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*The literary-art magazine and contest of Crowder College
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Crowder College*



Street Cleaner

Jaclyn Kidd | Neosho | Community | 2D Media | Silver

I combined unrelated elements to create a new scene with themes that can be applied to modern society. Archived print with pastel drawing

Kidd is currently a senior BFA graphic design student at Missouri Southern State University. She aims to create art that sends direct messages of awareness, advocacy, and education. She plans to create a wide variety of work as she continues her career.

**The Crowder Quill, 601 Laclede Ave., Neosho, Mo., 64850, 417-455-5410, fax 417-451-4280
www.CrowderQuill.com; Facebook: Crowder Quill; email: Quill@crowder.edu**

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The Crowder Quill magazine and contest was proposed and founded by Crowder College English faculty Dan Richard in 1980. With 39 years of publication, the *Quill* strives to consistently move forward in producing quality content.

Initially, the *Crowder Quill* contest was open to students of Crowder College as well as high school students and community members. Nearly all entries were published, but winners received a “Gold Quill” certificate award and designation in the publication. The contest was expanded to include a “Junior Division,” grades 1-8, starting in 1985.

The magazine was published bi-annually until 2006 when it was changed to a yearly contest cycle. At that time, the Junior Division was also removed. In its place was an annual K-8 fine arts day, held in the fall of each year until 2011.

The feather logo was created by Mark Hollandsworth and solely graced the cover of each publication from 1981-1989. The logo is still used as a symbol of the contest and publication today, present on all publicity materials and in the magazine itself.

Color was increasingly added to the cover and contents, prompting the addition of separate color categories for art and photography in spring 2003. Digital art was added in 2010 to reflect the new art of extensively altered photographs, particularly using photo-manipulation software such as PhotoShop, as well as computer-generated art. In 2013, the art categories were modified to reflect the academic departments at Crowder: 2D traditional media and 3D art. Also, \$500 scholarships were added to the prize for each high school gold winner. Each year, the contest receives around 1000 entries.

Dan Richard served as adviser until his retirement in spring 1988. David Sherlock took over the magazine in fall 1988 to spring 1990 in addition to his duties as adviser for the Crowder Sentry and director of the theatre department. Nina Gibson's turn was from fall 1990 to spring 1992, and Suzanne Woolever from fall 1992 to spring 1994.

Latonia Bailey has served as adviser since fall 1994. Bailey won a *Quill* gold award in 1987 as a high school student and then joined the staff as poetry editor in spring 1989. As adviser, her works in nearly every category have been chosen for honorary publication through the years by faculty and students.



In 2017, The *Crowder Quill* was given the highest possible honor by the College Media Association: The Pinnacle for 1st Place for two-year literary magazines.

AWARDS from the American Scholastic Press Association, College Point, New York:

- 2013-2018 Best Community College Literary-Art Magazine
- 2010-2018 First Place with Special Merit
- 2009 First Place
- 1993-2008 Did not compete
- 1992 First Place
- 1988-1991 First Place with Special Merit
- 1988 Outstanding Service for the Community
- 1987 Second Place

CURRENT STAFF JUDGES AND CONTRIBUTORS

The primary task of the *Crowder Quill* staff is to produce the magazine from contributed contest entries, not produce the contents themselves. However, staff members are required to submit entries as a class assignment to demonstrate expertise in their field of judging.

Winning entries are honorarily published but do not receive awards. The staff entries published in this issue were judged by the following honorary judges:

- **Fiction and nonfiction entries:** *Quill* faculty adviser Latonia Bailey
- **Photography entries:** Photography instructor Stephanie Potter and students

Staff members publicize the contest, select winning entries, and design the magazine. A variety of majors are represented on the staff. See the winning entries for additional author/artist statements as well as biographical information from each contributor to the magazine.



Members of the 2019 staff (left to right):

Back row - adviser Latonia Bailey, Neosho; Sam Hoover, Wyandotte; and Bretton Cole, Neosho.

Front row - Glory Reitz, Neosho; Madelin Sanchez, Stotts City; Maggie Smith, Joplin; and Maegen Lightner, Neosho.

GROWING LITTLE

Paul Wright
Carthage
Community
Silver
Poetry
Rhymed

Wright is a full-time electrical engineer, part-time farmer, and occasional writer who enjoys all things creative. Wright has been writing poetry and short stories since high school, and nearly 30 years later, he still comes up with a verse or two from time to time!

In no small part we spend our lives,
On that which somber thought deprives,
Our mind of things it once knew well,
Before the sense of age befell,

There existed once in each of us,
Imagination, wonder, love, and trust,
That then appeared as much a part,
Of life as science, law, work, and art,

For it was then when we were small,
That each day life amazed us all,
And every thought to us seemed new,
All words to each of us seemed true,

Magic was very real back then,
Wishes were not an if, but when,
Miracles were commonplace,
And life moved at a slower pace,

Forever was not quite a year,
A block away was far from here,
A closet was a palace high,
A big tall tree could touch the sky,

We built the world in blocks of wood,
And talked to toys which understood,
We did our part to help and share,
For we believed that life was fair,

And little did we realize,
That those we then believed were wise,
Were just the same as you and me,
But with reason and uncertainty,

Through passing years we learned as well,
To distort the stories that we tell,
Grown-ups see a different view,
A world more tangled than that we knew,

Questions for which there's no reply,
Challenges we no longer try,
Steadfast rules that twist and bend,
Broken hearts that never mend,

But on occasion there comes along,
A place, a fragrance, a sight or song,
That whisk away the veiled disguise,
And lets us see with children's eyes,

And in our hearts is cast a spell,
That warms our soul where memories dwell,
And for a moment, deep within,
We grow little once again.

Growing Little is a categorical look at why the world seems so much different now that we're adults than it did when we were kids.

Dandelions and Dimples

Lillia Monroe
Monroe
Homeschool
Academy
High School
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

My siblings and I discovered some "giant dandelions," which actually turned out to

be thistles. I love the dimple-y smile on my little brother's face!

ZTE Axon 7 Mini
Monroe is an advanced violinist, an avid birdwatcher, and an aspiring fiction author.



MY LIFESONG

I revel in myself, and sing myself,
And what I compose so shall you interpret,
For the red clay from which I am made
matches the shades within you;
We bleed ourselves.

Hot blood, those silky strands of red,
Effortlessly and exquisitely patterned,
Distinctively indistinguishable.
Bass and treble unite with perfect balance.
I pluck at them like the strings of a harp, and
those chromosomes create a cadence
Which I have yet to capture in writing.

A symphony, a melody that will not go away
A song my arms and lips can't help but play
Despite never being taught.
You know this tempo as well as I!
I can feel the rhythm deeply!
Allegro! Allegro!
Slow down, child.
Andante.

I, now seventeen years old with worlds before
me begin,
While within me lies a deep-seated desire to
not cease at death.

I come from a long line of hearts which
aboriginally ache
Only to bring another aching heart into the
world.

Parents who gave me Everything,
as theirs gave them,
as theirs gave them.

I will add to and give Everything to all aching
hearts which evolve from me.

An intellectual's image of ignorance is
an idiot's idea of grace.

An astronaut's fear of heights seems
insurmountable
without ambition interlaced.
So do not let yourself be stagnant!
I stand idle with a purpose.
I close my eyes to look around.

I syncopate myself with the silence, and I am
dynamic.

Here lies my final movement
So join me, sing along
A song of myself, a chordal procession
I sing you my Lifesong.

Aidan Chamberlain
McDonald County
High School
Gold
Poetry
Free Verse

*I wrote this poem
for English class.
It's inspired by Walt
Whitman's "Song of
Myself," and I've put as
much of myself into it
as possible.*

*Chamberlain is a junior
and plans on attending
college to become a
teacher.*



Seniority

Tyler Langford
Joplin
Community
Bronze
Color Photography

This is my beautiful niece and my most favorite muse. She is so fun to photograph and radiates beauty! Pentax K1

Langford and her husband, Kobie, own and operate a local photography business. Photography has always been a passion of hers and doing it alongside her best friend is a dream come true.

NEW YEAR'S

Leandra Toomooth
Anderson
Community
Gold
Poetry
Free Verse

*I wrote this in response
to how the morning of
New Year's is virtually
the same as any other
morning and how
strange it is we lump so
much responsibility on a
single day.*

*Toomooth is a high
school English teacher
in McDonald County.
She is currently
working on an
anthology of poetry
and a debut novel.*

The morning of the new year -

Promises hidden away, like tiny pieces of folded paper,
swallowed up by the morning sun,
bleary and bright

There is always time for regret later

Outside, the cold rises, like smoke, atop the front porch rail where
frost trembles against its own uncertainty

This same smokey uncertainty that lies, like a veil, between then and now
There's all those things we said we do: paint the house and drive to Phoenix
And those things we'll never do
And those things we didn't do but somehow will remember differently

And yet, these things, translucent and fine, peel themselves from the year
no differently than before, which when you look back, even now, there are
no regrets or disappointments, but instead only tiny remembrances
like the specks of dust in the corner of the room
that you only now notice as you sit quietly,
waiting for the year to wake up and waste unto itself.

Sparkle

Tyler Langford
Joplin
Community
Bronze
B&W Photography

*I was lucky enough to
be the 2nd photographer
at a few weddings with
a friend. This wedding
was so sweet and this
sparkler send-off was
absolutely perfect!*

Pentax K1

See previous page



SOULMATE

I'm here standing in a field of snow
Waiting for blossoms to bloom
Hoping for them to appear
They never came
I ran across this desert of snow
Finding a way back to you
To see the blossoms bloom with you
No matter how far I run
I don't seem to find a way out

I'm sorry if I have hurt you
I don't deserve anything and anyone
If I waited for these flowers to bloom
Will you come back?
I'm sorry that I have left you
You don't deserve anyone like me
If these flowers bloom again, will things go
back the way it was?

I don't know where you are
Maybe if you could give me a sign
I'll know where you are
Maybe if I keep on trying
I'll know where you are

This ocean of white is killing me
I don't want to give up
But I want to give up

Maybe if one day
Our souls meet again
I can finally hold your hand again
I promise you with all my heart
I'll stay
Will you promise me?
Will you stay?
Maybe one day
If we were meant to be
I won't let go

I got my inspiration from listening to k-pop music, reading articles about soulmates and short stories about break ups. When I think about soulmates, there's always an obstacle that interferes with the bond between two lovers. "Soulmate" is basically talking about how a person is sorry for hurting their significant other and tries to find a way back to them.

Laimchia Lee
Neosho
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Poetry
Free Verse

Lee is an 18 year old Hmong girl who enjoys music and dancing. She is a first year college student, majoring in business. She enjoys writing lyrics and poems when she gets an inspiration from movies, songs, articles or short stories.



I captured this photo to represent the safety that this man brings to his loving fiance.
Canon Rebel EOS T6 ISO: Shutter 1/100 sec., f/5.0, ISO 100, edited in Lightroom CC

Safe

Kaitlin Barnett
Webb City
Community
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

Barnett is a recent Crowder graduate who transferred to Pittsburg State University to pursue a degree in strategic communication. Photography is a hobby of hers that she feels is a creative way to express herself while capturing beautiful moments and scenes.

LOVE, DANIEL

Diana Salas
McDonald County
High School
Bronze
Poetry
Free Verse

I wrote this in the perspective of my late older brother Daniel Salas. He passed away a couple weeks before he turned 3 and two months before my first birthday.

Salas' future plans are to attend a university and major in environmental science.

you're right
I did miss your birthdays
and smothering your face in your cake
I did miss your 15
and getting to spin you on the dance floor
I did miss your games
and getting to yell at the ref when he made a bad call
I did miss stealing your ice cream
after you got your tonsils out
and you did miss seeing me walk down the stage at graduation
you did miss cheering me on at my soccer games
or football games
or basketball games
or baseball games
or track meets
you did miss getting beat up
or getting beat at mario kart

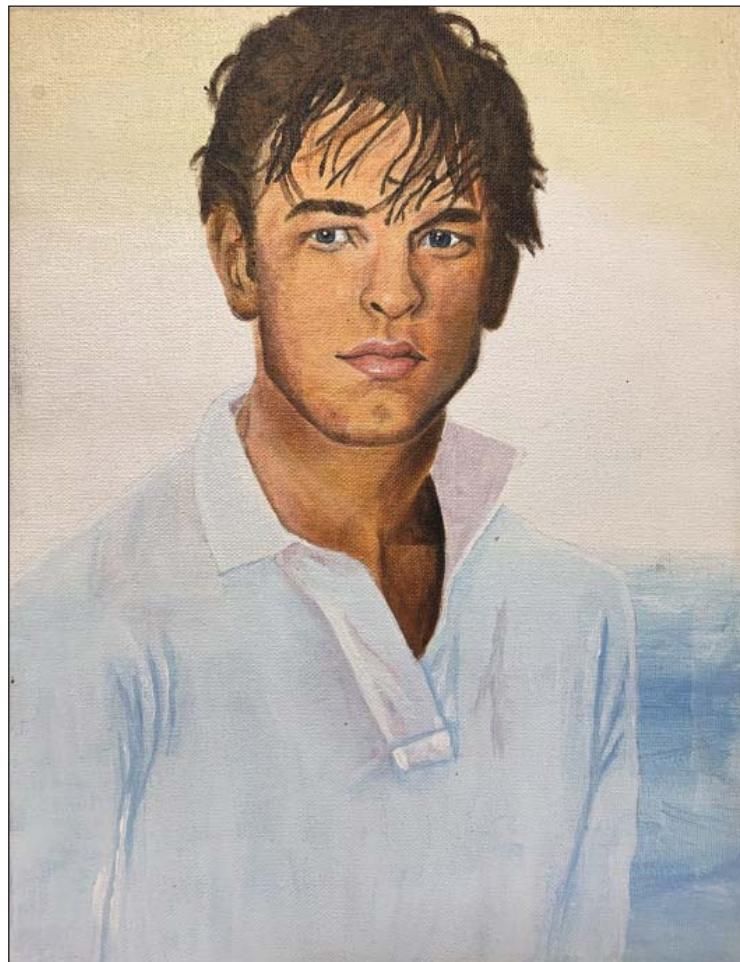
and I haven't given "the talk" to your boyfriends
or kicked their ass when they broke your heart
we did miss long road trips together
or having sleepovers in each other's room
or having inside jokes
or getting compared to each other
but I did get to hold you in my little arms
and make you giggle with my silly faces
and hold your little hand
and let ma know when you needed her
know that I'm always looking over you
so when the song you were thinking about
comes on,
the brightest star twinkling in the sky,
that rainbow after a rainy day,
that's me
I'll always be there
just as I always have been

Golden Hour

Skyler Smith
Seneca
Crowder
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Acrylics

I found this picture when I was looking through magazines, searching for something to paint. The piece is called Golden Hour because of the hour before sunset when people take pictures.

Smith is interested in art and may pursue a future in the art industry.



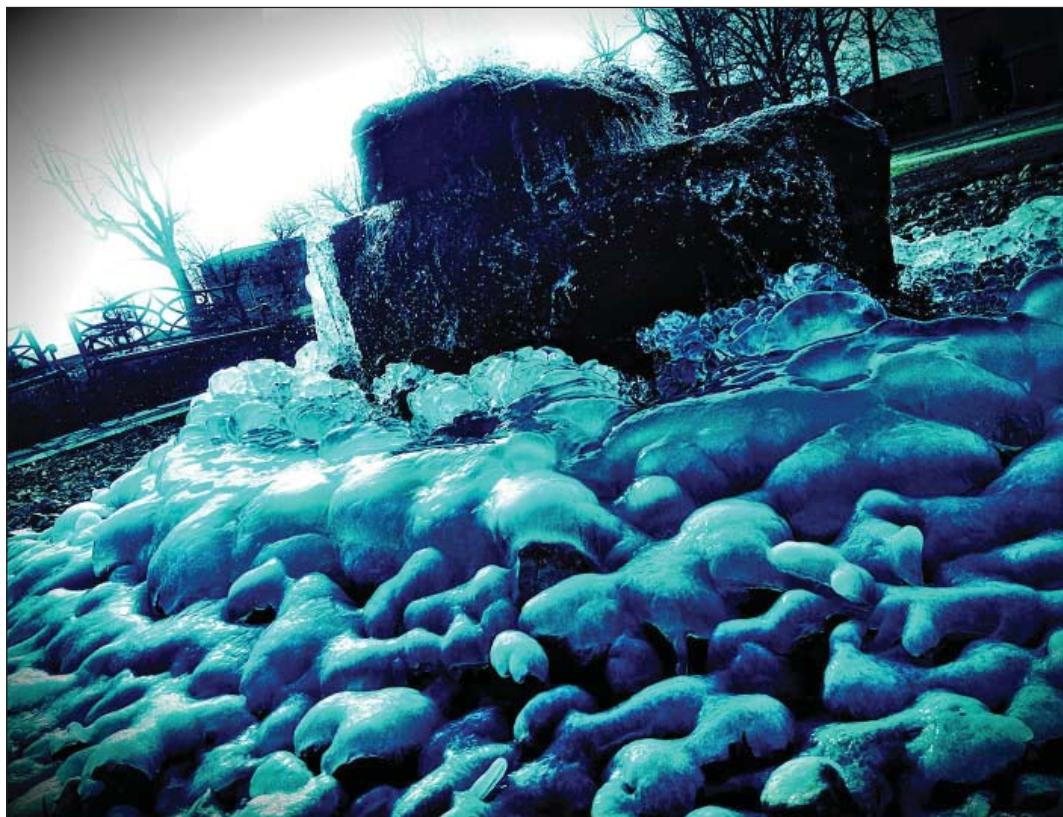


Snow and Tell

Kirby Reardon
Neosho
Crowder
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

I decided to hop on the bandwagon last year and take a picture in the snow. It didn't turn out as cliché as I thought. Nikon D3300, edited in Lightroom

Reardon is in her last semester at Crowder and is majoring in early childhood and elementary education.



Frozen in Time at Crowder

Jacob Hall
Neosho
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Digital Art

I walk past Crowder's fountain every day. I never thought I would see ice surrounding the rocks of this masterpiece. I snagged an epic photo as a testament to mother nature's cold embrace. Edited with Pixlr and Photoshop

Hall hopes to become an actor and capture the beauty of life.

[Left]

Frozen in Time
Stormi Norton
Carl Junction
High School
Silver
Color Photography



[Right Top]

Angling at Daybreak
John Mills
Neosho
Community
Gold
2D Media
Oil



[Right Middle]

Beartooth Lake
Barry Charter
Neosho
Community
Gold
Color Photography



To me, this photo is about overcoming obstacles. This trip certainly held many obstacles for me, but I pushed through and made it down the mountain.

Nikon D3400

Norton is a senior who is passionate about art and literature. She hopes to further improve her skills for the future.

Top: Mills, local artist, uses a wide variety of subject matter creating paintings in oil.

Middle: Taken at Yellowstone National Park along the Beartooth Highway, what really got my attention was the smooth water and the reflection. Charter is an amateur outdoor photographer. Canon 7D: 1/800 sec., f/5, ISO 160, 18mm

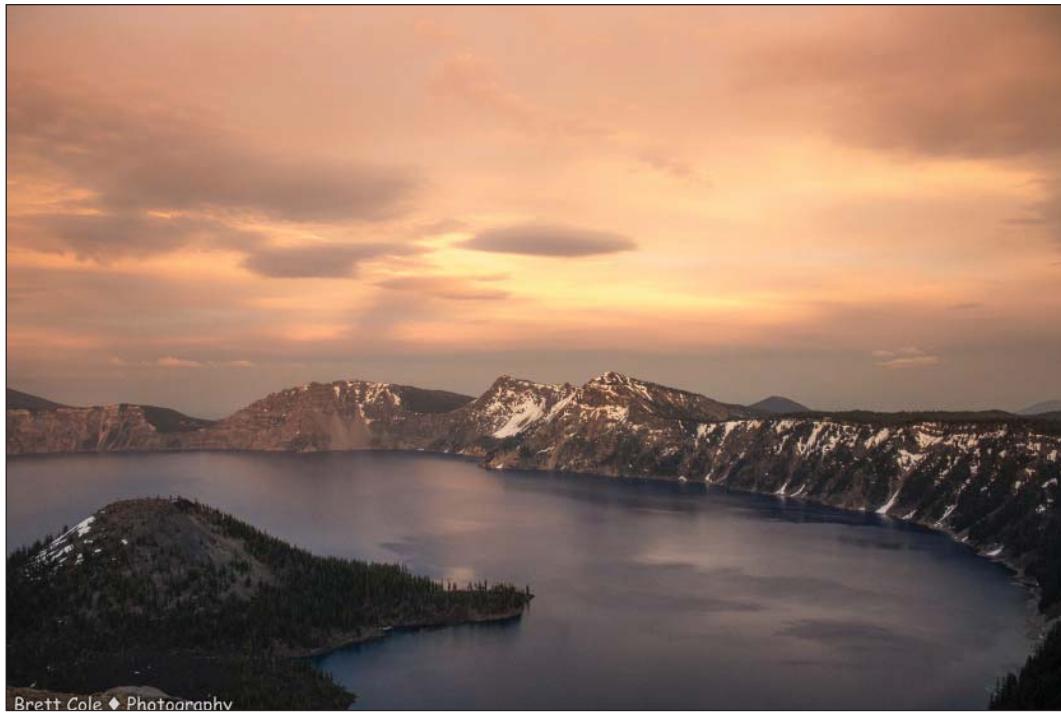
Exploring Tide Pools at the Edge of the World

Jennifer Conner
Pierce City
Community
Bronze
Color Photography

Conner has a degree in conservation and wildlife management. In her free time she'll be wandering somewhere in the wild with her husband and two young children.



In this photo of our vacation to Nova Scotia this summer, my daughter is reaching for a shell with the Atlantic ocean crashing in the background. Canon Rebel T7i



Brett Cole ♦ Photography

Tranquil Sunset

Bretton Cole
Neosho
Staff
Color Photography

As I was taking in the awesome sight of Crater Lake, I thought of the tranquility the lake has had for so many years, how many soft, incredible sunsets those peaceful waters have seen.

Canon EOS Rebel T5: shutter 1/800 sec., f/4, ISO 800

Cole is a freshman at Crowder College, an aspiring journalist, currently works as a draftsman at Twin Oaks Custom Cabinets.



Grand Tetons

Andrew Benton
Aurora
Community
Gold
B&W Photography

This shot was taken at Mormon's Row Wyoming in fall of 2018. Nikon D5300: shutter 1/250 sec., f/16, ISO 400

Benton enjoys being outdoors; recently diagnosed with type 1 diabetes, he continues to pursue photography and aviation all while managing his symptoms.

BLANK.

Lauren Spaulding
Joplin
Community
Bronze
Fiction
Short Story

I thought about what it would be like to lose your memory and what would go on inside your head. Writing this really pushed me outside of my normal creative bounds.

Spaulding is a business and communications student. She has spent years developing her writing and storytelling skills and has been recognized for her efforts. She is working to become a full-time screenwriter and novelist.

My eyes open. Everything is fuzzy. I jolt up. Pain sears through my head down through my neck. I look around. I'm in a ditch.

There's a barren dirt road nearby.

I squeeze my eyes shut, trying to relive what got me here.

Nothing. Everything is blank. I bring my hands to my head, gingerly rubbing my temples. They're wet. I look down at my hand. Blood. I'm bleeding. But my fingers are stained brown. My head spins. I stabilize it.

Slowly, I roll myself over to my knees. I get to my feet. My heart pounds in my temples. Blood drips down my cheek. I breathe. A car whizzes by suddenly. I stumble back as dirt flies into my eyes and mouth. I cough.

Where am I? I squint in the sunshine. I look down the road, both ways. Only constant road and dull farmland. I see a green sign in the distance. I stumble towards it, still holding my head.

Who am I? I peer down at myself. Black pants and jacket—both soiled. Black shoes that still feel tight around my heel and toes. I feel my pockets. A broken pair of glasses. A wallet. I flip it open. No ID. Just two receipts—Mack's General Store and Jaydee's, both from the 15th of July. The rest of the words are smudged as if dripped on with water. *What is today? What year is it? What is going on?* My mind is blank. Like a blank page.

I keep walking. It's the only thing I can do right now. My legs and feet ache, as if I have been on them for hours. *Perhaps I tripped and hit my head in the ditch?* That doesn't seem right. But I have nothing else to go on.

The green road sign says "HILLVIEW 1 MILE". Hillview. *Where is that?* The name doesn't jog my memory.

I plod heavily down the road. I see buildings up ahead. Buildings are good. Buildings have people — people have answers. I keep going.

It's a small town. A few cars drive by. Roads are rough. Buildings are old. I stand in the street, gazing around. I pull out the receipts. Mack's and Jaydee's. *What did I buy?* I can't make out the words.

A car blares its horn at me. I jump. I look

at the driver. The person inside flips their hands up at me. I look away. I walk to the sidewalk. There aren't many people here. I glance into a shop entrance. It's a tool shop. But a man is standing at a counter. Maybe he can tell me where to go. I approach him cautiously.

"Hi there, can I help you—"

He freezes when he looks up at me. Color rushes to his face. I glance around, suddenly uneasy.

"Back so soon?" He growls. "Didn't I tell you not to come back?"

He knows me? I notice his clenched fists as color rushes to his face.

"I—I'm sorry, have we met?" I ask. His eyes narrow.

"Don't pull that crap. Get out. Now," he says.

"Look, I don't know what I did to you but I—" I pause, breathing. "I don't remember anything. Or...anyone."

He studies me. His eyes go back and forth between my face and the bloody wound.

"When did I come in? What did I buy?" I say. He chuckles.

"Tried to cheat me outta money is what happened! You came in with some lady asking for brake pads," he says. "You were in such a hurry, then came back and demanded new ones since those were, apparently, broken." I nod, though still lost. He opens his mouth to continue. I step back towards the door.

"Where is Mack's General Store?"

"Why should I help you?"

I ignore him and leave. I wander until I see a flickering sign reading, "Mack's". I enter the store, hoping it will trigger something. I look around. Aisles of products, water dripping from the ceiling, stained yellow floors.

Still blank.

A tall, scrawny man approaches—his eyes double the size in his thick glasses. He cocks his head and smiles.

"Ah, back again? I like the new look, Mr. Brown," he says.

I stare at him. *Mr. Brown.*

"Brown? I told you my name is Brown? What else did I say?" I ask. He takes a step back.

"Well, um—you came in and bought some things on Friday. We talked for a bit. You said

you were picking up items for a friend.”

“Was I in a hurry?”

“N-no, I don’t think so—”

“What did I buy?”

He swallows hard. He goes to the counter and thumbs through the receipts on the spike.

“Any of these could be yours—”

“Here’s mine, there’s a number on the bottom,” I show him. He finds the matching receipt and pulls it out.

“Looks like hair color, pair of readers, and scissors,” he says. I run my fingers through my hair.

“Did I give you a first name?”

“No, you only came in once...” He trails off, stepping away from me. I turn to leave, deep in thought.

I cross the street to get to Jaydee’s. It’s a clothing store. I look at my receipt, also smudged. However, I can make out “size 10—”, “black—”. I look for a clerk. Maybe they will remember me. Or maybe they’ll kick me out too. A middle-aged woman behind the counter glances at me. She takes a second look at my head.

“Sir, do you need help?” She asks. I smooth my hair over the scar. I walk up to the counter.

“Look, I came in here on Friday—I think—and bought a few items,” I start.

“And?” She says, looking me up and down disdainfully.

“Do you remember me?”

“Maybe.”

“What did I buy?” I ask.

“What you’re wearing now,” she says.

“You came looking for durable shoes to run in and a ‘new look’, which is now ruined, I see.”

Run. Why would I need to run?

“But these aren’t running shoes,” I say.

“Do you think I ask my customers why they buy my stuff?”

“Did I give you a name?”

“Well, you opened credit so—probably. Last name?” She goes to her computer.

“Brown?”

I wait.

“Not here. Did you put it under another name?”

I don’t know. I’m blank. She looks at me, sees my struggle.

“I’ll search by date,” she mumbles, rolling her eyes. “No...no...no...those are regulars...’Bryan Wallace’. That you? I’ll need your ID if you want to use more credit.”

I shake my head. I’m so confused.

“What was I like?”

“Say again?”

“How did I act?”

She looks just as confused as I am.

“I think you need to get your head checked, Mister—”

“Please,” I plead.

“Oh, I don’t know. Quiet. Agitated. Kind of looked like you were from the ‘other side of town’ if you know what I mean,” she says.

I thank her and leave. I’m confused. Different names. Different personalities. Same day. *Who am I? Mr. Brown? Bryan Wallace?* Nothing connects.

I breathe hard, debating where to go. I start walking, trying to fit things together. They all saw me before my injury. New brakes, new clothes, new hair. Just little details about my life that I don’t remember. *How do they fit?*

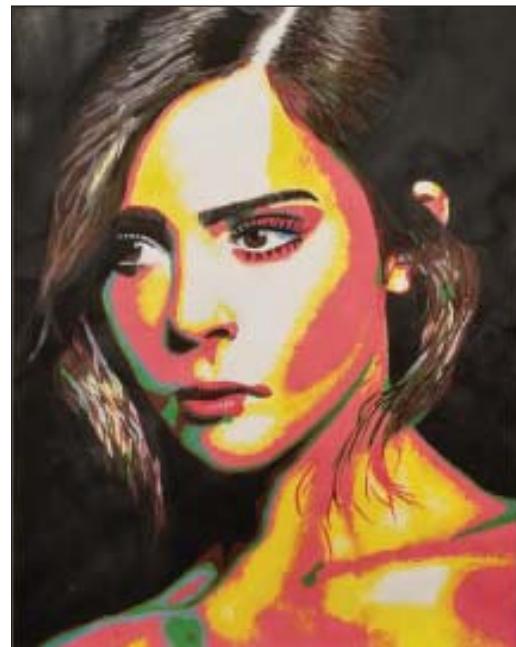
“You, there! Hey, stop! There he is!”

