

The Match

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THE MATCH

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FRONT PAGE: Fourth-graders Justine Hearon (left) and Mathilde Wesson (right) read during their lunch period in the media center. In the age of social media, many students choose to spend their time on sites like Instagram and Youtube over reading.

RIGHT: Teaching artist Laura Courter shares her theatrical knowledge with third-grader Logan Ellerson. The third graders will put on a "Third Grade Showcase," written by students and Courter, in February. PHOTOS BY ANNA LABINER



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TOP: Third-grader Benjamin Jiang places second place at the 2019 US Open Scholastic Junior High and High School Championship. Jiang began playing chess after his father's recommendation.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY MICHAEL JIANG

BOTTOM: The Match reviews The Reserve, a homey bookstore and cafe. The Reserve is a great spot to drop by and visit with friends or a place to study alone.

PHOTO BY TIFFANY YU



Third-grade tradition forged

by Elizabeth Hopkins

This year, the new “Third Grade Showcase,” a performance both constructed and performed by third-grade students, will mark the start of a new tradition for elementary school at Pine View.

In past years, “Third Grade Rocks,” inspired by the hit educational television series “Schoolhouse Rock!,” occupied this space as an annual performance conducted by the third grade.

However, third-grade teacher Freda Williams had an idea. No stranger to the arts as a Fine Arts and Interior Design major, the Ringling College alumnae works part time at Van Wezel Performing

Arts Hall as a teaching artist, an artist educator who implements their craft into an educational setting.

Surfing EdExploreSRQ, an online platform designed to connect Sarasota County teachers with learning opportunities in the classroom, Williams came across fellow teaching artist Laura Courter. Courter visits classrooms and instructs students through drama and writing, showing them to create their own stories and folktales, as well as how to perform them.

Both teaching artists, Williams happened to know Courter personally, and because folktales are emphasized in third-grade educa-

tion standards, she explained that this enrichment experience was the perfect fit for her students.

“That’s what we need!” Williams said, reflecting on the moment she discovered the program. “The stars just aligned.”

Subsequently, Williams approached the Pine View Association (PVA), which funds teaching artists. She

There are a lot of similarities, it’s just 100 percent student centered. ‘Third Grade Rocks’ was not inspired by students.”

Freda Williams,
third-grade teacher



Teaching artist Laura Courter visits Mrs. Williams’ third grade classroom to assist students in creating the “Third Grade Showcase” to be performed next year. Courter visits schools classrooms across the county to teach drama and drama writing.

PHOTO BY ANNA LABINER

recalled initial questions, as the proposed “Third Grade Showcase” would effectively replace the long-standing “Third Grade Rocks” production. However, PVA accepted the change upon the realization that the new production will be “in the same vein” as “Third Grade Rocks,” according to Williams.

“There are a lot of similarities, it’s just 100 percent student centered,” Williams said, as “Third Grade Rocks” was not inspired by student

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ideas, unlike the “Third Grade Showcase.”

During the weeks of Dec. 9 and Dec. 16, Courter visited with all third-grade classes for an hour lesson daily. Throughout the course of her instruction, students learned about foundational ideas in theater, such as stage direction, how to be directors, as well as the rise and fall of action. Students were also taught how to implement these lessons into their own plays, which will be weaved into a fully-formed, original folktale-inspired story idea per classroom.

“She’s teaching the tools, the things she knows about theater, plus she’s worked with educators so she knows what our standards are. So she brings all these things into the classroom to get the kids super creative, for them to come up with their own plays,” Williams said.

Ultimately, Courter herself will produce one script, using elements from each classroom’s story. After casting, she will rehearse the play with students briefly in February, leading up to a performance the same month.

A Night of the Arts

by Sarah Hassan

Drawing not only elementary students, but their families as well, the Luminary, a literary magazine club for high school students, held an Elementary Art Night in art teacher Sharon Salomon's room. The Art Night was held to foster kids' interests in the arts while creating a family bonding experience and helped raise funds for the literary magazine.

Initially expecting only four attendees based on pre-sales, the Luminary club was surprised by a total attendance of 22 families with a total 35 children. Tickets were \$5 for early purchase and \$7 at the event.

"[We brought him here] just to open up [his] mind and to explore creativity and imag-

ination, which I think are very important..." Laura Lewis, a parent who attended the Art Night.

At the event, students circulated between four stations, each focusing on a different art form. One to two club members led each station, consisting of sketching, origami, water coloring and poetry. Having different activities at each station, kids were able to unleash their artistic side.

Out of the four stations at the event, the origami station was the most popular. Eleventh-graders Gabby Gentile, Luminary Editor-in-Chief, and Zola Disz each arranged origami activities for the station. Gentile prepared a blow-up box, Pikachu, and a dog origami, while Disz made a Yoda,

crane and fortune teller origami.

"My favorite part was the origami, because I really like origami and I got to make a fortune teller," second-grader Shay Schultz said.

At the poetry station, students created haikus, limericks and freestyle poems on topics of their choice, and at the water color station, an autumn theme led to freestyle art among students. At the sketching station, with a serene atmosphere, students were shown a demo of sketching poses.

The event was finished off with pizza, at a dollar a slice, another source of fundraising for the Luminary. The event made a total of \$180 with the addition of the money made with the pizza. The Luminary



Eleventh-grader Zola Disz (right) leads the origami table at the Elementary Art Night Nov. 15. The event was held to raise money for the Luminary, Pine View's literary magazine. PHOTO BY ANNA LABINER

looks forward to holding another artistic event, with modification and new stations to appeal to newcomers as well as previous attendees.

"Mrs. Salomon is actually excited to have another [art night] if we want to. I would love to have another one in the spring," Gentile said.

A 'Whole New' Production

by Kasumi Wade

Putting its best foot forward since August, the Pine View Players Club has been preparing and rehearsing for its January performance of "Aladdin," a theatrical adaptation of the well-known Disney film.

Last year, with the help of former Assistant Principal Alison Rini, third-grade teacher Freda Williams formed the Pine View Players Club as an opportunity to give younger students a look into the theatrical world directly on Pine View's campus.

"While there are some independent drama companies, they are very expensive. We decided we would make our own club because we know

our kids. It makes it Pine View friendly, and as if there is a Pine View stamp of approval," Williams said.

Last year, the Pine View Players put on "The Jungle Book" performance. As the current members voted on their show for this year, they came to the decision that "Aladdin" would be their next play.

From August to September, auditions were held among 58 members for three weeks. Alongside Williams, fifth-grade teacher Andy Vitkus, art teacher Haley Brown, and parent volunteer Rebecca Lockwood gathered to make decisions on the final cast.

