

The NORTH HERN New York Maker



Arts & Literature
of North Country
Community College
2019-2020

The Northern New Yorker

Contributors

Jimena Alexander	15	Eryn Kidder	12, 17
Anonymous	22	Ryan King	25
Trinity Baillargeon	36	Andrea Kyzer	19
Nathan Baldwin	14, 25	Joshua LaBombard	7, 37
Rose Bamber	39	Carly Lafrance	10
Avery Benedict	40	Peter Martinez	11, 19, 21
Dayanara Bero	7, 20, 39	Alex Mitchell	16
Molly Brockway	44	Megan Mulvenna	24
Cheyenne Burdo	23, 39	Hailey Perkins-McGraw	11, 37
Linzy Compo	17	Marshall Pixley	36
Christine Conover	12	Jacob Rockhill	43
Chris Cook	38	Danielle Rootes	38
Zena O'Leary Cumber	23	Erin Rourke Cover Art	30
Nidia DeArmaYero	11	Courtney Roy	20
Rebecca Delair	13	Shannon Russell	31
Hayley DeTulleo	8, 17	Ashley Schork	28
Nicholas Fassett	36	Delaney Smith	29
Ashley Harris	37	Daniel Snyder II	26, 32
Jessica Harris	8	Jonathan Snyder	6, 15
Joseph Hickman	25, 42	Marian Stutzman	5, 6
Katherine Holvik	8, 36	Valerie Titus	12
Morgan Hotte	42	Nickey Toe	35
Alissa Hudson	40	Wade Willis	18
Emily Jablonski	28, 43	Calista Alegria Yaw	9
Corey Kidder	35, 37		

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She:kon/Greetings, my name is Erin Rourke. This is my final semester at NCCC. I am graduating in May with an AAS in Computer Graphics and Design. My thoughts behind the cover design were to incorporate my cultural history (Mohawk) along with a modern design aesthetic. At the time, I was taking US History and Typography and it seemed natural to incorporate both into the design. It was important to me to include the Mohawk language, the Hiawatha belt, and modern typography. I stayed with a monochromatic palette to highlight the purple of the mountain-like triangles. I included a Mohawk phrase that means, “the North Side at New York”, because I wanted to let viewers know that we are still here and have always been. I have had goals of getting published and starting my own business and recently I have accomplished both. Currently, I am in the early stages of starting my graphics and marketing business, and with the degree and skills that I gained from NCCC, I am writing a new chapter in my life.

Nia:wen/Thank you



It is always such a pleasure and delight to read through the writing submitted by students from all three of our campuses and to be able to help put together this literary and arts magazine! You show us the value of your education but also the material of your minds and hearts and we are privileged to put your skills on display for your fellow students, your instructors, and the rest of the NCCC community.

Bruce Rowe, Literary Editor

Within these pages you will find an abundance of creativity. At times it was a struggle, which I find, myself, is always rewarding in the end. The students featured are celebrated for discovering creative solutions to ideas presented to them – many for the first time. Thank you! “Practicing an art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven’s sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem. Do it as well as you possible can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something.” – Kurt Vonnegut

Tina LaMour, Chair, Art Department

My life my well-being only one life to live,
My happiness my one chance, yet my mind only gave but one glance,
How naïve yet full of love, so much to give, yet so much taken away,
Why was love such a blind thing; I only was after the peace and happiness in life to bring?
I thought I had been through enough to capture bad things,
Especially the negativity that now in my mind rings,
But lo that was not only so, but now I felt trapped,
Not only with the culture of only one time a chance at life,
But now also only one chance to make a mistake!
But because of religious reasons it was one I was taught not to forsake,
No reason no matter what, not even a moral reasoning?!
Upon the bitter and grueling pain, I felt like a mouse caught in a trap.
Could I get out, and if I did would I be able to be strong enough to recover.....?
Everything I knew I would have to leave behind...
Was normal consistency better than actually living?
It was not just a matter of a heart being shattered and broke; it was a breaking of rules.
Rules including everything that had been around me since day one.
I felt dull yet alarmingly pained, so full that it went numb.
Then one day I had a reason besides me
There was a person I had to shield, no longer just me
My mind still worked after all and with great clarity
I had no idea where it came from, nor were to go
I went as a tiny snowflake in a blizzard.
Something pushed me like the unseen wind
I trudged along even when almost nothing would budge
It wasn't easy but much better than living the same.
Then along the way came helping hands,
A how are you and a voice saying of course you can!
Wow, what a difference that made in a world of "course you can't;" **changing my world forevermore!**
LOVE, changes everything.....!!

Author: Peace, Love.

Mood Disorders, and Writing Experiences

Marian Stutzman

As a young child I was always drawn to reading and writing. Books were specialties in my family's house. To this day the smell of book pages can bring back memories of my childhood. The pages have an odd musty smell of memories, bringing an exhilarating sense of fresh air to the brain. Raised in a family of many siblings, sometimes one of us hid a book because if we didn't the next person to pounce upon it would claim it. That was no fun when I wanted to know the ending of a story. Siblings can be rather selfish when they are young, immature children. Our hometown library was pretty far away, so we were lucky our parents had friends who would bring us children's books. Looking back now, I assume our eyes must have lit up in excitement when they handed us books because they never stopped bringing more.

From my experiences, I would say evidence suggests that most people who love to write and consider themselves writers are usually readers, too. Reading as a child shaped my writing habits. The books I read played in my mind for a long time after I read them, when pushed aside for other daily activities. I loved pens and paper. Whenever I found a pen and paper I found myself writing. I didn't realize I liked to write until I had an experience one day. The first writing experience was when my friend moved far away. After missing her I found a pen and paper and started writing. She said she loved my letters and wrote me back. She informed me she didn't enjoy writing that much, but that she watched the mail every day for my letters. Knowing someone liked my writing and found it interesting inspired me even more. I soon found out that writing made me feel good. It seemed to boost my mood and ego.



Jonathan Snyder, Digital Art

The article "Writing Your Way to Happiness" shows that: "The scientific research on the benefits of so-called expressive writing is surprisingly vast. Studies have shown that writing about oneself and personal experiences can improve mood disorders, help reduce symptoms among cancer patients, improve a person's health after a heart attack, reduce doctor visits

and even boost memory” (Parker-Pope D6(L)). In this article the author states how studies have shown writing boosts mood and reduces negative symptoms, even in cancer patients. I find it interesting how the author explains that studies have shown expressive writing can be like therapy. Reading this article has made me think that maybe putting words down on paper can aid an individual by helping him/her realize what is important to him/her in life. In my own experiences I have always found expressive writing eye-awakening and mood-lifting. It’s almost as if it clears the fog up that was centered in the brain and brings ideas and thoughts to consciousness. It’s like having an identical person listen to my thoughts and ideas—that identical person being the paper itself.

Also written in the article was this statement: “When you get to that confrontation of truth with what matters to you, it creates the greatest opportunity for change” (Groppel, Jack p. D6(L)). Dr. Jack Groppel explains how writing can create an opportunity for change. He brings the idea to light that writing is almost like confronting oneself. And by doing that, it helps study one’s ideas and how these could be made better or if these provide a great opportunity for change.

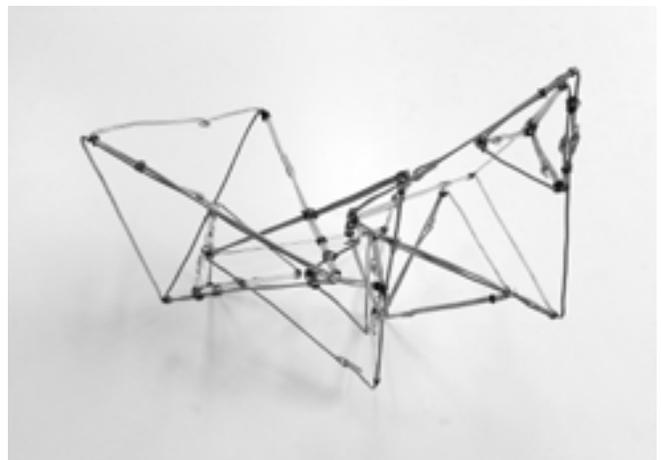
The reason I chose this article about mood disorder research and writing to incorporate in my narrative essay is, that mood disorders are often an effect from a symptom or disease in which someone is suffering. My opinion is that mood disorder diagnoses are often just thrown out there by most health care professionals without much inspection of what is really behind it. And the fact that this article studied people who wrote expressive writing and found the results very positive is intriguing. Reading tends to bring a person out of one’s own head, and seemingly make one’s own troubles seem more transparent, while in the meantime dreamily lodged in someone else’s life story. Writing, on the other hand, makes one inspect what one is feeling, why, and ways to change or inspire ideas. This brings me to the conclusion that encouraging writing for cancer patients or people with any other health illnesses could bring substantial positive outcomes, and reduce their negative symptoms by relieving stress. From my own experiences of reading and writing and how they affected my mood, and this article stating the positive effects writing has, expressive writing could possibly be considered a part of one’s therapy.

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Joshua LaBombard, 2D Design



Dayanara Bero, 3D Design



Hayley DeTulleo, Pottery



Jessica Harris, 3D Design



Katherine Holvik, Drawing I

Defined by Joy **Calista Alegria Yaw**

Everyone has moments that change them, shape them, create the person they will become. Some of these moments are filled with joy, some pain, and some are filled with tragedy. Some of these moments, you will remember not by the words said or not said, actions taken or not taken, but by the smells, the color of the walls, the song that was playing at that moment. I could tell you about the day I lost my best friend, about how yellow the walls were when I started crying, or that I missed art class to grieve. I could tell you how large the windows were the day that I almost lost myself in a boy's hands. I could tell you what the church smelled like during my uncle's funeral. I could tell you all of these things and more, but I am tired of writing of tragedy.

It has been six weeks since I cried, but it has been three days since I laughed until my stomach hurt and my face seized from smiling. I would love to be defined by my laughter, my side-stitches, instead of my tears. And so I shall define myself, here in front of you, all of my joys laid bare.

On average, it takes an hour and three minutes to drive to Plattsburgh—but depending on how angry the sky is and how many people you need to pass on the way there, that can vary drastically. In my car, Plattsburgh is 2.36 gallons of gas away. On this day, this special day which I wish to remember for you, there were four girls in the car. I am not qualified to say how these extra passengers may have affected my car's mileage, but they affected me greatly. I learned so many unimportantly-important things on that trip. I learned that Jordyn only likes banana Runts, that Melody prefers Panic!AtTheDisco to Fall Out Boy. I learned that Codie has never been to Starbucks. These things do not matter at all, which is why they are impossibly important to my recollection of this day.

In school, every child learns Important Facts. They learn that George Washington had wooden teeth, that $E=MC^2$, that the mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell. These facts and formulas are drilled into their heads, as if this is the purpose of our lives, as if this is what will make us successful and happy. They are not taught about those Unimportant Facts that are vital to humanity. Instead of learning about themselves through a novel, they annotate and analyze what the author meant, what the historical context of the story was. Instead of learning to remember what the breeze felt like on a certain pleasant day, they are meant to memorize the Pythagorean theorem.

Living like this, anesthetized to those small things that make life vivid and bright, it is hard to recall those moments in their lives that are happy and important in their insignificance. They instead feel as though they must prove that their life has value, show that they have worked hard, that they have struggled. They feel that they must justify their existence through some tragedy. They are made to believe that these are the moments that matter, and it takes so long to teach themselves that it is those small things—that Jordyn loves banana Runts, that Melody likes Panic!AtTheDisco, that Codie has never been to Starbucks—it is those small things that allow your life to have meaning through others. It is not the destiny of every child to cure cancer or end a war, but we all have red strings tied 'round our ankles that connect us to people. We all have the potential to turn small, insignificant and irrelevant facts, into important and wonderful memories. These moments shape our interactions, our understandings, our love.