I spin around. A uniformed officer speeds towards me, barking orders into his walkie.

I run. Out of instinct. I’m too afraid to do anything else. I hear shouts behind me. I dart between buildings, skid around corners. Guns are fired. My heart races. *The police?* *What do they want?* Maybe I should stop and attempt to talk with them. But something—I don’t know what—tells me I need to keep going.

I turn a corner and a blurry figure jumps out in front of me, jerking me into an alley behind a dumpster. I look up. It’s a woman. She looks at me, brow furrowed. I shove her off.

[Continued to 16]



Women

Madelin Cooper
Neosho
High School
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Acrylic Paint

This painting shows how well warm and cool colors can create so much dimension.

Cooper is a senior who will go to Crowder College and further her artistic talent in the art and design classes.

[Continued from 15]

"Wait, just—wait!" she hisses, pulling me back. The officers run past the alley. I catch my breath. I wrench my arm from her grasp.

"You're injured," she says, touching my head tenderly. I push her away. "It's okay. It's me. Where have you been? You're supposed to be in Billings by now."

My head throbs and I feel a warm liquid start to drip down my cheek. I stare at her.

Who is she? Why is she helping me? Or is she helping me? Our eyes meet.

"What? You need to hurry and—"

"Who are you?" I ask quickly.

She pauses.

"You don't—remember—"

"I don't remember anything, okay? I don't know who I am, what I've done, nothing. My mind is completely blank! Who am I? Who are you?"

I feel my voice raising. The woman bites her lip. Her eyes gloss over as she looks away. She opens her mouth to speak, but says nothing. I watch her closely, waiting for something else.

"Please, I just want answers."

"Your name is James...James Beck," she practically whispers, as if saying the name hurts her.

James Beck. Her reaction throws me off.

But how does she know? Who is she?

"There's a new silver Buick waiting for you two blocks from here," she says, suddenly composing herself. "Drive until you get to Billings; here's the address." She grabs my wrist and scribbles on it.

"What's there?"

"It's a safe house. It was going to be your next stop. He'll know who you are. He'll have answers."

I study her once more. Sirens in the distance interrupt my chaotic thoughts. *What option do I have?*

"Where are you going?" I ask. Her eyes flutter shut; a tear rolls down her cheek.

"You know I can't come with you. Someone has to stay."

I start to leave when she pulls me into an embrace, leaning close to my ear.

"Be very careful who you trust, James. They will kill everyone you love."

With that, she runs out into the main street.

As I run towards the car, my heart pounds—but not from exertion. *Who do I love? Who are they going to kill? Who can I trust?* I look down at the address once I get in the Buick. And as I drive, the blank page begins to fill. ☀

Sunday Storm

Madeleine Bell
McDonald County
High School
Bronze
B&W Photography



*I caught this picture while I was storm spotting with my parents, and it is just too good not to share.
iPhone on auto settings with black and white filter*

Bell is a junior who plans to attend Baylor University to pursue a master's in sports medicine and enter a career in athletic training.

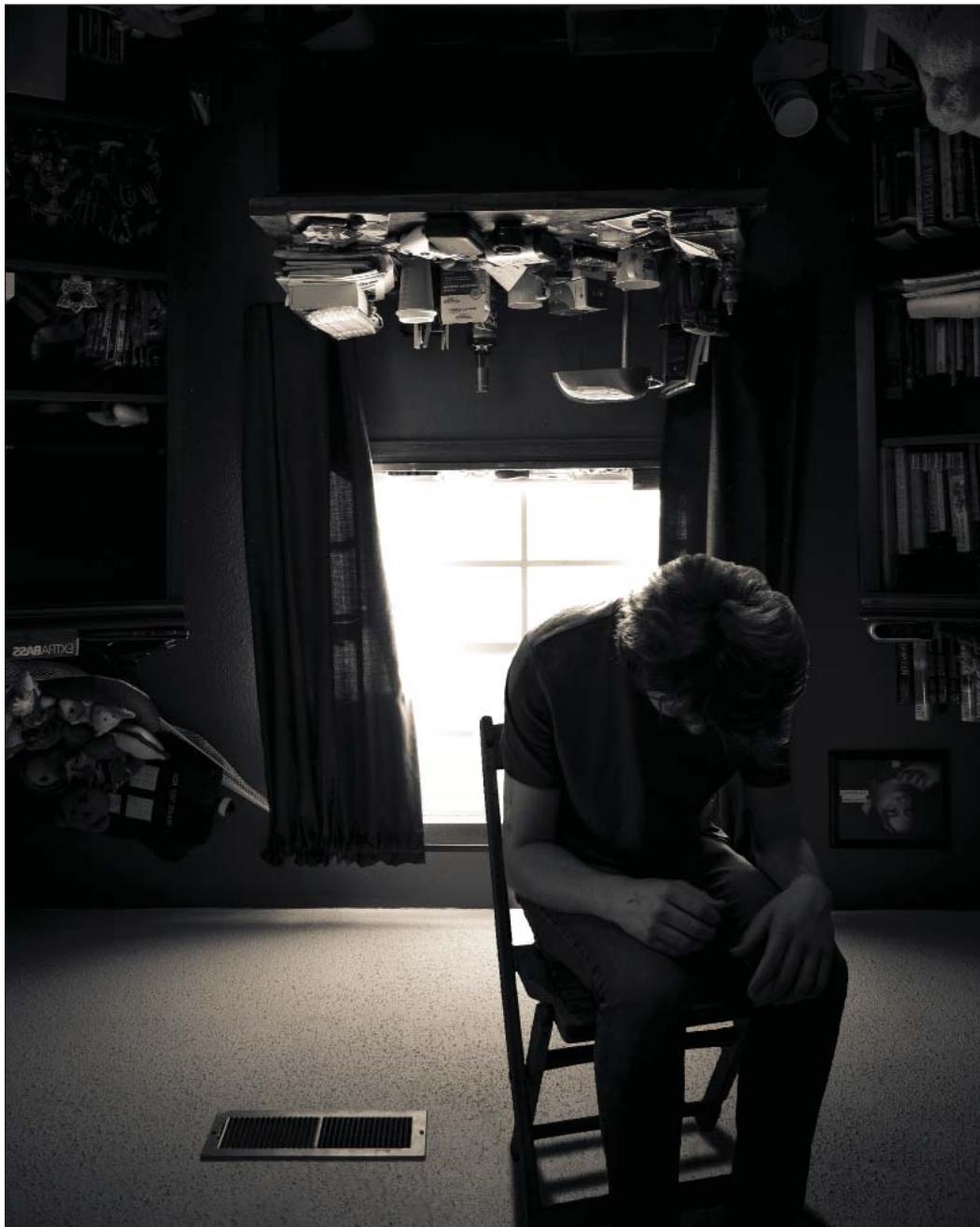
IF I DO NOT TRY

If I do not try,
I fail by foolish default.
Victors never quit.

Margarite Stever | Webb City | Community | Honorable Mention | Poetry | Haiku

I was inspired to write this haiku by looking over my submissions list. I've made writing my priority the last few years. If I don't try, I will certainly fail.

Stever has a Bachelor of Arts in English from Missouri Southern State University and writes stories and poetry that touch a person's heart. Her work has recently appeared in various publications and won several contests.



Upside Down

Braden Bare
Homeschool
High School
Gold
Digital Art

I wanted to capture a feeling of uncertainty. I really wanted to use it as an explanation for how I've felt about my life recently, where it took me a while to realize that some things happening may or may not be real.
Canon Rebel t5 then Photoshop and Lightroom

Bare is a senior pursuing a career in photography.

THE FIRST TIME GETTING PAID

Billie Holladay
Skelley
Joplin
Community
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction
Commentary

I wrote this story to detail the difficulties I experienced early in my writing career when I first tried to seek monetary compensation.

In retrospect, I can regard the events more humorously than they actually were.

Skelley retired from nursing and enjoys focusing on her writing. Her work has appeared in various publications in print and online.

I have always loved words. As a child, whether it was spelling, rhyming, or fill-in-the-blank exercises, I enjoyed learning about words and how to use them. I liked discovering their meanings and trying out new ones just to see if they worked in certain situations. For me, finding the right word was like finding the right piece in a puzzle. It was very satisfying. I also loved to write, and I started entering writing contests in school as soon as I was old enough to compete. I fondly remember in high school winning an award for a citizenship essay contest. As a nurse, I also wrote professional articles, usually to highlight public health concerns or to report research results. Since these articles were for the benefit of the public or for the advancement of the profession, no payment was involved. It is considered an honor just to be published in a professional journal. Consequently, my early forays into writing were mainly fruitful and positive experiences. It wasn't until I actually tried to get paid for my writing that I ran into trouble.

In retrospect, when I think about the world of freelance writing, or writing for hire, I know I was a little naïve. (I like the word naïve; it sounds much more sophisticated and refined than stupid—which is what I truly was.) I certainly wasn't very business savvy. (That word savvy is nice, too. It sounds cultured and polished to say I wasn't savvy, but the truth is I was just slow, inexperienced, and obtuse.) I guess I'm still not exactly sure what happened, but my first experience seeking financial compensation for my writing was not entirely positive.

At the time, I was volunteering with a community organization, and by chance, one day I met a woman who was an associate editor for a monthly regional magazine. When I mentioned to her that I liked to write, she indicated that I should submit an article, and "they'd see if they could use it." I knew other writers who wrote for this particular publication, and they had told me they were well-compensated for their efforts, so I jumped at the offer. I remember feeling so excited at the idea of being a "paid writer."

I wrote my first article, submitted it, and was thrilled to see it published the following month on the magazine's glossy pages. The weeks went by quickly, and I wrote another article for the subsequent month, and it too appeared in the following month's publication.

Then I wrote a third piece, and I was similarly thrilled to see it published.

About this time, I began to wonder about my payment. (Some "turtles" are slower than others.) I had speculated that perhaps this magazine only paid writers quarterly. When no check came after three months, however, I seriously began to wonder. I postulated that perhaps they had my address wrong or maybe there had been some type of clerical error. I thought I was being so astute in assessing the situation. (That word "astute" is written sarcastically here because the truth is I didn't have a clue.)

Not wanting the editor to think I was impetuous (which I am certain never crossed her mind) or driven solely by the lure of money, I waited. (Many turtles are happy in their shells.) Even back then, I wanted to be recognized for the art of writing and for my dedication to the craft. I didn't want to be viewed as materialistic or purely money-oriented. (I really did want the money, but I have to offer some rationale for waiting.)

I also rationalized my situation by repeatedly telling myself I wasn't sure who to contact about a payment. (That part is true, but I could have made more of an effort to discover who wrote the checks.) I told myself I was being patient (a good turtle quality), but I was simply reluctant to act. I was thrilled at being published, and I was afraid to rock the boat. So, I wrote three more articles and watched them appear in the publication during the subsequent three months.

Finally, after six articles and six months, I developed enough gumption to inquire about compensation for my work. (It only took six months! Even turtles come out of their shells eventually.) I was still hesitant to contact the editor, but I had developed enough courage to speak with a fellow writer who also wrote for the magazine. Much to my consternation and chagrin, this writer confirmed that she got paid monthly. She inquired what my contract had specified, and I was embarrassed to confess that I didn't have a contract. The original offer had just been a verbal exchange, and I had been so thrilled at being published, I had not sought specifics. I remember the look on her face as I gave my answer. It was clear she thought me gravely inexperienced and gullible. (She most likely thought I was a foolish idiot, but I wanted to use the word gullible because I like the way it

bubbles off the tongue.) Her advice was to check with the editor and see what was going on.

Confrontation is difficult for me. It always has been. I am a little shy, and I don't like to cause a problem or be the source of a conflict. (Turtles are happy and cozy in their shells for a reason.) I mean, if you are safe, there is no reason to come out and get attacked. So, I waited for two more weeks.

I finally decided to call. Phone conversations are much less stressful than direct face-to-face communication, and besides, I really didn't know where to go to confront someone. The magazine was published in another city, and I didn't know where their regional editorial offices were located. (That is the truth. I had always sent my submissions to an e-mail address.)

So, I phoned. My call was directed to the managing editor, and I am quite certain she did not have a clue who I was—even though I had six articles published in her magazine. She asked about when I was hired and when I had signed a contract. I told her I had spoken with an associate editor at a community event, and I thought we had an “understanding.” She asked me if I had signed anything, and I had to admit I had not. I did indicate that I knew other contributors to the magazine were paid, and I had assumed I would be, too. That is when she asked me again if I had signed anything. Long story made short, she said she would get back to me after talking with the associate editor.

She did get back to me — via the mail. I received a check in my mailbox at the end of that month. I got paid, but it was about half of what I had been told other writers were receiving for their articles. At first, I was upset, but the more I thought about it, the more I decided it was probably fair. The topics for my articles were of my own choosing, and they were subjectively written as opinion or observational pieces. I did what I wanted and simply submitted what I wrote. The other writers were being given assignments with deadlines. They often had to travel to investigate a topic or to interview a person. I was just sitting at home doing my own thing.

Call it coincidence, retribution for being greedy, or a simple hatred of turtles, but when

I submitted my next article, the following month, I was informed (via e-mail) that the editors already had several contributors for the upcoming issue and there was no room for my submission. They were happy to have me continue to submit articles, but there was no direct timetable for when my articles would be published. It could be fairly soon or in the distant future, but they really didn't know when. Basically, they were saying that they no longer needed my submissions. I was quite dismayed by this communication, but I decided to learn from the experience—and I did.

I learned that verbal agreements can mean one thing to you and signify something else to another person. Having an “understanding” is nice, but understandings can easily be misunderstood or forgotten. It is always best to have a written agreement so everyone has the same expectations for outcomes. A written agreement helps clarify everyone's “understanding,” and it can be used to refresh memories. I also learned that if I wanted regular payments for my work, I would have to seek out other opportunities, and fortunately I was able to do so.

My first experience of getting paid for my writing was unsettling and confusing, but the learning curve I traversed during this experience was more valuable than any financial payment I have ever received. I learned that even “shy turtles” have to stretch and come out of their shells to make sure everyone is on the same page. I learned there is no substitute for early communication with the person in charge, and there is no real understanding if it is not written down. Even as a child, I always admired the precision and accuracy words can impart to verbal and written communication, and this first experience of getting paid only made me appreciate and value words even more. ↶

Bubbly

**Mystelle Dueker
Joplin
Crowder
Silver
Color Photography**

This is a candid shot of my youngest son experiencing bubbles for the first time.

The look of pure joy on his face is a true representation of his bubbly personality.
Canon 70D: 1/2000 sec., f/1.8, ISO 100

Dueker is a stay-at-home mother of three boys. She will graduate with an associate's in business management in spring of 2020 with the goal of one day owning and running a photography business.



PENNY TAKES THE CASE

Glory Reitz
Neosho
Staff
Fiction
Short Story

My mother is a long-time fan of Agatha Christie's and John LeCarre's writings. I have always enjoyed Sherlock Holmes' adventures. This story is not like those; it's different.

Reitz is a dual-enrolled student of few words.

It was a pretty normal day at the diner; I was doing my normal shift. Linda was finally back from her self-enforced "mental health week", and Johnny had her payment waiting for her, so my days of overtime were over... until another boyfriend broke her heart. We were serving the usual crowd of folks just passing through town on their way to someplace bigger. Nothing interesting could ever happen here. The fellow I was helping at the moment was asking for a heart attack on a plate, and I was trying to talk some sense into him.

"Sir, I don't know if you really want that." My eyes flicked to the poster in our window, advertising a greasy-bunned burger with bacon spilling out the sides.

"Then what do you recommend?" he snapped.

"A salad and a walk in the park?"

He growled.

I decided it wasn't worth it to antagonize him. "...Or a double-bacon Grease Bomb. Your funeral. You want –"

An unusually loud pop broke out of the kitchen area.

"– fries with that?"

"Uh, yeah." He glanced toward the source

of the noise.

"Okay, and for a drink?" I asked.

"Dr Pepper. What was that sound?"

"Whenever a customer flops down dead from a heart attack at this diner, we offer a complimentary 21 deep-fat fryer salute... it would be rude not to. I'll be right back with your order, hun."

I zipped back to the kitchen with Mr. Grease Bomb's ticket and caught a couple of odd looks from the cooks: furrowed eyebrows and the whole shebang. Johnny, owner and manager of everyone's favorite diner, was all up in Frank's face. Or, as close as he could get, leaning over his swollen belly. Frank's size, and the fact that he'd been our best and most faithful short-order cook for seven years and running, meant that he didn't have much to worry about. And it showed. It looked to me like a good smack of gossip, so I hustled over for a quick look-see. Johnny was up on his toes, red-faced and hissing like a neglected teapot. I caught something about an explosion.

"What exploded?" I asked.

Suddenly, Johnny's index finger was in my face, and I was on the receiving end of a lecture on security and locking the back door.

"I always lock it, chief. Calm down," I said.

Chrysanthemum

Esmeralda Ortega
Neosho
High School
Honorable Mention
Digital Art

I was inspired to edit this picture because I love flowers and I liked how the picture turned out.

Photoshop app for color editing

Ortega is a senior who hopes to become a criminal psychologist when she graduates college.



"But what – other than you – exploded?"

Johnny's mouth closed and his eyes and cheeks got really big. A little vein toward the left of his forehead started pulsing. Then he walked away. Shoot, I really wanted to know what exploded. I looked at Frank, who was fashioning five deep-cheese bacon & chive Charolais patties. Those were always a big hit with tourists. We get asked all the time where to get this mysterious Charolais spice.

"What crawled up his pants?" I asked.

Frank shrugged his hulking shoulders and tipped his shiny bald head in the direction of the office.

I trotted in and took a look around. The air was hazy, which was odd, since Johnny wasn't a smoker. The top drawer of the filing cabinet was open, so naturally I took a peek. There were the remnants of what looked like a couple of cherry bombs, smoldering in a pile of ashes. Financial record ashes. I made a face and went to open a window, but it appeared that someone else had done it for me. And left a path through the azaleas. Shoot. I'd always liked those azaleas. Crushed flowers could make anyone grumpy, and Johnny didn't need that much of a push.

"What are you doing in my office?" Ah, the fresh breeze of a manager's garlic breath.

"Looking around." I turned to face Johnny.

"Well, stop looking and get back to work."

"Have you called the cops yet?"

"Yes..." He was hissing through his teeth again now. Not healthy, Johnny. "Now get. Back. To –"

"My lunch break? I will, thanks. Have a lovely day, chief." I bounced out of the office and back to the dining area, where I intercepted Linda on her way to the kitchen.

"Penny, I'm working."

"I know. I'm glad of it, too. Tell me just one thing, though. Your newest ex – was he a crazy?"

Her eyes dropped. "Nate was – he wasn't – he isn't... He only... sometimes he would – I thought I..."

"Okay, good enough for me. Where's he live?"

"1803 North Oakwood Drive." Her eyes were getting misty, so I gave her an awkward pat on the back and faced her toward the kitchen doors.

On my way out, I passed Mr. Grease Bomb his meal and refilled his drink. Upon reaching the door, I turned and saluted Phyllis, who was working the counter, and booty-bumped my way out of the front door. I always like to leave the folks with a special sort of good-bye, so that they don't miss me too much.

By the time I'd gotten my standard Panera lunch and walked to the police station, they had already been to the diner and gotten an earful from Johnny. So of course, they were thrilled to see me.

"Penny," said Officer Mackabie, "what have you been up to? Thanks for coming by, we need to take your statement. You want to wait for a minute and talk to Wilson?"

"No, I just had some questions for y'all."

"Penny –"

"Do you know a Nathaneal Gildan?"

"I know a lot of people."

"I'll take that as a yes. I just wanted you to know that he broke up with Linda Ferris a couple weeks ago. You may recognise the name 'Linda'. That would be because it was

[Continued to 22]



Winter Walk

Sunshine Morris
Jane
Crowder
Gold
Digital Art

This was inspired by the beauty of nature and how mysterious it can seem. Winter backgrounds can invoke a sense of wonder. Krita, using basic watercolor brush and sketch pencil

Morris grew up drawing. Being homeschooled, she used her free time creatively, and her large family helped critique her work.

[Continued from 21]

all of her time-cards and paycheck that got destroyed in the little explosion back at the diner. I don't suppose you dusted the windowsill for fingerprints?"

"We did, but the lab hasn't come back with the results yet." Officer Mackabie's lips thinned, and his mustache quivered. "I think I'll go get Wilson to take your statement."

I rolled my eyes and pulled a stick of gum out of my purse. Nothing irritates cops more than a gum-chewing witness.

Wilson came in, and we had a chat. I told him my story – you know how it goes – and then I headed off to 1803 N. Oakwood Drive. It was a sort of shabby place; I think I saw a 'possum or two commuting through the holes in the roof. I knocked on the door, which was gross because my knuckles sort of sank in and left marks in the rotting wood. Finally, Nate answered. I'd met him a couple of times while he and Linda were dating. He had looked significantly less greasy back then.

I propped a stiletto-ed foot against the door. Just in case.

"Hey, Nate-eo! How are you?"

"What the heck are you doing here?"

"Don't answer my question with a question. Boy, do my feet hurt!"

"Maybe if you didn't wear 3-inch heels everywhere..."

"I just stopped by to see how you're dealing with the break-up."

"...They make you look freakishly tall."

I took the stab like a champ. "Makes it easier to look down on you. Have you seen Linda recently?"

"Not for several weeks."

"You haven't visited her at work?"

"We broke up, Penelope."

Ooh, he used my full name. The scariest thing a 4-year-old knows how to say. Somehow, I overcame my terror. "I was just wondering, since we had a bit of an incident at the diner the other day, and I thought you might be

concerned, seeing as you split up on 'friendly terms'."

"What kind of incident?"

"Oh, just a little explosion of sorts."

"Today?"

"Oh, maybe it was today. How'd you hear about it?"

Nate's soul patch jumped up and down as he thought. "Uh... Nellie – Nellie, that barista chick. She and I are friendly. She told me about it at lunch."

"Huh. That's funny. Nellie quit a week and a half ago. Got a job at Scholastic."

"Oh."

"Yeah. That about covers it. You know, I stopped by the police station earlier. Talked to my old pal Officer Mackabie. I think he likes me. I can tell because he very subtly followed me here, and about five minutes ago he got a call about fingerprint matching results. Officer, would you like to give us an update on what the lab has to say?"

Nate dashed behind the house. Officer Mackabie and his three friends sprang from the bushes and took off behind him. I tossed a satisfied smile after them and peeled off my heels for a 2-mile barefoot strut back to the diner.

Two days later, Nate's trial had been scheduled, and I was back to working overtime. Linda had been emotionally distraught when she heard the story about her ex. Oh well, that was Linda.

I paraded out of the kitchen and slid five plates onto a table for a smiling family, then swept over to a young, fit and trendy-looking fellow. He ordered a full platter of something that had the potential to make him considerably less fit and trendy-looking. I squinted at him.

"Are you sure that's what you'd like?" I spotted a shiny watch-screen on his wrist and gently gestured in its direction. "Does your FitBit approve?" ☺

It was a sort of
shabby place;
I think I saw a
'possum or two
commuting
through the holes
in the roof.

BOY OH BOY

The first thing I noticed about him was his sweet smile with slightly crooked teeth, his canines more prominent than his front teeth. His boyish grin made even the coldest parts of me feel warm. When he smiled, his entire face would light up like houses during the Christmas season. His smile would affect all regions of his face: his eyes would squint to the point where only a slit was visible, his nostrils would flare, his cheeks would puff up like a chipmunk's, and the lines around his eyes would increase in dimension.

His laugh was the second thing I noticed. His laugh may have made me warmer than his smile, but they were two different types of warm. His smile made me feel warm from the inside while his laugh made me feel warm from the outside like a blanket wrapping around me, sometimes even leaving me with chills as the cool summer air would interfere with this metaphoric blanket. He had two different laughs: one which would bellow like that of an old man, and one that was only an octave higher than a female laugh.

His eyes were a dark brown, but not the warm kind. When in the sun, his eyes didn't transform into golden sunflower fields. Rather, his eyes were always the same cool tone of brown, a darker outline of brown with

a grayish brown to fill in the center before being met by the black of his pupil. In dark environments, the brown of his eyes matched the brown of his curly hair. He hated when I touched his hair, but I knew he secretly liked it, as he only ever told me to stop one time. His wavy hair came down to his ears, which he hated, but I loved, because it made him appear more boyish. Running my fingers through his hair, I could feel my fingers getting coated in a thin layer of oils from his greasy hair, a combination of sweat and oils. The softness of his hair outweighed the oil left on my fingers.

His smile may have been the first thing to catch my attention, but everything about him was my favorite. My least favorite question, "What about him do you miss so much?" That's like asking what my favorite movie is. With all the different genres, there's no way to choose. Even if I hate a movie, I still enjoyed it as the movie kept me entertained for an hour or two. It's a complex art form that would take a lot out of me to not enjoy in the slightest. I loved all parts of him, from his goofy personality, to the way he talked, to his smile. Nothing hurts me more than never telling him all of this. Despite the heart-wrenching pain it causes, I still stare at pictures of him and write papers about him. What was the first thing he noticed about me? ❁

Bayleigh Schad
Purdy
High School
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction
Character Sketch

I found inspiration for this piece in a close friend.

Schad is a senior who intends to pursue a degree in journalism at the University of Missouri in the fall.



A Man Who Can Do Both

Sam Hoover
Neosho
Staff
Digital Art

This was a project for my photography class; it was my first time using Adobe Photoshop for layering.

Hoover is a journalism major and an employee at Crowder who wants to get his bachelor's degree in journalism.

WILSON WEEKLY WINGDING

Ragan Wilson
McDonald County
High School
Silver
Nonfiction
Personal Narrative

I was asked to write a personal narrative essay about myself for my English class. I chose to write about the weekly Sunday dinners I share with my family.

Wilson, a junior, hopes to attend medical school after graduating from high school. She enjoys playing basketball and being with her friends.

Have you ever seen Norman Rockwell's painting *Freedom From Want*? You know, the classic American family seated around the dinner table, a gigantic turkey and only smiling faces to be seen? I think about that painting quite often, and quite often it irritates me. Do not get me wrong; it is a beautiful painting--every aspect of it is crafted to perfection. Though, that is the exact reason for my irritation. Every single piece of the painting is perfect. From the pristine white tablecloth and curtains, the smiling, tan faces, to the freshest and most perfectly cooked turkey my eyes have ever seen, there is nothing wrong with the picture.

Before you get started on all the deeper meanings behind it, just hold your horses and focus on the literal picture for a moment and what you see there-- *perfection*. You could even say it was... picture perfect, haha. Now, flip to the opposite end of the spectrum and think about a good ole "wingding". To give you some perspective, I will go ahead and define wingding for you. Oxford Dictionary says a wingding is "a lively event or party". Think about that versus the traditional family dinner for a minute. Which one would you rather attend? Yeah, me too.

The reason Rockwell's painting strikes a nerve for me is the fact that he was trying to portray traditional American family values

but completely missed the mark. There are no traditional family values for Americans, and there is no picture of perfection that we all have to base our values from. There is only one thing that an American family should possess, and that is love. I am so beyond blessed to be a part of the Wilson family, which overflows with love for me.

As you probably guessed earlier, my family is not like Norman's picturesque one. We get together every single Sunday afternoon for the Wilson Weekly Wingding, or the WWW for short. Though it is not always a party, it is always lively and eventful. Every Sunday for as long as my youthful mind can remember, we have graced Nana and Papa's home with our presence. The dining table has seen many smiles, laughs, and hugs, as well as many battles, tears, and heartbreaks. I have come to find that no matter the circumstance, a good meal can mend any hurt you are feeling, if only for the time you are there.

There is no one way to describe a "classic" WWW for each week is different. Every week there is a new meal to be made and new stories to be shared. The Wilson Weekly may not even be on the same day each week. Sometimes we get together three days in a row, other times we may have to miss a week. One day you may see a four-course meal, but the next we order fried chicken from KFC and chow down. There is no one way to the proper Wilson Weekly, but there are a few requirements. First, all members of the family must be present. Sleepovers on Saturday nights are allowed, so long as you are back by lunchtime the next day. I cannot count how many times I have said no or cancelled plans to be there. Second, Papa must pray before every meal, no matter how big or small, to initiate the plate-filling process. No one is allowed to eat before he prays, but there are exceptions for small samples only. The third and final requirement is that all stories accumulated throughout the week must be shared over dinner. Once we are all seated in our designated places (mine is a fold-up chair squeezed in to the right of Papa, who is at the head of the table), the real reason for dinner begins. Over the course of our meal, triumphs or trials, hopes and dreams, or even just the latest gossip is all laid bare. No matter the type of news, we all lay it out on the table and work through it together. That is the real

The Smolder

Sadie Maples
Homeschool
High School
Honorable Mention
Digital Art

I decided to use my brother's best expression as a model and only triangles to create his features.
Adobe Illustrator, using pen tool

Maples is a dual-enrolled Crowder student who enjoys 4-H. She plans to continue her studies at Crowder in graphic design.



reason behind the Weekly Wingding: to love and support one another.