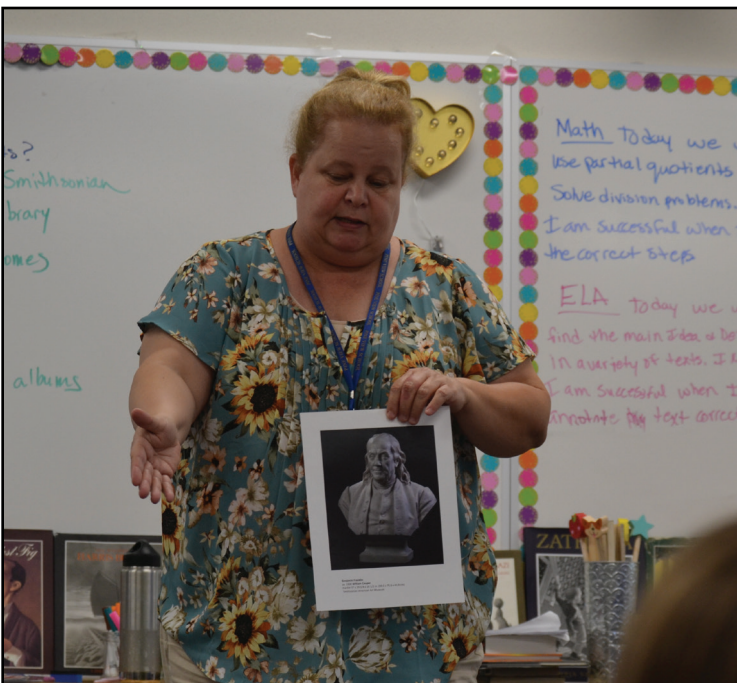
After all of the cuts were made, the "Aladdin" cast was

separated into several groups based on their characters. The groups rehearse on Wednesdays and Thursdays, depending on their character group.

Third-grader Lila Paul is playing Iago, Jafar's parrot, in the upcoming performance.

"My favorite part of the show is probably 'Prince Ali' because we're doing all these really big things for it," Paul said, "and I just think that this year is such a change from last year. For 'Prince Ali' we actually have giant puppets and stuff, so it's gonna be great," Paul said.

The Pine View Players will perform Jan. 10 at 9:30 a.m. for Pine View students and Jan. 11 at 3:00 p.m. for the parents in the Pine View auditorium.



Third-grade teacher Freda Williams teaches her class a lesson on portraits. Williams is the sponsor for Pine View Players Club, which will perform an adaptation of Disney's "Aladdin" Jan. 10 and 11. PHOTO BY GRACE JOHNSON

Fifth-grader creates dog feeder

by Sarah Catalano

The ingredients to a perfect puppy meal? Food, two buckets, a timer, and LEGO. Engineering his way to the Sarasota County science fair, fifth-grader Ethan Isaacs' creative blend of his knowledge in multiple fields allowed his vision to take shape.

Isaacs' initial plan was to construct a machine that would regularly deposit portions of dog food without need for human intervention. As an aspiring geologist, Isaacs owns a small rock tumbler, which was a great source of inspira-

tion for his science project. He incorporated the idea of a rotating drum shape, based on his knowledge of the inner mechanics of the tumblers used in rotating mechanisms.

"I got [the idea] from a fish feeder," Isaacs said. "My dad told me about how he had a fish feeder, and it had an axle, and it was basically the same concept, but like I said, I got inspired by a tumbler to instead make something on the bottom turn."

The final product was a fully functional automated mechanism that scooped and

poured food into a bowl without spilling, using a LEGO Mindstorm control and a small timer.

The process of building the mechanism, however, had its ups and downs.

"At first I wanted to use the controller... as a timer," Isaacs said, "but when I realized I couldn't, I just connected a timer with wires and used the Mindstorm as a source because there are batteries in there to power it."

Isaacs built three prototypes over the course of approximately 12-16 hours — the first operating with a motor alone, the second composed of a motor and a Mindstorm controller, and the third substituting a timer for the Mindstorm with the Mindstorm used as a battery.

His father, Greg Isaacs, encouraged him throughout the process.

"One of his chores at home is to feed the dog," Isaacs said. "I think that was the inspiration for him.... He's done a lot of things with LEGOs, so he wasn't afraid to try to build it out of LEGOs instead of us cutting up a bunch of wood or something else."

Isaacs' interest in engineering and science extends beyond just LEGO, though. His tumbler, which inspired the dog-feeding project, is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to his enthusiasm for rocks and minerals.

"He has always been interested in rocks and minerals," Greg Isaacs said. "It's some-



Fifth-grade science fair participant Ethan Isaacs sets his dog feeder to the on position using a mechanism he created himself. Isaacs will present his creation to judges at the Sarasota County Science Fair Jan. 30.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY GREG ISAACS

thing he notices wherever we go, and it may be a parking lot or a hike in the woods — he's always noticing and picking up rocks. It's just something he's always been interested in."

Isaacs and his dog-feeding creation will proceed to the

Elementary School County Science Fair in Roberts Arena Jan. 30. For now, he hopes to provide a convenience for pet owners everywhere.

"I think it could be useful... you can adjust it, and it's easy to make and easy to use," Isaacs said.



Featured is fifth-grader Ethan Isaacs' dog-food-feeding creation, which he engineered and built himself. Isaacs gained inspiration for the project from a fish feeder.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY GREG ISAACS



Lessons:

- Chinese & Spanish
- Programming robotics & fun
- LEGO Robotics League
- Table tennis club
- Chess lessons
- Art lessons

Pine View students can take the school bus 1602 to BaoAce after school tutoring lessons.

(941) 500-3982 | www.BaoAce.com | At Sarasota Square Mall

Dec. 20

Last day of first semester

Dec. 28

Coach DiGiacomo's birthday

Dec. 31

Mr. Maron's birthday

Jan. 8

Ms. Sedlak's birthday

Jan. 24

Elementary Proud Python

December and January Events and Teacher Birthdays



Fourth-grader Callie Fisher writes the names of her "marigolds" on a paper marigold for the class of 2021's December initiative. The initiative asked students to honor those who play positive and supportive roles in their lives.

PHOTO BY ANNA LABINER



Elementary girls and their fathers enjoy pizza, dancing and the photo booth at the annual Father-Daughter Dance Dec. 6. The dance was held by the senior class as one of many sources of funds for the class of 2020's graduation in May.

PHOTO BY LEO GORDON

IN BRIEF

Students advance to STEM fair

by Ben Gordon

Displaying their distinct interest in the sciences and their knack for innovation, 19 Pine View elementary students will show off their latest science projects, ranging from sources of energy during power outages to automatic dog feeders, at Sarasota County's annual STEM fair expo in January.

Fifth-grade science and language arts teacher Peggy Barber says these students' accomplishments exemplify why she values her work here at Pine View.

"This is why I teach gifted kids," Barber said. "By trying to get their projects to function correctly, they learn the value of failing and starting over until they succeed."

One of the participants,

fifth-grader Aadi Bhensdadia, was concerned about the frequent hurricanes and subsequent power outages that come with living in Florida. He created a hand-cranking fan that can provide some relief from the hot Florida sun.

Elementary students moving forward from Pine View's science fair to the Sarasota County STEM Fair Expo are third-graders Justin Kim, Suri Yao, Andrew Lyda, Paul Filosa, Leo Martin and Gabriel Constanzo; fourth-graders Jane Callahan, Nathan Jackson, Liam Bates, Oliver Creese, Pranaam Labo, Sivani Thiru, Elise McEwen Haworth, Gia Fotch and Anna Hunek; and fifth-graders Aadi Bhensdadia, Ethan Isaacs, Tara Stults, Allison Kim and Lucas Yee.

Town hall updates families

by Leo Gordon

In an effort to provide Pine View families with updated information on the plans for a new 80,000 square foot building on Pine View's campus, Principal Dr. Stephen Covert held a town hall Dec. 4 to address the questions and concerns of Pine View parents alongside the project's construction and design team.

