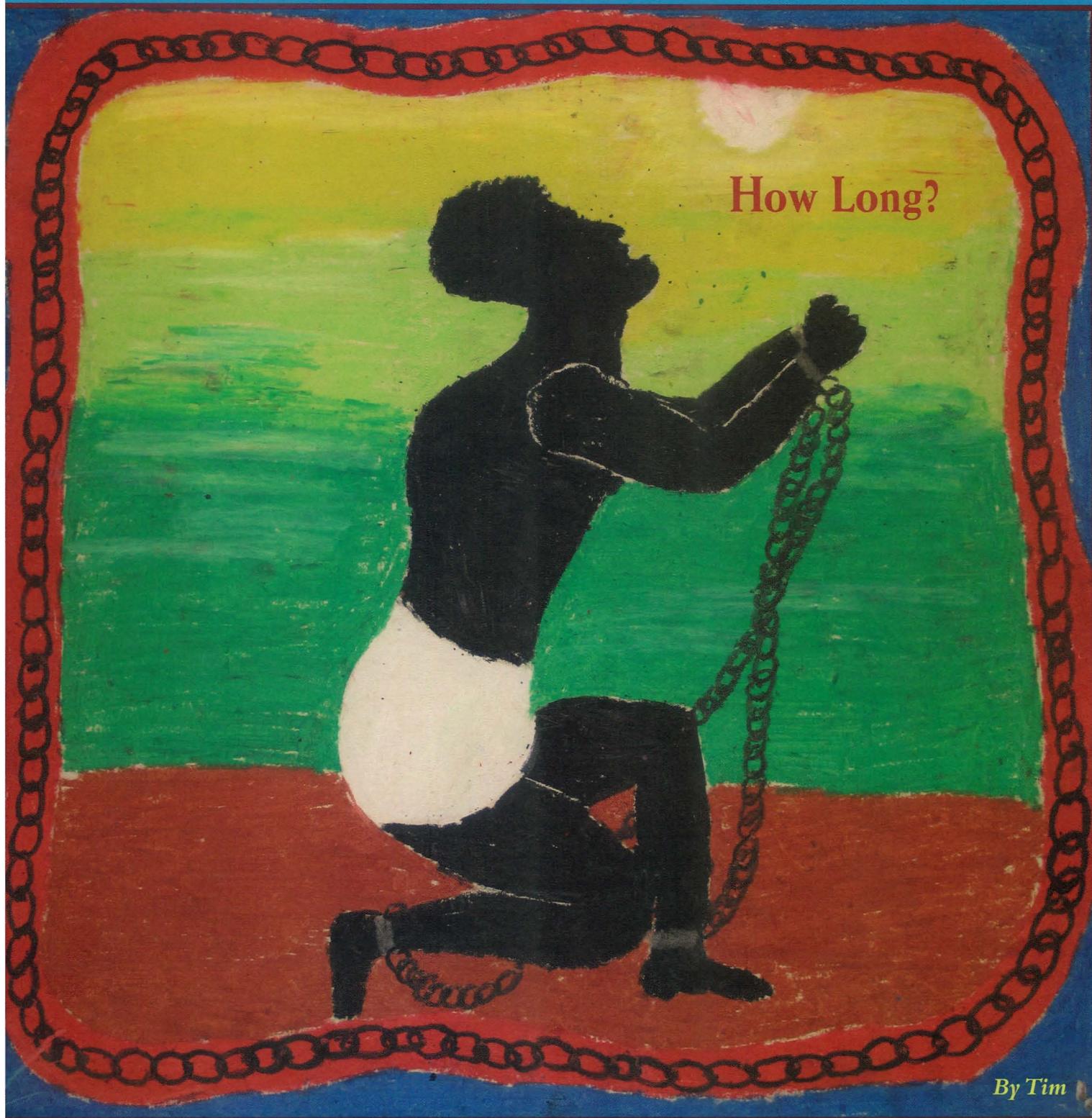


# Skipping Stones

Vol. 22, No. 5

Award Winning Multicultural Magazine

Nov. – Dec. 2010  
U.S.: \$6; CAN: \$6



By Tim

"Sojourner Truth" by Third & Fourth Graders, Maple Ridge School, New York.

# Water Fight, Anyone?... New Year Celebration in Thailand



Water fights on city streets are common in mid-April



Floats carrying statues of Buddha in Chiang Mai.



Ah... water fights in the summer! The shouts and screams of your friends as you dump a bucket of water over their heads or gun them down with that brand new super soaker. Fun, at least until your parents decide you've run the water bill up too high. Wouldn't it be great if everybody found water fights entertaining?

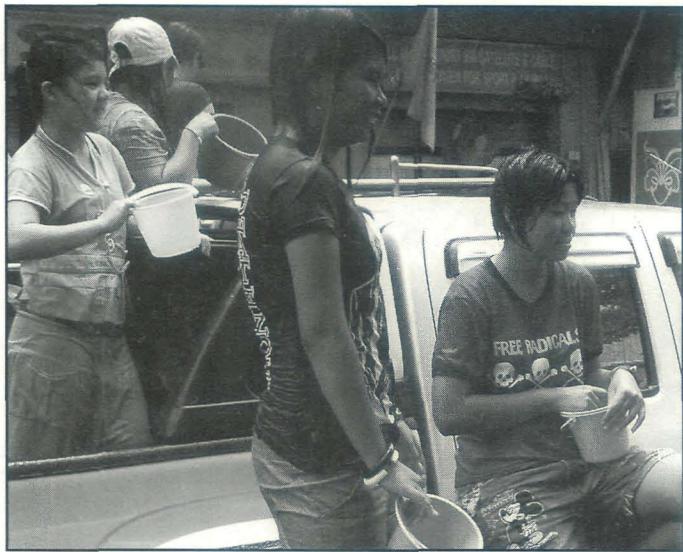
These photographs and article by Todd Aydelott shares an important Thai tradition. Unlike in India, where the Spring festival brings out all kinds of colors to sprinkle on people, the Thai people stick with plain water.



People use pick-up trucks for water fights in Chiang Mai



Offering water to a statue of Buddha



In Thailand, every year for about a week in the middle of April, the hottest month, the entire country erupts into one giant water fight. Bands of Thai adults and children stand by the side of the streets in front of their houses and splash each other and people passing by with water. No one is exempt and everyone takes it with a laugh and a smile. For this is the yearly festival of *Songkran* (สงกรานต์). As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Thailand, I was not exempt either. Nor did I mind, with daily temperatures of over 100° F.

#### Songkran Traditions

Songkran is the traditional Thai New Year festival. However, these days in order to align banking and business with the Western world, January first marks the beginning of the New Year. The word Songkran comes from the Sanskrit word Sankranta, which means "a move or change." Originally set through astrological calculations, the date of Songkran marked the "change" of the sun moving into the Aries zodiac.

Though the throwing of water is the most noticeable tradition, Songkran was and still is a time to visit and pay respect to the elders, including family, friends and neighbors. One such tradition, *Rod Nam Dam Hua* (รดน้ำดำหัว), is a ritual where a younger person pours water containing jasmine flowers or other fragrance on an elder person's hands. This symbolizes purification or the washing away of bad experiences or past. In return, the elder anoints the younger person with the water and says a blessing for the younger person, wishing long life, wealth or luck in love.

Another way people celebrate Songkran is by going to a Buddhist monastery, Wat (วัด), to pray and give food to the monks. This, known as making merit (Tam

## Water Fight, Anyone?

Boon, ทำบุญ), is one of the ways Thai folks improve their Karma. The monks bring out the Buddha images of the Wat for the visiting parishioners to ritually cleanse with water. In Chiang Mai, a major city in the north, the Buddha images pass through the streets in parade on ornately decorated floats. This provides people the chance to throw water and "cleanse" them.

#### The Toothless Old Woman

My first Songkran was only a few weeks after finishing Peace Corps training and swearing in as a volunteer. I went with some new friends from the district education office, where Peace Corps had assigned me, to the main festival area. Under the shade of one of the pavilions sat a line of old men and women. After a few moments, my friends succeeded in explaining to me in Thai that these were some of the oldest people in the village. The elders gathered for people to come and pay their respects. My friends then demonstrated pouring water on the hands of the elders with small, engraved metallic bowls. They urged me to follow them down the line pouring water and receiving blessings as we went. Eventually, we came to the last person in line, an elderly woman who began to laugh and speak animatedly to those around her. With her dialect thickened by her lack of teeth, I could understand nothing of what she said. After a few moments of discussion, my friends were able to explain the reason for her excitement. At 95, she was the oldest person there, and this was the first time in her 95 years that she met and spoke with a Westerner. After I poured the water on her hands, she gave a blessing of long life. She felt my arms and shoulders to check if I were real. After thanking her, I followed my friends back into the crowd.

There are many other traditions that are part of the Songkran festival, such as making sand stupas. These are sand replicas of the mound-like structures containing Buddhist relics. Often teams compete to create the most beautiful stupa by decorating them with flags and flowers. In addition to such traditions based on spirituality, Thai people hold beauty pageants, eating contests and volleyball competitions just for fun.

The Songkran festival remains one of the most important Thai celebrations.

—Todd Aydelott, ex-PCV in Thailand, teaches in Vietnam.

# Skipping Stones

Vol. 22 no. 5 Nov. - Dec. 2010

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ISSN: 0899-529X

### About *Skipping Stones*:

*Skipping Stones* is a non-profit children's magazine that encourages cooperation, creativity and celebration of cultural and linguistic diversity. We explore stewardship of the ecological and social webs that nurture us. We offer a forum for communication among children from different lands and backgrounds. *Skipping Stones* expands horizons in a playful, creative way. We seek your suggestions, submissions, subscriptions and support.

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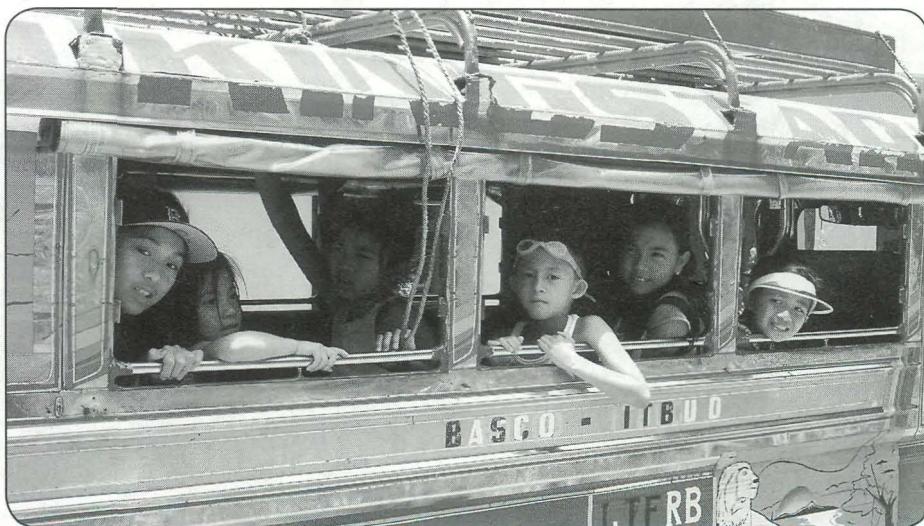
In the spirit of ecological sensitivity, we choose to print with soy ink on recycled and recyclable paper (40% post-consumer recycled content).



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My First Jeepney Ride, p. 29  
Photo by Christine Leong

**O**ctober 6th was observed as the “International Walk to School Day” in over 3,000 schools in the U. S. alone. When it first started, “Walk to School Day” was observed on the birthday of the world-famous nonviolent leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who was born on Oct. 2, 1869. These days, hundreds of communities celebrate Oct. 2nd as “Be the Change Day” after the famous quote attributed to him, “You must be the change you want to see in the world.”

For more than 60 years now, at the request of Pandit Nehru, the first Prime minister of India and co-worker of Gandhi, Nov. the 14th, his birthday, is celebrated as the Children’s Day in India. Nehru liked children so he wanted his birthday to be about children!

Yes, birthdays do not *have* to center around ourselves. For example, many communities annually celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King Day (Jan. 17 in 2011) as the National Day of Service. The organizers want you to get involved and take up Dr. King’s call to action.

I knew a social worker who, on his birthday, made a point of gifting new clothes to homeless and poor children in his area. And, I have heard from several eyewitness accounts that Amma, the famous spiritual teacher, gave a hug to some 50,000 people who came to see her on her 50th birthday. She received them one by one for over 20 hours non-stop!

Closer to home, I know several children and their parents who asked their birthday party guests to donate whatever they wished to their favorite charity or a local food pantry serving the needy, instead of bringing a birthday present. These families raised more than a thousand dollars for a social cause they believed in.

Birthdays are special for most of us. On my 35th birthday, I climbed Camel’s Hump, second tallest and prettiest peak in Green Mountains of Vermont, and then I ran back down it to signify that it was all downhill from then on!

In Sweden, when I was there many summers ago, I observed that their birthday celebrations began by waking up the birthday person with a “Happy Birthday” song and a breakfast (room service, of course)!

In rural Mexico, I was invited to a few birthdays. As a largely Catholic community, most people there were named after a saint, and they celebrated their birthdays on their patron saint’s day, in addition to the *cumpleaño*. Everyone in the village or nearby ranches, who heard about the birthday party, was most welcome to the feast and fiesta that went on until late in the evening!

In many religions, birthdays of their founders (and saints) are given special importance: Christmas (birthday of Jesus), Guru Nanak Jayanthi, (birthday of the founder of Sikhism) Janmashtmi (Lord Krishna’s birthday), Ram Navami (Lord Rama’s birthday), Vaishakhi (Gautam Buddha’s birthday) and Mahavir Jain Jayanthi (birthday of the founder of Jain religion) to name a few.

Why should we celebrate these special birthdays? Certainly, not because these great souls, visionaries or saints needed a recognition from us, or because they would be pleased if we celebrated their birthdays. They gain nothing from such celebrations. We observe their birthdays to remember their contributions to humanity, to broaden our outlook on human life, to think about the humanitarian qualities they strived to practice in their lives, and to increase our spiritual insights. Their birthdays serve as spring boards to reach higher levels of awareness. Many Hindus, therefore, also observe fasting as a part of many religious birthday celebrations.

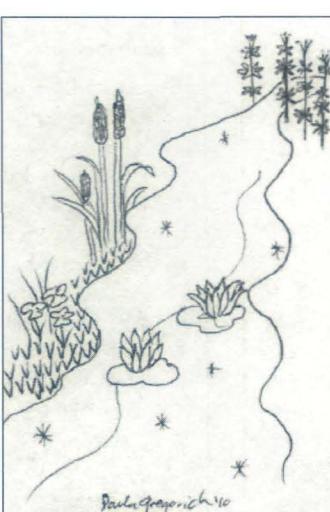
During autumn, we share *Skipping Stones* birthday with a multicultural offering—ethnic music and dances, food for thought, etc. Our 22nd Anniversary celebration will be in November. Visit our web site for details.