I remember a few summers ago, my sister had gone through a horrible breakup with someone she had thought she would eventually marry. I was too young to think about boys back then, but I will never forget how thankful I was for the support she had on our Sunday, because I knew I would be there one day too. Fast forward to this summer, and I went through a breakup of my own. I had gotten dumped on a Friday night, and I was livid with my mother because she was forcing me to go

to the WWW when my pain was still too fresh and my hurt was still too raw. As you just learned though, you never miss a dinner unless absolutely necessary, so onward I trudged towards my embarrassment. I was hiding in the sunroom, preventing anyone from seeing my tear-stained face, when along came my aunt.

She simply walked up to me, wrapped her arms around me, and said, "Am I going to have to beat someone up?" I completely lost it. Everything I had been holding inside

[Continued to 26]



Home

Allie Jackson
McDonald County
High School
Bronze
Color Photography

*I took this photo after coming home from school. It had just started to snow and everything was white and beautiful. I love the trees that sort of frame the house and the large flakes of snow falling into the shot.
iPhone 8 with Tezza "Mood" preset*

Jackson is a junior who loves books, music, and action movies. She aspires to be a photojournalist and hopes to one day see the world.

Adlynne and Whitney

Laney Brock
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography



I took this picture of my younger cousins who are absolutely gorgeous.

Nikon D7000 on auto settings

Brock is a junior who plans to attend College of the Ozarks and major in pre-med, then go on to the MU School of Medicine and get her doctorate to become a pediatrician.

[Continued from 25]

spilled out in a rush of tears. I'm talking body-heaving, boo-hooing sobs. After I had calmed down, we joined the rest of the women and had a long talk. The exact details I can't remember, but I do know how much better it made me feel, and how in that moment I knew I was going to be okay.

Whenever something major is going on that needs a big family session to discuss, there is an unspoken agreement that non-family members are not to be present during those special WWW's and that all actual family members must be there. For a few weeks straight that pressure and heaviness of an issue weighing on our time together was the only unwelcome guest at the table. My oldest aunt is currently dealing with some health issues, and because she had the genetic thyroid cancer that most of my family possesses the chance to get, we were that much more worried for her. Every week we ate together and discussed doctors, treatments, plans to take care of her work schedule and to help out with things at home, all so she could figure out why she was feeling so badly. We put aside our own fears to be strong for her, but we never gave up hope. Now, weeks and many doctors' visits later, she does not have the dreaded

C-word or anything that is untreatable, but she is not yet well. Every week we continue to pray for her and to help out in any way we can, so that she will know how much we love her and are there to support her when she is down.

Just like how my family values and traditions are different from yours, so are everyone else's. There is no one correct way to be a family. No cookie-cutter example of the perfect family or meal exists. No matter how wrong or right my family's values, I know that as long as they love me and teach me to be a good person, I will be okay. I am going to turn out all right. I know that every time we have gathered around that table, my life and future has been affected. Whether it be with advice or just by observing my family members, my role models, I know that these lessons will be with me the rest of my life. Every time I have stepped into the kitchen or sat at that table, I have come out stronger and wiser and more loved than I went in. My hope above all hopes is that the Wilson Weekly Wingding will live on forever, and that I can raise my children in an atmosphere of love and guidance just as I have been. Although they may not be the picture of perfection, those Sunday afternoons are perfect to me. ☺

FROM THE DEPTHS

De profundis

We are the common people
The ones who have been
Left in the depths
You might not think
That we're anything
But we are
We're here

clamavi

We're here
And we're crying out
Raising our voices
We will not be silenced
Even though you may try to push us
Down into that voiceless oblivion,
You who think you are gods

ad te, Domine

You who think you are gods
In your delusional folly
Who believe that you can silence us
That your power, your wealth, your fame
Makes you untouchable
That you are inherently better than us
But you are wrong

Domine, exaudi vocem meam

But you are wrong
And even if you were right
We are here
The majority that has been silenced
For far too long
So listen to us
Keep listening

Fiant aures tuae intendentess

Keep listening
And understand what we are shouting
From the depths
Because our problems are real
And they're not going away
And we won't go away either
We'll keep asking

in vocem deprecationis meae

We'll keep asking
We'll ask why things haven't changed
Why things are still the way they are
Why no one is doing anything
We'll ask until there is change
For us in the depths
We are the common people

Savannah Dillard
Thomas Jefferson
Independent Day
School
Bronze
Poetry
Free Verse

*Every day, we see
injustice in the world
around us: people are
oppressed based on
arbitrary things like
race, religion, or socio-
economic class.*

*Dillard has loved to
write both competitively
and as a hobby since
elementary school and
would like to continue
writing in the future.
She aspires to go to
college and eventually
pursue a career studying
the humanities.*



Thinking Outside of the Box

Shaenna White
McDonald County
High School
Silver
3D Art
Ceramics

*The pop art concept
really inspired me to
do this piece. This was
my first time doing the
holes in the face and I
believe it puts a twist to
pop art and ceramics.*

*White is 18 years old
and she will attend
college to become an art
teacher for McDonald
County High School.*

THE MARIONETTE'S STORY

Cierra West
Joplin High School
Silver
Fiction
Short Story

I created this story for my short stories class. We were told to write whatever we wanted, and this was the product. I wanted to express that even when someone has hit their lowest point, they can climb back up to a better place.

West is a senior who plans to attend Missouri Southern State University in 2019 to obtain a BFA in studio art and a minor in creative writing. She plans to become a full-time writer and illustrator.

Marionette had never seen the world outside of her theater; everything she knew had come from the stories she'd heard or participated in herself. She wasn't unhappy with her life, but there was one thing she wished she could change--

The Puppeteer.

The Puppeteer projected his personality not only through his actions but also through his appearance. With his wrinkled, stained clothes, greasy black hair, and a sickly odor of stale alcohol, it was no wonder why none of the puppets wanted to be near him. He was a careless, rude man who mistreats his performers, but he seems to abuse poor Marionette the most.

Marionette speculated that it might be her looks that land her in hot water with the irascible man. Her appearance had been based on the Puppeteer's late wife, who left the theater on an errand and never returned. She had been the one who could bring the Puppeteer back from his drunken stupors, but now he lived in a constant spirit-induced haze, lashing out at anything or anyone who tried tame his inner demons. No one came to the theater to see him; they came for the shows and, more specifically, to see his reigning star, Marionette.

Everyone that came to the theater would fawn over Marionette's honey blonde curls which bobbed just below her chin, her white porcelain skin without a single blemish or crack, and her emerald blue eyes that appeared as vibrant as the sea on a cloudless day. She was a perfect reflection of his loss, so he took his frustrations out on her.

He'd yank her strings before and after performances, or swing her unnecessarily on the way to the stage, dangerously close to the concrete floor. Marionette feared that one day, she'd end up a pile of broken pieces on the floor, and that there wouldn't be any knights to put her back together again. The only thing worse than being unused was being damaged, because once a puppet was broken, the Puppeteer would take them away and they'd be replaced, never to be seen again.

Marionette tried to forgive the Puppeteer for his actions against her and the other performers because she knew he missed his wife. That is why she would do anything she could to make him happy again! She wouldn't

complain when he tugged on her or treated her roughly during performances. She'd cooperate and bring the stories to life with her movements, which pleased the crowd and earned the Puppeteer praise for his puppetry.

This earned the puppets a momentary reprieve from the abuse of the Puppeteer; but soon again, he was incensed. Empty bottles of spirits littered the floor backstage where the performers were kept, and he managed to break several of them during one of his drunken tangents.

Marionette couldn't help the dreaded feeling of fright that caused her delicate, porcelain body to inwardly tremble. She knew something terrible would happen if they couldn't bring the Puppeteer back from the dark, ill-tempered chasm of his mind.

After that, Marionette felt like the blame for the Puppeteer's dismal state was completely on her shoulders, because she reminded him of his greatest loss every time he looked at her. She couldn't change her appearance, but she tried to disappear into her roles during the performances. Marionette hoped he could think of her as those characters, and not as the inanimate recreation of his constant heartache.

But no matter how hard she tried, he still tugged and yanked her strings carelessly, not even sorry for what he had done during his temperamental tantrums. There wasn't a single day when Marionette didn't feel constant fear for her situation. Her fear slowly broiled deep in her hollow body, stewing into something she hadn't thought she was capable of--

Anger.

She didn't like the emotion, because she had always associated it with the Puppeteer and his loathsome actions. Marionette didn't have the depth of rage and darkness that the Puppeteer had manifested in himself, but she was tired of the constant abuse from the Puppeteer, so she silently plotted her rebuttal.

The next time he grabbed her for a performance, she refused to move, no matter how much he tugged and jerked her strings. He cursed and raved as he grabbed her roughly, squeezing her delicate body before she was suddenly airborne. Time slowed as Marionette fell toward her unforgiving fate.

CRACK!

Marionette didn't dare to move as she slowly regained her wits, but she could see the

damage that had been done in the reflection of the forgotten shards of the Puppeteer's liquor bottles. Her perfect porcelain face was marred by cracks as thin as a spider's webbing, which stretched across her right cheek all the way to the hairline. She finally looked away from her reflection in horror and dread. The theater was dead; all the puppets stared down upon the fallen angel they had adored.

The silence was broken by the footsteps of the Puppeteer. He kneeled down and gingerly picked her up to survey the damage. Marionette thought she glimpsed regret in his eyes, but it was gone in a moment, replaced by a frown. He then placed her in an empty cardboard box and shut the lid, encasing her in the dark with her nightmares of what would come next.

She was unsure of where they were, but she knew they were no longer in the theater when she heard the ding of a bell. She could hear muffled voices before the box was opened, and a new face appeared. An older man with weathered features and dull gray eyes looked down upon Marionette. He carefully removed her from the box and examined her closely, inspecting the fine cracks across her face.

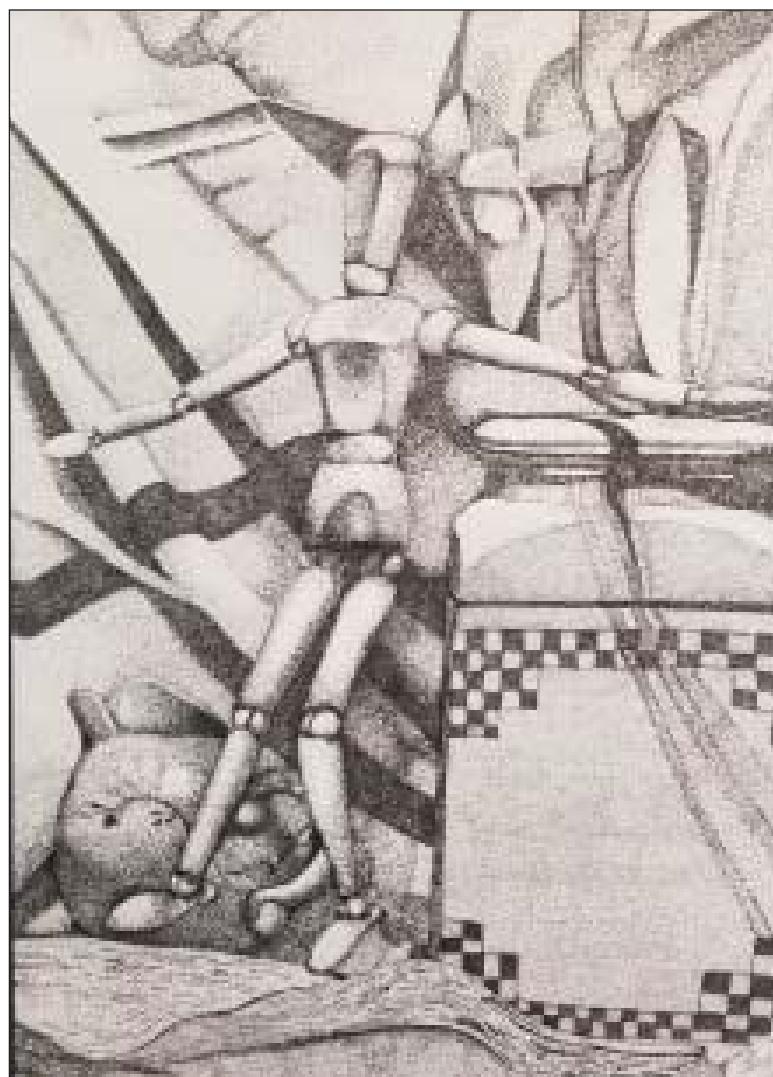
The Puppeteer was the next face she saw off to the side. He looked impatient as the man continued to check her for any other imperfections. Once he was finished, he voiced an offer to the Puppeteer, who didn't seem happy with the sum, but he agreed, giving his money without a second glance at her.

The old man seemed perturbed with the attitude of the Puppeteer but soon returned his attention to the delicate puppet in his hands. He held Marionette as if a single wisp of air would shatter her into a million pieces, and she was surprised by his calming smile that helped her porcelain body relax into a much-needed slumber.

The world blurred for Marionette as she contemplated her future. Unsure of how much time had passed, she finally opened her eyes, the light momentarily blinding her. As her vision cleared, she looked around and realized she was sitting on a shelf in a new room.

The room was vintage with its green and burgundy striped wallpaper, stained-black wood floors, a worn-out couch in need of re-stuffing across the room, and picture frames of numerous people scattered across the walls. As she took in her surroundings, she found that she wasn't alone on the shelf.

Another marionette sat beside her, a boy with chocolate brown hair, eyes the colors of



honey, and pale porcelain skin similar to her own. He smiled at her warmly, but she couldn't help it as she turned her face away, ashamed of her imperfection. It was then that she saw herself in the mirror hanging across the room for the first time since she awoke.

Her face was repaired!

There was not a single trace of the cracks that had made her useless to the Puppeteer. She looked back at the other marionette, and he explained that the store owner had repaired her while she slept. He then told her that the store owner was a kind man who would always take care of them.

This filled Marionette with relief. She had believed that the broken puppets were discarded to waste away in some awful place. Instead, she looked around and saw many others displayed around the room, some of which she had known at the theater. This was not an end to Marionette's story, but the beginning of a new one. ☺

Mannequin Still Life

Lucy Martin
Neosho High
School
Silver
2D Media
Pen and ink

I drew Mannequin Still Life with pen and ink for drawing class. The process took me three weeks to complete.

Martin is a sophomore who hopes to be an art teacher when she graduates college.

RED

Ashley Lawson
Neosho
Crowder
Silver
Poetry
Rhymed Verse

I have submitted this poem before, and each year I have come back to it, revising it to make it better. It's always been my personal favorite piece, and the one I am most proud of.

Lawson has been writing all her life, whether it be for school or just for fun, you can always find her with pen and paper in hand. She hopes to start up a blog soon, where she can write book reviews, critique the latest blockbuster, and discuss the plans she has for (one day) getting that novel published.

Him: Every night after our encounter
I lay awake hour after hour
Consumed with every thought of you
Wanting you, needing you, to come to me soon.
Her: When we first met, I fell into a daze.
I was rocked by the captivating power of your gaze.
I thought I was in love, and I told you how I felt.
When you leaned in close to me, my heart began to melt.
I went to my Grandma's after our meeting
My heart thudding wildly, beating and beating.
When I told her all that happened, her eyes grew in size.
Her voice trembled when she spoke. The fear was evident in her eyes.
She said you were a monster, a thing of evil.
Feared by all; the son of the devil.
Him: What's that you say? A monster I am?
My dear, you've been misled. I am merely a man.
I live alone here in these woods
And I hunt at night for something good.
Did you catch what I said? About being alone?
So maybe you should stay with me, stay in my home.
Her: I believed in you. I believed your love to be pure.
Willingly I would have gone with you, but now I'm not so sure.
So if you would kindly step aside, I'll be on my way.
I need to get this basket of goodies to my grandma's today.
Him: What's that you say? Your grandma's place?
I will walk you there and keep you safe.
I'll steal your heart, bit by bit.
No need to worry, I'll take good care of it.
Her: It's always been dark, and I guess I just couldn't see
That your eyes are so big, at least twice as big as me.
Him: What big eyes I have? My dear, they're nothing like yours.
Speaking of eyes, it's yours I adore.
And those lips of yours, I hope they are sweet.
They look almost good enough to eat.
Her: Please! I can't, I have to go.
My grandma will be so worried if I don't make it home!
Him: But I'm hungry! I'm so hungry for you!
I'll get on my knees and beg if you want me to!
Do you not love me? As you led me to believe?
Because if you truly do love me, you would come away with me.
Her: I love you, I swear! Why are you making this hard for me?
If I didn't have my doubts, I would go with you gladly.
Him: Your decision to leave me is one I detest
But I will respect your wishes, if you would grant me just one request.
Close your eyes, my love, and don't you peek.
I wish to place a kiss upon your fair cheek.
Her: Oh my! We're so deep in the darkness of these woods.
I didn't realize we'd strayed so far from my neighborhood.
Him: Beautiful maiden, I've waited so long
For this day, this moment, when I'd have you alone.
And now my dear, so young and alive
I shall eat out your heart, and roast your insides.
I feel sorry for you now, that you're under my roof
But how could you have known I was the big, bad wolf?
You shouldn't have wandered alone in the woods
Where men like me hunt for red riding hoods.

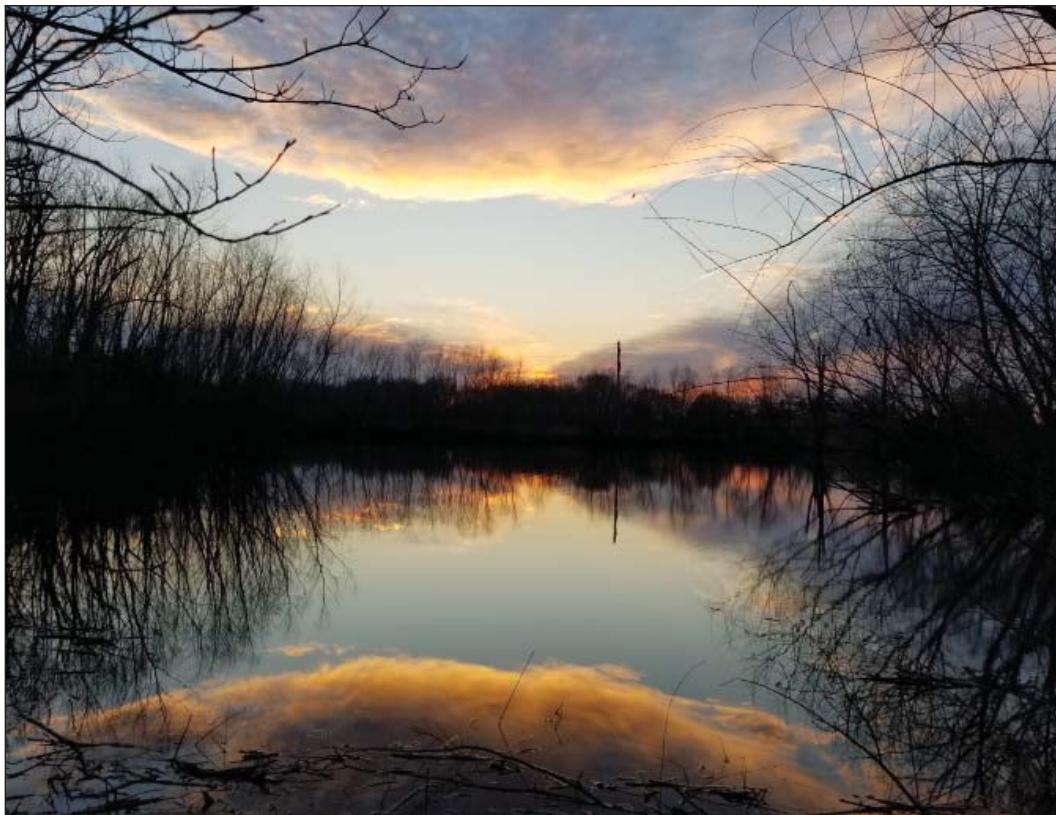


Clarity

Kaitlin Barnett
Webb City
Community
Silver
Digital Art

This vibrant colored photo was a fun project using a blending of shapes, layering, and blur tools.

Barnett is a recent Crowder College graduate who transferred to Pittsburg State University to pursue a degree in strategic communication. Photography is a hobby of hers that she feels is a creative way to express herself while capturing beautiful moments and scenes.



Pond at Sunset

Latonia Bailey
Neosho
Staff Adviser
Color
Photography

Twilight casts its reflection on the still pool below.

Bailey, adviser since 1994, submits various works for honorary publication.

WITHOUT MY GLASSES

Henri Whitehead
Anderson
Community
Honorable Mention
Poetry
Free Verse

I wanted to write a poem based on the blurred world that I see without my glasses on.

Whitehead has taught English for nine years and is currently finishing up a novel.

Without my glasses,
The distinctive lines drawn
By our world's creator
Are no more than
Drops of color in the distance.

The concrete, scientific rules
That instruct the sun to set for the evening
Turn to abstract, and
Empty lines are filled with
My imagination.

The nightmarish grey blobs
That occasionally fly past my position
On the lonely hill
Next to the rural road
Are transformed.

The silver clad knights
Race to conquer
The monstrous red dragon,
Laying its wrath of orange fire
On the horizon.

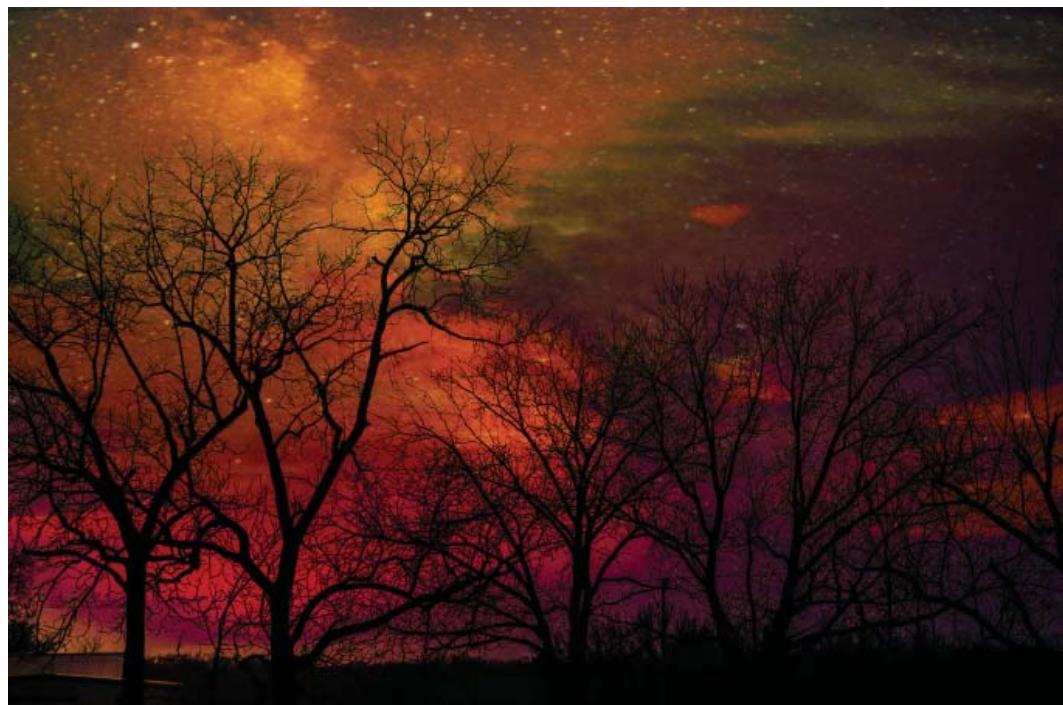
My eyes and mind
Are the storytellers
Of this epic, as I
Stand on this hill, and
Soak in their tale.

Spooky Night

Debra Lucas-Wolf
Joplin
Crowder
Bronze
Digital Art

I took this photo during a sunset in Seneca.

Lucas-Wolf is finishing her final semester of classes. She is majoring in photography and graphic design.



GRIEF

Fear conquers my body as I rest my hand on my abdomen. A single tear streams down my cheek. Unable to rest, I grab my prayer journal and write my hardest prayer:

Dear Lord,

Fear overwhelms me. I feel I already know the answer, and if this child is to suffer, please take my child now. I don't want my baby to feel any pain. If this child is to live, please grant me a safe and healthy pregnancy and baby. If it is not in your will, I accept your answer, but I'm struggling to understand the reasoning. I find this cruel and painful. Why am I going through this?

I barely write “amen” before despair drowns my hope and scars my soul. I stand in my sweater and jeans; lips tightly pressed together in a straight line to hold back my grief. I call my doctor’s office. I know the answer, but the nurse’s confirmation, “You’re miscarrying,” shatters my hope, because in a blink of an eye, my child becomes a memory. My husband tries not to expose his own feelings, but his emotions refuse to listen. He becomes more like an acquaintance to me; someone I barely recognize.

Two days later, my preacher stands outside my door. I can tell by the way his body tenses that he is saddened by my appearance. His eyes survey me and my dishevel appearance. He speaks with fog in his breath, “May I come in?” In silence, I open the door. He finds a seat on my sofa and places his chilled hand on top of mine, “I’m sorry, Sis.” I don’t reply for a long time; simply staring at my hands. Before he leaves, he gently touches my shoulder.

As a mother, my job is to nurture, love, and protect my children. I drown in guilt with the loss of my second child. My doctor promises I will have “more good days than bad.” I believe her until my due date arrives like a cruel joke. I question God and grow angrier at him. I feel myself changing to bitter as I sail along on waves of never-ending grief. I need to move on for my daughter because she deserves a mother.



Suffering a miscarriage during the school year proves difficult. A week of mourning, I rise early, dress, and return to work, some semblance of normal. The drive to work is quiet. I drop off my daughter at daycare, and find myself staring at my steering wheel in the school parking lot. I sit in my car, paralyzed. My stomach rumbles at the thought of opening my car door. The past week and a half feels like an endless nightmare. Almost as if losing my baby never happened, but purple bruises—from the countless days of blood work—demonstrate otherwise. With hesitation, I open the car door and step out.

The cold February morning hammers me. I wander to the entrance and stall before unlocking. The entire time I’m thinking, “I don’t want to do this.” I can’t help thinking my grief will never end.

It’s harder than I imagined. I suppose I may get used to it, like a blank page waiting for her story to be written. I struggle to finish the year, but on the last day of school, a student approaches me, grasping a note, “Mrs. Branstetter, I stood up til’ two in the morning to write this for you.” He hands me the note and continues, “but

don’t read til’ I leave, okay?” I nod. “Well, have a good summer.”

“Have a good summer,” I respond. I watch him leave as I unfold the note and read:

Mrs. Branstetter I’d like to thank you very much for helping out this year. Like giving me a letter of recommendation, helping me with my papers, and thank you for not getting me in trouble when I cuss. And most of all you taught me that it’s hard in life, and you’re an example of this because you got your credit stolen and sadly of all, which no women should ever go through is losing a baby. You mourned for the baby but even during that time you would still choose to come to school and teach us; you are among the strongest women I know and you deserve a personal thank you so I’d like to say thank you for everything you done for me.

The tears come. I smile because a sense of hope emerges. We are human, and with humanity comes grief, pain, faith, forgiveness, and teaching. And I must face this never-ending march forward to love. ☙

Kayla Branstetter
Purdy
Community
Bronze
Nonfiction
Essay

I wrote this piece during my graduate work. The assignment was “Why I Write.” I struggled with this assignment, but when I reflected on my past pieces and my experiences, I realized I write because I am human. I feel we need to share our stories to remind us of our humanities.

Branstetter is a mother, educator, writer, and artist who holds a master of arts in liberal studies from the University of Denver. She has had several art and literary works published in various outlets.

Flower

Anna Davila
Neosho High
School
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Scratchboard

This was a school project that reminded me of a quote: “If you think you’re as useless as a white crayon, find someone who uses black paper.”

Davila is a sophomore who wants to apply artistic abilities in a future landscaping and design career.

QUEST FOR THE PINK PLANARIA

Jennifer Conner
Community
Pierce City
Gold
Nonfiction
Narrative

I was honored to accompany the state parks director and researchers into this cave system underneath Rockbridge State Park in Columbia, Mo., to search for the pink planaria. I hope to inspire Missourians through my writing and to protect our precious cave systems, springs, rivers and forests.

Conner has a degree in conservation and wildlife management from Missouri State University. She's a volunteer leader for the Sierra Club, the country's oldest and largest outdoor and environmental advocacy organization. In her free time you probably won't find her as she'll be wandering somewhere out in the wild with her husband and two young children.

We entered "Devil's Icebox" in canoes on a cool dreary day in late April. Lifejacket donned, headlight on, I said goodbye to the grey sky as we drifted into the womb of the earth. The team's goal was to do intensive invertebrate counts, specifically seeking out the pink planaria, a species of flatworm known only to exist in this particular cave system. Not only has this creature never been found in another cave in Missouri; it has never been discovered or recorded anywhere else in the world!

Our leader was an unassuming, soft-spoken woman. She would lead us into a world that was full of potential danger: twisted ankles, hypothermia, falls. Before our trip, we discussed contingency plans, should one of us get hurt. Contingency plans before excursions always give me a warm fuzzy feeling inside, that like true adventurers, we would be wandering into a domain in which we are no longer lords. A land in which we are at the mercy of the elemental forces of nature.

As we rounded the first bend, a cluster of bats hung from the ceiling. The scientists took pictures, excited voices cave-echoing with joy, confirming that these were Indiana bats, an endangered species in Missouri. Every so often one would zoom past our heads like underground fighter pilots. I secretly wished one would land and let me examine its tiny features.

Bats, particularly, made this excursion special. An estimated 6 million bats have died from white-nose syndrome, a fungus that attacks their skin and causes bats to lose precious fat reserves while they are hibernating. Scientists postulate that humans may partially be the cause, spreading the fungus from cave-to-cave. As a result, humans have been prohibited from entering most caves in Missouri except for research purposes.

