

Arts Unlimited

# ANTHOLOGY



2023



*A collection of works by students of High School District 214*



Dr. Lazaro Lopez  
Interim Superintendent

April 2023

High School District 214 has established a well-earned reputation for excellence in so many arenas, including the fine and performing arts. For this reason, we eagerly and proudly present the Arts Unlimited Anthology.

The Arts Unlimited program consists of several related elements, one of which is this Arts Unlimited Anthology. Compiled annually, the anthology provides a platform for curating and sharing some of our students' most outstanding art and literary work. I encourage you to take the time to carefully peruse this volume's poetry, short stories, visual art and essays. For your time, you will be rewarded by discovering a wonderfully wide range of students' ideas expressed and truths spoken in remarkably creative ways.

This spring we celebrate the 47th year of Arts Unlimited, a concept inspired by former Elk Grove High School teacher and division head Richard Calisch, who was seeking a way to give wider recognition to all of the district's students' creative expression.

April marks the annual Arts Unlimited reception, which will further showcase student performances and artwork, and the Daily Herald's publication of winning entries in the Community Art and Writing contest, also conducted in conjunction with the celebration.

It is always gratifying to see the ways in which our students discover their futures in part through the arts: from painting, mixed media, poetry and short stories to performance groups such as show choirs, bands and orchestras.

All of this is made possible through the enthusiasm and dedication of students and educators, with the support of a Board of Education deeply committed to offering a wide variety of ways for students to explore and discover their passions. Special thanks are in order to the Arts Unlimited team, which works tirelessly to elevate and celebrate the arts.

I am so proud of this District 214 program and thankful for the value we place on the arts. Please join me in enjoying the product of this commitment.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lázaro López  
Interim Superintendent

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*A collection of works by students of High School District 214*



The mission of Arts Unlimited 214 is to provide all students with exposure to process-oriented perspectives through an ongoing celebration of the fine and performing arts.

Arts Unlimited 214 strives to inspire imagination and creativity amongst the District's diverse student body and to foster an awareness of the arts within our community.



## **COVER ART** left to right / front to back

**Ava Sander** | Buffalo Grove High School  
**Dana Cuellar** | Elk Grove High School  
**Leah Persson** | Prospect High School  
**Elida Zavala** | Wheeling High School  
**Natalie Janostak** | John Hersey High School  
**Doan Do** | Elk Grove High School  
**Victoria Sarat** | Buffalo Grove High School  
**Kacper Mitera** | Elk Grove High School  
**Emily DePaz** | Prospect High School  
**Lorelei Osterlund** | Rolling Meadows High  
**Angel Kral** | Wheeling High School  
**Matthew Pancini** | Prospect High School  
**Ariana Vega** | Rolling Meadows High School  
**Elana Brush** | John Hersey High School

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**Li Christoffersen** | Prospect High School  
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## **SPECIAL THANKS**

**Anthony Chidichimo** | District 214  
**Mark Ciske and Linda Ashida** | District 214  
**Susan Klovstad** | Daily Herald  
**Ann Cantieri** | District 214 Staff Support

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## HEAD OF AN OCTOPUS

Natalie Janostak | Hersey

## HUMAN

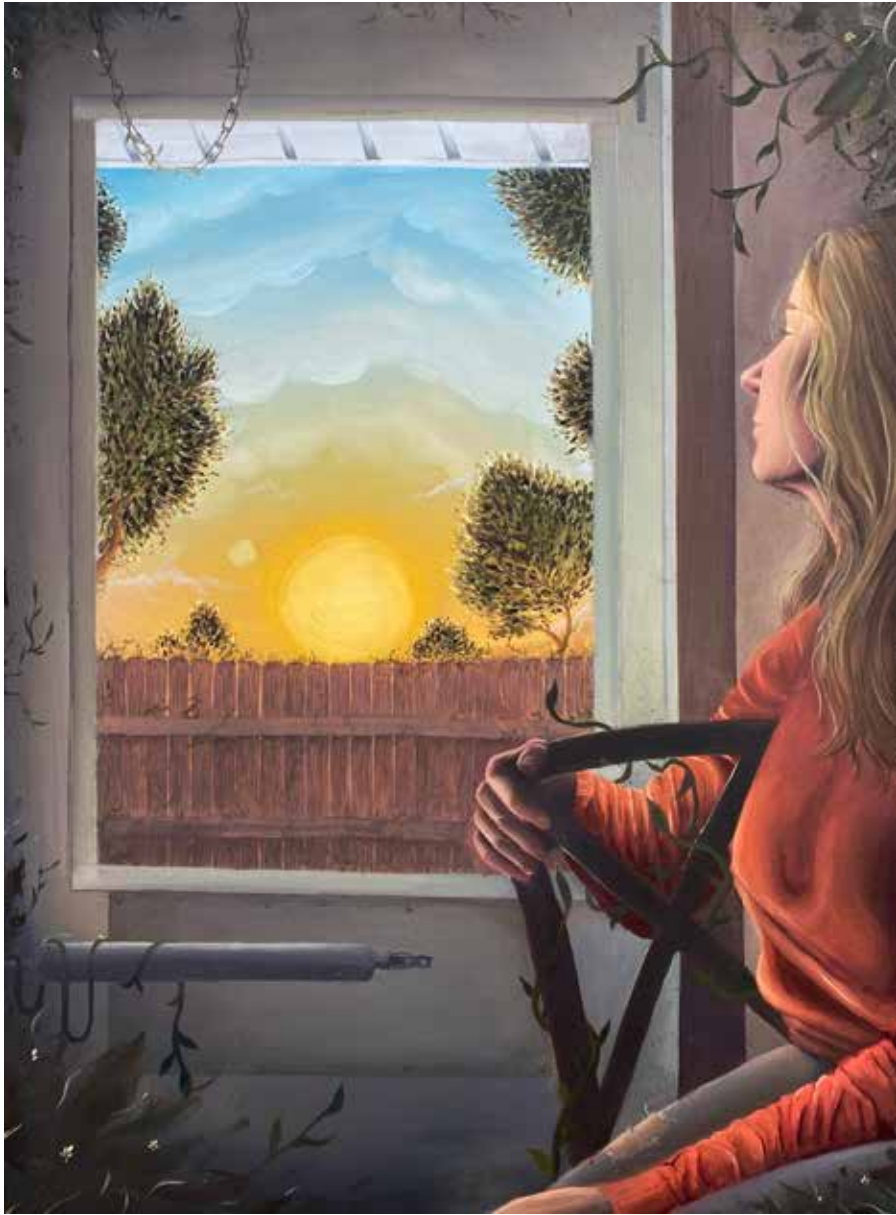
Izabella Pawlina | Elk Grove

To say you're human is nothing rare  
Look around and you'll see what I mean.  
If one makes a mistake  
Or says something wrong  
A single phrase is uttered like a song.  
They believe it will save them from their turmoil,  
"I'm human just as you are, just let me be."  
To me, a human like you,  
I only hear "Don't correct me."  
"Don't you dare."

To say you're human is nothing rare  
Look around and you'll see what I mean.  
People use the word "human" as a shield.  
We've been conditioned to believe it is real;  
To believe that the word "human" is the same as "peace"  
Everyone has forgotten what humans have done.  
A little voice whispers to them and anyone,  
"Forget it all. Don't remember."  
"Don't you dare."

To say you're human is nothing rare  
Look around and you'll see what I mean.  
But some will ignore me and continue on their way,  
They suppress the truth as they march away.  
The animals that drew their final breath.  
The trees that were pulled and frayed to death.  
The humans that were ripped clean of all their strength.  
To those who believe humans are good,  
I will say one thing,  
"Don't lie to yourself."  
"Don't you dare."

To say you're human is nothing rare  
Look around and I hope you'll see what I mean.  
"I'm human just as you."  
That's what they say.  
It kills me in every way.  
To those who believe humans are good,  
Just know I don't want to be one of you.  
"Don't you dare call me human."  
"Don't you dare."  
"Don't you dare."



**THROUGH THE WINDOW**  
Julia Naumowicz | Elk Grove



**COMFORT**

Natalia Grzeda | Rolling Meadows

**SHELL AND BOTTLE STILL LIFE**

Angelina Zayats | Buffalo Grove





## NOT MUCH OF A PRINCESS

Junet Graves | Wheeling

The ruffles on my fluffy pink dress bunched up together like waves crashing into a sandy beach on a sunny day as I kicked my legs with anticipation. The light pink eyeshadow my mom so delicately put on my eyes accentuated my bright smile, and my dangly earrings clicked together in a musical rhythm with every step I took. The picture in my head was clear as Cinderella's glass slipper. My dad—whom I rarely ever saw because he lived too far away and he was always working and the car was broken—would pick me up as he did with my sister the year prior, and I would have his undivided attention for the whole evening.

My night wouldn't taste like a poison apple. My night wouldn't consist of yelling and bickering about money or work. My night would make the likes of Cinderella, Ariel, and Belle green with envy.

As I sat there on the couch feeling as if Christmas had come a second time, my mom approached me with a pitying look on her face, "Lo siento, mi amor. He can't make it. He has work."

With those few words, my fantasy came crashing down around me. I was Cinderella as she watched her stepmother trip the duke and let her glass slipper shatter around her into a million pieces. But this time, there was no second slipper to produce and give this story a happy ending.

