word

And a choice is just a choice  
 Though some people leave  
 Most aren't worth the bearing  
 She's left weak and now she's strong  
 In the worthy hands of God  
 Though her body is weak  
 Though her soul is not here with us  
 Her smile will forever be in your heart  
 Life ain't a disappointment  
 But my mistakes make up for it  
 Sorry is just a word  
 And a choice is just a choice  
 Though some glad morning  
 You'll see her one day  
 She's left this world  
 But she's still in your heart  
 Life ain't a disappointment  
 But my mistakes sure make up for it  
 Sorry is just a word  
 And a choice is still a choice  
 She left too soon for some  
 But for others she was late  
 But For the angels up in heaven  
 She was right on time  
 Life ain't a disappointment  
 But my mistakes sure make up for it  
 Sorry is just a word  
 And a choice is still a choice  
 A song is not a song without the music in your heart  
 And life ain't a disappointment with her  
 Smile in your heart

DALLAS DOYLE, GRADE 8  
 THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

### *The Love Of My Life*

You are the first thing I think of in the morning and the last thing I think of at night  
 I couldn't ask for any better. I don't need nobody but you  
 You're my world I love the sound of you voice  
 I love it when you look into my eyes and say I love you  
 Yes we fight alot but we love each other so much that we don't stay mad at  
     each other  
 No matter what comes in ower way we can overcome it  
 No matter how big of a mount we can climb it  
 We can do anything that we set our minds to

BREANNA JACKSON, GRADE 10  
 THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

## *If Heaven Had A Payphone*

### VERSE 1

I wanna go home  
The home I knew before when things were bright and happy  
Until you knocked on Heaven's door  
I wanna go home, to the home I had when I was young  
When you were right beside me when my life first began

### CHORUS

The memories of your face start to fade, to fade  
But I still hear your voice like it was yesterday  
I didn't realize our time was numbered  
There's still so much that I want to say  
If heaven had a payphone you could call me anyday  
If heaven had a payphone

### VERSE

I would wait for you to call everyday  
I would talk to you for hours until it was time to part ways  
I'd tell you every detail big, small, or lame  
Because since that day you left things have never been the same  
(repeat CHORUS)

Like how much I love you, how I miss you everyday  
If Heaven had a payphone you could call me anyday  
If Heaven had a payphone

### BRIDGE

I'd sell everything I have just to feel your embrace  
I'll run a thousand miles to see your face  
It's been seven long years without you and my heart still breaks  
How much hurt can a young heart still take?  
If Heaven had a payphone I'd sit by mine always  
If Heaven had a payphone  
(repeat CHORUS)

SARA JANEWAY, GRADE 12  
THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

## *The Angel In My Life*

### VERSE 1

I found this man, the greatest of all  
He loves me so much, and I love him right back

He proposed in August, and I'm marrying him on May twenty third  
Because God saw fit, to bring an angel to me

### CHORUS

There's angels all around, but one of them is mine  
He was sent from God, as a gift from above  
I give God all the praise, for such a wonderful man  
I promise to love, and give all that I have  
Cause there's an angel in my life

### VERSE 2

My mother never had an Angel for her, I'm the only one she got  
And I'm flying away  
My mamaw says I should wait, til 2 years are up  
I don't understand, because I need him right now  
I don't wanna wait, I want my angel now

### CHORUS

They never understood it  
But I tried to make them see  
That we weren't poor at all  
We were rich in love you see?  
All I want to do is be this man's wife  
And love him til I die  
Cause hes an angel in my life

### VERSE 3

They say I won't have any money, that I'll be poor for  
the rest of my life  
He works all the time, but to them that's not good enough  
My preacher won't marry us, cause my angel don't have the blood applied  
They treat him like he's sick, but he's just a sinner like you and I  
My family say they live good, like any christian should  
But then hate on my angel, and never say forgive me Lord

### CHORUS

They never understood it  
But I tried to make them see  
That we aren't poor at all  
We are rich in love you see?  
All I want to do is be this man's wife  
And love him til I die  
Cause he's an angel in my life

VERSE 4

It's all part of God's plan, he never said it would be all fun  
There's some reason the devil, wants us apart  
I wish all would just accept, my gift from above  
And not try to take, my angel from me

VERSE 5

He is my angel, my only angel  
He makes me happy when skies are grey  
No one knows just how much I love him  
No one will ever take  
My angel away

VERSE 6

All I want to do is be this man's wife  
And love him til I die  
Cause hes an angel in my life  
My angel, my angel, the angel in my life

HANNAH JONES, GRADE 12  
THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

*I Love Spending Time With My Friends*

VERSE

They make me smile when no one else can.  
My friends stood by me when I was down and needed a shoulder to lean on.

CHORUS

I just want to say dear old friend I just want to say I love you.  
You've been here for all these past years and  
you've been here when no one else would.

VERSE

All these years and all the memories that we had cherished.  
All the times that you would come over to check up on me.

MARIAH MOORE, GRADE 8  
THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

## *You Are The Reason*

### VERSE

I wanna go up, up where I can see the ones before me  
To see the rushing rivers and not worry about a thing  
A place where stress, pain, and anger doesn't exist up there  
I wanna go up and be with the King

### CHORUS

I can see my Lord, His arms open wide, the one who helped me  
through it all and is Saying "Child do not cry." I think about, the things He did  
for me  
And can't help that tears leave my eyes while I fall down on my knees  
I look up and ask him how . . . He looks me in the eyes and He says,  
"Child you are the reason why."

### VERSE

I woke up from this dream again  
I look at the world we live in thinking how did it end up this way  
(repeat CHORUS)

SILINA PARSONS, GRADE II  
THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

## *We Are All Different*

### VERSE 1

We all wear a mask. We all change to fit in.  
We try to hide our tears. We are all beautiful the way we are no  
matter what.

### CHORUS

You find so many people are indifferent but you are mostly different.  
You wear a mask to hide it so that no one will find it.

### VERSE 2

You find people are unmasked but you are mostly masked  
It's ok to be different because no one is the same.

Masked, different and forgotten, beautiful too but you are loved  
 And those are the qualities of you. Those are the qualities of you.

ISABELLE RODRIGUEZ, GRADE 9  
 THOMAS WALKER HIGH SCHOOL

*Advanced Orchestra*  
*Jennifer Malechek, Stonewall Jackson High School*

The drum beats resonated like the bustling feet of my people. What I remember from my time in Ghana are the heart thumping rhythms that transcended conversations. The Speakers of the old radio's resting on the hard sandy ground spluttered out the first few beats. There was no easing your way into



the music. The prominent drumming cane hard and fast, rejecting all rules of music. This was my first experience with music. While fast and jarring, these sounds comforted me with memories of my home. It wasn't until I was 12 years old when I was confronted with something different. My school invited an orchestra teacher to play for us and entice us to pick up an instrument. It was there, cross legged in the cold gym floor, that the smooth melodies of the violin entered my heart. It was vastly different from the music I came from. The violin

snuck up on me, entrapping my attention. The drums of Ghana, demanded my attention. It was there I decided to learn how to play the violin. I wanted to learn how this instrument produced something so starkly different than what I was used to but somehow managed to captivate me.