As the researchers examined the second cluster their voices changed timbre. The bats were dead. White-nose. A silence permeated the cave as we continued to float. My Indian Jones bravado was tempered with reality. Observing the lifeless bats, clinging helplessly to the side of the cave, brought home the gravity of the disease. I wondered if the answer was here, waiting to be discovered amidst the all-encompassing darkness.

We floated on past a lone pickerel frog, crouching like a tiny statue on the banks of this underground stream then we portaged our canoes over a stream bank while ducking to avoid hitting our head on stalactites -what a strange sensation!! We were advised to lay down in our boats for the next section as, the ceiling was so close. As we lay in the boat, we used our hands on the ceiling (that thankfully was not full of delicate cave structures due to the periodic high-water flow) to guide our boats. I was informed at this point that there were no worries if the water came up while we were in the cave system because a survival box was hidden in one of the larger caverns that we could access if we ended up stranded inside. This really WAS an adventure!

Next we headed through the "chute," which is a narrow tunnel in which you use your hands to push quickly off the cave wall/ceiling and rapidly float through into the next cavern. This is where we pulled our canoes to land, our hiking journey had begun.

As we climbed up a muddy bank I praised the grip of my nephew's football cleats. The banks of this cave were like something constructed for a mud run: wear the wrong shoes and you're not going very far. Once inside, our guide climbed over things gracefully and quickly like a sub terrestrial spider monkey. Meanwhile I clambered along like a rhino, slowly slip-sliding, attempting to keep my helmet from grazing nature's sculptures (did I forget to mention I clinically lack depth perception?), and grinning foolishly the entire time.

Our guide stopped us after a short time and shone light behind a structure that was affectionately dubbed "bacon," due to it's ribbed, wavy appearance. It was drool-worthy. Then she asked us to sit next to the structure, turn our lights off, and listen.

As soon as our lights were off, I fell into a void. Here was complete darkness whether my eyes were closed or open. There were no helicopters or airplanes or trains or horns. The only sounds that existed were the rush of the underground stream and the "drip drip drip" of water from the end of the stalactite, slowly adding to the structure. I heard nature's whisperings through the water and through the cracks and fissures something like wind

would sweep through.

The lack of sensory input sent my mind into a tailspin, at one point I even questioned the existence of the ground underneath and had to pinch myself to remember that I was not a vapor hanging in the void, but a physical entity. As my mind whirled, it summoned images of holy places and followers surrounding relics or structures in a similar way, closing their eyes and waiting for the sign or the feeling that would bring with it illumination or transcendence.

These crystalline structures are calcite deposits, most typically a white-ish color but boast a variety of colors caused by the deposition of various minerals. The formations hung in the cave like jewels, handcrafted by nature and time. For a moment the world was dark then our guide shone her light behind another structure and a mirror image appeared in the stream like an apparition. The only way to tell that we were looking at a reflection was our perspective and the tiny ripples that made the sparkling reflection wave as if the earth had just shuddered with joy.

We hiked on, across stream-crossings, and came to a dome. It's interesting to note that an underground dome is indicative of a sinkhole on the surface. I always imagined that a sinkhole underground would look like collapsed bulge inside, but it is the opposite. You can imagine that the sinkhole is a mirror image of what's happening under the ground. As we entered Pierpont dome our guide asked if we wanted to sing. Having a background in vocal performance, I jumped at the opportunity. Forget Carnegie Hall, and the Sistine chapel, I was singing in nature's cathedral! It was the finest melding of human, art, and nature. I felt the melody and words escape and the walls send them back and forth, up and down, against limestone walls that would keep my voice inside their pores long after I leave this earth.

As we made our way to the crux of our journey, our guide touched the side of the cave and asked us to come observe. Tiny twigs and seeds were present, indicating that somewhere, there was a conduit between top-side and underground. This reminded me of the delicacy of our karst systems and groundwater. If twigs and seeds could make their way inside, imagine the constituents that could make their way into our drinking water.

On our journey we suddenly stopped and our leader dramatically turned to face us, then

shone her light on something behind me, as I turned to see the structure, my eyes were near-blinded by the shimmering whiteness. It was as if piles and piles of retired angel wings had been pasted together in an intricate, ethereal design, cascading from the top of the cave ceiling to the floor, shimmering in a mystical grandeur. I attempted to take pictures in front of the structure, recognizing that I was silly to try and capture its otherworldly essence with electronics, but trying my darndest, nonetheless. We three sat for awhile, not saying much, but shining our lights every so often at the structure and smiling.

We finally roused ourselves out of our reverie and slowly started to make our way back. As we waded, I felt the chill start to enter my bones. Instinct said it was time to get to the surface, but my soul lovingly held on to the walls.

We met up with the researchers at a preset location. None of them had found signs of the pink planaria. It was a bummer moment, even amidst all the adventure.

As we made our way back, one of the researchers found alone deceased bat hanging from the end of a stalactite in a quasi-suspended animation, the water dripping down and through its decomposing body to the edge of the stalactite, creating a strange slime that nearly reached the ground. It was reminiscent of the Alien movies and a bit too formulaic as far as horror movies go: a small group of researchers underground, observing closely (way too closely) a strange slimy

[Continued to 35]

Frost Flowers

Koral Martin
Carthage
Community
Silver
B&W Photography

Each fall I search for frost flowers that are created usually only once a year, when there is a frost and the ground is still warm. Each is unique and amazing and I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to capture this phenomenal happening in nature.

*Canon 5DSR Macro
100mm, 1/4 sec., f/13,
ISO 400*

Martin is a professional photographer who loves sharing her images with others both in the public world and the healthcare environment as she knows that nature can bring joy, lesson stress and even heal.



[Continued from 40]

specimen who likely had been parasitized by an alien creature. A creature who originated at the core of the earth and made its way, over millennia, to this cave system. The researchers continued to observe and remarked that the bat may well become part of the stalactite structure, they didn't seem to share my urgency or penchant for horror movies. Thankfully, we were spared the inevitable attack of the alien parasite. The incubation period obviously was not yet complete.

Earlier, during lunch, I had asked our leader if all our lights had failed, could she find our way out. She thought and replied, yes. And I thought, as we made our way back, that finding our way out of dark places when we have lost our light, can be done. We need only listen to that inner compass, the one that, for me, had been reawakened in this darkness.

Emerging from the earth was like transitioning from Kansas to the land of Oz. The sun had emerged and illuminated the world in technicolor. A cave swallow had

made her nest at the entrance and she flew nearly parallel with us as we emerged in our canoe. Her wings beat in slow motion and her grey, bathed in the same soft light, was different from the monochromes in the cave. It was a new glowing grey, a color on the spectrum I had never noticed or appreciated before. The image of the swallow, as we emerged from the darkness, would stay with me forever.

As we dragged our canoes to land and hiked back to the park entrance, I found it difficult to rouse myself out of deep contemplation, but that's what mother earth's chapel does, that's what the wild does. It speaks to your soul. The sense of wonder that gets lost between the appointments and flat screens and the mystique that, over the years, gets shoved into a back closet of your heart, creeps back in and simultaneously eludes you like the mysterious pink planaria nestled under rocks in its only home, just waiting to be rediscovered. ☙

Let There Be Light

There is nothing like waking up to sunlight shining through the bedroom window. Everyday is a fresh start packed with new adventures and experiences.
Canon EOS Rebel T6
Auto settings

Thompson is a special education preschool teacher. She has taught for eight years and has enjoyed every moment of it. Her hobby is capturing life through a camera lens.



Samantha Thompson | Seneca | Crowder | Honorable Mention | Color Photography

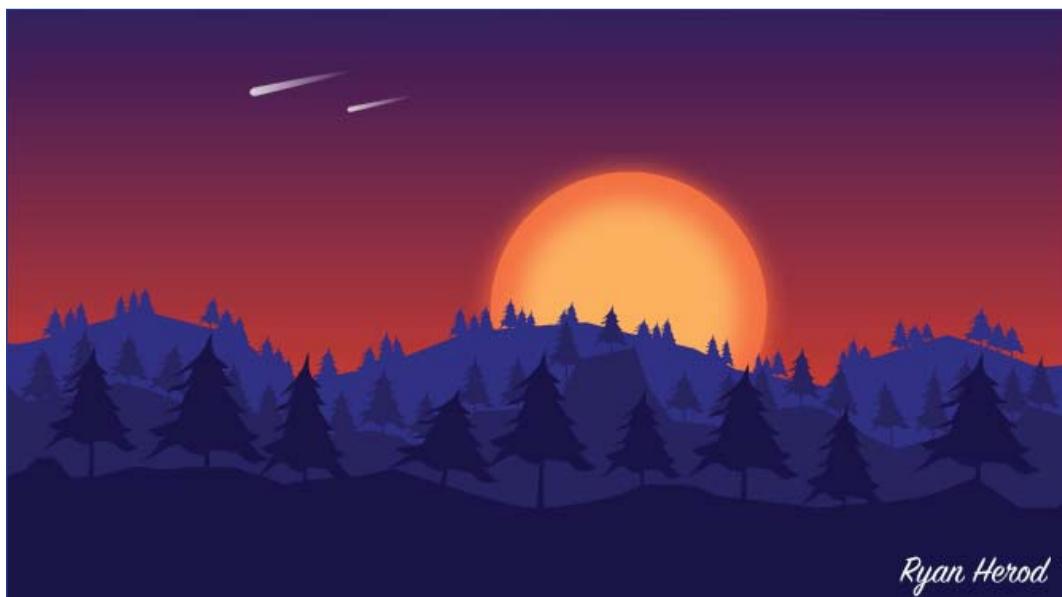
MARCH DAWN

Limp white walls build on the mornings freshly constructed hills;
Golden rays break through the hollow Silhouettes declaring their presents;
The noble warmth of the day is rolling in yielding itself to all;
The March Dawn has awoken.

Bri Murphy
Monett
Crowder
Gold
Poetry
Free Verse

I've always loved the month of March, and I could never resist getting up early to watch the sun rise.

Murphy hopes to someday be an art educator.



Summer Time Blues

I was exploring with the effects of color in a landscape while thinking about what it is like when summer ends and school begins.

Herod is a senior who loves doing graphic design and playing video games in his spare time. He is looking forward to joining the National Guard after graduation.

Ryan Herod | McDonald County High School | Bronze | Digital Art

BROKEN BY LOVE

I've been told I hurt
because I love so deeply.
But I refuse to change the way I love
and I don't know if I'm willing
to take that leap of faith
again.

Sydney Hartless
Carthage
Crowder
Bronze
Poetry
Free Verse

I was inspired to write this after a session with my counselor. It's a subject that I am still struggling with and trying to figure out for myself.

Hartless is majoring in teacher education and hopes to go on to teach high school art.

DEATH AND TAXES

Bretton Cole
Neosho
Staff
Nonfiction
Essay

I have always believed hardships in life are meant for more than being difficult. Life is a journey of new experiences, and learning from those is part of what makes life interesting. This particular writing reflects some of what I learned from what has been the hardest time in my life up to this point.

Cole is a freshman at Crowder College, an aspiring journalist, currently works as a draftsman at Twin Oaks Custom Cabinets.

Death and taxes have long been clichés for the things in life that are guaranteed. We all know, inevitably, our life will be over, but not before the government secures money from our pockets. However, there are other certainties which life requires from us. Our ability to meet those prerequisites will often reflect how well our life is lived. The third is an abstract idea, something casually overlooked by too many today. Responsibility. Taking charge of your life and making things happen, a valuable trait few seem to possess. So, while we know we won't escape death and taxes, we can likewise be sure that life, at some point, will look us in the eye and demand us to take responsibility.

Much of what qualifies as success in the contemporary world is predicated on assuming responsibility. Whether that means in our personal lives or in the workplace is ultimately irrelevant – it's the motivation to take healthy control of life that is essential. A dose of reality is usually necessary to kickstart responsibility for teens today. Sometimes, that comes in the form a particularly difficult life event. For me, that came in 2017.

"Game point!" he remarked, a noticeable smirk on his face. I grinned back, tossing the vibrant orange ball into the air and serving it. After a short volley, I spun the ball with a forehand slam, and it bounced wildly past my grandpa. I smiled again. "Merry Christmas, Poppa."

To many, a game of ping pong would mean very little. For me, the victory marked a momentous feat I'd been longing to conquer for over five years. My grandpa had been my idol, a master in the art of table tennis and a helpful teacher. Since my pre-teen years, he had been training me and helping me fall in love with our favorite sport: ping pong. Many afternoons when I finished school, we would head up the hill in Neosho to the rec center. He taught me how to play, and before long, I was beating college students at the age of 12.

The hours we spent together, ball

bouncing back and forth, forged a bond between us that was special. We shared mutual interests: people and ping pong, and sometimes pizza. A quick snack after several games was always a welcome treat. But, as good as it felt to compete with college students, one person I could never beat was my grandpa. He always seemed to find a way to keep me in the game, but didn't let me taste the sweet nectar of victory.

But, that Christmas of 2016, the gauntlet was passed. I had finally reached a point where he couldn't beat me. Sure, there was the occasional game where he got "lucky" and I had the reminiscent feeling of defeat, but for the most part, I had overtaken the champ.

"I've found that often the most important lessons are learned in the most difficult circumstances in life."

The greatest part of the change was that he knew it, and it didn't bother him. He smiled when he lost, happy to know that his teachings had paid off and the love for the game had been passed down. Unfortunately, I had no idea that game would be our last.

Shortly after Christmas, my grandpa got food poisoning. He began feeling bad, losing strength, and having trouble eating. After a couple of weeks, we realized food poisoning wasn't the culprit, it was his heart. He went to the hospital to have it checked out, and they found two blood clots on his heart.

Blood clots? I couldn't believe it. He was a healthy man and had just graduated from Crowder the May before. This couldn't be happening to my grandpa. There's something about sickness that touches a deep part of your soul. It fosters a gnawing fear. He had always been such a central part of my life, the thought of losing him was something I never wanted to even consider. I tried to shove it out of my mind.

It wasn't long before his health had substantially deteriorated. My grandma was in good health, but caring for a full-grown man is no easy task. It suddenly became necessary for someone else to help take care of him in his poor condition. As his only grandson, that

duty fell on me. I began coming over every day after school, faithfully watching over him while I did my homework, talking to him when he was lonely.

Responsibility

There was now something critically important for me to do. I had a job for the first time, one the likes of which I had never imagined before. There was a consistent responsibility for me each day. It certainly wasn't easy. It plagued on my physically and emotionally to see the life seeping from my only surviving grandpa. Why did it have to happen to me? Why was responsibility forced on me in such an inconvenient way?

I've found that often the most important lessons in life are learned in the most difficult of circumstances. Because I helped him in and out of his chair, lifted his spirits, and came over in the middle of the night to help him up when he'd fallen, I learned the importance of being faithful, dependable, and responsible for the tasks presented before me. It's certainly

uncomfortable learning a lesson like that as you watch a loved one teeter on the edge of life and death.

But, I value the time I spent with him. He passed away in April, a short four months after he fell sick. It was more difficult to take than I ever anticipated. Yet, I cherish the memories I have with him and cling to the lessons I learned during that time. There were days I didn't feel like going. I went anyway. There were times I feared seeing his hollow face. I went anyway. There were times, admittedly, where I asked God why we had to watch him endure the suffering. I went anyway.

Before that experience, I was not the most responsible teen. It's shameful to admit, but I enjoyed fun and shied away from work and responsibility when I could. I don't claim perfection, but I have made marked improvement since that time. I've learned the importance of being responsible. There are times where life doesn't treat you fairly.

[Continued to 40]

Day Dreaming

I was canoeing with my husband at Reelfoot Lake in Tennessee.

The sky was reflecting nicely in the lake with the cypress trees on the horizon. My husband stopped paddling to enjoy the surreal view. Canon FD SR 18mm 1/320 sec., f/14, ISO 320

Martin is a professional photographer who loves sharing her images with others both in the public world and the healthcare environment as she knows that nature can bring joy, lesson stress and even heal.



Koral Martin | Carthage | Community | Silver | Color Photography

SEASONS

My heart is a cold stigma
It is the epitome of the frozen winter.
Dark
Desolate
Absolute zero

Your heart however
Is the illustration of the warm summer
Bright
Exciting
Beckoning

Now there's not just distance between us,
But seasons as well.

Mallory Keinzle | Crowder | Honorable Mention | Poetry | Free Verse

I wrote this poem after falling in love with a man I knew could ever love me back. For about a year after there was not a day that went by where I was not writing constantly. Most everything that came from that year was pretty much garbage; but in the case of most garbage, you can find a hand full of things that are worth something.

Keinzle is majoring in psychology and planning to be a criminal psychologist. She enjoys writing poetry and taking photos in her free time.

[Continued from 39]

You feel like everything is against you.
Nevertheless, such is life, and life goes on.
Our responsibilities don't change. Instead of
letting life kick my tail, I had to take it by the
horns.

Since that point, I've allowed the
devastating death of my grandpa to inspire
me to take responsibility in life – he did. I had
to when he was leaving this life. Perhaps the
gauntlet was passed in more than just ping
pong.

Sometimes, I wonder if he'd be proud
of me now. I graduated high school, got a
good job, and I'm in college now. It's busy
working and going to college. But I think I
just might make it. Death is guaranteed. My
grandpa didn't escape it. Taxes are guaranteed.
I'll pay them for the first time this year.
Responsibility? Yes, life has demanded that of
me, but thanks to what the most difficult time
in my life taught me, I'm learning more and
more how to take responsibility. ☺

THE GUITAR STORY

Glad that his paper-route was done, older brother John had time to cruise the backstreet dumpsters that late afternoon for tossed-out treasures. And, there it was; for him, the holy grail of garbage. Behind the music store, a guitar ... with strings! His heart soared – and he didn't even play the guitar. Other than its broken neck, it was identical to the one our parents were renting from that same place for his younger brother, Jeff; perfect in every detail.

John biked home and, yes! Mom was still out shopping in the car. Since he had his learner's permit and had been practicing, he knew there was a blind-spot on the driveway just where you turned up and in from the street. He reverently lay the guitar there, just so. Going inside the house, sure enough, Jeff was busy practicing on the twin of John's sacrificial instrument. John smiled at him and went out to sit on the porch steps and wait, jumpy and oh so happy.

When Mom turned into the driveway from the street, he saw her puzzled expression through the windshield as the tires crunched beneath her. Screwing his face into the best shocked look that he could, he ran over just as she got out of her door. "Mom! Jeff was practicing and couldn't make a chord! He got angry, and ..." With that, John dramatically waved back up the drive.

Once she'd turned and taken some steps, Mom looked down and saw the now run-over guitar. Her transformation was magical to see: First, the look of bewilderment. Next, the dawning comprehension (THIS is the guitar we're paying to rent! Plus lessons! Jeff put this guitar here where I'd run over it!). Finally, she stiffened, turned beet red, clenched her fists and became Frankenstein's monster (Or, maybe in her case, the much scarier Bride of Frankenstein).

John followed behind, smiling, as the creature stomped up the porch, slammed open the door, and got halfway across the room in her maddened lunge for his brother. But, two things stopped this juggernaut:

The sight of Jeff, terrified and holding the intact, pristine guitar before him like a shield, and John's stifled, gleeful laughter behind her.

But, the monster did not change at all. She turned around ... and brother John ran.

Luckily for John, he could run faster than mom, and was better at climbing trees. As he hung from a branch in the front yard, six feet above her angry and shaking fist, inspiration hit: "Mom," he asked sweetly, "what time does dad get home?" The glitter of understanding in her eyes and the beginning of a slight smirk said it all: John was no longer in trouble, but dad would be.

❖

Christopher G. Doyle
Neosho
Crowder
Bronze
Nonfiction
Biography

This is a small incident from growing up that our family still talks about.

Doyle is a retired Crowder student – creative writing and theatre arts.



The Pizza Boy

Tyler Dallis
Exeter
Community
Silver
3D Art
Ceramic Cylindrical Figure

This piece is modeled after one of my friends who loves to eat pizza.

Dallis is a Crowder alum studying ceramics at Fort Hays State University.

THE NATURE WITHIN

Tristen Miller
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
Poetry
Free Verse

I was inspired by my mom to share this story because she was the one who saved my life.

I would not be here today if it was not for her risking her life for me.

Miller wrote this poem in her AP English class.

I remember looking at the river at the flooded water

I remember grabbing the rod and my shoes, running
Yelling, "let's go"
Running down to the flooded waters
I heard my mom yell "WAIT!!"

A brief hesitation before casting into the water
Slowly taking steps into the cold, rushing stream

A voice from behind me saying "don't go out any further"
A small step to see just a bit further down river

...Now I'm flowing with the stream yelling -
"Help!"

The further down the river I got the deeper
the water seemed to be

My mom thought I was playing
"Tristen stop playing around"

Being pulled under, rocks between my toes
My toes scraping the ground
"I'm not playing...."
I'm underwater, I couldn't see light
It was black

The water rushing past my ears
A moment of dead silence
A moment of absolute nothingness
A moment a piercing cold

Then
The sounds of a splash
The grabbing of an arm
Head above water
Breath inside lungs
Thrown to the edge of the bank
Reaching for the trees

My mom still in the water
"MOM!!"

I reach out to grab her hand
She grabs the branch and pulls herself up
Back on the bank running to car
"I wanna go home, I wanna go home"
Catching my breath
Surrounded by people

"I wanna go home"
My mind was blank

Thinking about what would happen if I didn't
get out..
I wasn't afraid

But what if.. Just for a moment
I didn't come back up
What if...

Ziva Guarding Her Homestead

Debra Lucas-Wolf
Joplin
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Color Photography

*Ziva was out there alone hunting for moles.
Nikon D5300*

Lucas-Wolf is finishing her final semester of classes. She is majoring in photography and graphic design.



NORMAN

At the other end of the bar, perched upon a stool, sat a lanky man, skin weathered, hair silver and combed back. He wore an olive knit stocking cap and a torn black coat, stained white linen shirt with shimmering snaps peeking through the center. With a pinched quarter, he scraped back and forth, brushing with his nicotine-stained hand the shavings from lottery tickets into a growing mound. He had been doing the very same thing the only other time I had been there, when we exchanged brief introductions. I remembered the familiarity and trust I saw in his gray-blue eyes, like my grandmother smiled at me from behind them. I grabbed the handle of my cold, wet mug and met him at the empty stool to his right. "Are you winning?" I asked.

He peered over the top rim of his gold wire glasses, studied me for several seconds, and replied in a soft gravelly voice, "I don't give a damn." I chuckled, but he meant it. That was the genesis of our one-year friendship, and it would turn out that Norman meant everything he said.

Norm had shakily written his phone number on a piece of cardboard he tore from his red Pall Mall pack. When I called, he invited me to his home, once a small two-room farmhouse with green pasture panoramas, now amidst other houses, churches, and businesses near the town's center. The air was thick when I entered, smelling like the brown ceiling and walls, decades after their last white coat. Norm's house was as bare-boned as he. A piped heat stove dominated the room, on just enough to not see his breath. A plain wood coffee table held a neat pile of papers and two ashtrays. Behind it, a plaid sofa, its cushions worn with filling from years of nightly sleep. Across the room, a small radio softly sang old country twang atop a mahogany buffet, slightly buckled in the center. We sat, coats on, one cigarette after another, sharing our pasts. I leaned close, struggling to hear his softly-spoken words over the clunk and whir of his refrigerator when its compressor kicked on. I learned that Norman, once an Air Force mechanic and retired as an aircraft electrician, enjoyed using his skills to repair the town's broken lawn mowers. I learned he had two children, a daughter he knew nothing of and a son who had frequented a Texas penitentiary

before making it his likely permanent residence. Norm, hoping to spare me trouble in my naivety being new to town, told me who I might encounter he deemed trustworthy and who I should avoid, all of which proved true as time passed. I learned his two beloved pups were buried together in his backyard and the nearby sprawling grapevine was 150 years old. From the seemingly mundane to stories of heartbreak, we shared a lot with one another. I felt comfortable telling him that I was worried about losing my home if I didn't soon find work. He said, "You'll never have to worry about having a place to stay. Let's go downtown for a beer."

In the spring, I was hired as a delivery driver for UPS. They sent me to Chicago for a week of intensive training and, when I returned, had me working long days running my own route. I hadn't seen Norm nor his vehicle, an old riding mower, parked at the bar in several weeks as I drove past toward home in the evenings, so I paid him a visit on a day off work. I found him atop the ripped vinyl bench car seat on his porch, wrenches in hand, stooped over an upside down lawn mower in a sea of its guts. "Hey, Norm. How you been?" I cheerfully said as I stepped up.

He slowly looked up and breathlessly whispered, "I'm not feeling very good today." His appearance startled me into a gasp; his face was the same color as the lilacs that had begun to bloom.

"Norm, you don't look well. Do you want some water? Have you eaten? Let's get you some water and something to eat. Want a banana?"

"No, no, I need to get this mower finished."

"Let's take a break, go inside, and have some water first." I reached out my hand insistently and, surprisingly, he put down his tools and let me lead him inside. After bringing him a cold glass of fresh water, I suggested he go to the doctor.

"Already been. Gave me some pills. I took 'em already. Said I probably have a cold, but I think it might be something more. That doctor's just a pill pusher. No good."

"Maybe we need to take you somewhere else."

"I'll be fine. I'm just tired."

Kristi May
El Dorado Springs
Crowder
Gold
Nonfiction
Character Sketch

This is the true account of my short but sweet time with my dear friend Norman.

May is a full-time student pursuing a degree in biology. She hopes to enter medical school and work in the field of molecular genetics. When she's not studying, she enjoys spending time with her family, flower gardening, and writing.

[Continued to 44]

[Continued from 43]

"Want me to cook you something, Norm?"

"Don't have much of an appetite lately."

I began visiting much more often and, with each visit, our talks became increasingly quieter as his voice became but a whisper, often interrupted by long bouts of dry coughs. Norm had visited a doctor in the city and learned he had lung cancer, stage four. "Are you scared of dying, Norm?"

He shook his head, "Heck no. Two things I'm scared about..." I leaned closer so I could hear his whispers over the refrigerator compressor. "Not being allowed to die in my own home and my son getting my house. I don't know when he'll get out, but I do know he wouldn't take care of it."

A hospice company brought a bed for his living room. Three of us, Norm's few trusted friends and neighbors, made a schedule. We took shifts to bring him cold water with flexible straws, help him stand to urinate because he refused to try it lying down, and urged him to eat something, anything, but he eventually refused food altogether. We turned off his oxygen tank and held cigarettes to his lips when he asked to smoke. I stayed

two to three hours with him after work each evening and every Saturday morning through Sunday evening.

I came to visit after work one evening as usual, but the living room lights were already off. I stared from the center of the road feeling strangely empty before deciding to drive on and let Norm rest. I awoke to the news. Norm was gone. The neighbor that was on his couch had slept through, and it was estimated that he passed quietly around 7 p.m., exactly the time I stopped out front the evening before.

Two weeks prior to Norm succumbing to his illness, as per his wish and with the help of an attorney who makes house calls, Norm signed over his deed. I sit beneath bright white ceilings in a room of clean air, walls the color of trusted gray-blue eyes, telling of my all-too-short time with my friend. The piped heat stove is turned up barely enough to not see my breath and the clunk and whir of the refrigerator lulls me. Aloud I ask, "Norm, what do you think?"

A familiar voice answers, "I don't give a damn." ☺

From the
seemingly
mundane to stories
of heartbreak,
we shared a lot
with one another.

Reflections

Noel Glenn
Pittsburg, Kans.
Community
Honorable Mention
Color Photography

I took this photo on a Missouri Mill Tour; the colors and the reflections in the water grabbed my attention

*Sony A77, 1/250 sec,
f/7.1, ISO 100*

Glenn has been a photographer since the late 70's. He believes by taking these photographs he is helping to preserve history.





Homestead
on the
Prairie
Diamond Bogle
Bartlett
Community
Bronze
Digital Art

I took this picture of an abandoned house, which has been standing for over 50 years, near my home in Kansas.

*HDR camera setting,
Adobe Photoshop for
compiling images*

*Bogle's work has been
published on blogs
and other small online
portals.*

GRANDMA'S SONG

She was born in 1893 to a farmer and his wife.

Her parents struggled each and every day but this was the farmer's life.

Young girl on the prairie where was life taking you?

She couldn't think of this much; too many chores to do.

He was smart and oh so handsome too...he was wild and he was free;
but she was the one that he pursued for her husband he wanted to be.

Young woman on the prairie where was life taking you?

Oh so soon the babies came and many chores to do.

She was living on the prairie with babies on her knee.
They both worked and worked the land than lost all in a poor economy.

Mother on the prairie what was life giving you?

Face the sorrows and the joys; but there were chores to do.

She had little ones to feed and they faced the world head on.
Than moved on to California and left the prairie far beyond'.

Woman on the prairie where was life taking you?
California's far from home but your love will see you through.

She raised up her family in the warm California sun.
Built up a family business than lost her beloved one.
Widow from the prairie see what life has all undone.
Soon her children all had grown; her ending had begun.

She died in 1993 at one hundred years of age.
Her generation was a book and I am just a page.
Grandma from the prairie see where life has taken you.
Thank-you for all your sacrifices as your love will see me through.

Dorice Baty
Monett
Community
Bronze
Poetry
Lyrical Story

*This is the story of my
Grandmother Beulah's
life.*

Baty is a 63-year-old grandmother and mother who loves the humanities, especially poetry and music. She is married to John and raising a 13 year old granddaughter.