Even though my grandpa had offered to take my dad's place and go with me, all I wanted to do was to take off the fluffy dress because the sunny day at the beach had become tainted with dark clouds in the sky. Tears escaped my eyes as I tried to rub off the pink eyeshadow that no longer had a smile to accentuate it. I wanted to rip out the dangling earrings because the sweet music was revealed to have a bitter aftertaste. And the likes of Cinderella, Ariel, and Belle would all be laughing at me. Regardless, my mom wiped my tears and sent me out to my grandpa's car. But she didn't send out a princess; instead, she just sent out a girl with slumped shoulders and dried tears on her face.

## FORLORN

Alanis Z. Davila Rodriguez | Hersey

The moon stood behind gray shadowy clouds. Daniela walked alone, illuminated only by the dim lighting of old street lights. Avoiding every crack and stone in her way and strangers, Daniela stopped at a solitary 7 Eleven and quickly went in without thinking twice, so much so that her green jacket got caught on the door. The embarrassment quickly faded as she saw there was no one there except for Rafi, the cashier on turn that night. Despite the cold temperature of the store, a fly whose buzzing complemented the faint Bossa Nova tunes could be heard in the back-ground. Any other time she'd get tense in Rafi's presence, but tonight she took a breath of relief.

"Hey, let me know if you need anything," said Rafi as he looked at her up and down.

"Thank you, I'm good." She responded without making any more eye contact than strictly necessary.

Her task was simple: get snacks and leave. While taking her time to make a decision, she saw something in the corner of her eye. It was gloomy and dark, like a shadow of someone moving at an odd, low speed. She turned her head to clear her doubts, but there were nothing but endless cans of different brands of energy drinks inside the coolers. She turned back, making sure she wouldn't regret her snack of choice later and trying to see what snacks she could bring back for her brother. Although they don't have the best relationship, she wanted to do something nice in hopes of him noticing it. She grabbed some Doritos and walked back to the cashier. As Daniela made her way over to the counter, she saw the silhouette, this time practically next to her. She turned around in a frantic manner only to feel embarrassed since once again there was no one there.

"You good?" asked Rafi after seeing her momentous confusion.

"Is there someone else in the store?"

"No, just you and me," said Rafi, without cutting eye contact, which freaked Daniela out a bit.

"Oh," Daniela said, trying to rationalize what had happened in such a short time.

Rafi checked her out and told her to be safe on her way back, that you never know who is creeping in the shadows. Daniela shrugged his words off as she made her way back over to the house. Once again she was surrounded by nothing but the usual rural setting with the same dim lighting. Suddenly she felt watched. She looked back at the path she had already walked only to make sure she wasn't being followed, half believing this could ever be a possibility. A sense of relief came over her body as she realized she could see her house. "I'm safe" she thought just minutes away from opening her door. Her pace was accelerating and so did the feeling of paranoia that was leaving her short of breath.

Just as she thought it was all in her head, there were steps. "Tap, tap, tap, tap" she heard behind her, unable to even gather the courage to turn around.

"Daniela," a masculine voice said. Her eyes widened and her stomach dropped.

She made it a point to keep walking without looking back. "I'm right there" she thought. "Just keep walking" Somewhat relaxed but urgent still, she turned around only to be met with a ghastly view. Unable to scream, she tried to move and when all her limbs failed her, the tall, lanky opaque figure with green glowing eyes grabbed her neck and in one sudden move latched its jaw onto it. Its mouth resembled a cage for thousands of teeth so sharp they pierced through her skin with ease. She fell, letting out a loud cry she hoped somebody would hear. The last thing Daniela saw was her front porch light turn off. Hopeless and weakened, she died, leaving her with a painful grimace engraved forever in her face.



## LIGHT

Victoria Sarat | Buffalo Grove

## THE MOLDING: A DEFINITION'S LOVER'S EXPLANATION

Jude Chris Ayala | Prospect

There's a skeleton at a cliff's edge.  
It's past rot by now.  
It's become Faded and Desolate.  
Its jaw is unhinged and agape. A cloud of smoke has settled between a stain and a puff of burn.  
It has no wrists.  
Its vertebrae are too numerous.  
The place at which its heart used to rest is especially discolored.  
It is Wrong.

It levitates near a tree.  
It's become Ashen and Desolate.  
It's grappled itself to a stone of jagged tar.  
A bracket fungus resides upon its rough and dry bark,  
beneath its broken-finger-like branches  
that do not sway, but crack in the lack of wind around it.  
It is Wrong.

From the weak branches hangs a noose.  
It's become Molded and Desolate.  
It hangs from a branch out of view, but it holds on by a lacking, frayed thread.  
Moss has covered it so thoroughly that you can only see its tattered knots faintly  
It manifests in a sickly green and brown and sticky hues.  
Its eight knots speak that it was enveloped in difficult effortlessness.  
In a blur of  
controlled tendons  
and muscles  
and uncontrolled thoughts.

It is Wrong;

However, I am Wrong,  
And the Desolate, Faded, Ashen, Molded, Desolate...  
Embodies the dirt of life  
After death,  
And after mold,  
And after rot,  
After all thought,  
For we, ourselves, are quite  
Wrong.

## POSTAGE STAMP

Jack Repak | Rolling Meadows

*Her envelope is sealed shut  
Affection emanates from within  
Perfect, slanted script confesses something  
Beautifully forbidden*

*All that's left is the last step  
That naked corner of the envelope  
But fear and shame mingle and strike, and so  
Panicked, it's tucked away*

*Stuffed in with the newspaper,  
Books and homework and other niceties  
Cloud urgency but she never forgets  
That love she felt, she feels*

*The years, they come and pass  
One square of paper yellows with the rest  
Corners crumple and paper dimples, but  
What's inside just grows*

*With every year that passes  
The more realized her feelings become  
They adapt, mature, and almost convince  
Her: today is the day*

*But the todays pile up  
The youthful fingers which penned the first note  
Grow bony and arthritic, and still that  
Upper corner is bare*

*One "today" however  
Inspired by the clarity of age  
One square inch sticker will change everything  
She peels off the backing*

*Placement is paramount  
Fifty three years have foreshadowed this  
With all of the tenderness in her heart  
The postage stamp is placed.*

## THE DAY AFTER HALLOWEEN

Lillian Khazin | Buffalo Grove

Awoken by crisp air and blowing orange leaves  
Blinded by the bright, yet gloomy sky  
Sugar-high children step outside and find couples  
Excitedly hanging up flashy lights.  
The grim designs  
On orange, rotting canvases  
Overflow garbage bags.  
Children at bus stops  
Flash open their lunch boxes to reveal  
King-sized candy bars from the night before,  
Making trades with their friends  
And unwrapping chocolate treats.  
Hands stained red from costume makeup  
Or orange from carving jack-o-lanterns  
And digging tiny hands into pumpkins  
To light tiny candles on Halloween night.  
The radio stations fill cars with "Jingle Bells"  
Or "All I Want for Christmas is You,"  
Leaving drivers either festive or rolling their eyes.  
The orange and red have been  
So quickly replaced  
With red and green.  
The forecast reads flurries  
And walking briskly is the only way  
To escape the frigid air.  
"Happy Holidays!"  
Signs exclaim.



**JUDGEMENT**

Millie Alpizar | Prospect

**POV**

Ariana Vega | Rolling Meadows



## JUST DO IT

Justin Novoselsky | Elk Grove

You pluck the bird's feather  
Dip it in the oil that led to its death  
And write a poem about love  
You know nothing  
About the suffering you create  
While you write your lover cries

And the air is filled with cries  
That float down in storms of feather  
Aware of the unease they create  
Because they want justice for their death  
There is nothing  
Left for them to love

You present the poem of so-called love  
She reads it and cries  
Her tears are made of oil and she says nothing  
In her hair there is a feather  
You are unaware of the death  
That your ego will create

Your poem is published in a magazine you create  
Critics give it praise and love  
How you see beauty in death  
And life and tragedy and the way your lover cries  
Your conscience is as light as a feather  
Do you care for nothing?