"And in that moment, I swear we were infinite." -- Charlie, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky

A Day in the Life

By Carly Lafrance

"Just my boudoir today. Thanks." A crisp \$100 bill lay next to the note. Easy enough. Mrs. E., the lady I clean for, had left instructions for today. Usually I maintain the entire house, both floors of a small stylish home on the East side. I found myself laughing at the irony. A woman who spends every other day in a house worth half a million will never be able to enjoy the pleasures of her own. Mrs. E. must have left for the day, as she usually greets me at the door. I unpacked my bags. Lemon Pledge, Murphy's Oil floor cleaner, and a feather duster were among the few essentials. Regular cleaning items that she insisted I use. The same products my mother used to use. I found it funny that such a wealthy home had been maintained in almost the same way as a two bedroom with a leaky roof and blankets in the windows. My mother's work had become my work. My mother's hands had become mine.

I climbed the stairs and went to the closet with the vacuum. I pulled the vacuum out and made my way to her bedroom with it dragging behind me. Her bedroom was always warm and soft. Thick caramel-colored carpet that stretched wall-to-wall made me want to kick off my tennis shoes and dance. My mother was a dancer. Swing. I remember as a child I found a tin box on top of the fridge with pictures of her youth. The bright, red low cut dresses she used to wear. The dance partners whose faces blurred in the photograph. She was the center of her world.

Wine bottles holding dried flowers were on every table. I couldn't help feel bad for this woman. Left with a large inheritance, no husband or children. Sure she had a nice house and lots of money, but she was alone. Drunk and alone. I began to strip the bed. I smelled her perfume. A couple of pills flew out of the sheets. I remember my mother would say to me, "The rich people, unhappy in their lives, press their pain into pills and swallow them." Today feels heavy with my mother's presence. She must be with me today. I stuffed the sheets and pillowcases into a large wicker basket, scooping clothes off the floor as I worked. I vacuumed the floor and heard the pills rattle in their orange bottle. Shutting off the vacuum, I headed to her closet to grab the change of linens folded neatly on the top shelf. I felt my momma with me again. I made up the bed and saw her, and remember how I changed her bed sheets with open windows, the wind carrying her sickness away. I tucked the corners of the fitted sheet under the mattress and thought of how her dark, brown eyes shone in the sunlight. The way she held my hand later that afternoon that would be her last day on Earth. I smiled as I dragged the duvet across the bed. Remembering the creases in her face, and deep wrinkles in her hands. The same wrinkles that were beginning to form in mine. Cleaning other houses was a connection. I can only hope to have the same strength as she did. What she must have sacrificed to provide a life for me. In my old age, I am becoming like her, but the strength she had was inimitable. The sunlight peeked through the large, arched window and I felt her warmth. She was with me.

A soft voice came from behind me.

"You know, I haven't seen my daughter in over fourteen years." I spun around to see Mrs. E. standing in the doorway. She had tired eyes like she had been crying. A suitcase was by her feet. "Fourteen years," she repeated. Mrs. E. came over to sit on the edge of her bed.

"I made a mistake a long time ago and I've been dealing with it ever since." She inhaled and let out a deep breath. I perched next to her on the bed. I've never heard Mrs. E. speak of her past before. "She hasn't forgiven me. The last time I saw Laurie she said she wished she had a different mother." My heart broke for this woman, seeing that there was a reason for her being alone.

"I'm going to go see her. I'm going to fix this. Even if she doesn't want to talk to me, even if she's still angry. She has to know that her mother still loves her." She grabbed my hand and pulled it into her lap, giving it a squeeze.

"I am so grateful for you staying with me all these years. You are a wonderful woman. I know your mother would be very proud of you."

I started to tear up. Mrs. E. stood up and walked out, grabbing her suitcase on the way. I waited until I heard the front door close before dropping to the floor. I lifted my locket from my chest and opened it, revealing a picture of my mother and me when I was a girl. I hope Mrs. E. makes amends with her daughter. She probably misses her more than she knows.



Hailey Perkins-McCraw, Drawing I



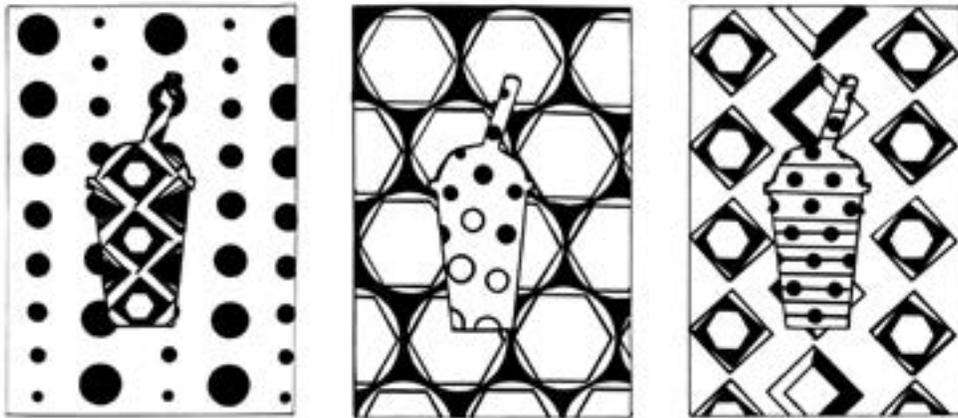
Nidia DeArmaYaro, 3D Design



Peter Martinez, Pottery



Valerie Titus, Pottery



Eryn Kidder, 2D Design



Christine Conover, Painting

Three Years Overdue

Rebecca Delair

Self-worth: The inevitable feeling of pride and strength in oneself. It comes after picking yourself up from a heartbreak when you realize how much more you deserve and viewing yourself as so much more than just a forgettable second option. The internal beauty inside everyone is worth more than wasted time on a conceited individual. It may be hard to find self-worth and appreciation through all the darkness around you, but once it is found, everything becomes more beautiful.

Heartache: The not-so-beautiful experience of a toxic relationship that took three years to leave, dealing with emotional and mental abuse while thinking that this was “true love.” This can turn into beauty when realizing there is so much more out there than crying myself to sleep every night and worrying about a person who sees no wrong in their actions. I began to take the pain from being called names and being lied to and betrayed by someone I thought loved me and turned it into self-worth. All his empty words left out to dry because of a lack of action. I was told that things would change and believed it even though deep down I knew nothing ever would. I was dealing with the mind-numbing feeling of being controlled and having what were supposed to be the best years of my life stripped away by the close-mindedness of one individual. It was the pain of going to my senior prom alone and crying in the bathroom because of one phone call that ruined the whole night. There were endless hours of wondering why I was not good enough or what I did to deserve to be treated in such a barbaric manner. I was always blaming myself because he never took responsibility for the pain he put me through. But, even after all of this I stayed. The love I had for him was genuine, and the idea of leaving him at the time was the most painful of all. I failed to see my worth and believed I needed him to be happy until I finally realized that that statement was not the truth. I began to turn something toxic into something beautiful.

Realization: I began learning how to live happily despite certain circumstances around me that were making it difficult. I realized there is beauty in my worth and growth from these experiences. It could make the not-so-beautiful moments something to be grateful for. I began viewing myself in a way that someone else refused to see me. The tears and pain that came from understanding that the “love” I felt was only lust for someone else became tears of joy when realizing I am worth so much more than meaningless sex and disrespect. The beauty that came out of learning to live life happily and love myself no matter the situation gave me the strength I needed to keep healing. The lies, betrayal, and abuse all became valuable lessons and showed me what I do not need nor want in my life. Knowing what I deserve changed everything around me, and understanding that my internal beauty is greater than any abuse I could encounter is by far one of the most beautiful realizations.

Reminiscing: The hardest part of moving forward and learning how to love myself is the memories. There are thoughts that flood my mind from time to time that make me question my past. It is comforting to be able to look back at the good memories, and it can be nice to think back to a time when love was all I felt, no pain and no sadness. I have become willing to find beauty in everything and have developed an open-mindedness that makes it possible for me to have a positive outlook on something so traumatic. Even with all the bad memories and the experiences I wish I could forget, there are always the ones that can put a smile on my face. And that alone is beautiful. Being able to forgive someone for all the harsh words that were spoken and all the immature actions that made me shed worthless tears is only the beginning of something so much more than a troubled past.

No grudge: Now I can sit here and write about all the pain I felt throughout these three years, but there was more to this person than is seen on the outside. A sensitive soul that is hidden behind a “jock” and “player” persona. His inability to see his own

potential because of the image he tries to sustain in the eyes of his peers. His reoccurring selfish acts that are made not only out of spite but out of the power of popularity. He is horrified by the chance that he might look weak because of his dependency on someone else. The beauty that is hidden behind a rough exterior is one that few people get the chance to see. However, I hope that beauty does shine through eventually because even someone who can cause so much pain and sadness to another individual deserves to live happily.

Healing: Healing and discovering what I have to offer the world is what I believe true beauty is. Being able to look at someone who hurt you and know

that they did not win and being able to forgive them is beautiful. The true internal beauty of knowing my worth and realizing what I deserve. The self-growth and prosperity that began to grow after three years of unimaginable abuse and control. The fact that I am able to see the beauty in myself and the world around me despite certain circumstances I have encountered shows me that I am not just strong, but I have the power to spread the beauty I have found within myself to others who may be going through the same toxic lifestyle I was living. I may not be fully healed from my past; I still reminisce, I still get upset and hurt when thinking about the last three years, but I am better than I was yesterday, and I can only grow from here. And that is beautiful.



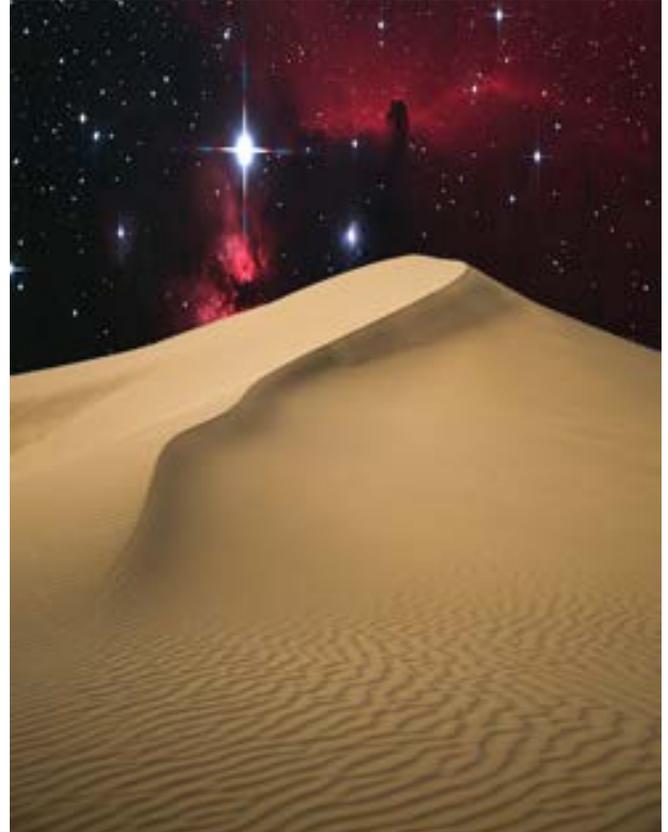
Nathan Baldwin, Digital Art

Stars and Dreams to Reality

Jimena Alexander

Once I reached for the stars. Once I reached for the moon, the planets, and the dark matter in the furthest reaches of space. Once I stretched my arms, wrists, hands and fingers towards a dream so beautiful it crushed every thought, every emotion, until only elation remained. No other dream has ever succeeded in making every muscle, every pore, in my body seep with such excitement and joy.