YAA AMOAKOHENE, GRADE 12  
 STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL



When I was a child my mom would always play Baby Einstein to calm siblings down whenever they threw a tantrum. The music would always grab my attention whenever I listened to it. The style of the music, the different kinds of instruments playing together in a whole. There was always one song that got my full attention but I never knew what the song was called until I was in middle school. It was called Für Elise by Beethoven, it's always been a beautiful piece of music that has never left my mind. Those pieces pushed me to where I wanted to be part of a music

group until in fifth grade a woman came to my school and played different kinds of sounds that came out the instruments. The violin, viola, cello, and double bass. The instrument that caught my attention was the viola, it was the one for me it was in between the higher strings and the lower strings. Although it doesn't capture the eye of many people, it certainly caught mine.

NANCY BERMUDEZ, GRADE 12  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL



Believe it or not, no one has inspired me to play the violin. I decided to play the violin myself. In fifth grade, the elementary school that I went to had an Orchestra program. My teacher asked me if I wanted to join, I agreed to join. Here I am now playing the violin for seven years. I also play the cello. For the cello someone did inspire me, that was one of my classmates. Seeing how beautifully, smoothly, and passionate they were playing the cello made me want to play. Present day, being inspired by all the people around me, I want to become an Orchestra teacher.

NANCY BONILLA-ALVAREZ, GRADE 11  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL



The reason why I decided to become a musician is because when I was young, my parents would put on a music channel so that we could watch people perform in a large stage with thousands of people. I remember when I saw a guy playing a violin solo and he sounded amazing to my ears. I felt the emotion when he was playing as the notes were resonating throughout the auditorium. This inspired me to play the violin. I wanted to learn how to play as well as him and play exciting pieces in the future.



Later after that wonderful experience, I joined the school orchestra program. I know It is not easy to play like a professional. It takes time to get that good. Throughout the years of learning to play the violin, I discovered many different techniques, rhythms, and ways to improve as a musician. It is always fun to play in a large orchestra and to be able to listen to each other's parts.

I know that I am a bit decent in my playing, but I know that I can do better. The more I practice the better the way I sound. Playing the music would always keep me in a good mood and I am grateful about the decision that I made about being a musician.

JONATHAN DELCID AMAYA, GRADE 11  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

### *Why I became a musician*

I wasn't pushed to become a musician it just happened. In middle school you are told you had to chose a music class so I chose orchestra. I wanted to play the viola but ended up playing the cello. At first I wasn't confident but throughout the years I began to enjoy playing. So I became a musician without a purpose but my love of music grew over the years. Now I push myself to try and be better every year. I strive to be a good musician to be balanced, to be different, and to express myself. I am now a musician because I love music and it allows me to escape from reality and create my on world with music.

TAMRA GREEN, GRADE 11  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

### *Music*

How has music effected my life? Whether it's from the strings vibrating on my violin or the sounds of a piano or even the beats of a song on the radio, music has revolved around my world since I could even remember. Since a kid, I remember tapping the table like a drum or clapping my little baby hands to the music. Music is very important to my everyday life. Everything changed once I signed up for orchestra.

I remember going down to the gym and being introduced by a lady. She had a cello in her rested on her body but I had no idea what it was at the time and she proceeded to go upstairs and she sat down and explained to us what Orchestra was and proceeded to demonstrate. As she played, I was mesmerized from the simple song but at the time it seemed so complex. At that moment I fell in love. To this day orchestra has been one of my passions. Every-time I pick up my violin I feel at home and it's something I will have a passion for forever.

EDWIN LINARES-RIVERA, GRADE 12  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Both my mother and my father have come from musical families. My mom's side works in television and music, and my dad is related to a Romanian folk artist. At age 4 or 5, my mom signed me up for piano lessons with her friend. Her friend eventually opened up her own music store. The reason I joined wasn't really about my mom's background, but rather she wanted me to be able to think creatively. Throughout my life, I've learned the piano, guitar, bass guitar, drums, and violin. I love to play because it makes me happy. I really enjoy playing, and want to continue playing, even past high school and all of the music lessons.

VICTORIA MACOVEI, GRADE 9  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Another year another concert, but it's not always the same. For me, every concert is a new experience and feeling. During my first ever concert, I remember feeling scared and nervous. Going on to other concerts, I began to feel excitement, joy, relief, and so on. And it is those feelings that always bring me back to my first concert. I've been playing for 8 years now, but my journey is coming to an end as I graduate this year.

It was a blast, playing with new people each year and making new friends! I've made so many memories to look back to. Although This is my last year playing in an orchestra. I will still continue to play everyone and then.

ERICK MARTINEZ, GRADE 12  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

### *What Music Means to Me*

Music is always a safe place. There is so much music and such different music out in the world. So, no matter how I feel, there's something I can listen to. When I'm happy there's music that shows me I'm understood. I have music to dance with, to cry with, to sing with, to play with, and to sleep with. To me music means: it's never the wrong time and I'm never alone.

JOCELYN MARTINEZ, GRADE 11  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

The reason I became a musician is an unforgettable story for me to tell. I first knew I wanted to play a strings instrument when my older brother chose to play the cello. Hearing the instrument by itself was an entirely new experience for me. Throughout my elementary school years, I enjoyed music class and in fifth grade I wanted to learn as much as I could. In fifth grade, I chose the viola as my instrument. My family and friends supported my interests in music. However, this choice was a difficult decision for me at the time. Although I did not know much about string instruments or the viola, my passion for it grew regardless. It was also a tough process, but thinking back to why I chose to play a string instrument, I felt that I needed to do the best I could. I acknowledged that it would require being responsible and being committed to learning the skills necessary to be successful. After many years of successes, failures, and support, my decision to not give up was the best thing to happen and I do not regret making the first decision that made it all happen.

FAHMEED NABI, GRADE 10  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Music has influenced my life by giving me an escape. Since I was young, music was a constant in my family. Throughout high school my dad played an array of band instruments and my mom played the cello. They loved music and would play the radio and CDs everywhere. It was in the car, the kitchen, the living room, and even when we were going to bed.

They never forced me to take any music lessons but when the time came I joined my 5th grade orchestra on the violin. My younger brother, who had the opportunity to join in 4th grade, quit during his 5th grade year. I kept playing. This year (2019–2020) will have been my 5th year playing, and I've lived every minute of it.

Music has made me want to share music and all the benefits if it. It's helped me focus on schoolwork and it gives me an escape

GRACIE O'NEAL, GRADE 9  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

I wanted to become a musician since I was a little kid just watching movies. I would listen to music played by an orchestra and I wanted to play an instrument from the orchestra. When I was in 4th grade, my first instrument I played was the recorder. I enjoyed playing the instrument and it was easy for me to learn and play it but I remember my classmates would always struggle. I wanted to be the best in my class and be the first person to get the blackbelt on my recorder (the highest award you could get by playing a piece for a test). Eventually I did achieve my goal to be the first one in my class to get the top reward and then I still wanted to continue with music.

Chorus was the first group that I joined for 4th grade. I enjoyed being with the group even though we didn't play instruments. I sang and soon we had an all-city concert. That was my first concert and I had fun being in that concert full of music. Once I was in 5th grade I got the violin. It was easy for me to learn the basics and I had no trouble when playing at the concerts. In 6th grade we had field trips and assessments for our concerts. The pieces I played were fun and I liked the pieces that were more difficult because it made it a challenge for me. I moved to a different school county for 7th grade but I still played in orchestra.

