

**The Notre Dame  
High School  
9<sup>th</sup> Grade  
and  
Rider University  
English Education  
Writing Partnership Collection**



A compilation of 9<sup>th</sup> grade student work in  
narrative, poetic, and essay writing



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Dr. Kathleen Pierce  
Lawrenceville, NJ  
Fall 2011**

## **How can I know what I think till I see what I say?**

**-E. M. Forster**  
(English novelist)

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The Notre Dame High School 9<sup>th</sup> Grade/Rider University English Education Writing Partnership grew from the professional partnership between Notre Dame High School English teacher Mari Ann Blemings and Rider teacher educator Kathleen Pierce. Together, we wanted to help our respective students experience and understand better the writing process, developing voice, and working with others. The partnership produced three distinct rounds of student writing in various genres (narration, poetic verse, essay writing), feedback, revision, editing, and eventually publication.

This compilation represents the pieces that each 9<sup>th</sup> grade writer chose to bring through the writing process to the publication phase from the work generated September through December 2011. Through the Fall of 2011, we conducted a writing workshop between the high school and university classrooms with the expressed instructive intentions to:

- ① help 9<sup>th</sup> graders persist in the development of their ideas through writing as well as benefit from an audience for their writing and
- ② help preservice English Education teachers appreciate the writing process and effects of focused feedback, editing, and ongoing informal assessment on student work.

On the evening of December 12, we all met for the first time face-to-face in the Notre Dame High School Media Center for an inspiring discussion and celebration of student writing, the power of ideas, and collaboration.

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Hannah Krupa

#1

This I Believe: No matter how many times you get knocked down, you have to get up and keep going forward.

When I was ten years old, my mom took me on a singer/songwriter cruise, since I'm singer/songwriter. There was an "open mic night", in which I sang in and placed second against a bunch of adults. One of the men that was in charge of the big artists on the cruise saw me sing. He told me that we was going to make arrangements for me to sing with singer/songwriter Brandi Carlile the next night. I was a huge fan of her and was ecstatic to hear this. I practiced all day the next day. When I showed up to the performance room that night expecting to perform with Brandi, the guy that was suppose to set this whole thing up told me that Brandi decided not to let me sing with her. Brandi didn't want to mess up her plan. I was so upset since I practiced all day and was so excited. This event was a huge disappointment for me.

Just this past year, I tried out for The Xfactor. I stood in line for five hours with my mom, along with 3,000 other people in the cold rain, just to get my papers so I could stand in line again to try out the next day. When I came back the next day, I sat in a huge arena for hours again, waiting to go into a little black booth and sing for one judge. I saw tons of people come out of the black booths without the yellow paper, which meant that they didn't make it through the first round. When it was my turn, I went in and sang my best. The judge really liked my voice! I came out with a yellow paper! I was thrilled that I made it through! The next day, I had to come back again to sing to make it to the third round. There must have been only forty to fifty contestants that made it out of thousands that tried out! I was the last person in my group to try out. As soon as I went into the booth, I could tell the judges I got were tired and in a bad mood. I sang my best and was confident. Unfortunately, the judges said no. I was disappointed because I know that I, without a doubt, should have been put through. However, I also know how those TV shows can be quirky about how they choose contestants for the show. I heard some amazing people singing, and they didn't even come out with a yellow paper. As a result, I know that I didn't have a bad voice. I just wasn't what they were looking for at the time, but I was still upset.

Even though I didn't get what I expected or was told, I know that it wasn't because I wasn't good enough. Rather, it just wasn't meant to be. My dream of becoming a famous pop star wasn't going to stop just because I was let down. I realized that is what you have to deal with in the entertainment business, and I better get used to it if I wanted to make it. Maybe since all of this happened, I have accomplished quite a bit. I finished my demo cd, my website, I have a song on iTunes, I have sang the national anthem at Trenton Thunder, and many other great things that I am proud of. They have happened because I didn't give up and kept going. I believe in keeping strong and carrying on, and not letting anything, or anyone, stop me from achieving my dream.

Hannah Krupa

### The Friend I Would Never Forget

About six and a half years ago (2005), right after New Years, everyone was coming from the holidays to the much loved second grade classroom. From what I could remember, Kelli looked different than she did before. She had a thin plastic tube running through her nostrils. Then attached to the end of the tube was a large bag. I did not understand what was in the bag, until later in the school year when she had a new model. This one was now on wheels and was shimmering. gleefully, she was more mobile than before. I had so many questions to ask her but I knew it would be rude to ask.

The following school year she had the same version which I now knew to be an oxygen tank with wheels. I still did not quite understand its use, but I did know she had it all the time, everyday, no matter where she went. One day during snack time outside, our entire class decided to play jail tag. We invited her to play but she said, "How can I?" Subsequently she sat out. I decided that I would go and talk to her so she was not as lonely. She was telling me how she was not allowed to exercise as much because of her condition. I still did not understand why she needed all off this medical support.

Time and time again she replied to our requests to take part in our games with, "How can I?" That's when I had come to realize that every game we had offered had been a game which required mobility. That was when I pitched the idea of truth or dare. She had seemed to be happier because it was a compromise between physical activities and other games that Kelli could participate.

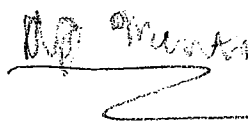
Throughout the year, I became closer with Kelli and we eventually became friends. We had become the types of friends who share secrets and told stories. She had become my most trustworthy friend whom I depended on. It had been about a year now and she had still had her oxygen tank. Classmates became more anxious to understand why she needed it. Kelli became more stressed, so she answered a few questions. It wasn't much to go on, but we knew she had breathing problems and she received surgery often.

Then came the tragic news; I remember this day exactly. It was May 15, 2006, on a Monday. I had walked into school like it was any other school day. People had looked at me, but not just me, my classmates too. They had looked at us, not with fear, but with some type of sympathy as if something in all of our lives had gone horribly wrong. What could we all have had in common that could lead to tragedy? As soon as I had walked into my third grade classroom I completely understood why. People had looked at me as though I would be the most affected when they told she had passed. We had mass that day, just the third grade, and I remember three of us were still crying after 2 hours and 15 minutes. I think that most of us had just been crying out of fear, fear that it was possible for someone to die.

I believe that Kelli did change me; I believe she changed everyone in my class. I don't care if everyone says I was too young to remember, because clearly I do. Everyone told me the easiest thing to do was to forget her. I tried to forget her, because it seemed like the only left to do, but I couldn't. I couldn't forget because she had changed me. Along the way since then, I have realized the term forget. To forget is not to completely forget, but it is to let go of but still remember it affects who you are. When something in the present happens, it sets a new path for the future. Rest in Peace, Kelli C.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Madeleine Arch". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.





## Karma

I've based much of my life now on Karma. It always scared me before so I would avoid anything I might regret so it would not negatively affect me in the future. People who don't believe in Karma may end up getting what they deserve at one time or another. The best thing to see is someone getting what they deserve, especially when a good deed is repaid ten-fold. Thankfully, I have seen a lot of that throughout my life. I have witnessed three major examples of people getting what they deserve as a result of bullying, cheating, and other experiences in my life.

Bullying is a sick crime in my mind but it always makes my day when I see a bully get in major trouble or get bullied themselves. This may sound cruel but it is a sad truth that everyone believes in. A bully is always getting in trouble in school or outside of school with the police. This reflects the kind of person they are. A study in 2009 shows that 73% of bullies in school become criminals later in their lives. In my mind, that is because of the dreadful karma they have. If bullies would change their ways and start helping kids instead of bullying them, I would bet that their lives would take a turn for the best. Hopefully, every bully takes my advice and starts to be helpful instead of destructive and bad.

Cheating is another way to gain bad karma rapidly, no matter what form it is in. There are many ways to cheat such as steroids, copying work and answers, and even taking someone else's idea. They all end in disaster. For example steroids are cheating not only yourself but the others you are going against. While everyone else has to work extra hard to become stronger and faster, people on steroids only have to work half as hard to obtain that goal. Additionally, copying other peoples work and answers is a disgrace and is called plagiarism. It's not fair that someone in a class puts hours upon hours into studying or working on a paper and someone else only spends ten minutes copying. Taking someone else's idea can refer to using an idea of an invention and patenting it just before that person patents it. That person spent a lot of time putting the ideas together when someone else just takes it, getting all the credit. No matter what way you cheat, it is completely wrong and will affect your karma dramatically.

I have had a personal run in with Karma that changed my life permanently. When I was a younger kid, around the age of twelve, I was a huge mischief maker and didn't care about school. I was always getting in trouble for being disrespectful and acting foolishly; my grades started to slip. I went from straight A's in sixth grade to straight D's and in danger of failing the year in seventh grade. Football is my life and always has been, that was all that mattered to me. I knew what I was doing was stupid, but I didn't care because I just wanted to be cool and funny. This path led my life towards destruction. My parents were embarrassed by my actions, my school grades were getting poorer and, worst of all, my entire football career was slipping. My first game I went to make a tackle and the running backs helmet hit my elbow and it broke viciously. That was the biggest slap in the face I've ever received; I instantly knew why this happened. As soon as I recovered, I returned my life as it used to be. I am now a straight A student, starting football player, and everyone looks up to me. Karma saved my life and I believe everyone should face a bump in the road and a chance to make better choices.