This dream was to one day be approved by NASA to become a photo analyst exclusively for the Hubble Telescope. This was a wild fantasy for a large portion of my high school years, and though it did create very erratic behaviors and temperaments within my group of friends, my classes, and within myself, I didn't care. I loved the rush it gave me to have the perseverance and integrity to, hopefully, be able to obtain a job for myself that involved working in and amongst individuals who have the same passion as I did. And being quite honest with myself, I loved the expectation and the thought of letting myself "fall into space" while submerging myself in my work of unraveling the mysteries of each and every photo I would ultimately receive. I was obsessed, I was hooked on a feeling, on a fantasy. The problem with becoming obsessed was that, with my personality, it is very difficult to let go of something once completely entranced with an idea or love of something, nor did I wish to let go of that feeling. This dream stayed with me for the remainder of my high school years and even followed me out and into the world.



Jonathan Snyder, Digital Art

It was only when I began to look for positions within NASA and colleges that gave out majors dealing with photo analysis and astrophysics and whatever else I needed to begin my incredible journey that I began to realize that no such position actually existed. I was crushed. For a long time, depression overtook me. Even if I found it to be something so simple as fantasies dissipating into a cloud of smoke, it still affected me deeply. After a period of about six months, I decided to shake myself of this sadness and search for a new dream. I still wanted to do something involving space exploration, something that didn't involve my feet leaving the ground. I began researching different positions and majors that included space exploration from planet Earth. And when that didn't work, I looked a little closer to home; I began to look a little deeper into things that I knew how to do and also had some level of passion for. I came up with several things, none of which I wanted to settle down and keep as a career for the rest of my life. One of these passions was caring for young children. The more I investigated childcare and teaching and the more I thought about it, the more the idea grew on me and gave me the same emotions and feelings as my previous passion and obsession. I was going to go through with it.

Then I fell into reality; it hit me hard that I really enjoyed caring for people. I enjoyed teaching. This I knew because I had some experience during my high school years in teaching the preschool grades as an extracurricular activity. Not only did I love it, but I found the deepest sort of satisfaction in knowing that what I gave, the youth took with them for the rest of their lives. And that gave me more of a feeling than I have ever felt with the dream of becoming a photo analyst for NASA. Once I reached for the stars; now I keep my feet firmly anchored to the ground.

Beheaded By A Praying Mantis

Alex Mitchell

Once I was a pure white daisy. Now I am a wilted purple lilac bush...I say this because I was once a child with so much light and ambition and happiness, which really was just blissful ignorance to a trained eye. But now that I have the knowledge of what was actually happening around me, and how I was really treated as a small child, I feel as if I am a flower dying from lack of water, sun and CO2.

My mother is a praying mantis, awaiting her next meal. She is always searching and always has a mate set up next. Whether or not she eats the heads off her mates, somehow they all seem to perish. But that extends to me. I am not her mate, nor a lined up meal. I am her stepping stone. I am the plant she walks upon to find a meal worth beheading. Though I disagree with her way of hunting, and I hate her for hurting other creatures that walk upon my stem, I am a harmless dying lilac bush, and so I just let her crawl on me with homicidal intent. The more she kills, the more I wilt; I carry the feelings of the men she rips apart. I watch them suffer in silent agony as she mercilessly moves on to her next victim. And so, as the pain rips through them, it wilts me over and over until all that is left is dead petals and the rotting smell of eighteen-year-old lilac flowers.

One by one I feel the scars over my stem...each one a memory only I can see. There are three big scars and many little ones. The three represent my fathers. Yes, I have three fathers. Three mantis bodies rotting on my dead flowered carcass. The first body is of a large insect with disastrous anger. He lies there beheaded, but full of what seems to be my emotions. This is my biological father. He gave me life, and now I have him in death. The next body is almost as big as the first, with no head and a small heart. You can see almost the agony he went through even before my mother. But he was just as much to blame for the pain that became his reality. Yet the third...still has a head. Though only attached by what looks to be nothing, he lies crippled on my stem, begging and crying for someone or something to end his agony. His tears nourish my body, giving me life. It is not because he is in pain that I get stronger, but because of his strength. Unlike the rest, he fought for his life, instead of backing down and letting her rip his head from his body. Each day there is a moment when he might die, when the pain is too grave. I feel his strength diminish; his tears begin to flow, and I grow stronger. I wrap my flowers around him, keeping him safe from the harsh elements in those moments of terror and pain. This mantis is my stepfather. He is my

world wrapped nicely into one man, and he is the light I thought I'd never find after my childhood ended. He is my sun and my water.

There is another lilac bush, smaller in stature but older, probably trimmed to fit better in the world. She also has similar experiences to me because she is my sister. She has a different father, one that was beheaded long before I knew the truth. She has memories and scars on her stem that I have never seen, though I still know some of where they came from because the origin, again, was our mother. Her flowers continue to bloom in some places, still vibrantly pastel purple! And then others are completely dead. I am worried...I want to give her water, but I don't have enough to spare. So I stand next to her as she continues slowly to die.

The plant on the other side of me is larger, and he is not dead or dying, though he is wilted more than the majority of the flowers hidden inside the bush. His colors are vibrant, ranging from deep purple to light lavender. He has experienced the wrath of my mother...but just the most recent time. I feel this affected him most because the last insect is his biological father. And so he shares, through empathy, his father's emotions. The knowledge he has acquired from me and my sister plant has given him enough anger to become almost poisonous, but alas we are lilac bushes and so we are harmless by nature.

We lilacs are damaged. We cannot tell if all women are praying mantises, ready to behead all of the creatures they encounter. Are all women comparable to murderous insects, or is that just the perception of us lilac bushes damaged by the one we all trusted the most? At least I know that my mother is a praying mantis. And I still foresee her ripping off the heads of more men. Sometimes I wish to be a praying mantis and rip her head off...but I am harmless, so I am still a wilted purple lilac bush.



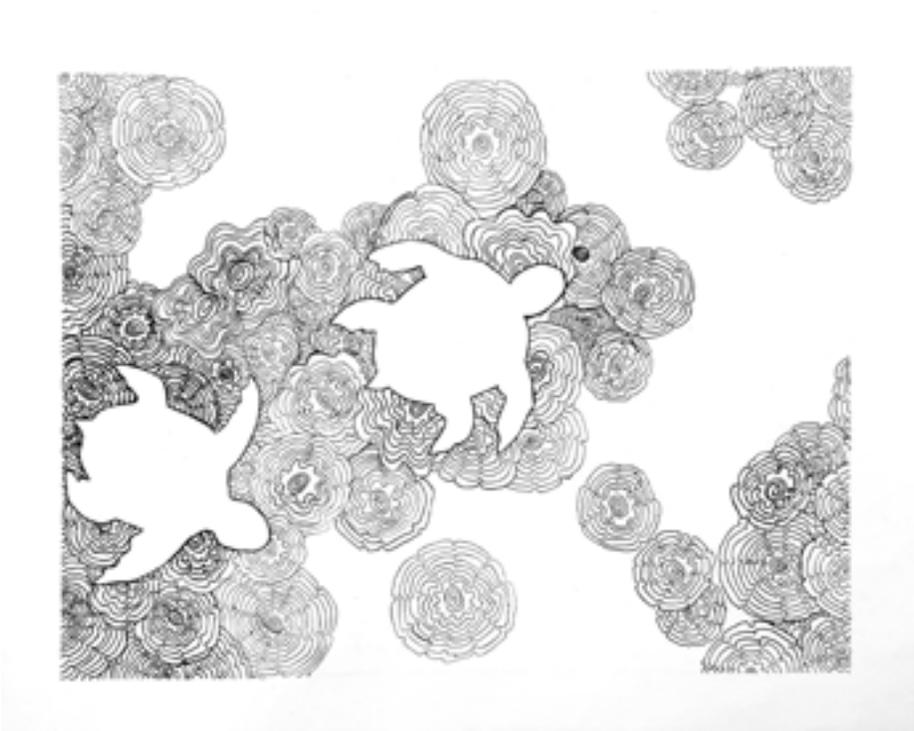
Andrea Kyzer, Pottery



Hayley DeTuleo, Pottery



Linzy Compo, 2D Design



Eryn Kidder, 2D Design

My Greatest Achievement!

Wade Willis

When someone achieves a lifelong goal it's one of the most special feelings in the world. Whether it be passing a driving test, becoming a doctor, or just graduating from high school, the feelings one can get from these tasks can be amazing. My life-long goal was to get into a competitive nursing program. Nursing at NCCC is a very competitive major. It requires lots of studying and hard work to achieve high grades to get a guaranteed spot. On March 4, 2019, I was accepted into the LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse) program at NCCC and was very excited to start my journey to becoming a nurse!

When I was in high school in my freshman year, I didn't know what I was going to do for the rest of my life. I was starting to believe that there was no major for me. My peers knew exactly what they were going to do and at what college they were going to achieve it. I was left in the dark, not knowing what I was going to do. I thought that I was going to work at a basic hourly pay job for the rest of my life. The thought of working at a basic fast food job was scary. Another year passed, and I was a sophomore. I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life and time was ticking.

About half way through my sophomore year there was a trip to BOCES near Franklin Academy. I attended the field trip and found something that had my interest. One of the programs that was offered at BOCES was Health O.C.C. Some students who were taking the program said that it is a once in a life time opportunity. They said that course had a lot of material and a ton of hands-on activities that were needed to pass the course. What interested me the most was the certification that I could get from the class. I could obtain my CNA (Certified Nurse's Aide) from the program. I was excited and I knew then that helping people was going to be my passion. I applied to the program and got in immediately. I could start my journey to becoming a nurse.

During my junior year in high school I attended the Health O.C.C. My first few weeks in the program were intimidating—the pages of reading and homework that I had to do were overwhelming. But I succeeded and pulled through. After the first few weeks the work load wasn't as extensive, was more manageable, and I could take it a lot slower. After lectures in class we had skills lab; these skills included: making beds, feeding, bathing, and clothing. Helping the elderly was a great experience and I enjoyed every minute of it. Every other week half the class went to the nursing home for clinical. The firsthand experience that came with going to clinical was great! Although I enjoyed the program and what I had to offer, I unfortunately didn't obtain my CNA. There was a certain skill that I had a hard time with and if we didn't complete a skill before our week of clinical, I couldn't attend clinical. In order to receive a CNA, I had to have 80 hours of clinical time and I had 75 at the end of the year. I was very upset that I didn't get my CNA and I was starting to give up on my dream of becoming a nurse. But with the support of my family and friends I gained the strength to power through the sadness and keep going. My senior year in high school I took a bunch of college-level classes to help prepare me for the courses I need to take in college to get into the LPN program. I graduated from high school with psychology, chemistry and statistics college credits under my belt.

After high school I started my journey in college at NCCC. I picked NCCC because it was close to home and I heard that the professors there were very helpful and generous.

My first semester of college I took a few courses that were required to get into the LPN program. I took Human Biology, Developmental Psychology, and Sociology of Addiction. I thought that these courses would better prepare me for my nursing classes than any other courses. I enjoy college much more than I enjoyed high school because the freedom and time management were all up to me. I needed to learn how to manage my time between all my courses and work. I was told that there was a high demand for nurses right now and that drove me to push myself to the limit and try to get the best grades I could possibly get. It turned out to be true! According to an article written by Juraschek et. al., RNs and LPNs are desperately needed in the United States. Some places are actually paying over what an RN or LPN would usually get because there is such a shortage (Juraschek et. al.). So knowing these few things, I wanted to do well in my courses. I aced Microbiology and Developmental Psychology. But with all the success I had I did struggle with Sociology of Addiction. In the end, I brought my grade up in that course and ended up with a 3.44 GPA at the end of my first semester. Now that I'm in my second semester of college I'm excited to see what the LPN program holds for me.

Chasing one's dreams is almost always a great experience to have. It can shine light onto a difficult situation and can drive someone to do his/her best. Achieving a life-long goal is something every person should strive for. The confidence and ego boost that it gives one can be very exhilarating and priceless. Being accepted into the nursing program was a task that I wanted to do for a very long time, and now that I've achieved it I can't wait to see what happens next!