1940 BLACK COUPE, TAKE ME HOME

Lacey Elkins
Cassville
Crowder
Gold
Fiction
Short Story

*This piece came to me
on a whim.*

*Elkins wants to become
a writer and hopes to
keep readers laughing
with the wit of her
word.*

As Billy Deville cruised down JJ highway, he wondered if it could even be called cruisin' If you were nuzzling along in a 2001 sand colored Taurus. His fellow classmates all wielded modest sporty cars, all purpose suburbans, and a select few proudly powered inherited pick up trucks.

Mom and dad overlooked those choices by a long shot.

"This car will get you to where you need to go. It is reliable. We are not buying this for you to go joy riding in. It is to be used with responsibility. We are trusting you. It is a privilege to own a car. And this is a nice one."

Deira Walters spouted his grandma has the very same car. Except mine might be nicer.

Parents seem to gain a naïve case of amnesia concerning the very hierarchy that is high school.

They forget the very same jeering and worries they put up with when they carried the torch.

It is a jungle in there, and if you do not have a map or at the very least a well equipped backpack, you can call yourself tiger meat. Yet, his rational side of mind prevailed.

The most unlucky kids forced to ride the distinctly smelling yellow submarine soaked to the front of his mind when he caught himself ungrateful. Their sticky foreheads crushed to the dusty prison-like windows circled his conscious.

Billy rolled up on a stop sign at the junction of Bluebird Lane and Dovoverall Street.

He checked all four ways as his father so intensely instructed, but idled as he stopped to admire the black 1940 Coupe. There it posed. It could bring a peacock to shame any day of each season.

Its color as pristine as the day it rolled off the showroom floor and made its way to its owner, the Coupe was most definitely what one could call a cruisin' automobile. The front of

the machine resembled a hissing snout. Inside it sprawled a piece of driftwood by the name of Theo Durham.

The rumor told he sat in the tomb day and night, as much as he possibly could, even completely slumbering in it a few nights a week regardless of weather, since it had officially become a yard ornament and its owner had lost possession of his license to operate it.

Not known to be your friendly neighborhood senior citizen, Durham scowled as he peeked up over his Thursday morning paper when he caught Billy eyeing his prized possession.

His eyes threw daggers as sharp as Vikings' tools. Then, suddenly, as if a flip had been switched, his face transformed. His faces revealed a conspirator. He beckoned me to roll my window down urgently, eager to tell me a juicy secret worthy of a top secret label.

"Say, kid. You like that monster?"

Billy looked around, attempting to figure out what Mister Durham referred to. When it struck Billy in the chest just what he had meant, he did a mental forehead slap.

How very uncool of you, Billy.

"Yes, sir. I could only dream to have a ride that nice."

"You want it?"

Billy froze, shocked at the inclination of Mister Durham's offer. As his father regularly said, Mister Durham had to be pulling his leg. He possessed a cruel spirit legendary to kids in these parts, but was he this capable of such a tease?

"Well, are you going to sit parked at that stop sign all day, or are you going to take your new set of wheels for a spin?"

Billy slowly and carefully pulled his grandmotherly transportation in Mister Durham's yard, careful not to disturb too much of his manicured area.

**The 1940 Ford
Coupe lurched
up to speed,
intent on
making up
for lost time.**



Durham peeled himself from the seats of the beast, leaving behind his imprint as if the machine was in the process of swallowing him.

Billy reluctantly took his place as Mister Durham prodded him as one does a shy child.

Durham swung himself into the passenger side, eager as a teenager ready for a Saturday night cruise.

"You know how many loads of shine I have hauled in this bad boy? He never once let me down. I have out ran every hot rod on this side of the mountain, and with ease.

This car isn't just a car. It's an entity entirely. It has lungs and a brain. It has heart, which is so much greater than I can say for that Nancy car you're steering around."

Billy blushed a shade bright red silently cursing his folks and their two bit lessons.

"You know what you are doing?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, then what are you waiting for? He's all yours. He's ready to get back out there.

How much longer are we going to make him sit?"

As Billy turned the key delicately, taking off as cautiously as one does when in possession of an item that does not truly belong to them, but all the same treasures, he glanced over at Mister Durham.

His eyes were closed, lost in an era far gone, where running firecracker in a 1940 Ford Coupe through the mountains as a seventeen-year-old was acceptable. Lost and smiling, he relished in the purr of the black demon that had carried him back home into another time.

The 1940 Ford Coupe lurched up to speed, intent on making up for lost time. ☺

Forgotten Ford

Madelynn Capps
Carter
Crowder
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

This picture was taken out at my grandparents' house of one of their old cars in the weeds, hence "Forgotten Ford."
Canon EOS Rebel T6

Capps is an aspiring English teacher with a passion for photography.

Broadway

Seth Potter
Pittsburg, Kans.
Community
Honorable Mention
Color Photography

*I created this photo
to experiment in
long exposure night
photography.
Fujifilm X100f
8 sec., f/10, ISO 200*

*Potter greatly enjoys
photography because of
all the new people he
meets. His aspirations
for the future include
becoming a professional
photographer.*



Vegas at Night

Leandra Toomoth
Anderson
Community
Bronze
B&W Photography

*This picture was taken
during our final night
in Vegas.
iPhone 6s*

*Toomoth is a high
school English teacher
in McDonald County.
She is currently
working on an
anthology of poetry
and a debut novel.*



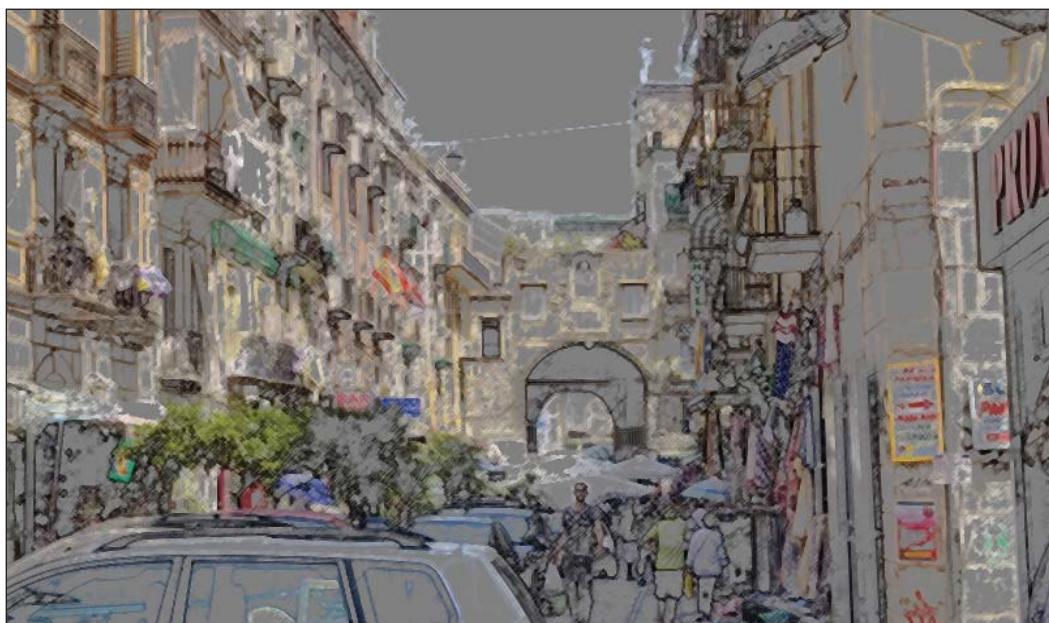


Freedom

Michelle Hilburn
Cassville
Community
Honorable
Mention
Color
Photography

This is a picture of Freedom Tower, that was taken in New York City. iPhone

Hilburn is an English teacher in Purdy and an aspiring librarian. She is currently pursuing a human services specialist degree with an option in learning resources at University of Central Missouri.



Napoli

Latonia Bailey
Neosho
Staff Adviser
Digital Art

Naples, Italy, buzzed with excitement mid-day in July 2018. Photoshop colored pencil effect

Bailey, adviser since 1994, submits various works for honorary publication.

BUYER'S BARGAINS

Maya Dally
McDonald County
High School
Gold
Fiction
Short Story

This fiction piece is loosely based on experiences I had working at a small dollar store.

Dally is a junior and she has been writing since she was young. She hopes to soon find a career she knows she can stick with.

Day One
It was like stepping into your grandma's basement; a faint smell of rotting mildew rose up from the cardboard boxes stacked high upon shelves, reaching all the way to the ceiling. No sound, save for the just barely intrusive drone, pulsing from the sometimes flickering fluorescent lights. There seemed to be no order, no Dewey decimal system for useless trinkets.

I almost decided to retreat back outside for just a moment to collect myself in the darkening evening. Before I made it to the door, a voice from around the shelves called out,

"Helloo! How are we doin' tonight?" A younger woman holding a distressed broom walks out from behind a toilet paper display and made a point to not walk too close to me.

"Hi, sorry. Uhm, I'm supposed to meet with Carolyn about a job?" I took a step toward her hoping to cover up the fact that I nearly left. Almost unnoticeable, she took a half-step back and continued to smile. Later on I would learn that this invisible 10-foot defense wall between us was brought on through years of other people invading it, something I would pick up for myself after only a few weeks.

"Well, Carolyn doesn't work nights, sooo...," She looked around for a split second and put her full weight onto the broom, the brush hairs folding beneath the weight. "You know what you *could* do, you could just talk to the night manager, Walsh. I bet you anything he'd let you just start tonight," I inadvertently raised my eyebrows as she spoke, "Ya know... since you're already here."

I nodded slowly, forcing a half smile onto my face to show that I was ready for anything, even if I had no clue what anything entailed.

As we walked through the store to find Walsh, she told me her name was Trina and she had been working at Buyer's Bargains for two and a half years now, and it gets kind of crazy sometimes, but you just gotta remember who you're doin' it for and that you're gettin' paid for it anyway.

Walsh was a thin man, dressed in a red

v-neck and black cargo pants. He wore a grey newsboy cap low on his head, nearly covering his eyes. Trina let me pass in front of her as we neared him. He was lifting a cardboard box high above his head onto the very top shelf above the colored pencils.

"Hey Walsh, this is the girl Carolyn got to replace Sidney." Trina nudged me a little closer to him. He turned to face us, much taller than what he looked from further away. He gave both of us similar but different smiles.

"I mean she looks better than Sidney already," He wiped his hands on his baggy pants and reached out to give me a handshake, which I accepted. His palms were cold and sweaty. "What's her name?"

"My name is Hera. I can tell you that one." I said.

**The walk to my car
at the far end
of the parking lot
felt like a marathon
in the dark.**

He motioned toward a tall step ladder behind him, reaching close to the rafters, "We call this Bertha. She's our tallest ladder," Walsh leaned his arm against the railing. "Why don't you step up there for me?" I gave him a funny look before I realized he was serious. Not wanting to ruin a new job, I slowly made my way to Bertha and stepped up the first few stairs before turning back to them. Trina had one arm across her belly, the other up to her face, her mouth slightly ajar, like she had something to say. Walsh clapped his hands together, barely making a sound, "Looks good there, I think you'll do fine working on the floor, but tonight I'll have you up at the register with Trina. Just in case I need you there one day."

Trina didn't say a word, but she leaned a little closer and motioned for me to come with her. As we walked away, Walsh never turned back the other way.

She showed me the back room and where to clock in and where Robin keeps all her food, so maybe just be careful where you put your own food, or what you *could* do is write your name on your stuff if you really wanted to.

"Where are all the customers?" I asked her a little hesitantly. It was never my intention to offend anyone, especially a dedicated employee of Buyer's Bargains.

"Well, we don't get much action since we're the night shift. Noon is when it's *really* packed. We mostly just clean up and prep for

the day shift." She made a hand motion like she was dismissing my question and then went on to show me how the register works. The bottom side was broken, so you had to tug on the drawer a little to open it.

The counters looked to be covered in a light yellow film, like the walls of a smoker's house. Dust covered any surface above eye level, and the wide open windows behind the cash registers were translucent with fingerprint smudges and yellowing flyers. Just before I started to ask Trina if we had to clean the windows, the sound of a dragging footstep caught our attention.

"Trina, I want you to look over the HBA aisle while I show Hera how to clean the bathrooms." Walsh appeared behind us from around the bubble gum machines. Trina walked past me slowly and around him, leaving a good two feet between them. He waved me over and began making his way ahead of me.

The walk to the back was silent as I stayed about a yard behind him. He never looked back to make sure I had even followed him. We passed through the plastic flap doors into a dimmed storage area with lower ceilings. The room itself was smaller, just big enough to hold a few metal shelves holding packages of pop. Two doors spaced a couple of yards apart were set on the far right wall, and I assumed they were the bathrooms.

"The main owner, Adam, has a stick up his ass about lawsuits. No cameras anywhere near the bathrooms. If you ask me, that's why we have so many thieves walking outta this place like it's nothing. His fault anyway," he pointed to each corner of the room, above the pop shelves and above the rest rooms, "Anyway, if you plan on doing anything illegal or against the rules, this is the place to do it. Nobody to see you. It's my room of choice." He faced me and made an obvious advance to come closer. I was standing in front of the women's bathroom door, so I stepped aside to let him through. He stopped as I had moved

away. Then walked slowly into the rest room.

"So how am I supposed to clean these things?" I looked inside, dismissing the weird tension, and made a face at the years of stains on the walls and the peeling paint on the floors. "No offense, but this doesn't look like it's been cleaned in a minute."

"Well I guess that's where you come in. To me, it sounds like you've got standards to a clean bathroom. See, our customers apparently don't mind the state of 'these things'. Not like they're helping us out any by coming in here anyway." Walsh said as he opened up the cabinet underneath the sink. He pulled out half a dozen empty wrappers and containers. I watched him shuffle through them to see what all has been stolen before he shoved the trash into my chest for me to take. "And that is how you clean the bathrooms here. Everything else is just maintenance." He watched me clean out the other bathroom

before leading me back to the front of the store.

The rest of the night was slow, but it still felt like I had just gotten there. Like time was stuck in a box, running around and around, bumping into the walls. I had been there since 6pm and clocked out at 11:34pm. Five hours of patient waiting and

the smallest talk from Trina. Every once in a while, Walsh would walk up to the register to stop and tell us to do something, or just to look. Around when it hit 9:00, I started to feel nauseous every time he came by.

The walk to my car at the far end of the parking lot felt like a marathon in the dark. Trina and Walsh strolled behind me, and I knew I was walking faster than them, but somehow we kept the same distance between us the whole time. I couldn't remember a time I had ever wanted to get in my car so fast. It was like feeling a bug slowly crawl up your back in the heat of the summertime. It started that night, but even now, I still rush to unlock my car door, get in, and lock it right back up behind me. Then take a breath of clean air, untouched by creeps in a dollar store. 

There seemed to be
no order,
no Dewey decimal system
for useless trinkets.

Cats Don't Need Names; We Know Who We Are

Rhiannon Hyde
Republic
Crowder
Gold
3D Art
Sculpture



When I was making my final project someone broke it, which was tragic. My teacher and I then had to make something I liked.

Hyde is a vet-tech major who enjoys making art. Art is a good stress reliever for her, but finding the time isn't always easy.

Haunted Hotel

Kayla Branstetter
Purdy
Community
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

*I took this photo while
on a ghost tour with
my husband in Hot
Springs, Arkansas.
iPhone 8*

*Branstetter is a mother,
educator, writer, and
artist who holds a
Master of Arts in
liberal studies from the
University of Denver.
She has had several
art and literary works
published in various
outlets.*





Succulent

Madelin Sanchez
Stotts City
Staff
B&W
Photography

Sanchez is majoring in photography. She hopes to one day be able to start her own photography business.

*Canon EOS Rebel
T5 f/2 1/400 sec.
ISO 3200
Edited in
Lightroom*

I took this photo because I really liked the detail in each part of the succulent. The little lines kind of draw you in towards the center.



Thirst

Steve Wilson
Anderson
Community
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

I love seeing God's beauty around me as I travel. Patterns and textures come together to stimulate the senses.
*Fujifilm Finepix XP90
5mm f/3.9 1/75 sec.
ISO 100*

Wilson strives to capture that moment in time and share with others the beauty that surrounds him.

THE VIRAL SPIRAL

Billie Holladay
Skelley
Joplin
Community
Silver
Fiction
Sci-Fi

*Written in celebration
of the 200th
anniversary of Mary
Shelley's Frankenstein.
It is a modern tale that
examines how what was
once science fiction is
now science reality.*

*Skelley retired from
nursing and enjoys
focusing on her writing.
Her work has appeared
in various publications
in print and online.*

Sitting at the desk in his office, Dr. James Franklin stared at his hands as if they held the answers. The renowned transplant surgeon had to think. Life had been crazy for the last week at the Urbana Medical Center. All the rules had changed. His world was being destroyed. For days, he'd felt like he was riding a merry-go-round. Moving, but going nowhere. He needed to think.

Slowly joining his palms together and interlacing his fingers, he put his elbows on top of the desk and leaned his forehead over onto his entwined fingers. He took a deep breath. It looked as if he might be about to pray, but he actually was preparing for a mental battle.

Many times, he had assumed this position when he had a problem to solve. Using logical, scientific evaluation, he could weigh multiple factors in a problem and find a solution. Science always holds the key.

Closing his eyes, Dr. Franklin began his cerebral gymnastics.

Mary, my wife and the only love of my life, is exhibiting symptoms.

No. Start at the beginning. All available information must be considered.

Mary, a noted virologist, had traveled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo with fellow virologist, Dr. Al-Shathir, and humanitarian aid worker, Louis Bibeau, to investigate a new virus afflicting residents in a village south of Yambuku. Mary had remained in Yambuku to set up a field lab, while the others traveled to the village.

Twenty-four hours after entering the village, Bibeau became symptomatic: fever, muscle pain, fatigue, and hemorrhaging. Physically, he declined rapidly, but mentally, he remained alert till the end. He died three days later due to blood loss, organ failure, sepsis, and shock.

Dr. Al-Shathir managed to return to Yambuku with fluid and tissue samples from afflicted patients. He'd worked with Mary to set up viral culture tests, but their best guess was that this new pathogen was a mutation of the deadly Ebola virus. Hence, they'd dubbed it Ebola variant 1, or Ebvar. Ebvar differed from Ebola in that it did not seem capable of crossing the blood-brain barrier. Ebvar patients exhibited the same physical symptoms noted in Ebola-infected patients, but they remained mentally unaffected.

In full quarantine, both Dr. Al-Shathir and Mary had returned to the United States. Dr. Al-Shathir died shortly after arriving. His autopsy

revealed a breakdown of all his major organs—the heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys. These organs had basically become “mush.”

Mary had been brought to the Urbana Medical Center and appeared perfectly healthy. Hospital administrators had refused my request to take charge of her care ... deciding instead to appoint Dr. Lucas Kahn as her physician.

When Mary arrived, I'd held her in my arms, and even through the thick, cumbersome, quarantine garments, I could feel her heart beating. My heart had felt like a heavy stone. I still feel like someone is trying to pull it out of my chest.

A tear had fallen from Mary's cheek, and I'd wiped it with my gloved hand. Later, when I'd removed my quarantine gear, I'd held that glove for the longest time because the tear was proof Mary was okay. She knew me, and she still loved me.

Now, twenty-four hours later, Mary is symptomatic. Her kidneys appear to be shutting down. Her liver is starting to fail. I must do something.

“Dr. Franklin, excuse me. Dr. Kahn wants to talk to you about the results of a culture. He's tried several times to reach you.”

Dr. Franklin stared at the nurse who had disrupted his reverie.

“Yes,” he responded. “I'll take care of it.”

As the nurse left, Dr. Franklin resumed his contemplative position.

Think. I can't live without Mary. My head is spinning, but I know what I have to do. It's fate. Why would all the pieces be here if I was not supposed to put them together?

Why would God make me a transplant surgeon if I wasn't supposed to act? Why would he provide my lab with an integrated tissue and organ printing system ... a 3-D printer capable of creating human organs from computer-created digital models? I've already made ears and skin with it. Actual organs, like a heart, have not been approved for use in humans, but they will be. I could easily and quickly make new organs for Mary.

When you think about it, it's almost like it's God's will. I mean if Ebvar infected the brain, anything I could do with the other organs would be for naught because the patient would have brain damage. Ebvar, however, doesn't cross the blood-brain barrier. Mary's brain is fine. She just needs a few new organs to go with it.

The 3-D printer uses human cells to print. Normally, these cells should come from the person who is to receive the new organ—so there are no

rejection issues—but Mary's cells are infected. If I use her cells, the new organs will be doomed to become mush!

Their answer is ... in my cells!

Of course, there will be some rejection problems, but they can be managed with immunosuppressant and anti-rejection drugs.

Think. You know your peers will say you are wrong to act. They'll say you're being unprofessional and unethical. They'll say you're acting like God—deciding who lives and who dies ... but who cares what my fellow physicians think? There's nothing wrong with what I'm proposing.

Transplanting organs is done all the time. Kidney and heart transplants are so common, they rarely even make the news. In fact, there are thousands of people waiting to receive donor organs. Usually, of course, transplantation involves one organ, but there have been multiple organ transplants performed.

Think. When the administrators of the hospital discover I operated on my wife, they will revoke my privileges. I may lose my medical license—but if Mary lives, it will be worth it.

Stop thinking. Act. Everything needed for success is here. Just do it.

Dr. Franklin jerked his head away from his hands. It was almost midnight, but he had his answer. He knew what he had to do. Rising from his chair, he grabbed his lab coat and headed toward his transplant lab.

Once there, he worked efficiently. Cells were made ready for the printer. Images of Mary's organs were obtained. Measurements were taken. Computerized-digital models were created, and printing was started. All in all, it took several hours, but no thinking was necessary. Only action was needed now.

While he waited for the organs to print, Dr. Franklin called the operating room and told them Dr. Kahn wanted Mary prepped for surgery. He also called the blood bank and ordered blood for transfusion. Methodically, he went about his tasks. He flushed the new organs with preservative solution and packed them in sterile ice for transport to the operating room.

Dr. Franklin arrived in the operating room just as Mary was being placed on the operating table. Too weak to speak, Mary thought her husband looked ill. She didn't want to have surgery. Where was everybody? Why didn't someone stop this?

Because of Mary's quarantine status, Dr. Franklin convinced the nurses and orderlies to leave the room. He assured them Dr. Kahn would be arriving shortly to assist him.

When the last nurse left, Dr. Franklin injected Mary with a benzodiazepine for sedation, inserted an endotracheal tube, and attached her to the Sydas anesthesia machine. This device would automatically administer propofol, continually monitor Mary's vital signs, and make certain she was properly anesthetized.

From that point on, Dr. Franklin was on automatic pilot—quickly performing surgical procedures he had done many times before. He had never transplanted four organs at one time—no one had—but it was just a matter of organization and planning.

Hours went by, and the time passed quickly. Dr. Franklin was just placing the last stitch in the patchwork of Mary's incisions, when Dr. Kahn, in full protective gear, entered the operating room.

"My God, Franklin. What have you done?"

"I had to save Mary. She has new organs—a new liver, new heart, new lungs, and new kidneys."

"You're mad. Absolutely mad. Where did you get the organs?"

"I printed them in the lab."

"You know those creations aren't approved for human use. What cell line did you use?"

"I used my cells."

"You're psychotic, Franklin. You've gone

[Continued to 56]



All Hands In

Ryann Rosenbohm
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
3D Art
Ceramics

I chose to do a piece like this because I made it around the time of Halloween and I love Halloween.

Rosenbohm has taken art every year he has been in school. He plans on continuing to do art in college.

[Left]

Atlanta

Latonia Bailey
Neosho
Staff Adviser
B&W Photography

The Mariott in Atlanta features a dramatic floor to ceiling column.

Bailey, adviser since 1994, submits various works for honorary publication.

[Continued from 55]

too far. You've broken every ethical and legal standard I know, and it won't work."

"The organs are of perfect size and proportion. They will work."

"No, you fool. They won't work. Don't you ever answer your messages? I tried to contact you several times yesterday. I got the cultures back that were drawn on you ten hours after Mary returned. You're infected, too. You have the Ebvar virus."

Dr. Franklin's legs weakened beneath him. His face paled as he realized Mary's new organs also would turn to "mush." He wanted to tell Dr. Kahn that he would print more organs, but despair and frustration silenced his voice.

Suddenly, Mary started seizing on the table. Dr. Kahn rushed to her side and started shouting to the nurses in the hall to remove Dr. Franklin from the operating room.

Under Dr. Kahn's care, Mary lived another forty-eight hours. During that time, she experienced agonizing physical pain from her multiple incisions and severe mental anguish due to concern for her husband. Her last breath was a relief for everyone involved in her care.

The medical staff didn't tell Mary that Dr.

[Right]

Double

Makayla Stone
McDonald County
High School
Silver
Digital Art

I originally did the drawing in pen but I wanted to inspire a more dynamic narrative. I added more intense colors with a new pattern.

Stone, a junior, hopes to get a degree in fine arts and become a master printmaker.



Franklin kept trying to pull his heart out of his chest to give it to her or that he kept saying he could print another one.

Observing Dr. Franklin, Dr. Kahn concluded Ebvar must have mutated and now could cross the blood-brain barrier. It must have been altering Dr. Franklin's mental state for days, and during that time, he could have infected many people.

What now?

Dr. Kahn was exhausted, but he needed to think. Retreating to his office, he sat down at his desk, closed his eyes, and took a deep breath.

This virus has the potential to be a real game changer. Humanity could be taken out by this insidious demon that made Dr. Franklin crazy in a few hours. Imagine him trying to keep his wife alive with spare parts! It's all shades of Frankenstein.

Think. Science will get us out of this mess. The answers always come from science.

My head is spinning. I feel like I'm on a merry-go-round ... galloping to nowhere. Think.

Maybe Franklin was right. Perhaps we could create new organs in the lab to save infected patients. Why do we have the scientific ability if we're not supposed to use it? It could ... work. ☺





Posed for Me

Maxwell Heckman
Joplin
Crowder
Gold
Color
Photography

Taken at Disney Land in Florida. This photo was an accident when I was trying to take a picture of its eyes.

Olympus e10 with 12-42mm lens. Aperture 4.5/ISO 300/shutter speed 1/50

Heckman is an art and design major. He hopes to one day be a college professor.



The Sea's Stars

Allie Jackson
McDonald County
High School
Silver
B&W
Photography

When I turned the photo black and white the sea became the night sky and the jellyfish became the stars.

iPhone 5s auto settings

Jackson loves books, music and action movies. She wants to be a photojournalist and see the world.

HIDDEN CRIMES

Alyson Massardo
Monett
High School
Honorable Mention
Fiction
Sci-Fi

I wrote this story because genetic modification really interests me and I thought I could write a cool dystopian story.

Massardo enjoys writing and photography and aspires to be a business manager.

March 10, 2120. Chaos was raining down around me, my eyes straining against the fog of dust. I climbed out of my hiding spot, hissing when the rocks scraped my knee. I had been hiding for hours, waiting for the crowd of people to leave, waiting to find something else to destroy. My life had been like this for almost ten years, and I was only eighteen. This life of hiding, stealing, and caring for Echo and Star had been going on since I could remember. The mayhem began with the close of enhancement centers. The enhancement centers were places that people used to go, to either have their children or themselves genetically modified.

“Cane, over here!” I looked up to the voices of Echo and Star. I walked over to them, staying close to walls. We all huddled around one of the ancient TVs (that normally only play Star Trek reruns), and listened to the broadcast. Tomorrow was election day, the only time of year when people stopped the destruction to pick someone new to lead it. Election day didn’t used to be every year, but after the centers had closed, the leaders were killed or banished once people were bored of them. I glanced over at Star, who sighed. She strode away from the screen, murmuring about how boring election day was. Normally I’d agree, but this time, it felt different. I knew the main person running had to be the cause of it. Hugo Everett—the man who wanted to “fix” the world—was running. The screen flashed white before shutting off.

“Well that was a waste of time,” Echo said, before wandering off behind Star. I thought of following them, but didn’t. I knew that they would yell at me about how stupid elections were.

“That new guy sure knows how to use people, with promises of a better world that will ever happen,” Mr. Jones said. The annoyance in his voice was clear. Mr. Jones always told stories of before, days that I can barely remember.

Election Day came, and I was terrified. Hugo Everett was a fierce supporter of keeping the world free of genetic engineering and enhancements, something that helped keep me and my friends alive. When we were born, I couldn’t walk, Echo couldn’t hear, and Star couldn’t see. Now, the three of us huddled

together, trying to keep our heads down while waiting in line to vote.

“How in the world is he going to fix anything? There’s barely anything left to fix!” Star snapped, rolling her eyes. We got to the front of the line and made our votes. Before heading towards one of our refuges to wait for the results. I prayed Hugo won’t win. His comments about “ridding” Jericho City of everything involving genetic enhancements, including people with said enhancements, were very concerning. Not in a mass murder way, but by undoing the enhancements.

“Citizens of Jericho City, the results of today’s election are in. The winner is...Mr. Hugo Everett! Congratulations to our new leader, Mr. Everett!” The voice of Mrs. Wilson, the city’s prominent newscaster, echoed from the speakers. Cheers could be heard in the distance. I looked at Star and Echo, and I could tell from their eyes that they felt the same as I did.

“Guys...This is really bad,” I whispered to them, “We have to find either some way to stop this, or to run...” They both nodded in agreement.

“We could always see if we can escape to one of the fishing communities and catch a boat to somewhere far away,” Echo offered with a shrug.