### **This I believe**

I believe that everyone in this world deserves a right to be treated right. No one should be treated the way they do not want to feel. Being treated unfairly or unequally can be a definition for discrimination and bullying. For example, there is a golden rule or a quote that says "Treat others the way you want to be treated". This quote is important because it means everyone should be treated equally and fairly. Although this quote is very meaningful and thoughtful, some people tend to ignore the treating each other nicely. I must admit that it is hard or difficult to be nice to everyone you meet or come across. However, trying to be kind is always worth it. I believe that everyone is more gracious towards people who are nice. People do feel much more pleasant with the person who treats others justly. Those people who are friendly towards others are those who do not realize how much their words and actions can badly hurt others. Painful words and actions can exceedingly harm other people. In worst cases, it also may end person's life. This is how powerful hurtful words and actions may result in negative consequences.

Someone said, "I have learned that whenever I decide something with kindness, I usually make the right decision." This quote tells us that when you do something nice and kind for others, it always and automatically pays off. Another person said "I have learned that even when I have pains, I do not have to be one." This quote means that you should always be nice and helpful towards other people even though they are very negative because you do not want to be the same people who are known to be unjust. For myself, being nice and fair to others is always a positive experience. It is fun to receive happy and kind reactions back to me. When I see someone who looks down and depressed, I always want to give help to them. It is good to expect and see bright reactions back. I believe that kindness can make the world brighter place and more for all fun.

Sometimes you may be treated unjust, even though you were nice, because of your nationality or race, wealth, and looks. Many people can be unbelievably rude towards who are different than them. They would make negative comments and would never include others with themselves. However, in this society, being different has become a big trend. For example, many celebrities and stars are always trying to be different by adding a unique style to them. The first reaction to the uniqueness was strange and negative but as time goes on by people became used to it and accept it. This can be an example for the fact that many people can get along even though they are different because everyone has their own uniqueness. Changing is great because it can show us new things. Meeting and getting along with many different people can help us. It can help us because with different people, they will have different opinions on ideas which can make us realize things in this world that we may never saw before. It can change our perspectives or point of views and our opinions. I wish everyone could accept each other's differences and talents.

Someone once asked me, "Why are you nice to him or her?" This question shocked me at first because I did not see the reason why I should not be nice to them. She or he may be quiet, not very attractive, or other various reasons, but this is not a reason you should be unfair towards them. Sometimes you have to be the first one to start conversations or else you might not be able to get to know them better. I believe that respecting other people's backgrounds and understanding their situation is important. It is because you never know what is going on in their life at the moment. It feels like that socializing and making friends is like having a class. Socializing with other people may really be fun, but it is hard sometimes. However, it is awesome to get to know many people without discriminating against them because we get to know a different lifestyle. It can be really interesting. Many people say "you are so sweet!" to those who are nice. I believe that it is because being treated and being nice is really sweet. It can never be sour because it always gives and remains you with warm nice feelings.



## The Carpool

A different day  
With a new book bag to form  
A different school  
With a new different uniform

New friends to make, and old to leave behind.  
A new school must mean new adventures to find.  
Starting new at a farther school  
Means no more riding the bus but being forced to carpool.

Bickering and fighting almost everyday  
With the people I carpooled with, Sally and Tre  
Except for my brother  
Who sat in the front talking, music with his mother.

Days went by, months past  
And up came a new school year, approaching fast.  
Until a bad situation came out for the better  
We both had detention and forced to sit next to each other

In the hallway I began to acknowledge him, and he acknowledged me  
The year went by and 8<sup>th</sup> was here ,And sometime in the middle of the year  
I noticed Tre's eyes begin to tear  
I asked what was wrong not, knowing what he would say  
He told me what had happened  
This sparked a friendship in process to this very day.

*Rob Grabowski*

Respect

I see respect and disrespect in my everyday life. I have heard yelling, sarcasm, as well as calm conversations. I sometimes question whether some of the things I hear are disrespectful, or not. I try not to get into other people's business, but sometimes it is hard. I believe that the disrespect towards adults is much higher than it should be.

Just because I am a teen does not mean I do not understand the importance of respect. It is an important lesson a person learns when they are a child. I always try my hardest to appreciate each person I am with. My mother raised me to always be reverent to the people in my company, especially adults. Everyday my mother stressed the importance of being respectful. My father taught me to always respect a lady. If my father didn't like the way I treated a lady, he would make me give them an honest and meaningful apology.

Now, I am not saying that I am never disrespectful. I am. Everyone is disrespectful at sometime or another. Disrespect is a part of life; however it can be avoided a majority of the time. Most of the time, people speak or react without thinking. I think that everyone should think before they do or say something. People need to stop themselves from saying something that might disrespect or hurt someone else.

Respect is in our world for a reason. We have respect so that we can get to know someone better, or so we are not always fighting or bickering. Of course, respect is not everywhere. Although I feel that if we show it more often hopefully, some of our respect will rub off on others. I believe in respect.

#7 Rafaella Tavares

## Believe in Yourself

In life, there are many ups and downs.

Sometimes you want to laugh, other times you want to cry.

You might want to give up, but remember,

There's always someone out there who believes in you.

Someone who gives you confidence, strength, and reasons to keep going.

Whenever you start to doubt yourself,

When you think you might want to give up,

Look into the eyes of someone who believes in you.

There, you'll see they trust you, love you,

Help you, care about you

Is there for you every step of the way.


Most importantly, they believe in you.

In another's eyes, you'll find courage and potential,

The reason to keep going,

The reasons why you didn't give up.

Remember to always believe in yourself and others.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rafaella Tavares".

*Dakota Skove**THE GAME*

YOU'RE IN THE CLEAR  
ONE MORE TO BEAT  
TIME SLOWS DOWN  
YOUR HEART GOES "BEEP, BEEP."  
ADRENALINE KICKS IN  
JUST YOU AND THE GOALIE  
THE GAME IS ON YOUR STICK  
OR IN THE GOALIES GLOVE  
THE CROWD GOES MUTE  
THE ONLY THING YOU HEAR...  
IS A COACH  
THE ONE WHO HAS HELPED YOU  
THROUGH THE DOOR  
ON THE ICE  
AND TO THE GAME  
HIS RASPY VOICE O' SO FAMILIAR  
THE ONLY SOUND YOU HEAR IS THE CHEER  
CAN IT BE?  
WHAT ARE THEY CHEERING ABOUT?  
THE BUZZER GOES OFF  
WHAT ARE YOU GONNA DO ABOUT IT??

### Words Can Hurt

My perspective on the quote, "Sticks and stones may broke my bones but words will never hurt me" has changed for the worst over the past years. I would indeed be lying if I announced that hurtful words directed towards me have never affected my emotions, I believe many others could agree with this statement as well. I started to embrace the uncomfortable feeling of being made fun of, getting called names, and being mocked on a daily basis due to the immaturity of classmates and friends that creates these remarks. Typically, my attitude in dealing with this subject is careless, as in I could honestly care less about what people say about me. Sadly, not everyone cares as little as I do. The effects that words have on some people can be extreme, and that is not okay. This is a growing issue in America. This I believe: Words can hurt.

With all the technology and websites that teenagers are linked to these days, it is difficult to avoid the bullies who do their job through a computer screen, also known as cyber bullying. The one website that online abusers seem to get the most joy out of is called Formspring, a site that allows people to ask anonymous questions to one another. Sadly, the anonymous button is taken advantage of in ways that are usually not for the better. Instead of actual questions being asked, hate messages and discriminating words are used to describe the victim the "question" is being sent to. "You're ugly," "Fat," and "No one likes you" are some of the common and hurtful phrases teenagers find in their inbox daily. Coming from me, one of the many victims of Formspring hate, it does stink to get those kinds of messages in the Formspring inbox. After getting so many of them, you actually start to believe what people are saying about you. People, mainly teenage girls, are beginning to change just because the words of society have told them to. Mean people point out flaws that individuals did not noticed until someone had to hurtfully point out.

Everyone is different, which also means that everyone takes harmful words differently, too. The sad realization is that society could verbally abuse someone to an extreme where the outcome could be the victim taking his/her own life. What abusers need to realize is that no words are worth people harming themselves in any way, shape, or form. The fact of dealing with such negative thoughts that someone gave to you is hard enough. Furthermore what I really do not understand is *why* people continue to do it. Society in general is the one to blame because they have the free choice to deliberately do this. I don't comprehend the joy that is linked with verbal abuse; all I know is what it feels like on the other end of it.

In my experiences with being hurt by words, it really does leave a horrible effect on your mind. I've only been a victim of it very few times, but it breaks my heart that people everywhere have to deal with it as a daily routine. No matter what the reason may be to feel the need to put someone down, no one should do it. My hope is that society realizes how immature and ungrateful it is to destroy someone for whatever reason they might deserve it for. Sticks and stones leave temporary damage, but hurtful words remain etched into the mind for a lifetime. I believe that words can hurt.

*Max Kalmes*

Chris Ward

Chris Ward

#10

My Disney Event

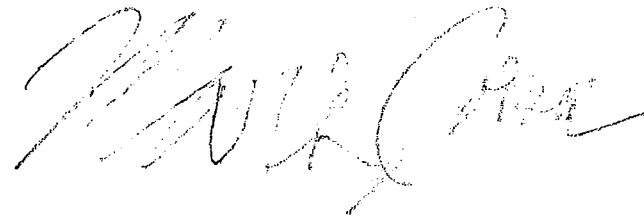
It's a warm summer day,  
We are approaching The Tower of Terror,  
My heart starts thumping.  
I am so scared of the ride breaking,  
And dying while I am on it.  
My sister insists,  
That everything is going to be okay.  
The closer we get to the entrance to the ride,  
The more I am scared to death of the upcoming terror.  
My sister keeps telling me,  
That everything will be okay,  
And I believe her.  
During the briefing when they tell you about,  
Why you might need to get off,  
I was scared, and I wanted to get off.  
As the ride was progressing,  
We saw ghosts and other scary things.  
When the ride was over,  
I told my sister, Katie,  
That I was really happy she had gotten me to go on it.