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Peter Martinez, Pottery



Andrea Kyzer, Pottery

Waking Up **Courtney Roy**

When I wake up, the first thing I do is head to the bathroom to start my morning routine. I stand in front of the sink and begin brushing my teeth. As I brush my teeth, I scan my overall appearance. I always begin with a close-up look at my skin, even though I usually have toothpaste seeping out of the corners of my mouth. Then I will back up and assess the state of my hair and then back even farther to get a view of my whole body. When I finish brushing my teeth, coupled with the full body scan, it's time to undress and step on the dreaded scale before my shower. When I explain my morning routine, I feel a ping in my stomach from how obsessive and excessive it sounds, but it sets in stone my actions for the day moving forward.

It may seem a bit insane to state that a daily 'body scan' predicts my actions for the rest of the day, but I know that I am not alone. When I worriedly explained this to my best friend, she expressed how she did the same thing and said, "Okay, so I'm not crazy?!" My best friend's boyfriend calls us "Cody," which is apparently short for co-dependent. I don't believe that we are "co-dependent," but I do think that we rely heavily on one another so that we don't pick ourselves apart to the point of depression. As her boyfriend calls us this, he is weighing his food for the week and counting down to the exact macros so that his body is in peak condition. Now I know I have only mentioned my best friend, her boyfriend and me being consumed with our appearance, but I believe that many people become obsessed with appearance.

I often wonder what self-love was like before social media came into the picture. Were we still picking apart our appearances, wanting to look like others? As I scroll through social media on the daily, my feed is filled with models, famous people, make-up art, and fitness techniques. While gawking at the images, I pick myself apart from my nose down to the cellulite that ripples my thighs. I see people with perfect lips, hair, eyebrows, and bodies, and it makes me devise plans to change what I saw during my body scan. There are countless ads and tips about ways to lose weight, improve your skin, have fuller hair, and to do your make-up to enhance your features. I am not a famous person by any means, but even famous people are burdened with their appearances. For example, Kylie Jenner had lip injections so that her lips were fuller and so that the comments about her thin lips would stop. Cardi B speaks openly about having butt injections when she was a stripper because her butt was too flat. These are just two examples of well-known people who have modified their bodies, but the number is much higher.



Dayanara Bero, Drawing I

There are many shows on television that express how obsessed people can become with their appearance, but my favorite is “Botched-up Bodies.” This show is all about the lengths people will go to change their appearance, but as expressed by ‘botched’ in the title their modifications go horribly wrong. The series shows people having procedures, from facial injections to labia reconstruction, yes, labia reconstruction. One of the most common modifications that happens daily is breast implants. I have always wanted breast implants myself, but then “Botched-up Bodies” showed a woman who had implants that went terribly wrong and led to her nipple and breast tissue dying. I feel a little less obsessive after watching this show and seeing just how far people are willing to go with changing their bodies. There is a man who is known as the “Human Ken Doll” who has gone under numerous surgeries, including injections, implants, and rib removals, to look exactly like the Ken doll and yes, there is a woman who has done the same to look like the “Human Barbie Doll.”

So many people become obsessed with appearance in this world it almost seems unhealthy, and social media only feeds everyone’s inner beast. Speaking of feeding the inner beast, let’s touch on the numerous diet fads. You cannot watch television without seeing at least one ad about some sort of diet that works, but also social media has several different ideas for you to lose weight as well. To name some of the fads, there is Weight Watchers, Atkins, Paleo, vegan, and fasting. Some of these involve calorie restriction and portion control, whereas others require certain foods and specific eating times. All are meant to help you become healthier and, most importantly, skinnier. To explain how many people are obsessed with weight loss alone, the weight loss and diet control industry is worth 72 billion dollars, according to Cision PR Newswire. That is an absurd amount of money that countless people spend yearly just to lose weight.

Obsessing over my own appearance began as a young teenager and only flourished as I grew older. From the few examples I have provided on appearance obsession, I know that I am far from alone in this world. Many people do just as I have, and even if they don’t ‘body scan and plan’, they can probably give examples of things they do to enhance or change their appearance. Even my own mother talks about wanting a facelift so that she appears younger. Our world is plagued with appearance obsession, and unfortunately, there is no cure in sight.

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Peter Martinez, Pottery



Peter Martinez, Pottery

Love Over Loneliness

Anonymous

Gentle bony fingers ran down my spine, coating my back with goosebumps as vast as the Rocky Mountains. Dawn peeked through jet black wool curtains that imprisoned the darkness from the day. A routine kiss was placed onto my lips following an "I love you" with the familiar warm unpleasant morning breath that I had grown oddly fond of. Shower water fell like rain to the floor until it was met by his robust shoulders. Water coated his skin, clinging to and running down his back with selected drops bouncing off, unwilling to stick. The way a waterfall flows and folds over a rough cliff-side, releasing at the bottom because there is no more room to fall. Sound of the rainstorm faded into silence; random noise filled the air from rummaging through the closet. An ordinary start to a morning that I had lived for almost four years would unknowingly be my last with him.

Months that felt like years playing in slow motion pass by our last encounter. Every touch and breath crashed into my mind like relentless waves, slowly eroding a jagged coast. Pessimistic memories circulated through my mind. Hurt leaked from my veins to arteries, pumping hatred into my heart, turning it cold. Days and nights were wasted locked away in my room, soaking pillows with ceaseless tears. Obsessing and over-analyzing the last text he left me became my new pastime.

Togetherness was the illusion I lived in since the age of fourteen. The ability to be enough for someone else, the capability of making someone else happy became my reality. Tending to and caring for my past relationship became a part-time job and I was being paid in happiness. Finding a love that came so natural and pure was what I thought beauty was. Is it not?

How could a love so beautiful covertly

sharpen its blade and cut so deep, leaving me wounded several years after? Questions became my only train of thought. Why, after all this time, was I not enough? Doubt overwhelmed my conscience, depleting any last positive feelings that still existed. Weight seemed to diminish from my body, mocking the colorful leaves that plummeted in the fall, one by one until the tree is left naked to brave the elements. Aloneness widened across the horizon, filling my vision with gloomy greys and midnight blacks. For the first time in my life I felt completely left in the dark. The immense heartbreak I experienced was unfamiliar terrain to me. Something I was not allowed to prepare for. This one hit me all at once, as if I had bolted in front of a class six freight train, sending my body parts in different directions like burning ends of scattered fireworks. My heart was stuck to a speedy rail wheel, the way a piece of gum gets stuck to the bottom of one's shoe. Every time a flashback played back in my head or I would see him with her, that wheel would make its way around, diminishing any remaining heartbeat. My limbs seemed to stretch for miles, lying in my bed, empty arms reached out for the ghost of him. "You are not here anymore, and you never will be," I repeated to myself every night before shutting my tear-filled eyes.

In the song "All I Want" the artist Kodakid sings:

When you said your last goodbye

I died a little bit inside

I lay in tears in bed all night

Alone without you by my side

But if you loved me

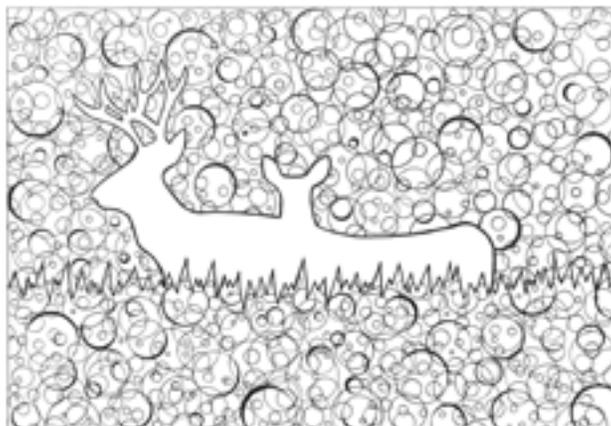
Why did you leave me?

Every agonizing feeling I experienced throughout my despair was concluded in a few lyrics.

Months of rebuilding took place following the traumatic train wreck. Hours of praying and family time started to fill my schedule. Piece by piece, I began to put the puzzle he tore apart back together. The importance of being alone started to make more sense to me. For the first time in my life I had a sense of identity without someone else looking over my shoulder. An unfamiliar smile I thought had I lost showed every few days; weight was adding on putting me back together. Dark curtains retreated to their hooks, month old laundry made its way through the wash cycle, inches of dust were finally wiped away. Working my way to the very last object resting untouched, stacked on my bookshelf. The picture book stood like a skyscraper that housed hundreds of memories of him. To this day the distinct building still sticks out in my room. It serves more as a reminder of recognizing how uncomfortable and sad happiness has the possibility to make you. The capability of overlooking that and seeing how empowering it can be finding yourself and that being alone is the true beauty.



Zena O'Leary Cumber, Pottery



Cheyenne Burdo, 2D Design

Google: The Hero We Need, Not the Hero We Deserve

Megan Mulvenna

How blessed are we to be alive in a time when Google exists? Whether we need to research information for an assignment that is due in ten minutes or we need to know a substitution for eggs in a recipe, Google is always right there to help. In just a couple strokes of the keyboard one is presented with a multitude of information regarding the topic one needs to search. One no longer has to learn the archaic method of using a real-life encyclopedia or the daunting task of looking through all of the books at the library to get information. Google has changed the world for the better by making information easily obtainable with no real effort put forth.

How many college students are scrambling for an idea for an essay topic at this very second? Thanks to Google, these students no longer have to struggle because in a matter of seconds essay topics ranging from research-based to whimsical are at their fingertips. "Their use boosted the demand for effective search among vast amount of information which is disseminated in a chaotic way" (Anagnostopoulo). In just a matter of minutes these college students can be on their way to getting that essay completed before the deadline, saving them from that dreaded late grade. These college students do not need to worry about starting the assignment weeks early without budgeting in appropriate research time because they now have Google. However, Google is good for so much more than helping college students beat those deadlines.

Working mothers are at home now staying up late to get their children's bake sale cupcakes baked when they realize they have run out of eggs. There is no time to run to the store as the kids are asleep, but these cupcakes need to be done for the morning. Insert superhero Google to the rescue, giving this mother a substitution so she can get to bed at a reasonable hour. The cupcakes get baked, the mom gets sleep, and again everyone wonders how she does it. Google helps people from all walks of life succeed in areas where they need more knowledge.

For example, older generations have a difficult time with technology, so it is no surprise to know they need more help understanding how to use advanced technology. Lucky for this older generation, Google is very user friendly and they can gain access to answers in a matter of seconds. Do they want to know how to FaceTime their grandkids? Google has an answer for that. Do they need to know how to use their new tablet their children bought them for Christmas? In swoops Google with their answers in a quick easy to understand format. Google can even help them understand all of the new language their grandkids said during that last FaceTime call. Google serves many purposes for many people in all walks of life.

Google is such a wonderful addition to our modern world. One can think of a question and instantly the information from multiple viewpoints is at one's very fingertips. It is only fitting in a need-it-now society that we are easily able to obtain information in a New York minute. "Along with other valuable results it was concluded that web users likely desire to acquire search results fast and with the minimum possible effort" (Anagnostopoulo). Google is a living, breathing library that anyone can gain access to from the comfort of their living room while they sit in their pajamas. Thanks to the inner workings of the Internet for the blessing known as Google. By having access to all of life's questions one will never be left without answers again.

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Nathan Baldwin, Digital Art



Joseph Hickman, Digital Art



Ryan King, Typography

I had a history test at 12:15 p.m. I grabbed my phone, seeing 12:09 p.m. I will never forget the number. I kept reading the terms in my head: Boston Massacre, Columbian Exchange, uh... I couldn't stay focused on the pages. My hands shook and I felt my head swelling with anxiety. I felt like at any moment I would explode, the study terms falling apart into loose letters in my head. Fuck it. I figured I was destined to fail the test, resorting to my personal mantra: Fuck it. The same attitude that got me here, ignoring doing the basics, like studying last night instead of getting drunk at Sarah's. Oh, but I couldn't tell Sarah Mills that I wouldn't come over. Of course I'll drink, Sarah, why not? I thought, mocking my laziness. Fuck it. Right?