“If we did that, we’d be caught by police, or eaten by a forest animal,” Star replied, “But we could always demand a change by protesting! I mean, we saw how well some of those worked in the past.” We went silent, trying to come up with ways to escape the inevitable. We stayed like that for a long time, all having ideas, but no one wanting to voice them. Night rolled in, and we started sharing the stories of things we remember from Before. Stories of happy times we hoped to get back, but knew that we couldn’t. When morning came, all we could hear was sirens.

“Citizens of Jericho City, your attention please. We have reopened the centers for the next twenty-four hours. If you have any form of genetic enhancement, please go to your nearest center to have it removed. Once again, please go to your nearest center to have it removed.”

“Guys, we have to make a decision now. It’s either we run, or we die,” I say, the fear in all of our faces clear. We quickly packed everything we needed out of the hideout, and began

creeping along the walls. We were all moving as quietly as possible, our hearts pounding. Getting caught trying to escape an order from the leader normally results in death. In this case, getting caught means going back to being in constant pain and having human abilities you've come to rely on stripped away from you. I felt Star grab my hand, while Echo grabbed the other. We formed a chain, making sure we don't lose each other. Our pace slowed every time we passed a cop, until one of them noticed us.

"HEY! You three! You need to report to G-E Center D now." One of the newer recruits--Officer Maines--said. We all nodded, walking until we felt far enough away, before taking off sprinting. But we weren't as far as we thought...

"HEY! GET BACK HERE!" All we could hear was Maines shouting as he and others started chasing us. We ran as fast as we could, our footsteps thundering down the paths, our hearts beating to the same rhythm of the chase. We made it to the edge of the city, only to find ourselves surrounded.

"Well, well, well. If it isn't a trio of misfits, all given up by their parents, even after being fixed by genetic enhancements," Hugo said, his voice full of mock pity and disgust, *"You've got nowhere to run, just come with me and let us restore you to your natural state."*

"NEVER! We will NEVER go with you." The three of us yelled in unison, slowly backing away from him. He growled and yelled for his troops to grab us. As they closed in, we broke apart and ducked around them, running into the woods. We ran as if our lives depended on it... probably because they did. I took off straight, giving Star and Echo time to run away. Their drumming footsteps, my heartbeat thumping. It was getting harder to differentiate the two. I kept running until I found it—the spot in the forest where we built the hideaway.

"Cane, get down here!" Star hissed at me from underneath the leaf roofing of the underground shelter. I started to climb, and as soon as I was down, I heard cops yelling. We waited them out, and finally we decided it was safe enough to talk. I turned around to look at them, and noticed Echo bleeding.

"ECHO, WHAT HAPPENED?!" I whisper-yelled at her, starting to freak out.

"I tripped on one of the tree roots, and after I got up, one of the officers tranquilizer pellets grazed my leg." She said, trying to dig around for a first aid kit. I helped her bandage her leg up after she found it.

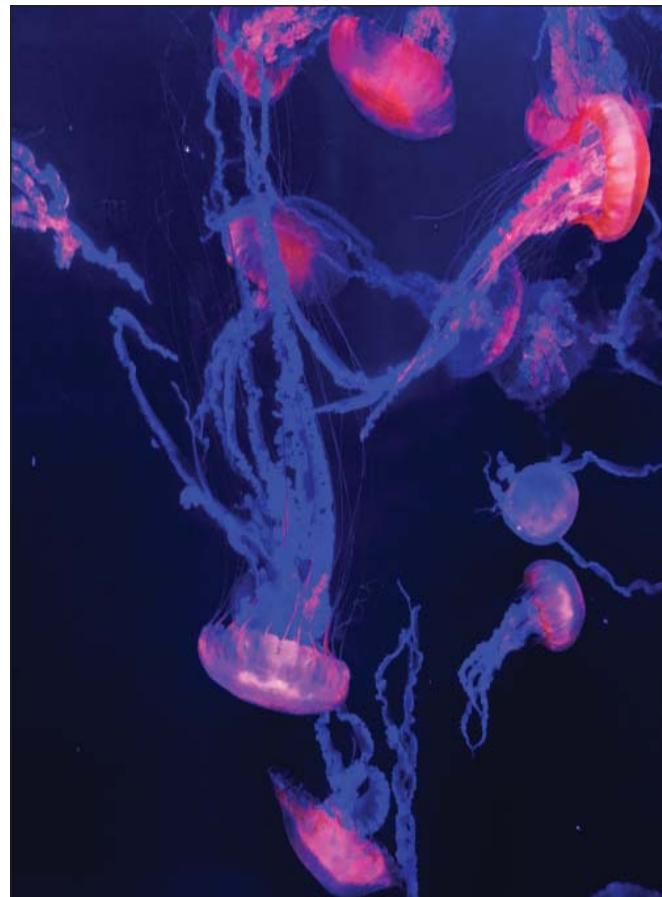
"I think we should all try to get some sleep," I said, pulling out the sleeping bags.

Cold. Cold was the first thing I felt when I awoke. I sat up, my head pounding. *'Where am I?'* was the first thought running through my head. I looked around and only saw gray walls. Prison walls.

"Where am I?!" I yell out loud, standing up out of the crappy plastic bed I was in, *"Why am I here?!"*

"You, Cane Williams, are in holding cell 2034. You're being held here for committing crimes against the capitol." An automated voice said.

"What crime?" I yelled back, but I knew what crime. Breaking a law and a refusing a direct order from the leader are the two biggest crimes in Jericho City. ☀



Intense Jelly

Maegen Lightner
Neosho
Staff
Digital Art

I took this at an aquarium and I fell in love with the blue of the jellyfish, so I decided to take it into Photoshop and intensify the colors. Taken with a Sony camera, Photoshop used to alter curves and exposure.

Lightner is a full time student pursuing her dream of becoming a professional photographer.

RED, RED, RED

Olive Thompson
Joplin
Community
Gold
Fiction
Short Story

*The piece came
about after
reading Vonnegut's
Slaughterhouse Five.*

*Thompson is a poet
and photographer.
She attends Drury
University and hopes
to one day write for a
major newspaper and
own her own business.*

A short reflection on the nature of bobbleheads, middle school dissections, and the perpetually insignificant quest for the meaning of human existence on this planet.

When Charlotte was little, she had a collection of assorted plastic figurines. While dinosaurs and horses made up the largest part of the population on her shelf, she also had a certain fond place for bobbleheads. She thought they were funny, their oversized craniums toggling back and forth on a cheap metal spring. Their expressions were ridiculous. Some were grinning ear to ear, others looking surprised or simply stupid. Baseball players, jockeys, presidents, musicians—none were immune to becoming a bobblehead. With just the flick of a finger, these figurines could be animate. They came alive, agreeing, saying *yes yes yes*.

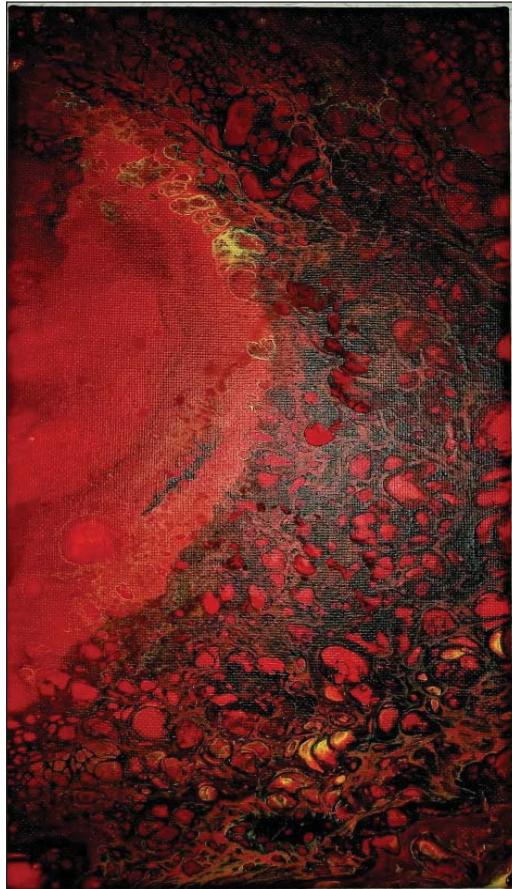
Whatever Charlotte asked them, they would affirm. Examples of these interviews went like this—

Lava Flow

Michelle Kleinbak
Neosho
Community
Bronze
2D Media
Acrylic Paint

*I chose these colors
because I was trying to
create a fiery painting.*

*Kleinbak took art
classes in school. She
enjoys experimenting
with different art
techniques.*



Should I study for my final exam? *Yes, yes, yes.*

Should I practice my violin tonight? *Yes, yes, yes.*

Will I get married and have a family? *Yes, yes, yes.*

Will I watch a man die?

Yes, yes, yes.

Fifth grade was Charlotte's favorite grade. She was just old enough to think critically but still young enough to think very little. She wore her dirty-blonde hair in two pigtails. The hair elastics used to keep the braids in very rarely matched colors. She often wore cowboy boots. She had a gap in her teeth wide enough to fit a straw through. She was not pretty, but she wasn't trying to be. Charlotte liked science.

Charlotte liked science so much, in fact, that she dreaded nearly every other class. She especially hated math. Her science teacher, Mrs. Atnip, was something out of *The Magic School Bus*. She taught her students things fifth graders ought to learn in the fifth grade—things like 'how to change a tire' and 'the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell' and 'dissection of a fish.'

Charlotte, while an avid science enthusiast, was unsure of her feelings on dissection day. Particularly because, instead of ordering prepared specimen from a science supply center, Mrs. Atnip took more of an organic approach. The school district had cut funding anyway. She did not see any sense in teaching fifth graders the systems of the body with specimens that had formaldehyde pumped through their veins in place of blood, and had been sterilized and frozen. Those stiff corpses were merely caricatures, yellow-tinted, wrinkled-skin mannequins of the real thing. Mrs. Atnip hated phonies.

So when Charlotte's beloved teacher removed a bloodied Walmart bag from a red cooler, the class was only partially shocked. Mrs. Atnip was an independent woman, always taking matters into her own hands. She knew enough about fishing to know that she didn't have to pay for a specimen; she had a perfectly good Rainbow Trout right there.

The class gathered around the small, white plastic folding table. The boys got extra

close-up. Mrs. Atnip, wearing gloves, made incisions along the belly. Scales peeled off, skin flayed back. It wasn't a pretty dissection (if such a thing exists). It was like carving a pumpkin. Unlike those well-preserved specimens, the fish still had blood. The blood began exiting the body with every Exacto-knife cut. Charlotte saw red, red, red.

Some students passed out. Charlotte did not. She watched, transfixed, the earthy, metallic scent of fish and the iron scent of blood mixing with the Fresh Linen Febreze that a student sprayed in vain. Mrs. Atnip explained the ways that the nervous system worked. The nervous system was like a delicate, feeling, spiderweb. The circulatory system was the thing that was emptying out fluids onto the metal tray. The reproductive system was a system that students would learn about next semester in a special presentation.

Charlotte did not want to watch, but she could barely look away. She caught the eye of the fish in the paper diagram. The fish was whole. He was a rainbow trout, just like the scientific sacrifice. His mouth was open. He was grinning the stupid wet grin that fish have. He was showing Charlotte all of the bones of his skeleton, the calcium-rich frame that let him swim and eat and mate and bask in the sun and exist. Rainbow Trout was proud of his skeleton. He wanted to keep it intact.

Charlotte looked up. Mrs. Atnip had severed part of this skeleton, freeing the head from the body. She was wearing it on her hand like a puppet. Her thumb was the bottom jaw and the rest of her fingers the top. She was talking in a silly voice, moving the fish's mouth like a ventriloquist. Blood ran down her wrist. The students laughed. The fish was talking. The fish's head was a hand puppet.

Charlotte saw red, red, red.

The fish's flat eyeball fell out and plopped on the table like a coin. It bounced once or twice. The trout's skull had a missing socket. *Fish don't have eyelids*, Mrs. Atnip explained. She picked up the eye, and tried in vain to put it back in the hole. There was a squelching sound. It stuck for a second, and then fell again. It bounced right off the table, and onto a girl's shoe.

The girl vomited. Another girl vomited because that girl vomited.

It is what it is.

Many years and moments later, Charlotte was eighteen. She had dyed her dirty blonde



Happiness

Bri Murphy
Monett
Crowder
Gold
2D Media
Oil Paints

I painted this during a finger painting competition; the prompt was to "paint something that makes you happy."

Murphy is in the pursuit of a degree in art & design. She hopes to be an art educator.

hair to a light shade of red, gotten braces, learned how to paint ornate angled lines on her eyelids and how to coat her lashes in black and her lips dripping in red. She wondered when someone would appreciate all of this artistry, performed painstakingly each day before 5:30 A.M..

Nevertheless, Charlotte was bored on this mundane drive down Campbell Avenue. Her car creaked like an ancient red giant, groaning. The drive to college required only a single turn in the road, and she felt as though she'd driven it a million times. She was barely paying attention, listening to some bluegrass song she only vaguely liked. The morning was a foggy haze cast over her; the hours were a veil wearing heavy on her eyes.

As Charlotte swam in and out of her consciousness, she heard the ambulance. She was irritated. *How dare a human health emergency disrupt her morning commute?* She realized that it was behind her, desperately trying to push past traffic that had seemingly come to a standstill.

When she first saw the black car at an awkward angle in the turning lane, she felt annoyed. Some idiot had tried to turn and gotten stuck. She watched then as the ambulance approached, and she was forced onto the shoulder of the road. The paramedics did not run when they got out. There was a girl, not much older than Charlotte, standing in polka dot tights and a white skirt and blouse. She looked innocent. She was crying into her hands, shaking. Her car

looked mangled, and its front tire appeared beyond repair. It was as unrecognizable as the Rainbow Trout that Mrs. Attnip had flayed into strips of bloody despair in the name of fifth grade Life Science. It is what it is.

As the paramedics approached the car with an orange plastic spine board, Charlotte realized that the twisted metal at the front left fender was not the tire of the girl's Nissan. It was a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, but barely discernible as such. The body of the rider of this piece of scrap metal was lodged partially beneath the car. That is why the paramedics were not running—the man was dead. Obviously. It is what it is.

Charlotte felt the horror come back up her throat. The asphalt was dark and slick around him. She did not want to watch, but stuck on the shoulder of the road, she had no option in her mind. The paramedic tried to remove the helmet of the man. There was a ghastly sucking sound, and the early morning light shone through. The man's head, merely attached by one red jugular vein, nearly came with the helmet in one piece. It was not a pretty incision; it was like a carved pumpkin. The severed neck gave a wet, grisly grin in

Charlotte's direction.

Another paramedic brought a bag and a tarp. The girl driver was hysterical. She was now a *murderer, committer of vehicular manslaughter* when seconds before she had merely been *driver, student, single mother*.

The paramedic started to cover the body. In a few mere seconds, the man had been reduced from *motorcyclist* to *victim* to *body*. He was a loss, a statistic, a tragedy. The morning local news would call him a traffic fatality; the big news stations would call him typical, they would have far more interesting and significant tragedies to report. His family would call him a heartbreak, a missing piece, a loved one, a caring-friend-to-many-involved-in-his-local-church. Of the things the universe could call him, he was not much more than a fiber in the stitch of the fabric of time. He was *something*, he was someone.

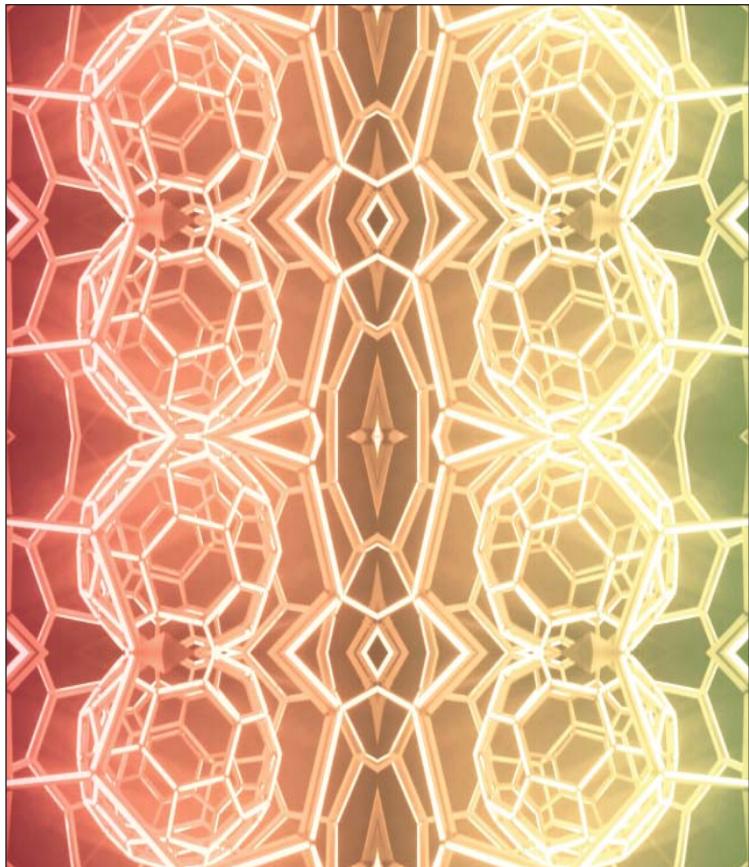
Charlotte began to think linearly. She thought of her childhood shelf. She thought of Rainbow Trout and the circulatory system and the nervous system that was a delicate, feeling, spiderweb. She thought of bobbleheads agreeing, their heads toggling on a spring. Charlotte saw red, red, red. ☙

Conglomeration of the Mind

Autumn Hottinger
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
Digital Art

My inspiration for this piece is stress. This is a representation of my mind when I'm stressed.

Hottinger is a drum major. She hopes to earn her degree in Pre-Med.



THE ARTIST

The world is screaming. A baby is abandoned, wailing in its pram. The bakery is in rubble, the smell reminiscent of a burnt bagel. The library is on fire. There is no order to the chaos. In the distance, airplane propellers can be heard, cutting into the onyx air. The town is holding its breath. Mothers are looking into their children's eyes for the last time, trying to remember the exact color. A hundred miles away, an artist is crying, unable to comprehend what is happening. Instead, he picks up a brush, and begins to paint the world screaming.

His brush bristles across the page. The squiggles turn into contorted human screams. The strokes illustrate the graveyard of empty houses and destroyed buildings. To finish it off, a few tears land on the canvas, forever staining its horror with sorrow. The artist's canvas shakes as the bombs drop, making the undried paint mix together into a polychromatic blur.

The screams become whispers. The fear becomes indignation. The world becomes silent. Education is destructive. Every piece of

knowledge is a loaded gun against a person's temple. Then suddenly, it becomes quiet again. The sun still rises after Armageddon.

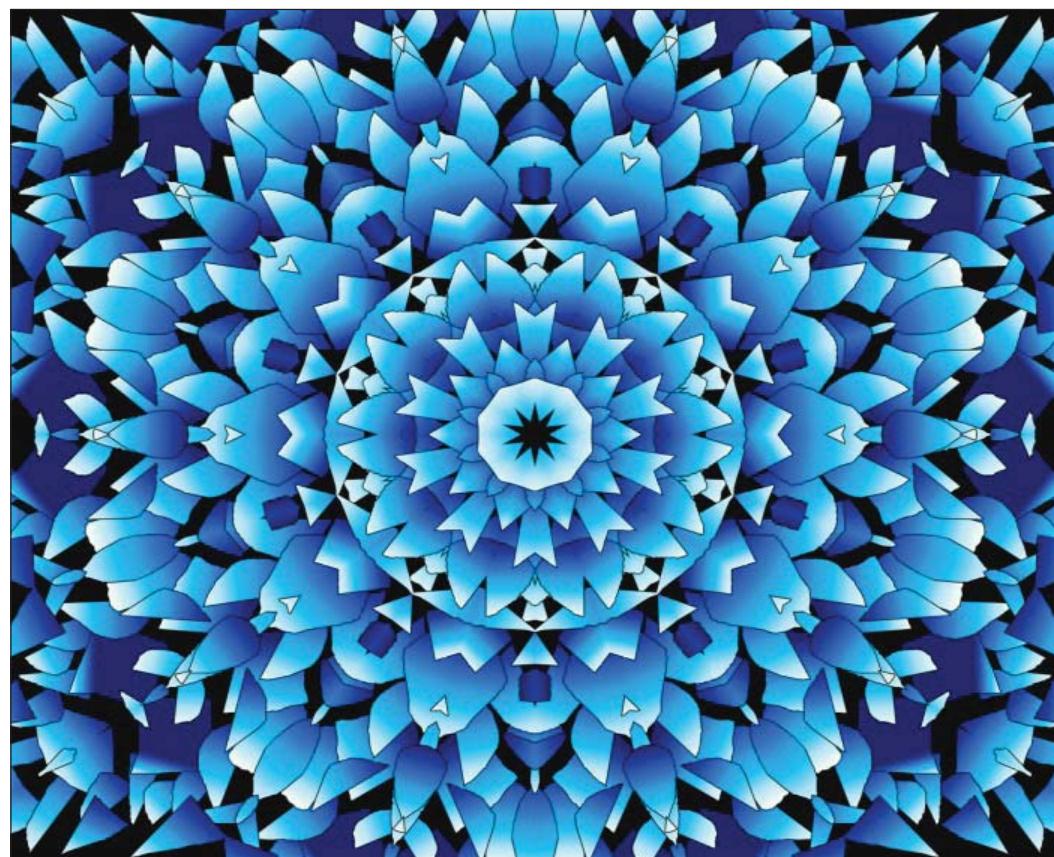
The painting is admired for its technique, its ingenious imagery, but the screams are forgotten. The artist still cries, each painting becomes more of a mesh of agony and frustration. His paint jars are almost empty.

The mothers do not remember their children's eye colors. The books in the library are nothing more than fuel to the flames. The bakery is flattened, like an over baked souffle. The land is empty, screamless. Soon, new bakeries, and new libraries will fill the town. New mothers will hold their children's hands and look into their eyes, not caring about the color. Everything will begin again, except for the artist. His ears will never forget the spin of airplane propellers. His nose will never forget the sooty smell of burnt bread. His memory will never let go of the world screaming, and that he could do nothing to stop it. The artist will sigh, knowing he needs to get used to it, for an artist never has control of their creation forever. ☺

Autumn Shelton
Lamar High School
Bronze
Fiction
Short story

I wrote this short story after seeing Picasso's "Guernica".

Shelton is a junior in high school.



Ice Crystals

John Baty Jr.
Monett
Community
Gold
Digital Art

I like the color, the beauty, and the complexity. And most of all I never get tired of looking at it.

One of the things Baty likes about digital art is having a blank screen in front of him and asking himself "Where do I start?" Using the tools of the software, his imagination is free to reach as far as it can.

Zebra

Kyndal Channel
Carl Junction
High School
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Gun Powder

I saw a video of a man making a deer out of gunpowder and decided to try it.

Channel, a junior, uses art as her escape. She enjoys anything related to art.



Cows of a Different Color

Skylar Howe
Neosho
Crowder
Silver
2D Media
Alcohol Ink on Tile

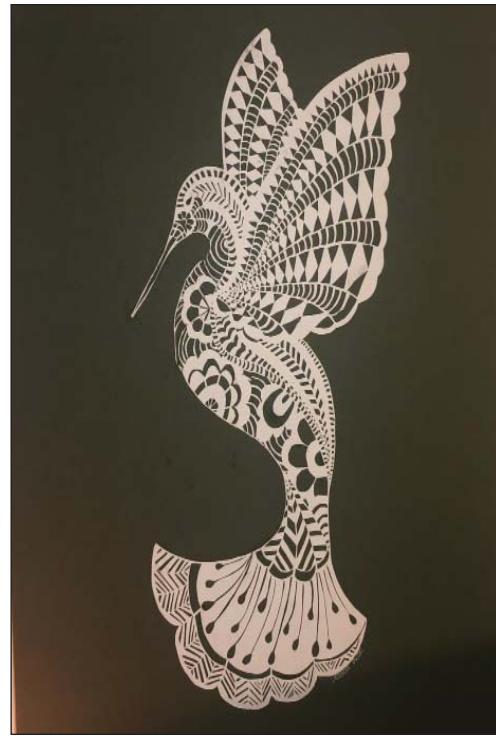
What can I say, I love cows!

Howe hopes to become an art teacher. Her main focus is to inspire kids to try new experiences and believe in themselves, try something new.





Inspired by Limarc's water color owl. I challenged myself with colored pencil.
Lamar, a Neosho graduate, she earned her teaching degree and is a mother of two boys.



I created this piece for my mom. I wanted to give her something she could put up in our house after moving.
King, a junior, enjoys volunteering for the community and participating in extracurricular activities.



[Left] Horned Owl

Chelsie Lamar
Monett
Community
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Colored Pencil/
Watercolor

[Right] Humming- bird

Ryan King
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Paper Etching

Exotic Beauty

Saige Bennett
McDonald
County High
School
Bronze
2D Media
Colored Pencil

This was my first piece made by colored pencils. I really enjoy using this medium.

Bennett, a senior, loves taking photos and creating pieces she can call her own.

SKY OF BOYHOOD

Haixiao Qin
Neosho
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Nonfiction
Essay

I hope my story can encourage parents to listen to their kids, and find the bridge to their world.

Qin is an international student from North China. He is planning to conduct comparative culture study in the future.

On a winter night in 1989, dad rode a bicycle and took my mother and I to our new residence. At this point, the earth had fallen to sleep; the night was extreme quiet. Dad was very tired, but his breath was full of delight. We arrived in a small town enclosed with walls. The doorman opened the gate and we continued to get to the innermost yard. Dad opened one of the townhouses that belonged to us and we got in. My room was small and cozy, and I found my bookcase already filled with my favorite books. Later I got to know the town was Xinyuan Farm, located by a grove five kilometers from Xinyuan County. The field surrounding the town was boundless. In summer, the channels with clear water would go through the vast field and nourish the corn leaves into oily green. An orchard and a piece of watermelon field were hidden in the farther woods; dairy farms, milk powder factories and grain-sunning ground scattered in the vicinity.

It didn't take long for me to like the life here. For a few days, I had acquainted a bunch of kids of my age, the age of playing with dirt. We built a factory, letting the rough sand filtered through a screen between brick layers and become fine sand. Some kids brought brick trucks to "buy" sand. After the factory manager put sand on the "trucks", these drivers drove the bricks somewhere, leaving long scratches behind. We learned to dig a small cave on a little dirt hill, opened a hole at the top of the cave and covered a piece of paper there. This was our missile launching station. We sealed the cave opening with soil, and slammed into the cave using a fist, and the paper was launched up by the compressed air. Sometimes we played hide and seek. We'd hidden in all the places we could. One day, we didn't find a boy, and everyone was so frustrated and went home. The next day, the boy told us that when he was hiding, he felt hungry, so he went home to eat. After that we came to an agreement that no one can ever hide himself at home or leave without noticing the others.

In summer, we adventured to the channels and fields, climbing over walls to steal watermelons and tomatoes, or attacked a bee

hive and ended up with so many stings. Girls liked outdoors too, but their favorite game was always a peaceful one, Playing House. They liked to play the episode that we just watched from TV the night before. Boys were reluctant to join in but failed to resist the girls' request. However, there was a character the boys all yearned to play. The story of last night's Dinosaur Corps Koseidon aroused our passion.

"Maori dropped from the airplane and was caught by the alien army, Godmess will kill him."

"Relax, Koseidon will rescue him very soon. Cause Aman the robot has found the alien's base." When we began to act it, everybody wanted to be Koseidon. If someone fortunately got the role, he would do some iconic motion of Koseidon, and fight with the Godmess' alien soldiers. We played around until a bunch of bugs hovered overhead.

"Hey, there is a toad in this cellar."

"Hey, there is a toad in this cellar." One day after school, I went out and the girls told me that. I didn't see it. They promised that they saw it and it was tremendous. I went down into the cellar to check it out and show my bravery. The girls looked at me worriedly and reminded me to be careful. When I saw the big, ugly toad, I was startled, and quickly climbed up out. I found that girls saw me in an admiring manner. The talking about dangerous animals went on.

"Do you know, you must not kill a snake. Because even if the snake is cut off, it will recover. The snake can find your home and revenge."

"Yes. Ah, last year we killed a snake in the woods, and then we passed over there again and found that the snake was gone."

Our conversation was full of fantasy and exaggeration, and we had infinite energy, so we moved from here to there, kept chasing and shouting, and never got tired. We heard the air flow through ears, and our high voice coming out of the body. Is that my voice? The loud, shrill voice with excitement and wild strength? We totally forgot about the time, the space and ourselves. It is the pure happiness of the golden age.

Not long after, my mother got a job in a

bigger city. She said there were better schools for me. I was taken. I entered a different environment, where tall buildings replaced trees, and people spoke another dialect instead of Mandarin. We lived in a single room rented by my mother; the furniture was old and lame, the earthy gray walls frustrating. My mother's job was a boiler worker, and her work place was next to our apartment. I felt that I was not welcomed. The children here were very polite to adults and always called them in honor. And I called their names directly. People thought that I was a poor-educated child. The school I attended was far from home. Mother sent me to school by bike, and I returned home on foot. In the hot summer, there were dozens of people in our classroom. I was assigned in the last row though I was short. The teacher was screaming at the distant lecture table, and most students slouched in their seats.

No joy playing with the children here. I felt a great nostalgia. Always missing the past life, and immersing in my own world, I became silent and sorrowful. My negativity raised people's contempt on me, and no one cared about me.

One year later, it was another summer vacation. My parents took me to my paternal grandpa's, and then to my maternal grandma's.

It seemed that they didn't like their own home. I had no smile at my grandma's place and that drew my caring grandma's attention. She brought me my favorite candy, and I shook my head. How happy was I before! And now I just can't be happy again. I asked the question to my parents in my heart, "Why don't you want to go back to our own home?"

