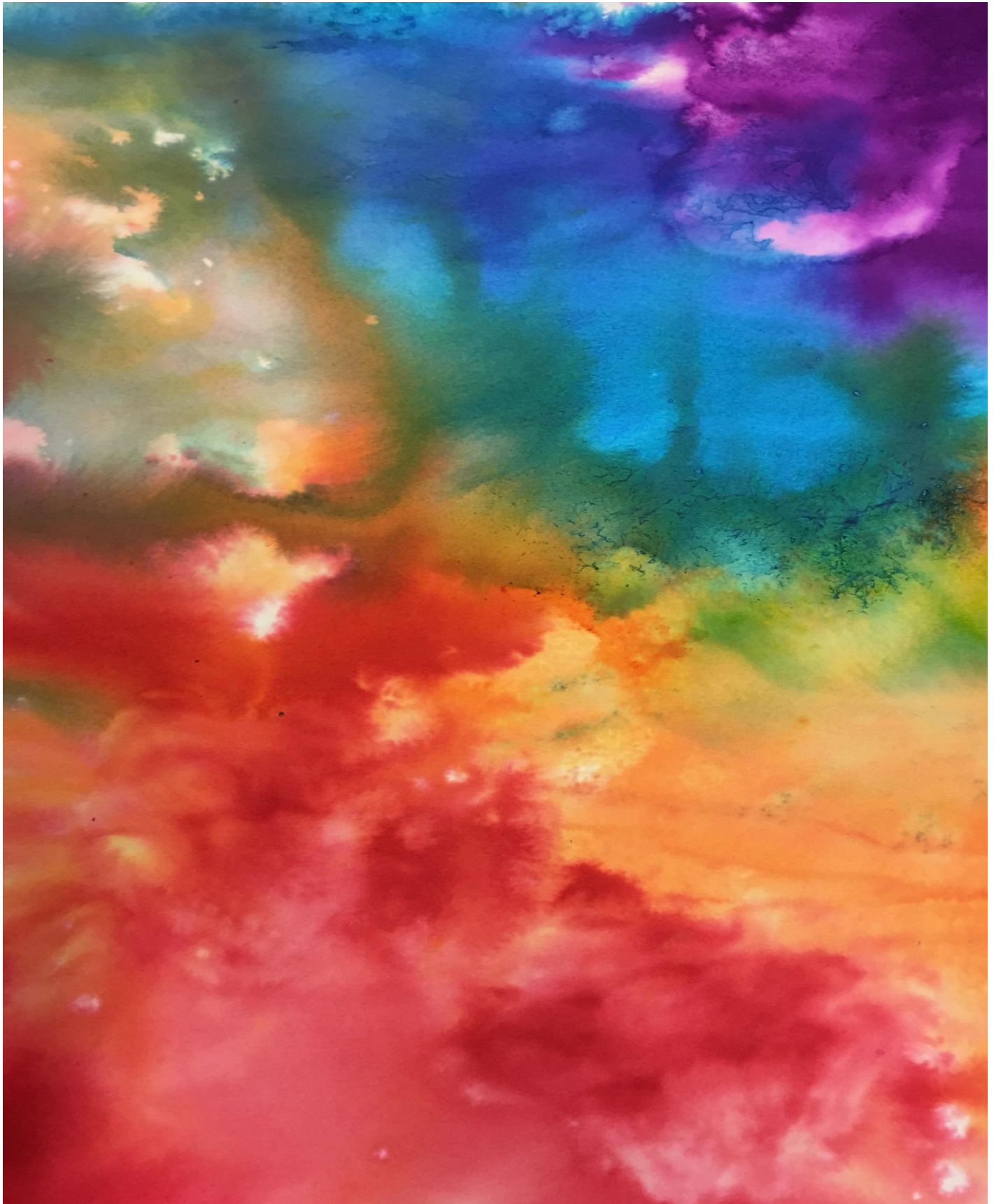


ethereal

(e·the·re·al) adj. extremely delicate and light in a way that seems too perfect for this world.



Islip High School Literary Magazine June 2017

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This is Islip High School's second literary magazine, produced by the Islip High School chapter of the National English Honor Society.

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Vice President: Emma Mecozzi

Secretary: Holly Iafrate

Treasurer: Kelly Conway

Literary Magazine Editors: Zoe Camhi and Mimita Rahman

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POEMS

Possibility

Look at a piece of pencil lead:

What do you see?
Contained in that stick
Are a million thoughts
Thousands of words
Hundreds of drawings
Lists, songs, poems
Reminders and notes
A line of possibility.
It in itself is art incarnate,
For all art
Can lead back to its source.
A pencil.
A stick of graphite.
A possibility.
What do you see?

By Shelby Mashkow

Bending the Written Rules

I may not be the best with words
I'm no good at making them match
My syllable count always fly away like birds
The division of thoughts I just don't catch
But outside these rules
Outside pre-decided ideals
Webs, skyscrapers, mountains, constellations!
I can craft them all out of graphite—
And a thought or two
My words jump and run and fly
And oh the way they dance!
Prose or poem either way it's but a name
Words hold power,
And so with this power I shall craft.

By Shelby Mashkow

Shooting for Stars

With stars in my eyes
I put words on a page,
And hope they reach the sky.
Under moonlight,
I put worlds on a page,
And hope I reach them.

By Shelby Mashkow

Countdown to Change

It is 11:56pm
Softly I chat with friends that may as well be siblings
Strong bonds I never imagined I'd have
It is 11:57pm
I look back, how different things were then
How different I've become from the me that once was
It is 11:58pm
I look further, all I have achieved since my start
Thinking of the young me and just how far they've come
It is 11:59pm
1 year, 12 months, 52 weeks, 365 days, 8,760 hours, 525,600 minutes, 31,536,000
seconds... 31,536,000 moments
What a difference it can make.
It is 12:00am
A new year, a smile appears
I wonder who I'll be this time next year?

By Shelby Mashkow

The Flower on the Wall

On the wall there is a flower
Through it all it shows light
It contrasts with the grey and dull atmosphere
And grows in the darkness of life
It rises above with an elegance
Like a feather in the air
But nobody sees the flower on the wall
No one knows that it's about to fall
All they see is that it looks proud and tall
But at night they can't hear it call
"Why do I act so big when I feel so small?"
So nobody knows the flower at all

On the wall there is a flower
Through it all it shows hope
It's different from the pessimists
And glows in a life of darkness
In people's eyes it glistens
Like no one has ever seen it
But nobody sees the flower on the wall
Nobody sees the fear that's behind
How pretty it looks around everything else
How new it feels compared to the usual
But inside it cries and breaks within
So nobody knows the flower at all

On the wall there is a flower
Through it all it shows grace
It's unalike from the people around
And thrives and strives in a place with bad vibes
Around others it is poise
Around others it acts as if it have never had a problem in the world
But nobody sees it at all
Nobody knows how much it works
No one sees how hard it is trying
To defeat the odds
To become somebody
To live instead of just exist
To be the exception
So nobody really knows the flower at all

By Samantha Guerra

A Sight to See

When I first arrived
It was a sight all should see
When I got to my new home
It hugged me
Without any intention of letting go.
This new adventure
And the love I felt
Was the love and adventure
That all need to see.
Coming here had its hardships
But it may be the place that holds my future,
And of course my true love,
And oh boy that's a
Sight to see.

Wherever this future leads,
I will never stray
From the path that makes me happy,
For I'll always be on the pursuit of happiness
For me and those around me.

By Chris Pineda

Beans

There are more green peas than beans
As I eat, I cannot help but speak
About the lack of beans to eat
There are more green peas than there are beans
After I ate
I had to state
I ate the beans before the green peas.

By Sebastian Camino

*The next two poems were inspired by the book *Girl Rising: Changing the World One Girl at a Time* by Tanya Lee Stone. The book consists of many young girls' stories of life in developing countries around the world. The Girl Rising movement is a "global campaign for girls' education and empowerment."

Kamlari*

Kept away from my education
Abused from dusk to dawn.
Made into a slave before I knew what one was.
Laying on the floor because my masters won't grant me a bed.
Always singing to myself because it is the only freedom I have.
Remembering when my family sold me in exchange for food to eat.
Instead of books I have bruises, but I have hope because
I have YOU.

By Crystal Toro

I Used To*

I used to play in the fields with my friends,
Rolling, jumping, laughing, smiling,
Not caring about the future or what might confront me.

I used to run through the streets
With my friends to school,
Which was like my second home.

I used to walk home with my friends,
But as they grew up, they left school,
They left me, I couldn't understand why.

I now walk home by myself,
With only school books in my arms to comfort me.

As I approach my home,
The home that once sheltered my friends and I,
It now shelters old, loud, and scary men.

I used to play dress up with my friends,
But when my mother held up that white wedding dress,
I knew this wasn't pretend.

"You won't be needing these books anymore," said my mother,
As she took them out of my arms
Along with my dreams, my hopes, my aspirations.

I used to play sports with the boys,
Even though I'm only a girl.
This man wanted to play with me, my body,
Even though I'm only a girl.

I used to be brave enough to say "no."

When I said "no" this man beat me,
He raped me, he killed the little girl
I used to be.

I used to carry books in my arms.
Now I carry babies.

I used to think my life would be more,
I used to think being a girl wouldn't be a burden.

I used to think citizens of the world
Would condemn these abominations.

So where are you?
Girls of the developed world,
Where is your help?

Don't you know that book and that pen
Is all I've ever wanted?

I always believed that those two things
Could save my life,
Could change my fate,
Could re-shape my future.

You have YOUR freedom, so
Help me find MINE.

By Crystal Toro

The Light in the Void

Darkness.
It seeps into every crack of my being.
An unfortunately familiar intruder in this life.
Intruder?
No.
Darkness is the one who caresses me.
Darkness is the one who has always been there for me in times of struggle.
But darkness always leaves, leaves me alone with my own thoughts,
Alone left with my own thoughts alone.
I struggle with the concept of what's real and what's not.
Things are confusing without darkness.
I have to pick up the pieces
I have to figure out the real from the strange.
But what's real and what's strange?
Am I real?
Is darkness ever returning?
Is darkness ever returning or am I real or am I strange or am I picking up the
pieces?
Or am I picking up the pieces or is darkness real or am I darkness?
Darkness is back.
Darkness holds my head and I see.
All is clear.
But is it?
Yes, no, clear, unclear, confusion sets in.
But darkness is no longer my comforter and I am alone,
Even with darkness I am alone.
I know all, I know nothing.
I see that darkness is light and light is dark, or is it the other way around?
And I am picking up the pieces again,
And I am real and strange but neither.
But am I both?
Real, strange, pieces, darkness is light and so goes on, all is nothing yet nothing is all?
And I am here and I am there and I am not confused anymore!
But who is this?
Is this darkness returning?
Why is darkness so bright?
Light lays their hand on my forehead, and peace is here.