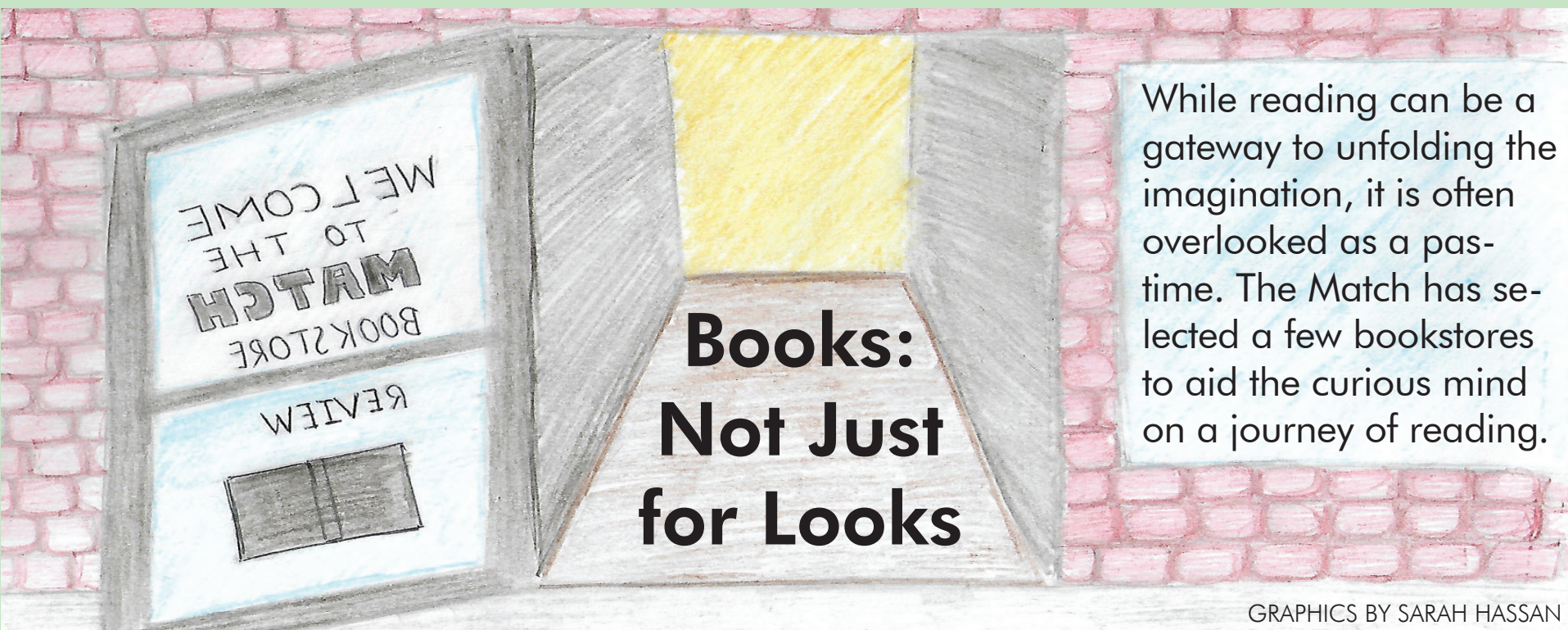
According to project manager Paul Pitcher, the new building, projected to open to students in January of 2022, will include three stories of classrooms, an art wing, an archive museum, a

college resource center and a large chorus room, among other prospective plans.

The building, which will cost an estimated \$28 million, or \$300 per square foot, is designed to meet the needs of Pine View's unique environment.

"Part of Pine View's campus experience is seeing older students that you'll be like one day," Covert said, "and [this project] will reinforce the crossing of paths of students."

For questions or suggestions regarding the project, contact Pine View administration by email.



While reading can be a gateway to unfolding the imagination, it is often overlooked as a pastime. The Match has selected a few bookstores to aid the curious mind on a journey of reading.

GRAPHICS BY SARAH HASSAN



Between the halls, books fill up the shelves from the ground to ceiling. Situated in downtown Sarasota, A. Parker's Books offers a variety of old books, causing the shop have an antique atmosphere.

PHOTOS BY ANNA LABINER

A. Parker's Books

by Anna Labiner

An iconic staple of downtown Sarasota, A. Parker's Books has remained a charming, hole-in-the-wall shop popular among both locals and visitors for over 35 years. The store attracts a plethora of book enthusiasts for its specialization in unusual and aged books, making it especially appealing for those looking for a more interesting and alluring read.

In operation since 1975, A. Parker's Books maintains its antique and aged atmosphere, a comfort for those overwhelmed with the ever-changing landscape of downtown Sarasota. The overcrowded shelves and profound smell of old books make the store feel familiar and the sheer volume of fascinating and offbeat literature is certainly enough to revive anyone's love for reading.

Such is the case with many

older bookstores, however, maintaining such a business in an era of technology (Kindle, Audible, Amazon books, etc.) can prove to be challenging. Owner Gary Hurst, who took on the business about 39 years ago, relies on the nostalgia of customers and the typical allure of an old bookstore to keep the store alive amidst a developing reading revolution.

"Nostalgia plays a big part. If you read Sherlock Holmes at a young age, and it speaks to you later on, perhaps it reconnects a part of you," Hurst said in an interview with Sarasota Magazine in 2018.

The bookstore also prides itself on its wide array of antique items, which are displayed neatly in their front window. These oddities and trinkets add to the mystique of the shop and often prompt passersby's to stop in and ex-

plore the further anomalies that the store has to offer. These collectibles and trinkets also serve as a source of revenue for the bookstore and can sell for thousands of dollars.

"Book collecting is akin to all collecting. You are collecting beyond the thing itself," Hurst said.

A. Parker's Books is certainly one of the hidden jewels of Sarasota, and its ageless charm makes it a centerpiece in the downtown scene. The store is enjoyable for all ages as well, with a kids section tucked in the very back.

A. Parker's Books is located on 1488 Main St and is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Sunday from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.



Rating: 5/5 Torches

The Reserve

by Tiffany Yu

Located in the heart of historic downtown Sarasota, The Reserve is the perfect spot to relax and enjoy a warm cup of hot chocolate over a good book. In addition to being a cozy bookstore, The Reserve serves as a coffee shop, restaurant, meeting space, and home to several rental suites.

The bookstore, attached to the coffee shop, is meticulously furnished with rustic wooden furniture to encapsulate the homey atmosphere of the store and is framed with several bookshelves teeming with the freshest selection of books available. Although the space is compact, the area is expertly

utilized to fit as many books as possible.

The titles range from non-fiction books on Floridian aquatic creatures to philosophical works. The Reserve has something to appeal to every audience. The bookstore lacks a large collection of books due to its limited space, but is made up for in its charm and overall ambiance. In comparison to other traditional bookstores, The Reserve is heart-warming and full of life.

The coffee shop, which shares its sitting area with the bookstore, offers homemade pastries and coffee, ranging from classic brews such as the Americano to more peculiar

drinks such as the Rose-Pistachio latte. The Reserve serves its beverages at a very affordable price, ranging from \$2 to \$4.50 for a cup of coffee. The Reserve also offers hot chocolate as well as iced and hot teas, proving popular amongst customers in the winter season.

Overall, The Reserve has a unique ambiance that sets it apart from the rest. As a stand-alone bookstore, The Reserve is a little lackluster, but it makes up for it in charm with the addition of the adjoining cafe, allowing customers to grab a sweet treat. The Reserve is a great hangout location and a cool new spot for students.