I wanted a challenge so I would audition for all county when I could. I made it in for 7th grade and 8th grade. I am going to play the violin for the rest of my life because I enjoy playing it. And it helps me in many ways. I can express my emotions by playing music. I've made it far for myself by playing music and I'm really glad that I chose music

ADRIAN ORELLANA, GRADE 9  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Music is a universal language, the rhythm and emotion that comes from playing or listening to an instrument is an indescribable feeling of unity with everyone across the world. Coming from two different worlds and two different cultures music has been a critical part of my childhood and an important part of my life growing up. Especially playing the violin has made me into the musician I am today, this could be because I am one small part of a lineage of violinists. I still remember traveling to my mothers homeland of Sweden and always loving their style of playing the violin and how it enthralled me and put me at peace. My great grandfather was a violinist and would play at weddings atop of a horse, which was an interesting part of the Swedish Marriage tradition, and how people would say his music could bring those who were in love together through his music. There is a sense of joy and brightness to Swedish music, the way it brings people together in fun and dance. My mother and I would always enjoy ourselves in the upbeat nature of Swedish summer feasts and the music that was played in the dance ceremonies, laughing and singing to the beat of our feet as we danced around a flower pole. Being a violinist has not only changed my perspective on music, it has also made me appreciate how it brings all sorts of people with different backgrounds to join together in dance and song and made me feel unified with my culture.

EMILY PINEDA, GRADE 12  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

### *The Impact of Music*

Personally, music is a way of expressing oneself in an artistic way. A connection can be built between a musician and the piece which allows for a stronger sentimental projection of the music through the complete engagement on the performance of a piece. Being able to connect to the music being performed and play with passion and devoted emotions gives me a moment of complete serenity. When playing a piece and being completely engaged I can have a peace of mind giving myself up to the rhythm of the music. In doing this, a form of communication is created with the audience throughout the narration of the piece.

Having the power to tell a story through musical aspects and skills is a key that makes the art of musicianship unique and magical. Playing music allows me to build on talent and explore the field of musicianship. This form of communication and expression is an art by which multitudes of lives and hearts can be touched and impacted. Music holds immense power by which so many like me are amazed by.

ALBA REYES MONTIEL, GRADE 11  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

I became a musician because I wanted to find a way to express myself. I wanted to be able to understand and repeat the music and song I heard from others. I chose the violin when I had the chance in order to learn

about music and learn how songs are formed. It has also given me a view into history due to the changing styles from different time periods. It has also inspired me to want to learn how to compose music.

When I first started to play the violin well, I started to try and play familiar music. From videogames, movies, and TV. It felt good when people recognized them, like I was helping them remember the times that they had forgotten. When I hear a familiar piece of music, I want to learn how to play it for myself. I feel accomplished when I've learned the whole piece.

Learning the violin has also inspired me to want to learn more instruments. School taught me how to read sheet music and understand notes. I've used this to learn piano. I also want to learn how to play other instruments like guitar.

KEVIN RIVERA, GRADE II  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

At first, I was never interested in learning about music. The only reason I was introduced to it is because my mom wanted me to try different activities. I first started piano lessons in elementary school. At first, I disliked the lessons since I thought they were useless and boring. Once I began to learn I realized that playing the piano was more interesting than I thought. Learning to play beautiful pieces and perfecting techniques provided a fun challenge for myself. If I had not followed my mom's advice to explore new activities, I would never have sparked my interest in music.

When I was in fifth grade, I learned that there was a strings program I could join. Since I already had some knowledge about music, I wanted to join so I could learn more. I decided to play the violin for reasons I cannot remember. I continued into orchestra for middle school and high school, and I still take piano lessons to this day. Throughout those years I learned to appreciate music more and my interest remains today.

JILLIAN ROSSEAU, GRADE II  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

### *The Sounds that Move Them*

My Great Grandfather played violin. Papa Paco, as we called him, grew up in the rural impoverished areas of Guatemala and lived a life filled with many hardships. Papa Paco may have been illiterate but that was never going to be his legacy. All my life I have heard stories of the songs he would compose by ear and his sheer love for music. He would perform for everyone on the streets to simply bring, not only himself joy, but to bring joy to everyone around him. My Papa Paco played anything and everything he heard with no proper instruction, he simply let the sounds go and live on through his own interpretations. I wanted to share that, to experience that, something greater than me. Ever since the first day I was given my viola, I have persevered, I never let what I was not able to currently do define what I would be able to do. The Man who inspired me to keep following the sounds of music was the same man who inspired so many others in his own town. Papa Paco was the wonderous man I never got to meet, he told stories through sounds I will never be able to hear, but he left an imprint in not only everyone's mind, and heart but their soul too. To this day I love playing for my family because I swear, every time a note rings a sudden spark comes across their eyes as I know that his melodies have danced across their minds once again. They begin to smile as music begin to fill the room and the memories of his joy while playing shines through. The whispers that once moved their souls through his songs carry some resonance through mine. My family sways to the sequence of notes and I know it is his sound that moves them.

ANGIE TELLEZ-SANDOVAL, GRADE II  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Even as a child, music was always a part of my life. Listening to music was just a part of my daily life just like waking up was. With music I do not have any specific tastes in music, I will listen to anything that

sounds good and be able to replicate emotions. Music is important to me for a variety of reasons, but the main reasons are that music simply makes me happy and I tend to attach memories to it. For me specific songs are linked to a specific period, and when I hear those songs it reminds them of sweet happy memories during the time period the song is linked to. As I grew, I still maintained a deep connection to music and even took an interest in making music which makes me as happy as listening to music. Music has always been an important part of life and it will always stay that way.

JONATHAN UMANA, GRADE 10  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

When I was a little kid, I've always been thinking about what my future holds for me. then ever since I started taking orchestra in 4th grade. And my teacher was teaching me the basics about holding the instrument, using the bow on the string to create sounds from my instrument. I had a connection with my instrument. So, I finally figure out what I wanted to do is become a musician because it shows who I really am as a person. It shows my personality in music and these are the reasons why I choose to become a musician.

FRANKLIN VILLALTA, GRADE 12  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

Seven great years have gone by from being inspired by the sweet melody of a violin to present day. Some may say they are done but how far do we truly want to go. In other words, people say there are limits that stop us, but to be honest there are no limits at all. Some of us continue to strive to meet our goals, my self-included is on this journey. Never give up on what you want to accomplish because we can go as far as we want in our journey. Now how far will you go? Seven great years have gone by from being inspired by the sweet melody of a violin to present day. Some may say they are done but how far do we truly want to go. In other words, people say there are limits that stop us, but to be honest there are no limits at all. Some of us continue to strive to meet our goals, my self-included is on this journey. Never give up on what you want to accomplish because we can go as far as we want in our journey. Now how far will you go?