How do you celebrate your birthday? With games, pizza, cake and ice cream? Consider a different kind of birthday celebration...something more meaningful. Consider talent shows, cultural performances, ethnic foods, nature museum tours or nature hikes, etc. Do you give a “Goodie Bag” as friends leave your birthday party? Some parents put books in the goodie bags in place of throw-away plastic toys and candy.

Enjoy your birthday and bring meaning to your life and also to your friends and family.

Make every day a special day, as if it were a birthday. Smile at life; laugh a lot, each day!

—Arun Narayan Toké



## Our 22nd Anniversary Special!

- *Receive 22 back issues (one from each of our 22 years) for just \$22 (plus \$6.66, postage and handling)!*
- *Send your creations—poems, essays, stories or art—on multicultural, nature or international understanding for our pages. If you're published, will receive a special gift!*

Must send entries and/or orders by 22 Dec. 2010.

Contact: editor@SkippingStones.org

## Introduction to Poetry

A poem is a bird,  
That can sing a unique melody.  
No two birds the same,  
All different and beautiful.  
Some may be dark and stormy,  
Others upbeat,  
But most of all,  
They all take flight.

—Laura Kim, grade 7, Pennsylvania.

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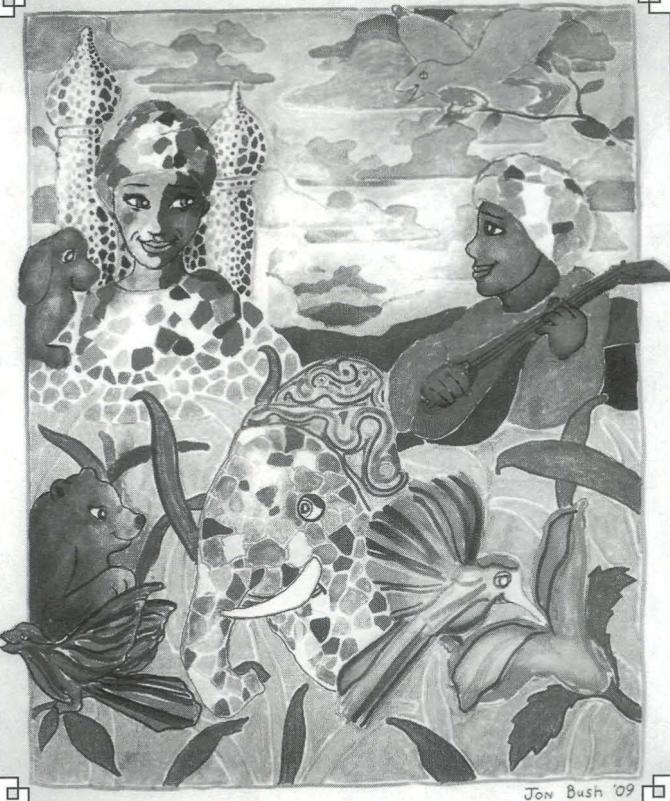
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**Winner of the National Association for Multicultural Education, EdPress, Writer, NewsStand Resources & Parent's Choice Awards.**



## Celebrating A Multicultural World

*Skipping Stones* invites you to appreciate the amazing diversity in our world of plants and animals, people and places, languages and cultures, as well as the ecological and social webs that sustain us all.

Illustration by artist Jon Bush, Massachusetts.

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October 1, 2010

—Arun N. Toké, Editor & Publisher

## What's On Your Mind?

Send your submissions to: editor@SkippingStones.org

### Standing Strong

Standing strong  
Sitting at lunch with people who don't understand you  
Thinking to yourself, I don't need this  
Hold your head high  
Be the better person and be kind to others even when they are unkind to you  
Take a deep breath and let it go in one ear and out the other  
Gain confidence  
Look them in the eye and delete your fears  
Don't worry about what they may think of you  
Mind your own business  
Tell yourself you can do this and Never Give Up  
Remember you are just as important and special as they are  
Keep going  
Even if you fail the first time, try again and again until you reach your goals  
Face your intimidations and conquer them  
Plant your feet firmly into the ground  
No one can move you without your permission  
Don't give them your permission; you are in charge of yourself  
The better person wins in the end  
Love yourself and don't let anyone get you down  
Only you can change your future  
Stay strong

—Callie Andro, 13, Pennsylvania.

### From An Ambitious Fish

Swimming around and around and around.

The same thing every day.

I see a huge world around me full of weird beings and sounds.  
Outside of my small little home is a huge world that is waterless.

The animals there do not swim with their fins, for there is no water, so they must walk on them.

These beings' shelters amaze me, and I spend most of my days looking at them wishing I could explore out of my four-by-four aquatic habitat, but a fish can only dream.

So for now I swim around every day dreaming of finding bigger waters.

—Jessie Uhrin, grade 7, Pennsylvania.

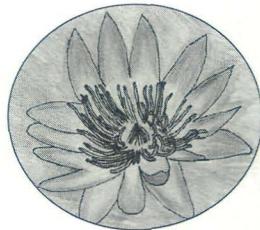
Mix It Up At Lunch Day:  
November 9, 2010

No NAME Calling Week:  
January 24-28, 2011  
Let's End School Bullying & Name Calling

### An Open Door

When you close your eyes at night  
The future doesn't always seem bright  
You brace yourself to dream a dream  
You set your imagination out to the extreme  
Your mind is free to explore  
Wherever your heart takes you and more  
Your worries have vanished, reality is gone  
You are so withdrawn  
When the end comes to a near  
Your mind begins to clear  
Tomorrow's just another day  
Your mind will never walk away  
From a dream your heart is wishing for  
Always dream with your mind set to an open door.

—Allyson Gaven, 14, Pennsylvania.



### That One Chance

I'm sitting here  
For that one chance  
That one moment to make a difference  
Waiting to be loved

Just one chance to be the hero  
Cause the history can't be changed:  
But a change can come in history  
That one chance to make the book

A picture on the wall  
It is that one chance  
With that moment  
I changed: to a champion

A champion, a writer, an optimistic leader  
I'll be the man: which is venerated  
That one who makes a change  
All, with that one chance  
—Brendan Scheller, 11, Pennsylvania.

## Skipping Stones Stew

### Want to Solve a Radial Puzzle?

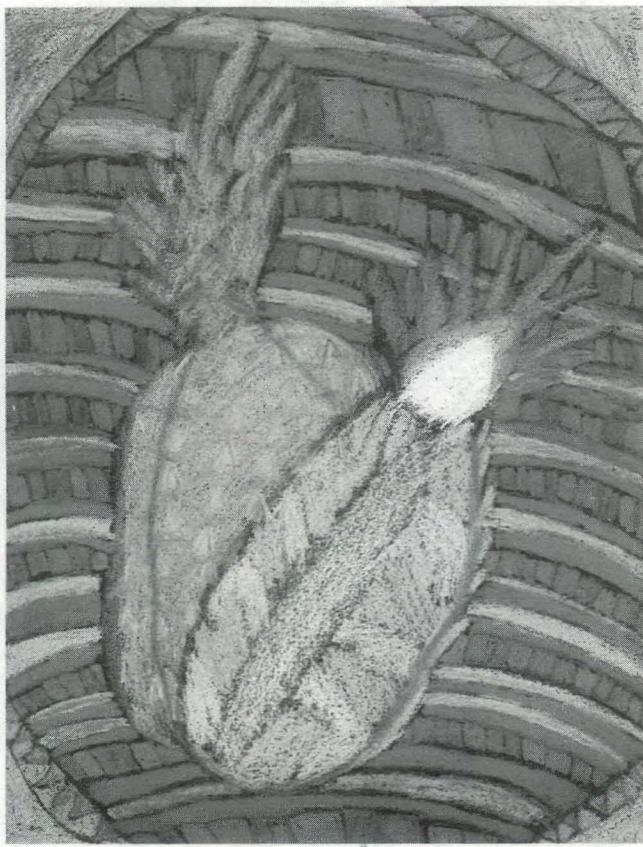
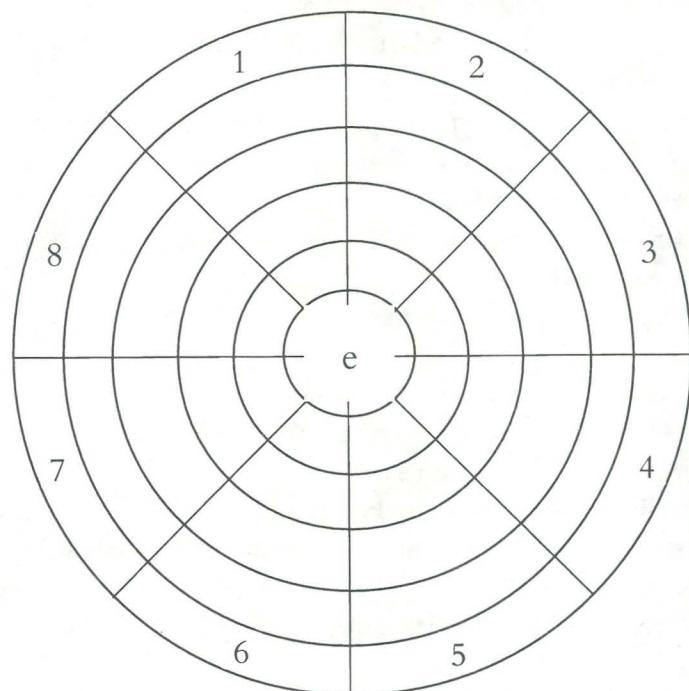
Solve the eight clues below. The words radiate clockwise to the center circle. *Each word contains five letters and ends in the letter "e."* The first letter of each word (1 to 8) spells the answer (*SEDIMENT*).

#### Clues:

1. A rock composed of minerals.
2. To fill with joy or pride.
3. Compact
4. The latest copy of *Skipping Stones*.
5. The basic metric unit of length
6. To wear away by the action of water, wind, or glacial ice
7. A special market place a product has
8. Treasure

Go for it!

—Nicole Foucault, a retired French Canadian teacher  
who enjoys creating word games, Québec, Canada.



### Pineapple, the Fruit of the Tropics

by Emma Gerlach, grade 4, Florida.

### Pineapple Symphony

The luscious aroma of pineapple fills the air reminding me of my home

Its juice sweet like honey  
sliced perfectly round  
waiting to be consumed

O my little pueblo Versalles  
beaches, sand, fruit, the people's warmth  
remembering that's all you need  
endure the distance

What a marvelous world surrounded by  
scarcities but love

Always in the pursuit of happiness  
dreaming for tomorrow with no regrets  
little things mean a lot more

Passion flows through me as I taste  
the sumptuous pineapple

Wild like a tiger in the African savanna  
and free as a bird flying through the infinite sky

No place like home  
no fruit like the pineapple  
Perfect harmony of sweet and sour.

—Miguel Perez, 12, Cuban American,  
Florida.



### Is It Fair?

Personally, I LOVE deer meat, mostly hard-earned, self-caught venison. The hunters that shoot deer from their cars are hunting illegally. Also, deer hunters generally don't drive deer out of their homes, and wish to keep the deer population stable, so that there's enough for next year.

For some people, hunting is a way to get in touch with the primitive needs of our ancestors. It gives an appreciation for life that you can't get by going to the store and buying ground beef, wrapped in plastic. Especially not beef that came from a cow which was fed an unhealthy diet of corn and pesticides. That cow lived its life wallowing in manure and shoulder to shoulder with thousands of other cows, sharing diseases and such. They have suffered more on their way to the slaughterhouse than the deer ever have. The deer have lived their lives free, eating organic plants and running around in the woods.

Is it fair to raise our meat and treat it as just that, meat, not like a real animal? I think not.

That's why I believe that hunting for food, running around in the cold, rain and snow, being silent for hours while tracking a deer through the woods, is a better way to get meat, even if you could just walk down to the store (although most stores don't sell venison) and you don't actually have to shoot a deer to survive. Plus, it's a way to get in touch with and appreciate nature, and biology, and the secretive ways of the life cycle.

I do not agree with, however, wasting the animal or taking more than you can use. I also don't agree with killing animals for a certain part of their body and just wasting the rest of it. For example, the poaching of elephants for their ivory tusks and leaving the rest of the elephant to rot on the savanna is always a despicable and disgusting practice.

So, if you wish to complain about hunting, complain about those hunters who are unethical, who take more than they need and don't appreciate what they get.

—Hanna Hostick, 14, Oregon.



### Miniature United Nations

English and Spanish are the languages spoken by my family. During family gatherings, one would think we resemble a miniature version of the United Nations. Some of the young family members, including preteens and young adults, refuse to speak Spanish, while the older generation feels embarrassed to speak English. Although we understand each other, someone will either speak Spanish and answer in English, or speak English and answer in Spanish.

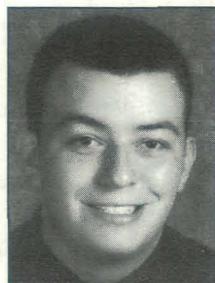
My parents constantly tell me how times have changed, because they say when they were young children, they simply remained silent or went outside to play, because they feared being ridiculed for the manner in which they spoke Spanish, the dominating language spoken in their homes. The families strictly followed the rule that stated children are to be seen, not heard.

Although I do not admit it to them, this rule still seems to appear at the most inopportune moment, especially when I am around my grandaunts and granduncles, for they only speak Spanish. I communicate in Spanish with them, but I often receive a language lesson, for I mispronounced a word or failed to conjugate a verb properly. I do not mind, because it helps me learn the language spoken by my ancestors. Whenever I ask them about speaking in English, they just laugh and say, "Goodbye," which tells me I must immediately drop the subject.

### Two Languages, Two Worlds

Be mindful of what you say,  
For predicaments may come your way.  
A word in one language may sound quite pleasing.  
A mispronunciation may lead to some teasing.  
Translating words back and forth in my head,  
Causes me to grimace about the words I just said.  
An instant replay would show me how I speak.  
Unfortunately, Edit, Delete and  
Mute are  
the buttons I now seek.  
Two languages, two worlds, too  
many situations  
My translations require aid from the  
United Nations.

—Mathew Elliott Mendoza, 17, Texas.



As a kindergarten teacher, I was concerned that my kids learn good behavior. I chose some sayings from many sources, including the Biblical book of Proverbs that help children make good choices and learn simple character qualities. I made up hand motions to help the children learn the words. The quotes said things like, "Be kind to each other" and "A wise child thinks before speaking."