#11

Mark Johnson

I Believe in Football



Football has been in my life as long as I could remember. My family raised me as a die-hard Eagles fan. That all changed after the 2007 NFL Super Bowl Game between The Seattle Seahawks and The Pittsburgh Steelers.

I can remember going to the annual party down the street from my house. Normally, during the actual game, I really didn't watch the game I just played with all of the other little kids. However, in this game, I focused on the intensity of the game. From the start of the game, I was so excited when the announcer announced the Pittsburgh Steelers and they came running out of the smoke filled tunnel. Many times throughout the game, my dad asked me if I wanted to leave. I would give him the same response every time, "This game isn't over yet."

Even though I never really understood the game, I was always smiling. The only aspect about football I knew was if you scored a touchdown that was good. This game was very low-scoring, but I still wanted to keep watching. As the game progressed, my mom and sister left because they weren't that interested in football, but my dad and I couldn't stop watching. Throughout the second-half, I was really rooting for the Steelers and my dad kept trying to encourage me to stay with the Eagles. As the game went on, I started to learn more and more about football. I now knew what penalties were an all of the other plays. My favorite play was the field goal. I don't really know why but I liked when the kicker kicked the ball. I thought I knew so much that I should be the coach.

As the game was ending, there was less than a minute left in the game and The Seahawks had a chance to tie the score, but they were stopped by the almighty Steelers defense. When the game was ending I realized two things: The Steelers were my new favorite team, and that I believe in football.

Matt Mullins

12

### This I Believe

How many ways are there to truly achieve our goals in life? Do we always try our absolute best to accomplish the goals we set forth? The answer is no, life is very difficult because of the obstacles we face and the destinations we would like to meet. I am a fourteen year old male who dedicates himself to playing football and I think that when we set goals in our lives, we should all dedicate ourselves to achieving the highest of our capabilities.

Setting goals is not always easy, but for everyone it is different. You must pick something you are very familiar with and something you think you could excel in. This will help you be more comfortable with what you want to become. You must also be able to commit yourself beyond beliefs. This means to never give up and always continue trying. Once you have chosen a goal, you must dedicate yourself to working hard. Working hard is essential to earning what you deserve. This is how people who have achieved their dreams live in their everyday lives. When you work as hard as you possibly can, you would be surprised at what your outcome is.

Also, there are a couple of reasons why it is needed to be so dedicated. Nothing great has ever been accomplished in an environment lacking devotion. Dedication is the most important aspect of being who you really want to be. If you watch any type of professional sport, the players there have dedicated their entire lives towards portraying their goal of being in the position they are in now. Peyton Hillis, Cleveland Browns halfback, is a great example because he worked on improving his mistakes and getting better since he was a child. Like most NFL players, Peyton improved his strength by exercising for hours on end just to make it where he is now. Another example is Tim Tebow, quarterback for the Denver Broncos. Although he is not the best, and certainly not believed in by a lot of people, he is one of the hardest working football players out there. Just look at people like this and you will realize why hard work and dedication is important.

As you can see, not everyone will put themselves in a position to work hard, but those who do, are always proud of their success, and they should be. They had all started in the same way by setting their goal, working hard, and staying dedicated. Each step is important and should be used efficiently. All people should have goals in life, and when they do, they should work as hard as they can and never give up. I believe in pursuing dreams.

Liam McNicholas

13 Liam McNicholas

### **Money Cannot Buy Happiness.**

In today's economy, money is a central part of living. Almost nothing is free in this world. I believe money can buy a lot of things, but I also believe money cannot buy happiness. For example, when you buy something, even if you have wanted it for a long time, you're only happy for as long as it seems new. However, when you find something that always makes you happy, that happiness never seems to fade. You will, realize often that it is not something that costs money. Even some of the wealthiest people in the world are not happy. Therefore, I believe that money cannot buy happiness.

Money cannot buy happiness. First, speaking in literal terms, I'm pretty sure there is no item that is labeled "happiness". On a more figurative note, buying the newest thing will only keep you happy until that "newness" wears off, or the next "new thing" comes along. For example, you buy the newest I-Pod, and you feel happy until the next version comes out. Then you find you do not feel happy any more. You think buying the next "new one" will make you happy, and you buy that one. As a result, it is a never ending cycle of want and get. You need to realize you should be happy with what you have already; otherwise, you may never be happy.

When I got my I-Pod, I thought I was the happiest person in the world. Then the next version came out and I didn't get it; I was still a very happy person. I want an I-phone, and I have wanted one for a long time. Although there are no plans for me to get one, I am still a very happy person. I am happy because I have a family that loves me, my good health and great friends. I believe the obsession with new is that it looks better, it sometimes has cooler, or better features. However, cannot always have the newest. Consequently, we need to be happy with what we have. I watch the news, listen to the radio and all the talk about the movie stars and celebrities who are abusing drugs, getting divorced, and never seem happy, yet they have all the money they could ask for. Flip the coin remember history. The immigrants who came to this country with nothing were so happy to be free. On the other hand, the immigrants were probably not happy to be here with nothing. As Thanksgiving approaches, I also remember the Pilgrims who suffered great hardships, but always remained happy that they had each other and their religious freedom.

In conclusion, no matter how many things you have or how much money you have, I believe that, even though money can buy just about anything, it cannot buy happiness. Look at history or current events and see proof of this. There are people who search their whole lives to find happiness in material things. However, if they just looked at what God has already given them, they would be happy. Although money is a big part of our world today, it cannot buy our most treasured gifts of love, health, and family.

This I Believe Essay

I believe that how you act in a crisis shows who you really are. Not many people know what to do in a serious crisis because they are either in panic or in shock. There are major crises, everyday, usually policemen or firefighters, or EMTS are usually at the scene of a crisis like an accident or a fire. Sometimes they don't get there right away so what do you do? People usually come to help to see what's wrong, but what if that one person just stood there and let the person suffer. What kind of person would that be?

When I was about nine years old my brother was in a baseball tournament in New York for baseball. When we were on the way home, a car flipped over on the highway because the driver fell asleep. The sound of the car echoed like a boulder hitting the ground. My dad and a few others that were with us pulled over and helped the driver and the passengers out of the car. Other people were just driving by and looking and not doing anything to help. The good people my dad and his friends are pulled over and helped them. (Although the speed limit on the highway is seventy miles per hour; my family and friends pulled over to help a stranger in need.) That didn't stop them to get to the car. Thank God no one was severely hurt, but the one guy had to get stitches since he was badly cut. These just shows how smart my dad and his friends were to stop and help these people that were in need, this shows that they have pride and excellence, and care for other people without worrying about their own needs.

When I was younger there was a crash at a baseball field right down the street from house. We lived a few doors down from a fireman who helped out with the accident. The accident was scary because I could hear the car going into the fence and destroying it. He was a true hero because he actually caught the girl who caused it. If he didn't catch her she would have gotten away. Then she would might have done more poor choices.

These two stories show how people can react in different situations. If my dad and his friends didn't help those people their injuries could have been worse. If John the fireman didn't catch that girl, she would have slipped away and done other bad things. This shows how people are truly heroes. Heroes save people, and people save lives. A hero is someone who stops and thinks what to do. That is what these people did, they helped save lives and stop criminals.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kyle Kaluzny". The signature is written in dark ink and is located at the bottom of the page.

Rachel South

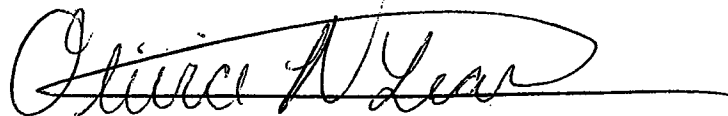
When I was first starting soccer, I had a very low self-esteem. I didn't believe I was the fastest, or had the biggest kick. I only played because my parents made me. As the years went on and I moved up to higher level teams, coaches realized my potential and tried to inspire me to put all my effort into my playing. They said that I could be the best player on the team if I just tried my hardest to reach my full potential. One day during a game, my coach yelled at me to push with all I had. This coach was always there for me, and always knew how to get me to play my best. I listened to him and I got the MVP Award for the game. Ever since that game, I've realized that I can be the best player on the team. The award made me realize that if I try, I have very good skills that could get me on the highest level of teams that are available. Now, in every practice and game, I try my hardest; I know, that I am one of the best players on the team. Every coach I have ever had has told me that I have the potential to be on a national league team one day. And ever since I listened to them, I have made the ODP teams, which are the Olympic Development Players. These teams refer their players to all the big league teams, which has been my goal since I started playing. Most people who are on these teams make it to the national league someday.

Soccer has always been a part of my life and, hopefully, I will make it into the Olympics one day. I would love to play for the United States Women's League when I get older and represent my country. Also, since my coach has inspired me to do my best, I have traveled to Spain and Italy for soccer, and I will be going to France this summer. My U.K. Elite team plays in the Domestic Cup every summer. U.K. Elite stands for United Kingdom Elite, which has players from all over the world come to play in a big tournament. I'm on the team that represents the United States. The team pays for the plane flight over, and they include luxury hotels and rides to get from game to game. The coach who inspired me and raised my self-esteem came with me last year to Italy to cheer me on in my game. This group encourages you to bring people that you think will make you a better player and push you to do your best, which is why I brought him. Also, while we were on our Spain trip, Spain won the World Cup while we were there. The streets were going crazy and everyone was cheering. It is a memory I will always remember. All of these accomplishments are because of that one game, and that one coach who pushed me until I couldn't be pushed anymore. He worked with me until my legs went numb. At first during this kind of training I would have normally just given up when I heard that I would have to do all this running, weight lifting, and follow a special diet to stay in shape for the seasons to come. Since I have moved on from that coach's team, he always checks in on me if he sees my name in the newspaper or in other articles to tell me how well I'm doing and how far I've come. He is always encouraging me and I will never forget how he helped me get to where I am today in my soccer skills and where I stand in rankings. I made a promise to him, "I will always hold my head high, and never doubt my abilities, even on a bad day."