RONALD VILLATOROS ORTIZ, GRADE 11  
STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

# LANGUAGE OF ART



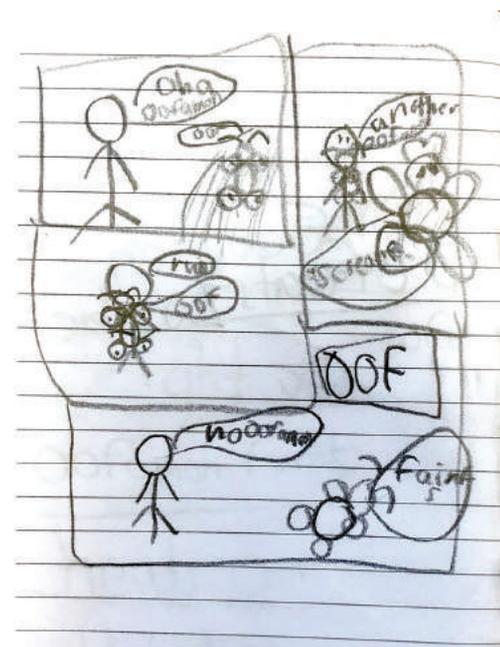
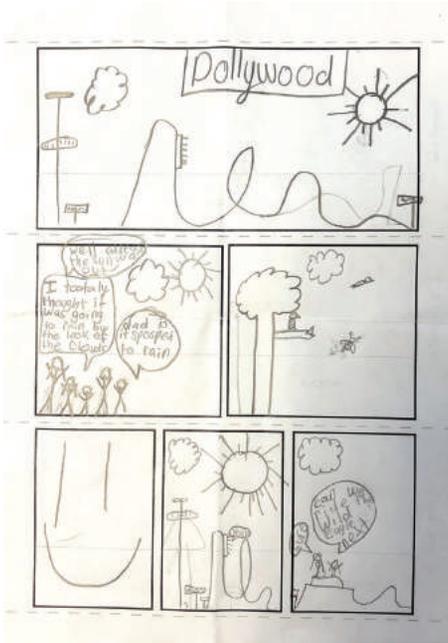
## Language of Art

### Flatwoods Elementary Art Class

#### Graphic Novels Inspired by Jarrett Krosoczka

This year, for The Origin Project, the fourth graders at Flatwoods Elementary were inspired by the amazingly talented graphic novelist, Jarrett Krosoczka. Many students were able to attend his writing workshop at Emory & Henry College, and when we got back to the art classroom, students were itching to put pencil to paper.

After a class discussion, they were fired up about the idea of spicing up their stories with pictures. We learned about character development, story outlining, and how to turn each part into a frame that showed action with dialogue. We fol-



lowed a similar process they have already become accustomed to in their language arts class: brainstorm, research, rough draft, revisions, critiques, and final draft. It has been enlightening to see the progression of these students' work, and their enthusiasm never wavers.

The students were so motivated that some of them decided they wanted to continue working on their comics at home. Others decided to team up with a partner and combine their ideas to create a story together.



I have been able to work one on one with each student, which has been an enriching process. I was able to witness a couple of my students who lacked interest in art become driven to make a graphic novel. The key to their excitement was the realization they could make their images humorous. Laughing with friends, they were doodling more than I had ever seen before, and it was like a lightbulb illuminated right in front of me. We then had a class discussion about adding embellishments to their otherwise true stories, then the room erupted with passionate debate about the elements they were going to add in.

Together this year, we discovered a whole new genre of books, and were able to enhance our writing as a result. Now they are viewing their stories as little pieces that flow together

instead of separate sentences jammed together. I hope they have enjoyed this process as much as I have watching them grow as writers.

ALYSSA DOTSON, ART TEACHER  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



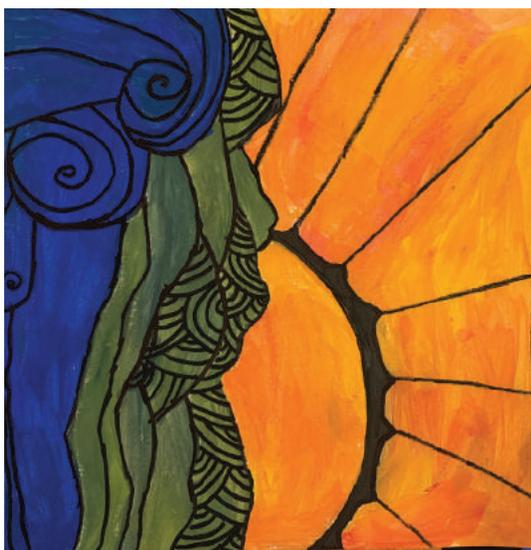
St. Paul Elementary School Art Class



*Snowy Friend: Tempera, Brayden Rose, Grade 4*



*Corn Maze: Acrylic, Emily Morrison, Grade 6*



*Sunny Daze: Sabrina Compton, Grade 7*



*Blotched It: Sean Stevens, Grade 4*

## Virginia High School



*Cat in the Hat, Pencil, Charley McKemy*



*Jackrabbit, Nick Stout*



*Mercy, Pencil, Alexus Martin*



*Moonlight, Acrylic, Tenisha Poore*

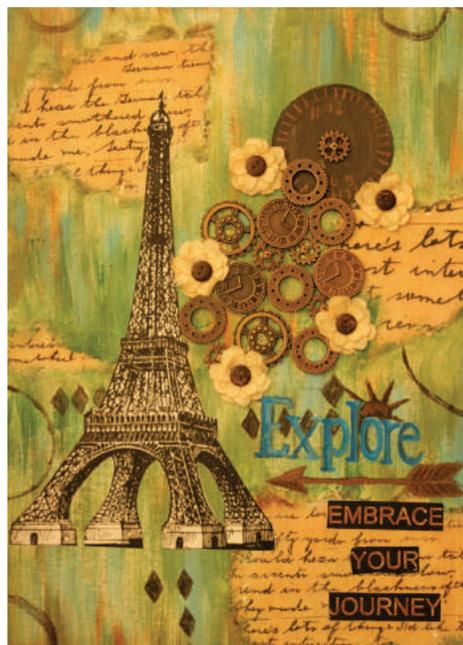
Eastside High School Art Class



Roar, Multi-Media Acrylic, Kaitlyn Robinson, Grade 11



Harvest, Pencil Sketch, Kaitlyn Robinson, Grade 11



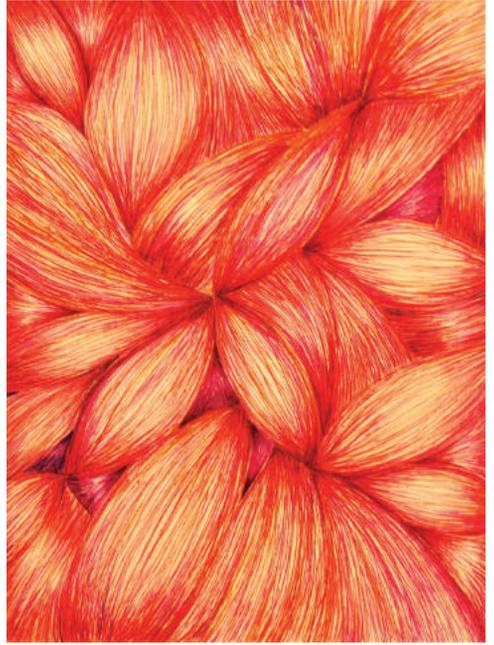
Multi-Media Acrylic, Marissa Smith, Grade 12