The Reserve is located at



Two customers relax in the sitting area at the Reserve. The Reserve has many functions to its customers such as a coffee shop, restaurant and meeting space.

PHOTO BY TIFFANY YU

1322 N Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236, and is opened from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays.



Rating: 4.5/5 Torches



In the children's section of Bookstore1, stuffed animals and colorful books are displayed to create a friendly atmosphere. Bookstore1 appeals to a wide audience by providing a selection of genres such as Mystery, Classics, Sci-fi and Poetry.

PHOTO BY MAHITHA RAMACHANDRAN

Bookstore1

by Mahitha Ramachandran

Sitting at an intersection lined with quaint shops in downtown Sarasota, Bookstore1 is the quintessential cozy bookshop. Upon entrance, customers are met with a friendly welcome from staff and a display of new fiction and nonfiction books, encouraging readers to explore new authors and recent literature.

Filled with books everywhere, the bookstore is organized into sections such as Classics and Poetry; however, the charm of the bookshop lies within the honey-brown wooden floors, bookcases, tables, the homestyle armchairs with vintage fabrics, and the soft music playing in the background while getting lost in their wide selection of books.

Bookstore1 has several distinctive features that allow it to reach to a wide audience.

In the back of the shop, a children's section welcomes kids in with an array of colorful books and animal puppets.

Near the poetry section, a bookcase holds a display of the bookshop's new Spanish section, including Spanish literature as well as translations of English books to Spanish.

Across from the check-out counter is a wall of Florida books, coupled with an assortment of unique greeting cards for all occasions. Be sure to pick up some literature merchandise for your local literature nerd, such as t-shirts and bookmarks.

On the wall between a glossy black piano and the title "Staff Picks", a diverse collection of hand-picked books rest on shelves below. The staff recommendations at Bookstore1 have become a famous feature of the store. Apart from the main display, the staff picks are

scattered around the shop, including books from all genres.

"Everyone who works here is a reader," Georgia Court, founder and owner of Bookstore1 said. "There is no specific system for the staff picks, but when you read something and really like it, the best thing you can do is share it."

Clearly, supporting independent bookstores is not the only reason to go to Bookstore1. The knowledgeable and welcoming staff, the cozy atmosphere, and the wide selection of books available are just a few reasons that a visit to Bookstore1 is sure to be a worthy one.

Bookstore1 is located at 12 S Palm Ave, Sarasota, FL 34236, and is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.



Rating: 5/5 Torches

Boosting the 'beats'

by Joanna Malvas

Offering a wide range of musical experience for his young age, fifth-grader Ethan Nealis plays both the piano and trumpet, a reflection of his long-lasting interest in music. Beginning his study of the piano at the age of five, Nealis picked up the trumpet a year ago.

Spending at least 30 minutes practicing trumpet and 40 minutes practicing piano each day, additionally, Nealis attends his weekly lessons for trumpet on Tuesdays and pia-

no on Wednesdays, preparing for regular competitions and performances. Since starting piano lessons, Nealis has competed in every annual competition of the National Federation of Music Clubs Festival.

In last year's competition Nealis scored the highest ranking, Superior.

"Very early on as a toddler, he was interested in music. When he was four, he showed interest in piano, so we found a teacher named Mrs. Valentine in Lakewood Ranch who

was willing to take him at four and a half. She doesn't take kids until they're about six. She made a little special exception for him, because she saw that he had a natural talent and a very strong interest in the piano," Ethan's mother, Melanie Nealis, said.

In light of his accom-

I like how you can do duets with other people. I just like the sound of having other people play the trumpet along with me."

**Ethan Nealis,
fourth-grader**

plishments, Nealis has been exposed to music within his household. In fact, many of his family members are heavily involved in music.

"My whole family right now plays instruments. My dad used to play the trumpet, so that's one reason I found out about [the trumpet]. My mom used play the piano and cello, and my brother plays the guitar. We sometimes get together and try to do some duets, or my mom will play the piano with us," Nealis



Fifth-grader Ethan Nealis smiles widely with his piano teacher, Joyce Valentine. Nealis has been playing the piano since the age of five along with the addition of playing the trumpet for a year.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY PETER NEALIS

said.

"I feel like I'm reliving his time when [my father] used to play the trumpet. I feel really proud to play the trumpet with him," Nealis said.

Peter Nealis, Ethan's father, takes pride in his son's musical endeavors.

"It's great watching him play...It's fun to watch someone like Ethan who really naturally picks it up. He's probably playing songs right now that I played in high school. It's really enjoyable; he's got a real talent for it," Peter Nealis said.

Not only does Nealis perform solo, but he also seeks enjoyment in playing music pieces with others. In light of this, he aspires to perform alongside other musicians one day.

"I like how you can do duets with other people. I just like the sound of having other people play the trumpet along with me...I really like both the trumpet and the piano, but if I am going to be in a band, I would definitely pick the trumpet, because that's the instrument I see myself playing," Nealis said.



Fifth-grader Ethan Nealis sits with his friend at the lunch table. Nealis loves to listen to jazz music outside of school and plays at fields during recess.

PHOTO BY FELICITY CHANG

[Book review]

The Land of Stories

by Grace Johnson

Reading for pleasure is one of the most overlooked joys of life. Part of why such an entertaining pastime goes unnoticed is because of the struggle of finding a creative and captivating novel. The frantic search can be ended, though, as “The Land of Stories: The Wishing Spell” and the other five corresponding books in the series enrapture any reader in a complex yet light-hearted storyline.

Chris Colfer, author and famous actor, showcases Connor and Alex Bailey, twin brother and sister, and their adventures as they fall into their grandmother’s magical storybook. The Bailey twins travel across the Fairytale World to collect eight significant items from famous fairytales, such as Cinderella’s glass slipper or a lock of Rapunzel’s hair, which, when combined, will grant any wish they ask. While the Baileys only wish to use the spell to return to their normal lives on Earth, the Evil Queen from Snow White wants to collect the items for more sinister reasons.

The writing of “The Land

of Stories” series is clear and simple yet entertaining, making the novels perfect for all ages. I read the first book in the series in third grade and recently reread it. I am continuing to read the more recent sequels as a tenth-grader, which illustrates how age and reading level truly do not matter when reading Colfer’s consistently compelling plotlines.



Throughout the novel, Colfer makes a point of convincing the audience that people, just like stories, should not be judged by their covers. The story reveals the unexpected backstories of several villains that not only garner sympathy for the infamous characters, but the backstories tie into other famous fairytales as well.