I posted the quotes on a classroom bulletin board, and I would ask the children to recite them as part of getting ready to read. A parent who was picking up a child after school, noticed some quotes had the source of Proverbs written below them. She questioned whether they were appropriate in a public school setting because they were from the Bible.

First, what were the curriculum issues? In the Kindergarten class, the "Wall of Inspiration" content was teacher-directed, with several curriculum focuses: public recitation, group camaraderie, reading readiness and classroom management. This "Wall of Inspiration" helps the children who read them to see a deeper purpose for school.

However, the kindergarten class, if I taught again, I would select the quotes more carefully and search more actively for good advice from many traditions both secular and religious; I might ask the parents and students for suggestions. I would try to ensure that the quotes would not offend any child, and mirrored both the neighborhood and our larger, diverse society. Students have freedom to write about religion, for instance a grade school child is free to respond to an assignment, "What I will do during the winter break" with a religious theme.

I have also had a wall of quotes in the hallway of my building on our college campus. Here, college students were free to post any guiding quote they wished. They were free to post a religious quote. Bible verses and Native American prayers generally account for about 20% of the quotes on the wall. In the college classroom, I was able to encourage thinking about deeper matters in a wholesomely neutral manner. When I view the quotes in the hallway, I see a multiplicity of viewpoints and choices that encourages me as an individual in my quest to make my classes at any

level safe for all students.

However, the kindergarten classroom, with teacher-selected quotes, is a different matter. The teacher, as an instrument of the State, must remain "wholesomely neutral" in religious matters. In retrospect, I believe I could have done a better job of balancing the sources for my "good advice" for young people, even though appropriate quotes from a religious source is legal. In my next column,

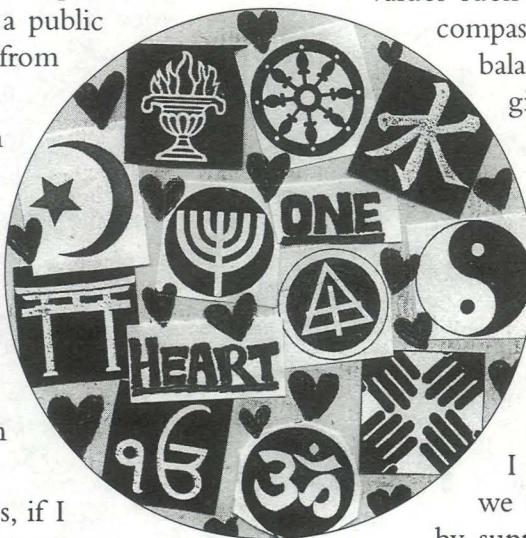
Whatever our persuasion in religious matters, we have developed personal belief systems that help build our principles. Out of these principles come common values such as honesty, integrity, justice and compassion. In the interest of integrity and balance we need to incorporate strategies that do not ask us to ignore or abandon these values or the spiritual side of ourselves.

In 1998, President Clinton said, "Schools do more than train children's minds. They also help to nurture their souls by reinforcing the values they learn at home and in their communities.

I believe that one of the best ways we can help out schools to do this is by supporting students' rights to voluntarily practice their religious beliefs, including prayer in schools.... For more than 200 years, the First Amendment has protected our religious freedom and allowed many faiths to flourish in our homes, in our work place and in our schools. Clearly understood and sensibly applied, it works." (*US Department of Education*).

In 1998, the U.S. Secretary of Education went on to include great detail about our responsibilities as agents of the state in regards to religion: "The United States remains the most successful experiment in religious freedom that the world has ever known because the First Amendment uniquely balances freedom of private religious belief and expression with freedom from state-imposed religious expression. Public schools can neither foster religion nor preclude it. Our public schools must treat religion with fairness and respect and vigorously protect religious expression."

Public schools may not provide religious instruction, but they may teach about religion, including the Bible or other scriptures, the history of religion, com-



## **“Children may make religious choices in public schools.”**

parative religion, and the role of religion in the history of the U. S. (and other countries), all of which are permissible public schools subjects. Similarly, to consider religious influences on art, music, literature and social studies are also allowed. Although public schools may teach about religious holidays, as well as their religious aspects and may celebrate the secular aspects of holidays, schools may not observe holidays as religious events or promote such observance by students.

The First Amendment, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,” and the wealth of case laws gives us some very specific guidance on legal issues. The Supreme Court held that reading the Bible for religious purposes and reciting the Lord’s prayer in public schools during normal hours were unconstitutional as part of the assigned classwork. The same decision held that schools could teach about the history of religion, or religious art and music, or teach the Bible as literature in appropriate classes. Because public school teachers are employed by the State and speak for the State, they must be careful not to include religious messages in their classroom expression. But they should also respect the free exercise rights of students to include religious expression where appropriate. Teaching about religion in a non-coercive manner that does not advance or inhibit religious beliefs is both constitutionally protected and important in our society.

The eighth graders that I teach were learning about the early colonial period of American history, including the arrival of the Pilgrims. I dressed as a pilgrim and set up a one-room meeting house with the men on one side and the women on the other. It was around Thanksgiving, and I led a reading of a Psalm of Thanksgiving from the Bible. Immediately, a problem arose. In the spirit of loud praise the class became way too noisy with their simulated worship and I wondered how to quiet them. I began to have some misgivings. At this point, my disciplining could be seen as negating their obvious enthusiasm for this religious reenactment. Also, as I see it now, I crossed a legal line. Instead of simply teaching about religion I was asking them to participate in a worship service, and that would violate the Lemon Test.

From a curriculum perspective, the lesson was successful in conveying the importance of faith to the new immigrants to the North American continent. It would have met legal guidelines, I believe, if I had

asked for volunteers and simply acted it out with a few students with the rest observing and discussing various issues. This would have been more consistent with my moral decision to offer students choices in such matters in order to honor their religious expressions.

As for personal faith issues, at first I truly enjoyed the turn of events, because I did feel as if I were worshipping. However, this very feeling helped me to recognize that I was crossing the line into practicing religion rather than teaching about religion. Finally, as for common sense, I could have more carefully anticipated that events such as these might occur.

As you may imagine, by now I had lost some confidence, and I was wondering how to bring the class to a successful close. At this point in time, one student, without telling me why, asked if he could talk to the class. I glanced at the clock, and noted that it was one minute until the bell rang, but I nodded to him, not sure how I was going to conclude this class period anyway.

He stood at the podium and with a passionate voice, spoke of his faith and urged others to join him in it. My mouth dropped open as the bell rang and students filed out.

Of course, this unexpected turn of events had no curriculum focus. As for legal issues, I had given up my place as the instructional leader and allowed a student to proselytize: this was clearly a violation of the Establishment Clause. Morally, I was not comfortable about the captive nature of the audience, and of common sense...there was none! The message happened to be consistent with my personal faith, but that is beside the point.

There are times when this student’s speech may have been legal with an appropriate curriculum focus. For example, if the student was assigned to give a persuasive speech as part of a language arts class, and he had his choice of topics, he could have used his religious convictions as a basis of his speech. His talk would then have been one of many similarly persuasive speeches, as well as it would have met the course learning objectives. He also would have his own Free Exercise right to express his faith in his speech.

And, the most important point is to understand that First Amendment neutrality doesn’t mean one must be neutral on values or acting on values for the good of children.

—Professor Jean Moule, Oregon.

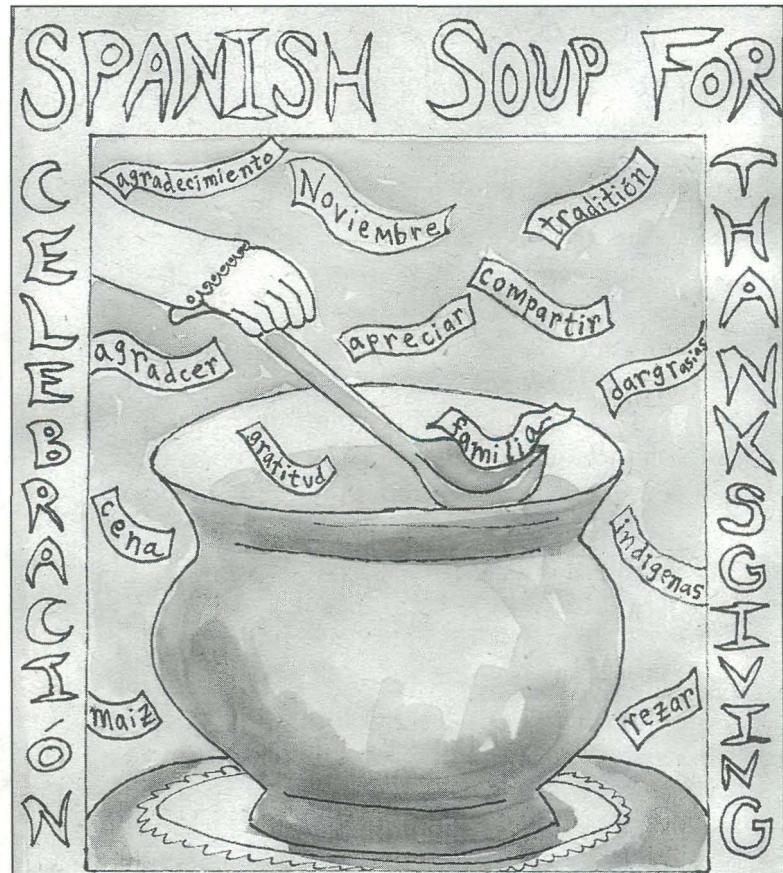


## A Thanksgiving *sopa de letras* in Spanish

You may know that *gracias* means “thanks,” but how many other Thanksgiving-related words do you know in Spanish? Try this *sopa de letras* (word search), and see for yourself. Look for the Spanish translation of these common Thanksgiving-related words. Note that accent marks and capital letters in the search list have been omitted within the grid itself because including them would make it too easy to spot the Spanish words.

Buena suerte!

Palabras	English Meaning
agradecimiento	gratefulness
pavo	turkey
día de acción de gracias	Thanksgiving Day
jueves	Thursday
maíz	corn
gratitud	gratitude
pastel de calabaza	pumpkin pie
peregrinos	pilgrims
indígenas	Native Americans
Nueva Inglaterra	New England
salsa de arándano agrio	cranberry sauce
agradecer	to be thankful for
dar gracias	to thank
apreciación	appreciation
familia	family
vacaciones	vacation
fútbol americano	football
comer	eat
rezar	pray
apreciar	to appreciate
cena	dinner
relleno	stuffing
sobras	leftovers
noviembre	November
tradición	tradition
compartir	to share



—Laura Aldir-Hernandez is a Cuban American author living in Florida. Art: Paula Gregovich.

## Christmas, My Favorite Holiday

I wake up and rush down the stairs. I see all the gifts under the tree and feel a cool, crisp wind run across my cheek. It's Christmas, my favorite holiday with the scrumptious food, the exciting gifts and the creative décor.

In particular, food is what I love about Christmas. Since my family is Colombian, it is a tradition to make these special platters: *Buñuelos*, *Natilla* and *Ajiaco*. *Buñuelos* are round cheese and bread balls that are fried. *Ajiaco* is a soup consisting of chicken, potatoes, peas and *papas creollas* (another type of small potatoes that taste like French fries). One time, while making *bunuelos*, my mom did something wrong and when she took them out, they exploded. Even now, I laugh at the thought of it.

One Christmas my grandpa called me to tell what his gift to me was, and to my surprise, it was a Jersey cow. To this day, I still can't believe it.

Last, but not least, the décor at Christmas is always dazzling. My favorite two decorations are the Christmas tree and yard lights. Our Christmas tree is the most unique one because we only put wooden ornaments on it. This is because my grandpa works with wood which gave my dad his love for wood. Of course, we put all the streamers and lights on the tree, but the main part is just wooden ornaments from all over the world.

—Sofia De Los Angeles Grosso, 9,  
Colombian American, Florida.



## The Rush to Mass

Even though it is a weekly ritual,  
It feels that my family is always rushed,  
To make that 5:00 deadline,  
Of Saturday night mass.  
It sounds good in theory,  
Because we all like to sleep in on Sunday.

Preparation begins,

Cleaning up, showering, and changing into nice clothes.

"Do we have the offertory envelope?"

The parking lot fills up fast,

And people flood in to find a seat.

The goal is to be in a seat before the bells stop ringing,

The music begins filling my soul with joy;

A quiet calmness comes over us.

The peacefulness of church begins,

Until next week when rushing starts all over again.

You'd think we would be more prepared.

—James Mullen, 14, Pennsylvania.

## Colombian Buñuelos

### Ingredients:

Vegetable oil for frying

¾ cup cornstarch

2 tablespoon yucca flour or tapioca starch

1 cup finely grated feta cheese

¼ cup finely grated *Queso fresco*, farmer's cheese

½ teaspoon sugar

Pinch salt

1 tablespoon milk

### Directions:

Place all the ingredients, except the oil in a medium bowl and mix well using your hands until soft dough is obtained. Form small balls using your hands and in a deep pot, heat the vegetable oil to 300°F. (not very hot). Carefully drop the balls in the warm oil. Cover the pot and after about 3 to 4 minutes, turn the heat up and fry until golden brown then remove from the oil and drain on a plate lined with paper towels, serve and enjoy. —Sofia and her family

## Claudia's Flan

She would mix the ingredients

8 eggs, syrup, condensed milk and evaporated milk.

Always forgot the sugar.

But no matter, I liked it that way

How good it always came out,  
It was a sweet dessert.

So good, no words to describe.  
It was special to my family and I.

She always smelled like food  
If it was breakfast, lunch, or dinner; she would cook it

She was later in the hospital  
No matter, I still made it...for her.

Not as good, not as heavenly.  
But certainly very sentimental.

—Valentina Genta, grade 7, Florida. Her Tia (aunt)  
Claudia, an amazing cook, was her inspiration for this poem.  
Valentina's family comes from Peru and Uruguay, S. America.

# DEAR HANNA

“My grandmother will be celebrating her 80th birthday in December. What can we give her? She already has many things she has accumulated over her lifetime.”

—Rita

Dear Rita, Let me share a story that I experienced recently.

Members of a family were excited about an elderly grandma. Yet they were equally puzzled. As one family member would meet another one, this question would pop out: **“What have you decided to give Grandma?”** Frequently, the response brought forth a groan, “I can’t think of anything to give her!”

It was only a month until the long awaited day. Then, one of the leading and courageous relatives invited all family members by saying, “Let’s get together tomorrow night after Grandma is asleep and plan the birthday!”

When the time came, this relative began, “Grandma is exhausted. She is sure not to wake up no matter how much noise we make.”