The coach who has inspired is a little Italian man who was my coach for three years. He has a great sense of humor and was a professional at one point in his life as well. We would always joke around and he would teach me new moves on the side. He has black slicked-back hair that he fills up with gel and he has a goatee that everyone makes fun of. His daughter plays on a few teams with me and we have become very good friends. At least once a month, we get together and have a training session to keep my skills as high as he knows they can be. He has always been a great motivator and my main coach.

The Sky Is Your Limit

Reach,  
Try,  
Push yourself  
Make it,  
You can do it!  
Work hard,  
The sky is your limit,  
All the things I heard  
So I could do my best  
Reaching for the stars and nothing less  
Working towards something bigger and better,  
So that I can achieve everything I want  
Creating new hope in a young mind,  
Making me,  
Be,  
Brighter,  
Happier,  
Looking forward to things  
Not stuck in the moment  
Looking for the future and what it may hold,  
That NO ONE determines your destiny but YOU  
So when you fall down  
Pick yourself back up  
And try ever harder the next time  
Until you get it right  
And most of all  
Never,  
Ever,  
Give up,  
Don't let people tell you, YOU can't  
Because if you try hard  
Work for something  
And be patient  
You CAN and WILL succeed  
Change your attitude,  
Be positive,  
Because attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference  
Don't  
forget that.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Olivia Lear". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned at the bottom of the page, below the main text.

Alex Lynch

#17

Alex Lynch

**With the Proper Guidance**

Only with the proper guidance,  
May one be able to achieve his or her true goal.

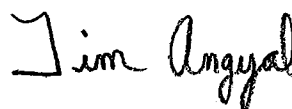
Pointed in the right direction,  
Where persistence and growth fully shows.

Grasping the truth behind this act,  
You can pursue anything you set your mind to.  
In this case, the goal I had hoped to achieve  
Is an improvement in my skills as a soccer player.

For confidence and improvement  
To take the lead,  
My coach had informed me  
That time and effort was what was in need.

Taking this into consideration  
I did all I could possibly do.  
Listening to my coach  
Persistence and strength had truly pulled me through.

Tim Angyal



#18

### **The True American Holiday That Stands Out From the Rest.**

There are many things that people believe in. What do you believe in? Well, ever since I was a little kid, I have always believed that Thanksgiving is a time of giving thanks. People may think it is just another ordinary holiday. However, it is truly a time that brings us as Americans together. This is why I believe that Thanksgiving is the best holiday in America.

Thanksgiving is always a big celebration that causes us Americans to gather and to give thanks that we are in this country today. An example of this is the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade in New York City. It is a huge parade that expresses our American values and cultures. Thousands of Americans come together in New York City to experience the exciting atmosphere. I believe that the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade will continue its success forever.

Thanksgiving is also a very important time for families to come together. They can see how everyone is doing and what they are thankful for. Sometimes relatives can't see each other very often, because they all live far away. I'm lucky enough though that I get to see my relatives year-round for Thanksgiving. Some years, I travel to upstate New York to see my Aunt Cindy, Uncle Bob, Uncle Greg, and my cousins, Chris and Alex. Other years they all come to my house to celebrate Thanksgiving. I believe that in good times or bad, Thanksgiving is a happy time for families to get together and be thankful that they have each other.

Not only is Thanksgiving a time to give thanks, but it is also a time that us Americans get to eat great food. A usual Thanksgiving meal consists of turkey, mashed potatoes, vegetables, stuffing, rolls, cranberry sauce, gravy, and the very popular pumpkin pie. Most of these delicious foods date back to the first Thanksgiving, but not all things that we eat today were eaten back then. At my house, we eat all of these delicious foods including butternut squash and green-bean casserole. For dessert, my Aunt Cindy makes her homemade pumpkin pie and raspberry cheesecake which all add even more delicious taste to our Thanksgiving holiday. All of these foods are also well made and very delicious. I believe that with all of this food, you shouldn't try to mess with the Thanksgiving menu too much!

To wrap things up, Thanksgiving is a fantastic holiday and a personal favorite of mine. All of us can gather together and just get away from all of the economic troubles to be thankful for our country. Families can also come together and be thankful that they have each other. We all can also enjoy delicious food to give thanks for what we have. After reading this I hope you ask everyone you know, "What are you thankful for?" Well, this is what I believe in.





The Uncontrolled Happenings of Life

October 10<sup>th</sup>, 2008, was a day off from school because it was Columbus Day. Although I thought it would be a completely normal day, I was wrong. It wasn't normal. In fact it was probably one of the worst days of my life. It was a beautiful day with hardly a cloud in the sky. My parents and brother were downstairs. There was something in the air that was not right, but I ignored my instinct and walked over to my brother who was sitting on the couch watching *Star Wars* on the television. I plopped myself next to him, but I was not really watching. I was distracted. My mother was calling for my dog, "Lucy! Come here girl! Come on!" she said in an encouraging voice. My dad walked over towards my mom and she said to him, "She's not coming. She hasn't moved all morning. Do you think she is in pain? More pain than she normally is?"

My mom sounded worried. Lucy was on her mat, lying in the corner of the living room between the two couches. "Did she eat yet?" I asked my mom.

"No she hasn't. She won't touch her food. She won't get up. She hasn't even got up to go to the bathroom."

"It got worse, the arthritis. The pain medication clearly isn't working."

"What do you suppose we should do?" Mom asked me.

"The question is, what can we do?" I asked. My bottom lip trembled. I could easily read the expression on my mom's face. She looked over towards my dad and asked him, "Should we call the vet to see what she has to say?"

"I don't see why not," Dad said. Mom went to the phone and called. I didn't want to hear anymore so I walked outside, onto the deck, and sat on the stairs. I started to remember all the good times that I had with Lucy. All of the funny dinner time moments when she would beg for people food and perform all of the tricks she knew. I remembered the times when my mom was trying to teach her to bark for a treat. That never worked well, only once did we actually get one bark out of her. I remembered when I would chase her around in the backyard just to get the tennis ball out of her mouth so I could throw it, then end up chasing her for the ball again. I loved the welcoming that I got from her when I came home from school. We were best friends. A few minutes later, my dad walked outside and sat next to me.

"Can I ask you something?" he asked. I just looked at him in response.

"What would you do if we had to put her down?"

"I would hate you, all of you," I said as tears started to trickle down my cheeks.

"What if it's the only thing we can do?"

“It can’t be the only option! What happened to surgery?” I said shouting at him.

“That’s very expensive-”

“I don’t care how expensive it is! She is my dog!” I shouted.

“Please. Don’t hate me,” he said.

“The only way I wouldn’t, is if I knew it was absolutely necessary.” he then walked back inside.


Later that day, after much crying from the whole family, my mom and I were sitting next to Lucy. Mom looked at her and said, “Come on! I need a sign here! Lucy, are we doing the right thing? Do you know what’s happening?” She looked at my dog as if she knew she was going to get some kind of answer. Then, Lucy picked up her head, looked at my mom and gave a short growl. My mom looked at me and said, “She understands!” she said hopefully, with tears in her eyes.

“Well, don’t just sit there! Keep asking her questions!” I said to my mom. She nodded.

“Are you ready Lucy? Are we doing the right thing?” Mom asked her. Then, Lucy responded with another growl.

Lucy then put her head back down.

This sign changed my life. I never would have been able to let Lucy go if she never gave us that sign, letting us know that she was ready to die. Later that day, we were able to get Lucy into the truck and take her to the vet, as instructed by Dr. Skolnick. We brought Lucy into one of the rooms and said our final goodbyes. At 6:10 that evening, we were driving away from the vet; I looked at the clock and knew. Lucy was dead.



## This I Believe

Harriet Tubman once said, "Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world". We all have hopes, desires, and ambitions. To me, a dreamer is someone who acknowledges those desires, has a drive to achieve them, and does everything in his/her power to make them a reality. I believe one has to search for the true core of who they are to discover who he/she is, find that small flame of power, and make it a raging fire.

Martin Luther King Jr. let nothing stand in his way of accomplishing his goals. He was a strong civil rights activist who strived to end the racial discrimination and segregation of African Americans. He did this by forming marches and protests all over America to gain equality for all men. Martin heard the little voice in his head that was saying "You can change the world if you work hard enough". Listening to that voice, he never gave up on getting rights for African Americans. Unfortunately, he was shot after giving his famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Eventually, blacks and whites began to be treated similarly. Martin Luther King Jr. heard God's call and he fulfilled his purpose in life. Your dreams don't always have to consist of changing the world; they can be as simple as meeting your idol.