Finally, in the last few days of the summer, they decided to go back to the farm! It was like a dream!

Dad was riding a bicycle, and I sat on the front beam. We crossed a railway and slid downhill. Then came through a bridge and passed by a grove. Aspen trees stood upright in parallels; when my sight went across them a sort of rhythm came out. In the neighboring village, I saw the slogan reading, "A couple with one child is good" on the wall. After that, we passed by a hill and entered the boundary of Xinyuan Farm. I saw the clean paved road, the neat houses, and then we were in the innermost courtyard.

As soon as I entered the yard, I heard kids shouting: "Xiao Yu---! Xiaoyu is back." I jumped off from the bike bar immediately. Hadn't seen them for one year. Their faces all changed a bit but not too much. They

[Continued to 68]



Eagle Eye

Nicole Kost
Diamond
High School
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Graphite Drawing

I really find the eyes of eagles appealing. I like being able to give life to an animal through drawing.

Kost enjoys drawing animals. She plans to pursue art after high school.

[Continued from 67]

surrounded me, asking me so many questions, and I answered quickly. I asked them to go on with their game and let me in. It was so fun to be with them, no matter what we were doing. The day was darker and darker, and the sky was dyed into ink-blue in the vault, and the moon rose from between tree branches. Our voice sounded like wind chimes that rang through the darkness, turning the night into a hotbed. No one was willing to go home.

I realized that life here was my true life, but I can't own it anymore. This kind of

consciousness made me cherish the moment even more. My companions were innocent, happy, and ecstatic, but I had gained a little maturity. After this visit, I never returned to the farm. My way was doomed to following success and all the modern convenience unwillingly, and I believe my fellows have been living a more natural and simple life, probably very common and unnoticeable. But even though I have experienced so much advanced urban life, the ink-blue sky of my boyhood farm is the only unforgettable scene in my heart. ☺

Senior Laila

Debra Lucas-Wolfe
Joplin
Crowder
Silver
B&W Photography

*I took this photo for my
Photography class.*

*I used Photoshop in
order to black out
everything around Laila*



Lazy Days

Samantha Thompson
Seneca
Crowder
Honorable Mention
Color Photography

*I encountered this groundhog
relaxing on a rock in Yellowstone
Park.*

Samsung S8 Selective Focus

*Thompson is a special education
teacher. Her hobby is photography.*



THE MUCH-TOO CURIOUS CAT

Ferdinand was a cat who liked the finer things in life, a very long nap and full bowl of food... and often a nap in the sunshine after eating a full bowl of food. Beyond sleeping and eating, Ferdinand was known for his curiosity.

Living with the Mom, Dad, Boy and Girl, Ferdinand had a comfortable life. He liked Mom because she was the one that fed him and protected him from the Boy. The Boy liked having a cat so much that he tried to teach Ferdinand to shake hands, would kiss him and was commonly found trying to ride poor Ferdinand like a horse. The Girl was better, a little better. She would help Mom feed Ferdinand and was generally nice to him, giving him lots of pets and cuddles. But once she dressed Ferdinand up like a princess, and he's never forgotten that ordeal. The Dad was the fun one, which meant that he often would drag a ribbon for Ferdinand to chase, but then he often encouraged the Boy to play with him too. Ferdinand did not like being encouraged to play with the loud, sticky Boy.

When the family was too much, or when they were gone and he was bored, Ferdinand would get curious. The first time he was curious was when he wanted to know what was hiding behind the spare room door. Inside the spare room he found a wonderful old desk sitting in a sunbeam. When he curled up on the desk, not only was he warm and comfortable, Ferdinand could look outside and watch the squirrels running through the trees. It was really a perfect place to be. That is until the wind blew hard and pulled the spare room's door shut. Try as he may, Ferdinand was stuck in that room until his family came home to free him. Once free, he went straight to his food bowl for comfort.

Once when the Boy and the Girl were playing, Ferdinand was curious about a large box. It sat fascinatingly on the floor near the Boy. Deciding to see what was in the box, Ferdinand crept closer and jumped in. He landed on a pile of toy trains and railroad tracks. Of course, he didn't lose his balance at all, he'd have you know. But, before he could explore further, the Boy closed the lid of the box and trapped him inside. Unlike being trapped in the spare room, Ferdinand was quickly freed by the Mom. She spoke harshly to the Boy, who apologized by petting Ferdinand roughly and giving the cat a hug. Like most

cats, Ferdinand did not appreciate hugs. He needed a thorough cleaning after that encounter, and found a quiet place on the end of the couch where he groomed every inch of himself.

Ferdinand's most delicious curiosity was on the Boy's birthday. Mom had fed Ferdinand, and like usual, it wasn't enough to fill his kitty cat tummy. In the kitchen were many colorful displays on the countertops. Ferdinand leapt onto the slippery countertop and found many items to delight this old cat. He decided to sample something round and bright blue. One lick, and the sweet gratification ignited his taste buds. The world around him disappeared as he took bite after bite of that sweet, blue delight. He only stopped when he was interrupted by a blast of water to his ear, and then another to his forehead. The Mom was yelling and waving her hands as she brandished the evil water spray bottle. Ferdinand fled quickly, landing with a loud thump as his heavy girth hit the kitchen floor. The birthday party continued without Ferdinand, who'd gone to take a nap in a sunbeam and have sweet dreams about this most recent curiosity.

One night the Mom and Dad left their bedroom door open. Ferdinand was not allowed in this bedroom, but he had snuck in before and found the best sleeping place in the world. The bed was soft, and the comforter was thick, and there was so much space to move around. He absolutely loved this bed. He even forgave the squeals and splashes coming from the Boy through the doorway. His joy turned to utter frustration and annoyance when the boy came running into the room with a towel flapping

[Continued to 70]

**Annie Smith
Monett
Community
Honorable Mention
Fiction
Short Story**

This story was inspired by my own cats. It is also a story my children could enjoy.

Smith spends her days chasing after her two lovely young children and teaching a theatre class at Crowder's Cassville campus.



Starry Eyes

**Braden Bare
Homeschool
Honorable Mention
Color Photography**

*I wanted to capture some sort of magic with this photo.
Canon Rebel T5
Edited in Lightroom*

Bare is pursuing a career in photography.

[Continued from 69]

around him and dripping with, he hates to think of it, water. All it took was another of the Boy's hugs to make Ferdinand re-think his need to explore the Mom and Dad's bedroom again.

Of course, there were other curiosities for Ferdinand to discover. The long string hanging from the blinds was an enjoyable toy. That was until he heard a snap and the whole set of blinds came crashing down on his head. The rocking chair in the Girl's bedroom was fascinating, but one can guess what peril befalls a cat and a rocking chair. Ferdinand's tail ached for days after that curiosity. The Boy has a small trampoline in the toy room where he likes to bounce endlessly. Ferdinand was curious what it would be like to nap on the trampoline. It was joyous, until the Boy decided he wanted to bounce. That was a rude awakening.

With the Boy and the Girl there were always toys to explore and recently discarded, but still warm pajamas to curl up on. Ferdinand kept busy with his curiosities in his home. That is until his most grievous curiosity...

This curiosity was the most curious of all. One night, Ferdinand encountered a new neighborhood cat. On his regular, post-dinner prowl Ferdinand came upon another cat, this one black and white with a very bushy tail. Being a gentleman cat, Ferdinand decided to befriend this stranger. Only when he approached with a friendly meow, he was met with a lift of that bushy tail and a spray to his face.

Oh, horror of horrors! The smell was atrocious. He couldn't think straight with the aroma and the feel of the putrid fluid seeping into his fur. Ferdinand ran to his house and yowled at the door. The Boy opened it, and Ferdinand ran inside to escape this discourteous cat. He only wanted to find a quiet, soft corner where he could start cleaning himself, but the

Cat

Madelin Sanchez
Stotts City
Staff
2D Media
Scratchboard

This type of project takes lots of time, especially when trying to get all the detail in the fur.

Sanchez is majoring in photography. She hopes to one day be able to start her own photography business.



smell, the odor was so offensive that he couldn't keep his kitty cat mind thinking straight. He looked around the room and knew he would only find comfort on the desk the spare room. But the Boy began to chase him and squeal. Ferdinand ran for the spare room, only to collide with the Dad. The Dad emitted a sound of disgust and covered his nose with his arm.

Being a usually well-kept cat, Ferdinand was embarrassed to be treated so. He took off in a new direction, trying to find a place of solace. The Dad chased him while the Boy laughed and cheered. At his size, Ferdinand was not a quick-moving cat, and he was soon overtaken by the Dad.

Ferdinand was embarrassed and offended when the Dad hauled him into the bathroom and shut the door. Once the door was shut, Ferdinand was curious what would happen. Actually, he was curious and a little frightened, so he began to look for a way out as he meowed for the Mom to come and rescue him yet again.

His cries for help drowned out the sound of the Dad filling the bathtub. He continued to protest as the Dad picked him up at arm's length and plunged him into the soapy bathtub. Now, Ferdinand had been curious before about the bathtub, and even took a nap or two in it while the family was away, but he had absolutely no idea whatsoever why they would fill it with water nor why they would think a cat would want to be in it. His curiosity fled quickly as he yowled louder and tried to reach out with his claws to grab on to anything in the slippery, wet tub. His paw and claws caught the Dad's arm, leaving the Dad to yell words he'd never heard before. He continued to fight with every ounce of energy he had. Why didn't the Mom come and save him?

After some time, the Dad began to rub something into Ferdinand's wet fur. And while he thoroughly detested being this wet, the

rubbing on his body felt nice, and the smell of that stinky cat was starting to fade. He fought less. He let the Dad wash him clean as he spoke soft words to him. So, this is how the family cleans themselves? This is very curious indeed. Ferdinand was elated to be wrapped up in a dry towel. The Dad rubbed Ferdinand's fur with the towel, drying out the water from the horrible bath. Ferdinand relaxed and let the Dad do his work, and maybe, just maybe, a purr escaped from deep

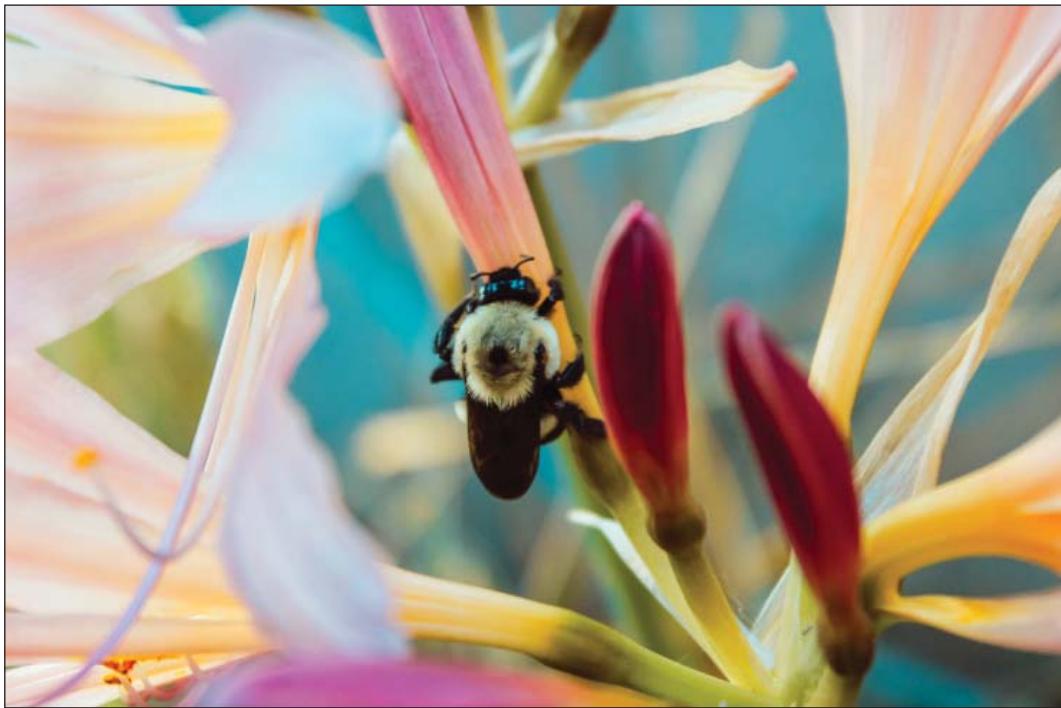


Daisies

Lillia Monroe
Homeschool
Gold
Color Photography

*This was my project last summer while the daisies were blooming.
ZTE Axon 7 Mini*

Lillia is an advanced violinist, an avid birdwatcher, and an aspiring fiction author.



Busy Bee

Madelin Sanchez
Stotts City
Staff
Color Photography

I noticed these flowers in my yard. I saw this bee climbing on them.

Sanchez is majoring in photography. She hopes to one day be able to start her own photography business.

inside him.

After the unfortunate encounter with the new neighbor cat, and the experience of the bath, Ferdinand took a very long time to groom himself and clear out any remaining drops of water that had invaded his person. And after that day, Ferdinand was much less curious and

much less trouble to the family. And as he laid next to the Girl while she read books before bed time, he thought that maybe his curious days were behind him.

That is, until he saw the Mom put a paper bag on the kitchen table. Surely, it wouldn't hurt to take a little peek, would it? ☺

CHRONIC YOUTH

Leandra Toomooth
Anderson
Community
Silver
Nonfiction
Personal Essay

As a high school teacher, I find it eerily strange how different and yet how very much the same, life is for teachers (as I identify now) and the students they teach (as I once identified).

Toomooth is a high school English teacher in McDonald County. She is currently working on an anthology of poetry and a debut novel.

As a high school teacher, I am stuck in a perpetual state of adolescence. I walk the halls of my school and am constantly reminded of my own experiences as a teen. The corner of the hallway, where the kids do not think we see them, dubbed “Lover’s Lane”, is the same place that my high school boyfriend and I would steal kisses between classes, counting down the minutes until the next escapade. The ladies’ room, where even as a teacher I have to fight to find an empty stall and often am privy to conversations I would rather not hear, is the same bathroom in which I cried after that same boyfriend and I broke up. The cafeteria, never to stray from tradition, still serves chicken patties every Wednesday without fail.

And, believe it or not, the teachers have remained the same too. These teachers, now my colleagues, are those teachers who, only then, appeared much older than I ever assumed I would be.

The coach who doubles as a Social Studies teacher who replaces instruction with overused and overvalued documentaries. The sad middle-aged teacher who disguises her own unhappiness by trying to be every students’ “friend” in an attempt to appear more cool and hip and fun than her real age could allow. The young male teacher that all the pubescent girls swoon over and whose name marks the empty spaces of their notebooks.

All the stereotypes are present now as they were then.

And the kids are no different.

In fact, there are times in which I forget I am staring at a student in my class and not at a former classmate. There are those that I see bully that bullied me too. Those female students who now roll their eyes at me when I attempt to tell a joke in class were the same ones who rolled their eyes at - presumably - the same jokes then. The male students who don’t think I catch them picking their noses are the same ones I hoped I wouldn’t have to sit next to in class. The alpha-males, the drama-queens, the wallflowers; they fill the pages of my class roster just as they once filled the pages of my yearbook.

Having said that, teaching is kind of like being in a perpetual time warp. And the problem with never leaving high school and being in this perpetual time warp is that you

are constantly self-examining: *what have I done since high school that really means anything? Have I become the person I was meant to be? Have I achieved all my life goals?*

The answer, of course, is almost always no. Nearly everyone would answer the question the same, but unlike accountants or zoo keepers, teachers are constantly bombarded by the presence of wasted youth and lost time.

It also forces you to examine your greatest regrets, which I have many. I regret not moving away to a city, which I committed to doing after an early obsession with the show *Friends*. I regret not attending a larger university, a promise I made myself after watching *Legally Blonde*. I regret not being more active and athletic in high school - when I actually had the time and capabilities that now escape me in my early thirties.

And aside from the silly or superficial, my personal history is filled with so many mistakes that I wish I could rip from the eyes from my past and present self.

It’s funny, I think most high schoolers look to us teachers very similarly to the ways I had stared at my own: as adults who have it all ‘together’. They fail to see that we, too, flail. They ignore our own struggles; overestimate our own confidence.

They see us as nothing more than robots, programmed do nothing more than teach. They do not know about my stack of bills or grandmother’s failing health. They cannot see the struggle I have in trying to be the best mother and wife I can be. They could never possibly fathom how often I question my abilities as a teacher as they stare at me with judgement or boredom.

There are days when I am a mess. But I always pass it off as if I’m fine for fear they’ll learn the truth: I’m just as scared as they are.

So, in that regard, it doesn’t really help that we are willing participants in this ‘confidence charade’. We pass it off as if we have all the answers and hope and pray they fail to recognize our own uncertainty. And in that, we are not so much inspired mentors, but rather shameful shams. Our approaches to teaching are no different than that of a wily charlatan, but instead of pushing upon the crowds a cure-all or salve, we push upon them mantras or adages that in our own moments

of crises, we ignore.

How do I explain to them that while trying to teach them to become the best version of themselves I'm still trying to find the best version of myself?

How do I explain to them that I, too, fear one day failing to achieve *my* dreams?

With that in mind, it isn't those kinds of age-old stereotypes that bind us. It isn't continuous traditions. It isn't yearbook sayings or cultural fads.

It is fear.

For my students, they fear possibility.

For my peers, they fear impossibility.

But regardless of that source of fear, we are all just little kids, covered in a blanket, squeezing our eyes tight to the impending storm outside.

And this awareness of being neither youthful or really grown-up has me staggering blindly through life.

Perhaps next year I'll have it figured out. But history, the same I teach just as I once learned, tells me not to count on it. ☺



Laundry Day

Alyssa Logan
Webb City
Crowder
Silver
Digital Art

I saw a photo of Hyuna Kim, a famous Korean rapper and vocalist, just sitting on a couple of washing machines. iPad Pro and Autodesk Sketchbook

Logan is studying to be a kindergarten teacher. She would love to teach English or work in a child care center in South Korea. Drawing helps her relieve the stress of her health complications.

EYES WITH PRIDE

Autumn Hottinger
McDonald County
High School
Bronze
Nonfiction
Narrative

This was originally started as an assignment in an English class, but grew to be an assignment that I enjoyed and reflect me.

Hottinger is a drum major. She hopes to earn her degree in pre-med.

My heart is flawlessly in time with the tempo, sweat droplets run down my face, my breathing is deep in an attempt to catch up, and the widest smile consumes my face. I stand with my feet together, stomach in, chest out, shoulders back, and eyes with pride and take in the moment.

The crowd is roaring behind me but all I hear is the ring of the gong. I give the command to Fight Song off the field and march toward the black wire fence then step down off the track. My heart is now racing, for there is no tempo for it to follow and the adrenaline is overtaking. I fall in for us to march off the track. In the darkness of the shadow of the stadium lights, the band forms a spiral and comes to a halt. I had just completed my first halftime performance as a drum major in one of the biggest games of the year, homecoming. This may be the ending of a show, but for me, it only creates a new beginning and a different person. I had just learned what the definition of confidence felt like.

Marching band season was at its peak, and the leaves had just begun to change to their beautiful auburns and burnt oranges. It was the fifty-first homecoming at McDonald County High School and was different from

all years past. This was the year that the football program was being turned around and synergy was surging about. Our schedule for that week was quite intense and full. We had an extra rehearsal on Monday after school, practice on Tuesday and Wednesday, followed by the Homecoming Parade that evening, dress rehearsal on Thursday, and then on Friday it was show time. Practices had been going well and the band was performing decently, but it felt as if something was missing. I had observed that when the senior drum major, Tony Jaquez, conducted his song everything was perfect. He commanded the band with confidence, pride, and experience, all of which I was lacking and it was showing.

Looking back to all of the events that lead up to the halftime show they are a little blurry to me, but I distinctly remember the pep talk that Tony gave to me. We were down on the track waiting for the game clock to strike two minutes to walk to the visitors' side in preparation to take the field. My nerves must have been showing because without any hesitation he told me the story of his first game as a drum major in an attempt to calm me down. I am sure that when he was telling this account that he was being a little over dramatic, for no one could have struggled that much. He said, "Autumn, you are already off to

#17

DeAnnah Britton
McDonald County
High School
Honorable Mention
B&W Photography

This photo was for the school yearbook. You can see the focus and dedication on her face as she prepares herself.

*Canon Rebel T6 -
Auto*

Britton is involved in yearbook and photography and hopes to one day be a professional photographer.



Wide Eyes

Mystelle Dueker
Joplin
Crowder
Gold
B&W Photography

In this image of my kind-hearted middle son, his right eye shows a heart, a true reflection of his personality.
Canon 70D: 1/100 sec., f/2.8, ISO 250, 50mm

Dueker is a stay-at-home mother of three boys. She will graduate with an associate's in business management in spring 2020 and pursue a photography business.



a much better of a start than me because you haven't puked on the side of the field yet and have everything memorized." He then went on to remind me of a very important fact. At the George N. Parks Drum Major Academy that we attended during the summer, we learned that the band is our mirror. Much like a mirror every time there is a reflection the image becomes distorted, therefore the band will always perform ten percent less than us. Even if we as Drum Majors, perform at one-hundred percent the band will only perform at ninety percent. If I want the band to have confidence and pride in what they do then I always must show ten percent more than them. The clock strikes two-minutes, and I am pretty sure that my heart skipped a beat in panic.

We begin our walk to the opponent's side of the field. That action within itself gives you no extra boost needed to take the field. The visitors can give you a look that can cut deeper than a knife. My spine is tingly because of all of the looks we are getting. It is now halftime and is time for us to take the field. I count every step and reveal my mace on count forty-eight. The announcer announces our names and asks, "Drum Majors, is your band ready to take the field?" We do our salute and catch all of our mace tosses and were off to a strong start. To me, the first song passes in a blur and it is now my turn to conduct the second movement. I run to the ladder and yell, "band horns up," with an up down up inflection in my tone and short cadence like rhythms. I use my

shiny, piercing whistle to set the tempo and start the best two minutes and five seconds of my life. Before I even realize it, it was all over and I was in the shadows.

We begin to talk about what had just happened. I struggled to find words because I was so busy thinking in my head. I was told that I had what looked to be a light bulb moment followed with tears of joy and the shaking of adrenaline. I was flooded with emotions and thoughts of, "oh my gosh, I really did it and the crowd loved it." After I calmed down a little bit, my director came up to me and told me something that I will always carry with me, "You just made this the best halftime performance that I have seen in ten years." After her, many people came up to me and told me how well I did and congratulated me on my success. At the end of the night, I earned the honor of getting to lead our "MC, you know" chant in the band room.

From this event, I have only grown to be a more confident, prideful, and experienced Drum Major. I walk taller off the field and keep my eyes up with pride in everything that I do. I now can help others that were just like me to find their field confidence and help bring them out of their shell. There is always the possibility that my confidence could waver anytime I take the field, but when those blinding Friday night lights hit my face, I am back on that same adrenaline rush of my first performance. ☺

O, FATHER TIME

Maya Dally
McDonald County
High School
Gold
Nonfiction
Essay

I wrote this personal narrative about my father growing up.

Dally is a junior in high school. She has been writing since she was young. She hopes to soon find a career she knows she can stick with.

The earliest reaches of memories of my dad are drenched in fear. Although his skin was leathery and cancerous from too much sun, he was a cold man. I remember the Saturday mornings of waking too early. While my dad still slept, mom would cook a mess of eggs and piles of toast for only him to eat while I would watch, my stomach growling all the while. She did that every morning for as long as I could remember, even though I had never seen my father so much as touch a spatula.

He was largely uninvolved in any aspect of the household except for punishments, which he embodied. They started off easy; you give your brother a bloody nose, dad gives you the belt and a lengthy lecture. At some point, we became afraid of him. We feared the spanking that would be met by accidentally breaking a plate and so made it a habit to grip them tightly while walking from table to sink.

This was when my dad realized his punishments were working, and so he largely lived through them. A shift of atmosphere occurred during that time in our family. Mom wouldn't talk if he had anything to say in a conversation. My brother would evaluate every step he took in front of him, glancing up to make sure he didn't misstep too loudly. My half sister would clean as much as she could before he had the chance to yell and scream at her. It was like living in the same house as a bear. If you were to wake before the bear, you must be sure to make no sudden movements so as to not wake him. He eats first and much more than everyone else. You fear his large paws, which are strong and quick. There is a natural food chain in the world, and he was at the top while we cowered below his feet.

My mom would say it wasn't his fault. We'd cry to her when he was away. She would pet our hair, but defend him all the while.

"I know, I know. But you know why he's that way. You know how he was hurt, and you know what PTSD is. Be patient with him."

But how could we, as young children, possibly be patient with a man who never made any attempt to be patient with us. He couldn't hear the first five times you'd say his name; it was like the universe warning you to just not ask him for anything at all. What sense he lacked in his left ear, he made up for in whatever signals went off when someone was staring at

him.

"Wipe that look off your face," he'd say, and I would look away.

You had better luck getting his attention by glancing at him from across the room than sitting two feet from him and saying his name slightly above a normal speaking voice. Sometimes it was better that he could only *kind of* hear. Loud, sporadic noises drove him crazy, which was particularly unfortunate for me who considered their favorite holiday to be, none other, than the 4th of July. I had to bite my tongue that night, for living in the same house as a man who had a fear of his own past rockets far outweighs my love for a holiday filled with them.

Those were the only times I had ever felt sorry for him. Back then, I could only imagine what it was like having an innocent sound flood so many violent memories back into your head to the point where you're unable to sleep. Now that I'm older, I am able to better understand, especially upon hearing a plate shatter on cold tile floors.

Growing up, my siblings and I truly believed he was the human form of dread. I will never be able to accurately describe the feeling that would rise up into my throat when we saw his car parked in the driveway on our way back home from school. Equally as much, the immense happiness when it was not there. I can recall every detail and slow-moving second spent with my nose pressed to the wall of our trailer hallways for hours; another one of his "punishments". It's easy until either your heels start to ache or you start to boil from boredom. If you were lucky, he would forget he ever sent you there and you could find a reprieve to slowly sit down, and then inch your way down the hall and into your room without him noticing. Despite the anger and the sadness and the fear, I will argue, until the day I die, that my father was not *always* bad.

If I think with great effort and for a long while, moments of him sitting quietly in front of a light table, tracing a tattoo piece slowly will come into my mind. He never listened to music, but sometimes he tapped a rhythm for no reason. If I stayed quiet enough during his tattoo appointments, he'd let me stick around long enough to listen in on he and his client talking about religion and politics. Always with a voice much softer than the one I heard at

home.

Almost four years ago, my mom finally packed my siblings and I up to leave him in the middle of the night. He never slept, so I knew it was a bad idea from the start. I'm sure he heard the commotion of snatching only the clothes we needed from shared dressers. When I left my room and went into the living room slowly, he was already standing there completely still in the dim light. This was the only time I had ever seen my father cry.

I often used to rationalize why he never showed love to us. My parents had to have loved each other at some point. The only good reason I could ever come up with was that he never really wanted children. Maybe he felt like he was being held back by us? Maybe he would have more food in his pantry without us there to scavenge it all.

I last saw him about a year ago. He was in the area and asked if we could meet in Joplin, which I did. I wanted to see if there was something salvageable about him. I never told my mom even though one of my brothers was living with my dad at the time, so I was fortunate enough to see him as well. I asked my best friend to drive me to the Motel 6 in Joplin, and we rode together as the sky was turning into fire.

Walking up to his room, I heard music. Something like contemporary rock. He was standing against the railing, talking to someone below while smoking a cigarette. The door was wide open, welcoming the slightly crisp November evening air. I felt the weight of the

years between us. He never got to see me grow into a teenager. The inside of the motel room had been lived in. My brother, Carson, was lazily lying across one of the beds, a laptop covered in stickers in front of him, exactly how I had imagined him, even though it had already been a year since I last saw him. Books lay on the tabletop in front of the television. *Hinduism, Politics in Today's World, The Power of Music*. All of which are things I only got minuscule glimpses of from him while I was growing up. Some part of him bloomed after we left. Now he shares music on his Facebook and makes jokes under friend's pictures.

He no longer has children. He's a thriving bachelor, even though he told me,

"You know I think about you guys everyday. Not a day goes by... Everything that happened. I think of it everyday."

He'd say it without making any eye contact, shame written on his face. My reasoning for his anger was that he never really wanted kids anyway. We held him back. When we left, so did the title of 'dad'. Instead, he became *Luke*. When I was young, my parents refused to go to parent/teacher conferences or even my spelling bees. Now he goes out with friends and is socializing. As much as it hurts to see the person who *should* have been raising me going out and doing his own thing, I feel so happy for him. We were all better off apart from each other.

O Father, time put so much between us, but it made you grow.

And me too. ☙



The Look

Maegen Lightner
Neosho
Staff
Color Photography

My friend and I were walking around down town Main Street in Joplin, and decided to do a photo shoot to show off her clothes! Sony camera

Lightner is a full time student at Crowder, trying to fulfill her dreams of becoming a professional photographer.

LIKE PEARLS ON A STRING

Bri Murphy
Monett
Crowder
Silver
Nonfiction
Memoir

This is a short narrative about events in my life that have shaped me into the person I am today. We all go through things that change us.

Murphy is in the pursuit of a degree in art and design. She hopes to be an art educator.