By Caleb Himmelman

American Dream

The American Dream
What does it mean
It's not about one person,
but your whole team.
I dream to live in bright world of green,
Where nobody is mean
The streets are clean
No pollution
No smoke or steam
Everyone together in peace
One Team
The American Dream.

By Luke Lorenz

Flying Football

I am a football
I like to travel and fly as a bird
Sometimes I am held as a treasure,
but I also get kicked and thrown around.
And sometimes, I am thrown to the hard ground
after someone scores a touchdown.
When the wind is blowing in my face, I don't feel out of place.
I am a football.

By Joe DiGregorio

Money Corrupts

Money seems to grow on trees for Gatsby
Money isn't important to him when compared to Daisy and love
Money controls Gatsby into doing thing he wouldn't normally do
Money blinds him
Money corrupts

By Ryan Gremli

Sleeping

In class, I'm always sleeping
And my teachers are weeping
At the fact that I am keeping
All my dreams although they are creeping
As my grades are just reaping

By Griffin Edwards

Volleyball

Volleyball is my favorite sport
I pass the ball across the court
We bump and set and spike.
And we play it all through the night.
We need to work together,
In order to get better
We need to pass it to the setter
So that I won't be a fretter.

By Maya Jablonowska

For My Aunt, Godmother, and Role Model

Adventurous, Considerate, Intuitive
Affectionate, Generous, Passionate

She's the greatest woman I've ever known
She pick us up when we're feeling low.

Independent, Loyal, Model
Calm, Energetic, Funny

She has the warmest heart and the most gentle touch
She is the woman I admire, so very much.

Neat, Powerful, Self-Confident
Sociable, Unassuming, Witty

From work to personal obstacles, to baby Jack's cries
She always remembers to cross her T's and dot her I's.

Amicable, Dynamic, Soulful
Faithful, Optimistic, Sincere

She's he prettiest woman I know
Yet her beauty just continues to grow.

Now while the list may never end,
Ill cut it short, as my aunt has many places to attend

There is no one that compares to her
No one that even comes close
She is the definition of unique
She shines as a star, but values like an antique

On a high pedestal is where I hold her
High enough to touch the clouds
High enough to be seen in crowds
For I look up to her more than she'll ever know

She's a blessing from god
The greatest gift of all
Without her in my life I would be nothing,
Nothing at all.

By Sean Skahan

School

Waking up is tough
And school is rough
Six hours is enough
Can I get picked up?
The days are long and the hours pass slowly
I can't wait to get home so I can sleep.

By Alexa Cangemi

Soccer

My favorite sport is soccer,
scoring goals and passing to my friends.
Winning a game
gives me unflinching fame.

By Dylan Widecki

The Weekend

Going to school means work all day.
But the weekend means all stress goes away.
On the weekend I get to sleep late.
And I don't have to worry about a due date.

By Marianna Colonna

Wander Luster

I lust to soar above the clouds
Where my soul can be found
And wander among different places
See different faces.
I want to learn different languages
And take on new challenges.
I want to leave my comfort zone
And let the purr of the plane engine set the tone.

For once I can fly like a bird is free
And my eyes are reopened.
Once again I see, that the world is so small
And there is no waste at all.
So I set out for adventure
Like a free spirit wander luster
And I travel to live life on a whole 'nother level.

I am a wander luster, a dreamer.
I believe in counting stars and chasing the sun
I'll look back and reflect on all the good things I've done.
So thank you for having me here
But I've got a world to see dear.

Believe It or not, I leave for Europe today!
So I must be on my way,
There can't be any delay.
Ciao, Au revoir, Adios, and Good day!

By Crystal Toro

A Mantra

You can be happy living life to the fullest
Doing what you love.

By Jonathan Powell

Content

As I sit in a chair in a dark room alone
Watching the flame of the candle
Dance to the rhythm of my guitar
I realize:
I am exactly where I want to be.

By Jonathan Powell

How It's made:

1 Poem
2 Days before its due
3 Rough drafts and I still have no clue
It's a poem 4 the schools poetry slam
And I'm trying to make a 5 star jam
So it goes

In 4th grade I wrote down a quote I made it up myself, it's true
It read that "the only change one should make is from being someone to being you"
This I have kept with me for all this time
And I never told it to anybody, not until I had to write this rhyme
Most people are so focused on being appreciated or loved
But then forgetting that their true inner self is being shoved
Eh I guess you can say I'm not your average Joe
I'm just outspoken, but I wasn't born this way ill have you know
I've been shy my whole life till last year
Not letting anyone into the bubble I created and kept so near
The bubble was popped and I lost a lot of friends
And I frayed from all the dumb mainstream trends
I was slightly upset most of the time
Oh but now my life is sublime
Not a care of others views
I'm king of my own world, I do what I choose
Over the summer I found a notebook from 4th grade put of the blue

By James Rindos

A Eulogy to John Proctor

The land was always tended to while you were here,
Sometimes the children still see you in the farm.
Sometimes Elizabeth still hears your voice.
The town of Salem hasn't been the same since you left.
Your bravery to speak up against the injustices has left your mark on this town
Your role in your family is now a hiatus
Waiting to be filled

By Selia Mercado, Acsah Melgares, Brianna Sanchez, and Emma Rosado

A Eulogy to John Proctor

John,
Oh how I grieve that you are gone
I don't know how our three sons and I will move on
You were a great farmer in your day
After you were hanged my whole world turned grey.
I still wish that you hadn't lied,
For you would have never died
I know you did it to save my life,
Therefore I will forever be a grateful wife.

By Vivian Kelly, Erik Schassberger, and Vinny Capolongo

A Eulogy to John Proctor

Because Dad was proud
Your death was profound.
My mother and brothers are left behind
As our grief fills the town.
You lied to save your wife
Which Elizabeth is thankful, for the rest of her life.
Your honesty got you hanged
But in the end the truth came through.
Which most admire and strive to do.
The trails are now over so everyone is safe
Grateful, faithful, and some sinful for their mistakes.
Dad you weren't perfect but you made a difference.
Thank you John Proctor.
Thank you.

By Kayla Altman, Maria Cacoperdo, Hannah Englehardt, and Martha Jablonowska

A Eulogy to Mercutio

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here today to mourn the death of dear
Mercutio.
Mercutio was a loyal friend, cousin to the prince, and brother.
My brother was murdered by Tybalt;
He was only trying to protect his good friend Romeo.
Mercutio's death was sudden and unfair.
He was my only brother and I don't know what I will do without my dear brother.

By Lauren Gilson

Truth about School

School is Very Hard
With all these classes and tests
I just want to sleep

By Raymond Dominguez

Happy Now?

Teacher's happiness
I'm reading this poem
To complete this assignment
You happy now, teacher?

By Daniel Canales

The Watcher

One morning a watcher was watching the sun
while another watcher came by to see all the fun.
Then, a which watcher watched that which watchers watch.
While that which watcher kept watching the which watchers have fun,
the other which watchers came by to see what had begun.
While the whichers and the watchers piled back on,
the which watchers started watching
the watchers that came to tag along.
So the watchers that watched
kept watching a which watcher
who was a watcher
who watched a whicher
who was watching a watcher
who was watching the sun.

By Garrett Siricio

Roads

The roads are not always smooth.
The road could be rough
Which makes it tough.
Some roads might have grooves.
So if there are two roads
It would be hard to choose.

By Luke Arey

Open Wide

I open my eyes real wide
and hide
what I'm feeling inside.
Can't push me or take me away
I'm here to stay.
So shout "Hooray"
It's a new day by the Bay
and everything will be okay.

By Marissa Gologorsky

A Lazy, Crazy Day

I can be lazy and a bit crazy
and my favorite flower is a daisy,
but I love to dance and prance
through the night
and sing with some bling
and move and groove as I listen to tunes
and watch a movie that makes me feel groovy
until I take a bath and laugh and do math.
What a day!

By Marissa Gologorsky

The Rules of Life

First and foremost, be kind

This will get you far
But that doesn't mean
You get pushed around

Second, work hard
This will make you a star
Sure, you may get lucky
From time to time,
But luck is unreliable;
Better to depend on
Determination

Third, be honest
This will give you peace
Because lies are thieves that
Steal your happiness and sleep

Fourth, be present
This will give you joy
Because life goes be so fast
So be here now, don't wallow in the past

Last, let it go
Worries are traps
That keep you from your dreams
Years from now
It won't be as bad as it seems

By Linda Festa

Thursday

Seven-thirty in the morning
and already today's lesson
on hormones is met with quiet dismay.

Gloom becomes despondency,
a miasma of melatonin
sedates my room,
rows of days have run into the next,
a syllabus of stupefaction
obliges the apparitions of presence
who sit up with their eyes closed
chins propped on knuckles and palms
only to bolt awake
thinking its Friday.

By Wayne Mennecke

*Reprinted with permission from the poetry chapbook *Pencils Down*, by Wayne Mennecke

ESSAYS

September 16th, 2005

When asked to reflect on my childhood, memories of playing dress up, hide and go seek, and pretending to be a teacher in my mom's high heels always come to mind, but not without being accompanied by the memories of endless hospital, clinic, and specialist visits that are more vivid than any other. When I was born, I was diagnosed with a condition called atrial septal defect, or ASD, which was defined as a hole in the wall between the heart's upper chambers. As the doctors initially recognized that the hole was too big to close on its own, the only alternative was surgery. Finding out as a five-year old that you will be in the hospital for a two-week recovery after surgery isn't the most secure feeling.

Prior to the surgery, my life was completely different than the one I live now. I was always tired, cranky, short of breath, and extremely lazy. I had a tendency to fall asleep anywhere and everywhere; in the shower, at the dinner table, even in the middle of a conversation. Feeling fatigued and moody all the time was definitely not ideal, and felt like some sort of punishment.

As my parents gradually introduced the fact that I would be getting the operation, of course my initial thoughts were of nothing but the worst possible outcome. Being so reluctant to even visit the hospital anymore, my parents tried to think of the best ways to make me comfortable with the scary idea. This included daily reminders of how much better my life would be in the future, picking up every single item at any store that had a heart on it, and promising the much anticipated expected ice cream and Jell-O aided recovery. At first, I resented my parents for doing this to me; despite all of the tears, begging, and defiance, they still told me it wasn't a choice, and that the procedure had to happen no matter what. Because I didn't understand, I was angry and confused as to why this had to happen to me, when it wasn't happening to anyone else I knew. It didn't seem fair that I was the only one in the whole world who had to go through something as intense as this.

Counting down the days was the best and worst part. The best because of the tiny red heart sticker that I was able to put onto the calendar for each day that passed, getting closer and closer to the day of the surgery. The worst because as the days went on, the nerves only got worse. Finally, before I knew it I had run out of my little heart stickers and was on my way to St. Francis Hospital and Heart Center.