You must feel nothing  
No shame or guilt for the disaster you create  
Now your lover is only beak and feather  
You say you still love  
Her but you only love the poetry you write about the way she  
cries  
You can't wait to write a sonnet about her death

Now your world is filled with death  
That you could prevent, that you don't because there is nothing  
On this goddamn planet that could make you hear the cries  
Of oceans and forests and birds as you create  
A world without them for the sake of love  
You write your poem and burn the feather

Everything you create  
Is a false declaration of love  
Your lover is a bird and you pluck her feather



## **SOBRE LAS OLAS**

Alan Zepeda | Wheeling



**LOST IN TIME**

Jake King | Hersey



## AN ACCOUNTABLE APPRENTICE

Carter Piagari | Hersey

It was a warm and angelic night in the town of Lettersworth, nothing but abundant shops, allegiant neighbors and alluring food, with the letter A absent for now. Yet, the locals of Lettersworth would soon be in for an abysmal evening. Sirens were blaring left and right, police at every intersection as one amoral letter had decided to steal Lettersworth's prized possession, The Alphabet Amulet. The letter ran with such an anxious pace that he was afraid if he'd make it out alive. Nobody truly knew how he got access to the amulet, nor do they have an answer, but as the scandalous letter approached his headquarters, he knew he was in the clear. It's hard to get access to such a place and have such a rank as Vincent "Little V" Ferrari. He was the boss's accomplice, his attorney, his assistant and meant everything to the boss. As the large metal door swung open to the abode in which the boss and his crew hid out, he felt completely at peace. The warehouse was dark, abandoned, and made people anxious just to walk past it. Ash littered the floor as the boss was one who enjoyed cigars. Seconds later, the boss appeared. He was an astute gentleman, not all that angry looking but always had an agitated face. His attire was classy, yet very modern. A gray fedora sat atop his head with ash falling from his current cigar. His two tone dress shoes were the cherry on top, always shiny and admirable. The boss's name was Anthony "Big A" Valentino, he got his name after pulling off the most adept heist in all of Lettersworth. Big A had stolen Lettersworth's former prized possession, a solid gold key to the town, and melted it into a large letter A he now dons around his neck. "Congratulations, Sport," said the boss. "I assume a celebration is in order, you just pulled off the second greatest heist this town has ever seen." Overcome with joy, Little V shook the boss's hand. "Alive and well I see, eh? Didn't get no holes in ya tux did ya?" Boss exclaimed with appreciation. "You've done well, kid, I must say, this letter is gettin' a little old for this kinda shabang, y'know?" "What are ya saying boss?", replied Little V. "What I'm saying is that I need a replacement, and the applications just closed. What you proved to me today is that you got a feelin' for this kinda thing, V. It's best ya take my place, sport." Little V could believe what he had heard. Was he finally getting his dream job? "Big A was anticipating a long hiring process," chimed in Papa B, Big A's former right hand man. "It appears pullin' off that heist made it easy for the old man." Little V was ecstatic, overwhelmed, but most of all, appreciative that he gained his dream position as the one and only, "Big V".

## **THIS IS THE YEAR**

Suryansh Dasgupta | Buffalo Grove

This is the year that you found that person  
After searching for so long.  
As you watched the best theater production you had ever  
seen,  
Hands interlaced, the crowd holding their breath  
All together  
Waiting for Carrie White to serenade them once again  
mesmerized by the beauty of your present life,  
And the fleeting dreaminess of it all.  
Blinded by the stage light, deafened by the applause  
Blissful. Happy. Fulfilled. Unaware.  
Accolades and trophies, sitting on the table  
Success and with that success was promised; an end.  
Dangerously close to the mountaintop  
Seeing the summit  
Threatening, yet inevitable.

## **MY STILL LIFE**

Lindsey Vega | Buffalo Grove



**FASHION OF THE BIRDS**  
Kacper Mitera | Elk Grove



**GOLD STANDARD**

Jovanna Mathai | Elk Grove

My first day on this Earth was the start of my downfall  
Adorned with gold, I was paraded  
My debut was my first success  
What else could I do but labor in the mines  
Sweat, blood, and burning tears fall  
Yet I bring home gold  
Its value is equated to negate my pain  
My worth is measured by carats and cash  
Feeding the fire by building a pillar of medals and trophies that glimmer at the entrance  
It stands proud at the entrance of my once safe space  
Put on display like me, a glorified show pony  
While I cower before it and its gleam  
It taunts me and provokes me to keep feeding it  
To grow it, to worship it  
Will my pillar grow or has the shiny exterior faded?  
The reflection catches and burns my eyes and mind  
It attempts to keep me blind from my own inner fading  
Is my value diminished?  
Is my job finished or shall I push?  
When will Midas come and touch this heart that's faded  
For I am not gold, I'm simply gold-plated

## SMOKESHOW AND BLINDING LIGHTS

Denise Flores | Wheeling

4:30pm. Naturally I'm running late. It's opening night for Cry-Baby: The Musical, and I am a mess. I rapidly shove my mild chicken sandwich and fries from Fry The Coop down my throat, barely tasting the yummy crispiness of the chicken or the flavors that burst in my mouth. My mother yells at me to be on my merry way so I'm not late. But who are we kidding, I'm always late.

I turn to look at my father. He sits there, eyes cold as ice—so close but so incredibly far. I don't bother going up to him, feeling as a constant reminder of the failure that I've become, unable to reach out as if I am an iceberg surrounded by water slowly melting and fading away.

My vision begins to blur and my face burns. I grab my three bags, pick up my water bottles and shove my keys in my pocket as I slip on my Crocs. As I walk to my car, I'm thinking about the talk I'm going to receive from Mr. Colella once I arrive at school—all about how punctuality is important and how I should've gotten to school earlier if I knew I wouldn't make it on time.

But there's no time to change that now.

I have my tights under my sweatpants and green and white striped fuzzy Christmas socks on my feet. I'm wearing my Cry-Baby sweatshirt (repping the merch, of course), and my hair is in two braids, so I can easily slip my wig onto my head. I reach my 2009 Gray Toyota Yaris, otherwise known as Rose Jane, who helped me learn how to drive and who always was a fierce and loyal companion from the start. I start Rose and connect my phone to the charger that conveniently works as an aux as well. I reach over to put my seatbelt on and press play to the music. Nothing is more irritating than the gazillion stop signs in my neighborhood before I finally reach Wolf Road. I turn right out of my neighborhood to go south on Wolf Road when I'm greeted with bright red. I come to a full stop knowing I'll be here for a minute.

I'm bombarded with a buzz, almost as annoying as a mosquito near your ear. I reach over for my phone thinking, Great! Mr. C. knows I'm late and people are trying to get a hold of me. I see it's one of my castmates asking for help with their makeup. I quickly respond.

I see green. Awesome, we're on our way. I am encapsulated in my own thoughts that I forget that it is now traffic hour on Palatine Road, and it would've been much faster and safer to take Wolf Road and turn left on Hintz Road. I realized my mistake as soon as I turned. But it's ok, I'll be fine, I think to myself. No need to psych myself out. I check the side and try to see where I will fit in the line of merging traffic, but I fail to see right in front of me where cars are all stopping. When I finally turn my head, it's too late. I see the car and then I see nothing.

I come to and smell smoke and see the back end of the red car right in front of my face. Rose Jane's hood is crushed inwards. I feel a headache and want to cry. I reach for my phone and realize everything isn't where it's supposed to be. I tug at the charger, pulling it in until my phone is in my hands.

I call my sister. No answer.

I call my mother.

"You have reached the phone"

Great. Awesome. The moment I am in need you're not picking up your phone. All those lectures about *tienes un teléfono pero no responden cuando uno llama?* You have a phone but you don't respond the second someone calls? But what I most want to avoid is talking to my father, the man who gave everything up to give me everything. The man who gifted us Rose. The man who is on a pedestal in my mind, close but so high, like the standards set for me that I failed to reach.

As I start to take in everything again, "Backyard Boy" by Claire Rosinkranz is still playing, Rose is making some weird noise, and I hear the cars whooshing by right next to me on Palatine. I hear honking and I start to realize that my breath is shaking, my eyesight rapidly growing blurry. I grab my phone and type three numbers.

"911. What's your emergency?"

Words run through my mind, but I sit there with my mouth open, sobbing into the phone while the man repeats the same question until he finally hangs up. I hear the sirens grow closer and all the headlights just mix together as the sun hides, and I wish I could hide with it.

Fifteen minutes later I find myself alone in the hospital waiting room. With the pale look of the walls, the room resembles a black and white movie. The doors woosh open, and I feel a gust of wind pressing upon my face. Timidly, I look up and I see a man. A man who looks like my father, but this man doesn't have cold icy eyes. This man isn't seething or full of rage and anger. This man is scanning the room with concern in his face. His pace is quick. His eyes lock on mine, and he rushes over. This is the first time I can read his expression, the first time I recognize genuine hurt combined with worry on his face.

"Denisita, ¿cómo estás mija? Esperaba verte sin cabeza o con sangre derramada por tu frente" He cracks a joke and I smile as he sits next to me and invites me to rest my head on his shoulder.

## **REPLAY**

Natalie Von Oesen | Rolling Meadows

Childhood is imagination filling my mind, new fantasies expanding every second

Pirate ships, pixie dust, and potions

Worlds form in front of your eyes yearning for you to explore them

Childhood is sitting next to the phone waiting for a friend to call

Heart skipping a beat when the doorbell rings, crossing fingers for it to be the neighbor

Or little heads poking over the fence, trying to see if anyone wants to play

Childhood is having a curfew by dinner and your mom screaming

"Be back before dark"

Little legs running fast away before she changes her mind

Dancing into the backyards of others waiting for you to join their games

Childhood is swinging on the swing set

Letting it take you higher and higher

Feeling your hair floating up up up and then back down down down

Childhood is like an old movie

As you find yourself remembering the scenes and characters

you wish could rewatch it for the first time again



## INK OF THE PEN

Olivia Larkowski | Buffalo Grove

## INTERESTS

Vee Castro | Wheeling





### **LACK OF**

Elana Brush | Hersey

### **HINT FICTIONS \***

#### **SEEING BLACK**

Rachel Rainey | Rolling Meadows

Resting his eyes after the optic surgery, he opens them to a dark room. Relief washes over him till he realizes the lights aren't off.

#### **WORK FROM HOME**

Selah Lonard | Rolling Meadows

Excel spreadsheet and change crib sheets. Doody calls.

\* Hint fictions are works of fiction in 25 words or fewer that hint at a larger story.