I wrapped my hands around the door handle. The brisk metal sent tingles up my fingers, pulsing through my nerves. I fully pulled the handle down, unlatching the door. Bang. My hand froze. Bang. Bang. I hear high-pitched wails echo the halls. The crashing explosions echoed down the hall, through the door, up every fingertip, rattling my ears. I knew the sound.

I thought of hunting with my friend, Jason. I remember my ears rattling in the woods, the blood of the deer. The deer frantically kicking and crying out before slowly giving in to its fate. I didn't ever shoot, I left that to Jason. I just went for the quiet. The cold, brisk dawn forest.

Bang. I was back in Neverbrook. In the bathroom. No. Not here. Neverbrook Central? No way. I couldn't imagine at my little school something could happen. I remembered gunshots only could mean one thing. Something's dying. More gunshots rang out, and I felt my gut sink. I needed to puke. Not the time, no, I got to go.

I opened the door, heard a gunshot that sounded like it was downstairs. I knew I was on the second floor and I had nowhere easy to leave the school. All the windows were locked because of some dumbass eighth-graders climbing on the roof. I heard the gunshot move towards the stairs a couple yards to my left. I gotta go now. I don't have another choice. I looked towards the connecting hallway ahead. Fuck it.

I threw myself forward, sprinting with a boost of energy I never felt. Down the West Wing. More shots echoed behind, coming up the stairs. I kept my pace, sliding around the corners. Screams echoed out. Right. Down to the Agriculture Wing upstairs, the greenhouse. Open windows. Gunshots followed me like a shadow, every three seconds it felt like one pierced my eardrums, aching my head. Blood. I slid into the Agriculture room, running to the back. I grabbed the latch, yanking it to get jerked back, crushing my hand on the door. I had too much adrenaline flowing to notice my strength. I grabbed a hammer and rammed it into the handle. The bangs of the hammer made an eerie song with the gunshots, and I felt my blood pumping. I can't die today. C'mon you piece of shit.

On the fifth hit, the handle clanged to the floor and I pulled it open, running to the back windows. In front of them lay ladders, barrels, hoses, and other greenhouse equipment. There weren't any plants in there. I couldn't move it in time. A heavy gunshot echoed out. They're outside.

I slid into a barrel on the side of the room and pulled the cover over the top. I twisted it shut and held my hand over my mouth. Like every horror movie I have ever seen, yet I can't put into words, to this day, the pangs of my heartbeat. Every beat hit heavy in my chest, throbbing like a metronome in slow motion. Bu-bump. Bu-bump. Bu-bump. Then it stopped, the minute I heard a heavy boot hit the floor of the greenhouse.

I sat silent, hoping the sound wouldn't be around long. I heard heavy footsteps clap on the tile floor of the greenhouse. The little puddles of water splashed under the steps. I heard them stop

for a moment. Finally, a voice broke through.

"Hey! Where the fuck are you? I heard you!" he screamed in a deep holler. I knew the voice too well. I heard footsteps come right next to the barrel and felt a sharp kick in the side. The barrel tipped over and I flew out the top. I looked up, meeting eyes with the emptiest face I'd ever seen. Jason sat in front of me, a loaded shotgun in his hands. He had all camo on, two pistols on his side. He had dirty, tangled hair, unlike his normal, well-brushed mane. His skin was dull and pale. His eyes sunk into his head and had purple bags under them.

"J-J-Jason," I started, shocked. "What are you doing man..."

"I've had it, man. I got nothing left, man. I felt like this..." he said, shaking his head and looking at his gun. "This is an impact," he said, sending a chill up my spine. "I won't be a nobody..." he muttered.

"Jason. You really fucked up, man! This is really fucking crazy, man. I know you are hurting, and are really confused right now, but you need to calm down," I pleaded, trying to pull and tug at the heartstrings of the kid I thought I knew.

"It's too late, I already started. I might as well finish this," he said, looking down in a peculiar stare on the floor, tightening his grip on the gun.

"Listen," I said, standing up slowly. He cocked the gun and stood alert. "Give me the gun. We will stop this now. Before more people have to suffer, Jason. They're suffering now, just like you." He looked me in the eyes. The look was haunting. He looked shattered. He looked like the deer we hunted. The marbled, black centers of their eyes standing out with fierce obscurity, making me look longer and longer at the emptiness inside.

Jason walked to the other side of the room and sat down. "It's over, man..." he said, putting the shotgun in his mouth. I turned away before a gunshot rang out. My ears rang and I felt unaware of what happened. I felt like I froze in time, like someone hit the pause button.

The EMTs said they found me in the corner of the greenhouse against the wall. I blacked out after the gunshot. The next day I woke up in the hospital at 7:00 a.m. I was sedated to sleep through the night, as the hospital staff said I was shaken up and exhausted. The news played on the TV in the room.

"The Neverbrook Press says the hero student talked the shooter down, saving hundreds of lives of students in the building."

I rushed to shut the it off. Quickly after, my Mom came in.

"Hey bud, feeling okay?" she said.

"Yeah, a little dazed..."

"You're a hero, you know that, right?" she said, rubbing my leg.

"Yeah, I guess." I didn't feel like a hero. How do you celebrate any part of a massacre? It puzzled me every day after, how, in this messed up world, I could be a hero by causing my friend's death. If anything, I wish I would've talked to him earlier. I didn't know that the deer bones he had were from mutilating corpses in his free time. No one questioned him. Come to find out, he had been having devilish, horrific thoughts for years found in his journals after the shooting. I wish he could've found help. He was a good friend lost to dark thoughts, and tragedies he inflicted last decades beyond him.



Ashley Schork, Digital Photography

Roses

Emily Jablonski

Once as pure as white,
As peaceful as snow
As bright as the sun,
We were all white roses
Then none...

Years go by our colour stains
Turning pink from all the pain,
Not that old but so much fear
Petals stained...
Once a beautiful white now stained
Broken by the night...

Wars of hearts break us,
Torn between love and hate
Blood runs making us brave
The crimson color stays
A blood red armour
Once as pure as snow
Now as dark as blood
Our fear becomes our power
May all fear...
The roses we will become

My Moon Child **Delaney Smith**

Growing up, my mother had always been fascinated with the bright city lights along with the busy madness of Manhattan. Therefore, I had no choice but to be brought up in the city lights. I knew that when I was old enough to leave home, the city was never an option. I loved the quiet and the dark, so it was ideal that I would live in a small, quiet town. Luckily for me, I got this wish, met the man of my dreams, and we lived in a tiny town with our closest neighbors a couple miles down the road. At last, I was in heaven, I had peace and quiet, and the only bright lights were those of the stars on a clear night.

This dream of mine was exactly that, a dream. I had reached satisfaction. Our small town consisted mostly of farm land and small family owned businesses. There's a small bakery owned by a lovely older couple and a beautiful greenhouse that was owned by a lovely younger mother of five and her husband, where everyone from close towns would come to buy flowers to plant at their own homes. Then there was one of my favorites, a small bookstore that also had a little café inside where customers could buy their books and sit to read while enjoying a nice hot cup of coffee. My husband worked for CSX, a railway corporation. I mostly stayed home in my sunroom where I would write for my blog and update my readers on our simple life in our small town. Sometimes I would go down to the bookstore and do some blogging there as well. Things couldn't be better. We were expecting our first child and we had chosen not to find out the gender. There are only so many great surprises this cruel world offers, and we wanted the next chapter of our lives to be a big surprise.

Living in this tiny town, with neighbors miles apart, was exactly the opposite of how I grew up, and I loved it. I was thirty-four weeks pregnant and my husband was away for work, which was normal since his job required a lot of traveling and I wasn't due for another six weeks, so we thought. On the clearest of nights, home all alone and while

I was updating my blog, the unimaginable happened—my water broke. Of course I scurried around the house and grabbed the essentials, probably forgetting many things since I hadn't yet put together our hospital bag. I didn't think I'd have to for a few more weeks. I hurried to the door without phoning my husband, figuring that I would call him on the way, not even thinking about the poor reception that most of the town had. I waddled down our stone path that had bushes of irises and hydrangeas that my husband and I had planted the year before. I forgot to turn on the light for the back porch on my way out the door, so the only light that helped me see was the full moon right above me. Something about the way the light hit the flowers was calming, along with the fact that tonight was the the night of the full moon and the same night that I went into labor, it all felt like a sign to me. I was so excited; our lives were about to change for the better.

11:48 p.m.: I threw my things into the passenger seat and started the engine. The only light in our area were my headlights and the moon that was still shimmering bright above me. Since it was late most businesses were closed except for the one gas station we had in our area, and everyone else was most likely in bed for the night. I could tell my contractions were becoming closer and quicker. Our hospital of choice, or the nearest hospital at that, was a twenty minute drive. Although I was in so much pain, I couldn't contain my excitement. I couldn't wait to phone my husband and tell him the good news. As I rummaged through my things, finally, I found my phone to call my husband and give him my exciting update. I clicked my home button, "No Service," read across the top. "No way," I thought to myself. My dreams of living in a small town, in this very moment, had backfired.

12:00 a.m. on a Wednesday night, I had been driving for about twelve minutes, which had seemed like an eternity since every minute seemed to make a difference with this labor. All the houses I passed were blacked out, since everyone, I'm sure was tucked into bed for they probably had work in the morning and all the kids had school. I kept checking, knowing it probably

hadn't changed, but taking the chance, but I still had no service, and at this time my contractions were intense to the point it was almost unbearable and definitely dangerous to be driving. I shimmied my pants off since they had been soaked, and when I did that I could see it was time. I could see the top of my baby's head. A sudden rush of emotions came over me, pure terror, sadness, excitement, everything in between. At this moment it hadn't really even crossed my mind I was alone on the road with only the moonlight. I pulled over because it seemed to be the only option. Unsure of what to do, with no service and no one else around but my baby who was eager to enter this world in this exact moment, nature took its course. I had moved my seat back a ways, gave one big push, and there she was. I always had been mesmerized by the moon, but never in my life had it seemed so beautiful until the moment I held my child for the first time on the side of the road when the moonlight poured itself across her face, highlighting every beautiful, tiny feature. My life felt complete, and although my husband

wasn't there to witness it, I felt this moonlit moment couldn't have been more magical. It was a girl, our daughter. She was here, it was just the two of us. I suctioned her mouth to the best of my ability, wrapped her in the blanket I had packed, and drove to the hospital. Hot tears streamed down my face as I drove, trying to wrap my head around everything that just happened, completely in awe of my daughter's beauty and overwhelmed by the love I felt for this tiny girl whom I held in my arms. Finally I got to call my husband who showed up shortly after.

"She's here," I said.

"She? It's a girl?" he responded.

"Yes, we have a daughter, she's here. How do you like the name Luna?" I asked, thinking of the moonlit road she had made her grand entrance on. This was the night that I realized my dreams had changed my life forever. Without them, we might not have my moon child.



Erin Rourke, Digital Photography

Dad

Shannon Russell

As we grow up our parents tell stories of our childhood. Some stories are memories we share while others are left, locked up in our minds, never to be thought of again unless someone shares them with us. Sometimes traumatic events occur at a young age; certain individuals can remember every detail, what day it was, whether it was a nice day or a dreary one, and what smells floated through the air, while others block it out having no recollection of the events whatsoever. Growing up with these memories or lack thereof can have the ability to define people, make them who they become.

When I was growing up, whenever the weather changed, I noticed a dull ache in my collar bone. Along with this ache was what felt like a slight deformation just below the skin, made up of what I could only assume was bone. The other side didn't feel this way and I couldn't recall hurting myself enough for any permanent damage to have occurred. Growing much more curious over the years, when I was a teenager, I finally decided to inquire from my mother the origins of this mysterious injury; I wanted to know what had happened. She knew, and she remembered what happened that day, a story of my childhood I didn't recall, even though to her it seemed as though it had just happened yesterday.