Morning Coffee, Coffee & India Ink, Marissa Smith, Grade 12



*Flower Garden, Pen/Ink, Marissa Smith, Grade 12*



*Rose Petal, Pen/Ink, Marissa Smith, Grade 12*



*Let the Music Play, Pencil Sketch, Marissa Smith, Grade 12*



*Masked Beauty, Ceramic, Kaitlyn Robinson, Grade 11*



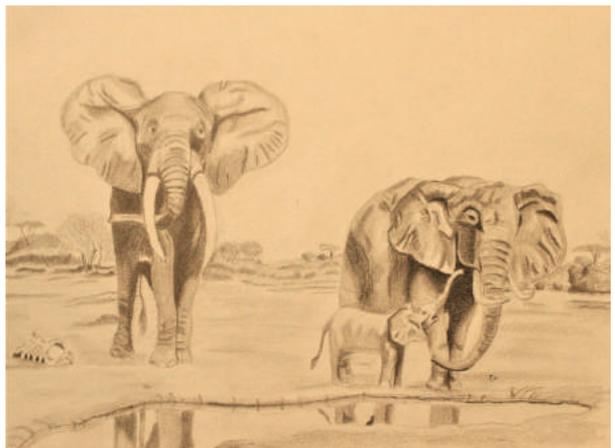
*Morning Wake-Up, Acrylic Palette Knife, Brandi Wade, Grade 11*



*Hello, Multi-Media Acrylic, Brandi Wade, Grade 11*



*Oh Deer, Pencil Sketch, Faith Meade, Grade 12*



*The Hurd, Pencil Sketch, Faith Meade, Grade 12*



*Creeper, Pencil Sketch, Faith Meade, Grade 12*



*The Forest, Watercolor, Landon Deits, Grade 9*



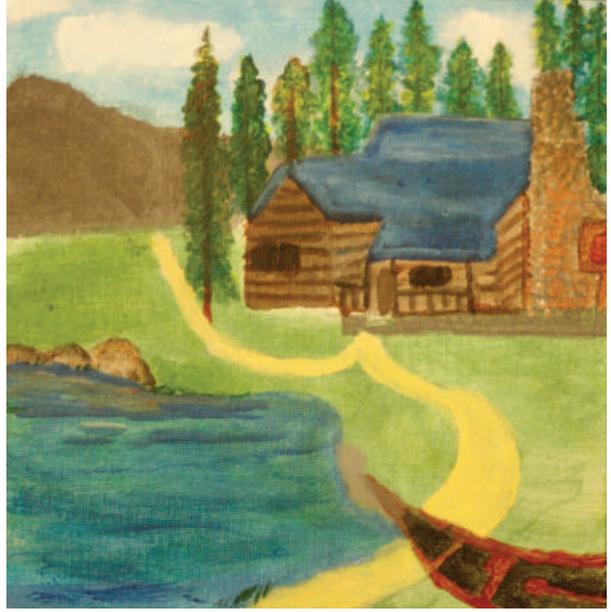
*Girl in Cotton, Acrylic, Kaylee Hill, Grade 10*



*Pumpkin Harvest, Landon Deits, Grade 9*



*Tin Punch, Tin, Kaylee Hill, Grade 10*



*Forest Cabin, Acrylic, Hannah Edwards, Grade 9*



*Night Stars, Watercolor, Brandi Wade, Grade 11*



*Twisted: Ceramic, Marissa Smith, Grade 12*

Stonewall Jackson High School Art Class



Mariama Mustapha, Grade 11



Marissa Lustan, Grade 12



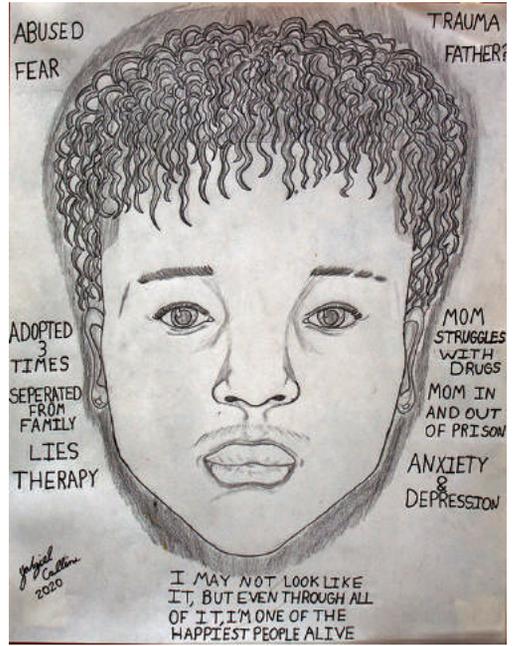
Karen Geter, Grade 11



Krista Johnson, Grade 11



Sydney Shepherd, Grade 12



Yahziel Collins, Grade 12



Malaika Campbell, Grade 11



Glenda Shul Alverado, Grade 11



*Alexandra Huamani-Lopez, Grade 11*



*Honey Syan, Grade 11*



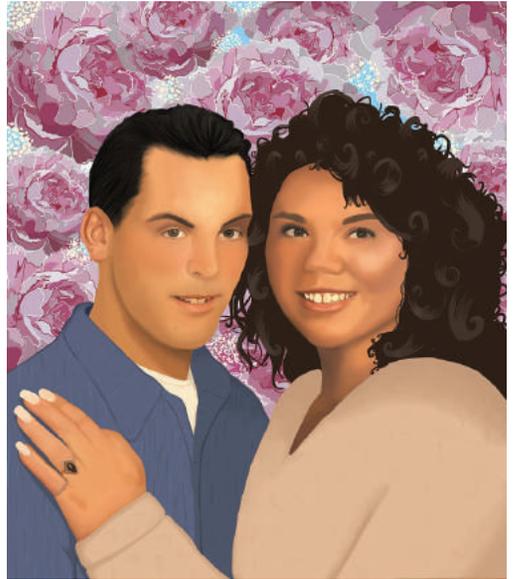
*Gabriela Benitez Hernandez, Grade 12*



*Kelly Marquez, Grade 11*



*Marjorie Del Cid, Grade 12*



*Paige Ramandanes, Grade 11*



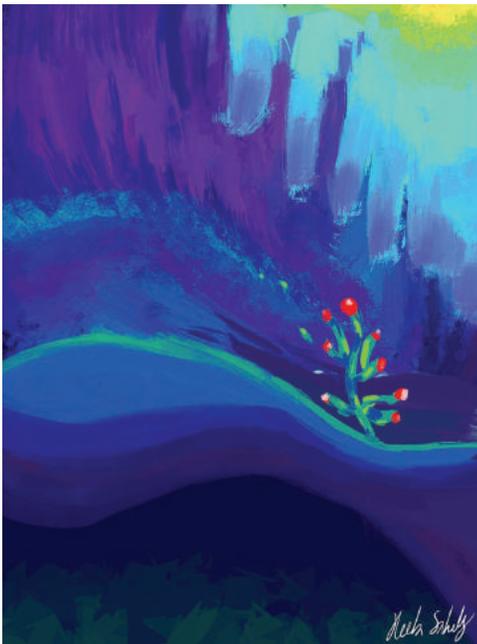
*Nathalie Cornejo, Grade 12*



Heela Sabely, Grade 12



Katelyn Rodriguez, Grade 12



Heela Sabely, Grade 12



Brianna Lark, Grade 12



Carey Geter, Grade 11



Khadija Bangura, Grade 12



Christopher Guzman-Cruz, Grade 11

## Woodbridge Senior High School Art Field Trip *Camera Eyes: On Poetry*

The Center for the Arts in Manassas, Virginia, presented “Camera Eyes: On Poetry,” featuring local published poet and photographer, JoAnn Lord Koff. The Woodbridge Senior High School field trip to the gallery included a talk with JoAnn Koff. We began with JoAnn telling us the story of her book publication which led to the gallery show. She talked about her own diverse origins that influenced her poetry and gave her the opportunity to take photographs all over the world. Her book is titled *Sand, Pebbles, Fossils, and Rocks: a lyrical ambrosia of poetic writings and captivating photographs*. We followed with an engaging question and answer session, and JoAnn read three of her poems. Next was the writing workshop during which students selected a photograph to use as a springboard to writing poems and stories. After a period of “quiet” writing time, many of the students stood and shared beautiful poetry and prose. Finally, we ate lunch in Old Town Manassas. It was an outstanding and inspirational day!