The method by which Colfer interlaces the stories that readers have grown so accustomed to alters perspec-

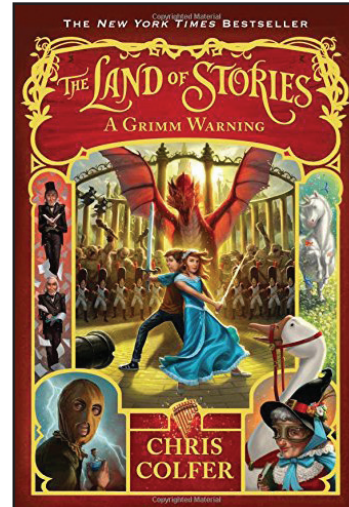
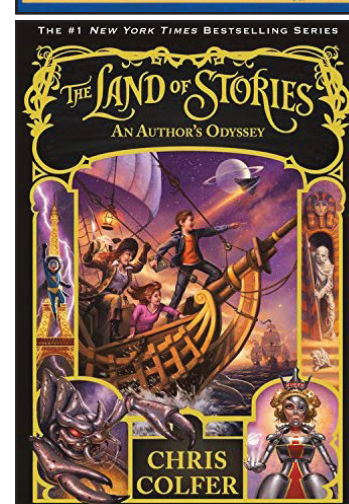
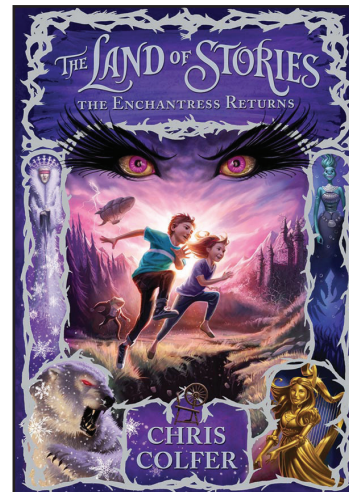
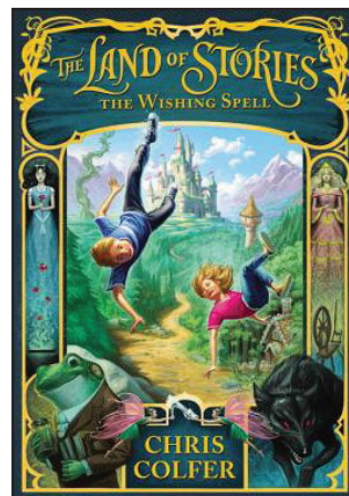
tives of how one may think of and remember several different fairytales.

Not only does Colfer portray villains in unexpected ways, but also beloved characters. For example, as Connor and Alex get to know Queen Red Riding Hood of the Red Riding Hood Kingdom, they realize she has a much bigger personality than they expected

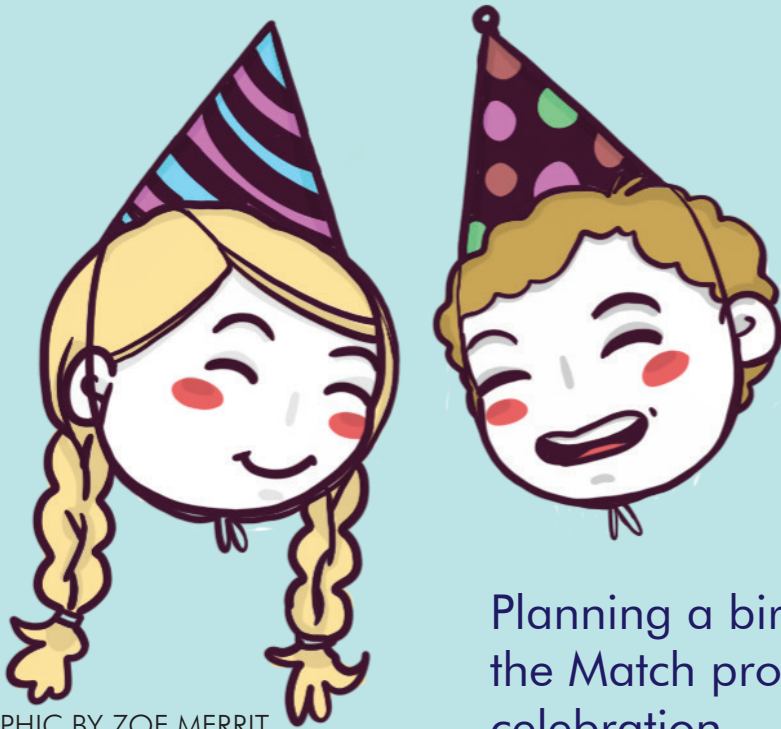
— with a personal desire for revenge against Goldilocks, a fugitive ever since that fateful day with the porridge and three bears. The two, now grown women, are both in love with Jack from Jack and the Beanstalk, and as he chooses Goldilocks, Red must

move on throughout the story. These characters are just three of many who have been represented in a different light than expected.

The suspense, creativity, and strong will of “The Land of Stories” series is overflowing and makes it the perfect entertaining read for anyone with the time. Colfer relays many important lessons through a compelling storyline and shows that everyone has a place where they belong, even if only in their imagination.



LEFT: The map shows the different fairytale kingdoms in the Land of Stories. The Land of Stories is written by famous actor and writer Chris Colfer
RIGHT: The six books of The Land of Stories series.



GRAPHIC BY ZOE MERRIT

Planning the Perfect Birthday Party

by Peyton Harris, Tricia Saputera and Odelia Tiutyama

Planning a birthday party can be difficult, but rewarding. Here, the Match provides a guide for planning the perfect birthday celebration.

Themes

Beach: Take advantage of Sarasota's natural beauty and gorgeous beaches by hosting your birthday party at one of Sarasota's six beaches! The beach is a great place for summer parties in particular, but works for other times of the year as well.

Art: Celebrate your birthday at home with friends and family with an art-themed party. Activities like painting self-portraits and artistically frosting cupcakes are great ideas for entertaining art-loving family and friends.

Movie night: Plan a complete movie night with popcorn and lots of snacks, all while celebrating your birthday from the comfort of your own home. Bundle up with friends and family in comfy blankets and possibly turn movie night into a movie marathon.

Music

Spotify makes it easy to create playlists with your favorite music, or you can find a playlist made by other users for every occasion. You can also take requests from your friends for what they want to hear by easily adding to your queue of songs.

Party Activities

Beach: A beach-themed party has limitless opportunities for fun activities that will entertain guests for hours, such as beach volleyball, relay races, sandcastle-building competitions, decorating seashells, and limbo. Adjust activities to your guests' relative ages and interests, and the potential for a noteworthy beach party is endless.

Art: For the more creatively inclined, an art-themed party can be memorable and unique. Take your guests to a painting class (such as at Painting with a Twist or Arts A Blaze), or DIY one at home by preparing easels and paints for your guests and allowing the creativity to take hold.

Movie night: For a more relaxed, intimate evening with your guests, consider a movie-themed party. Pick several movies for a night of fun, and play games such as movie-themed charades or making your very own home film by collaborating with your guests to write and perform a fun sketch.



GRAPHIC BY BEN GORDON

Decorations

Rainbow water: Create a beautiful scene on the tables that all your guests will love! For this DIY, all you need is a few small vases, food coloring and carnations. Simply fill the glasses about halfway with water and add a few drops of food coloring into each with a flower to complete the look.

Balloon Backdrop: No party is complete without a fun background that you can take pictures in front of! Perfect for any season and theme, all you need are some balloons and streamers to add festivity and color. Tape long strands of streamers together along the wall and tie balloons that match the pattern on top.

Paper fans: Paper fans are a classic party decoration that can work for any type of birthday party. Using a variety of decorative paper and patterns, fold the paper as though you are creating a fan and then staple the ends together. These are easy to make and look great clustered together.

Birthday Cake

Beach: Keep the summer feeling going at your beach party with this fun beach-inspired cake: vanilla cake with teal-colored frosting to represent the ocean, and fun plastic palm tree toppers! This can be made fairly easily at home, but can also be bought at your local bakery for a more detailed and professional look.

Art: The creativity of this cake will be certain to impress your guests. For your art-themed party, consider a cake shaped like a painting palette (sort of a curved half-circle) with different-colored dollops of frosting to represent paint shades. While this cake is able to be made at home, buying this custom-made at a bakery will save a lot of frustration and hassle.