We sat down together on our sofa, my legs laid across hers and her hands resting gently atop of them. She began to tell me about how when I was just an infant my father had a game he enjoyed playing with me. He tossed me up high into the air, bringing about many smiles and great amounts of laughter. As I came back down he caught me, doing this over and over again until his arms could no longer tolerate the repetitive motions and he needed to rest, despite my disapproval. As many mothers can probably relate, my mother hated this, fearing for the worst possible outcome, but my father didn't care because it was "our thing."

One particular day when I was about seven months old, I was home in the care of my father and my mother was at work. After a particularly long day, she arrived home to hear laughter in the other room. Wondering where such a joyous sound was coming from she walked into the room only to find me in the air, mid-toss, and without thought or hesitation she let out a panicked yell. This was all it took to distract my father from his one and only job in that moment: to catch me. As gravity pulled me back down, I went past the safety that was his hands and came crashing down. The large oak coffee table made by the same hands that had failed to catch me broke not only my fall but my collarbone as well.

Most parents run to the aid of their child to ensure they are okay, wipe away any tears and comfort them; however, my father was not most people. He had a panic and run instinct, and he did just that, he ran! My mother, on the other hand, came to my aid, comforting me, unaware of the broken bone hiding beneath the flesh. Within minutes my father had come to his senses and returned to bring us to the emergency room. While the doctors checked x-rays and made sure I was going to be okay, he stood in the hall unable to face me after what he had done despite reassurance from everyone that I was going to be okay. He's an odd man, not capable of love the way most people are. He never forgave himself for what happened that day despite it having been an accident. Even though some people block out the bad memories, some do not. My father is one of those people; he didn't block out his childhood, he will never forget what happened to him, and we will never know who he could have been.

Redemption

Daniel Snyder II

"I'm sorry, excuse me," a gentle female voice behind me said, snapping me back to reality. I smiled and moved to the side, allowing the petite blond girl into the library. I had been standing in front of the door for a few minutes now, and the wind was turning my dry fingers a bright red. I squeezed inside before the door shut and headed to the back room.

I opened another large red door at the back of the library to face twelve people in the back room. There were thirteen chairs in a circle, and next to the blonde girl from earlier was an empty one.

A lanky man with red, curly hair and a thick beard stood at attention. "Ah, welcome! I'm Mr. Mackleroy, but call me Mack. You must be our new guest, Tom?" the man inquired.

I scratched the back of my hand and peeked around the room. "Yeah, that's me." I felt judged, even though no more than two people lifted their heads.

"Well come, come, join the circle!" Mack said, and I plopped down next to the blond girl. Mack sat down before breaking into a spiel about the positivity behind community. I couldn't focus on what he was saying. I just kept wandering my gaze, landing upon a vending machine in a darkly lit corner, a garbage can over-flowing with coffee cups, and a poster in the corner that had a beer bottle in a circle with a line through it. It looked like a Bud Light bottle. My lips began to dry and the migraines I'd been having started back up as well. I tried to pull myself back in, but I couldn't help but focus on the bottle.

"Tom?" Mack said, grabbing my attention. "Would you like to introduce yourself?" he prompted, and I was too nervous to do anything but nod along.

"Hey, everyone. I'm Tom. I'm twenty-five, and I am a recovering alcoholic. I was drinking for six years straight, been on and off for the past three," I said, trying to get it all out before I started stammering.

"Good, well it's very nice to meet you Tom. Don't worry about being shy, we all are here for the same reason," Mack said, flashing a small coin on his necklace with "20" written on it. "Twenty years for me a few years ago. I stopped getting new coins because I was losing them in vending machines," he joked, and a few chuckles rang out. The man with a gray beard down a few seats hacked heavily, spitting into a cup nearby. "Well, in today's session, we are going to talk about why we got sober. Just a brief little wrap-up of the moment you decided to," Mack explained, placing his elbows on his knees and leaning forward. The room sat silent for a few moments until I figured I should go, as the new person. That, and I didn't want to go last.

"I was twenty-two and was coming back from..." I stopped mid-thought, feeling all the emotions flooding back. The worry, the regrets, all of it came back like it had many times before, but I had to suppress it. "I was coming back from a party with a friend. I already had twelve or thirteen by that time and was just trying to get him home. I was coming down his road and..." I clammed up as I started feeling my heart beat faster. I started trembling slightly, and I felt a gentle hand wrap my shoulder. The blond girl was rubbing my shoulder, looking at me with eyes saying: It's okay. I want to hear. I am not going to judge you. The man down the row spit in his cup again. "I hurt someone," I said, a tear welling in my eye but perching itself on an eyelash, holding my vulnerability in by a thread.

"It's okay now, Tom. That wasn't you making the decision. That was a different you. You can be a different person than before, Tom," said a frail, middle-aged black man across from me in the circle. "I think you're a good person, Tom," said the man, smiling to reveal

his discolored and partially disfigured smile. I smiled at him with more tears welling up and he nodded at me.

"See, Gerald is right, Tom. See everyone, we all need to focus on being better people tomorrow, because you can't change who you were yesterday," Mack said, reaffirming the man and trailing off into more motivational rambles. I couldn't focus on them. I was thinking too much now. Maybe I was a better person now. Or at least I could be. Gerald's words weighed heavily in my head the rest of that AA session.

Next meeting, I came with a renewed security. I was never one to speak in front of others, but I felt like I belonged there. Mack asked me how long I was sober and I couldn't lie to him, so I said a month, max. Even though I hung my head in shame, he congratulated me and said I was strong. This meeting, he gave me a month coin to commemorate my sobriety.

"Everyone, let's show Tom our warmest congratulations, he gets his one-month coin today!" Mack said, and everyone in the circle clapped. Even the man with the gray hair down the row from the first meeting clapped in between spitting in his cup. Some of the people around me seemed so harsh, looking weathered from years of emotional storms brewing inside them, the rough, spotty skin and tired demeanor showing the exhaustion of mental dependency. Even these people were clapping, people who didn't speak a word any other time, supporting me. This made me feel less ashamed and on the contrary, quite proud of my measly month.

Mack began telling a few stories, trying to wake all of us up out of the shared haze. I've noticed that alcoholics all share the same tiredness of tiny interactions and intricacies of everyday life. Whether it was what made us drink or if it's because of the drinking, it showed in us all. Eventually, Gerald, the elderly black man from the first meeting, spoke.

"Well, Mack, recently I got to talk to my daughter again," he said, seeming sullen but happy. "She talked for five minutes today," he muttered, cutting himself off with a sad, defeated stare at the floor.

"Gerald, that's really good progress!" Mack said, slapping his hand on his knee. He readjusted his glasses. "Did you talk about meeting soon?" he asked.

"Well, I don't think she's too keen on that just yet. Didn't say I love you back just yet. I don't think she's ready," he explained.

"Well, Gerald, she'll come around. Just keep trying. Sometimes it's really difficult to forgive someone, but it's possible, and you can't forget that," Mack said.

Is he right? Could I be forgiven? I hope so. I thought on Mack's advice for a long time. I tuned back in after a while.

"I'll keep trying, she's all I got. God with you, Mack," Gerald said, ending his words by pulling his cross pendant out of his shirt. The words obviously meant a lot to Gerald, and they meant a lot to me.

After a few more people chimed in, I figured I could share a bit about how I have been and raised my hand. "Ah, Tom!" Mack said, pointing at me. "What's going on?"

"I have been all right. The other night I almost drove to the store. It was 2:00 a.m. I couldn't sleep," I said, feeling the weight of my guilt lift off my chest. The black mass of regret of even considering going for a booze run was building in my chest for days. The force grew, bursting and cracking my ribs, crushing my diaphragm, making me feel like I was suffocating. Now the pressure released, and my ribcage shrunk back, my diaphragm working once again to bring air to my lungs. "I wanted a brick. I could've killed 'em all, I just couldn't sleep," I said.

"Tom, that's really powerful of you. I have definitely been there," Mack said. He always

could reassure you that. Unlike what society tells you, you aren't a scum degenerate, you are just sick like any hospital patient. Mack leaned forward and scrolled a stare down the circle of eyes. "Sometimes that cool drink ends up burning a hole in your stomach though, and that gut feeling is worse than any withdrawal spasm you've ever had. As a frequent relapse-r, I'm sure you've felt the regret, as many relapsed members here tonight." The old man coughed and spit in his cup. "Just remember, you never, ever truly want the beer. You want the solutions to your problems. Hunt for that. To hell with the poison," he gracefully finished. "I think we have had enough for the night; it is 11:00 after all," he said peering at his watch and letting out a sigh. Time flew at the meeting this time, as I felt way more connected to the group. Or rather, disconnected from reality. It took the guilt off my shoulders for a second. Let me remember what it's like to not have my conscience gnawing on you all day. "We'll see each other again. Call me if you need to. I love you all," he said, standing and clapping his hands together. He packed up to leave and I headed for the door.

I was in my car outside, letting the heat blast to warm my car, when I saw Gerald on the steps of the backdoor. I got out, figuring it'd be good to make some friends; I lost basically all of my old ones.

"Hey, Gerald, what's going on?" I asked, plopping down next to him on the concrete stairs.

"Waiting for the bus. I missed the 10:45 one, so I'm here 'til about 12:30, hah-hah," he said, laughing, "I'd go inside but the damn doors are already locked. I'll be fine though," he said, rubbing his hands together.

"Let me bring you home, man." I said, feeling bad for him. He didn't deserve to sit in the cold like a forgotten animal. "C'mon," I said.

"Well...lemme count how much cash I've got for gas—" he began before I interjected. "Don't worry about it. Just come for the ride," I said.

With hesitation, he came with me for a ride home. On the ride home, he decided to share more about his daughter.

"I drank myself out of a twenty-year marriage. I lost my job. Spent the last four years of my marriage chugging away my layoff check and unemployment. My wife, damn near ready to kill me, told me to never see her or our daughter again," he said, looking out the window. I listened in, waiting to hear yet another dark end to an addict's abuse. "She was fifteen when I got on the rye, so she knew what was going on. She still doesn't forgive me. Who knows if she will?" Gerald said, a face striking him with grief. He didn't cry, but his eyes drained of life. He seemed to become shallow, corpselike, staring into the distance.

"She'll talk to you man," I said. I didn't know what was the right thing to say.

"What's your deal?" he asked, blankly and bluntly. "Well..." I started, anxious to hear the words come out of my mouth once again. "I was bringing my friend home. Unfortunately, I was piss-drunk and unable to see clearly. Normally, I would just crash on the side of the road, but I was tired and had to work in the morning." I said, using as much language to stall the inevitable evil past I hid to be uncovered. "I went past a little girl's home. No older than twelve. Her father had gotten her a new birthday present, a cute puppy," I said, choking for a second and feeling the tears well. I wasn't planning on letting that stop me, though. "She was taking her new dog out. Little German Shepherd. He was trying to sniff the mailbox. I was going too fast and didn't see her on the side of the road... By the time I realized I had to stop I could only see her in the mirror, standing on the side of the road,

with the leash in her hands and the trail of red following my car's path," I said, slowly saying the story to try to lessen the shock of hearing my own mouth say it again. It was different to talk about something wrong when I am the one who took part in it. Even with these attempts, I started crying. "It was her damn puppy, man... I broke her wrist from the tug, but I felt the real damage was on her losing the dog," I said, sniffing. "No one should see life destroyed in front of them so young." Those words that come out of my mouth, as silly as it sounds, were prophetic to myself. They really made me think, I shouldn't let this destroy my life. I should overcome it, and I should do what I can to better the lives I've worsened.

"You oughta call 'em," Gerald said. "I know you saw them in court I'm sure, but calling them to apologize and say how you feel will help them. If it doesn't it will help you. It helped with my daughter, at least..." he said, trailing off to dwell on his own demons.