I don't really remember much from when I entered the doors to when I was wheeled out and sent home, but a few things do stand out. My dad, trying his hardest to make the best out of the situation by constantly reassuring me and asking if I was okay. He made me a bouquet out of paper towel roses (only because I wouldn't let him leave the room long enough to buy real ones), and decorated my room with

bright blue gloves and gowns, as if I was going to have a party right there in my hospital bed. My mom, kissing my forehead and doing her best to hold back the tears I could clearly see welling up in her eyes, trying not to scare me. Both of them waving to me until the last second before I went through the glass of the operating room, holding a stuffed pig that they had bought me from the hospital gift shop to be waiting for me when I get out.

The next few hours were characterized by tears, fear, and confusion. Waking up with a sore throat from the tube, not being able to sit comfortably, being monitored and question what felt like every second.

I came home, followed the doctor's orders of strict bed rest (though only for 3 days out of the recommended 7), and in no time was back on my feet. This time, however, it felt much different than anything I'd ever known. Playing with my sisters, we ran up and down the hallways, played tag, hide and go seek, ran in circles, anything to keep me occupied. Exhilarated is the only word that comes to mind when I think of the emotion that I felt as I could run for what felt like hours without needing a break or wanting a nap.

The last thing that stands out from this experience was my grandparents' visit on my fourth day home. Showing them that I was able to do all of these things, bouncing off the walls with energy and activity was so new and fun for me; I had already fallen in love with my new lifestyle. I vividly remember running back to them, waiting for praise and applause, as if I was some kind of superhero. But all I received was two blank stares and quiet tears from my grandpa's eyes, followed by long hugs and explanation that they were "happy tears."

Being five at the time, I didn't realize why everyone would instantly smile and hug me when they saw me, or why everyone seemed to be crying "happy tears" all the time. I failed to realize the true intentions behind my dad's paper towel roses or my mom's living room collection of heart pins and stuffed toys. I couldn't grasp the whole idea of "happy tears." But being sixteen now, I understand more than I have ever been able to. When I look back, I am now the one crying happy tears, hugging my parents every time I see them. And making sure I never take anything for granted. My favorite flower is a rose and my closet is stuffed top to bottom with heart-shaped pillows. I am eternally grateful for the family I have, for all along they only wanted what was best for me and were willing to go to any extent to comfort me through it. At the end of the day, the people that care about you wish nothing but the best for you, will be there for you through the tough times, and ultimately will go to the ends of the earth to make you happy.

By Cheyanne Johnson

The Truth of the World

Two summers ago I visited the 911 memorial. Walking in, I could already feel the weight of the air compressing upon my soldiers; intensity draped over our heads like a heavy hanging curtain. However, the beauty of this memorial was indescribable. The shining bronze name plates gleamed like stars, which accompanied the stunning waterfall in the center. How could someone possibly take a tragic nightmare and turn it into something beautiful? But the architect had accomplished this unbelievable feat.

Walking gingerly, I couldn't help but notice the silence. All antics came to a halt. Everyone acted as if their mouths were glued shut. Apparently I wasn't the only person who had noticed this. My little brother, who was eight at the time, tugged my hand with a puzzled look on his face. He didn't have to say anything; I knew he was looking for an explanation: "Why is everybody so quiet? What is this about?" I turned away. How do you explain to a little boy that almost 3,000 people were murdered? Each of them with a family, a best friend, an unfulfilled dream. They were normal people. Good people. Innocent people. Just like him and I, all of these people were missed by family.

Even if I had explained to him, there would still be the haunting question that many people are still not capable of answering: Why? This was the biggest **THING**. After telling the story of these innocent people, how could I proceed to tell a little boy who only sees good in the world why **THIS** occurred? Is there really that much hatred in our lovely world? Can someone really be that wanton towards another? The truth is, with all the good in the world, there is also cruelty and evil that we have to be exposed to just as well as the good. Most of the time, all the beauty overlaps the true detriment of the world so the true horrors remain unrevealed. There are two sides of this world; one with hope, dreams and love. The other with nightmares and evil. No matter how beautiful someone made this memorial look, there was still thousands of lives lost. No matter how beautiful someone made this memorial look, there are still horrible people in this world which we can't be shielded from forever. I look down again and notice my little brother's big, brown, innocent eyes. I realized then that I love him too much to say anything, but eventually he will come to an understanding of what this world is truly about and I can't protect him from that forever.

By Toni Castronova

The Battle

She was huge. At least a head taller than me, her biceps the size of my thighs. The girl standing in front of me looked more like a woman. They told me she was a senior and that she won her division. They also told me I could win. I told them they were wrong.

It was October of 2015, the end of my favorite time of year—tennis season. The sun was shining bright, yet the constant gusts of wind were so cold it felt as though the air was piercing my skin. I looked around and recognized countless faces. Some that I have battled in a match and others whom I have only had the opportunity to watch. I continued taking in the beauties of my surroundings until suddenly I stopped. At that one moment, the flood of thoughts racing through my mind precluded my whole body from moving. The only action I was capable of was pondering how in this instant, all of the sacrifices I have made in the past have paid off. The endless hours of tennis lessons have finally come to mean something. The goal I have been striving for my whole life was accomplished. Finally, I have made my way to the county tennis tournament.

All of the satisfaction I was feeling immediately diminished when I laid eyes on my opponent. Slowly, we stepped onto the court. I looked into her eyes, fierce and determined. We began warming up. The balls she hit were bullets zooming through the air, her strokes flawless. As a tennis player, my opponent was a work of art. I knew I had evolved into a pretty good player over the years, but I was certain that my abilities did not even come close to that of the player across the court from me. This mindset was a detriment to my game. I had lost all confidence, and my lack of hope only helped my opponent. I no longer vied to win.

As we began our match, my confidence only went down. I was losing. Point after point, my shots were called out. Eventually, I noticed a pattern. I was so busy thinking that I was losing this match that it took me until I lost the first set 2-6 to realize I was getting cheated. Although all of my shots were getting called out, I knew that they were within the lines by at least a foot each time. I let it go. After all, she was a better player. I knew that. However, the sound of her voice saying the word, “Out!” numerous times was slowly building up anger within me. I let it go. The next five games were painful. My opponent continued to cheat and change the score. By then I was getting mad. She was not even trying to hide her churlish ways. Her antics became unbearable. In the game where my opponent was able to win the whole match, she lost four points in a row. She was fuming. After losing only one game, my opponent couldn’t hold in the anger I have been feeling the whole match.

“ARE YOU KIDDING ME!?” I screamed across the court to my opponent. Did she really just pick up a ball and hit it as hard as she could at my chest? My anger could no longer be contained. Now, I was the one fuming. After hitting me as hard as possible, my opponent didn’t even feel the need to apologize. The next ball she called out that was clearly in caused me to sprint off the court to get a line judge. I wouldn’t allow this girl to steal any more points from me. When the line judge arrived at the court, he called my opponent out on her line calls. Even with an adult on the court she was cheating. However, the points she tried to steal could no longer count towards the match. Finally our match could be played fairly, and to my surprise, I began winning. First points, then games. The girl I once saw as a tennis god was losing games, to me.

It eventually came upon me that I wasn’t losing so badly in the beginning because of my lack of abilities. If I hadn’t underestimated myself so much, there could have been a possibility for my victory. I let my opponent take advantage of me for so long that by the time I noticed her wrong-doings, it was too late. The final score was 2-6, 5-7. Although I lost, I learned to speak up and not let people walk all over me. Therefore, this was an amazing experience for me, not because I lost, but because of the valuable lesson I learned.

By Madelyn Germano



Photo By Kyle Renwick

My Biggest Failure—Or Was It?

“The wheels work!” Olivia had to shout over the hollers and chatter of the impatient observers in the congested gymnasium. “Test the claw!” Olivia and I were a little nervous about operating our robot in front of so many people, but we knew we performed well. We basically lived in our mentor’s house building and operating our robot. My fingers effortlessly pressed the button that moved the wrist of the claw. I have operated our robot thousands of times, and this time would be no different. Suddenly, my blood ran cold. The wrist was not moving. It must be a mistake on my part—I must be so nervous that I forgot to turn on my controller, I thought. I promptly checked the controller. It was on. “Um...Olivia?” I croaked. “The claw...the claw is not responding.”

My mind could not comprehend what was happening. It was just not fair. Our once durable and robust robot was now incapacitated. It was the second round of our robotics competition and after coming in first in the first round, everyone was expecting us to do well. And now, the event proctor was allowing us just two minutes to fix a half hour repair that would make the difference in placing first or last. “Time’s up, girls!”

I do not remember watching our run. Since I only operated the claw, I was forced to stand next to Olivia as she quickly hit a ball into Zone C and moved into Zone D, getting us as many points as she could without a functioning claw. What I do remember was staring at another team as they watched and laughed, since they no longer had to worry about their rank—they had already come in first. I remember thinking that this should not be happening, that I should be operating the claw and helping us get a good rank. But none of those thoughts really mattered, because Olivia was already done and had gotten us placed tenth.

On the long bus ride home, I began to think that this was my biggest failure. All the time Olivia and I put into this competition was now invalidated. I completely failed my entire team, since robotics was one in about twenty events. Then, as if to ready my mind, my mentor Dr. B. came over to sit down next to me. He asked me why I chose robotics as my event, and I responded, “Robotics has always interested me. I really wanted to build a robot. It seemed so impossible yet I wanted to try.” Dr. B. and I had become very close, and he instantly understood what I meant. He said, “You did it. So why are you beating yourself up for not winning?” That was the moment I realized the competition was never about the prize. It is not always about winning first place. I now saw it through a different perspective. It was about the experience, about learning from our mistakes. And our robot was not a failure. I learned a tremendous amount from this experience, and no matter what place we came in, we would always be a great success.

By Sofia Rubinson

The True Prize

I quickly stoop up, shuffled down the aisle and made my way backstage. The manager ordered us to get ready to go on when the group on stage finished. As the last notes of their music trickled into silence, the audience burst into thunderous applause, but I could hear nothing but the pounding of my heart. “How could my friends and I ever compare to a group like that?” I silently wondered. It was all too soon that we were ushered on stage and our music began. About twenty seconds into our routine the music started to splutter and came out in discordant and jarring sounds until the music completely ceased to play. I could feel a beet-fed flush spread across my face, and the tears welling up in my eyes, threatening to overflow. “No one else’s music was messed up, why us?” I wanted to cry. I forced myself to muster up my courage and keep dancing. My friends were counting on me, and I could not disappoint them. As we finally reached the end of the dance and slid into our final pose, the audience gave a polite clap. I could not help but think how it was nothing like the deafening plaudits that the crowd had given the group before us. I trudged back to the audience disappointed in my performance.