Susan, another relative, stated, “I am giving her a cute pink mouse chasing around in a pink little cage.”

Other relatives shared their ideas for gifts that included: “an electric can-opener—its less work than that old one she is still using”, “the best joke book that has ever been published”, “a beautiful coat of blonde hair to last a whole year”, “a never-ending supply of raisins that don’t stick to her teeth”, and “a happy, singing yellow canary to keep Grandma entertained...”

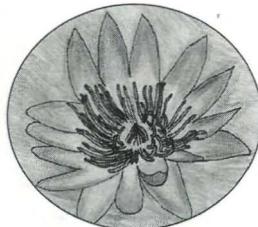
When the meeting was over, ice cream and cookies were served. Tom pleaded, “Let’s get Grandma to join us for ice cream. Just don’t mention the birthday!”

Ice cream gobbled up, Tom led Grandma to her bedroom and asked, “Grandma, what would give you pleasure, say as a birthday gift, on this special birthday?”

“Oh my,” said Grandma to Tom, “I would like all the boys to be as thoughtful as you are! For sure, I don’t want another pet! They are a lot of work. Don’t give me jokes, they don’t seem funny to me. Don’t give me modern electric kitchen gadgets; I do well with the old ones that I am used to for many years. It’s an insult to give plastic flowers when nature has made the most beautiful flowers the world over.

“Of course, I’d love to have family give me company every now and then. Tom, I thank you for asking what I want for my Birthday. You have really made this the best **birthday** for me.”

In Peace,



Hanna

Send your questions/comments to:  
**Dear Hanna c/o Skipping Stones**  
P. O. Box 3939  
Eugene, Oregon 97403 USA

Illustrated by Paula Gregovich, Oregon.

## The Buddhist Birthday

For us, the group of teenagers who called themselves the Kitchen Crew, the Jeweled Repentance of Emperor Liang was not so much jewels as sore muscles and sweat. It was hard, working in a kitchen that served hundreds daily, dashing back and forth between that job and others, and then trying to go inconspicuously into the ceremony hall to hear at least some of the Venerable Masters' lectures.

I had my mother to thank, really. It was because of her that I had been dragged along to the Jeweled Repentance, a nine-day repentance ceremony that was being conducted by the Houston chapter of the Compassionate Service Society, of which my mother was a member. The Jeweled Repentance of Emperor Liang, apparently, was named after an emperor in China whose wife was cruel and did bad deeds during her lifetime. One night after she had died, the emperor had a dream in which she came to him and asked him to pray for her, so that she might escape and be able to pass into the next life. The emperor did what she asked, and this repentance ceremony became a time for people to pray for the escape of their loved ones into the next life, as well as repent their own bad deeds. For me, at least, this was my first time to participate actively in an event with fellow Buddhists—English-speaking Buddhists—who were closer to my age.

Despite the grueling work involved, working on the Kitchen Crew did have its perks. There were the frozen-yogurt expeditions, there were the conversations with interesting people from such far-off places as Hungary, Kentucky and California, and there were the lessons learned—perhaps the real jewels of this ceremony—like the Buddhist birthday.

I didn't know it at the time, but a member of the Kitchen Crew, our friend Vivian, had a birthday that fell in the middle of the nine-day event. Others on the Kitchen Crew knew about it, however, and in secret they had planned a surprise birthday party for her. They had commissioned Vincent, another teen volunteer, to ask the Venerable Master Ce Hang Truong to help sing "Happy Birthday" to her. It took Vincent two tries to reach the Master through the crowd of reverent Buddhists. Finally he was able to state his request, and the Master's reply was swift.

"Where?" he asked.

While the little kids kept the birthday girl occu-

pied, Julia, Khôi and others on the Kitchen crew had been setting up the back table area. It looked fabulous, with colored streamers and a special place, marked out by a birthday crown and a huge drinking cup, for Vivian. The Master looked around and spotted Anh Nguyễn, our kitchen source of comic relief, plugging candles into the birthday cake.

"Wait." He held up a hand. "Don't light the candles yet. Gather the others around," he told us. "Gather them around and I will tell you about the Buddhist birthday." The rest of the Kitchen Crew was rounded up in a matter of minutes. We surprised Vivian and toasted her with plastic cups of juice and water, and then gathered around the table as Anh Nguyễn carried out the unlit cake and set it in front of her.

"In Buddhism," the Master began, "we consider the normal birthday, the blowing out of candles, to be very inauspicious. It is as though the candle flame, your life force, is terminated. It is not meaningful."

"In Buddhism," he continued, "instead of blowing out candles, we light each candle one at a time, and for each candle we pledge to do a good thing. In that way you can take control of your own life. You, Vivian, can light the first three candles. Then, you can get your friends to help you light the rest, with their promises to do good things."

Someone handed a lighter to Vivian, and with a quiet voice, she came up with three promises. Then it was time for the rest of us. We came forward, hesitating at first, and then more confident, each lighting a candle and making a resolution. Become a vegetarian. Learn the Mantra of Great Compassion. Get straight A's in school. For Anh Nguyen, it was to stop drinking so much. For our friend Andrew, it was to argue less with his sister and brother and help the family stand strong, and so on and so forth.

When all the candles were lit, the Master spread his arms wide to encompass the table surrounded by a score of young people with wide grins.

"Look at this," he said. "There is so much light here. Maybe the most light I've seen in these past days. So much positivity. Congratulations," he told Vivian. "You get to have the first Buddhist birthday in Houston!"

—Tuong-Phi Le, 14, Vietnamese American, Texas.

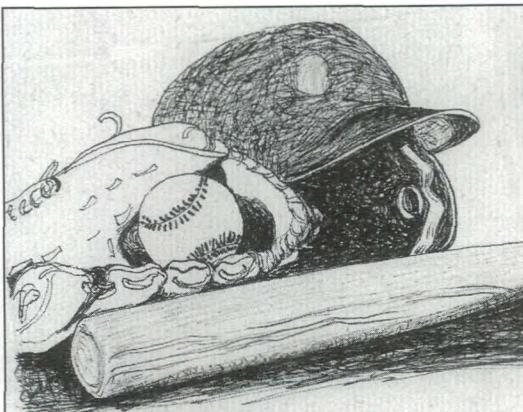
## The Boy's Birthday Wish

Once there was a young boy who was going to have a birthday soon. What this young boy really wanted for his birthday was a baseball bat, a baseball and a mitt. No one in his family asked him what he wanted for his birthday because they thought they knew him well enough not to need to ask.

The dad thinks, "What shall I get my son for his birthday? What would a young boy want? When I was a boy I always wanted a briefcase just like my dad had." So the boy's dad gets him a briefcase.

The mom wonders what to get him and thinks, "When I was his age I always wanted to get a big bottle of bubble bath. The pink kind always smelled the best." So she gets her son pink bubble bath.

The boy's little sister thinks that if it was her birthday she'd like a new doll. "Maybe my brother would like a doll too." So she gets him a new, pretty doll with braided hair. The boy's dog even knows it's his birthday and gives the boy her second best chew toy. Only the grandparents ask what the boy wants for his gift and the boy tells them he wants baseball things.



When the boy's birthday comes and he blows out his birthday candles, he wishes for baseball things.

First, the boy opens the gifts from his parents and sister. His dog didn't know how to wrap a present and so she just places the chew toy next to the boy. With each present the boy gets more and more confused, but just laughs about the presents.

Finally, he opens the gift from his grandparents. The boy's birthday wish comes true! His grandparents had given him a baseball, a bat and a mitt. The parents were surprised and said, "Wow,

Grandpa, we didn't know you liked baseball. Grandma, we didn't know you even knew anything about baseball."

The grandparents chuckled. Grandma said, "We don't have to, it's not my birthday and it's not Grandpa's birthday. It's our grandson's birthday, and he likes baseball."

The whole family laughed as Grandpa added, "For my birthday, I want a nice pair of socks."

Later they all played a game of baseball with the birthday boy.

—M.G. Fernelius, Utah.

## Meet the Melody

Do you want to know a fact? From here it's all a mess.

I write in my head, in the shower, in the car. The feelings circle in my heart and my mind changes them into these words, words that keep me up at night, words that form questions.

I've come to this place where the river runs freely. I've come to this place where the wind blows through me. Where the sky spins. Moves me, leaves me, takes me. Sometimes you're here. You come and you go. I guess its okay because I do it too. We all do.

We all betray and we all lie, I know, I know that it's bad to lie and cheat people. But, its human nature, it comes...naturally.

We dance around fires. We celebrate things. The ones that fool us into thinking we have them. We own them. We need them.

Here's the thing. This river runs. This wind howls. This sky moves.

I love this dance. I know somewhere in my heart you know the song. Just hum the melody and we can learn the lyrics, together.

—Arielle Blount, 13, Florida, adds, "Writing has always been a passion for me, and it helps me bring out my feelings..."

## Getting Along With Gran

Gran lives in my room. Well, it used to be mine. I gave it to her when she came to live with me and my mom. Now I live in the basement. Gran can't walk up and down the steps so I sleep downstairs.

Sometimes I have a hard time living with Gran. She doesn't always remember my name. That hurts my feelings a little.

One day Gran asked me, "When can I go back to my home?"

But she can't go back home. She can't remember to take her pills, so we have to remind her, and she forgets what she says.

"Are we going to the store?" she asks. A few minutes later, "Are we going to the store?" She doesn't remember asking the question or the answer we tell her. Sometimes this makes Mom and me grumpy. I know we need to be patient with her. She was patient with me when I was little. Now Mom says it's my turn to help her.

Mom says something called "dementia" causes this. Gran's brain is not working like it used to. Her brain can't think or remember well. I guess that happens to some older people.

The days when Gran is very forgetful are hard days for all of us and they can frustrate me. So Mom and I take turns—I go to the neighbors' for a break and she stays with Gran. Other days we swap so Mom can get away for a while.

We've developed ways to take care of Gran so that she can make decisions and still be safe. We put the medicine in her pill organizer, and she takes the pills. We drive her places, and she decides where. We wash her clothes, and she picks what to wear. We cook her meals, and she helps choose the menus. Giving Gran these choices shows we respect her.

The good days with Gran are a special gift.

On Gran's good days, we laugh and talk and play.

She's like her old self. Once when I took too long to drink my orange juice, my Gran teased, "Are you going to drink it or wear it?!"

I drank it, fast!

When Gran makes me toast, she puts raisins on it, for eyes. She laughs and says, "Somebody's watching you."

She likes to take out her false teeth and chase me with them!

Living with dementia isn't easy. Getting along with Gran can be hard, but Mom and I love her. When you love someone you take care of them, right?

Each night when I go downstairs to the musty basement to sleep, I miss my warm, sunny room. But Gran needs it more. That's just another way I can help my Gran.

—Jaclyn S. Miller, Indiana. Art: Paula Gregovich.



### Wanted! Your Creations for Our Pages

We welcome your creative writing (stories, poems, essays, opinion pieces, etc.) and original artwork for publication in each issue. You can share your ideas and experiences, thoughts and opinions, dreams and visions. We like shorter pieces so that we can include many more contributors.

Prose (900 words), poems (30 lines), photos/art (8 pieces) limit. Please include a cover letter.

### 2011 Youth Honor Awards

We invite your best writings and art on Cultural Diversity, Family and Society, Nature, Ecology, Dreams and Visions, Youth Activism, Creative Conflict Resolution, Peace and Justice. Ten winners will be published in Vol. 23, no. 4!

Send by **June 25, 2011** to: **Skipping Stones**

**P. O. Box 3939, Eugene, OR 97403 USA**

E-Mail: editor@SkippingStones.org



## The Support Under the Bridge

My mom is the support under a bridge  
Without her, all would fall  
And struggle in the water  
Calling out for help  
And she would come  
It may seem impossible  
But she could even fix that problem  
The supports would swoop down  
And pick up the bridge  
Along with the people  
Never would she leave anyone behind  
She would bring towels  
For anyone who's wet  
And food for anyone who's hungry  
And water for anyone who's thirsty  
And shelter for anyone who's cold  
And love for anyone who needs some  
And who doesn't need love?

—Elizabeth Lurz, 10, Connecticut.

### Untitled

One Day After School  
My Heart stopped like rain  
freezing in the air  
It felt dead  
when my mom told me  
my sister wasn't  
coming home.

It was the middle of summer  
and no one could find her.

There was a black flower in my chest.  
—Tremaine Gardner, African American,  
grade 6, Michigan.

## Family Page

### “Goodbye” Food

The smell of cinnamon tickles my nose  
Time I have with him remains unknown

Yet none was wasted

Chopping, peeling, pouring, stirring, and cooking

I eat silently thinking of what to say  
Only goodbye goes through my mind

Somehow I can't say it

The silence is too deafening

Jelly-like substance brings my face to a smile  
He disappeared like the apples on my plate

Tears choke my heart

When will he come back?

Tomorrow, next week, next year?

No remainder of him worries me  
Why can't he join me now?

Many questions

Wishing for one answer

Goodbye

—Abigail Coleman, 12, Florida, wrote this poem about saying goodbye to her father as he went to N.J. to get treated for colon cancer.

### I Am from the Smell of the Wind

From the leaves outside

I am from my messy house

A house that smells like cats, pancakes, comfortable

I am from the sunsets between the two trees out in the distance

From the flowers outside that are beautiful

From purple and yellow flowers

And the flowers making me smile

I am from the spring times

And moving all the time, and fighting, and libraries

I'm from the flowers blooming

Ice cold of New York, and “don’t go out in the road!”

I’m from the winter

Halloween, celebrating birthdays, Fairy Festivals

New Mexico, a beautiful tree

Vegetables, salad, lettuce, broccoli, garlic, onion

From grandma who bought a pearl in Hawaii; mom got one too

From the pearl they kept somewhere safe; my mom shows it to me

From the picture of lava Grandma bought in Hawaii that I keep  
on my wall

—Iris Lake, 9, Oregon

## Stories to Tell

The wind that rushes through the trees that turns and twists, pulls and pushes the April leaves has stories to tell.

The birds that tweet and twitter, that pick up seeds and peck at fruit, that let the wind rush into their feathers and lift them up into the cloudless April sky have stories to tell.

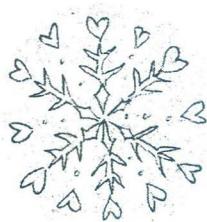
The leaves that seem to wait until the wind comes rushing through and pulls them from their refuge in the trees have stories to tell.

The trees that stretch their arms out to the sun, that sprouts beautiful green apples and perfect pink flowers, have stories to tell.

The dolphin that jumps out of the water and into the sky that dives into the deep water only to emerge seconds later to leap out of the water in a graceful arc have stories to tell.