It has been said that the best changes in life are the ones that awaken the soul and make us reach for more, that plant a fire in our hearts and bring peace to our minds. Never had that been more true to me than in the time of my parents divorce. I had only been twelve when it began and what an awkward time it had been. I was young, but old enough to just start seeing life's realities. This world isn't as happy and open as it seems when you are a child. When you're young you know only what you have been given and it's that simple, you don't often struggle or wonder what will become of yourself someday. So you can imagine how uncomfortable a divorce was for a kid like myself, to be stepping into the real world alone.

It had started as you could probably guess a divorce would, the basic foundation of a marriage is slowly and surely chipped away and soon the pillars that they built their home and family on become nothing but chunks and pebbles scattered across the ground. Pieces that could never be put back together. Often times I wish I could say that their divorce was a piece of cake, that they were together and now they aren't. However if I told you this it would be a lie, because their divorce was nothing close to simple, easy, or safe.

It took three years of confusing chaos. To be honest I don't remember much of my time being twelve or thirteen, but I can give

you the sum of my everyday. It started with two little girls who I woke up every morning. We got ready, ate breakfast, we picked out clothes, combed out our hair and brushed our teeth, double-checked to make sure we had our homework, and then we started our walk to the bus stop. We sat on a bench and waited for the bus that picked up elementary school children. When the bus came and the girls were well on their way, I walked the rest of the way to the middle school.

In school I was safe. I hadn't known until later that school was a good place to be. Even though I was away from Aspen and Olivia, I knew that they were safe in their classes with other children, away from home. How terrible that sounds but how true it is. For me it was a place of many things: it was puberty, friends, stress, and art. It was awkward to do it alone, not being sure if what you're doing is anywhere near correct. My body was changing but so was everyone else's. Classes were a struggle, and I had great friends but, I was quiet I didn't ever say much of anything about how I felt. It was safe from home, but the best thing about middle school was the art.

Art had freed me from worry and being scared; it released my mind into worlds that I could be myself in. I had found the bridge between my world and this one. It had snuck its way into my life and I guess it had reached the point of absolute no return. I had soon given my time and developed my talent to art, and I hadn't even known it. I'd say that the credit goes to Ms. Barker my middle school art teacher. She was not only my teacher but also my friend, whether I told her about home or not, I knew that she had an idea about what went on. She inspired me and pushed me to be the best that I could. I hadn't realized until later how grateful I was to have her. She had helped me in ways she could never understand and may never know. She had been one the first stepping stones to what, I hope, will be my lifelong passion. She brought me into a new world, one that would soon change my perspective on life forever.

However, it wasn't always so optimistic, because when the end of the school day came near, I always grew nervous. Not knowing if it would be quiet and lonely or a night of screaming and tears. In a lot of ways it's all the same; screaming at each other while saying silent prayers and crying yourself to

Rose Ring

Theresa Walthall
Goodman
Community
Bronze
3D Art
Porcelain Clay

Sculpting the ring was a creative break from the usual mugs and bowls that I make so many of for shows in the fall.

Walthall is a full-time art teacher at McDonald County High School. In her "free time" she creates with clay.



sleep. Those words and tears were not for me, they were empty promises that my parents sent to each other every night in wars of emotion and distress. That's all my home felt like for three years: a war zone with bombs, flares, and sadness.

My mother was depressed and when it was a quiet night she slept a lot, but when she wasn't sleeping she was yelling and begging for it all to end. My father who normally never yelled, always made his statements much louder than my mother could have ever screamed. I hadn't known at the time but he was in fact abusing her, not physically, but mentally. Making my mother believe she was crazy, a bad mother for sleeping and not taking care of her children, for not being able to do everything. He had pushed her, accused her, and lied to her until she had no safe place left to hide. She believed him.

While all this went on I tried to make sure Aspen and Olivia were as comfortable as any child could be in a situation like this. Even though I was twelve and much too young to have to worry about taking care of others, I took care of my sisters. If our parents were yelling, I knew to take them outside to play. The girls thought it was all just fun but I knew it kept them from hearing the words our parents said. At night we took baths, did homework, ate dinner, played games, and most important we were all together. It didn't happen a lot but sometimes in the middle of arguments, Aspen or Olivia would need something and ask mom or dad like any kid would. Sadly, they were either never answered or what they needed was never completed. It had always been up to me to be there for Aspen and Olivia, I had been my sisters' caretaker everyday for three years.

There were only a few times I had been deeply afraid. I knew our parents would never hurt us, but when they hurt each other and themselves it was a sight to see how two people that had once loved each other can now gave hatred so freely. It had started as any other night; he accused, pushed, pulled, lied and called her horrible names that I knew she took to heart. Mom often had no way to release her feelings or anger, so she broke things like vases, plates, glass, computers or just about anything she could pick up and throw. There had only been one time that I had felt afraid and shaken to the point of total shock, unable to move and unsure what to say. She had picked up a glass vase and repetitively beat it on our kitchen table until it had broken



Dark Fear

Jordan Jones
Neosho
Crowder
Bronze
2D Media
Acrylics

Fear could be a tool or could be your phobia. How it interacts together with all aspects of life could just be an illusion of truth. What does your fear tell you when you take time to understand how it works?

Jones strives to question the boundaries of the simple things that surround people daily. He wants to work to help others understand the complex question that sometimes is beautiful and yet disastrous.

into little shards of glass, it had cut deep into her hand. She stood in the middle of our living room screaming with tears and blood running down her body. She trembled and held her blood-dripping arm. I only remember her shaking and a very large blood stain that was left in the carpet after everything was said and done that night. It had become the stain that would never go away. The stain that reminded me of the power of a few simple words. The stain that I had walked over every single day for three years.

It had taken three years for my mother to finally say, "No, I don't deserve this, my children don't need this. I will not be beaten or threatened or shaken to my core by you ever again." You would probably think, great it's all over now it should get better, but that was easily not the case. It's one things to file for a divorce but it's a completely different thing trying to getting away from someone. My mother knew this best, see we three girls could bounce back and be okay after a little time, but for our mother it was an everyday struggle. He was haunting her, for he had been the only thing she knew for twenty years. She had given her life to him and now she had to break every bound she had sewn that was tied to him. I always said I was there for her and that she's not alone, but in all reality I was alone too. She hadn't known that I felt more alone than she did for so long, but I had created a way to escape through art, she had nothing, she was left empty.

The divorce is still going on up to this very day, it's nowhere near as bad as the

[Continued to 81]

Ezio Auditore

Austyn Guthrie
Neosho High School
Honorable Mention
2D Media
Scratchboard



I wanted to do a person with a lot of depth and tones in the face to challenge myself.

Guthrie is a senior and is going to become a game artist and designer. After high school, she'll attend Full Sail University in Florida.

Life and Death

Isaac Wallace Kinslow
Neosho High School
Gold
2D Media
Scratchboard



This is my own take on some of Alex Grey's artwork. I put my own spin on it.

Kinslow will be attending Crowder College after graduating.

Moon

Nicole Ambrose
Neosho
High School
Gold
B&W Photography

*I captured this on my back porch. It took so many tries to keep the camera focused.
Canon camera*

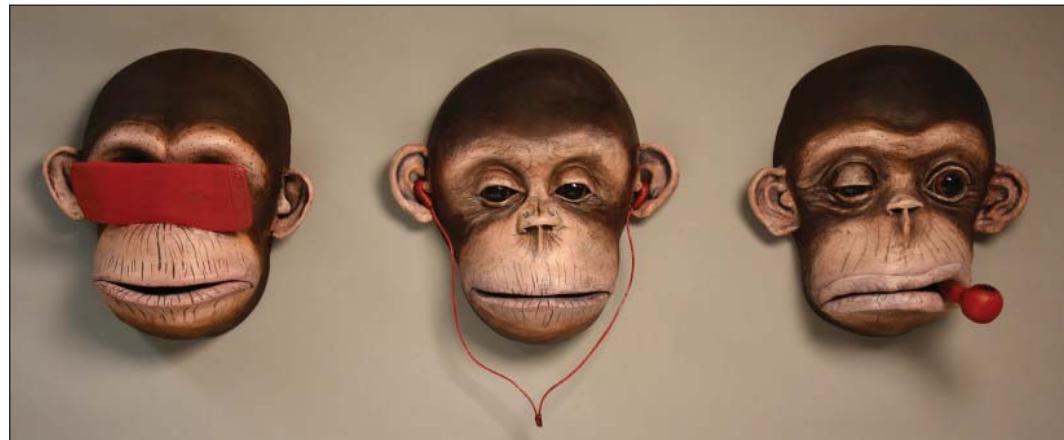
Ambrose is a junior who plans to attend Ozark Christian College after high school to go into travel ministry and travel photography.



[Continued from 79]

days that I've tucked deep into my mind, the memories that I choose to forget. I can gladly say that I am safe and now have a mother who is also one of my closest friends. I'm glad that you can choose to forget some pieces of your life after a while...

the life you had before. Things that you had once let control you are like pearls on a string. Cut the knot and they scatter across the floor, rolling into dark corners, never to be found again. So you move on. And you forget what the pearls even look like. Or at least you try. <<



Ignorance Is Bliss: The Three Wise Monkeys

Hanna Selman
Neosho
Community
Gold
3D Art

One of my biggest inspirations is the cubist movement. Utilizing art as a universal language, I will tell the world that it is okay to adapt to modern advancements as long as we are always at peace with our roots.

Clay, ceramic bisque, and acrylic paint

After graduating from Neosho High School, Selman began perusing a bachelors degree in ceramics and will graduate spring of 2019.



Señor

Alexandra Serrano
Purdy High School
Bronze
3D Art
Sculpture

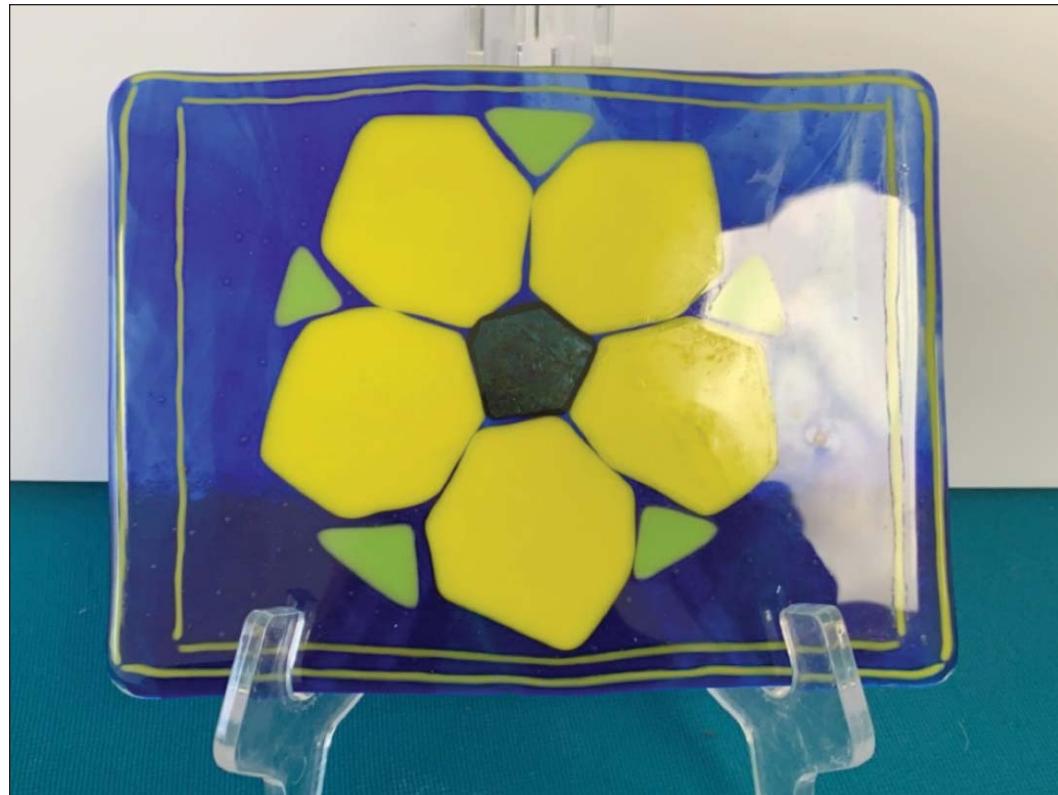
Serrano is a senior who plans on attending Missouri State University and has a long term goal of traveling the world.

I have always been creative, so with this piece I enjoyed challenging myself to create something in ceramics.

Yellow Flower

Hailey Gordon
Carl Junction
High School
Honorable Mention
3D Art
Glass

Gordon is a senior who is currently in a mixed media art class.



She enjoys making glasswork. I feel like this artwork brings happiness, with the bright in the foreground and the dark in the background.

High Flyer

Karli Washburn
Carl Junction
High School
Honorable Mention
3D Art
Glass and Grout

I wanted to explore glass and knew that my grandma loved hummingbirds. She recently passed away so I made this in memory of her.

Washburn is a senior in her second year of art.

She wishes to attend

UNT in the fall to study dental hygiene.



Roll With It



Bri Murphy
Monett
Crowder
Silver
3D Art
Recycled Materials

This was made from magazine pages rolled and then hot glued together. This piece was all an experience for fun.

Murphy is in the pursuit of a degree in art and design. She hopes to be an art educator.

In the Meadow

Alondra Hinojosa
McDonald County
High School
Gold
3D Art
Clay

Hinojosa is a senior who hopes to one day spread her creative ideas around her community to inspire others.



For this piece, I used a pottery wheel to create this small bowl. I had always been intrigued by the pottery wheel and have been making progress for the past 2 years.

ABOUT THE CONTEST

Art and literary submissions are accepted at CrowderQuill.com from May 1 to Feb. 1 each year. Mostly an online contest, 2D and 3D art may also be hand-delivered; contact Quill@Crowder.edu to make arrangements. The maximum number of entries per category per person is four. Only one award per category is allotted per person. Entries are judged by staff members. Divisions are high school, Crowder College students, and community members.

The *Crowder Quill* is a literary-art magazine published annually by the Magazine Production class at Crowder College. The mission statement is “to encourage and showcase the creative abilities of local writers, artists, and photographers as well as provide a cultural and link between Crowder College and our surrounding communities.”

Disclaimer: Some content may be inappropriate for younger audiences.

For more details about the contest guidelines and an entry form, go to www.CrowderQuill.com.

COLOPHON

This publication is designed annually by Crowder College students enrolled in Comm 111, Magazine Production. Text was set in Bell MT 10 point regular. Story titles were set in Myriad Pro. Credit information was set in Arial fonts.

The *Crowder Quill* was produced using Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign CS6. The magazine was printed in the Crowder College print shop on the Neosho, Mo., campus. The cover stock is Sappi Flo Gloss Digital Cover 11 x 17 80 lb. 7TP coated, and inside pages are on 11x17 60 lb. white Husky Opaque Offset Domtar.

Funding of the publication comes from the college as a means to provide a cultural link with the community and for an outlet for creativity and expression.

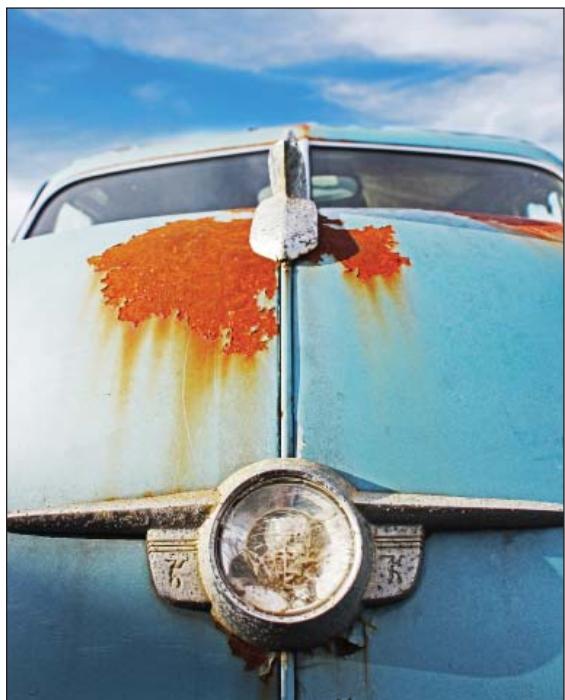
For the 2019 contest, 1063 entries were received, and 123 awards were presented in a public ceremony and poetry reading May 9, 2019 on the Neosho campus of Crowder College. Award winners were published and received certificates to be recognized as part of the 38th annual publication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to the following individuals and departments for making this publication and contest possible.

Cindy Brown, Public Information Office
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Meghann Winchester, Communication Department
Casey Smith, Josh Smith, and Josh Knott, Art Department
Stephanie Potter, Photography Instructor, and students

Archive 2015 winning entry



CONTEST CATEGORIES

The magazine is a compilation of winning entries in the following literary and art categories.

Various forms of each genre are welcome as publication submissions. The following are common terms and explanations within each category. For more detailed contest guidelines, see CrowderQuill.com.

Nonfiction

Essays, character sketches and other true-to-life writings should be limited to 1,800 words.

Essays – a short piece of writing that is based on one certain subject in which the author normally states and details their opinion on.

There are four types of essays in literature: expository, descriptive, narrative, and persuasive.

Biography – a piece of literature that has been written about someone's life.

Autobiography – when the biography is written by the subject of the story.

Character sketch – a short piece of writing that details a certain character.

Memoir – a written work similar to a biography but focuses on a specific time in a person's life.

Historical narrative – a narrative that was written for the general purpose of recreating historical events and characters.

Satire – a piece of writing that ridicules mankind's downfalls and corruptions.

Political satire – a piece of literature written for the purpose of mocking the government and its members.

Commentary – writing that is generally used for records. The author, having been a part of a certain experience, details what occurred.

Journal/Diary entries – a written record of a person's thoughts, opinions, and activities.



Archive 2012 winning entry

Fiction

Clear plot development and well-defined characters are expected; also limit of 1,800 words.

Short stories – a brief story that, while it does come to completion, lacks complexity and in-depth character development.

Plays – a written piece presenting a story that was created with the intention for the piece to be acted out on a stage.

Fables – A short narrative that is used to teach morals and commonly uses animals as characters.

Folklore – a piece of literature that preserves the traditional customs and tales among a certain group of people.

Parody – a piece of literature that closely imitates an author or another piece of literature, most often for comedic purposes.

Fantasy – a literary genre that is comprised of things that cannot occur in the real world, such as magic and mythical creatures.

Science fiction – a literary genre that has a story line that is based off different views on what science and technology will be like in the future.

Sources:
Information is paraphrased from a variety of sources.

For a complete bibliography, see www.CrowderQuill.com in the post titled "Contest Categories."

Poetry

Whether free verse, blank verse, rhymed or metered verse, poetry should make a point, state emotion, or relate an experience.

Musical lyrics – poetry that is paired with instrumental sound to create a song.

Free verse – a verse that does not have a steady rhythm.

Blank verse – a verse that does not rhyme and is most commonly written in iambic pentameter.

Rhymed verse – a verse in which the words at the end of each line rhyme.

Metered verse – a syllabic rhythm recurring throughout a verse.

Ballad – a type of poetry that is used in dance songs, they often tell a story with the themes ranging from comedy to romance.

Sonnet – a poem in the fixed verse form pattern of fourteen lines that are generally iambic pentameter rhyming agreeing to a specific design.

Haiku – a type of verse, originating from Japan, that contains three lines with five syllables in the first and last lines, and seven syllables in the second line.

Credits this page

Archive 2017 winning entries



Water Color

2D Media

Original two-dimensional art may be black and white or color. Entries may be scanned and uploaded online, hand-delivered, or mailed. Art should be created based on real life (still life, landscape, or live model), memory, or imagination rather than copied from published materials. If a source is referenced, credit must be given. Model consent required. See entry form on pages 87-88 for more detailed information.

Hand-made prints – artwork created by hand.

Monoprint – a single print created by applying ink or paint to a smooth surface and then transferring it to paper; may have a 1st, 2nd, or 3rd monoprint, each with a specific process.

Etching – a print produced by etching with acid into a piece of metal, then applying ink and pressing paper to the inked metal.

Screen print – silk-screen printing; a process that uses stencils on screens to layer different colors of ink onto a

print.

Charcoal drawing – a drawing using sticks of charred wood.

Oil painting – made with oils; takes longer to dry and is used in layers.

Colored pencil – similar in shape to a graphite pencil, each colored pencil has a different shade or color, and the lead contains wax.

Pastels – similar to a crayon; made out of powdered pigment made into a binder.

Graphite pencil – a pencil whose lead is a mixture of powdered graphite and clay; easily erasable.

Marble texturing/brush – applying a pattern to an object by transferring oil paints floating on water.

Pen & Ink – A drawing or sketch done in pen & ink. Often incorporates the methods of stippling and cross-hatching (as a variety of media do.)

- **Stippling** – created by drawing or engraving a detail or an image in either small strokes or dots.
- **Cross-hatch** – creating an image with series of lines that cross over each other.

3D Art

Qualifying art must include a relief that protrudes at least 1/8 inch off the surface. Photographs of the art (front and side view required) may be uploaded online instead of bringing the art for judging.

Pottery – objects that are wheelthrown with clay and fired to cone 02-10. They can be altered, added on to, or detailed.

Ceramics – all things made in clay and fired; it is also possible to make from a mold; not thrown on the wheel.

Sculpture – 3D objects that can be created from a variety of materials, through various processes, such as carving or welding.

Assemblage – a piece of art that is created with different sections or pieces that are assembled to create a whole piece.

Recycled Material Art – artwork that is made of recycled materials or trash.

Relief art – a sculpture that has been made to give the impression that the carved image is above the background plane.

Fused-glass jewelry – created by selecting pieces of glass and arranging them to be fired in a kiln in order to fuse the pieces together.

Stained-glass mosaic – decorative glass pane that is created by cutting and arranging pieces of colored glass connected by strips of lead; color enhancements may be added with stains and paints.



Sculpture



B&W Photography

Black and white entries may be reproduced from film or digital files with only minor corrections and adjustments.

Color Photography

We seek film or digital files that emphasize vibrant color. Files should be uploaded online. All photography is judged on originality, contrast, composition, and artistic merit.

Aperture setting (f-stop) – f-stops are the size of the aperture and corresponds to how much light is allowed in the lens. Larger f-stop numbers result in a darker image. Smaller f-stop numbers result in a brighter image.

ISO (film speed) – measures how sensitive to light the camera sensor is; the lower the number, the less light sensitive and less grain on the photo, and the higher the number, the more light sensitive and more grain on the photo.

Shutter speed – how long the aperture exposes the sensor to the light, the faster the speed of the shutter, the crisper the picture.

Automatic setting (Auto) – the automatic setting controls aperture, shutter speed, and ISO for the user.

iPhone lens attachment – smartphone attachments that helps the phone and user to produce a higher quality photo.

Film processing – a series of chemical baths that develop a photograph, requiring control over the environment, especially light. With digital printing, images from digital cameras can be printed directly from the computer.

Digital Art

This graphic art category includes computer-generated art or extensively manipulated photographs in order to create special effects. Photography with only minor adjustments should be entered in one of the photography categories. Digital art, photography, and literature entries should be uploaded online. See CrowderQuill.com for more information.

Common Photoshop techniques – a few of the most commonly used Photoshop techniques are the ability to manipulate photos, create textures, alter hand-drawn images that are scanned in, add layers to create more dimension, and alter the lighting on an image to make it brighter or darker.

Photoshop layers – different sections of the same image that can be altered and moved separately to give the image more dimension.

Photoshop filters – an effect that can be used to imitate photographic filters, correct a photo, or apply special art effects that give the image a unique appearance or appear to have been created using a different medium.

Sumo Paint software program – a website with a downloadable program for image design, photo editing, and making digital art.

InspirARTion software application – an application that allows users to utilize various brushes of different styles, sizes, and colors as well as different symmetry modes to draw or create digital art.



Archive 2014: B&W Photography and 2012 Color Photography



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2019 CROWDER QUILL CONTRIBUTORS



Archive 2014
winning entry

competition with Crowder students.

Each entry includes an artist/author statement, which is a short reflection from contributors about their goals or reasons for writing a particular piece as well as insight into the creative process, inspiration, or subject matter of their entries, as well as a biographical statement. For graphic entries, the technical process is included, if provided. There were 86 individuals published, including staff entries. The contributors hail from the following cities and high schools:

CROWDER STUDENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Anderson, Asbury, Aurora, Bartlett, Carl Junction, Carthage, Cassville, Diamond, El Dorado Springs, Exeter, Goodman, Jane, Joplin, Lamar, Monett, Neosho, Noel, Pierce City, Pineville, Pittsburgh, Purdy, Republic, Seneca, Southwest City, Stark City, Stotts City, Webb City

HIGH SCHOOLS

Bare Homeschool
Carl Junction High School
Diamond High School
Joplin High School
Lamar High School
Maples Homeschool
McDonald County High School

Monett High School
Monroe Homeschool Academy
Neosho High School
Purdy High School
Thomas Jefferson Independent Day School

2019 TRAVELING AWARD

This special award is presented to the most-winning high school for its entries in this issue. The award is calculated on points: gold winners count as four points, silver as three, bronze as two, and honorable mention as one.

1st Place

McDonald County High School

2nd Place

Neosho High School

3rd Place

Carl Junction High School



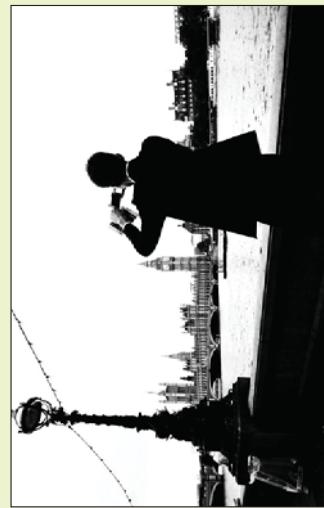
Literary & Graphic Arts Competition

Winners published in the
Crowder Quill Magazine

Entry Deadline:
around Feb. 1 each year



Entry guidelines for contest



VISUAL ARTS

Artwork, photography, and digital art

- Digital art is extensively altered digital photographic images and computer-generated art.
- 2D traditional media includes both black & white and color two-dimensional entries. 3D art has been added for three-dimensional entries. Photographs of 3D art may be submitted online.
- A model consent form must be submitted for photographic or art entries of live models.
- Art should be created based on real life (still life, landscape, or live model), memory, or imagination rather than copied from published materials. On the rare occasion that an artist alters a previous work of art, credit should be given. For example, an alteration of the *Mona Lisa* could be titled *Mona Lisa's Smile* with source credit given to the original artist: *The Mona Lisa* by Leonardo Da Vinci. "Copy art" used as learning exercises will NOT be accepted as contest entries.
- 2D media should be mounted, matted or placed in clear plastic sleeves for their protection. Please do not send entries in frames or with glass. Attach entry form to the front left-hand corner with single-sided tape.
- 2D media may also be scanned with a high-quality scanner and sent digitally.
- All photography and digital art should be submitted online; see general guidelines.

Division: Entry form for hand-delivered art

High school, grades 9-12 only

School _____

Teacher _____
 Crowder student Community

Category: 2D Traditional Media 3D Art

All other categories should be submitted online, except with permission from the Quill office.

Title _____

Source of inspiration for creation of art:

Memory Imagination Real life

Real life includes still life set ups, live models, landscapes, and building interiors or exteriors.

If you used a live model, check the box to indicate obtaining permission of the model or parents/guardians if the model is a minor.

Medium: (pencil, pastel, woodcut, sculpture)

Artist's statement: Write 1-3 sentences explaining THIS art's purpose, process, inspiration, or effect. _____

Biography: Write 1-3 sentences about yourself.

Attach additional paper.

Date _____ Phone _____
Name _____
Address _____
City/State/ZIP _____
Email _____

WHAT IS THE CROWDER QUILL?

The *Crowder Quill* is a literary-art magazine published annually by the Magazine Production class at Crowder College. It is our goal to encourage and showcase the creative abilities of local writers, artists, and photographers as well as provide a cultural link between Crowder College and our surrounding communities.



GENERAL ENTRY GUIDELINES

- All entries except traditional 2D media and 3D art should be sent online at CrowderQuill.com.

- Postmark deadline for art: Feb. 1

- Deadline to be announced for online submissions and hand-delivered art entries, usually a few days after Feb. 1.

- Email Quill@crowder.edu or call 417-455-5410 to make arrangements for hand delivered entries, if you have difficulties with the online submission process, or do not have internet access.

- Individuals may submit up to four entries per category in every category.

- Failure to meet all guidelines may result in disqualification.

- Entrants give their express permission that winning entries will be published in the magazine and may also be used for promotional and educational purposes.

Exception:

2D traditional media
and 3D art may be
entered by hand, mail,
or online as scanned files
or photographs.



CATEGORIES

Accepted by mail OR hand delivery with an attached entry form OR online:

2D Traditional Media: original paintings, drawings and hand-made prints including pen, pencil, woodcut, etching, screen print, charcoal, oil, colored pencil, pastels, and acrylic creations, both black & white and color. Entries may also be scanned and uploaded.



Categories to be uploaded online:

- **Nonfiction:** Essays, character sketches and other true-to-life writings should be limited to 1800 words.

- **Fiction:** Clear plot development and well-defined characters are expected; also limit of 1800 words.

- **Poetry:** Whether free verse, blank verse, rhymed or metered verse, poetry should make a point, state emotion, or relate an experience.

- **Digital Art:** This graphic art category includes computer-generated art or extensively manipulated photographs in order to create special effects. Photography with only minor adjustments should be entered in one of the photography categories.

- **Black and White Photography:** Entries may be reproduced from film or digital files with only minor corrections and adjustments.

- **Color Photography:** Film or digital files that emphasize vibrant color reproduction are sought.

Carefully read the descriptions of each category to avoid disqualification.

*See more details online at
CrowderQuill.com.*