I plopped down into my seat and watched the other groups dance. I spent the rest of the competition obsessing over every mistake I had made. I wanted to bang my head against the wall in frustration, there were so many ways I could have improved my performance. After the last girl had finished her dance, the judges called for a twenty minute break to decide the winners. While I waited I listened to the chatter of my friends as they asked each other how they thought they did. Olivia, one of the girls in my group, scrambled over to me. “Do you think we will get a medal? I really want to!” she exclaimed. “Despite all the mistakes we made, I honestly believe we had a good shot at getting at least third place.” I replied. It seemed as though twenty minutes passed in the blink of an eye, as the judges requested everyone to return to their seats. They began by announcing the winners for the solo variation division, and then the character variation dance. Finally, it was time for the group dance division medalists to be named. A group of girls from a different school won first place. The girls from the advanced group in my school got second place and a silver medal. Third place and a bronze award were given to another group I did not know. Then the judges moved on to the next category.

By the time the judges had finished allotting medals to the winners, I had managed to gather myself together and was no longer in danger of bursting into tears. I slowly gathered my bags and started to jostle my way through the crowd. As I neared the exit, out of the corner of my eye I caught a glimpse of a teary-eyed Olivia as quick as I could I pushed my way over to Olivia to find out what had happened. Then it hit me: poor Olivia had worked so hard to perfect her dances. She had

wanted to win so desperately she performed two dances, but neither had earned her a medal. When I reached Olivia I tried my utmost to reassure her that no one would think ill of her because she had not done as well as she had wanted in her first competition. I told Olivia, "It was sad neither of us won a medal, but we have a whole year to work and improve until we can come back and surpass this year's performance." I gave Olivia a brief squeeze before leaving to find my parents and head home.

A few days later I was still grappling over the outcome of the competition. That night at dance class I watched Olivia as she danced; it seemed as though she had miraculously improved overnight! It was not until the end of class that I understood what had changed in Olivia. She had taken my advice to heart and refused to dwell on her failures, instead focusing on how to improve and enhance her dancing. In that moment I realized that I had been spending too much time brooding over my mistakes, and needed to move on. It was not important that I was not the most advanced dancer who had competed, but that I did not let one disappointment preclude me from bolstering my dancing. Though I had not earned a medal, I had gained something much more important: the knowledge that it is the experience that matters.

By Anastasia Cardlin



Photo *By Lauryn Fenigstein*

Broken

I ran up to the net, spiked the ball, and then came crashing down on the gym floor. Crack! I heard the sound of my left foot breaking. I could feel the tears starting to form and my heart beginning to race. I thought, "Is it broken? Is this the end of my volleyball season?" I took that first step and immediately knew something was wrong. But I couldn't stop now, I wouldn't stop! This was try-outs and I planned on finishing strong. And I did! My name was called and I made the team. Most of my anxiety lifted but I still had one problem: my broken foot. I stepped into my aunt's car and the tears came pouring out. My foot was killing me and I needed to do something about it.

Once I spoke to my parents, who were out of town, my grandma immediately drove me to STAT Health in Bay Shore where I had to fill out numerous medical forms and sign in. I anxiously sat in the barren waiting room thinking to myself, "Is it broken? How long will it be out for? Will my team be mad at me for taking someone else's spot? Will they miss me? What will my coach say?" After patiently waiting for over an hour, they called my name. My heart stopped and my anxiety went through the roof. I gingerly walked down the long hallway and we finally came upon the room. I sat down on the examining table waiting for the doctor to enter. To make matters worse, as the doctor came in, he said, "Wow, you look terrible." He then asked me what had happened, so I explained the story and he recorded it all in his file. He then proceeded to tell me to head to the x-ray room. There, the doctor placed my maimed foot under the x-ray machine and took several pictures. About five minutes later he came back with my results. He told me, "I'm sorry to say this, but you have a non-displaced fracture of your left metatarsal bone."

My heart sank and I started to cry. On my way out the door, the doctor handed me a lollipop and said, "Hey, don't worry about this kid. You're young and have big things ahead of you. When my daughter was your age she had a similar injury and now she plays division one volleyball as a freshman in college. Good luck with the rest of your volleyball career." This small statement really changed my perspective on this bad experience. On my way to Applebee's with my incapacitated foot in the air and my crutches at my sides, I was welcomed by my teammates with warm hugs and smiles. All of my worries lifted off my chest and I was relieved that my team wasn't mad at me.

My team and I had a night full of laughing and I wasn't as upset anymore. After taking what my doctor said into consideration, I realized that breaking my foot wasn't the end of the world. Even though not everything happened as planned, it all ended up working out in the end: I became captain of the team and got to cheer for them on the sidelines at every game. I ended up being able to play the last four games of the season and helped in making my team undefeated. I got the game ball my first game back and couldn't have been any happier to set foot on that court once again.

By Anna MacGibbon

Process Analysis: Pronunciation

When you meet someone, the first thing you learn about them is their name: “Hi, my name is ____”. From this introduction, you now know how to properly pronounce the person’s name. Thereon, it is a bit more challenging to read out names before hearing them aloud first, especially if it isn’t a common name. There was a week where I decided to count how many times my name, Preya, was pronounced incorrectly. Disappointingly in the first day alone, there was already over a handful of mispronunciations. *Preyeya*, *Preeaya*, *Breya*, *Preyar*, *Pīya*, are just a few of the countless variations of people massacring such a simple name. *Preya*— five letters: three vowels and two consonants— it can’t be that difficult to pronounce, right? Apparently wrong. There are very few steps to success at pronouncing my name, even if you put in as minimal effort as possible, you can still succeed; all you need is good ears and some primary school education.

First off, know that you are potentially being set up to fail. My name is Preya, however the more common way to spell it is Priya. My parents loved the name Priya, but felt as though it was too common (yes it may be surprising to people living in such small communities with very little ethnic diversity, but many people actually have the same name; it’s not very authentic), so they changed the “i” to an “e”. If the name was spelt *Priya*, it might be recognized more easily, therefore pronounced correctly.

The “e” in Preya seems to throw everyone off. Is it a long e? Is it short? Does it become an “eye” sound since there is a “y” after the “e”? To figure this phenomenon out, we can use basic techniques our kindergarten teachers taught us when we were younger. First, the syllable test: place one hand under your chin and say *Preya* (correct pronunciation is not needed at this time, just try your best). For every time your chin moves down, count it as one syllable. Got it? If you did it correctly, you should discover that *Preya* has two syllables.

Now that we know how many syllables there are, our next primary school technique is to isolate each syllable. By doing this, we can now tackle the pronunciation piece by piece. Seclude the first syllable, *Pre-*, from the second, *-ya*. Now attempt to pronounce it based on other words you may recognize. *Pre* is usually a prefix that means before. How do you pronounce *pre* in *preschool*? Now proceed to the second syllable: *-ya*. This one shouldn’t be too hard, when the letters “y” and “a” are placed next to each other, they typically apply their regular consonant-vowel agreement. The “y” should sound the way it would in *yo-yo* and the “a” ending should sound alike to more familiar names ending with “a” such as

Kristina or Olivia. Now if you put those two syllables together, viola! You now learned how to say my name!

If you don't want to go through all these steps, there is also an easier route to success where all you need is to keep your ears peeled. Say you are a teacher and you are blanking out on your student's names. You can read the name on a piece of paper, you are able to identify who this person is, but you just can't remember how to pronounce it correctly. If you tune into your students' conversations, you can listen to how they address her. By listening closely and acknowledging how others pronounce the name, you should be able to thrive.

The name, Preya, is only five letters. Pronouncing it shouldn't take much effort at all; but if you still struggle, you can always ask the person for help or reassurance on whether you are pronouncing the name correctly. However, if you do wish to figure it out on your own, all you need is to do is use basic reading techniques or listen closely. Putting in even the slightest effort brings the best outcomes. Not only will you feel accomplished, but the person will also feel satisfied in that you no longer mispronounce their name.

By Preya Roy



Photo *By Cara Whitehorn*

120 Seconds

120 seconds. The time it takes to floss your teeth, trim your toenails, or run five blocks from a vicious dog. 120 seconds seems like nothing, but when you are reciting an impromptu speech in front of 400 adolescent girls, it becomes everything.

I stood there at the podium. *Still. Speechless.* Panic filled my body from head to toe. The incessant tapping of my own fingers echoed throughout the hall. *What's wrong with me?* I was in a perpetual earthquake. This was my first ever panic attack.

All I remember from those 120 dreadful seconds were Michelle Obama and vegetables. *Vegetables. Really?* I was trapped in an abyss and it was *my* fault. I suddenly had no control over my body. I was unrecognizable. I thought I could handle the immensity of the situation, but my confidence withered away with every passing second. I knew that I had failed.

Or that's what I thought at the time.

After weeks of nightmares going back to that day, I realized that I had been dodging public speaking unconsciously for my entire life. I convinced myself that it was because I just didn't *feel* like it. In reality, I knew it was because I didn't want to. I didn't want to be perceived as vulnerable; meanwhile this assumption is what made me vulnerable.

But everyone has a chance to redeem themselves. And, I wasn't going to waste mine.

I drove myself to be ambitious, to take risks. I delved into every opportunity that came my way. In doing so, I allowed myself to discover new, unexpected things that make me smile, laugh or even cry. I've learned to accept that I will be incapable at some activities, but I refuse to surrender them without a good fight.

I dreamed big but started small.

My greatest fear since I could remember has been dogs. Tame or violent, Chihuahua or German Shepard, it makes no difference—I'm scared of them all. You'll always be sure to find me dashing to the opposite corner of the street when a cute little devil is in proximity. When I visit my friends, I make sure they hide their dogs before I enter. However, when I returned from that dreaded speech, my goal was to surmount my fears. Slowly, I would accustom myself to dogs whether it is simply walking past a dog or even petting it. Soon, you found me walking near dogs! Petting it was slightly overambitious; I'll save that for another day.

With one fear down, I was ready to take on another. It was time to prepare myself for greater fears.

Senior year of high school is a daunting time for most, but in an effort to reach my goals, I make sure to push myself a bit harder each and every day to become a stronger and more cosmopolitan version of myself. I pursue every public speaking opportunity whether it is for two minutes or for 40. I continuously venture outside of my comfort zone: I raise my hand more often, run for leadership positions in clubs, and take on stressful public responsibilities.

My biggest risk was running for secretary of Student Union. I assumed the role this fall and have loved every second of it. Once again, I had the chance of talking to a massive crowd—well over 1000 students during pep rally. There I stood—center of the gym, thousands of penetrating eyes glaring at me—a newer, improved version of myself, building brick by brick in my foundation of confidence with every word I uttered. I came across that once unfamiliar version of myself yet again, but this time, I moved past it. I engaged the audience with my bold and composed words and found myself wondering where all the time had gone once it was over.

120 seconds flew by. This time, I wished it hadn't.

By Mimita Rahman



Photo *By Kristen Baumgartner*

Gabby, Did You Make It?