We rode quietly to his place, dropping him off at his brick apartment building.

"God be with you, Tom," Gerald called back, walking into his stained, chipped wooden white door and leaving me out in the car alone. I never took myself to be a religious person, but that prayer meant more to me than many words I've heard in my life.

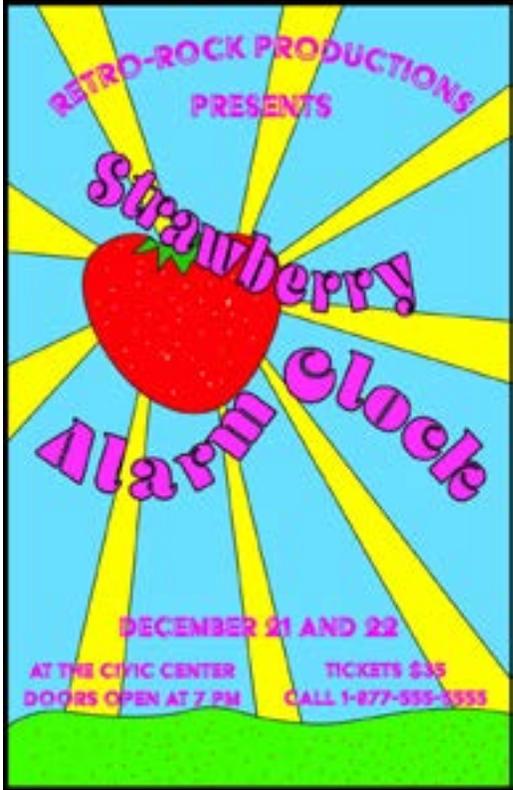
I called the family of the girl the next morning. I needed to tell them how I felt. The parents initially said that what I did was unforgivable, but quickly shifted their tone to claim that they understood I was young and troubled. Hearing the mother detail her daughter's life now, successful in school, lots of friends, no health issues, all helped to let me move on. I felt that I didn't do something I couldn't repent for. I continued to go to AA meetings for a few years but fell out when we lost Gerald after six years in. I still wonder if I have made up for the stains of immorality I put on the Earth, if my good deeds have covered my bill of disgrace. Community events, church socials, food banks, I have been into it all after a year in AA. I felt I had somewhere I mattered, and, in some way, I could eventually redeem myself. I hope I can, one day.



Corey Kidder, 2D Design



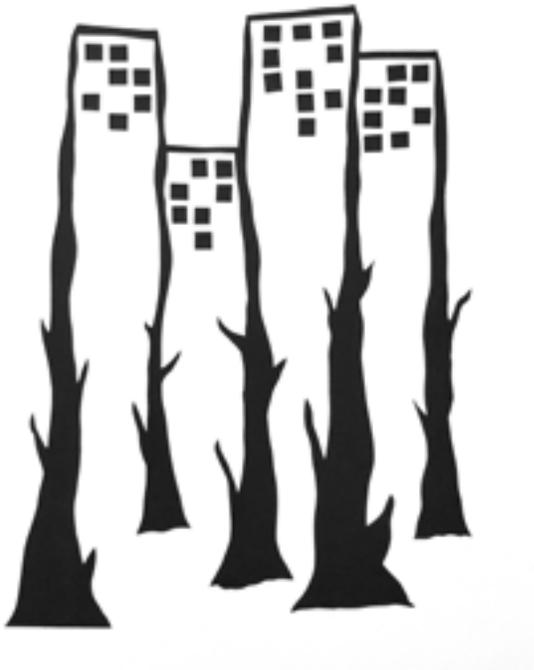
Nickey Toe, Digital Photography



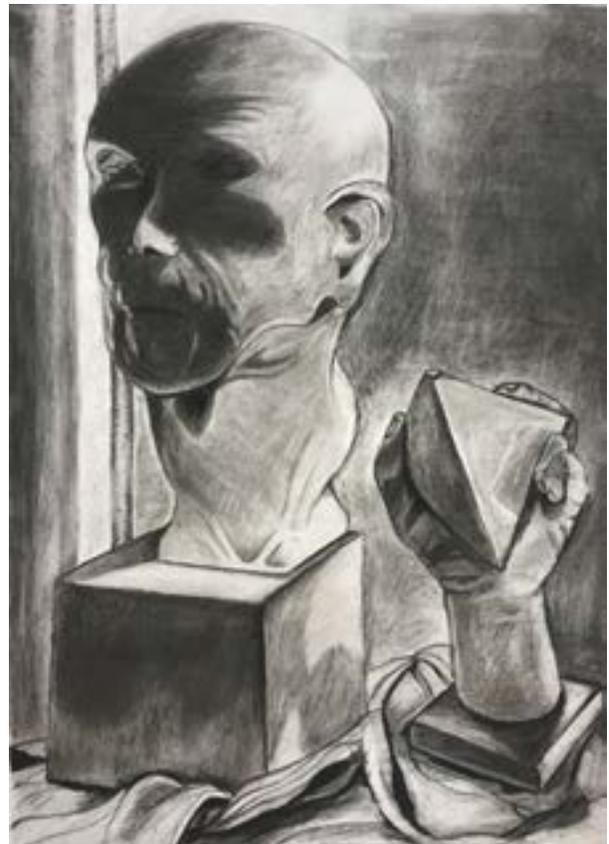
Marshall Pixley, Typography



Nicholas Fassett, 2D Design



Katherine Holvik, 2D Design



Trinity Baillargeon, Drawing I



Hailey Perkins-McCraw, Drawing I



Ashley Harris, 2D Design



Corey Kidder, 2D Design



Joshua LaBombard, 2D Design

Autumn in The Adirondacks

Chris Cook

When looking back throughout my childhood, it seems as if my best memories came in the fall. New clothes, new shoes, new friends, new soccer season, new movies, new wood, new smoke. These all came about when the leaves turned from their dark green to vibrant reds and yellows that make the woods look as if they are on fire. Fall was full of new opportunities and experiences that allowed me to make some of my best memories over the years, and the simple smell of hardwood burning in someone's fireplace takes me right back to my happy place every time.

Coming home after a town league soccer game on a Sunday afternoon will always be one of my favorite memories. The days always seemed to be partly cloudy in the mid-50s where it was just cold enough in the morning that my Dad would wake me up and a fire would already be burning in our living room in a fireplace he had constructed 25 years earlier. Before we'd leave for the game, he'd make sure to throw at least one or two logs on, so when we arrived back there'd still be a fire ablaze, or at least a hot bed of coals for another log to go on later.

I was on my way home after a hard fought game against our arch rivals, Malone. The game was a dog fight all the way until the final five minutes when one of our left wingers passed a ball into the box and I blasted the ball past the keeper into the top right corner. This ended up being the game winner and my parents couldn't have been more



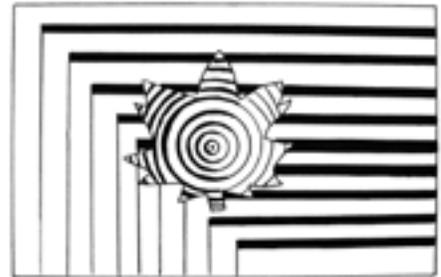
Danielle Rootes, Digital Photography

proud. On the way home, "the big hill" is the last landmark when approaching my house. From the top of the hill you can see my garage where my dad and I stacked fourteen cords last month and where his Camaro sits, waiting to be put in storage for the long winter ahead. The hill is lined with tall maples that are all well over 100 feet and they make the road look as if it's some sort of tunnel. Leaves litter the entire hill, painting it red, orange, and yellow, but within a couple of weeks these same beautiful leaves will be brittle and brown. Before I know it we're already pulling into my driveway and I'm debating on how to spend my afternoon. Should I go play in the treehouse my dad and I just built? Should I save my parents some raking and rake up a huge pile of leaves to play in? Should I hang with my neighbor and ride bikes? Should I clean my room to please my mom? I decide that the last one is definitely not happening but the other ones are still on the table.

As soon as I throw open my door in my Mom's Mazda, it hits me. The smell of smoke. I look up and I can see it billowing out of the chimney from the roof of my house. It smells almost sweet and my dad tells me it's because he threw a birch log on the fire before we left for the game. The aroma fills my nose and, for a minute, I forget about all my worries. Like the big town league playoff games approaching and the fact that I have to return to school tomorrow morning.

I walk inside to undress from my red, sweaty soccer jersey with the number 9 written across the back. The entryway leads into the room that we refer to as "the cathedral ceiling" because from floor to ceiling, there's a 27-foot space in between and there's not much warmth felt in there. As I approach the living room, though, I can feel the heat radiating. I can hear my Dad poking around in the fireplace, creating room for the next block of wood to be claimed by the flames. The heat immediately hits my skin and starts to alleviate the goosebumps that I had on my arms from the game. I sit down no farther than three feet from the roaring flames and watch as they dance along the bark of the log. A safe enough distance to where I can feel heat without being burned.

These days of my childhood will be the ones that will always stick with me. Even now, the drive home on Thursday nights from North Country will never fail to fill me full of excitement. Looking at the beautiful foliage that goes as far as the eye can see as I drive up Route 30 towards Malone is a view that will make me content for the rest of my life. As I approach the "big hill", my heart begins to race and I can't help but feel the excitement that I felt as a child. The roadside is more bare now due to the power company butchering the trees, but the road itself is still very much covered with leaves. As I make my descent down the hill I can see my dog Sadie, a one-year-old border collie, prancing around my yard. As I pull into my driveway I can see it. I can't smell it yet, but I already know the scent because of the many years that I've experienced it prior. I throw open the door on my 2001 Volkswagen Jetta and my dog meets me immediately. I stand up and stretch out my arms and my legs and all of a sudden it hits me. The smell of smoke. And I'm home.



Cheyenne Burdo, 2D Design



Rose Bamber, Painting



Dayanara Bero, Painting

The Love for Light **Avery Benedict**

Once I was scared of the dark; now I am the light. Parenthood has changed who I am, given me new challenges, and given me more courage to face darkness. Darkness was never my friend, it is still not my favorite, but now there is someone who needs me in the dark. That someone is my son.

As children, we see and hear things that stick with us into adulthood. That thing that stuck with me was the fear I developed as a little girl when I thought I saw a figure in my room that I assumed was cousin who had just died in a four-wheeler accident, coming to visit me. My bed was in the far-left corner of my bedroom, opposite the door. It was a white canopy style bed with matching furniture, including two dressers and a matching toy box. The toy box was next to my dresser with my small Disney style television on it, which was across my room. It held my dolls, my Littlest Pet Shop toys, and my American Girl doll's furniture.



Alissa Hudson, Digital Photography

I had been tossing and turning all night for some reason, and I rolled over facing my television with my back to the wall, when I saw a small figure in front of my toys. The figure was like a white mist and its presence in that moment felt feminine. It had only been there one second and gone the next but still, the sight made me fear darkness even if I had my television on. I never liked to sleep in my bedroom after that. I could start off going to bed in my room but would eventually wake up and wait for my Mom to go into her room then speed walk to her and ask to sleep with her. I did this until I was eleven because I never wanted to risk seeing something that would spook me again.

Another reason I have always been afraid of the dark is because I have had sleep paralysis in the past. During these episodes I would wake up to find that I could not move, talk, or breathe. It felt as if someone were sitting on my chest holding me down and keeping me from calling for help to get out of the situation. When I Googled sleep paralysis, I found an image of a demon-looking creature sitting on a body, which is exactly how it felt, from the pressure of being held there to the fear I felt when it was happening. To add to the fear, when I woke up from these episodes, I would see a dark figure in my room, and until I looked away, it held me there with its intense strength from across the room. I hated going to sleep after these episodes were finally over and often lost a lot of sleep just to avoid the chance seeing the creature that restrained me from functioning.