I will always remember the night when I got to meet Max Ehrich, my celebrity crush and favorite actor. When I first saw Max in the lifetime movie "The Pregnancy Pact," it was love at first sight. I thought he was the cutest boy I had ever seen, and he extremely talented. "iCarly", "Ugly Betty", and "High School Musical 3" are only a few of the many shows and movies Max has appeared in. I followed his Facebook Fan Page and would constantly talk about him to my friends. I would tell them things like, "Whether it's one, ten, or even thirty years, I will meet him one day." My friends gave me puzzled looks and told me the chances were one in a million. I would join in their laughter, not because I was joking, but because I knew they didn't have the courage to dream as big as I did. Finally, on October 7<sup>th</sup> 2011, my mom and I drove up to see the Disney play, "The Newsies" in Milburn, New Jersey; I found out online that Max was in the play and my mom immediately bought the tickets. The play started at seven o'clock and we got there at five so we could park, pick up the tickets, and eat dinner. As we were walking to dinner, I said to my mom, "Ok, I'm looking for anyone that looks like Max." Right when I finished saying that, I looked up to see two boys headed in the opposite direction, and carrying boxes. From a distance, I was drawn to one that looked very attractive. As they got closer, I realized the one I was looking at was Max! My heart dropped and I was completely shocked from being caught off guard like that. They passed us and my mom kept urging me to go talk to him. Still being stunned, I told her no because I was too nervous. We ate dinner and I kept beating my self up for not talking to him; I thought I had missed my only chance. We got back to the playhouse and saw at a souvenir stand that you could meet the cast members afterwards. During the play, my eyes were glued to Max the entire time. The curtain fell, and applause filled the theatre. My mom and I went to go stand outside and wait for Max to walk out the back entrance. I finally saw him, and it was the most surreal feeling I had ever experienced. I went up to him and told him that I loved him in "The Pregnancy Pact" and that he was amazing in the play. I realized I had forgotten to say my name; I wanted to make sure I did so he might remember me if I ever saw him again. "I'm Kelly, by the way," I told him as he was signing my poster. He then looked up at me, shook my hand, and said "I'm Max." I almost said, "I know," but I caught myself because I would sound like a stalker. I got a picture with him and almost died when he put his arm around me. When the night was finished, and my mom and I were walking to the car I cried tears of joy. That was truly the best night of my life.

W20

We all have power to get the things we want, we just have to know how to harness that power and have the strength to never let it go. I think that people give up too easily. If we try our very best and overcome tough obstacles, we can achieve greatness. I advise everyone not be selfish, but to define yourself by your own standards. If you do this, you will discover what will truly make you happy. Remember that no matter how much money you have or how old you are, you can change the world. God has a purpose for everyone and He speaks to us through our hearts. If we listen to our hearts, we can hear what we are intended to do. Always dream big and, when it comes true, dream even bigger.

### The Joy of Cheering Up Others

Did you ever have a bad day and needed someone to cheer you up? Well, I can try to help you with that. Throughout all my years, even as a child, my friends would always come to me with their problems. I always tried my best to help them and it usually paid off. I love to help people, not just to make them feel better, but also because it makes me feel better knowing that I could help someone. I've learned that if you want to cheer up yourself, you should try cheering up others.

Have you ever thought a friend said something unkind about you behind your back? I have, and so have just about everybody else. Sometimes they really did say it and they aren't the friend you thought they were, but most of the time it's just miscommunication. Miscommunication is almost like whisper down the lane, or rumors, thinking something someone said when they really did not. I've seen and experienced many cases like this and it can cause a lot of friendship to be ruined. When this happened, as a kid, I would act as a neutral third party and talk to each of my friends one at a time so I knew where it is they went wrong and help them restore trust between their relationship.

Have you ever thought low of yourself and didn't have the best self esteem that day? Well, this happens to everybody and it is not an uncommon feeling. On the days when you are not feeling very confident or good about yourself, I am here to tell you otherwise. I'm here to tell you all of your best qualities. If other people keep putting you down, then you don't deserve to hear it. Even though things may seem bad today, it helps to think positively that tomorrow will be a little better.

Cheering up people not only makes them feel better but it always makes me feel better knowing I could help. It brings me joy to know I can make a difference with a few kind words. Although they may be just a few words, when spoken in a heartfelt way, they can mean the world to someone else. Throughout all the years I've had so far, I've learned you should always show kindness to people and never put down others. If they are feeling put down, then cheer them up so they can feel better about themselves and you can feel good too.

*Mary Kate Carlson*

This I Believe Essay

Every day, I have people to turn to for help. I have family members and friends that I know are always there to point me in a good direction. For instance, I have parents that love me and a brother I know I can depend on. Whether I just need to talk to someone, or want support from another person, I know someone will always be there for me. This idea that someone will always be there for me is one of the best feelings in the world. Everybody should be able to have the satisfaction of always having someone there for them, whether it is one person or one million people; nobody deserves to be on their own.

Rich or poor, everyone needs that one someone to be there for them. With someone to fall back on, you can never truly be lost, mentally or emotionally. Rich people might tend to be cocky sometimes, thinking that they have many friends. In reality, all of those "friends" are just using them for their money. When the rich people realize this, they break down and really need one true friend that is always there for them. On the other hand, poor people might think that they do not have any friends. However, when it comes down to the important situations, they have people that stick with them and help them get through their most difficult times in life. All together, most people do have a special person, family member or friend, to support them in their decisions. For those few people who do not have any support they sometimes tend to be more closed off to people and find it hard to trust anyone.

If someone is lonely, he/ she are more likely to become uncivilized and do something nobody with people to talk to would do. Since he/ she has nobody to talk out their problems with, that lonely person would try to fix their own problems themselves, causing more problems. Everyone needs at least one person to help get through anything and everything. Trying to fix problems yourself can just become frustrating and the person can become stressed. With support from a friend, you have a shoulder to cry on and someone to help make decisions with you. As a result, all the pressure is not on you.

Luckily, I have people I can trust and share my stories with. Unfortunately, some people are not as fortunate as I am. They do not have people to care for them, or people to care for. I am very appreciative for my family and friends, and believe that everyone should have the same opportunity as I do. Sometimes my parents and I get into fights and disagreements. However, by the end of the day, we all know that we could not live without each other. We regret ever being mean or disrespectful to one another. Hopefully, one day everyone will have those people they can be grateful for just as I do. For now, all I can do is hope for the best for those who have no one.

*Jenamarie Carella*

#23

Brian Hawkins

### I Believe in World Peace

In the country today, all you see on the news is disaster and destruction. For example, you see shootings on the streets, neighborhoods, and even schools! The thing about the news is that they never show the things in the world that are caring and kind. What I mean is that when we donate funds to the less fortunate or donate money to a good cause, the news never reports about that. The news focuses on the things that will grab your attention, such as disaster and destruction in the world. I believe in world peace.

The past couple years have been disastrous for Americans. We have been fighting a war with Iraq for ten years now. This year, Osama Bin Laden was found and killed. Furthermore, our economy has been destroyed. People are losing their jobs, which results in poverty. Thirteen percent of the United States of America is living in poverty because of the damage the economy has caused. I think we could achieve world peace if we could all stop the wars we are in and become allies. I think we could attain world peace because our world would be so much more peaceful and we could all get along. As of now, we are living in a world of violence and chaos. We have to change this.

Ten years ago, our country was struck with a massive disaster. Two planes flew into the Twin Towers, resulting in chaos, terror, and mass destruction among our families and friends. I don't completely remember that day, but I remember images. I was very young, about four years old when this happened. My Dad worked in New York and he was working the day of the attacks. He was a couple buildings down from the Twin Towers and he tells me today that "he saw the plane out of the corner of his eye and he could feel the heat of the gasoline." The glass of his building shattered, but despite this, he made it out alive. Unfortunately, my mom's cousin died in the attacks. He was a firefighter and he was on duty. I believe in world peace because of the events that are occurring in the U.S. today.

The world we live in has many challenges and difficulties. The news makes our world seem like nothing good is going on because they only report about the horrific events that occur in our country. For example, we have car bombings, school shootings, and economic destruction. The world needs to come together as a family. As of now, we are a family with struggles and differences; however I believe that if we become a family, our world will experience peace.

Brian Hawkins

## Friendship

Friendship is not just about being friends,  
It's being loyal and trustworthy to each other.

I can say that I have a friend like that.

That friend's name is Kelly and

I met her in first grade.

She was my first friend in my new school-  
That was the greatest thing I could ever ask for.

We had a lot of things in common.

One of those was hanging out with all our friends,  
And we like the same music and both love to dance.

We love to meet new people,

But we still love to be together.

We have a strong friendship,

That I know can never be broken.

We have an everlasting friendship,

And I am so proud to say that I have a wonderful lifelong friend.

*Elena Delligatti*



Dianna Gross

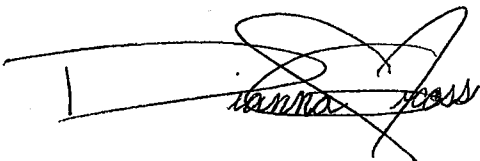
#25

## Different Ethnicities Different Cultures but Best Friends

My best friend is Sheana; she is Puerto Rican. We've been friends for at least two years now. It's not the longest time, but it feels like I've known her forever. She is a different nationality and has a different ethnicity than me. I am African American so our cultures are not the same at all. Even though, our features and backgrounds are diverse, we are compatible in a lot of ways. Sheana has helped me expand my horizons in trying new things. One way is that she has showed me all of her customs, even though she didn't know a lot of them since she was born in the United States of America and not Puerto Rico. However, without her, I would not know a lot about Puerto Ricans and even less about their culture. On the bright side, her mom was born in Puerto Rico. Subsequently, she knows how to speak and cook foods in the Spanish tradition. This is really cool because her food is amazing, it doesn't taste like it came straight from the box. It tastes so fresh with all the flavors! Additionally, it is very interesting when she speaks Spanish as I listen to her while she is speaking fluently in Spanish, I would try to pick up a few words

When I was over her house, her mom made a BIG Puerto Rican dinner. There was food I had never even heard of before like platanos, bacalao (codfish), Asopao de Pollo (chicken stew), Sopón de Pollo con Arroz (chicken soup with rice) and Flan de Leche (caramel custard). At first, I felt a little uncomfortable about eating it because it was food I had never heard or seen before. This was not my typical food that I enjoyed. But, Sheana and her mom told me to try it, so I wanted to be respectful. When I had a little bit of it, it was so different than what I was expecting. There were so many flavors and spices that exploded in my mouth, and it was so interesting about how the flavors all connected with each other. After I had just a little bite of the food, I didn't stop eating it. It was one of the best dinners I have had in my life. I am so glad she is my life so I can learn more about her culture. She has inspired me to try more things and maybe take a trip to Puerto Rico.