## INCREDIBLE I

Jake King | Hersey

The letter i was instantly introduced to a new chapter in his life. His family made the important decision to move from Ireland to the United States. This was because i's family sought to end isolation and be more in touch with his alphabet relatives. The letter i was a very independent individual who excelled in innovation. He looked tall and thin, with freckled skin, indigo eyes, and dark-ink-colored hair.

His parents believed the possibilities for him were infinite in the States. In fact, i felt so honored that he got invited to attend a prestigious industrial engineering high school in Indianapolis, Indiana. However, introspective i felt inadequate and insecure about immigrating from the island of Ireland. He wasn't sure if his abilities were up to par in America.

The letter i was concerned about adapting to the American accent. He interestingly searched for ways to calm down on his iPhone. The night before his first day of school, the letter i ingested ice cubes to relax his tongue, but unfortunately got a freezer burn. i was insistent on staying home, but thankfully his inner mouth increasingly warmed overnight.

As i nervously inched into the immense, beautifully-structured school, he instantly became ill at ease. However, he remembered that the other letters were going through similar experiences: taking difficult classes, attending a new school, and meeting unfamiliar people. So, the letter i chose to be open to exotic experiences and make the most of school. Instead of hiding from the unknown, the letter i interacted with a couple of friends. He intuitively vibed with the letter s's, who came from Switzerland, South Africa, and Singapore!

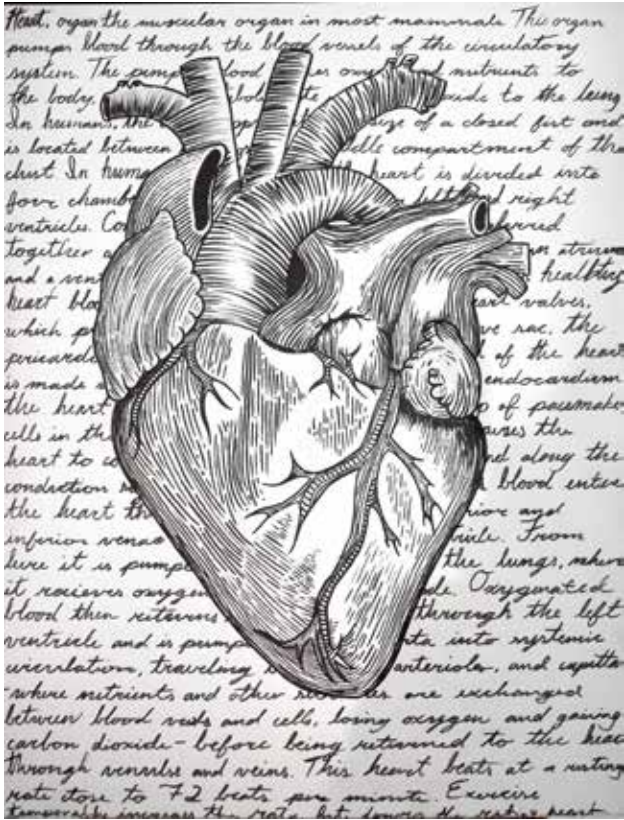
In terms of the letter i's engineering status, i instantly rose to the top of his class.

He impressed his professors after inventing a new component involving iron, building intricate automobile models, and illustrating complex theories. i's work was so incredible that he won intense national competitions and was awarded a full-ride scholarship to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He became invincible!



## SPRING TRAIL

Sophie Murray | Rolling Meadows



**HEART**

Leah Persson | Prospect



**DAY OF THE DEAD**

Ivan Bailon | Elk Grove

## SCREAM

Michael Migacz | Elk Grove

the lights, they scream  
silently  
through sharp, electric teeth  
that bite into my ears  
and eyes  
and skin  
until I shudder off the metal plates  
that touch the inky powder  
that stick to my hands  
and skin.

I prefer music that screams  
loudly  
through cracked lips, sharp teeth,  
they bite not into my ears  
but into my core of metal and clockwork  
that requires to routinely move my  
rusted gears  
and routinely pick  
the moss off  
my skin

my voice box has been damaged, I scream  
incoherently  
back at the silent loud lights  
back at the music that screams with me  
back at the eyes that watch and  
demand  
my scratched glass eyes  
to look back  
and  
scream  
silently

## FREEDOM

Alessandra Rodrigues | Rolling Meadows

A beaming bell begging to be beat.  
Warm and tender, but cold and commanding.  
A powerful roar heard for miles and miles.  
Its arms simultaneously uplifting me and pushing me away.  
An oxymoron.  
A battle to be won.  
A mountain to climb.  
Freedom is the wind that carries seeds into the earth;  
We are the ones who must learn to grow.

## BLOOM

Cam Straus | Buffalo Grove

bright summer days taste of sticky strawberry jam

puffy white dandelions are in bloom

a child pure and innocent makes a wish and blows

the seedlings  
dance  
on the breaths of the  
child

two seeds break off from the crowd  
seemingly flirting and floating around each other

these flowerettes are destined to grow together

a bright yellow plant, radiant in the sun

## THE LOVE SCAR

Alessandro Ramos Vargas | Wheeling

"I'm so sorry! I never meant for any of this to happen!" exclaimed Paulina as warm delicate drops of water flowed down the contours of her eyeliner. Her words floated above me, and then came straight down and impaled me. I gave her the cheek, and the room sounded like static.

The cold fall breeze sent shivers down my spine as the school year began. Being early to school meant I had time to play in the most fun place in school: the playground! I coasted with my Sketchers on the uneven sidewalk towards the back of the school, sliding past my classmates as if I were a ninja, dodging their colorful book bags. I got to the blacktop where some students were lined up ready to go inside, but it was way too early, in my opinion, to be in line. I tossed my backpack alongside the dominos of the bags lined up. I admired the weirdly shaped objects called playground equipment. It's like they were inspired by the abstract shapes of Picasso's artwork. Being sometime in mid-fall, my oddly-patterned, black and blue, SwissTech jacket wrapped around me. Looking past the vast sea of kids, I spotted my favorite playground equipment: the balance beams, two long, elevated pieces of orange steel separated from each other. I cautiously stepped onto the beams and found myself starting to shake from side to side.

In a matter of minutes, I saw another kid hopping on the one right in front of me, so I knew he wanted the smoke. Not willing to lose, I looked my opponent dead in the eyes. We were two midwestern cowboys who knew that there wasn't enough room for the both of us. His shadow stretched over me, and his face displayed a malicious grin. I then realized who he was. He was one of the biggest, meanest bullies in the grade. Austin was a kid notoriously known for ditching recess in 2nd grade. (Like who does that?) He later sold weed by the side of the school for a mere two quarters and was most recently known for beating up a teacher after she said, "I don't know. Can you go to the bathroom?" There was no point in moving. My knees knocking and my face pale, I already knew my fate.

In a matter of seconds, a mysterious force pushed me, forcing me to make skin-to-metal contact with the beam. Then, darkness, nothing but darkness.

Waking up, the first things that greeted me were my glasses, the right lens covered with a red liquid. Slowly, I pulled myself to my feet, however, not before coming back down. Soaked wood chips stuck to my face, and the ground felt like sandpaper. Giving it a second try, I pushed myself up from the wood chips and managed to get grounded. Feeling the side of my face, I looked at my hands. My left and right hands were both painted red. Nothing

but wetness. Not even a second after feeling my cheek, I felt a pulsating feeling within my face. With my heart dropping to my stomach and blood consistently tumbling down my cheek, I analyzed my surroundings. All of the kids had already gone to their lines, patiently waiting for the teachers to let them in. There was no one to help me. Stumbling forward and tripping over myself, I slowly made my way toward civilization. As I passed the line of kids, every single pair of eyes fixated on me as if my bone was popping out of my cheek. I heard gasps of disgust from even my closest friends. Finally, one of the teachers noticed me as I made my way to the line. Shrieking, she immediately told me to go to the nurse's office.

Entering the school, I became blinded by the white lights. I kept walking, but the hallways didn't seem to end—just more doors and classrooms that were about to fill with students and teachers. I arrived at the nurse's enormous door, which was covered in staying healthy and nutrition posters. Slowly turning the doorknob, I was greeted by the nurse, whose eyes and mouth opened wide as soon as she saw my face.

Sitting down on the nurse's chair, waiting for my mom to arrive, I held my head tightly. Ring, Ring, Ring. My brain tumbled around inside my skull. I swayed from side-to-side, trying to ease the pain from both my head and cheek. Before I knew it, there was a familiar figure standing right at the nurse's entrance: Paulina. Petite, blonde, and wearing her black Levi's jeans and an orange crop top. She was my girlfriend of three weeks. I felt that someone had lit a fire, and I'd been fed honey.