The wind that rushes through the trees that pulls at the leaves and knocks the apples from their leafy home, that pushes the birds out of their perch flying into the morning sky and that pulls the dolphins into the sky have stories to tell.

—Eleana Sarah Sheeber Sorenson, 9, Jewish-Scandinavian American, Oregon. She was inspired to write “Stories to Tell” while looking outside her classroom window and listening to the birds.



## Sparrow

Dark and sneaky,  
A spy.  
Its green emerald eye  
Sees everything,  
But speaks nothing.  
Its dark wings flutter,  
Then glide in the sky.  
A sparrow, flying by.

—Laura Kim, 12, PA.

## I Hear Snow Falling

I hear snow falling, the countless snowflakes I hear,  
Those of many shapes and sizes, each one with unique patterns  
The sky crying with frozen tears as the temperature is compressing,  
Some sledding down the hills of frost, others dwelling by the fire,  
The green surrounding fading away, as the tears continue to fall,  
The hot chocolate steaming with warmth, perceiving true meaning,  
The icicles dangling with beauty, the pinnacles dripping,  
The children indenting the frost, the heavenly angel appears,  
The day proceeds to get whiter as the growing snow deepens,  
Falling with carelessness their elegant crystal tears.

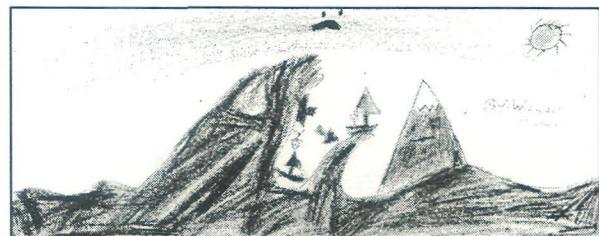
—Morgan Saeman, 15, New Jersey. Art: Paula Gregovich.

## Nature Poetry

### The Tiger Dude

The tiger stalks like a professional boxer.  
He darts as fierce and fast as a lightning bolt.  
It hides in the prairies and steps on berries.  
Its black stripes dance around the orange.  
It pounds and pounces like the earth is shaking.  
It waits all day. It might not be tall but it is strong and waits for its prey.

—Richie Noparstak, 9, grade 4, Illinois.



### The Great Wave

The waves roar ferociously as a lion.  
The boats quiver like twigs in a rampaging elephant's path.  
The white foam on top grabs and tears like tiger claws.  
The mountain stands still awed by the waves' power.  
The sky turns yellow with jealousy wanting to show the mountain its true power.  
Then the wave subsides and everything is still and silent.

—Wasen Kumar, grade 4, Illinois.



## Best Friends ... Muchos Amigos

The *azul* bowl of the *gato* sat on the kitchen floor almost empty but for an inch of dirty, stale *agua*. Juanita hadn't felt like doing much of anything all week. Sure, she went to *la escuela* and went through all the motions of listening to her *maestra*, Ms. Herrera and getting out the right *libros* at the right time, but she didn't much care for what was going on.

When she'd gotten a hall pass to go see the nurse, she'd run into Kendra, and their *ojos* had met for only a brief *momento*, but that was enough. She knew that Kendra hadn't meant to tell "the secret," that it had probably just "slipped out" like it had before.

Kendra had tried to apologize and said she felt terrible. But it was too late, there was no way she could take it back, and Juanita would never forgive her. What made it worse was that this wasn't the *primera vez* Kendra had "spilled the beans" and shared something Juanita had told her in confidence. Kendra was a blabber-mouth, and Juanita wanted nothing more to do with her ever again. If you couldn't trust one of your best *amigos*, whom could you trust?

Laying in her bed staring at the *azul y blanco* canopy seemed to be Juanita's favorite pastime now. She felt too tired to even answer *abuela*'s knock at her bedroom *puerta*. To the familiar "Can I come in, Junita?," she reluctantly replied "Si. ¿Como no?"

As Nana sat on the edge of the *cama*, she quietly said, "Juanita, the school nurse called today. She said you weren't feeling well. She said she thought you seemed depressed. Can I help? Sometimes it just helps to have someone to talk to."

"I told Kendra about how terrible I did in the Little Theater Company try-outs, and she told Jamilia, and now everyone in school knows."

"Juanita," said Nana, "didn't we talk about this before, when you told Kendra about getting an 'F' on your *matematicas* test and she told that to everyone? Some people just can't keep *secretos*."

"Yeah, but you said I should "forgive and forget" and I did. And now look what happened!"

"But why did you tell her something private and special to you again when you weren't sure you could trust her?"

"Juanita," continued Nana reassuringly, "you told me you were *amigas* with Kendra because she laughs a lot and had a good sense of humor. That she was an "up" person and fun to be with—not that she was good at keeping *secretos*. Forgive the 'F' incident and forget that it happened, but remember what you

learned, that Kendra is fun but not good with *secretos*. Nobody is perfect. Kendra just hasn't learned to keep secrets yet. We all have different qualities and abilities and things to learn. That's what life is all about."

I'm not mad at Nana anymore for giving me what I thought was a bad advice. I guess I just didn't understand it right. Kendra and I are friends again. We're going skating tonight—but I'm not going to tell her that I'm trying out for chorus next week because I might not make it, or that I want to be a doctor someday. We'll just have fun!

My other friend Olivia doesn't like to skate and her *madre y padre* won't let her go to the movies or the mall but we listen to each other's *problemas* and it helps—and she's good at keeping *secretos tambien*!

—Patricia Burke Hanson, Arizona. Art: Paula Gregovich.

\* Can you guess what the Spanish words and phrases mean? See if you can figure out the meanings as you read the story, without looking at a dictionary. Some words are very similar to English (e.g.: *escuela* and *school*) while others are not (e.g.: *tambien* and *also*). Good luck. Buena Suerte!

### ★★★ For all Kids who Study a Lot! ★★★

A recent study has found that if you take short breaks every hour (even only for a few minutes) to walk around, to stretch up, stand up, do chores, etc. that's very good for your body and mind!

# The Cat

This is ridiculous, I thought to myself, as I sat in the stuffy confines of an airplane. I was traveling all the way across the Atlantic Ocean to see a cat. Not just any cat. My Dede's cat.

Dede is what we call my grandfather. It's Turkish.

Dede lived alone in an apartment in the bustling heart of Istanbul. It had been his humble home for more than twenty years, and now he had opened his doors to the newest member of our family: a cat.

A family friend had found the cat abandoned in a park. She had thought it would be the perfect companion for Dede, and so she lured the cat into a pet carrier with food. Then she took the cat to what would be its new home, to Dede.

At first he wasn't pleased.

He didn't want to care for a cat. The first night she was with him, she tried to sleep in his bed. Annoyed, Dede took her and put her out in the hallway. But slowly, with her purrs and her gentle meows, the cat worked her way into his heart. She would purr and rub against his legs when he woke in the morning, and she would follow him, meowing, as he went to the kitchen to boil his tea and toast his bread. Now Dede adored her with all the love his soul could muster. She was more than just a cat; she was his cat, his perfect little Liza.

I was eager to meet this cat, this beloved cat whom I had come all the way from America to see. Bright light and noise from the crowded airport assaulted my senses. Excited family members spotted me. I soon found myself crammed into a taxi and on my way to the apartment. I had my luggage in my lap. It had never seemed so heavy until now.

The door to Dede's apartment protested with a loud groan as he shoved it open. I heard a meow, and then, at last, I was face to face with the famous feline.

She was beautiful.

She was a large cat, graceful in her step, her fluffy tail held high in the air. Her fur was long, white and surreally soft, and she kept herself very clean. She had splotches of brown, black and auburn on her back and on her face. Her eyes were large and glassy, a seductive

shade of green, and her delicate pink nostrils quivered as she breathed. She radiated calm and dignity, watching me with half-closed eyes as I set my luggage down by the door. She was a regal cat, like an empress overseeing her vast domain from the post of the living room coffee table. Immediately I felt her imperial aura.

I knelt slowly, carefully beside her, as one would approach a great queen. I held out my hand. Her whiskers tickled, and then I heard a low sound, a rumbling, vibrating sound that emanated from the cat's belly. She was purring. Dede beamed proudly at the others in the room, a pleased smile dancing on his lips. Then he knelt too, and stroked his cat, cooing words of affection.

That night jet lag plagued me. Unable to sleep, I wandered into the living room with eyes glazed over from fatigue. I saw a large mound of white fur lying on the coffee table, in the stream of cold air from a fan plugged into the wall. As I passed Liza to get to the couch, she lifted her head from her paws and made a gentle sound, half-purr and half childlike gurgle. I smiled as I sat across from her. She meowed, and quietly leapt from the coffee table to lie down next to me. Liza consented to sit on the couch through the night, keeping me company. She slept. Now and then, her paws would twitch as she dreamed. I mindlessly stroked her soft fur and stared at the silent television. She was warm, and she purred. The sound was soothing. I fell asleep.

My trip only lasted five weeks. Obligations with school called me back to America. I was sad to tell Liza good-bye, but I knew I would see her again soon. In the short time I had been with her, she captured my heart and I had fallen as deeply in love with her as had Dede. For those weeks, I was certain I had been in the company of a queen. When she looks you in the eye, you are certain she can read your mind. Her face is calm, austere, and all-knowing. To me, she is not simply a cat. She is not just Liza, my grandfather's cat. She is the Cat, and there will be no other like her.

—Belle M. Homsi, 14, Missouri. "There are many little details about life that are often overlooked, and I hope my work succeeds in highlighting those small details and bringing them under a virtual magnifying glass."



# My Home

Canada is a place where people can be themselves and live the life they want. There is always something to do and places to be. I lived in Canada until I was 12. Then we moved to the United States because my mom met an American and married him. He had his job in the U.S. During the summer and Christmas when I get to go to Canada, I always come back replenished and full of excitement. The people and places in Canada make it what it is. My family all lives in Canada, and seeing them always makes me feel like I'm taken care of, and I can have a good time. All of my close friends live there and even though we are a whole country away, we talk all the time and spend much time together when I'm there. I always remember my summers in Canada because they impact my life, and I never want to leave.

The moment I get off the plane I see my dad and my heart starts racing and I can barely breathe. As I wait for the escalator to reach the floor my dad is on, my hands start to shake, and I'm speechless. My dad, step mom, sister and my best friend are all waiting for me. My eyes began to tear up as I run and hug my dad first, he smells like aftershave and spices. My dad cooks food that could make a vegetarian eat meat.

When I hug my sister I realize looking at her is like looking at a mirror. We're four years apart and yet still the same person. When I look at Julie I notice how much she's changed over the time and the first thing she says is, "Oh, so now you finally hug me!" In one hug she reminds me of how much I miss home. The ride to my dad's house consists of everyone talking about what has happened in the past six months. My dad tells me about his job and the family while Julie tells me about the new gossip. Julie's mouth is moving faster than the car wheels and the radio is just a soft hum in the background. My dad tries to fit in as many words as he can before Julie cuts him off again.

Once I walk into my dad's house a soothing feeling sweeps across my body, until claws scratch at my feet. I look down and see Bogart and Bailey, my two Boston Terrier puppies, greeting me by jumping at me. Their smiling faces and wagging tails remind me I'm back home. As I unpack my things, thoughts of Canada rush into my head and things I'm going to do this visit. While sitting with my sister, she fills the room with laughter and her bright personality. I finish unpacking

and head upstairs to find my family waiting for me.

Each family member has their own way of greeting me, and each one has their own way of smothering me with love. As Aunt Diane hugs me, perfume floods my nose and my bones slowly crack by her embrace. She tops it off by kissing my cheek with her 99-cent lipstick. Once I'm let loose of the tight bear hug my cousins come over to welcome me back. Each cousin reminds me of embarrassing moments from my childhood. Story after story, I remember every tragic moment in my life. I go outside to see my family all sitting around a large table with food piled up to the top. Chicken, potatoes, lasagna, chips, hamburger and fries are all sitting at the table waiting. My dad knows that with my family it's like feeding a wild pack of lions so he knows to be prepared. We all grab an overfilled plate and sit down to talk about everything new that's happening in Canada.

While sitting in the circle with my family, my heart tingles and I remember my childhood and that I used to have this feeling every day. Visiting in the summer allows me a piece of Canada every year and still keep in contact with my roots. Being with my family and friends at one time is an experience I can never forget. Canada has the most beautiful things to see and the most exciting things to do, which is why Canada is my home and forever will be.

—Stephanie Terriah, 15, Washington.

## The Island at Sunset

The beauty of the sun is just too gorgeous to bare

The sunset is the island's old treasure

So just take a glance and breath

Feel the waves touch your toes

Walk meditating with the shore

Feel the peace come within

The light house at the end of the island

Is waiting for tourists to come

The white faded historical landmark

Shines with the sunset's good-bye.

—Alexandria Takesian, 12, Florida. She has French, Armenian, Polish and German heritage, and speaks fluent French and is now learning Polish.

## Poetry Page



### A Wiccan's Prayer

Power of Spirit  
 Mystery of the Waters  
 Might of Fire  
 Beauty of the green Earth  
 Serenity of Air  
 Free and Flowing  
 Basal and Fixed  
 White moon amongst the stars  
 Call unto my spirit  
 I am the soul of nature,  
 who gives life to the universe

Voice of the Goddess

Let there be  
 beauty and strength  
 power and compassion  
 honor and humility  
 mirth and reverence  
 Within you  
 Blessed be to thee.

—Josie Russo, 14, Florida.



### Congé dans un métro

Je ris à un panneau d'affichage  
 Dans une gare métropolitaine—  
 soudain tout est drôle.  
 Je choisi ma destination  
 un pas sur le quai  
 et je suis emportée par le métro  
 Emportée par la vie, emportée par le temps.  
 Des débuts, des haltes, ici et là  
 tout le monde bougent.  
 Visitez, explorez et souvenezvous  
 et un jour retournez dans votre patrie  
 comme je l'ai fait.  
 Dans la grande région de parisienne,  
 Dans la ville charmante de Bruxelles  
 Je commence avec le métro.  
 C'est un bon endroit place, parce quí après tout  
 le monde se rassemble dans les gares de métro.

—Yahong Chi, 14, Ontario, Canada. “A trip to a foreign country can be interesting at the least. What started as a school assignment for me blossomed into a full poem, written in French. “Congé dans un métro” paints my experience in France and Belgium travelling their public transit system, the underground subway. My ancestry is Chinese and I am currently learning Mandarin and French. I am a member of CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children’s Authors, Illustrators & Performers).” She has been published in magazines and anthologies. Art by Paula Gregovich, our illustrator.



### I'm Playing Basketball

with the full moon  
 I go to dunk the ball  
 at the heaven's gates  
 but God blocks the dunk.  
 An angel on the sidelines  
 gets the rebound.