I am glad my best friend helped me expand my mind to new things and different cultures. Without her and her mom persuading me to try the food, I would have been stagnant and not moving forward. The person in my life that went through a journey with me is Sheana, my best friend, I am forever grateful that I went through that journey with her.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dianna Gross", with a large, stylized flourish above the name.

I woke up on a sunny day, full of anticipation and excitement in the air. I walked down the stairs and ate a bowl of Cinnamon Toast Crunch. My family was packing the car with numerous suitcases, full of items we would need, for our trip to Washington, D.C. My brother and I had been in a quarrel recently over various things. My mother called, "Come on. It's time to go." The car ride was very quiet and awkward. I was just listening to music or reading a book. Then we arrived at the hotel which was enormous. The lobby's decorations were filled with very detailed sand sculptures and a myriad of good looking restaurants. We devoured a delicious dinner that night and watched illuminating fireworks later that night.

The next day we went to see some of the famous monuments. My brother and I had been arguing a lot over the past few days over non consequential things. We would continuously try to prove each other wrong by saying "I bet you didn't know Ben Franklin lived in Philadelphia" or that "Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence." After this whole argument got ridiculous, I tried to dismiss the frustration. As we walked through the area, my brother and I were talking for a while which I thought was good, because we weren't bickering back and forth. We enjoyed the day with less tension between each other and looked forward to the upcoming week. It looked like we were going to put the arguments behind us when it started all over again.

As it appeared to be getting better, things drastically changed from bad to worse. The next few days while we were walking through the city, my brother and I just fought the whole time. Finally, I decided to simply ignore him. He would continuously try to yell at me or say things like "Why do you have to be like that?" I tried this for a day, but it was really making it harder to enjoy the trip. Eventually this had to stop. As the days went by, I think we both got tired of the arguing and decided to just stop. There were only limited days left until we set for home, and I believed we wanted to make these days as argument-free as possible. It actually went pretty well.

As the days dwindled, they became more entertaining. We had become better friends and began to enjoy each other's company. We traveled home and the ride didn't seem so boring or inanimate. We can now look back on this trip and savor each splendid moment from it. Now we are very good friends and are a part of a great family.

## This I believe

Drugs will affect anyone who does them. It not only can hurt the person using them, but there friends and family. I would never do drugs because I see what it can do to a person and I see what life style it leads to. I wouldn't want to be unemployed and live a poor life style because of something as ignorant as doing a drug. They are illegal for a reason. I think that the police and the DEA should really enforce the law more because drugs are a horrible thing to get yourself hooked on and there's no one to blame for your choice but yourself. People will use drugs to help get them through tough situations like bullying, family issues, and even just to help them feel like they are cool or to help them fit in.

Almost everywhere today you can see that drugs are a big problem. This happens not only in adults but in teens. I can even see friends and people I know doing drugs and it's not good. I can see that there falling behind in school and making bad decisions that can get them in serious trouble and make them loose friends. Even in family life some parents aunts or even uncles can be doing drugs. In my family, my uncle and my aunts are hooked on drugs and it is affecting my family dearly. They don't keep in touch with us he we barely see them anymore. They have been to jail many times. I wish I could see them more because I don't want them get in more trouble then they are already in and I want them to be more involved in our family. The last time I saw them I was still a baby.

Drugs can affect a person physically and mentally. Once someone is hooked on a drug it can be very hard for them to stop. They have to visit rehabilitation centers that can provide them help but just because they stop doesn't mean the cant become addicted again. When a person quits using a drug they were addicted to and start doing the drug or even a harder drug it's called relapse and it will be harder for the person to heal themselves from the addiction and it can affect their body and mind severely.

It's a horrible addiction that no one should have to go through. There are other ways for you to deal with problems in life; consoling and talking with family or friends is better than getting addicted to a drug that is illegal and can get you in a lot of trouble. Drugs should never be an option to help someone deal with something or to help someone feel cool and fit in.

- Joey Pulaski

Erin Maloney

#28

My Friend

High school was the first time I played field hockey.

I went to preseason to get better but,

Making new friends was my goal.

Talking to people helped me achieve that,

One of those people was Elena.

On the first day of school, I saw that we were in the same class.

That was the best thing I could ask for.

One of the things we had in common was our position,

Defense was what it is.

We always felt accomplished,

This would be where we saved the ball from scoring,

Even if we lost, we would still be in good spirits.

And sometimes, we would walk to the other team's games,

Always laughing and having a good time.

We made memories that will last forever.

Three months later, we are still making new memories,

But we will never forget the old.

*Erin Maloney*

Tyler Roberto

“Live Life to the Fullest With No Regrets”

There was once a wise person who said to me that “Live your life so that you will have no regrets.” This is the way I have lived my life since I first heard that saying. My grandfather is the one who inspired me with the way I make my choices. He told me this when I was a very young boy, it is important to choose my actions in a way that reflects my action’s consequences. My parents have taught me to always think about what is right and wrong. They have encouraged me to make good choices that will impact my life positively. I have tried to live my life by this set of beliefs to the best of my ability, but I have to admit, it can be very challenging as a teenager.

In my family, I have my mom, dad and two older brothers who have been role models for me to follow. Also, I have the memory of my grandfather whose words constantly ring in my ears. It is natural for the youngest member of the family to want to be like those who have achieved so highly. Although I will constantly strive to be as good as they are, it is not an easy road to walk on. I want to work at achieving as much as they have, if not more. I am aware that the choices I make will affect whether I have regrets later on.

My family is very concerned that we all do well and do the best we can. My family stresses that we all cannot be super achievers but, as long as we work to the best of our ability, that good choices will surely result from that. The one example that my family has stressed to my brothers and me, is that lack of effort is not acceptable. This applies to being a good student, being a good athlete, being the best person I can be, and always trying to recognize that God is always present in all of our lives. They stress the need for me to be a good Catholic and set examples for others to follow.

There was also another person in my life that helped me to guide my path. This was my seventh and eighth grade teacher. Even though she was a tough teacher, she told me that if I worked even harder, I would be able to live my life the way I wanted to, I would be successful at whatever I did. This inspired me to work hard and be able to become a better student and, most importantly, a better person.

Certainly life will bring challenges, sorrows, and disappointments. If I live up to the standards and expectations that are appreciated in my family, I will be able to deal with those difficulties. Hopefully, as I become an adult, I want to feel a sense of being wise, making good choices and accomplishing certain goals to the best of my ability. This outcome will result in a successful life with little, or no, regrets. I still am inspired to this day by my grandfather’s words “Live your life so that you will have no regrets.” By making many good decisions daily, I will honor his memory and enjoy a fun but productive life.

*Tyler Roberto*

In our society, everybody is judged. You're judged on what you look like, what you wear, how you talk, and who you like. Teen suicide has rapidly increased over the years, especially for the gay and lesbian teens. There are some hateful, ignorant people out there who are just so self conscious about being their own self that they make it their business to make the life of another human being absolutely miserable. It truly disgusts me and puts a bad taste in my mouth every time I hear of these attacks happening. It shouldn't matter if you are gay or lesbian. It doesn't affect anybody else's life if someone is different except that person.

Gay people are people too and should be treated like human beings, not animals or a different species. When another kid bullies a homosexual, it is just a sign of ignorance. People need to educate themselves and realize that these people have feelings too and do not deserve to be treated like garbage. I have several really close people in my life that are gay, and it makes no difference to me. At my cheerleading gym, most of the male coaches are gay and the ones that I am very close to are gay. They have told me how hard their teenage years were, and how much abuse they suffered from. People used to spit on them, kick them, and treat them like garbage. People shouldn't be bullied because of their love interest. It is none of anybody else's business. Tyler Clementi was a homosexual student at Rutgers University who killed himself because of a hate crime performed on him. How would you like it to know that you were the cause on someone's death?

Love is love, love knows no race, love knows no color, love knows no gender; love is love itself! The way one person feels is not the way you feel, so why is there a problem? Why are people homophobic or anti-gay? I stand with the people that are themselves and can embrace its beauty. Only ignorant people have something negative to say about other peoples' romantic lives. I feel like the gay people of this world shouldn't be afraid to go somewhere or have to kill themselves! Don't be a bully; love one another the way God wants to.

Alexandra Besse

#31

Abby Tharp


### This I Believe

While growing up, and being a teenager, I believe that sitting back and watching someone get made fun of or bullied is not the right way to go about the situation. Sitting back and watching someone get bullied won't be satisfying to you, or the person it is happening too.