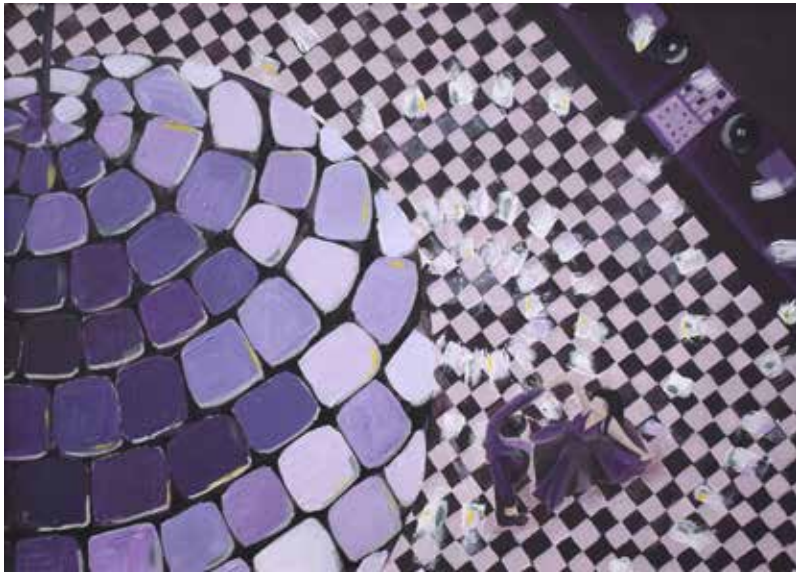
Not moving much, she stuttered, "I'm so sorry! I never meant for any of this to happen!"

As she placed her small, soft hand on my shoulder, I found myself transported back to the moment before my face slammed into the balance beam.

I turned to face her, watching as her hand rose to cover her face, smearing her make-up.

It was as if that beam reached up and smacked me in the face once again.

I turned away from her toward the parking lot where my mom would be coming to drive me to the hospital. Out of the corner of my eye, I watched Paulina slump back toward class and knew our three weeks had come to an end.



**LAVENDER LIGHT**  
Hannah Lifton | Prospect



**BEHIND THE GLITTERING FACADE**  
Jina Choi | Wheeling

## HOW TO AVOID QUITTING STARBUCKS THREE TIMES

Jennifer Flores | Wheeling

After a nerve-racking interview, you finally get the email that you got hired at Starbucks. It's all "Congratulations!" "Good job!"--that is until it's your first day on the job and you're looking at your reflection. You put on your blue unripped jeans and your black shirt, hair tied up and makeup done. The finishing touch is your green apron with the Starbucks logo smack dab in the middle. You look up and, wow, you look like a green highlighter.

You open the door, and the smell of freshly brewed coffee hits your nose. You walk to the back and meet your trainer. They have a bright smile on their face, acting like this is the happiest place on earth. At first you start believing it, but trust me, your smile will slowly turn upside down, and you'll be running out the door like a person in a horror movie who runs to the exit but is stupid enough to trip on some books on their way out. You walk over to the bar station, and you feel overwhelmed by just looking at the 30 different syrup bottles, seven different milks being pulled out of the fridge, and the espresso machine that looks like it would fall apart from a single tap. But don't worry, right? However, even if the trainer still has a smile, their eyes tell a different story.

You keep trying to reassure yourself in your head, "Four more hours," "Should I put in my two weeks already?" "It can't get any worse, right?" (Oh, trust me. It's just starting). Training is a piece of cake. If you mess up, you have someone there to clean it up for you. The best part is when you have to learn 50+ drinks. Don't even get me started on the number of shots and syrup pumps that go in each drink: six pumps for a venti iced drink, but don't forget it's one less for a caramel macchiato. Oh, did I mention the syrup pumps will go completely out of order depending on the drink you get? Yeah, no, I give you two months max until you're back on Indeed searching for another job.

But I'm not here to encourage you to quit (although I've had my fair share of putting my two weeks in multiple times). Number one rule is always look busy even if you are aren't. Most of the time, your coworkers won't stop you because they don't want to deal with doing more work than they have to. It makes time go fast, and you'd be surprised how many people completely ignore you when you look like you're invested in your job. It saves you time from dealing with running like if you were in a marathon, trying to figure out how many shots go in a caramel grande iced latte. Here are some tips to avoid making drinks that look difficult or you're simply too lazy to make them. You can either go back on your drive-through position, sprint and ask another barista, or simply wait for it to solve itself. (Minimum wage job, minimum wage effort, right?)

Another favorite: avoid difficult customers. I've been there, and yes, sometimes your impulsive thoughts win you over. That so-called LATTE rule that Starbucks has completely flies out the window. Whatever you do, please don't throw that venti strawberry açai lemonade (PUT THE DRINK DOWN). There are other ways to avoid that, and one is to let others deal with it. I know it seems mean, but at this point, it's every man for themselves. Avoid eye contact. It gives others the opportunity to complain to you, and we don't want that. We're trying to live our negative-free life, and a grumpy customer does not fit the category.

But I saved the best for last: calling off. Nothing feels better than going out with friends, knowing you were supposed to work that day. The only exception to calling off is doing it when that one life-sucking person is working. We all have those people that we try to avoid at all times. The minute you walk in, the air has a sour scent, and your day is automatically ruined. But the best way to avoid that is calling off and going to your local michoacana and getting a deliciously expensive manganada. (Shhhh! Don't feel bad about calling off--just keep eating.)

I've taught you as much as I could in this essay, which will get you through your first two months if you listen to my simple rules. I know it might feel like putting in your two weeks is the best option here, but I can assure you that after you quit, you'll be back at a Starbucks drive-through, ordering a venti iced white mocha with oat milk and no whip. Would you rather pay for that drink or get it for free with your Starbucks markout?

## HOSPITALS

Ryan Pearlman | Buffalo Grove

I'll never set foot in a hospital without thinking of you  
My voice shaking while requesting a visitor sticker from the front desk  
Inching upwards in the elevator, each floor taller than the last  
Crawling out after the door creaks and the bell dings  
Trying not to think as the nurses maneuver a gurney by my side

I force myself to keep pushing forward  
Gently knocking on your door, being told to come in  
Observing the date printed on the wall  
Accompanied by the name of a nurse you don't like  
And an untouched Jell-O cup you should have eaten today

There's one large square window  
And a long white couch  
A muted TV endlessly playing a sport you don't care about  
And a nurse speaking words I don't begin to comprehend

Tubes hooked up to your body and port  
A machine beeps every so often  
I cry through my mask as we hold hands at your bedside

I have to extend fully forward to hug you  
I am careful not to squeeze as you lie there

I don't want you to hurt any more

## SONNET

Kateri Martinez | Elk Grove

The blissful whisper from a gentle wing  
Her aura glist'ning brighter than a sun  
A radiance of which she thrives as king  
Her curse, though silent, she cannot outrun

Some see this beauty and believe her vain  
Whilst blind as mice to all that she achieves  
One fierceful fight that soon will drive insane  
This mind entrapped beneath majestic eaves

May all who feel her love, her trust, her heart  
See past the guise of peace, a mere mirage  
Take care, one step off path will tear apart  
The face of calm, which starts a grand barrage

She screams, unheard, the struggle hers alone  
How soon she'd run, escape the ghastly throne





**PRESSURE**  
Emily DePaz | Prospect

## FIRST (AND LAST) TRY

Jason Pondel | Wheeling

As I felt sticky sweat run down my forehead from nervousness alone, Tyler assured me that I wouldn't get into any trouble with our parents. "Dude, they're not even home. How would they find out?" But I kept thinking about all the times my mom told me I couldn't ride my bike past our block. Noticing my wide-eyed expression, Tyler reached into his white camo Adidas drawstring backpack, dug his hands around for a few seconds, and whipped out a wrinkly five dollar bill. He pinched it between his pointer finger and thumb, waving it around just out of my reach. Suddenly it felt like my mission to make it to 7/11.

Hopping onto my cousin's hand-me-down, rusted, silver BMX bike wasn't nearly as fun as I imagined. The brick-like hardness of the seat felt like it would cause permanent damage to my tailbone. The tires' firmness reminded me of our basketball that refused to bounce more than a foot into the air. The pedals were so resistant I could've used them like a leg press. Keeping up with my brother's prized cherry red bike that he won from the race Grandpa brought him to last year wasn't even close to possible. It had only been a minute into the trip, and the amount of times I thought about turning around was probably higher than I could even count at the time. After almost wiping out on each sharp turn we took, Tyler made the final right hand turn and I followed. Now we were on a straight path to 7/11. In the distance, he already looked small to me, but each time I looked up from my struggle, my brother was smaller than the last. In two agonizing minutes he started to get bigger, and that's when I noticed the sinister shadow looming around him and saw something I truly feared- a crosswalk at a busy intersection.

I came to a very slow stop next to my brother, my weight falling onto my left foot as I dismounted my bike. The horror stories my mom had told me about this place actually seemed real now. All the noises around me that I had been tuning out began to add to my fear. Deafening motorcycles sped past me, giant trucks honked at one another, and California Gurls by Katy Perry was blasting out the windows of at least three different cars. I felt the wind from each vehicle passing by ruthlessly blow me to the side. Lost in a trance of my own thoughts, I stared at the worn out white stripes covered in tire marks that led to the other side. When I least expected it, Tyler rolled forward onto the crosswalk yelling, "GO!"

I snapped back to my senses, and my eyes darted to the orange hand and countdown radiating above me, and without hesitation I threw my right leg over my seat, placed my feet back onto my pedals, closed my eyes, and

pushed as hard as I could. Before I knew it I rolled onto the other side only a few seconds after Tyler. After taking a look back to where I started, I couldn't believe I made it to the other side without losing a limb. The fact that I crushed my fear so easily made me feel like a superhero. The celebration in my head lasted about 10 seconds before it was crashed by Tyler tugging on the collar of my neon green Under Armour shirt. I shrugged off my major accomplishment and proceeded into the 7/11 parking lot.