Islip on three! Ready 1, 2, 3, ISLIP! My teammates and I stand in a huddle with smiles from ear to ear, proud of each other and our undefeated season. Looking at my teammates, I remember all the hard work and perseverance it took to get here. Ultimately, it had not always been so enjoyable.

It was the last day of middle school volleyball tryouts as a seventh grader. All of my closest friends ran out of the high school screaming “Gabby, did you make it?” I angrily scowled, sulked into my car and slammed the door; I silently sat, consumed with disappointment and humiliation.

I got cut.

I came home and ate dinner in silence, and dragged my feet upstairs and sat in my room. I decided to go on my phone which usually cheers me up—I was wrong. I opened Snapchat and my feed was flooding with group pictures of my best friends at Applebee’s with the caption, “BFFs and I made the volleyball team!” I spent what felt like 15 minutes clicking through snapchats of my friends bonding without me. I began to worry about my friendships. Would I soon grow apart from my friends because I am not on the team? I stood in the shower, listening to the water fall from the shower head in unison. As each water droplet fell, I grappled with myself about continuing my volleyball career. However, after some serious thought, I decided giving up on volleyball was not an option. I had to be optimistic. And I was.

I was more motivated than ever. I immediately asked my friend, who had made the team, to practice with me until next year’s tryout so I could enhance my skills and make the team. Day by day, I began to improve, and I felt myself evolving into a stronger player: my serves stronger, passing more controlled, spikes fiercer. I now knew that failing to make the volleyball team would shape me into a better player.

Sometimes failure is necessary in order to succeed; getting cut motivated me to continue pursuing my passion of playing volleyball. My journey was filled with ups and downs, but in the end, it was all worth it.

By Gabby Reyes

Troy

Hello, is this Natalie Gonzalez?

No, this is her daughter. Can I take a messa—

My mother grabbed the phone from my hands. I sat there, eavesdropping of course, but all I discovered was that she was speaking to a social worker. She soon hung up the phone and stared at me.

“We are going to take care of a little boy named Troy” she said.

Definitely not what I expected. But excitement filled my body from head to toe. I sat on the front porch, anxiously waiting for the boy’s arrival. Car after car passed as I got more and more excited to have a foster brother again. Soon after, a sparkling, white car slowed down to a stop in front of my home.

A woman got out of the passenger seat and went to take the boy out of his car seat in the back. When Troy came out of the car you could sense just how nervous he was, yet he was still smiling and tried not to show his nervousness. Troy and I watched the fireworks as my mom talked to the social worker. I was so amazed at how this was such a new and weird situation yet he still pretended like everything was okay and completely ignored the fact that he was ripped away and separated from his family.

My mother finished talking to the woman and came back looking completely distraught. She whispered to my father, “We need to make sure he feels at home.” His parents are ex-convicts and his dad was in possession of drugs, weapons, and God knows what else. All of the kids were verbally and physically abused—they were found hiding in a closet with no sign of eating for days.” She continued to say how Troy was separated from his siblings as they were placed in a group home, and he was given to us.

The next morning, we went to the store with Troy. He only chose one toy, and we encouraged him to take more. He claimed this was closest to his comfort as he was deprived of many things throughout his childhood. In my head, all I thought was: *how can someone treat a child like that?*

Troy was only with us for a few days, but the impact he left on my life is something that will never fade. His difficult past is something I wish no child had to suffer through, but unfortunately, Troy did. Seeing the white car pull into my driveway yet again, which once brought exciting feelings, now seemed so dreadful to me and my family. I never thought I would miss someone I knew for such little time, so much. He wasn’t just any other child we took care of until he or she found a permanent home, he was different. Troy taught me to appreciate every little thing I possessed—not just on Thanksgiving—but for every moment in my life.

By Natalia Gonzalez

The Power of Accomplishment

Fear. An emotion every person struggles with. For each person fear is caused by different factors, but the emotion is still the same. No one wants to feel afraid, but the emotion is utterly unavoidable. When people feel afraid, it affects their decisions to try new things, which can eventually cause them to become unhappy.

From a young age, I've always loved singing. One day I went to a voice lesson and out of the blue, I was unable to sing high notes. I had to strain my voice, which eventually made the situation worse because my throat really started to hurt, even when I was just talking. My voice teacher immediately picked up on the problem because my voice became very raspy, deep, and scratchy. I became extremely worried so my mom took me to an ear, throat, and nose specialist. I recall walking up to the door shaking: what if the outcome of this situation would be that I could never sing again? I was only eight at the time, so every little thing in a doctor's office scared me.

The doctor moved a tube up through my nose into my mouth; I can vividly remember how uncomfortable and painful the procedure was. Unfortunately, my doctor shared terrible news with my family and me after the test.

I was diagnosed with nodules.

Nodules are "benign (noncancerous) growths on both vocal cords that are caused by vocal abuse. Over time, repeated abuse of the vocal cords results in soft, swollen spots on each vocal cord. These spots develop into harder, callous-like growths". I was then required to see a speech pathologist to help dissolve them. Every Tuesday, I would have to drag myself to speech because I hated it so much, but I knew that if I didn't go, I would lose the ability to sing again. Sadly, during the two years it took to fix this problem, I was unable to sing at all. I was required to practice every day, which consisted of speaking the same sentences over and over in a high pitched tone. Luckily with determination and hard-work, I was able to eradicate the nodules and eventually get back the voice I once possessed.

The only emotion strong enough to overcome fear is the feeling of success. Since the fourth grade I've participated in NYSSMA. This is when you prepare a solo and perform it in front of a judge, just to get criticized. And if that wasn't hard enough, you are also required to sing eight measures of notes that you've never seen before, perfectly. Each year you increase levels until you get up to the highest, level six.

This past year, 2016, I was old enough to qualify for Allstate, so I chose a song that would make me stand out, an Italian Aria. Even though I sing in front of

people almost every day, I still get extremely nervous for every single performance. So the week before NYSSMA I am always stressing, but this year was the worst because this is the level that was going to determine if I would make Allstate. In order to get into Allstate you have to get a 100 on NYSSMA level six and have a recommendation from your choir teacher. I had all this pressure on me from my voice teacher and family to get a 100 because I had been working towards this goal ever since I knew how to sing. I remember walking up to the school that NYSSMA was occurring in, and literally shaking while my stomach felt like it was about to explode from the nerves. I needed to stay calm though because nerves affect my singing, causing me to have a very airy tone and sometimes even the worst possible thing: cracking. I scooped up all the confidence I had left in me and went into the room, giving it my best shot.

In the end, that's the only thing people can ask from you. Luckily, I later found out I received a 100. The splurge of adrenaline and excitement I had when I found out is something I'll never forget. At the end of this process I learned if you believe in yourself and put a lot of effort in every day, you can achieve whatever you set your mind to and overcome hardships.

By Emma Regina



Photo by Victoria DiRago

Switching Nets

Sitting at a red light, my mom's hands drumming on the steering wheel to the beat of the radio, I remember feeling anxious. Anxious about high school starting next week, yes, but I was mostly anxious about the dreaded "Hell Week". The drumming on the steering wheel stopped, and I looked up from my phone to see my mom glancing at me. "Are you sure you want to do this?" she asked, leaving a clear pause at the end showing that she hadn't finished her thought. "Because I was talking to the other moms and..." I gave her a look cold enough to cut off her sentence. "Yes" I said clearly annoyed by my mother's never ending questioning. "I am sure; it's not a big deal." I said, but I began to wonder, was I reassuring her or myself?

Looking back on this turning point in my life, many factors contributed to my indecision and nervous attitude towards making the choice between tennis and volleyball. My middle school years were beyond busy; I played a sport every season and competed in Science Olympiads which took up almost all of my time after school. Transitioning into high school meant a lot of things: more freedom, more work, and more challenges.

However, for me, it also meant a choice between two very influential sports that now were both played in the fall. In the past, I was able to play both as volleyball was in the winter, and tennis in the fall, but now the choice loomed over my head like a dark cloud. The decision wasn't just about the sport, I remember liking volleyball much better than tennis, but it was about the people and my skill level. On one hand, I had played tennis with my childhood friends at the Bayberry Beach club for years, taken private lessons at World Gym, and my entire family played. This was familiar to me; I knew exactly what I was getting into and it probably would have been the more comfortable choice. Volleyball was a totally different animal. I made the team in seventh grade by the skin of my teeth and spent the entire year on the side lines, facing carping glances from the older girls on the team. I hated it.

In eighth grade, everything changed. I became more outgoing and overall became better at the sport, made a bunch of friends and generally just enjoyed playing. The sport was exciting, playing was exhilarating, and the sense of companionship on the court when we were pushing for the last couple points was something tennis never offered me. I was truly conflicted.

My mother played volleyball in high school, and even coached it at a private school when she was younger, but I knew what decision she wanted me to make. All

her friends had children who played tennis, volleyball was an unfamiliar sport to most of the town moms, and tennis was the bread and butter of the beach club. Plus, we had both heard rumors about volleyball “Hell Week”, the week of try outs with double practices and harsh conditioning, and knew it would be a challenge.

The choice came down to the one thing that was most important to me, being myself.

So, I sat my mom down and explained to her how much I loved volleyball, even if I wasn’t the best, and I knew it had the most potential for me. On the tennis team, yes I would know the rhythm of the girls on the team, but that rhythm wasn’t for me. I wouldn’t have started; I would have just been another one of the girls who was good, but not great. We went out and bought new spandex, kneepads, and shoes. The decision was made.

Two years later, I know I made the right decision. My best friends are still the girls on the tennis team, and they do amazing each year, winning divisions, leagues, and counties! However, that is what they love and I don’t regret not being a part of it. I am closer to the girls on my volleyball team than most people I know and the bond we share on and off the court reminds me of why I made my decision every day.

I made the unexpected choice, eschewing criticism from those around me, and it was one that would distinguish me from my friends and makes me unique. I surprised everyone, including myself, friends, and family, but that has been the best part. The reward was meeting new people, making new friends, and having a supportive group of girls to help me transition into high school.

At the time, I hadn’t realized the impact of my decision, or how different my life would have been if I had chosen tennis.

As for my mother, months after hell week, the season and the start of high school, she revealed to me what she had been thinking for months. “Madeline,” she said, “I think you made the best decision, and showed yourself as the individual, strong girl you are.” I couldn’t agree more; this choice is essential to telling the story of who I am today.

By Madeline Edwards

Lauren's Little Sister

Ever since walking into Room 4 on my first day of kindergarten at Wing Elementary School, I have been known as “Lauren’s little sister” first, and then “Olivia” later on. Lauren is my brilliant, outgoing, and extremely intelligent older sister, who makes her academic mark wherever she goes, all the way up to Boston College, where she currently studies. Being so close in age, it’s no surprise that we’ve always been compared to one another, whether it be our looks, our personalities, or even our unique laughter. With personal comparisons, come academic comparisons, where teachers, and even fellow classmates who have worked with Lauren in the past, put our smarts and classroom behaviors side by side. Because of this, I have always felt the need to prove to myself and the world that I can be just as hardworking and dedicated as she is.