—Greg Harris, grade 7, Michigan.

### Metro Vacation

I laugh at a billboard  
 In a subway station—  
 suddenly everything is funny.  
 I choose my destination  
 one step on the platform  
 and I'm swept away by the subway  
 Swept away by life and time.  
 Starts and stops, here and there  
 the whole world moves.  
 Visit, explore, remember  
 then one day return to your home country  
 like I've done.  
 In the greater region of Paris,  
 In the charming city of Brussels  
 I start with the subway.  
 It's a good place to begin, because after all  
 the world gathers in subway stations.

# Elijah's Ears

Long ago in the savanna of Chad, all the elephants had small ears. Because of this, elephants were always yelling just to hear themselves. One elephant, named Elijah, realized the annoyance caused by elephant's yelling.

One day, Elijah was walking and saw his friend, Rhino.

"Hello!" boomed Elijah.

"Why do you always yell so loudly?" asked Rhino.

"Oh, I'm sorry, but my ears are so tiny."

"Ah," said Rhino. "Then we must make them big."

"Yes, I know, but how?" asked Elijah.

"We can tie banana leaves to them," said Rhino.

So they went off to find some banana leaves.

"Look," exclaimed Elijah. "A banana tree!" The two friends tied them on to Elijah's ears. Then he could hear much better.

"It works!" said Elijah.

"That is good," said Rhino. They went to show the others.

"Oh Elijah," said all the animals. "They are very big."

Then it started getting very hot and the leaves withered and fell off.

"Ahaaaaaaa!" screamed Elijah, "The leaves are falling off!"

"Oh no," said Rhino. "This is terrible."

"Now, we must think of something else," cried Elijah.



## Elijah's Ears

The two friends thought and thought and then thought some more.

"I know, we can strap cow hides to them."

"Good idea."

They set off to find a dead cow. Soon, they saw Lion eating a cow.

"Hello Lion," said Elijah.

"Hello."

"My ears are too small to hear with and I want that cow hide to make them big."

"You can have it," said Lion. And Rhino and Elijah tied it on.

"Oh, this one I am sure it will work," said Elijah happily.

And they went to show the others. But then the rope holding the hide started to break from the weight.

"Oh no," cried Elijah. "No! No! No! No! No! I guess it's just hopeless."

Then Elijah leaned his head against a tree and sobbed.

"Do not cry," said Rhino.

"Why not? Nothing will work. I'll just have small ears forever."

"Come," said Rhino. "We will find another way."

But then Elijah tried to get up but his ear was stuck in the bark. He pulled harder and his ear started to stretch and stretch. When he pulled free, Rhino was gaping at him.

"Your ear is big! You stretched it out," he exclaimed.

"Really? Then I must also stretch the other."

When Elijah had his ears stretched, he went to show the other animals. All the elephants loved Elijah's ears and decided to also stretch their own. So now all elephants in the savanna have big ears.

—Eric Zack, 11, made this book in 6th grade, Oregon.

## My Life as a Shoe

Now let's get this straight. I'm a shoe. Not just any shoe but the one and only, Footington, the football shoe. I'm writing this story so you think next time before you throw off your shoes in the laundry room.

You might think my job is easy, being carried around all the time, but it's NOT! Being a football shoe, I get hurt a lot!

So, Jeremy is running (by the way he's my person) and he has the ball, and the other team's person is catching up an WHAM! He steps on my toe. "Aaaaaah!" I scream. Of course humans can't hear me. Football practice is fun, but it can hurt.

Today Jeremy is taking me to the coffee shop. Do you ever wonder what shoes eat? The shoes of the world eat sock thread. Yep, sock thread! Ever wonder how your socks get holes in them? If you do, the shoes you normally wear pulled the thread out one by one. "Yum!"

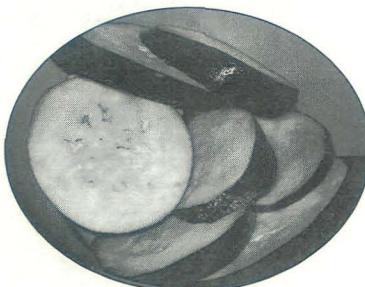
Today, Jeremy was outside and his feet got hot, so he took me off. Fufu, the neighbor's dog snatched me up and ran off. Jeremy ran after me, leaped for Fufu and missed, I was completely covered in slobber. "Uggh!" Fufu's owner, Aladia, rescued me and gave me back to Jeremy. He wiped me down and put me with my family: dad, the hiking boots, mom, the high-heels, my sister the clogs, and my brother the sneakers.

—Molly McCarthy, 9, Pennsylvania.

## My Family's Recipe for Eggplant Cutlets

### Ingredients:

1 large eggplant  
¼ teaspoon of salt  
½ teaspoon of turmeric  
1 tablespoon of olive oil  
½ teaspoon of paprika  
Black crushed pepper (optional)



### Directions to Cook:

Cut large eggplant into 1 cm thick diagonal slices.

Put cut slices into large bowl.

Add a tablespoon of olive oil, ¼ teaspoon of salt, and ½ teaspoon of turmeric. Rub mixture onto both sides of eggplants and then sprinkle ½ teaspoon of paprika on to eggplant slices.

Drizzle oil onto pan and lay slices on till cooked.

Flip over and do the same to the other side.

Once cooked, serve with sliced tomatoes, onions, cilantro, etc.

If you like spices, top with black crushed pepper. And, you can use substitute the eggplants with potatoes to make potato cutlets.

—Pallavi Pemmireddy, Indian American, 12, New Jersey, says she learned this Indian recipe from her mom and grandfather from India.

## Wet Music

Water drips from my fingertips and it forms into violins, cellos, saxophones and such.

I think of a rhythm.

The violin rises up and plays the tune.

The drummer makes a big bang.

All the instruments are made of water.

After they fall to the ground, the choir director starts crying because his mom is coming

to hear the concert. Water slips in under the bedroom door and it forms into a big band again.

It starts playing music but the water's falling from my eyes, while I'm sleeping I'm crying.

—Xavair Carpenter, African American, grade 6, Michigan.

## The Pearl Castle

The pearl castle glows  
In the evening warmth  
Of a violet sky,  
And an indigo sea.

In the evening warmth  
A woman combs her hair,  
And an indigo sea is  
Misty with dreams.

A woman combs her hair,  
She sings a lullaby,  
Misty with dreams  
To coax you to sleep.

She sings a lullaby  
About an Indigo sky  
To coax you to sleep.  
The pearl castle glows.

—Sara Elizabeth Kimsey, 12, grade 7,



Florida. Sara says, "I like to go diving, snorkeling, tubing, etc. Anything involving water I absolutely love... I love writing."

# Health Rocks!

## Laughter: A Great Medicine!

Really! Try it! You may like it. And, it doesn't have to cost you an arm and a leg. You don't even have to charge it to the plastic credit card in your wallet. It is free unless you wish to spend time listening to those cheap comedians or sitcom shows on TV.

But beware; laughter can be contagious!

Have you attended any laughing parties? Not in theaters but in friends' living rooms or back yards? It is a great cure for the cabin fever that we could easily catch during the dark, gray winter months.

There are laughter clubs, web sites, national conferences on laughter. And even a branch of yoga called Laughter Yoga. It is not a laughing matter. They have a good time doing it. No kidding!

Write a funny story. Read cartoons and laugh out loud. Send us your favorite jokes. Tell us about a cross-cultural communication comedy.

Instead of crying or being mad or sad, laugh at yourself for that mistake of yours. We all make those silly mistakes in our daily lives. If you found any mistakes in these pages (*and there are several in every issue!*) guess what? Join us for a big laugh! But most of all,

### **Have a good laugh at least three times a day!**

- A study involving 452,000 people found that although avoiding cigarettes and tobacco smoke is the most important preventive action in reducing lung cancer risk, consuming a variety of different types of fruits and vegetables may also reduce the risk, independent of the amount, especially among smokers. Why? Perhaps, because, fruits and vegetables contain many different bioactive compounds. The results were published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, a journal of the American Association for Cancer Research.
- Most of the processed foods available in grocery stores now contain **genetically modified** (GM) ingredients, even though we are not positive that such products will not cause health or environmental problems.
- Did you know that a lot of Chinese people do their morning stretching and exercises in the form of *Tai Chi out in the fresh air?* In India, many people walk bare feet in cool, dew-wet grass, early morning each day because it is considered good for their health.



## Healthy Beverages Kids Love

There are better choices than soft drinks when it comes to protecting kid's teeth, says 1-800-DENTIST, a free dental phone consultation company.

School-aged children in the U.S. are facing an epidemic of tooth decay. The problem is so bad that the U.S. Surgeon General now recognizes tooth decay as the nation's number-one chronic childhood disease. A U.S. Department of Agriculture report indicates that a big part of this problem is children's unquenchable thirst for highly acidic, sugar-sweetened soft drinks including sodas, sports beverages and energy drinks.

Some "kid-friendly" alternatives to the sugary beverages (that are bad for teeth) offering healthy, easy-to-pack options for brown bag lunches and after-school snacks are:

**Water:** Generally fortified with cavity-fighting fluoride. Calorie-free, sugar-free tap water is nature's number-one thirst quencher. *Before soda, there was water!*

**Fruit Juice Fizzers:** A splash of 100 % fruit juice mixed with 12 ounces of seltzer or sparkling water is refreshing and economical. Fizzers are a great way to make the transition from soda to healthy beverages.

**Sporty Half & Halves:** A 50/50 mix of sport drink and water creates a tasty light drink kids love. It reduces the enamel-destroying sugars and acids found in most sports drinks. So, it offers a good transition.

**Tea:** Lightly sweetened with honey or stevia, chilled herbal, green, decaffeinated or black teas are a great alternative to canned iced teas. Sugar-free, fruit-flavored herbal teas are popular choices, too. Hot tea made with chamomile, ginger root or hibiscus flowers hits the spot in cool weather. Iced herbal teas are a treat in hot months, or after an outdoor sweat-out!

**Low-fat Milk:** This old-school favorite is packed with bone-building, teeth-strengthening calcium.

**Soy milk, Rice milk and Almond milk** are sold in most grocery stores. Many brands offer two or three flavors to bring a variety to please kids.

**Question:** What causes more deaths than wars?

**Answer:** Contaminated water. More children in developing world die due to water-borne diseases.

## In the Garden, a Girl Named Rosa

Rosa lives in the city where the people are made of roses. The citizens smell good all of the time. In Rosa's world the people don't touch each other much. They have special lotion to soften the thorns when they hug in despair. Rosa's people love it when the bees come to get their nectar because it tickles them. They slip their roots into the ground at night when they sleep. They sleep in groups like gardens.

The children in Rosa's world get their nutrients running around in the sprinkler. They not only have fun, they get healthier and start growing.

Rosa loves to sing. She carries a water bottle with her every day and eats fertilizer for every meal. It helps her with her vocals. Rosa lives in the basement of a church. Every morning she goes to the altar and prays to God until God starts shining. God is her sunlight.

Some mornings she hears a rustle of petals over her head. The first time she heard the mourners she just ignored it. But one day the priest at Rosa's church hears Rosa singing. He runs downstairs and hides behind the staircase gazing in her direction. Her voice is so beautiful it made his gray hair turn golden yellow. Rosa stops singing and cautiously walks to where she rests her hand on his shoulder. Rosa is so graceful. She seems to float towards him like an angel.

Her touch snaps him out of his trance. He leads Rosa up into church where the choir once stood. She looks out to the crowd of roses, and it looks like a field inside the church. Imagine reds, pinks, purples, yellows—so many cheery colors for such a sad moment.

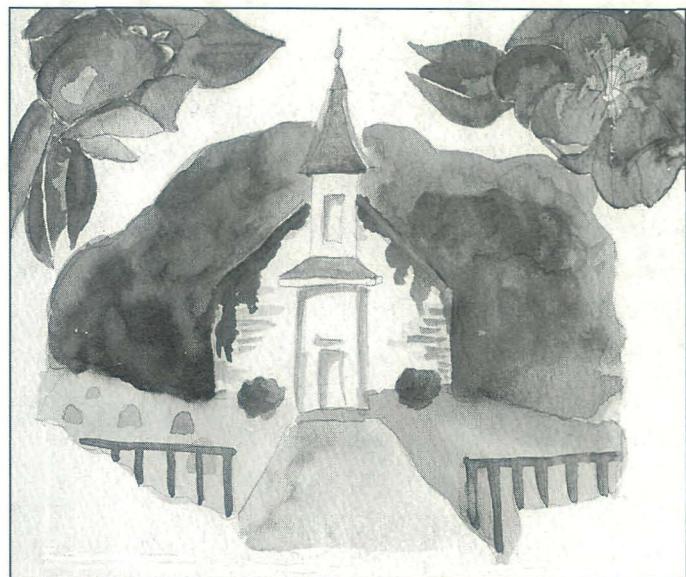
When Rosa starts singing there's a rush of the spirit of the person who died, and the roses gathered there begin shedding their petals all over the floor.

Helga is Rosa's sister. She's a black rose and very Gothic. Whenever Helga enters a room all the happiness and light fades from people's faces. But when Rosa sang that day even Helga's black heart turned a light pink. For the first time in her life her heart was shining. Helga's thorns disappeared, and no one's thorns had ever done that in Rosa's world. Helga was so huggable that day.

In Rosa's world even the cars are flowers. On the way to the cemetery the congregation of roses passes a policeman directing traffic. The policeman is sky blue and has a black hat. On one side of the stoplight over his head there's a red flower; there's a green flower on the other.

When the rose people gather at the grave, Rosa begins to sing Amazing Grace. All the other roses join in. Each time the wind blows more of their remaining petals go swift along with the wind. When Rosa does a solo, Helga tosses her bright rose body into the earth, and she rests there on top of the casket through all eternity.

—Written jointly by Destine Hall, Elisa Smith-Alquarelles, Alinah



Oropeza, Jennifer Maldanoda, Desiree Baughman, Angela Dekker, during a workshop conducted by John Rybecki. Students are all sixth graders in Michigan. Art: Mindy.

## How The Water Changes

I'm watching the water  
As it reflects the bright sun  
And the bright, colorful fish.

They swim  
In the bright, sunny, colorful water  
It looks beautiful.

But in a few months  
This beautiful place disappears  
And we all must wait.

Once it's been blown away  
Strange thoughts enter the mind  
And people think.

I'm thinking differently,  
More than I ever have.  
Water is starting to take action.

What I love most about  
This beautiful place is that  
It changes everyday.

What do you know  
About this beautiful place?  
Have you ever seen it?

—Akari Seiner, 7th grade, Oregon.