My brother took the extra time to lock our bikes, and I had to wait for him even though I explained that mine would still be untouched after a week. I was finally handed my five dollar reward that I had completely forgotten about and soon enough I walked out of 7/11 with a full-sized, half-melted Milky Way bar, along with a bottle of Sprite. My purchase and loose change were securely stored in my brother's bag, and we were about to head back the way we came. As Tyler unscrambled the bike lock one digit at a time, I demanded that he let me cross the intersection first, and he surprisingly accepted without fighting back.

Now my front tire rested on the red part of the sidewalk, no more than an inch away from the rough pavement. I leaned forward and kept my right foot on the pedal, my left planted on the ground. My eyes stuck to the crosswalk light like a spider in an insect trap. I had already entrusted my brother with the duty of pushing down the crossing button, but when he decided to trick me and yell "GO!" instead. I immediately shut my eyes and went into action like last time. This is where my brother realized I was too stupid to mess around with. Milliseconds before my bike's frame (and my bones) were dismantled by a 4,500 pound beige Ford Edge going 40 mph, I forcefully clutched my right hand, pulling down on the handbrake, immediately locking my back wheel in place. Unfortunately, my primal instincts were still too slow, and my front wheel laid two feet into the street from the sidewalk. The Ford Edge's right headlight took this as an invitation to blast straight into it, sending scraps of metal, rust, and chipped paint into the air. I guess whoever was driving that Ford Edge either didn't care at all about the damage they just caused to the both of us, or didn't even realize it happened since they completed their right turn and cruised by, not even bothering to slow down. At this point my brother had already told me to not snitch on him three times, and I agreed, as long as I wasn't the one dragging rubber all the way back home.



### **SOUL VACATION**

Emily Podejko | Rolling Meadows

### **HANDS OF ADORATION**

Dana Cuellar | Elk Grove





**UNTITLED**

Taylor Jansen | Hersey



**SINKING**

Jackie Sanchez | Rolling Meadows

## MY PURPOSE IS TO SING

Moselle Kurth | Hersey

I spend many hours in my black box. Well, I shouldn't complain so much. After all, the box was specially designed for me. Each compartment is meticulously fabricated to make the perfect home. For both my shape, and my small friends, we're fortunate that it's not a thin fabric that holds our home together.

My special box is usually opened after-hours. My owners' mood usually dictates this. When she's happy, sad, angry, or even just has a song in her head, I'm always there for her. She knows my songs are her expression. I will say the tunes she makes me sing can get repetitive. I could be singing the same chorus over and over again until it's just right. She gets frustrated sometimes when she can't make me sing the right note or even loud enough.

Sometimes she creates something new. A new piece can be crafted in just an hour, but it also could take days. I feel like some of these songs have potential for much more. Regardless, it's a new song for me to sing. I'm happy to oblige. I want to sing something new. My purpose is to sing.

Her excitement and joy in making me sing is evident, but our audience is almost nonexistent. I used to sing for my teacher or on a dark wooden stage, but when my owner finally mastered the use of my voice, we both realized the comfort of just being in each others' presence was enough.

However, I feel like her need for perfection can sometimes lead to her pushing herself too far. Her fingers don't stop when they feel like rocks, begging for moisture, blood oozing to the tip of her palettes. Her tired eyes are more awake when I sing. A fire is ablazed in her eyes—or is that from the bedside lamp?

Even though she watches concerts of bands smashing others like me, she has always been gentle with my kind. A scratch is the farthest in damage I've gone through, but I guess anything is better than being left in unmalleable pieces.

Sometimes when my steel twine is getting too sensitive, I feel a slight sting whenever she presses for a note. I can be stretched by tuning too much that my carefully-braided strings can retract or tear. It's until then when she decides to replace my strings, making it possible to fulfill my purpose.

When it's finally time for her and I to get some rest—or her parents are mad that I'm singing too loudly at two in the morning—she puts me back in my box. The black velvet perfectly hugs my figure as I am gently placed in and above my small friends. The black hatch closes and locks me in.

Although pitch black and silent, I know tomorrow I will sing again to brighten her day.

My purpose resides in her hands.



**STRENGTH OF THE WOMAN**  
Angel Kral | Wheeling



**LINGUINI**  
Matthew Pancini | Prospect



### **WATCH OUT!**

Julia Pandaleon | Prospect

### **AMUSEMENT PARKS**

Catherine Bautista | Buffalo Grove

This was the year where we screamed at the top of our lungs  
as the rollercoaster rocked us in its metal arms.  
Indulged with cotton candy and funnel cake monsters,  
we stumbled on the pavement under a sugary spell.  
I amused myself with plastic rings and popping balloons,  
ignorant of money once my greedy hands won a cheap stuffed toy  
that will end up on a shelf covered in dust.

This was the year I learned to say goodbye to old friends  
but until then we exchanged numbers that I'll never call again.  
We got enchanted by flashing lights and pop music as  
the world dimmed into an orange hue that smeared across the sky.  
And spun on a carousel of chipped paint horses with kids half our  
size,  
I sat backwards to face you for a picture.





**SEE NO EVIL, HEAR NO EVIL**

Olivia Kim | Hersey



**COLORED PORTRAIT**

Doan Do | Elk Grove



**PAJARO EMBROIDERY**  
Elida Zavala | Wheeling

## WHY WE CRAVE A RAGGEDY T-SHIRT FROM THE THRIFT STORE

Melissa Hernandez | Wheeling

Firstly, it's NOT just a t-shirt! It's unique, it's vintage, and it's the 80s right in your face! Walking in, you see hundreds of hangers dangling from racks. Clinging to each is someone's ex-closet tenant that's been evicted. Aisles as far as the eye can see wait to be explored. While you may be perceived as a vulture scavenging every inch of the store, you remain aware that every second at the thrift store is like a treasure hunt, but your gold must be unburied from heaps of textiles. This treasure hunt is not for the faint of heart, for with it you will have opponents (other customers) who are just as eager (desperate) as you to uncover a great find (they're also cheap). Always hope for the best but expect the worst. Always carry and apply hand sanitizer every few minutes. Never forget that you are playing a game of chance where your efforts are not guaranteed to pay off.

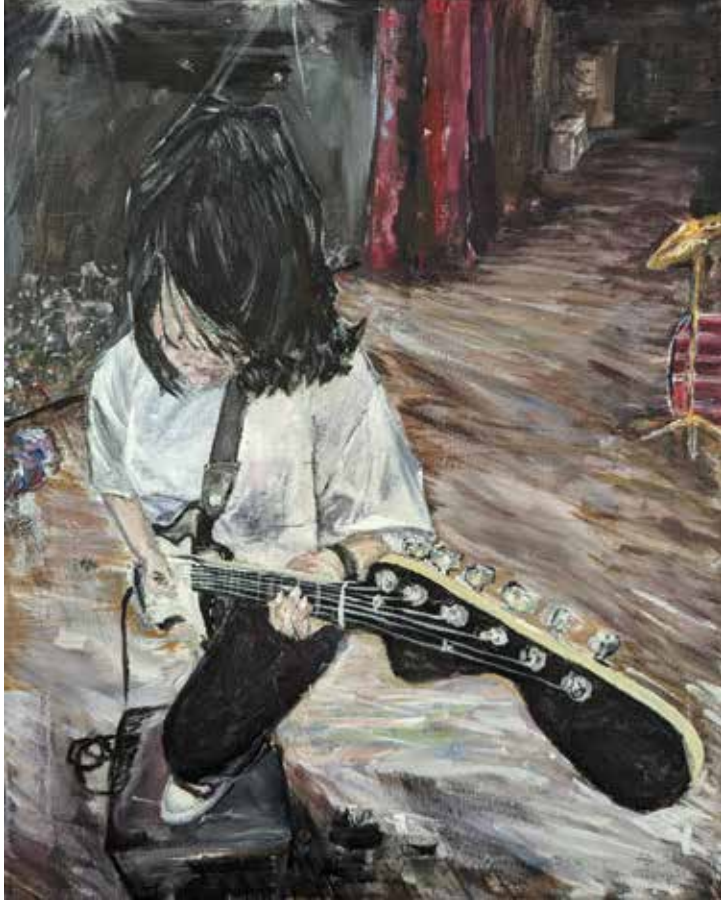
Swiping quickly through the t-shirts will make your vision blurry and hands have a soft coat of dust (hopefully dust) all while unleashing the thrift store classic smell of stuck-in-storage-for-years-then-straight-to-the-store funk. But even with your slightly germaphobic brain screaming at you to leave, you can't help but be mesmerized by the story behind each shirt and who wore it. A simple adult medium marathon shirt could have been worn by someone who loved to run, who ran for years, joining each marathon they could find until taking a fall with a serious enough injury that even looking at a shirt of a marathon leaves them with a feeling of emptiness for a passion of the past. Or the shirt could have belonged to someone who finally checked off running a marathon from their bucket list but decided that keeping a shirt that they would never wear again didn't fit into their minimalistic lifestyle, so they tossed it away to erase the evidence they would ever own anything other than beige and gray t-shirts. Tip: Curiosity about the previous owners and the shirt's origin in the thrift store always stick to the clothes until the first wash when all the questions go down the drain. So make sure to increase the soak time on the first wash!