I’ve never blamed Lauren for how teachers tend to react to my familiar family tree; she shines in every way, and I’ve always admired her for that quality which I lack. I also have never blamed the teachers that I’ve inherited from Lauren for their subconscious comparisons they make between us, because I am a much more reserved student than her and I have trouble speaking up in class, while she doesn’t have those limitations. Because I can be so quiet, I tend to get overlooked or underestimated, which is the real killer for me. Even my mother has created similes between Lauren and I saying that my sister is like an excited puppy, and I am like a kitten, more quiet and maybe seemingly timid, but they still both make marvelous pets, and in our cases students.

Moving forward ten years to the first day of tenth grade, I was a girl who was used to being accidentally called “Lauren” by teachers seven months into the school year, answering with “yes, I’m Lauren’s sister” as I walked into each of my classes on the first day, and knowing that I always needed to work to my greatest potential so I wouldn’t blend into my sister’s shadow. So on the first day of sophomore year, I had expectations for most of my teachers to reminisce on their times of having Lauren as a student when they saw my last name on the attendance sheet. When I got to sixth period chemistry, though, I was pleasantly surprised. Although I knew my teacher had two of my siblings, Emily and Lauren, both extraordinary students, in the past, he made no mention of them to me. He treated me like any other student, which was a breath of fresh air for me. Since doing very well on the first test in chemistry, I knew I had a natural ability for the subject that many of my peers seemed to be struggling with. This, mixed with the fact that I never felt as though I was constantly being compared to my sisters’ achievements in the class, made sixth period very enjoyable for me. It was the first class I found myself actively participating in and

working hard to do well, and it became my best subject, despite the quick and rigorous material of course.

Over the span of ten months, I learned a lot about myself. First and foremost, I learned that although my big sister and I are on opposite sides of the spectrum as far as students are concerned, it doesn't make one of us better or worse than the other, because it's comparing apples to oranges. Another thing I learned was how to apply myself to academics. I'd been so used to selling myself short that I thought my best would never be good enough, but through studying and self-motivation I showed myself a new "best" that I'd never known before, which I now apply to each of my classes to this day. The last thing I learned was that it doesn't really matter that I'm known as "Lauren's little sister", because I know that I'm just plain Olivia, and it doesn't matter that my name comes with a long line of three other superstar students with the same name who came before me, because it's much better for a teacher to expect great things from you than to expect nothing at all. All my life I'd been working to emulate my amazing big sister, but I now know that if I just try my best, it will pay off in the end, which it did. I earned a 96 on the regents, the best chemistry grade the Schadt family has seen yet.

By Olivia Schadt



Photo *By Zoe Camhi*

Overcoming Embarrassment

Ever since I was a kid, I've always worried over the smallest things such as speaking at the wrong time, turning red when talking to someone, or even getting a question wrong in class. This constant nagging followed me to high school, as all through my sophomore year, I still found myself obsessing over these small minor details.

November 20th, 2015 started just like any other day; I woke up, ate breakfast, and made my way to school. Around eight period, I started feeling a little off, but I pushed it to the side, as I only had two periods left before I could leave. We are doing lab in chemistry, and the strange feeling in my stomach had almost gone away- until it didn't. The twisting pain in my abdomen began to become more prominent, and I started to feel very hot and sweaty. Somehow I still disregarded these feelings, as I continued to stand with my group and work on the lab. About two minutes later, my ears began to ring; a slight buzzing noise, which was followed by white spots clouded my vision. At this point, I began to panic, as I had only thrown up once as a kid, but if I moved, I thought I would have passed out. Faintly through the dull ringing in my ears, I heard my friend say, "Wow you look really pale". Great. Just another addition to the now numerous list of things that were wrong with me. I laid my head down, hoping it would somehow calm my intransigent and churning stomach, feeling the cool lab table on the clammy face. Not even a minute later, I felt a strange sensation rising from my stomach. I stood up, said, "I really think I'm going to throw up", and out it came.

Surprisingly I was very quiet; no one in my group seemed to notice what I did until they saw the vomit in a puddle in front of me. Honestly, what happened after I threw up was a blur, as I was mostly focused on the relief I felt throughout my whole body. Eventually the substitute called the nurse, and I was taken out of the room in a wheelchair.

As I was being pushed through the halls, I noticed that I wasn't embarrassed at all. Somehow, throwing up in front of my class wasn't as big of a deal as I thought it would be. This feeling began to sink in on the car ride home, as I wasn't freaking out when my dad asked me what happened; I was surprisingly very calm for someone who just threw up less than a half hour ago. When I got home, I realized that all the small things I worried about weren't as world ending and horrifying as I made them seem. Since then, this realization has helped me through many minor bumps and issues I have had in life. Today, I'm not nearly as self-conscious, as I was when I was younger, all because of the time I threw up in chemistry.

By Faith Terrill



Photo *By Victoria DiRago*

Content on that Cliff

One week was all we had to canoe fifty miles. Our second crew agreed that by the end of this canoeing adventure, we wanted to make it to “The Bluffs” on Tupper Lake. Personally, I thought this was a challenge and I never rejected adventure. Early Saturday we drove up the Buttermilk Falls, New York. I stepped out of the car and absorbed the stunning mountain views and clean air. It wasn’t until the moment I sat down in the canoe that I realized that ahead of us was a long, grueling, journey.

On the first day we traveled a total of thirteen miles. It was the most strenuous activity I have ever been through. The wind was surging at twenty miles an hour against us. For every five feet we traveled forward, the wind pushed us back three. Our boat was bounced aggressively on every wave that we hit, splashing water into our faces and into our canoes. I did not believe that we were going to make it through the first day, it seemed like a better idea to call a rescue boat than cross this lake on our own. Then, at the seven mile mark, I knew we couldn’t give up. We were halfway to our goal, the Kelly Point campsite. What felt like days was only hours, and within four hours we arrived at our destination. I was sore from all the paddling and my clothes, and pack were wet, further, I was getting sunburn on my back. All I could think was “I want to go home.” The rest of the trip flew by, there were days of rain, extreme heat, and we got lost more than a few times. Now it was the fifth day and we were at the final site, a peninsula in Tupper Lake. The experienced canoers on our trip recommended that we spend extra time at this site because it was “special”. None of the novice paddlers knew what this meant, but we were all eager to find out. In the morning after we arrived on shore, I was in awe. The site was greater than anything I’d ever imagined, from an endless view of mountains and trees, to ground that was just right so we could pitch our tents on level ground. There was no technology and we seemed to be in our own little world, with no invidious energy. All day we played frisbee in and out of the water, fished bass, swam in the invigorating water, and hiked around the area. Even with all of the entertaining activities, the main highlight of this last sight was a cliff that overlooked the lake.

The cliff was twenty feet above the dark, blue water. After testing the area to make sure it was safe, we decided to jump. The first time I jumped, it took me forever to build up the nerve to leap. I stood at the edge, wondering about all the things that could go wrong, but for some reason I jumped. My heart dropped as my body descended and hit the water. Even though I was wearing a lifejacket, the force of the jump completely submerged me under the water. Once my head broke the surface, water was coming out of my nose, ears, and mouth. It was thrilling. I was impressed with my courage or maybe with my foolishness.

After everyone got their chance to jump, one by one we started to relax and just lay on the edge of the cliff. We talked about life, death, college, family, love, the universe, trust, and many other deep topics. I realized that in this moment, I was satisfied. I never wanted to leave that moment, that cliff. For a brief time, nothing concerned me. I wasn't worried that I hadn't started my summer assignments. I wasn't nervous about the trip home. I wasn't thinking about anything, there was just an overwhelming feeling of enjoyment, bliss and contentment. I was grateful to be with some of my favorite people - people who make me laugh, who comfort me, who grieve with me. Completely overflowing with happiness, I began to cry. From the view over the lake, with the mountains and trees fading off into the distance, the smell of fresh air and tree sap, to the feeling of the cold rock up against my legs and back, it completed me, I was content. Suddenly, there was a chill that fluttered through my spine and I was crying tears of joy. "Are you okay, Kathy?" one of my concerned friends asked. "I'm so at peace right now, I never want to leave" I responded. I suddenly knew why this site was "special." I felt that I could forever be content on that cliff.

By Kathy Voska



Photo *By Kristen Baumgartner*

A Once in a Lifetime Experience

Just like any other teenager I have always felt like I was being suppressed by my parents, and treated as if everything I was being denied was purely because of my age. Theoretically this made sense to me—it still does—considering the fact that I am still just sixteen years old. My freedom was being arrogated by my parents, and I was being denied the rights that both my grades and personality had proved I deserved.

So, when my parents finally approached me on my fifteenth birthday with the idea that it's been one month studying at Oxford University, in England, alone, the only thing I could think about was “it's about time”. It's about time these people understand I am capable of not only being independent, but being alone in England for a month. The argument that I fabricated must've been pretty coherent if it was convincing enough for them to send me away for a month, a month that proved to be one of the most valuable experiences of my entire life.

After seven and a half sleepless hours on an overnight flight, I finally landed at Heathrow airport and the journey began. On the coach bus to Oxford University, I met Brianna, who would soon be my best friend. She was from North Carolina and happened to be one of the most religious people I have ever met. I was never much of a believer in any type of God, but listening to her long rambles about how most people don't understand where she comes from, open my mind and allowed me to realize the impact that religion can have on a person. Although, I still do not practice religion myself, I no longer find it ludicrous to believe in a higher power.

It was these experiences and these conversation that made me realize that this month wasn't like any other. There were moments like these with friends when we would cry about our pointless teenage issues and even bicker about the small minutia that would now make us laugh.

Many differences came up across all spectrums and one that kept coming up was the fact that my Long Island accent was just way too noticeable. Friends from San Francisco, Raleigh, Cape Town, Perth, Los Angeles, Manila, Singapore, and Pittsburgh all found ways to point out the way I would say “daughter” , “ water” or even the way I would say “ Long Island”.

The friends I made in Oxford are some of the most influential people I have ever encountered; they encourage me to go out of my comfort zone, which in the end, made me feel more comfortable with my surroundings.

In addition to the influential friends and their open-minded attitude, the city of Oxford and the entire atmosphere expose my mind to the idea of real independence. The erudite environment pushed me to be in a particularly

inquisitive mindset and focus more on International Business and Speech and Debate, rather than any teenager in a new environment would do, which is try to make as many friends as possible. My professors assigned a number of hours of homework a night, which required me to meet up with people from class to work on case studies. The way that everyone at the University of Oxford applied themselves was encouraging to me; it made me want to challenge myself and get as much as possible out of this adventure.