It was comforting to be able to talk with my family about our origins and connect with my culture. What I wrote reminds me of what I love about Peru and my relatives there.

RENATO ECONA, GRADE 10  
WOODBRIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

When I turned in my work, I got good feedback. The trip really inspired me and gave me good ideas for creative writing. Hopefully my ideas will become great stories. I loved when we looked at pictures and we wrote poems. Everyone’s poems were great. After the workshop, we walked around and ate food. The food was really good, and my surroundings were also inspiring. I hope to do this again!!

HANNAH FRAZIER, GRADE 12  
WOODBRIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

It made me evaluate a room and, in the future, my surroundings differently. I’ll try to question everything I do in an artistic perspective. The field trip was definitely



one for the books, mainly because of the area we visited and the scenery. I learned to stretch my brain when it comes to writing and to trust the process.

CINIYA GRAY, GRADE II  
WOODBRIIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

On this trip, I learned a lot about the Origin Project, which is expressing yourself through writing, art, or photography. It was really interesting to hear others' thoughts and feelings. I never knew my classmates could write like that, especially seeing my best friend share her work. It really brought joy to my heart. I loved exploring Old Town Manassas and looking at the beautiful scenery. Thank you for this wonderful experience; it was way better than I expected.

YEAMA SAM-MBOMAH, GRADE I2  
WOODBRIIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

What I learned about was that I am becoming comfortable with who I am. I used to try and hide certain flaws about myself, but I've learned to embrace them through my writing. I really enjoy writing for the Origin Project because it allows me to express who I am in my writing with no judgment.

NEREIDA SUSANA ANTUNEZ, GRADE II  
WOODBRIIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

# BEFORE & AFTER: WHY THE ORIGIN PROJECT MATTERS



*Mollie Weitzman at border wall in Jordan*



*Zabra Wakilzada speaking with US Senator Tim Kaine during TOP event at Stonewall Jackson High School*

## Why The Origin Project Matters

My students and I have thoroughly enjoyed being a part of The Origin Project. Being a part of the project has allowed us to realize the unique individuals we are, each with our own special stories and talents. The Origin Project has allowed my students not only to strengthen their writing skills, but to celebrate their family stories and traditions. We have explored family recipes, special places and people in their lives, and shared wonderful, beautiful memories.

MARGARET DEE, ENGLISH TEACHER  
PHOEBUS HIGH SCHOOL

The Origin Project has been an eye-opening experience for my students, both as writers and as young adults. In taking the time to reflect on past experiences, memories, and moments, we were really able to get to know ourselves better. The human experience knows no limits, so when my kids reminisced on the area they grew up in and the traditions they experienced in their lives, I was able to get a glimpse into how they have become such wonderful, multi-dimensional individuals. I genuinely hope you enjoy these submissions from my hardworking creative writing students, who so bravely made themselves vulnerable on paper for your reading pleasure.

KASEY RIZZO  
CREATIVE WRITING TEACHER  
PHOEBUS HIGH SCHOOL

### *Lifetime Memories*

Where can I begin in trying to express what a wonderful opportunity it is for the Peter Paul Academy student to participate in the Origin Project? This truly is an experience that our Peter Paul students will treasure for a lifetime. It is because of the Origin Project that our students were given the opportunity to write about their hopes, dreams, and aspirations. This specific opportunity will assist the children in charting a plan that will help them identify tangible goals, which will influence the rest of their lives.

As I reviewed what our students had written about the legacies they hoped to give to their communities and the world at large, the things they wrote about and shared left a lasting imprint upon my heart.

Furthermore, the Origin Project enables the Pete Paul students to dream . . . to use pen and paper to share their thoughts. Origin Project carves out the space for our Peter Paul students to freely express themselves in a supportive environment.

ANGELYN POE, READING TEACHER  
PETER PAUL DEVELOPMENT CENTER

### *Why The Origin Project Matters*

Through the Origin Project, I began to think critically about the things I want to write. Knowing what you're going to say next is going to get published gives you a pressure unknown to most. You start to think "someone is going to read this." That's the inevitable.

It made me think about the content of my writing. Who am I speaking to? What am I saying? There was nothing I could've stated about my origins at the time I first wrote from the Origin Project until I took my hearing aids off in the bathroom. As I asked who I really was, the faint beeping from the device gave me a starting point.

This year, I focused on my relationship with music as a deaf person. I've never been able to hear it clearly, but I still have a passion for singing. I don't want people believing that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals

like myself can't enjoy things like that. Overall, the Origin Project helped me explore myself and gave me a voice I didn't previously have.

ELIZABETH NAZARIO, GRADE 12  
WOODBIDGE SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

### *Before & After*

My 4th grade TOP students have been able to write essays about someone special in their life. Now that other grade levels are participating, it allows teachers to see students' writing in progression from one grade level to another.

In the following excerpt, Addison Clark has written about her great-grandmother in the 2nd grade then again in the 4th grade. It is obvious to see Addison's writing development improve over the years. You can tell how important her great-grandmother is to her.

This essay became even more special as Addison's great-grandmother passed away recently. Addison's great-grandmother can be fondly remembered now through her own thoughts and feelings as expressed in her essays. A memory which will last forever.

GRETTA CARROLL, GRADE 4 ENGLISH TEACHER  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

### *\*A Game From the Past*

I interviewed Brenda Cope. She is my great grandmother. She was born in 1946. She played the game of Red Rover. She played with her brothers, her sisters, and her neighborhood friends. There were two lines of kids facing each other, standing apart, and interlocking wrists with the person beside them. One team hollers, "Red Rover, Red Rover, we dare Brenda over!" If the person dared over doesn't break through, then they are on your team. But, if they break through, they go back to their own team. The team with the most players at the end of the game wins.

ADDISON CLARK, GRADE 2  
FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL  
\*PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED IN THE ORIGIN  
PROJECT BOOK FOUR

### *Great-grandmother Nanny B*

My nanny, Brenda Cope is the best person in the world! My nanny is 73 years old and was born on August 6, 1946. She was born at home in Jonesville, Virginia. She got to school by walking. She had four brothers and three sisters.

She said she had a good childhood and had great parents. She played hopscotch and rode bikes with her brothers and sisters. She had to do chores. They were sweeping, mopping and dusting. Her family had a dog named Whitie. When she got older she had seven kids, then she worked in the school system for 10 years, as a certified nurse assistant for 6 years, and in the jail system for 5 years. She still loves cheesecake and that's her favorite food. Her favorite music is country.

When she met Papaw she whistled as he drove by and then they went out the next night. She told me about my mom. She said, "She prowled all the time." Her proudest moments were when her kids graduated and she always loved toting her kids around. We found out that her last name means a maker of cloaks and capes. The most important things to her now are health and family.