Of course, it's not a complete adventure without some foe to go against. Other than time pressuring you not to look around too much, you must always keep in mind the other customers who are just as much—if not more—motivated to find a good t-shirt. They will clear aisles three times faster than you and have a cart full in 20 minutes while your eyes have only scanned 10 shirts. Tip: Act fast if you spy something you like, and keep it close.

That is why after overcoming multiple obstacles (and obsolete clothes), you will become obsessed with immediately purchasing any shirt you can even slightly see yourself wearing at least once. Even if the shirt is as wrinkled as a crumpled-up piece of paper or seems to have a fourth of its original vibrancy, you will grow a sentimental value to a piece of cloth you didn't know existed until two minutes ago. Blends of polyester and cotton will capture your heart. Don't overthink it, just buy it! HURRY! RIGHT NOW BEFORE ANYONE ELSE SEES IT!

But beyond being the budget-friendly bang for your buck, the shirt will bring a beacon of hope to what was once a drab, dreadful, depressing closet. A shirt doesn't need to be NEW to bring back life into your closet; it can just be "new" to you. This perfect T-shirt will make you seem more unique for having such an exclusive item while also giving you an edge of no effort since it's been worn down for you. Truly, a sentiment of hard work and a souvenir to bring home and sit lazily on the couch in. Who wouldn't want to be perceived as this effortless?

Though, finding your soulmate t-shirt does have serious consequences...you can't walk into a room without a compliment or question. EVERY conversation with a friend will start with "Bro, I like your shirt," and when your friend asks about where it's from, you can look back on your adventure to acquire the shirt and feel a sense of pride within yourself for uncovering such a diamond while on the look for gold. This ability to give to yourself should be rewarded. Maybe next time at the thrift store, you'll run across a medal to gift yourself with for having the best of taste and utmost dedication.



**THE GUITARIST**

Maya Nowakowski | Buffalo Grove

**UNTITLED**

Grace Haapapuro | Hersey





**THANATOPHOBIA**

Lorelei Osterlund | Rolling Meadows

## FEATHERS

Julia Kucharewicz | Elk Grove

You pluck the bird's feather  
Dip it in the oil that lead to its death  
And write a poem about love  
You know nothing  
About the suffering you create  
While you write your lover cries

And the air is filled with cries  
That float down in storms of feather  
Aware of the unease they create  
Because they want justice for their death  
There is nothing  
Left for them to love

You present the poem of so-called love  
She reads it and cries  
Her tears are made of oil and she says nothing  
In her hair there is a feather  
You are unaware of the death  
That your ego will create

Your poem is published in a magazine you create  
Critics give it praise and love  
How you see beauty in death  
And life and tragedy and the way your lover cries  
Your conscious is as light as a feather  
Do you care for nothing?

You must feel nothing  
No shame or guilt for the disaster you create  
Now your lover is only beak and feather  
You say you still love  
Her but you only love the poetry you write about the way  
she cries  
You can't wait to write a sonnet about her death

Now your world is filled with death  
That you could prevent, that you don't because there is  
nothing  
On this goddamn planet that could make you hear the  
cries  
Of oceans and forests and birds as you create  
A world without them for the sake of love  
You write your poem and burn the feather

Everything you create  
Is a false declaration of love  
Your lover is a bird and you pluck her feather



**FISH OUT OF WATER**  
Ava Sander | Buffalo Grove

**HEARTS OF PEACE**  
Diana Montelongo | Wheeling



## **BAD VACATIONS AND THE LEMON SCENTED GAS STATION**

Elina Saha | Hersey

Who you spend your time with is what makes your experiences, not the places you go or the things you can buy. Good people make you feel things, things that nothing else in life can. There is something about the familiarity of the neighborhood where I grew up, the imprints it has of memories I have with the people that make me laugh. There is something about that which a glamorous, glittery vacation out of the country can never compete with.

I can remember the exact moment this dawned on me for the first time. It was the day after I came back from Los Angeles in July, a trip that had been abruptly cut short after my mom and my brother both contracted a virus (one of the main reasons I was so happy to be back home). But still, to understand why it was so clear to me on that one day, you have to understand everything that happened before that. It was the June of my last summer before high school. Now, the summer between middle school and high school had always been famous for being the most memorable of a teenager's life, but I'd always been skeptical of it until it actually happened.

The summer was wasting time with my friends every day. Texting each other at nine in the morning and biking to the creek at ten and eating watermelon together at two. The odd thing was, the six of us shouldn't have fit together. There were two that I hadn't really talked to at all the entire time I'd known them in middle school. All of us had come across each other by chance on the very first day of summer, and somehow that day seemed to unanimously, abruptly decide the rest of our summer for all of us.

Looking back on it, I wish I'd realized how significant it was in the moment.

The weeks that followed were blistering and soaked in sunlight. I can remember us grabbing handfuls of each other's arms as we tried not to trip across the rocks in the creek, biking barefoot because our feet were wet. It was the hot sun beating down on our backs until we escaped into the nearby Walgreens and stole the free air conditioning, raced with their shopping carts until a tired old man came out and told us to leave. And it was fun, so much fun that for once I didn't have time to worry about the things that awaited me in high school. But I also didn't have time to appreciate the memories I was making, the true, simple nature of summer I was experiencing.

And like all things, you only miss it when it's gone.

It had been about a month and a half when my family decided it was time for a vacation.

Los Angeles, California. Beverly Hills, Hollywood Boulevard, the Walk of Fame. Of course I was excited for it. Who wouldn't want to go there?

And yet as it turned out, I spent most of my time there imagining how much more fun it would be if my friends were there—if Venice Beach were suddenly a little creek surrounded by woods and grass and yellow flowers. If the roads winding through Beverly Hills were suddenly made of cracked asphalt with bike tracks streaking through them.

Now, it's not like I had a natural hatred for L.A and spending quality time with my family on vacation. But I didn't really like the kind-of-broken car we rented or the piles of garbage piled high on Hollywood Boulevard or my brother throwing up in our hotel room the third day we were there. Though the sheer dreadfulness of it definitely



bonded me with my family, I constantly found myself wishing we could've been back at home, and I could've been kicking the stand of my bike up and running off in worn-out flip flops to see my friends.

And then it happened, about a week and a half after we'd left for California. I felt tired and sore from the plane ride home, my throat was hurting because of something I'd caught there, and I was grumpy because I hadn't gotten a proper night of sleep since I'd left.

I don't even remember the exact things that happened that day. My friends were happy I was back, and we decided to go hang out all six of us again. Like usual, I dragged my bike out of the garage and started biking through my neighborhood. As soon as I did, all my problems seemed to leave me and I began to feel the excited anticipation of seeing my friends after almost two long weeks.

We met at this old gas station down the street from my house that sold overpriced gum and smelled like old lemon soap. I hugged them all hello; I hadn't realized how much I'd missed them. Then we fought over what to buy with the little seven dollars we had between all six of us. We bickered the entire time, and then bickered even more when we left. But as we were biking away from it, yelling at each other over the sound of cars rolling by, I fell silent for a moment. I took a deep breath. It was oak trees and sunlight and suburban bliss. The prettiness of it all hit me then. Then I looked around myself, seeing a group of loud and colorful characters surrounding me with reckless amusement glittering in their eyes. It filled me with a sense of delirious happiness as I realized how much I valued this time. The summer, my friends.

But since I'd come back from California, nothing had changed. They were the same people, these were the same roads. I'd gone through these actions countless times in my life, especially this summer. But as I continued to look around, I realized that there were memories hiding in every nook and cranny.

I know now that in a few years, there's very little I'll remember about the vacation compared to the rest of my summer. Sure, there were a few good moments. Laughs in the car with my parents and when my mom and I got to see the Warner Brothers set of Gilmore Girls. But really, even those weren't defined by the places I went. They were defined by the people I loved.

Before this summer, I was always unsatisfied. I was anxious and constantly thinking about the things that were out of my reach, not realizing the handfuls of greatness that I already had. I wasn't trying to make the most out of all the things I already had. This experience, and the whole summer really, has made me a lot happier. Even though for the most part all my friends stayed the same, the new appreciation I have for them and the time we spend together makes everything more fun. And now, as I look forward to every lunch period we spend together buying different food from a different cafeteria, but still with the same seven dollars, each day making it more obvious that these people won't be leaving me alone any time soon, I know that these are the kinds of memories I want to be making. And more importantly, the kind of people I want to be making them with.

## **FRISSON FRIENDS**

Beckham Cordell | Buffalo Grove

Nothing will ever again

Be my wonderfully ominous room of obscured details

My aghast heart, pulsing with frenzy fueled by the potential dread of incompleteness

Sanded, oak wood floors laced with zesty lime-scented cleaner competing, ambushed

by small battalions of lead-painted, emerald green walls, seeking dominance

Gabby remorsefully peering into the miniature, aged furnace while Teddy fixates on the jarred eyeballs, ensuring that he has scrutinized each hidden clue

Ash and I quivering in the corner, accompanied by the faint sneeze of illumination from the buzzing excuses for sight-providing lights

I am anxious

"BAM!"

A forceful fist beating from the outside, wielding all the panic in the world

Adrenaline surfs along the blood vessels that run through my goosebump-ridden arm

"Two minutes left"

Centering our neurons towards one final goal, clues once hidden become found, unsuspecting details become the main culprits...