As a parent, your role is to be your child's number one support system and to guide them through life. I have noticed a lot of young children are afraid of the dark because they aren't taught that the "monsters" under the bed or in the closet are not real, let alone capable of hurting you. I myself was one of those children who believed that if you left your feet uncovered, a monster would pull you down from your bed by your feet. For example, I have a younger cousin who's six. Although she shares a room with her two brothers, her mom has told me that she is afraid of sleeping in her room. When she does manage to stay in her room, she waits until everyone goes to sleep, then she gets out of bed, runs to the main light switch in the hallway, turns on all the lights, and then runs back to her bed.

This is what I worry my son will be like. Already, although he is so young, he gets scared when we are in the dark. Just the other night, he woke up in the middle of the night and fought to go back to sleep, so we sat him up in bed to take a break from trying. I had forgotten that across the room in the corner we have a wardrobe that I have a habit of hanging my jacket up on. When my son's wandering eyes saw my dark jacket hanging there, he let out a cry that I could only imagine was from being caught off guard and scared. We took the jacket down in an attempt to make him more comfortable as well as anything else we suspected might make him scared. As I attempted to put him back to sleep, he continued to look at the wardrobe and even to the left of our bed where his playpen is and he would just start showing signs of being scared again. He was shaking, he had goosebumps, his whines turned into crying, yet he could not look away. This worried us because we could not see what he was looking at or understand what was scaring him. The next thought I had was what if he is seeing something similar to what I saw when I was a little girl?

In my culture we believe that the "soft spot" on babies' heads connects them to the spirit world. Since the "soft spot" does not harden until they are around two years of age, we find that our children are able to see spirits and can even communicate with them. The next night, I knew something had to be off in our room when he reacted the same way only there was nothing—that we could see anyways—that might alarm him. At this point, my mother-in-law smudged the house by burning sage and telling whatever bad energy was there to leave, and then we put a leather that was smudged with the same medicine around his wrist. When we put a leather on a baby's wrist, it is believed to protect them against being followed by spirits who may like them, or more importantly, bad spirits. Since these last couple of nights, we've added nightlights to our room and taken down anything hanging up that might scare him in hopes that his sleep schedule improves.

Although I had once been afraid of the dark for reasons that might be silly, that same fear can be passed down and developed by my son. When we have children, we must overcome our own fears and help our children do the same. At this point in my life, I have found comfort in knowing that I have become the light that will guide my son in darkness, after once needing a light for myself.

Finding Your Voice

Morgan Hotte

Once I was blind; now I am brave. When I was blind, I was very impressionable since most concepts were foreign to me. As I was growing up, my father took advantage of my fresh eyes; he was in the midst of a painful divorce with my mom. Throughout our weekend visits, my brother and I were exposed to a wide range of lies about our closest family members, always circling back to our mother. Brainwashed and blinded, we would come home and not speak a word to anyone for days. We did not trust; we only feared the world around us. Though it was never mentioned, there was an unspoken rule to never repeat our experiences to anyone. To do so would be to betray the one we loved most, our Dad. Loving someone who was verbally abusive was hard; even at our young ages we were making constantly making excuses for his behavior. As the saying goes, love is blind.

For years this vicious cycle would carry on, until one day, I made a decision to speak up. It was my thirteenth birthday; he was bringing us home to celebrate with my Mom's side of the family. Pissed off about something, presumably small, he was on another one of his rampages. Usually everyone in the car remained quiet during these outbursts, looking down at our hands or out the window. After the years, it became easy to drown out the noise. All you had to do was separate yourself from that exact moment in time. This state of disconnection I have come to learn is called dissociation, and here and there it still follows me through life. But something had come over me on that car ride; call it a moment of clarity. It could have been when I looked to my right and saw my brother staring out the window, lifelessly. Or when I looked up and noticed Diane (my father's wife) in the passenger seat not even flinching a muscle as he smashed his fist into the dash (he did this while emphasizing a strong statement). I remember thinking to myself, what quality of life was this? Did I want to keep living it? With a shaky yet agile hand, I snuck my iPod out of my pocket

and voice recorded every single spiteful word that flung out of his mouth until we arrived home.

After he dropped us off and sped away, my Mom was sitting on the doorstep greeting us with loving arms. My brother walked past her with a discouraged look and locked himself in his room per usual every Sunday night. I, on the other hand, stood in the road staring back at her. I could imagine my face was the palest it had ever been when I handed her that iPod. Without speaking a word to each other, she knew. For years my Mom tried proving to the courts that something was going on, but we were too afraid to speak. With my Dad being the charming dedicated father he appeared to be, no one really believed her. After we brought the recording to family courts, visitation rights were immediately excluded to our terms.

Once I was blind; now I am brave. I believe wholeheartedly if I hadn't recorded him, there would've been no way to prove the state of life we were living. Our weekend visits would have continued on for years. I saved my brother and myself from ever having to endure any more. I always disregarded my act as spontaneous, nothing more or nothing less. But now that I am older, I see a severely scared little girl taking a huge risk in hopes for safety. Afterwards, life changed for the better. I became more positive and social, and my dissociation seemed to drift away. For a long time, I felt like my own hero. What I endured made me the courageous person I am today. My eyes are now open, and I am fearless.



Joseph Hickman, Digital Art



Jacob Rockhill, Digital Art

Emily Jablonski
Villa Maria Contest
The Fallen

The scratching the screaming of the howls of night
The blasts of cannons for everyone fears the might
Cries of the fallen one by one
All fall to the arms of the dark one,
The rivers that have fallen to ash and blood
The tears that stain the faces once loved...

For them stone is etched with the names of none,
Who all carried a weapon but not a gun
For these fallen under the names of none,
Were not soldiers but yet
They still fell to one's gun...

I Make Note of It
Molly Brockway

Trigger Warning for Sexual Assault

She told me no, I don't like hearing that word, but I know what it means, so I throw myself on the floor and cry. It doesn't work. I soon learn that no, means no. I make note of it.

I had a few drinks at the party, the fire feels warm on my face, the summer air is so refreshing. You are in the crowd.

She told me to stand up straight, and to never give anyone the power to knock me down. I make note of it.

There are a lot of us standing around this fire now, words flutter among us. You are standing next to me now. My body feels tingly from whatever I drank.

She told that I need to listen to people's words, be conscious of their feelings, and value their truths. I make note of it.

We are out of wood, and the fire is now a single log waiting for its turn to join the rest of the coals. People are leaving. You stay with me. The remaining few decide to head inside.

She told me lying is not right, that only words known to be true should leave my mouth. I make note of it.

We sneak up the back staircase of the house, several hushes are in order. It is a straight walk ahead to the basement door. We manage to get there without waking those sleeping upstairs.

She told me that even if you always speak your truth, there are going to be people who aren't always going to. I make note of it.

Most of the group turns left at the bottom of the stairs. You and I turn left. An area rug covers a small patch of the cement floor. We lie there. I wonder if your body feels tingly, too.

She told me that life is too short to be sad. She told me that life is trying, but it moves along better if you have a smile on your face. I make note of it.

You kiss me, I smile. I am not sure how this is supposed to feel since I've never really done this before. I decide to just let it happen. Your hands that were tangled in my hair begin to travel.

She told me that I need to be aware of my surroundings. She said that the environment you subject yourself to is critical. I make note of it.

I can't see the group of people on the other side of the room, but I can hear distorted conversations. You are trying to get your hand past the band of my jeans, and I don't like it. I push your hand away.

She told me that I am beautiful. She said that I didn't need to brush my sister's makeup on my face, that I am perfect exactly how I am. I make note of it.

It hits me how tired I am. I think if I lie still for a minute, I could fall asleep right here next to you. You whisper to me that I am beautiful. You ask me to kiss you. I do.

She told me that I am going to come across situations that I just need to walk away from. I make note of it.

I feel you fidgeting. You reach for my hand, you grab it and lead it to a place that I am not familiar with. My hands begin to sweat, and suddenly my stomach feels sick. I don't want to be lying here anymore.

She told me that if you aren't careful with your actions, that they will follow you throughout life, haunting you. I make note of it.

I want to be in the other room now, even though the conversations that I heard before have disappeared. I pick myself up off the floor. You ask where I am going. I don't answer, you follow.

She told me that people will push you, but you need to push back. If you aren't okay with something, then let it be heard. I make note of it.

I walk through the door to where my friend is sleeping in her bed. I crawl into bed with her, you crawl in behind me. She knows that you are there, she leaves. I don't want her to go, please stay.

She told me that sometimes I will feel alone, but to always remember who I have standing in my circle. I make note of it.

You whisper again, asking me to turn around, I do. You kiss me, I kiss you back. I feel you trying to get your hand past the band of my jeans again. I push your hand away. You seem slightly frustrated.

She told me that I need to make my own decisions, not to let other people dictate how I feel towards something. I make note of it.

I am so tired. I want to go to sleep. You don't seem tired. You are not ready to sleep. Maybe if I do what you want to do, I can go to sleep after. Can't I just go to sleep?

She told me that I have layers, and to be careful who I let peel them back. She said only people who prove their loyalty to me should have access to them. I make note of it.

Again, you try to pry your way past the band of my jeans. Maybe you just want pants off so you can feel my skin against yours. If it means I can go to sleep soon, I will take them off.

She told me that I possess the power of words, and that it was indeed a power many people wish they had. She said that my words move people. I make note of it.

You take your jeans off. Maybe I was right. You lead my hand to the place that I am not familiar with. It is now sweaty, and my stomach hurts again. I tell you I am going to sleep. You don't move.

She told me to never back down from a battle. She said that I was strong and urged me to always stand my ground. I make note of it.

You seem lively, and you won't stop whispering to me. You ask me to kiss you, but I am too tired. You try to slide your hand into my underwear. I tell you no and push your hand away. You don't stop.

She told me that I was strong. She said that I have always embodied strength, and that I needed to carry that with me. I make note of it.

I feel like this cycle won't end. You won't give up. I need sleep. I want to get up, but I can't find the energy to. I stay here. You get on top of and kiss me. I don't like it this time, and I try to push you off, I can't.

She told me to set goals and to never quit until I reach them. I make note of it.

I tell you that I want to go to sleep. You have different plans. You keep trying to touch me, I keep telling you no. I don't know why you're not listening to me. Maybe you don't know what no means?

She told me that things aren't always what they are supposed to be. She told me to always use my best judgement and go from there. I make note of it.

I think if I just do it, whatever you want to do, that this will stop. I just want it to stop, I need it to stop. I just need to get this over with. Instead of pushing your hands away, I let them go to where they want to.

She told me that sometimes people want to see you hurt. She told me to stay away from these people. I make note of it.

I feel sick, but I think it will be over soon. You lie behind me now; your body is molded to mine. I can feel your breath on the back of my neck. You touch me where I am hoping you won't. I don't like it.

She told me that I am her baby, and that she will always be standing in my corner, rooting for me. I make note of it.

I can feel you pulling my underwear to the side, and I want to move away, but I can't. I can't move. Why can't I move? You are pushing yourself into me. I hate it. I lie there, tears welling in my eyes.

She told me that I should never be afraid to ask for help. She said that everyone needs help sometimes, and never to be shy about asking for it. I make note of it.

Only a minute has passed, and I feel a weight lift off me. I can move. I pull myself away from you. The tears stream down my face. I walk into the room next to us. My friend is sleeping in there. I wake her up.

She told me that sometimes you need a good cry, sometimes you just need to let it happen, and she assured me that I will always feel better after. I make note of it.

I am running up the stairs, and I can hear my friends' footsteps thumping up the stairs behind me. I run to the bathroom, and she comes in behind me and shuts the door. I can barely talk through my sobs.

She told me how loved I am. I make note of it.

I am still crying. I am on my way to the hospital.

She is crying. She tells me I am going to get through this. I make note of it.

Otheré:ke nonkwá:ti tsi Kanón:no

*“The North Side at
New York”*