## \* A STEP IN THE LEFT DIRECTION \*

You may have seen photographs of President Obama signing documents. Did you notice that he is left-handed? Since only about one in ten adults is left-handed, the odds are that only four past presidents would have been left-handed. But this is not the case. In fact, five out of the last seven presidents have been left-handed.

Have you ever heard that left-handed people are more creative than right-handers? Or maybe you've heard that they are better in math. These kinds of beliefs show a shift in the way left-handers are seen by society. For many left-handers, being connected with a positive trait is a welcome change from the past.

There was a time when it was not considered acceptable to be left-handed. Throughout history, the roots of Latin, French, Italian and Portuguese words equate "left" with words like sinister, awkward, clumsy, evil and unlucky. In English, the expression "to have two left feet" refers to clumsiness in dancing or in sports. In China, the phrase "left path" stands for obtaining something through illegal means. In the United States, socially liberal and progressive politicians are often labeled "Leftists."

It was once common for left-handed people to keep the fact that they were left-handed a secret whenever possible, for fear of being discriminated against. Children were often forced to learn how to write with their right hands. Before World War II, historians rarely recorded whether or not a president was left-handed, as it was considered a disability.

If there was a way to determine which presidents were left-handed, going all the way back to George Washington, we might be surprised by what we would discover! What if fifty percent of our presidents were actually left-handed? How would scientists explain the odds of such a thing happening?

Most of what scientists have discovered about left-handedness is still not considered fact. A lot more research has to be done. But many scientists now agree that any random group of left-handed people is likely to have more than its fair share of successful people.

The list of famous left-handed musicians, including Glen Campbell, Jimi Hendrix, Paul McCartney, David Cook and Justin Bieber, is staggering. The same can be said for left-handed authors, athletes and actors.

There are many theories floating around as to why left-handers might be more successful on average than right-handers. One thing that left-handed people seem to have in common is an understanding, from an early age, that they are different from their peers. Whether their parents and teachers saw this preference as good or bad, these young people were aware that they were special, and that's a quality that is often found in leaders.

Left-handers still face challenges in everyday life that right-handers never have to experience. In many ways, it is still a right-handed world. But being left-handed no longer means that a person cannot reach their full potential in life, and that is a step in the right (make that left!) direction.

### **Five Left-Handed Presidents**

What do the last five left-handed presidents all have in common? They all showed an impressive amount of potential as children or young adults. Most of them excelled in school from an early age and began working while they were still in school.

Our 44th President (Barack Obama, the first African American to hold the highest office), the 42nd President (Bill Clinton, who once considered becoming a professional musician), the 41st President (George H. W. Bush, the youngest pilot in the Navy when he received his wings, and flew 58 combat missions during World War II), the 40th President (Ronald Reagan, who worked his way through college, and acted in 53 films) and the 38th President (Gerald Ford, who starred on the University of Michigan football team) have all been left-handed!

—Janet Reimche, Animal lover and advocate, California.

**Did you know that driving on the left side of the road is the right way to drive in some nations? England, India, Malaysia, China & 70 more places!**



Art by Jon Bush, Massachusetts

# My First Jeepney Ride

A brilliant blue vehicle, streaked with fuchsia, pulled up beside my dad and me in Manila, the capital of the Philippines. I looked up, my mouth open, to gaze at what looked like a party on wheels. Mounted above the windshield was a signboard with the words, "Road Warrior," painted in mustard yellow. Three bright red reflectors lined the rooftop. A silver mustang horse decorated the top of the hood. Orange plastic streamers dangled from an antenna.

"This is a jeepney," my dad said proudly. "You can only find it in the Philippines."

My eyes gleamed as I grinned in anticipation of my first jeepney ride. I had wanted to ride the jeepney since I arrived in the Philippines. It was my first visit to my parent's home.

"American troops occupied the Philippines during Word War II. When the war ended, the U.S. military sold their leftover jeeps to the local Filipinos," explained my dad.

"It doesn't look like a military jeep to me," I said.

"Filipinos changed the jeeps to seat more passengers and transformed them into 14-passenger multicolored jeepneys that we see today," my dad finished. He reached for his handkerchief from his back pocket and wiped the sweat off his forehead.

As I boarded the jeepney, I held my breath to avoid the noxious gray fumes coming from the exhaust pipe. I squeezed between two elderly Filipino ladies on the shiny, red vinyl bench. The women clutched their purses on their laps.

The jeepney's jerk startled me as it drove off. My body rocked side to side as the driver weaved in and out of traffic. The breeze that flowed through the open windows tickled my back. I watched the streamers shimmer in the wind. Then the jeepney came to a sudden stop to pick up more passengers.

Jeepney drivers will pick you up and drop you off anywhere you want along their routes. The man we picked up just stood on the side of the street and whistled to get the attention of my driver. Another one waved his hand in the air. When you want to get off, you call out, "Para!", which means stop and the driver will stop where you want him to.

I couldn't believe the variety of jeepneys that crowded the streets like a used car lot. I enjoyed watch-



ing them pass by. The jeepney is a popular form of public transportation. It is also popular among tourists.

Jeepneys are painted in eye-popping colors, decorated with flashy streamers and adorned with chrome ornaments. But no two jeepneys are designed alike. The interior is also decorated with pictures, decals and the driver's personal items.

The driver of my jeepney was a petite, dark Filipino man with slick black hair and silver strands, parted to the side. I noticed him kissing a wooden rosary that dangled from his rear-view mirror each time he drove past a church. A plastic statue of the Virgin Mary stood peacefully on his dashboard along with a collage of pictures of his wife and three kids.

As we traveled through the city, the driver of my jeepney used his horn, but it didn't honk. Instead it played musical tunes, which attracted the attention of potential passengers. I felt as if I was riding in a parade float.

I bounced in my seat as we left Manila. The sounds of horns grew faint. The brown hazy sky cleared to a blue hue.

"Eew!" I said noticing the scent of roosters that replaced the smell of exhaust. But the nice breeze soon cleared the air. The wind left my hair tangled and my face tingled.

"Para!" my dad called out. He dropped eight pesos into the palm of our driver's hand.

"Can we ride it again, Dad?" I asked while exiting the jeepney with a smile plastered to my face.

—Romelle Broas Guittap, American-born Filipina and a mother of two boys. They live in California. Photo: C. Leong.

# The Trail to Your Tomorrow

Dr. Jane Goodall became passionate about animals as a child after her mother gave her a lifelike chimpanzee toy. By age twelve, Mother Theresa, already fascinated by stories of the lives of missionaries and their service, identified that she wanted to commit herself to a religious life. Joy Harjo, at first a painter, wrote her first poem in eighth grade. She knew early on she'd be an artist when she grew up.

But what about the rest of us? When we neither "know" or "see" the trail ahead—whether it's college, career or beyond—how can we move forward with confidence?

At no point through high school did I seriously consider college. No one talked with me about envisioning and creating a future. This was the 1960s, when most women pursued traditional and predictable careers—secretaries, nurses, teachers. "Something to fall back on," it was called, a far cry from the freedom of imagination, creativity and passion.

After a year of working as a secretary in a legal office and a bank and a short stint as a nurse's aide, I did something I'd never considered: I applied for college. I wanted something more challenging and interesting than business offices and lower-level service positions.

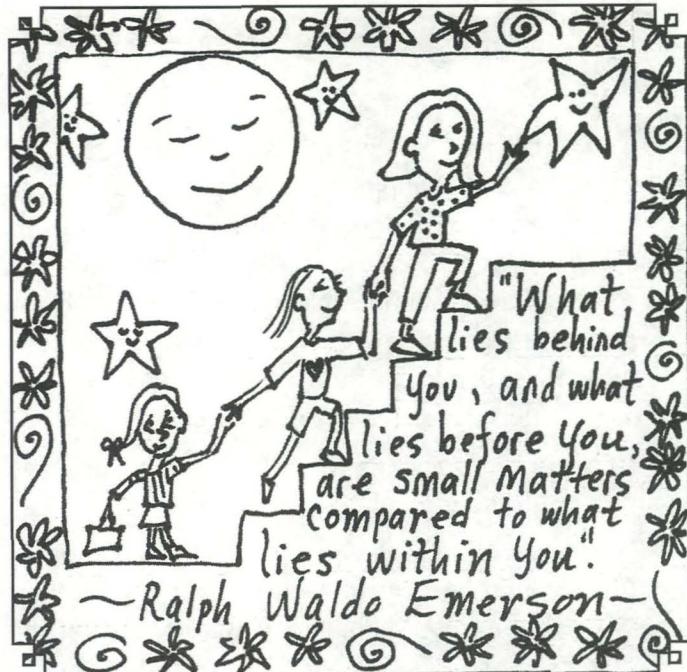
While I have no regrets about choosing nursing as my career, I sometimes wonder what I would have chosen, what I would have become if I had dared to dream. If I had been blessed with a caring mentor or the skills and confidence to discover myself earlier, where would that trail have led?

What I do know, with all certainty is that personal power flows when certain principles are in place. I've identified seven:

- **Dare to dream.** Unleash your creativity. What do you love? Explore possibilities. Henry David Thoreau said "Go confidently in the direction of your dreams." Imagine your future with abandon. Begin to recognize the potential your life has to offer. Pursue your dreams.

- **Know what is important and matters most to you.** Stay true to your religion, ethics, morals, values and beliefs. Create a personal mission statement. Breathe it, believe it, live it. Revise it every year.

- **Have an awareness and understanding of self.** Develop a firm sense of personal worth. Trust your intuition. Take cues about life from deep within yourself. Let your insights include your unique skills, traits, strengths, values and goals. Believe in yourself. Express



yourself and your uniqueness.

- **Recognize growth.** Appreciate and understand your personality and periodically evaluate your enthusiasms and strengths, gifts and talents. As you grow, be aware of any personal changes that need to be made and don't be afraid to make them. Be willing to take risks. Remember, nothing can hurt you unless you give it the power to do so.

- **Make sure your life is balanced.** Maintain a sense of humor. Play. Be financially savvy. Be a life-long learner. See the extraordinary in the ordinary. Experience the joy of life.

- **Stay healthy. Respect yourself and others.** Say no to alcohol, smoking and drugs. Be self-accountable and self-responsible. Make healthy choices. Practice self-care.

- **Stay connected with your family, friends, community and yourself.** Honor your culture and heritage. Share your gifts. Be of service and give to others. Make a contribution to the world. Whatever your situation or background, remember to love yourself. Be kind and compassionate to yourself and others. Understand that success is all in how you define it.

And do remember Ralph Waldo Emerson's words:

"What lies behind you and  
What lies before you are  
Small matters compared to  
What lies within you."

—Debbie McCulliss, writer, wellness educator, applied poetry facilitator and journal writing instructor, Colorado.



**Champions of the Ocean** by Fran Hodgkins, illustr. Cris Arbo (*Dawn*). Eight curious, passionate scientists and explorers whose work would definitely inspire us to become stewards of our oceans are featured in this book. Ages 10-15. ISBN: 978-1-58469-119-8.

**Watch This Space; designing, defending and sharing public spaces** by Hadley Dyer and Marc Ngui (*Kids Can Press*). An illustrated, entertaining non-fiction book that covers various points of interest, from what is 'public' to skillfully designing public spaces, making them inviting to everyone. It also encourages us to share our ideas of how to create better and more public-friendly public spaces. Ages 11-18. ISBN 978-1-55453-293-3.

**Sharing Our Homeland: Palestinian and Jewish Children at Summer Peace Camp** by Trish Marx. Photos: Cindy Karp (*Lee & Low Books*). An uplifting story of how a summer camp in Israel helps form bonds of trust and friendship in Palestinian and Jewish children. Ages 8-12. ISBN 978-1-58430-260-5.

**Moon Watchers: Shirin's Ramadan Miracle** by Reza Jalali, illistr. Anne Sibley O'Brien (*Tilbury House*). This enchanting story is told through the eyes of Sharin. She is eager to practice her family's tradition of Ramadan, a Muslim holiday of prayer, fasting and good deeds. Although she is too young to fast, she learns about the spirit of kindness, understanding and cultural pride. If you have as many questions as young Sharin, this story has the answers. Ages 7-11. ISBN 978-0-88448-321-2.

**The Can Man** by Laura E. Williams, illustr. Craig Orback (*Lee & Low*). A heart-warming story of giving. What is important? A birthday gift or seeing someone have a warm coat to wear when the snow is in the air? Ages 7-10. ISBN 978-1-60060-266-5.

**Blue Jay Girl** by Sylvia Ross (*Hey Day*). This is a light-hearted story of a Yaudanchi girl. The Yaudanchis are part of California's Yokuts tribes, native to the San Joaquin Valley. She embarks on an adventure to discover her place in her tribe and learns some important lessons. Ages 7-12. ISBN 978-1-59714-127-7.

**The Secret of Your Name: Kiimooch ka shinikashooy-en** by David Bouchard and Dennis Weber (*Red Deer*). This story sheds light on the struggles of the Metis people of Canada. This bilingual Michif book includes a CD and a short history of some Native American societies. Ages 7-10. ISBN 978-0-88995-439-7.

**Arab Science and Invention in the Golden Age** by Anne Blanchard, illustr. Emmanuel Cerisier (*Enchanted Lion*). Originally French, this illustrated, non-fiction book about the historical achievements of the Arab civilization, especially in science, math, city planning, geography and astronomy is educational and interesting. Ages 9-14. ISBN 987-1-59270-080-6.

**Gandhi: His life, his struggles, his words** by Elizabeth de Lambilly, illustr. Severine Cordier (*Enchanted Lion*). Also originally French, this biography of Gandhi is a fresh look at the extra-ordinary life of Mahatma Gandhi. The book includes a 12-page colorful, comic, biographical account. Ages 11-15. ISBN 978-1-59270-094-3.

**Lost Childhood** by Annelex H. Layson with Herman J. Viola (*National Geographic*). This is a true story of a girl and her Dutch family during World War II. They were imprisoned, along with many Dutch people, for 3 and a half years, in prison camps in Java, Indonesia, by the Japanese army. Ages 9-13. ISBN 978-1-4263-0321-0.

**Black Angels** by Linda Beatrice Brown (*Putnam*). This outstanding novel looks at the Civil War through the eyes of children caught in the middle. Luke, 11, is heading North to freedom. Join him and his friends on their journey. Ages 13-18. ISBN 978-0-399-25030-9.

**Pipestone: My life in an Indian Boarding School** by Adam Fortunate Eagle (*Univ. of Oklahoma Press*). The author shares his experiences of the ten years he spent in an Indian boarding school in Minnesota. The truth is rarely picture-perfect, and **Pipestone** is no exception. The book is so full of insight and intrigue that it is hard to set down. Ages 11-18. ISBN 978-0-8061-4114-5.