Not only was the impressive academic environment in Oxford unique, but the architecture and history of the city was astonishing. From learning about the life of Lewis Carroll and Alex Liddell to the filming of the Harry Potter films, the journey proved to be entertaining yet educational. Eating breakfast and dinner in the hall where Ron Weasley received the howler from his mother is scolding him for the daring act that he and Harry had committed, seemed to be the most surreal thing to me and all of my friends in the Literature and the Fantastic class.

On a different note, being alone in the city for a month at fifteen years old was most definitely one of the most important experiences of my life. At first, getting coffee in the morning from a local café was a challenge to me, but as time went on I got more comfortable being alone. Taking on responsibilities of waking myself up, locking the door when leaving my dorm, and making sure that I had everything I needed for the day was essential to adapting to “the college life”. A month alone in a foreign country taught me adult responsibility and independence.

So in the end I guess one could say that my parents were right. They proved that there was most definitely room for me to become even more independent than I thought I had been.

I believe that experience and practice can be applied to aspects beyond sports or music, experience is used to impose maturity and poise on oneself. Oxford proved to be the factor that allowed me to channel my feelings and compose a more mature person out of myself.

By Jillian Piano

Hershey Park

Everyone always has that certain place where they are perfectly content or somewhere that is filled with memories. To me Hershey Park is where my childhood was and I can definitely agree that it is the “sweetest place on Earth”.

Hershey is filled with some of the biggest and tallest roller coasters as well as, of course, the best chocolate around. Yes all the attractions and games are fun, but most importantly, the memories I created with my family are ones we will remember for a lifetime.

It was traditional that my family and my aunt and uncle with their children would go together every summer. It all started in 2006, when my parents thought we should join our cousins on their vacation because they went the year before and raved about how much they loved it! My cousins and I always got along so well, especially since me and both my sisters each had one that is the same ages us, so we were all extremely excited to go to away together.

The excitement started when we first got to the hotel. Our rooms were directly across the hall from each other, so I and my cousins were running back-and-forth and jumping on the beds. At first, it was all fun and games because who doesn't love jumping on the comfy hotel beds?

However, soon enough, one broke. That's right, my oldest cousin Frankie thought it was a good idea to jump from bed to bed but ended up breaking the box spring on one of them! After only 10 minutes of being there, we knew it was going to be an interesting trip.

Furthermore, one of the best parts of Hershey is when the trolley drops you off at the front of the park where you are overwhelmed by the aroma of chocolate and by how many activities there were; unsure which way to go first. When I was younger, I used to be afraid of the characters that roamed around the park as different chocolate bars. Now, my cousin and I go on a mission to find them and get a picture with them.

As the years went on, it's crazy to see how much we grew...literally! The height chart when you first entered the park told you if you were a Reese's, Hershey, Twizzler, Jolly Rancher etc. The best moment was when I finally reached a Jolly Rancher, which was the tallest, and it meant I could go on all the rides! The first ride I ever went on was called the Scrambler, and let me tell you, you couldn't get me off that thing. I really don't know how I didn't get tired of it or extremely dizzy when the entire time it would spin and just whip you around. To me, that was the definition of fun.

As the years passed, I finally was brave enough to go on my first real roller coaster: The Comet. The rush I got from that ride was something I never experienced I just wanted to do it again and again. As I was introduced to new rides each year, I could officially say I went on every roller coaster the park offered. The flips and turns are so exhilarating and it's something I look forward to every year.

Another tradition we had was waiting until the last day to go to Chocolate World. Even though the chocolate tour was always the same every year, it's just something you have to do. We spent multiple hours in Chocolate World because it is impossible to choose between everything they offer. Not only do we get loads of chocolate, but Hershey has the best chocolate chip cookies and kettle corn so we obviously can't leave without those necessities!

Sadly, when my sister and my cousin reached the age of 18, it became very difficult for us to plan a trip that would work around everyone's schedule. That year, my aunt and uncle didn't want to go but we surprised my cousins with tickets and my parents took all six of us kids for one last time. Now, imagine all of us cramped in a car for five hours and we had woken up at four in the morning that day to get an early start. Also, we only had one hotel room which was just not a pretty sight. Even though it wasn't the most ideal living accommodations, we still made it work and we were just happy that we could all be together.

Don't get me wrong, these trips weren't always perfect. We all had our fair share of arguments with one another just like any family does. Whether it be me getting heatstroke one year, my uncle falling out of the tube on the waterside and hitting his head, my cousin getting lost, beds breaking, getting sick from eating and then going on roller coasters—these were the imperfections that made everything so memorable.

I am sad to say that now we are all older and don't go to Hershey Park as a big group anymore. Although my dad makes an effort to still take me there once a year, we always recollect on our previous times there. Not much has changed from all those years ago, but it never gets old and will always be my happy place. Other than holidays, it's rare that I and my cousins are all together.

Recently, we all got to hang out for the first time in probably a year and it was so nice to catch up. All in all, it is important to cherish family time together because of people grow up, people grow apart, but creating memories together will stick with you all forever.

By Kristina Martin

The next two essays are satires, based upon Jonathan Swift's original satire, "A Modest Proposal."

A Modest Proposal: Sexism

There is something coming. It is rampant in the streets, feasting on the weak minded like a savage beast. It is feared by all, yet perpetuated by all. It will devour every town, every city every state, every region, every country, until all hope is crushed. Like a plague, it spreads quickly and silently. Our only hope is to lay waste to its path by crushing the ideas before they ruin every last member of society. The real problem society faces today is a grave and somber word: Sexism. Women are paid on average 80 cents to a man's dollar for performing the same exact job! Currently, in male dominated fields, young males are chosen more favorably even if employers are presented with a female who has the exact same qualifications, due to preexisting prejudice. Furthermore, if a woman is "fortunate" enough to be hired, her average salary is set, on average, four thousand dollars lower than that of her male counterpart.

The advantages of my plan are both plentiful and pure. I intend to free the masses from the chains of poverty and injustice. Along with the benefits that my plan directly causes, it will have positive implications for the economy, along with the expansion of safer societies. Every surviving member will reap the benefits as this plan is meant only to help the masses. For too long now women have been set back from the moment they were born, struggling to get ahead simply because of their gender, but not anymore. Women will be able to roam darkened streets without fear, enjoy carefree days at the beach, and walk around with the knowledge that safety is within their grasp. Injustice will be eliminated from society.

I have devised the perfect solution to eradicate the world of sexism. For too long, women have been viewed as subservient and weak. Yet today, I stand before you to propose a new law, one which will benefit society in a multitude of ways. We will take back the world, and together, balance the scales in favor of women for a change.

My plan will ensure that the ideas of inequality are wiped from society eternally. It will be initiated when each town gathers around their prospective town hall and rings out my proposal. There will be cheering along with tears, but once reality sets in, all those being sacrificed will come to see that the benefits for society severely outweigh their mere concerns. A committee selected by district advisors will administer psychological and physical tests, which will include a written part along with a "fitness" test. The written test will determine, subconsciously, how each male views feminism and equality, gauging how strongly they believe in our cause. Blood will be taken and tested for genetic "fitness", ensuring no genetic disorders can be passed on that would hinder the future population. Another physical fitness test will ensure, as Darwin would say, that only the fittest survive. Using a formula, which takes morals (40%), genetics (40%), and physical health (20%) into consideration, only the top contenders will be spared from each country.

I move to propose that as a society, we should euthanize 90% of the male population due to their weaknesses. The spared 10% will be chosen for two distinct reasons: to keep the human population alive, and spread their “fitness” for life which will be determined by a series of tests both psychological and physical. The board administering the tests will be impartial; a group of three females and three males, who have already passed their exams.

Ridding the world of the disease we call sexism will do more than merely give women what they finally deserve. It will also bring about change that will revolutionize the world for the better.

In recent years, many brave people have fought for our cause. By exposing the wage gap, creating femicide laws to hinder the mass genocide of women, and speaking out about the monstrosity of allowing sexual harassment to continue its existence in society, we hoped to achieve true equality, just as our suffragette sisters did before us. Yet all these motions have failed because society does not value true equality, only equality for those who “matter”. But who determines what this really means? Surely it is only those who have usurped the peoples’ power for thousands of years. They refuse to listen to reason, but this is exactly what my plan enforces.

Did you know that 80.4% of violent crimes are committed by males? How about the fact that 92.6% of gang members are male? Or that in 1995, 17.7 million women had reported that they had been raped within their lifetime and that 93.7% of rape perpetrators are male? These statistics are revolting. With a limited male population, the world as a whole will be safer, and will benefit from the lack of crime and violence to become productive. Citizens will be active and positive members of their communities, fostering bonds with their neighbors like never before. The world will become a more caring and tolerant place.

Secondly, my proposition will stimulate the economy exponentially. With the massacre, many jobs will become readily available to society members. The community will need to employ impartial candidates for each district to administer the tests. We will need scientists, business women, plumbers, engineers, firefighters, police officers, artists, authors, doctors and more. With the increase of jobs, women will be more inclined to educate themselves to qualify for necessary positions the community will require. This means that women who previously had no access to an education will finally get their chance, as the world depends on them. The increase in the workforce will drop unemployment rates lower than 2%.

Thirdly, this destruction will save the world. Due to the current overpopulation epidemic the world faces, people are starving; animals, dying. We are not only causing our sisteren (we must also throw away the archaic diction that glorifies male superiority to coin new phrases) to suffer excruciating death, but also causing species to go extinct. While we hack away rainforests for both living space and raw materials, we are

destroying the local ecosystems that the animals need for existence. These plants and animals which go extinct because of our problems could not only ruin the fragile ecosystems to which the creatures are essential to substantiate life, but also potentially hold the cures for diseases which kill millions, like cancer. Also, pollution will greatly decrease worldwide as less humans equates to less garbage. This could lead to a full recovery of the ozone layer, which would lessen the effects of global warming and, over time, even end the cataclysmic effects we have had on the environment.

A colleague, whom I hold in very high esteem, has also proposed a viable solution to end our problem. He recommends that we force an acceptance of women as the superior race and moves to force all men into a slave-like dependence upon women, where they will have to grovel for everything as they will be the minority and subservient. I, however, find this idea preposterous. As women very well know, the ideas of oppression and dependence are vulgar; unnecessary in society. It is inhumane to ruin the lives of an entire gender for the sake of revenge.

Some will scoff at my proposal, finding it to be immoral and unimaginable. But I can assure them that killing for a respectable cause is not viewed as immoral. Take, for instance, soldiers in war. They are celebrated and respected by the public, for they are the ones who keep us safe and free. We are the brave and noble public who will sacrifice the pathetic to ensure the freedom and safety of all people on earth. Why wouldn't that be the same?