Movie night: Take a break from bingeing movies at your party with this unique cake: a circular, chocolate cake with decorative icing that resembles a movie reel. This cake is fairly easy to make at home, able to be done with simple black and grey frosting.

Party Favors

Beach: When hosting a party at the beach, consider giving your guests a party favor, they'll be sure to remember your party with small sand buckets filled with candy and other goodies! These buckets can be found at Target or the Dollar Store and filled with a candy of your choosing.

Art: A colorful way to leave your guests smiling after an art-themed birthday party is with a watercolor or paint-by-numbers set! These can be found in bulk online and in most craft stores.

Movie night: After a night full of film with your friends, let your guests take the excitement of the movies home with them with these fun party favors: popcorn buckets stuffed with microwavable popcorn and candy! The popcorn buckets, as well as candy, can be found at most stores such as Target and Walmart.

Budget

Birthday parties can range from under 100 dollars to up to 1,000 dollars depending on the venue, number of guests, food, decorations, music and party favors. The most expensive factor will likely be the venue, food and music if a professional DJ is hired. Here is how to plan a birthday party on a budget without skimping on fun:

DIY Your Decorations: Checking Pinterest for low-budget decorating ideas can help keep the budget in check. Instead of spending money on pre-printed decorations or party bags, let your inner artist shine while having fun and saving on expensive decorations.

Find the right venue: If you decide to have a birthday party at a venue that must be rented out or paid for, be sure to check deal websites, like groupon.com, for discounts or promotions. Asking the venue about a discount for hosting the party at an off-peak time or day can also help save lots of money.

Skip the fancy invitations: When it comes to party preparation for a kid's birthday party, swapping out paper invitations for digital invites will not only help save money, but also decrease the risk of lost invitations.

Twirling into triumph

by Ella Williams

Keeping her goals on pointe, third-grader Suyi Yao has been dancing for five years.

To become a great dancer, one needs complete focus, commitment, flexibility, and good posture, which Yao already has in the bag.

Always wanting to dance since she was very young, Yao's parents decided to enroll her in ballet. Yao currently dances at the Cuban Ballet school, where she works hard everyday to succeed.

Undaunted, Yao practices five days a week around 15 hours each week.

Although Yao is very busy with school and dance, in her spare time she loves to read fantasy and humorous books.

Along with reading, Yao loves music and art.

"She always dances along with the music at home when she is in a good mood," her mother, Hailan Yao, said.

Yao is currently involved in "The Nutcracker" and plays three parts: a mouse, a baby doll, and a bon bon.

"I love playing a bon bon because I get to do a lot of gymnastics," Yao said.

On Mondays and Wednes-

days Yao practices for "The Nutcracker," and on the other days she has normal dance class.

Although Yao loves "The Nutcracker," her favorite performance is the end-of-year show. She loves showcasing a dance choreographed by her own teacher, and the performance enables Yao to display many of the skills she has learned throughout the year.

A huge reason why Yao loves to dance is because of her friends. Through dance, Yao was given the chance to meet new people.

I love ballet because I can move to the music and dance with my friends."

Suyi Yao, third-grader



Third-grader Suyi Yao (second from right) poses with her dance group before a performance. Dancing for five years, Yao currently dances at the Cuban Ballet school.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY HAILAN YAO

"I have made a lot of new friends who go to different schools, from dance," Yao said.

Yao is grateful toward her parents, who gave her the opportunity to dance.

"I love ballet because I can

move to the music and dance with my friends," she said.

In the future, Yao is planning to continue with dance.

"I want to continue dance for as long as possible," Yao said.



Fifth-grader Everett Perrin (center) strikes a pose with his acting group at the Spotlight Kids Theatre. Perrin also participates in Pine View Players, where he is playing the part of the guard and prince in the play "Aladdin."

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MELISSA PERRIN

Student is well-versed

by Elena D'Amato

Fifth-grader Everett Perrin not only excels in school, but on the stage, too. Every Monday from 4:30 to 7:30 p.m., Perrin can be found at Spotlight Kids Theatre practicing for upcoming musical productions, like his upcoming show "Madagascar," in which he will play Mason the Monkey.

Through hard work, dedication and auditions highlighting the characteristics of each character, the directors chose roles for those who best suited the written characters for "Madagascar."

Perrin memorizes both speaking and singing lines for his productions. And, though he is not in choir, Perrin is not

afraid to sing on stage either.

"I always feel achieved just being on stage and showing that I can do it," Perrin said.

Beyond Spotlight Kids, Perrin also displays his talent in the Pine View Players Club. He auditioned for Pine View Players' production of "Aladdin" and will play the role of a guard and prince at their next production Jan. 10.

Perrin started performing after seeing his friend, third-grader Lila Paul, perform with Spotlight Kids.

"My mom said, 'You should do Spotlight, so I went ahead and did it,'" Perrin said.

The two friends still perform together in both Spotlight Kids and Pine View Players.

"Spotlight Kids has given Everett an excellent fun, creative, energetic outlet. In the two years he's been involved, it opened him up, and in turn has greatly built his confidence," his mom, Melissa Perrin, said.

According to Everett, commitment is usually not a problem in terms of managing schoolwork and theater.

"[I only have a problem] if I have a big project. Once, I procrastinated, and I had to do a big social studies project in just two nights," Perrin said.

Ultimately, Perrin hopes to continue theater throughout elementary and middle school, with plans to join Pine View's Drama Club in high school.

Student is a triple threat

by Lora Rini

Fourth-grader Mason Howard is a triple threat, excelling both on land and in the water. He has been competing in triathlons since he was six years old, and has qualified for nationals for the past two years.

Triathlon season runs from the end of February to the end of September. Howard spends an hour and a half every Sunday during season training with his team, which is called Trimonsters. There are around 40 kids on the team aged 5 to 17. In a typical practice, they run, swim at the beach or the Y, or bike on the legacy trail.

Howard's coach, Deb Peters, described him as focused, committed, and a very hard worker.

"Mason's never one of the kids goofing off - he's always right in the front, paying at-

tention to what's happening. He wants to be the one to demonstrate whatever I said," Peters said. "He takes on a

My favorite thing about watching him is probably the determination.

He's very focused when he's racing,"

Kendra Howard,
Howard's mother

leadership role, and he's really good with the new kids. Not all of the kids have the capacity to be able to do that."

During the race, kids from six to ten years old swim 100 yards, bike three miles, and run a half mile. This is the category that Howard is in at the moment, but when he turns eleven, he will have to double each of these distances for the eleven to fifteen category.

Howard is not the only one in his family who enjoys triathlons. Although he was the first one to begin training, his mother, father, and two brothers also compete. His family occasionally bikes and swims together to train.

"My favorite thing about watching him is probably the determination. He's very focused when he's racing," his mother, Kendra Howard, said.

Howard has been very successful in his racing, even making it to nationals two years in a row, which is no easy feat. To make it to nationals, he had to get a coach's recommendation by placing under tenth place in regionals, which is located in Sebring this year. Howard got third place last year in his age group in regionals. He did well in nationals as well, placing fourteenth in his age group his first year.

Howard especially enjoyed regionals and nationals, saying that they are his favorite triathlons to go attend.

"They're the best put together; there's less confusion about them," Howard said, regarding what puts these triathlons above the rest.