In middle school, we all wanted to be in the "popular group." Once you made it into the "group", you were looked at as mean. No one thought they were good enough to be in that group. One of my best friends, Kylie, and another one of my friends, Mykenzie, used to be inseparable, and no one could break them apart. However, one thing eventually did, jealousy came into action. Mykenzie started to make fun of how Kylie would talk, or how she would dress or even how she thought she was not smart enough to get into private school. Eventually, Kylie would go home and cry for hours and hours about how she felt, like she wasn't good enough.

The worst part about it was that I just sat back and watched it all happen. They were both my closest friends. I got absorbed into being "popular" and I hated it. I didn't want to speak up because I did not want to be the next one to get made fun of. Everyone laughed when Mykenzie was being mean but, I sat there quiet. I had no idea what to do. When my best friend was really hurting from this, I went to my guidance counselor. She told me to stand up for Kylie when she was getting made fun of and not to sit back and watch bullying happen again. My guidance counselor called both of them in, and had a friendship session with them. I could not take seeing my friend being treated like that. After seeing how mean my friends were, and how they treated people I changed my whole group of friends. Additionally, I changed my mind on wanting to be in the "popular" group.

The thing about being a teenager is we all are concerned about how we look, or who our friends are, not how others are being treated. We should not sit back and laugh while someone else is hurting. That's the problem we have today, no one says anything because we are scared that we will be next on the list, I instead we should be worrying about how to stop it.

Abby Tharp 

Justin Hammond

#32

### Practice Does Not Make Perfect

People all across the world spend countless hours mastering their craft. Likewise, I'm always in the gym, working on my basketball skills. Through the many practices, I've noticed no improvement in my jump shot percentage. I struggled to understand this since my coach used to stress the importance of practice making perfect. Referring to the consistency of my past season percentages, I've come to the belief that practice does not necessarily make perfect; however, it makes permanent.

As a student of the game of basketball, I listened to Hall of Famers such as Magic Johnson and Larry Bird. They described how they would wake up early in the morning, taking one thousand shots per day. Mirroring their efforts, I began to walk to the park daily to shoot. As days turned into weeks, I found myself becoming more and more frustrated because I did not see the progress that I anticipated from my hard work. Then, I began to brainstorm.

Using my resources, I found books and website articles discussing the perfect jump shot. They explained how technique is the key to accurately shooting a basketball. Thus, instead of just shooting the same shot, when I trained I had guidelines to abide by. This steered me in the right direction. One week, I practiced my release. The next week I would work on my form. Every week I dropped a flaw, and saw more shots going in the basket.

Initially, I used to rehearse the same shot over and over. Now, in practice, I focus on bettering certain aspects of my shot that don't follow the "perfect shot" criteria. I've noticed vast improvements ever since I've taken this approach. My shooting percentage went up with my confidence because, like everything in life, you're going to do things in the same way you practice it. Thus, I believe that only if I practice properly, will I become "perfect" since practice makes permanent.

- Justin Hammond





#33      Brendan Daly

1.0

Release after release he kept the crowd waiting

Block after block he kept updating

I sat there and watched as the crusaders paved the way

As they fought and they triumphed through night and through day

I myself started near the end of completion

When numbers of inhabitants were not nearing depletion

Torches and candles were a thing of the past

Because wiring and circuitry was here at last!

He has a temple, a shrine built for himself

Where many have wandered looking for great wealth

He held an event, a convention in late fall

Where many gathered, to unite one for all

He is a dreamer, a thinker and is willing to watch

As his creation is being turned up, Notch by Notch

John Deveney

### *Fishing at Night*

The moon is shining bright on the green algae floating on the top of the pond.

Every once in a while the water ripples where a large bass shows its fin through the thick, cluttered, water plants.

The only noise around me is the sound of mosquitoes buzzing in and out of my ear, my friends whipping their shiny lures that attract the fish as they spin through the water and then slowly reel it in across the top of the water, and the sound of the tall grass brushing against each other in the cool night breeze.

The feel of the warm handle on the reel is matched with the smooth feeling of reeling in my lure, waiting for a small tug alarming me there is a fish on the end of my line.

The water seems like the most calm and peaceful place in the world until I feel the tug of a fish and I start reeling it in. Half way to the shore it jumps out of the water trying to be set free. Then I get it on to shore, off the hook and then back into the water.

Suddenly a sliver of light came from the top of the tree line telling me our night of fun was over, and it was time to get our fishing stuff for the next night.

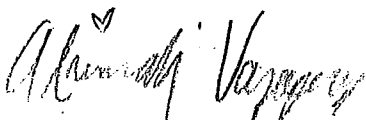
This I Believe...

Almost every day in seventh and eighth grade, I had to deal with seeing someone getting bullied. I knew that whatever I did to try to stop it the people would never stop. The worst part for me was that I've felt the pain of the person getting bullied, too. Some days, I would go home upset to my mom asking why? Why would someone do that to someone they don't even know? I am a fourteen year old girl living in the freedom country. This I believe: that no homosexual/lesbian/bisexual should get bullied because they are "different."

Even though I'm straight and I've never been bullied because I'm "gay," I've seen one of the most important people in my life being bullied because he is homosexual. The boy's name is Tyler. Ever since I met Tyler, I've always been on his side. The first time I cried over my best friend being bullied was when a boy told him that if he sat next to him in class, he would "catch being gay," like it's a disease to be gay. When I heard that come out of someone's mouth, I didn't know what to think. Since that day, I try to talk to Tyler about being gay and how it feels to be bullied. We talked about that maybe he shouldn't go to that school anymore, or maybe he should get some help and talk to the people doing it. Most of the time, he just wants to forget about it. Since the first time a remark like that came out, I finally saw what it is like to get bullied if you're gay. But what I didn't even know was coming is the pain you feel when you see your best friend go through horrible depression over being bullied.

When Tyler didn't come into school for a whole week and he wasn't answering his phone, I knew something was seriously wrong. When I finally got in touch with him after not being in school for a month, he said that he got checked in a hospital because he started to cut himself and had thoughts about killing himself. After hearing that remark come from someone's mouth that means a lot to me, I didn't know what to do. I was scared for him and I didn't want to go to school and see all of the people's faces that made him do this to himself. Four months into school, he transferred to public school. Then, at public school, things got even worse. He would be called "fag" and "homo." But the worst part for me to even think about is that his mother didn't even care. She completely disowned him when she found out he was gay. This made it a lot worse for him. Then, before I knew it, he was checked back in the hospital. After both schools, he was finally home schooled and, at the end of eighth grade, he would move in with his sister and her husband three hours away from Jersey.

My family was like Tyler's family, but we accepted him. After all Tyler had been through, my mother treated him like a son because my mother has been through depression, too. Even if Tyler is happy at his new school, I will always be worried about him. I knew that even if he was gay and had depression problems it would never change how I think of him. It breaks my heart to know that Tyler will always have these memories in his mind. But, at this point in Tyler's life, he is really happy at his new school, with his new boyfriend, and his new life. When life goes on and on our friendship will grow more and more. I know wherever he is in the world, he will never forget about me and I will never forget him. He has truthfully changed my life in so many ways. I've learned that in the real world, people are going to be rude and mean, even if they don't know you. I hope that one day, people in America will finally accept each other for who they are on the inside and out; even if they don't understand each other. I believe in gay rights.



### Friendship Isn't Always Meant To Last Forever

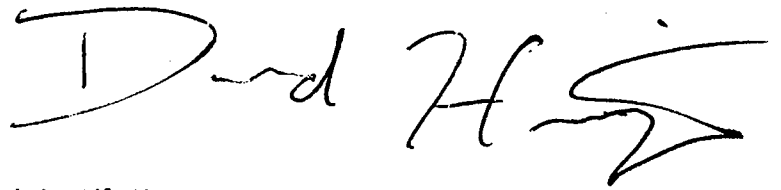
Not everyone stays the same. Over time, people can change. You can be the best of friends with someone but, over time, both of your interests may change. Sometimes both of you change and still have common interests. For others, they drift apart. None of your friends have the exact same interests as you, though you do have things in common that keep you friends. In my life, I have had friends come and go. As we grew up, our interests changed and so did our other friends. It's hard to be so close to someone and then not even talk to them. I believe that people can change, causing a friendship to grow apart.

From elementary school to middle school to high school, you grow up and mature. Not everyone will change in the same ways you do. When I was in elementary school, I was friends with all the studious kids. We did not have that much in common, but they were in my classes and were nice to me. When I moved on to middle school, I ended up leaving those friends behind and we grew apart. They became friends with the other smart kids who were in their advanced classes, while I found my true friends who stuck with me all throughout middle school. There were four of us and we were the best of friends. We all enjoyed the same things but, as the years went on, we each got other groups of friends. Eighth grade was hard because that's when we all drifted apart and each got new friends who had different interests. I became friends with more popular girls since they had a majority of their classes with me. It was difficult because my "new friends" were not really my friends at all. Luckily, I hadn't fully grown apart from my close group of friends and, to this day, we still hang out.

Just as I did on my move from elementary to middle school, I left most of my friends on my journey to high school. It was difficult since all of my friends were going to the public high school, while I chose to go to Notre Dame. The majority of my middle school friends do not even talk to me anymore because they have new friends and new interests. I am okay with that since I have changed, too, by having new interests and new friends who share those same interests. My new group friends are better friends than those shallow, popular girls. We are now the best of friends and I hope our friendship will last.

Friendships do not always last forever. In some cases, they do but, for others, they slowly fade away. Whether it is a group of friends or just one, you need to work on keeping your friendship alive. Sometime you just know when it will not work out. You just have to accept the fact and let go. I wish we did not grow apart, but as we grow up so do they. Friendship is wonderful until you lose it. You have to wonder if your friends were the ones who changed or if it was you who changed. I believe that people can change, causing a friendship to grow apart.