Nanny loves talking, visiting, and watching tv. She told me when I was born that she was very happy. She likes life better now so she can boss people around and when she was little she couldn't do that. Nanny told me to stay in school so I can learn.

I love my nanny. I know she loves me and everyone. Nanny is the best I can't wait to learn more about Nanny. I love her so much. I am very thankful for my nanny.

A couple of weeks ago my Nanny Brenda Cope passed away, but I remembered as one goes another will come. I know she is in a better place and I still love her.

ADDISON CLARK, GRADE 4

CURRENT STUDENT, FLATWOODS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

## Before & After

### *The Origin Project*

The Origin Project is one of the great highlights of my life. I initially signed up for an English class as a senior because I was excited to write for The Origin Project. I did not know anyone who was planning to take that class; therefore, enrolling in that class was stressful for me. Our first-class was entirely different from what I expected. My English teacher, Mrs. Sterne, began the school year by asking us to pronounce our name correctly: the way our mothers or grandmothers pronounce our names. It was the first in my life that someone made the effort to pronounce my name right and wanted to know the story behind my name. It was that day when I realized that my name is more than just a noun. It is my identity. It is my family history. It is me.

It did not take us too long to learn everyone's name and story. Through our writings and peer editing, we got to know each other very well and we quickly became a family. In that class, there was not the question of whether we write correctly or not, but it was a safe space that taught us that our stories and our emotions are valid. Together, we explored our roots and we learned what we did not know. We hugged after writing heart-breaking stories, we laughed after giving out popcorns and juice in front of the administration, we screamed after we were called published authors, and we cried after we said goodbye.

The Origin Project of Stonewall Jackson High School was more than a classroom. It was put together by a caring mother, Mrs. Lori Sterne, who successfully created a loving family with great skills including writing. I am a first-year student at Georgetown University now, but I miss my classroom every day. I write and perform poetry, but I always search for the energy of my classmates among my audience. They will forever have a special place in my heart. I wish them nothing but love and happiness. May we all meet again.

ZAHRA WAKILZADA

FORMER STUDENT, STONEWALL JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL

CURRENT STUDENT, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

## *You*

I hold your hand  
And trace the burns on your fingers.  
I grab your other hand,  
And put it over my heart.  
As you feel my heartbeat,  
I sob like a baby.  
Your burned fingers moved slightly  
And wipe off my tears.  
How does it not hurt?

My heart aches every time I see  
the redness,  
And you say, "It is okay!" with  
a smile.

Let me trace the burns again.  
No one will ever see your pain  
Through your smile.  
Your eyes are no longer shining  
When you smile.

Your hair is no longer dark  
black  
And your hands are no longer  
soft.

No one will ever understand  
why?

No one will try to understand  
why?

No one will ever understand  
Your struggle of living in an  
unfamiliar land.

No one will ever understand  
Your love for your motherland.  
They might ask you and as you  
speak

One will pretend to understand  
And another will ask you to  
repeat

Because your accent is not  
"American" enough.

Mom, let me trace the burns on  
your fingers

And put my hand on your  
heart.

I want to trace the broken  
pieces of your heart  
As I run my fingers through  
your gray hair and  
breakdown.

ZAHRA WAKILZADA

\*FORMER STUDENT, STONEWALL  
JACKSON HIGH SCHOOL  
CURRENT STUDENT, GEORGETOWN  
UNIVERSITY

*\*Zahra Wakilzada is a first-year stu-  
dent at Georgetown University planning to*



*Linda Woodward, Zahra Wakilzada, & Nancy Bolmeier Fisher*



*Zahra & friends with high school teacher Lori Sterne & administrator Rhonda Carper*



double major in Government and Economics with a minor in Women's and Gender Studies. She started to publish her writings at the age of 14 and was an author for *The Origin Project Book Five*. As a young activist, she is very passionate about equality and immigrants' rights. She strongly believes that writing and education are two powerful tools that can change the world for better.

## Before & After \*Kugel

Kugel (קוגל) is a baked pudding or casserole most commonly made from egg noodles. It's a traditional Ashkenazi (European) Jewish dish that's often served on Shabbat. We actually acquired this particular recipe from my aunt. This particular kugel recipe is sweet, rather than the savory kind (which, I must admit is pretty good too). We normally make it when we have our little house parties – like Hanukkah or Thanksgiving. It's so amazing that on birthday dinner of mine, I actually asked my grandmother to make a whole pan for me to eat all by myself (I did end up having to share, but you get the idea). It has noodles, cream cheese, raisins and all kinds of amazing stuff. Everyone I know that's tried it quickly falls in love.

My grandmother and I made the recipe together the weekend of the 25th. It was super fun and easy, it barely took any time at all. I didn't burn myself (except for when I was washing my hands, because I don't understand water temperature) or anything like that. While it was cooking, we made a salad and Shepherd's Pie, then ate dinner with the rest of the family. We

had a complete blast. I definitely enjoyed the extra time I spent cooking with my grandmother.



## What it's Like to be Jewish in Southwest Virginia

In such a small town like Big Stone Gap, people tend to be a little more closed-minded. I mean, most of the population doesn't think twice about putting a Christmas tree up for the holidays, or buying a rue21 t-shirt with a jeweled cross on the front. At my house, however, things run a little differently. My mother would throw a fit if I even brought a pine tree through the door, let alone wear one of those cute little cross rings. It makes the air a little uncomfortable when kids in my school are baffled at the fact that I don't go to egg hunts every spring, or to pray at a church every Sunday, and it even gets to the point that I feel almost insecure talking about the fact that I make latkes in December rather than Christmas cookies, and I eat matzo balls in April or March instead of patterned Easter eggs.

Religion is a sort of safe haven, you're supposed to feel like you're a part of something more – safe and happy. But in a community that feels safe and happy about a whole other set of beliefs, sometimes I feel like I'm being stared down by people that think I'm wrong. Wouldn't you feel uneasy if at age ten you were being asked questions like "Do you believe in God?" or "Do you think Jesus is real?" Whether those were in good heart or not, it didn't always feel that way from fifth grade on.

Don't get me wrong, I really like being a Jew. These days I don't care so much about being different from everyone else, whether it's hard or not. I like being myself with my own beliefs and individuality without getting caught up in the cliché of it all. There will always be jokes, remarks, and crazy people trying to convert me. There will always be people that try to change your mind and tell you that you're wrong. I don't want to be one of those people, and I certainly don't want to be one of the ones who actually listens.

At the beginning of the school year, there was this girl. I didn't really interact with her that much, she was simply friends with my friends and I didn't know her. Once the second semester started, I did have a class and lunch with her, and we started talking a bit more. Later on, I was thrown off when I overheard her telling one of my friends that I was annoying. At the time I'd just shrugged it off. I'd never expect everyone to like me. A couple weeks after, however, I'd told a few jokes and she'd laughed at them, and we actually started to become pretty good friends. Eventually, she came up to me and said: "You know, before I got to know you, I actually hated you." And I – being the blunt person I am, replied with: "Yeah, I know." She'd said back: "Yeah, but you don't know why." I shook my head and explained that I did know why, because I'd overheard what she'd said about me. "Well, that's not all of it." The girl had argued. After a few minutes of prying and after I'd promised not to get mad at her reasoning, she finally opened up: "When I found out you were a Jew, I hated you. I was afraid of you. I thought you were going to set me on fire." (This is a direct quote, by the way.) Now, let me tell you; This girl is three times my height, weight and size. I'm small anyway, and she could literally crush me. And yet, she was scared of me, because of a religion she didn't know about.