Although he enjoys every part of a triathlon equally, running has been a part of Howard's life even before he started competing in triathlons. He



TOP: In the ocean, fourth-grader Mason Howard completes the swimming portion of a triathlon. This requires Howard to swim 100 yards.

BOTTOM: Howard mounts his bike during a race. He trains for triathlons an hour and a half every Sunday.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KENDRA HOWARD

has been running 5Ks since before he started training for triathlons, and continues to do them while participating in triathlons.

Ultimately, Howard is interested in doing cross country in high school, and plans to continue triathlons into the future.



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Student shoots for the stars

by Naina Chauhan

Aiming for a different target, fifth-grader Kiana Cullen has been practicing archery for nearly two years.

Cullen was inspired to start archery after her sister introduced her to the “Hunger Games” Trilogy — a series that follows Katniss Everdeen, an archer, who against all odds pursues justice in a dystopian society.

“She just always continues to keep going and never stops trying,” Cullen said.

After watching all the films and reading the series, Cullen started practicing archery informally with a freestyle approach but now has a portable post which she brings to a large field to practice various skills.

Despite her busy schedule, Cullen always dedicates time to practice over the weekends for 45 minutes to an hour at a time.

During her practices, Cullen fine-tunes her strength and aim. She admitted that when she first started archery, it was difficult to teach herself these skills as she had to first learn to adapt her finger positions. However, she said she learns through practice, mistakes, and successes.

While Cullen has seen progress since she first began, her archery journey is far from over. Currently, her main focus is aim and being able to consistently control the arrow. While she said that it can be frustrating when missing a target, she

uses Katniss Everdeen as a role model to keep trying.

Cullen’s father, Sean Cullen, who often accompanies Kiana to practice, has enjoyed watching her grow as an archer.

“She is very strong and has beaten me in regards to furthest shot in an open field. She has been getting more and more comfortable with her equipment, including retrieving her arrows from a quiver. It’s nice seeing her develop her skills,” Sean Cullen said.

Cullen’s favorite aspect of archery is that it lets her become detached from the rest of the world.

“You’re just totally in the zone. You can control the arrow and watch it hit the target,” Cullen said.



Drawing back an arrow, fifth-grader Kiana Cullen aims for her target. She taught herself first with a freestyle approach.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY SEAN CULLEN

Applying these skills of getting ‘in the zone’ has led to her success in school. According to Cullen, she has learned to take a moment to just breathe and relax to help her

focus in archery.

Cullen wishes to continue this sport and hopefully even find a local club in which she can practice archery at a competitive level.



Practicing a flip while diving, third-grader Gabriel Constanzo splashes into the pool at Southwest Florida Diving at FGCU.

Constanzo has been diving since he was seven years old and doing flips because they give him more points during competitions. PHOTO PROVIDED BY GINA FAVEL

A Springboard to Success

by Ella Hechlik

Third-grader Gabriel Constanzo holds enormous success in springboard diving, a sport that entered the Olympics in 1904 only eight years after the first Olympic games.

Springboard diving is performed on a flexible plank that is usually made out of steel or aluminum from which divers perform stunts and dive off at different heights.

Constanzo has been springboard diving for three years and started at the age of seven. He practices at Southwest Florida Diving at Florida Gulf Coast University in Fort Myers, Florida.

Constanzo regularly competes for both three meter and one meter dives but prefers the three meter.

“You have more time to

complete the flip or dive you are doing, with more time in the air,” Constanzo said.

In the past three years, Constanzo has learned over 50 different dives and multiple flips.

“Backflips and front flips get you more points than just regular diving, so I learned a lot of those,” Constanzo said.

Along with the basics, he also named a few other dives such as the inwards dive, one-and-a-half, and the back dive.

“The one-and-a-half dive is probably my favorite dive to do, I’m really good at one meter, and it took a couple days to learn to do,” Constanzo said.

Practicing three times a week on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays with his team, Constanzo has made many friends on the Southwest

Florida Diving team and has learned a lot from his experience.

He has attended many dive meets across Florida in the past, and will complete his next meet in February, at the Plantation Dive Invitational.

“Gabe is a very skilled diver with a lot of passion and commitment to the sport. He travels over an hour each direction to get to diving practice,” David Boyko, Constanzo’s coach of two years, said. “He has a lot of potential, and I am excited to see how he progresses over the years as a diver.”

“I definitely want to keep going [springboard diving] through high school. I haven’t thought about it much after that, but definitely in high school. I’m excited to continue,” Constanzo said.

Student has 'drive' for golf

by Lily Quartermaine

Just like the strokes he makes on the golf course, third-grader Josiah Joseph soars above the competition when it comes to golf. Ever since he received a mini, plastic golf set for his second birthday, he has been hooked.

Golfing is a huge part of Joseph's life. Whether it be an early-morning practice or participating in some of the most esteemed junior competitions in the country, his love for the sport is astonishing.

"He never wants to leave the course and always says, 'just one more drive... just one more chip... just one more putt!'" Joseph's mother, Kristin Joseph, said.

Joseph has been invited to a myriad of competitions including the Florida State Invitational, the PGA Golf Club Invitational in Port St. Lucie, where he won eighth place, and most recently the Copperhead Classic Invitational in January

2020.

Despite Joseph's impressive skills in golf, he admits

there have

been many challenges to the game as well.

"When I was about 6 years old, I four-putted every hole," Joseph said, explaining his mistakes in the game.

Essentially, Joseph had a self-proclaimed bad habit of needing four tries to get the ball in the hole once he got on the green.

Joseph's main coach and mentor has always been his father, Jeremiah Joseph, who has played a large role in Joseph's relationship with golf. Josiah Joseph is not

currently in a team, but has started working with Jon Bullas, the founder of the

US Kids Golf Academy at Laurel Oak Country Club, participating in Bullas' academy there.

Joseph has competed in the Sarasota US Kids Golf spring, summer and fall seasons of tournaments for the last 2 years. Recently, he won a Fall Tournament Champion award in US Kids Golf for having the most points and wins at the end of the fall season.

"Josiah impresses me every time I see him play. A youngster having the ability to hit a golf ball so solidly is just amazing!" Bullas said.

One of Joseph's most admirable achievements involved being a part of the US Kids Golf World Championship. The tournament involves youth golfers from across the globe, all invited to play based on exceptional golf scores. The event took place over multiple days at the historic Pinehurst Golf Course in Pinehurst, North Carolina. Joseph described this event as a struggle, but fun nonetheless.

"It was really hard, if I hit it on the green it would roll off, so I had to stick it," Joseph said, "But I want to do it again and I want to be on TV."

Joseph has high hopes for his future in golf. One of his biggest aspirations is to play on the PGA World tour when he is older, as a professional golfer. For now, Joseph looks forward to joining the Pine View golf team when he is old enough.



TOP: At the end of a long day, third-grader Josiah Joseph practices his swing. Joseph is recognized by his family members and coach as hard-working and enthusiastic about golf.

BOTTOM: Joseph poses in front of a sign on a golf course where he plays his beloved sport. Joseph has had a knack for golf since his second birthday.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KRISTIN JOSEPH

Spreading Kindness

by Brianna Nelson

As a former elementary school student, I can speak to the truth that kids can be mean — like, really mean.