*Stephanie DeSimone*



#37 David Haytaian

Never Stop Learning and Live Life Happy

A popular saying is "Learn as if you were to live forever; live as if you were to die tomorrow."

What does this statement mean to you? Not many people live by this statement. People who do are very successful and happy. This statement means to learn everyday, because nobody should ever stop learning. The second half of this statement means to live life with no regrets. I see people everyday so uptight and filled with anxiety; they barely make it through their day. It kills me to see people like that because I don't understand how they can make it.

People are not as successful as they can be because they do not "learn as if they were to live forever." For example, Phil Jackson, who is the NBA Head Basketball Coach for the Los Angeles Lakers, has won fourteen NBA Championships. He said he keeps winning because he never stops learning. Furthermore, he persevered. He is an ideal example of the statement above. When I live by this statement, which I try to do every day of my life, I am very successful. I promise you if you "learn as if you were to live forever," you will be successful, too.

In my school, I see people who cannot handle pressure when it is put on them; they are always uptight. Also, people say that they "hate life" and "life stinks." This is because they do not "live as if you were to die tomorrow." You only live once and your life is too precious to live with regrets and doubts and sadness. Every day of my life, I try to live by this statement too. Sometimes I do get caught up in things and I get very stressed. If everyone in the world tried to relax and enjoy every moment, the world would be ecstatic.

Almost everyone I know who hears this statement agrees with it 100 percent. It really breaks my heart when I hear on the news about brand new moms and teenagers killing themselves which is most likely because of stress. I hope one day everyone in the world can live by a more positive attitude because there would barely be any more tension and worries. As a result, our world would become an amazing place.

## It Will Be Okay

For me the meaning of the word “okay” changes every day. One day it means “fantastic”; and the next day it means just “acceptable”. It seems that I encounter the word okay multiple times every day. Its usage is depends on a variety of scenarios. For example, the typical response to the question “How are you feeling?” Usually ends with the response “Okay.” The word signifies only one of the ways in which this word can be used. Its application can vary depending on its use.

Lately, the use of word “okay” has been more common in my life. My father has been recently diagnosed with brain cancer; the doctors and my parents keep saying he will be “okay.” When I heard the word “okay,” it made me reflect on what the doctors and my parents meant by this “okay” phrase. I thought about the word long and hard, and I did not understand how this word was appropriate in such a critical situation. The word just did not make any sense to me regarding my father’s health. “Okay” usually was only used as a general response to questions like “How is your day?” “Okay” does not seem the appropriate response when a family is facing a health – related condition. “Okay” simply does not seem to be the right answer when discussing my father’s health.

The word “okay” is just one way of expressing that everything is “excellent,” “terrific,” and “amazing.” But, is it really? When an individual says to me the word “okay” in a situation or conversation; do they mean acceptable for the time being or it is 100%, this is great? Truthfully, in my current situation, “okay” means that everything is acceptable for today, but tomorrow it might mean great. You see, the meaning for me changes every day.

I finally understood what the word “okay” means to me. It means that no matter what happens everything will be all right: everything will be o.k. When the word comes up in a conversation, I automatically think that things will be all right. “Okay” has no promises that everything is good or bad, it simply means that things will be all right and they are manageable. Whatever happens, it will end up being okay. I believe everything will be okay.

*Conor Hader*

Steven Robak

#39 Steven Robak

### Struggles in School

The person I chose is my aunt. I chose my aunt because she helped me do better in my studies. During seventh and eighth grade, I couldn't really do well in school through the first semester. My aunt works as a school teacher at a school in Pennsylvania. She is a ninth grade teacher there. She was a really tough teacher so I was scared on what she was going to make me do.

I first started out getting C's and D's on my report card in first semester. My parents were very upset with my work but I didn't know what to do. After school I had to do my chores and then get ready for soccer right away. By the time I got home I got dinner shower and then sleep. I barely had any time to study or hang out with friends. I tried to find time to study but it wasn't enough to really soak it all in. When my parents found out how I was doing in school. They were very upset with me. I had high expectations for me that I wasn't able to reach. I was trying to find one of my friends to help me but they didn't have any time to help either. They were all doing sports or family events. I was stuck I had no clue what to do, I was below average in most my classes and my parents were yelling at me. I refuse to go to any tutoring place to be tutored. I went to summer school after every school year until I met my aunt. My aunt is a teenager at a high school in Pennsylvania. I forget what the name is but I know it's a good one. I went to her for help. I thought she would be the most effective person to help me because she is a teacher and she has experience in teacher kids my age and older. I asked her if she wanted to help me and my parents said she was delighted too. I met her three times a week after school for every week. I was so happy when she said yes because I knew there was going to be a change in my

Connor Todaro

### **This I Believe**

Imagine living in a world where discipline is one of the number one priority is to make peace in society. Imagine how little crime there would be. None, right? What if some of the most powerful criminals in our world would have to think before they pulled the trigger, or before they stole, someone else's goods, what if they were to be compensated with the same treatment? To reach peace in a society, you must first establish an fairness to discourage all of the tragedies and crimes.

Hammurabi, one of the most well-known leaders of all time, was the first to establish a law making system like an eye for an eye, or tooth for a tooth. Hammurabi's code was organized with a set of strict laws and harsh punishments. By establishing these laws, crime was rare and peace filled his society. How would a greater equity affect our society? No differently than it did on Hammurabi's because criminals would have to think twice before they made the wrong decision.

The Bible is another perfect example of an eye for an eye. In ancient Palestine, the society practiced this idea when they themselves were mistreated. For example, if someone stole one of your cows, the offended person could go and kill five or so of their cows to teach them a lesson. This would drastically decrease the crime rate in the community. Most of the Palestinians were too scared to commit a crime because they knew it would backfire with something five times worse than their own crime.

Imagine if a greater influence was established to make others be kinder to one another. How would it affect our modern society today? Yes, I think there would be many disagreements but, with the law-making body backing the law up, society would be forced to do nothing but obey. As the world starts to adapt to an eye for an eye, and the people would evolve. They would become used to the strict living style and crime would be scarce.

A community with no discipline would simply become too corrupt to exist On the other hand, a community with strict laws and harsh punishments, such as an caring for others, would prosper. Hammurabi and his country would later evolve to conquer its neighboring enemies after his code was put in place. Palestine was able to live in peace with each other, fearing that if it did something wrong, it would happen even worse to all of the other people as well. The main goal of society should be to remove crime and replace it with peace and happiness by establishing the policy of treating others the way that they would want to be treated.

*Connor Todaro*



## Be Yourself

I believe in being yourself. Being yourself doesn't seem like it would be that hard to do but nowadays it is the hardest thing in the world. Every teenager just wants to fit in; maybe cliché but it's true. People will change their morals, their standards and their appearance just so they will be accepted by their peers.

I've watched a person change right in front of my eyes. It's one of worst feelings in the world watching one of your friends turn into someone you know they're not. One of my friends, was made fun of during our 8<sup>th</sup> grade year because she was smart and always got good grades. When high school came around, she started wearing lots of makeup and immodest clothes. She started acting dumb so she would fit in with the other kids in her class.

She wasn't being herself; she was trying to be what she thought other people wanted her to be. Honestly, I liked her better in eighth more than I do now because she was an individual, her own person. She was unique. Letting other people pressure you into doing something that is wrong never benefit you. No one was there for her to tell her that acting like this would not get her friends; All it would get her was people waiting on the chance to turn on you.

As a result of changing so much she is now failing three classes and has been asked to leave the school. Our friendship no longer exists. Even though it was hard for me, I had distance myself to protect my morals. Being who you truly are is how you get somewhere in this life. You get noticed by being unique, smart, witty, funny, and showing love and kindness. I think some people forget that, being true to yourself makes other people feel like you are confident and sure about who you are. I believe in being yourself.

*Nicole Carothers*

Thank you  
so much for all  
of your hard work!  
you are all great  
writers and I enjoyed  
working with you.  
-Kelsey

Thank you for all of  
your hard work!  
You guys have  
done a great  
job! Thank you  
for helping me in my  
own development!  
-Kathryn

I really enjoyed  
your work and I  
hope you continue  
towards becoming a  
great writer.  
-Nicole

Thank you  
for giving  
us the  
opportunity  
to read  
your thoughts  
you are all  
so full of  
great ideas!  
-Denise

Thank you for all  
your great writing!  
Don't forget that writing  
is an art so don't be  
afraid to express yourself.  
-Taylor Cortina

I loved reading all  
your work. Keep  
it up! -Chelsea

Good luck guys!  
you guys did an  
awesome job.  
-Christian

Thank you for  
your hard work  
and allowing me to  
read your writing!  
-Stephanie

It's been great  
working with you!  
Thank you for all  
your hard work.  
-Kelly

Thank you so  
much for a great  
semester. It has  
been an excellent  
semester!  
Happy Holidays  
Megan

Thank for allowing me  
to share this experience  
and read all of your  
great writing!  
-Nick La Torre

THANK YOU -  
THIS WAS AN  
AMAZING EXPERIENCE!  
MICHAEL

you guys  
are going to  
be great! Keep  
working at what  
you love and  
you will shine!  
Thanks for all  
of your great  
contributions!  
-Sarah

Best of luck in  
your reading and  
writing! you are  
perfect just the  
way you are  
Cassie Metrik

I really enjoyed  
reading your works!  
Thank you for such  
a great semester  
keep up the great work!  
-Catherine

Thank you  
for being  
full of ideas  
and willing to  
to learn from  
me!  
-Arianna