By implementing my plan there will also be less disease. As most harmful genetic mutation will be wiped out, the future generations will experience fewer and fewer cases of debilitating diseases like Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and Huntington's. For the first time since the mighty Spartans, women will have power. They will head government agencies; the leaders of the world, changing how countries relate to one another and how the world is managed. The ideas of inequality will be nonexistent; women will enjoy carefree days without feeling inferior or hearing comments about their character based on their gender.

This plan is only meant to better mankind. I profess, in all sincerity; I have no personal interest in my promotion of this plan. I hope to achieve only a safer world, with less disease and heartbreak, but with more advancement and positivity. I would lose family members whom I love dearly, but if it is for the betterment of the human race, I will gratefully sacrifice them.

By Kelly Conway

A Modest Proposal: Drug Addiction

It is a melancholy object to the sober and strong, when they enter a room, receive a call, check the obituaries, to find a loved one lost to chemical dependency. In the streets, three, four, or six beggars sit with cardboard signs, waiting to compile enough money for their next fix, having lost their jobs as their habit consumed them entirely. Illegal drugs pour past the borders, sweep through the country, hook 21.5 million Americans and suck them dry for every single dollar in their pocket.

Illicit drugs are no cheap habit. The average heroin addict spends about \$25,200 a year—at minimum; oxycontin, about \$54,000 annually. This is partially due to the extreme measures that must be taken to handle and deliver these drugs against the consent of the law. My intentions will improve quality of life for the 21.5 million addicts and will outreach far beyond this group of society. A wide variety of industries will monetarily benefit from my solution to this epidemic. Addiction is a disease, an illness, a weakness. My solution will provide a benefit to the terrors currently seen in this disease.

Addiction is only one side of the equation; drug trafficking is the other. Drug trafficking is a business worth over \$50 billion per year in Mexico. Legitimizing this act could provide various benefits to the United States. Addiction is a disease, but who says it needs a cure? The loss of drug trafficking would decrease Mexico's economy by 63%. Wherever this market shifts, the economic benefits will follow. Shall the circulation of abused substances be sanctioned by an order of Congress for economic prosperity in these United States?

From here on out, all illegal drugs should be legalized in the United States and sold over the counter in the majority of local pharmacies. The first step will be a law making some of the most commonly used illegal drugs—heroin, cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamines, hallucinogens—legalized on a national scale. After the law is passed, the manufacture of such substances will be made public and products will be distributed to local pharmacies all over the country. Prices will be determined and the drugs will be ready for sale.

Legalizing the sale and use of such drugs won't necessarily lower addiction rates. In fact, it may increase them, but if the majority of people are addicted to drugs then what's the difference? It will create an Alice in Wonderland situation where it is social norm to do drugs, so there will not be any out casting based on chemical dependency. But this is not the goal of my solution. The goal is to wipe out drug trafficking which will be easily done upon my proposal. There will be no need to ship in drugs and buy them at such pricey rates when a person can buy them at the corner store legally. Legal drugs will still be expensive—as to make a large profit—

but will be far cheaper than their illegal counterparts as licit drugs will not include the cost of shipping internationally and the trouble of eschewing criminal acts from the government. In turn, drug addicts may be able to save up a little bit of their money to get themselves off the streets and in apartments, raising their quality of life. This means less cardboard signs, less heckling for money and a wealthier country.

A vastly intelligent superior of mine, a true lover of his country, and whose virtues I highly esteem decided to revise upon my scheme. He instead proposed a no-rehab policy. In this proposal, addicts are taken to a place where they receive no help in the recovery process. If withdrawals kill the addict, then so be it. Survival of the fittest. To put it plainly, addicts are put in jail to die—or just barely survive. However, this wouldn't allow for the economic benefits my proposal provides. From my superior's proposal, nearly no job opportunities are created as the addicts receive no aid in the recovery process. Furthermore, drugs would continue to flow over the border, with all the wealth flying into the pockets of drug lords residing predominantly in Mexico. Addicts are the ones punished in such a proposal which is unethical and unfair. Addicts shall not be punished for their disease rather allowed access to the fix they so desperately need. We do not punish diabetics for their desperate need for insulin, rather we provide them with their fix. The same should be done for addicts and punishment bestowed upon the traffickers—by taking away their market.

The economic prosperity that is sure to result from the trade of substances will cause a positive impact on commerce. The \$50 billion industry in Mexico will shift to the United States. The drugs will be taxed either nationally or by each individual state allowing money to flow into government. Jobs will be created on a national scale which will, in turn, decrease unemployment rates. Jobs in licensing stores to sell the substances will be created. Jobs in producing the substances will be created. Jobs in mass distribution of the substances will be created. Food services will boom as citizens crave food when they are high. Countries will look to the United States to distribute their products internationally. The decriminalization of drugs will lead to mass immigration from people searching for access to these substances. As the mind wanders off while under the influence of such substances, the inventions that will be thought of by the citizens of the United States could pull the U.S. into the mainstream of technological advances. The United States could pull farther ahead than ever before by the economic benefits that will result if my solution is put into effect.

Crime rate is at an all-time high as illicit drugs are attempted to be distributed throughout the nation without being detected. Legalizing the currently illegal drugs will lower crime rates. Overcrowded jails will see far less drug-related inmates. Currently 48.6% of people in federal prisons are incarcerated for drug offenses.

Decriminalizing these drugs will free-up jail cells and reduce overcrowding in prisons. Many of these drugs have medical uses as pain killers and can reduce symptoms in diseases such as Parkinson's. This will help expand the medical field through research and the possibly of the medicinal use of these substances.

I see no reason for possible objections to such a proposal. Previous solutions have all failed. Tightening of the border has seen no success in that drugs still flow over the border unrestricted. Cracking down on drug dealers has only added to overcrowding in jails and drugs remain in circulation at high quantities. Punishment to addicts for using has proven not to lower use as their disease doesn't allow them to care for anything other than their next fix. Until a solution as credible and prosperous as mine is put forth, I see no reason for objection.

As a member of society, I am welcome to less extreme solutions that will provide for prosperous result. I do not wish upon society the need to come to a solution such as mine; but a solution must be put in place and as no other solution has been put forth with such advantages as mine, I see my solution better than none. I would also like to remind that I do not propose this solution looking for any benefit of my own. I am not nor have I ever been a user or advocate of drugs. I do not own or work in a pharmacy. I have a job of my own and do not look to go into any of the fields that will be opened up by my proposal. I do not set forth my solution looking for any compensation. Instead I set forth my solution from the depths of my heart and for the good of this country.

By Lyndsey Sparks



Photo *By Caleb Himmelman*

QUOTES

Forty-five students were inducted into the Islip Chapter of the National English Honor Society this year. Each student presented a quote of his/her choosing that reflected the ideals of the Society at the Induction Ceremony in April.

Caitlin Anetrella

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”

--Colin Powell

Victoria Arthus

“Don’t be afraid to give up the good to go for the great.”

--John D. Rockefeller

Ryan Becvar

“Effort and courage are not enough without purpose and direction.”

--John F. Kennedy

Haley Brown

“There are no great limits to growth because there are no limits to human intelligence, imagination, and wonder.”

--Ronald Reagan

Amanda Burke

“The only limits we have for tomorrow are the doubts we have today.”

--Pittacus Lore, *The Power of Six*

Sebastian Camino

“No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart.”

--F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*

Lauren Cottral

**“Sometimes people are beautiful.
Not in looks.
Not in what they say.
Just in what they are.”**

--Markus Zusack, *The Book Thief*

Madeline Edwards

“There are two types of people who will tell you that you cannot make a difference in this world: those who are afraid to try and those who are afraid you will succeed.”

--Ray Goforth

Christopher Giuliani

“The ends justify the means.”

--Niccolo Machiavelli

Jenna Gologorsky

“It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves.”

--William Shakespeare

Rafael Gonzalez

“When writing the story of your life, don't let anyone else hold the pen.”

--Aubrey Graham

Samantha Guerra

“I am no bird, and no net ensnares me. I am a free human being with an independent will.”

--Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*

Delaney Hardekopf

“A ship is always safe at shore, but that is not what it’s built for.”

--Albert Einstein

Martha Jablonowska

“Be a voice, not an echo.”

--Albert Einstein

Cheyenne Johnson

"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined."

--Henry David Thoreau

Shweta Karmakar

“Try again, fail again. Fail better.”

-- Samuel Beckett

Nikolas Kinalis

"A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but an idea lives on."

--John F. Kennedy

Grace Klomp

“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.”

--Maya Angelou

Luke Lacetera

“I know not all that may be coming, but be it what it will, I’ll go to it laughing.”

--Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*

George Magagnoli

“Only you can control your future.”

--Dr. Seuss

Kristina Martin

“It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are.”

--E.E. Cummings

Shelby Mashkow

“Don’t try to behave as though you were essentially sane and naturally good. We’re all demented sinners in the same cosmic boat—and the boat is perpetually sinking.”

--Aldous Huxley

Brendan Mercado

**“Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world”**

--John Lennon

Selia Mercado

“Great minds discuss ideas; average minds discuss events; small minds discuss people.”

--Eleanor Roosevelt

Nicholas Nilsen

“Do, or do not. There is no try.”

--Yoda

James O'Halloran

“Do not go where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

--Ralph Waldo Emerson

Alisa Ozturk

“Happiness can be found, even in the darkest of times, if one only remembers to turn on the light.”

--J. K. Rowling

Inderpreet Pabla

“When you tear out a man’s tongue, you are not proving him a liar, you’re telling the world that you fear what he might say.”

--Tyrion Lannister

Jazlyn Papandrea

“Speak your mind—even if your voice shakes.”

--Maggie Kuhn

Corrin Petrucci

“Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

--Albert Einstein

Jillian Piano

“If you want to win the lottery, you have to make the money to buy a ticket.”

--Lou Bloom, *Nightcrawler*

Logan Powers

“The thing I realize is that it’s not what you take. It’s what you leave.”

--Violet Markey

Ethan Rall

“It’s much better to do good in a way that no one knows anything about.”

--Leo Tolstoy

Emma Regina

“The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today.”

--H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Michael Riselvato

“Do not take life too seriously. You will never get out of it alive.”

--Elbert Hubbard

Mathew Rogers

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.”

--Winston Churchill

Samantha Rossano

“Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.”

--Henry Ford

Meg Rumplick

“Minds are like parachutes. They only function when they are open.”

--Sir James Dewar

Olivia Schadt

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

--Winston Churchill

Sean Skahan

“Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish on its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid.”

--Albert Einstein

Matthew Southard

“You just have to prove to yourself that you can go out there and be the best that you can be and not prove anything to anyone.”

--Serena Williams

Faith Terrill

“We’ve all got both light and dark inside us. What matters is the part we choose to act on. That’s who we really are.”

--J. K. Rowling

Olivia Vallette

“It often requires more courage to dare to do right than to do wrong.”

--Abraham Lincoln

We would like to give a special thanks to...

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