**Gringolandia: When History calls your name, how will you answer?** by Lyn Miller-Lachmann (*Curbstone/Northwestern Univ.*). After Papá's arrest in 1980, Daniel's family flees Chile to U.S. and Daniel has a new life. When his father is released and rejoins the family, Daniel sees what five years of prison in a brutal police state have done. This story portrays an immigrant teen's struggle to reconnect with his tortured father. Ages 15-adults. ISBN 978-1-931986-49-8.

**From North to South, Del Norte al Sur** by René Colato Laínez, illustr. Joe Cepeda (*Children's Book Press*). This tenderly done bilingual book touches the difficult and timely topic of undocumented workers and family separations. Ages 7-11. ISBN: 978-0-89239-231-5.

# Noteworthy North.East.West.South.

- **Dr. Howard Zinn** (1922-2010), the famous author of *A People's History of the United States*, died on 27 January 2010 at the age of 87. His book, used in many high schools, put common citizens at the center of the stories and inspired young activists to remember that change is possible. He also wrote his autobiography, *You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train* in 1994.

Dr. Zinn's book, *The Bomb*, recounted his time as a World War II bomber, and how he came to grips with the reality of napalm attacks and the firebombing of cities. Many gruesome effects of war are kept away from public consciousness by the corporate media. The book reminds us that corporate media discussions about war are bloodless debates over tactics and strategy that leave out voices of conscience that question the assumptions and twisted logic behind ill-conceived wars. Zinn was a heroic voice that will be missed!

- **The Secular Student Alliance** will offer both resources and hands-on assistance to teenagers promoting positive secular values in their lives and on their campuses with support from the Stiefel Freethought Foundation. To create a more compassionate, reason-driven society, the foundation will provide them with financial support. The goals are to help students educate themselves and others about secular values and also act upon such values through service projects.

• **Children growing up in Palestine and Israel** not only suffer the direct physical consequences of violence, but also the psychological scars from the high levels of violence they witness. A study presented this summer at the International Society for Research on Aggression reports that nearly 50 % of Palestinian children, ages 11 to 14, have personally witnessed effects of violence.

• **Privatizing Water?** Around the world, communities that can't afford to keep fresh water supplies clean, safe and accessible have increasingly turned over management to private companies. In many cases, the experiments have failed badly, and local citizens have forced their governments to take back the control of water resources. Privatizing water is surely not the answer!

• Imprisoned human rights activist in the P. R. of China, Liu Xiaobo, is the **2010 Nobel Peace Prize** winner. Mario Vargas Llosa, Peruvian by birth, receives the **2010 Literature Prize** for his many literary contributions, and his commitment to nonviolent social change.

• **The Worldwatch Institute** reports that Americans only recycle 0.6 percent of the 100 billion plastic bags they take home from stores every year; the rest end up in landfills or as litter on the land and in our oceans.

• **Health of the plant kingdom is crucial to the health of the planet and the animal life it supports.** "Through photosynthesis, plants provide the oxygen we breathe and the food we eat and are thus the foundation of most life on Earth," reports the Center for Biological Diversity, an Arizona-based nonprofit dedicated to securing the future for endangered plants and animals throughout the world. A 2009 report by the UK-based nonprofit, Plantlife, found that 15,000 of the 50,000 or so species of wild plants known for their medicinal qualities in traditional remedies are being overexploited and may be headed for extinction. Most people in the world—including about 80 % of all Africans—rely on herbal medicines obtained primarily from wild plants. Mass extinction of wild plants would pose a serious threat for humanity and the ecology. Researchers estimate 33 % of all flowering plants worldwide are threatened with extinction. (Source: Earthtalk, E Magazine)

• **International Day of Signed Languages, 30 September:** The human right to communicate using a sign language when necessary is included in the U.N. Convention on the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, signed by President Obama. It requires sovereign nations to promote, respect and protect the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities.

• **Mix It Up at Lunch Day, Tuesday, Nov. 9th:** Free **Mix It Up** lessons and activities for teachers to help organize a successful **Mix It Up at Lunch Day** and to promote social border crossings are available from [www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up](http://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up). Students thrive socially and academically in schools that are inclusive. Yet, for many students, schools are hotbeds of exclusion. Social scientists tell that contact between diverse groups helps alleviate tensions and reduce prejudice. **Mix It Up** seeks to break down the barriers between students and improve intergroup relations so there are fewer misunderstandings that can lead to conflicts, bullying and harassment.

• **Annual No Name-Calling Week, Jan. 24-28, 2011,** offers educational activities to help end name-calling at school and provides schools with tools to end bullying.

## Homeless Boy

A glimpse of light shone across the dark sky,  
The moon began to drift away, the sun came closer,  
until it covered the city like a blanket.

There was a homeless boy beside a red brick building  
on Maple Street.

Men were walking by with nice suits, ties and coats.  
The dirty boy was thin with nothing in his stomach.  
The sun glowed across the blue sky and its light spread  
like a tiger's stripes on his body.

Then, a rich man walked by and saw the homeless boy.  
The boy's wrinkled, ripped black shirt was covered  
with dirt and garbage stains. His cold bare feet touched  
the hard ground.

The sun's heat warmed the boy's body.

The first time the man made eye-contact with the boy,  
he whispered something the homeless boy had never  
heard before.

*"Filthy Peasant's Rags! Filthy Peasant's Rags!"*  
The hungry boy ignored the man's dreadful comments.

Then, he went looking for food in the garbage can in  
the alley. He found a cold, half eaten pizza. And held  
the box in place with his hands and tore the pizza apart.

The Homeless boy ate and was satisfied as the sun rose  
higher into the sky.

—James Firsick, grade 5, Connecticut. Art: Mindy Cooper.



## The Homeless and the Wind

Wind falls from my fingertips while I sleep.  
It blows on the window and rushes towards the trees.  
It keeps going to Africa where it's hot and  
gusts of wind give them a nice breeze.  
It makes great waves on the ocean  
for the sailboats too.

The wind picks money off the concrete  
and sweeps it to the homeless. Feathers gather.  
They turn into pillows and blankets and float  
the homeless to a big area where they will be safe.  
The wind doesn't stop there. It picks up chicken,  
pizza, noodles and ice cream and carries it  
to the area where the homeless are starving.  
The wind drops the food there  
and the homeless finally are happy.

—Dadric Haywood, African American, grade 6, Michigan.



## Poetry

A poem should be treated as a living, breathing thing.  
You have to ask it nicely what it means, or it won't  
answer.

Sometimes its answer won't be straight forward,  
So you will have to look deeper under its surface.  
Take your time if you're writing or reading one,  
To get the meaning faster,

And to make sure your reader gets your meaning.

Let your mind be free,  
To the endless world of poetry.

—Makenna Laffey, grade 7, Pennsylvania.

# Sojourner Truth: Childhood and Youth

Maple Ridge School is set in the mid-Hudson Valley, where Sojourner Truth, the famous slave, was born and raised. Her childhood and youth was spent in this area. The students were able to immerse themselves in the natural surroundings of the school and build relationships with people throughout the community.

The 3rd and 4th graders at Maple Ridge did a unit of study and extensive research on the life of Sojourner Truth. They visited the houses where she was owned as a slave, and walked the trails where she walked. Along one of the well-trodden paths of her youth, the Wildflower Trail, they are developing a nature preserve where the students spend many hours working, playing and studying the wildlife in the area. There they also performed a play on her life and faith, and her struggle for equality and freedom.

We're pleased to present 14 paintings in full color and a just few writings that these students have created. We hope you appreciate the amount of work they've put in this project, and you will be inspired to take on an interesting project, specific to your region. Because Maple Ridge is a television and computer free school, which allows more time for students to do such creative activities.

Our thanks to Mr. Steve Wiser and the entire school community for letting us share their work with you in these pages. We wish we could have devoted twice as many pages.

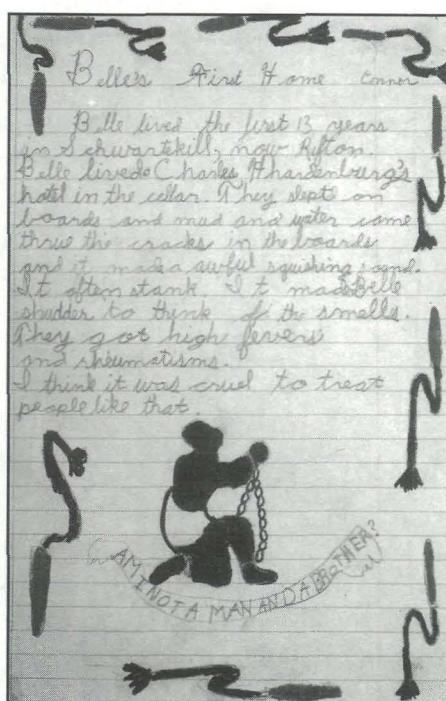
—editors.

## The Slave of Hardenburg

For the first 28 years, Sojourner Truth was known as Isabella. She was born in 1797, the same year as George Washington warned the nation in his farewell speech that regional bickering would one day "disrupt the Union."

She was given the name Isabella, but her parents shortened it to Belle. They were owned by Colonel Johannes Hardenburg, whose family was one of the wealthiest landowners in Ulster County, NY. The Hardenburgs at one time owned nearly two million acres between the Hudson and Delaware rivers.

—Joyanna



## Slavery in the North

Sojourner Truth was a slave in the North and Northern slavery was different than in the South.

Slavery in the North was affected by the climate. Since it was cooler in the North, they could not grow such big crops as the South. The farms were smaller and had fewer slaves. However, in the South there were lots of slaves because they could grow lots of major crops. In the North, slaves lived in their masters' basements. In the South, the slaves lived in compounds. The slaves in the North were isolated, which made it hard for them because they could not turn to other slaves at hard times. In the South, slaves could help and encourage each other in their slave compounds. Also, in the North, the slave children were sold sooner because the farms were small. Whether in the North or the South, slavery was cruel.

—Tim. The cover artwork was also by Tim.

## Life with the Neals

One dreaded day when she was nine years old, Isabella was separated from her mom and dad forever. At the auction, she was sold with some sheep for 100 dollars to Mr. Nealy, who was a mean and cruel slave master. Later, Isabella would say, "now the war began." The Neals could only understand English and Belle could only understand Dutch. So this was a problem. When Mrs. Nealy would ask for her hair brush and mirror.

Isabella might bring her the frying pan. Mrs. Nealy became extremely angry. Although they gave her plenty to eat, they also whipped her often!

One morning, her master was so upset by her misunderstanding, he laid rods in the fire, tied her hands together and whipped her cruelly with the red hot rods. To the last day of her life, Isabella had scars.

While she was tortured day in and day out, she remembered what her mother taught her about praying to God. She found a secret place where she could talk to God. She prayed to God to give her a kinder master, and God answered her prayer.

—Brianne



Belle (Belle) was the daughter of James and Bitsey, slaves of Col. Hardenburg.

—Jonah



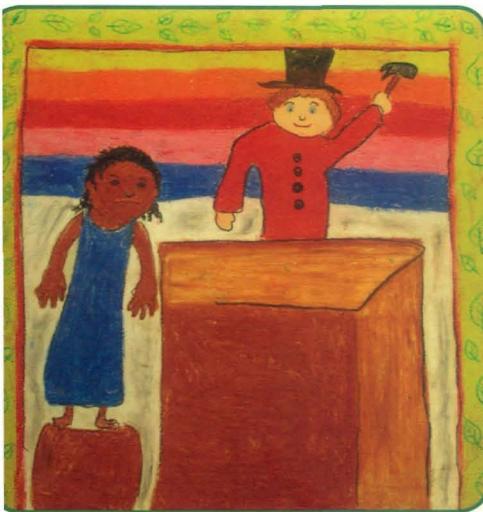
Belle and her family had to sleep on boards in the moist, stinky cellar.

—Connor



Mau Mau taught her to have faith in God and be honest and hard working.

—Carissa



The never-to-be-forgotten auction arrived for Belle and Mau Mau to be sold.

—Karilyn



Belle was sold to the Schrivers who owned a tavern. They allowed her to drink.

—Edwin



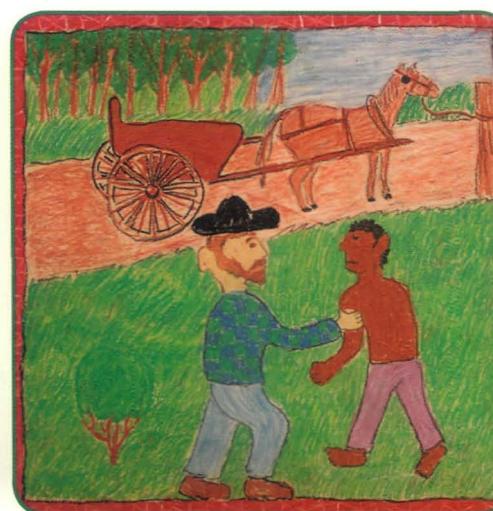
The last days of James were hard ones. He was old, weak, lame and nearly blind.

—Mikaela



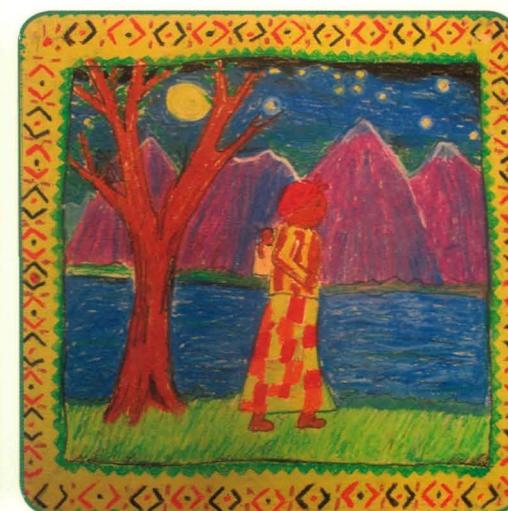
When Belle found Jesus it was one of the most powerful experiences for her.

—Warren



Sojourner's son, Peter, was sold out of state, against the law. She went to free him.

—Riley



When Mr. Dumont broke his promise to let her free, Belle escaped at dawn.

—Leah

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### **"Life of Sojourner Truth"**

By Maple Ridge School's third and fourth grade students, New York.

Maple Ridge students in the mid-Hudson Valley of New York, studied Sojourner Truth's childhood and youth. Sojourner grew up in this area which inspired the children to do a unit on slavery. (Clockwise) Sojourner Truth by Joyanna; Death of Mau Mau by Tyra J.; Sojourner as a Mother by Joel; Life with the Nealys by Brianne. Please also see pages 34-35.