"Ding" everything clicks

A collective chill flows down our bodies, no more were our hearts aghast, but rather, they were satisfied

Hugging, we create a bond that mends all that are broken

Warm, solar rays emit from our stance

Blinding all previous forces of fear and pressure

Our friendship is solidified

## SUMMER SENSES

Mikaela Carreon | Rolling Meadows

Summer is the falling rain,  
frozen watermelon,  
Chalk dust on my hands,  
Sweat dripping down my back  
and the A/C blasting

Summer is a well-needed break.  
It is relief  
and it is joy.

Summer is the sun  
and the shadow that follows me on stilts.

Summer is cool water  
and a perfect swim.

Summer is a smell.  
It is the residing powder lingering in the air  
from the bright fireworks that lit the sky.

Summer is the scent of smoke from a bonfire.  
The scent of fresh cut grass,  
Mixed with a bit of sweat.

If I could feel summer...  
It would feel cool  
like the breeze on a hot day..  
It would feel like the dewy grass between my fingers and toes

If summer were a sound  
It would sound like cicadas talking to one another,  
Kids playing outside with each other,  
Loud music blasting in the car  
And laughter.

If I could feel summer...  
It would feel like the heat of the sun,  
It would melt in my hands like ice candy  
And leave my hands sticky.  
Whether or not I could feel summer-  
Whether it were a sound or a scent-  
A flavor or a sight:  
Summer will always be  
my favorite memory.



## TYPICAL THURSDAY

Gia Faiola | Elk Grove



**MARY LARSON**

## 2023 FRIEND OF THE ARTS RECIPIENT

A 1981 graduate of Arlington High School, Mary Larson completed her Bachelor's Degree in The Teaching of English at the University of Illinois and began her career at Elk Grove High School almost 40 years ago. During all that time, Mary has been a true friend of the Arts. I remember Friday afternoons as an Undergraduate, The Arts would sometimes be low on cash and Mary would always let the Arts borrow a few dollars until its next payday. In the late Nineties, when the Arts desperately needed a donor kidney, Mary stepped up to...

I kid.

I have known Mary Larson for more than 40 years and I can think of no better recipient for this "Friend of the Arts" award. We attended U of I together in the early 80's and started teaching at EGHS when we were barely older than the Seniors in our elective classes. Mary and I were both hired by Richard Calisch, the legendary English Division Head who actually invented Arts Unlimited! According to legend, Mary was the last teacher he ever hired before he retired, which must mean that when he found Mary... they broke the mold!

I kid.

Mary's original extra-curricular activity was the school newspaper, an enterprise she led for almost three decades, encouraging young journalists in the art of writing, budding editors in the art of editing, neophyte designers in the art of paste-up and layout, and nascent cartoonists in the art of... Art. I remember looking forward to each new issue of The Guardian back then because it was just so darn good. During her tenure as adviser, The Guardian won numerous awards and honors, which were all testaments to the quality of Mary's stewardship. She always inspired her students' joy and passion—making The Guardian a delight to read.

Mary also coached and mentored young writers as a founding member of Elk Grove High School's writing center, Write Here, the first in the district. Whether designing assignments and assessments for teachers in other disciplines or engaging with countless students in one-on-one editing sessions, Mary kept the written art alive and kicking in EG's academic rodeo. The writing center also won numerous awards and Mary was a big part of what made that little room so special and awards-worthy.

Write On, EG's creative writing club, found an eager sponsor in Mary, and Wednesday afternoons soon became a refuge for the hearts and minds of the school's poets and authors. As an offshoot of the creative writing club, Mary organized twice yearly Poetry Slams, which were wonderful, rowdy affairs held after school in the library. I was lucky enough to judge some of these fun competitions before I retired. She also assumed the mantle of Editor-in-Chief for the school's literary magazine, e.g. It was often on the editorial board of that august publication, and I must say that some of the best mornings in my entire career were those that saw the editors meeting up to "compare scores" and pick the pieces for publication. My memory is that Mary and I were usually aligned in our tastes in student poetry: hardly any fistfights! And Mary was a gracious victor in each.

I kid.

Mary Larson served on the Arts Unlimited Committee for more than a decade, assuring that young people will continue being exposed to and immersed in art forms hitherto unknown to them. If we could somehow total the hours that Mary has spent on this worthwhile enterprise (heading the school newspaper, creative writing club, and literary magazine; planning Arts Unlimited's Journalism Days and Creative Writing Days; organizing Chicago Shakespeare Theater field trips; attending Elk Grove drama, variety show, Orchesis, and musical performances; and holding hundreds of one-on-one student writing conferences) it wouldn't even come close to quantifying the debt of gratitude the D214 community owes to Mary Larson, a master teacher and a true Friend of the Arts.

About that, I do not kid.

--John Bottiglieri

## 2023 FRIEND OF THE ARTS RECIPIENT



**KYLE MARQUETTE**

Thirty three years ago when he began teaching at Hersey HS, Kyle hit the ground running. He immediately began not only coaching speech but directed his first play, *The Curious Savage*. His passion and dedication to the arts at Hersey, as well as D214, has continued throughout his career. Now, as he prepares to retire, he certainly is deserving of recognition for all his efforts on behalf of D214 students, staff and parents.

He directed two plays a year from 1990 through 1998 when he added the musical to his directing repertoire. For much of the time from 1990, Kyle directed all three productions a year and coached speech simultaneously.

His directorial resume is impressive and includes taking two musicals to the All State Theatre Festival. These musicals were adjudicated and selection was over productions throughout the state. His goal has been to expose students to the educational aspects of theatre, always challenging them to learn.

As a result of these impressive productions, Kyle was honored to be selected to direct the All State Musical, *Les Miserables*, in 2007.

Kyle also directed a staff melodrama which is a highly regarded memory for all staff involved. He directed staff who had never done any theatre to participate and to a person, they all became devotees of the theatre program at Hersey.

In 2009, Kyle became the JHHS Fine & Performing Arts Coordinator. To that position, Kyle brought a whole new level of expertise. He really understood all aspects of the fine arts teachers and their individual challenges. He has worked hard to create a collegiality among them, encouraging interdisciplinary curriculum and activities.

He created a D214 Idol competition, inviting students from throughout the district to participate. It was a huge success, won by Haley Reinhart, a Wheeling student who has gone on to have considerable success professionally.

Always looking for ways to get students excited about the arts, Kyle even was part of a District art project where teachers were asked to come to Forest View and spend the day painting. His picture from that day still hangs in the fine arts area to this day.

He has encouraged and helped to facilitate the efforts of the Music Department to encourage middle and elementary school students to become involved in programs at Hersey.

His love and devotion to the arts has permeated his entire career, and he leaves at legacy at Hersey and the District that will be felt for many years to come.

--Joann Langley

The annual Arts Unlimited Anthology collects poetry, prose and visual artwork created by District 214 students. English and art teachers from across the district submit work for consideration. Each school is invited to submit six pieces of writing and six works of art. Submissions are reviewed by the Arts Unlimited Committee which is comprised of seven teachers and one administrator. In reviewing the works, the goal of the committee is to ensure that the pieces selected for publication represent the excellence and diversity that is associated with the district's art and writing programs. Every effort is made to provide an authentic public forum for student expression. Since this is a community publication, committee members also consider appropriateness of subject, style and length. Arts Unlimited publication will not distribute material that is obscene, libelous or will cause material and substantial disruption of school activities.

## COLOPHON

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## ROLLING MEADOWS SENIOR RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS CALISCH AWARD FOR THE ARTS



**AUTUMN HONG**

Each year, the Richard W. Calisch Arts Unlimited Award is presented to the District 214 senior who best exemplifies creative excellence in the arts. The award was established in honor of Richard Calisch, a former English teacher and Arts Unlimited program coordinator. Each District 214 comprehensive high school nominates a senior student for this recognition.

This year's Calisch Award recipient is Autumn Hong from Rolling Meadows High School, who used her artistic and leadership talents in myriad ways.

Autumn started as a clarinet player in the Rolling Meadows concert and marching bands, playing alto saxophone for the jazz band as well. Her career with the Marching Mustangs culminated with two years as drum major, where she proved a diligent, motivated and compassionate leader. She was named Outstanding Drum Major at the Sandwich Renegade Festival, and also was recognized as Outstanding Soloist at the Mundelein Jazz Festival.

But Autumn also sought out other opportunities to play music in school groups, including symphony orchestra and leading the pit band for the school variety show—displaying her talents on as many as six different instruments during variety show performances.

Autumn also was a member of the Rolling Meadows speech team for four years, including two years as team captain. During her senior year, she was a six-time medalist in speech, including being named MSL conference champion and an IHSA sectional qualifier in special occasion speaking.

The other five District 214 candidates also were exceedingly talented in the performing arts and academics and share their time and talents with their communities. They received honorable mention recognition and include **Lexi Conejo** of Wheeling High School, **Elizabeth Ferrazza** of John Hersey High School, **Kennedy Gerber** of Buffalo Grove High School, **Rey Tello** of Prospect High School, and **Raphael Lausa** of Elk Grove High School.

BUFFALO GROVE HIGH SCHOOL  
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ROLLING MEADOWS HIGH SCHOOL  
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