Most of the population in this small town, and this part of the state, are Christians. I get that. They're all pretty open, and talk about praying or going to church, and that's expected. Sometimes, the people here assume that everyone is a Christian. My mom complains about that all the time, actually. And there aren't just Jews and Christians around here either. It's really a lot more diverse than you'd think. And we are most certainly outnumbered. Sometimes it's almost like we don't exist. It's just that the majority of people around don't even know that we're here, or even know what Judaism is. That's part of why I get so many questions, and people think



*Birthright Israel trip & border wall with artwork promoting Peace between nations*



*Challah Bread*



*Making Challah with other Jewish women at the great challah bake of 2019*



*University Jewish Student Organization celebrating Hanukkah lighting*

up ridiculous things – like that the Jewish race sets people to a stake and lights them up with gasoline. I can admit I’ve had bad days, and gas prices are too high anyway. . .

Earlier I touched on not being able to be as open as others about my religion. I mean, I’m sure you’ve heard people say: “I went to church yesterday afternoon, it was a little boring at the end, but at least we sang Let It Shine.” That’s pretty typical. You don’t really hear: “I went to Synagogue for services on Friday. This week’s Torah reading was pretty hard to sit through, but we sang Ma Tofu.” It just doesn’t happen. This all goes back to me as a scared little elementary school kid, feeling afraid that someone will just laugh in my face. It’s also that I can’t really talk to someone who could relate as well (other than my family). I mean, if you know someone in Big Stone Gap, Virginia who can speak Hebrew, be sure to let me know.

Because we live in such a small town, there isn’t exactly a temple within a seven-mile radius. Even in the entire county the Jewish population is basically miniscule, so it’s not even the city’s fault, there’s

just not enough of us. We do still go to Synagogue, but it’s all the way in Blountville – and even there it’s a pretty small congregation. I have to be in the cramped, stuffy car with my parents and my younger brother and sister for over an hour just to get there. As a teenager, it’s not strange that I’d rather go to the movies on a Friday night than a tiny little temple. So any and all motivation I’d had to go disappears ten minutes into the car ride. It’s also exhausting afterwards (Friday services are at night, so the sun is setting just when we get there), and at that point all I want to do is crawl slowly to bed, which as I previously mentioned, is an hour away.

In Southwest Virginia, so many grew up eating cornbread and soup beans or mashed potatoes and gravy. But I, however, didn’t have that. I had matzo balls, latkes, or even hamentaschen cookies. Technically, we’re not even allowed gravy. As a kid, I was always exposed to a whole different culture of set foods. It might not seem that important, but actually is. Or, it was to me, anyway. I’d also like to mention that I’m eating two pieces of flat matzo as I write this.

Speaking of Jewish foods, have you ever seen matzo cake flour in the grocery store? Yeah, neither have we. Seriously, it might be non-existent for all I know. There’s a tiny little section of Jewish things (like matzo meal) in Food City, and also one in Kroger. Otherwise, nada. Someone from our congregation actually went all the way to Atlanta to get the supplies for their Passover. Crazy, right? That’s like Walmart not having gravy in stock; Which would surely start a riot.

In short, I’d had to deal with some struggles in the past. Then again, isn’t it really worth it to watch the leaves fall off the trees every year, or the snow on the mountains, or the shining lake water? Yeah, it sucks sometimes, but this area is so gorgeous that it doesn’t even matter. I would never give it up. I can’t imagine

living anywhere else, no matter the advantages. It would never be the same. And just because my origins are a little different, doesn't mean we don't all come from the same place: The same amazing area, Southwest Virginia.

### *Kugel Recipe*

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees

Ingredients:

5 eggs separated

8 oz. cottage cheese

4 oz. cream cheese, softened

1 teaspoon vanilla

1 ½ sticks of butter

2/3 of a cup of sugar

8 oz. sour cream

sliced apples and/or raisins

Boil noodles, drain, set aside.

Beat egg whites until stiff peaks form. Set aside.

Beat together all other ingredients.

Add noodles and fruit.

Fold in beaten egg whites.

Pour in 13 x 9 greased pan – sprinkle with 1/3 of a cup sugar and cinnamon.

Bake 40–50 minutes.

MOLLIE WEITZMAN, GRADE 10

FORMER UNION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

\*PUBLISHED IN THE ORIGIN PROJECT BOOK ONE, 2015

### *What it's like to be Jewish in Southwest Virginia: (Update)* *What it's Like to be Jewish in NOVA*

When I wrote Kugel/What it's like to be Jewish in Southwest Virginia I was a sophomore in high school, living in the bible belt and trying to figure out who I was (Spoiler alert: I am still figuring that part out). Growing up in a small town taught me a lot, and now I am living in a big city near Washington D.C. studying environmental science where there is not one, but two Jewish Student organizations on campus and many synagogues to choose from. I am so grateful to have people to share similar experiences with, to spend shabbat dinners with, and even to go to Israel with.

However, I am so grateful for everything Southwest Virginia taught me. I live every day conscious of my Judaism, and conscious of what makes me different and it took so long for me to become proud of who I am. I think that if I grew up anywhere else in the world, I wouldn't appreciate who I am. I am so thankful for my friends back home who love me and support me even when they don't understand what Rosh Hashana is, or what it means to wear a tallit, and stopped to ask me how I was feeling after the shooting in Pittsburgh. I don't have to hide my keepah under my pillow anymore, and I wear my star of David necklace every Friday, but I am still so proud of everything it has taken for me to get here.

MOLLIE WEITZMAN, STUDENT

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

FORMER UNION HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT

## Launching Into the Future *Landon's Space Academy*

Landon Spain was awarded a full scholarship to the Space Academy at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville, Alabama for July, 2020. In 2019, Landon participated in the Wise County LEAD program in which students build satellites that were launched with the Anteres rocket (pictured here) at NASA Wallop's



Island. The Anteres was a resupply rocket for the International Space Station. Landon also attended his first space camp at Wallop's, where his team won the robotics medal. In his words, "We were able to look down into the Vehicle Assembly Building to see the NG-13 Cygnus capsule being built for the second ThinSat launch. Also as a little side note, I play guitar and can play the intro to David Bowie's Space Oddity."

Landon's application for the 2020 space camp in Huntsville was judged out of 500 applicants by employees of NASA.

LANDON SPAIN, GRADE 6  
UNION MIDDLE SCHOOL

# THANK YOU



We wish to express our deepest gratitude to the following individuals for donating their time, talent and treasure in furthering the mission of *The Origin Project* as we present this year's anthology. Every student receives a copy for his or her home library. All school libraries and public libraries will have a volume available for students and the public to enjoy.

The Honorable Mark Warner, US Senator for Virginia  
The Honorable Tim Kaine, US Senator for Virginia

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The Crooked Road  
Powell Valley News  
Amy Greear

Mountain Empire Community College  
Rebecca Pepin, WCYB  
Olivia Bailey, WCYB  
The Woodward Family  
Ryan and Ian Fisher  
The Stephenson Family



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