I went to a school outside of Sarasota that was a bit different from this one; our class sizes were massive, and I only knew a few people within my program, specifically a boy named Aaron. Aaron and I were on the same teacher team and both took Spanish. We weren't very close, but I knew his name and said "Hi!" in passing. But, in fifth grade, Aaron broke his leg, leading him to hobble to the elevator every morning on crutches.

Knowing elementary school students can be a bit insensitive, you can guess what happened next. Everyday, people would make fun of Aaron for his crutches, and we all thought that was normal. No one spoke up, no one defended him.

Aaron's injury was visible to us all, but while people bullied Aaron, other kids in our class were dealing with similar issues; health issues, family issues, or friend issues.

So, when you realize that everyone is going through something, why add to their daily pile of burdens?

The thing is, no matter who you speak to, there's a high possibility that some-

thing negative is happening in their life — something temporary, like a pile up of homework, or more permanent, like a disability or health condition — and that doesn't make the problems they struggle with any less serious.

At the same time, in fifth grade, a close friend of mine told me she had Type 1 Diabetes. No one had known about it except her family, and no one at school had known about the burden of doctors visits and medication along with the endless list of other complications associated

with diabetes. During this time, kids made fun of her for enjoying reading, something she enjoyed, and being a bit of a nerd. Adults always tell you to watch your words. "If you don't have any-

thing nice to say, don't say anything at all," they say, and they're right. It's always necessary that you take a moment to think about the fact that a person could be dealing with a life-changing issue you don't even know about. If you see a kid like Aaron being made fun of for his crutches, stand up for him, because you don't know what all these words are leading to in the student's life.

Ultimately, elementary school can be a stressful time, and after pondering my time in elementary school, I can say that those years helped form me as a person. What I learned was that thinking back to your time in school, you'll want to remember the times you supported a friend who was sick, or helped an acquaintance who was struggling, not the negative times that put you or someone else in an uncomfortable place. No matter where you are in your life, you and everyone around you will have a struggle, but no matter what you can try to show kindness and just make that little difference.

GRAPHICS BY BEN GORDON

HOW TO BE KIND IN THE CLASSROOM

1. Speak respectfully



In class, always listen to what people have to say and respond in a way that doesn't put them down. Sharing your ideas in front of others can be scary, so always be kind.

2. Share your supplies

We all know the feeling of panic when we don't have the right school supplies, so if you see a classmate in a similar situation, help them out and lend them what they need.



3. Do your share

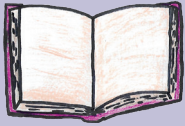


One of the hardest parts about group projects is splitting the work evenly, so make sure that you do your part! Don't be the person who brings the group down.

4. Listen well

This is rule number one! If you want to be listened to when you are speaking, you must give others the same respect.





Sorry, I'm Booked



by **Isabella Gaskill**

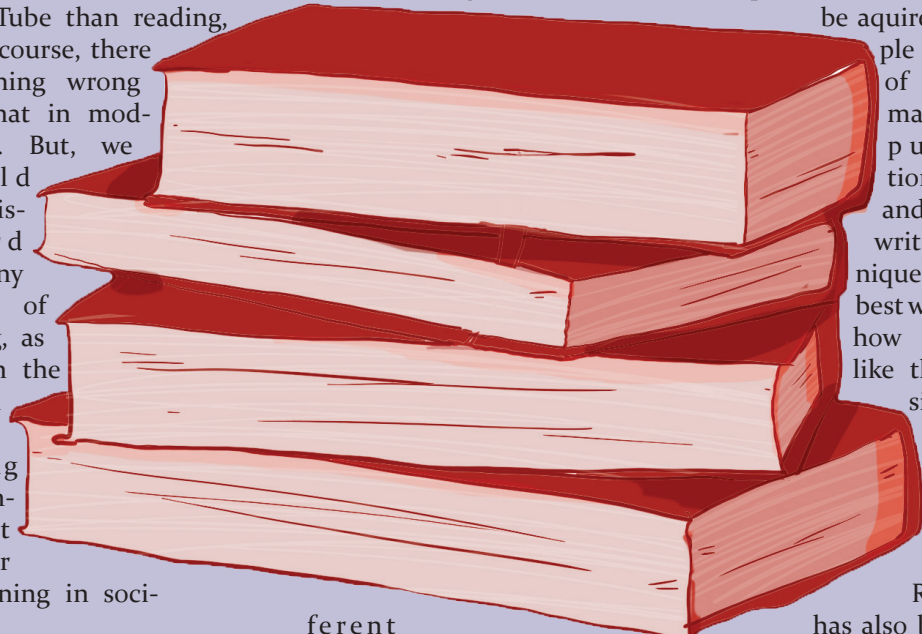
The most pivotal point in my childhood was probably when I was in fourth grade, when, after much pestering from my mother, I finally picked up J.K. Rowling's "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone." I remember being absolutely immersed in the story, taking it with me on the bus for field trips and reading past my bedtime with a flashlight. It was one of my first big interests as a kid, and I talked about it nonstop with anyone who would listen. But as I am watching kids like my little brother grow up, I'm seeing that more students are starting to dislike or even hate reading.

In the modern world, there are a lot of options when it comes to entertainment, with Netflix and every social media app under

the sun taking up more and more of our lives. So, I'm not surprised when I see a lot of kids who are more interested in YouTube than reading, and of course, there is nothing wrong with that in moderation. But, we should not disregard the many merits of reading, as even in the digital age, reading is an important skill for functioning in society.

Reading is one of the best ways to expose yourself to new vocabulary and storytelling

techniques. This can be used to improve your own writing and conversational skills. The more familiar you are with dif-



ferent vocabulary and how to use it, the easier it becomes to write quickly and effectively.

According to the Huffington Post, "Writing is a skill. But this skill is very complicated because it can't

be acquired by simple learning of grammar rules, punctuation marks, and different writing techniques." The best way to learn how to write like the professionals is to read and learn from their works.

Reading has also been proven to reduce stress. According to takingcharge.com, "A 2009 study at the University

of Sussex found that reading can reduce stress by up to 68%." Balancing school and everything else can get tiring and lead to high stress levels, so sitting down with a good book is an easy way to relax.

But the main benefit of reading is the enjoyment of reading itself. Not everyone is going to love every book, and that's okay. That being said, there is a book out there for everyone. Don't be afraid to try a whole bunch of genres until you find one you like. If you aren't enjoying a book, it's okay to put it down and try to find a different one. Ask your friends or parents what books they think you would like because everyone deserves to find the book that they absolutely cannot put down. Or, you could start your reading journey how I did, and go pick up a copy of "Harry Potter."

GRAPHIC BY ZOE MERRITT



"Story Thieves"
by **James Riley**
recommended
by
Fourth-grader
Sabrina Vapolsky

"It's not really an ordinary story you would normally hear. It's fantasy; not with dragons or anything, but more than that with magic and a lot more details."

"Cape" by
Kate Hanigan
recommended
by
Fourth-grader
Alexandra
Ginger

"It's cool because it is a normal book with comics. It's about two girls with superpowers during World War Two."

"Throne of Fire" by **Rick Riordan**
recommended
by
Second-grader
Christopher
Lander

"You should read it because it's really cool and super interesting."

GRAPHICS BY GRACE JOHNSON

What did you enjoy learning this year?

“Multiplication and division”
- Annika Michael, grade 2

“How to add and subtract”
-Gianna Fotch, grade 4

“Early explorers in Florida”
-Dillon Carlson, grade 4

“How to conduct science experiments”
-Ela Vardan, grade 2

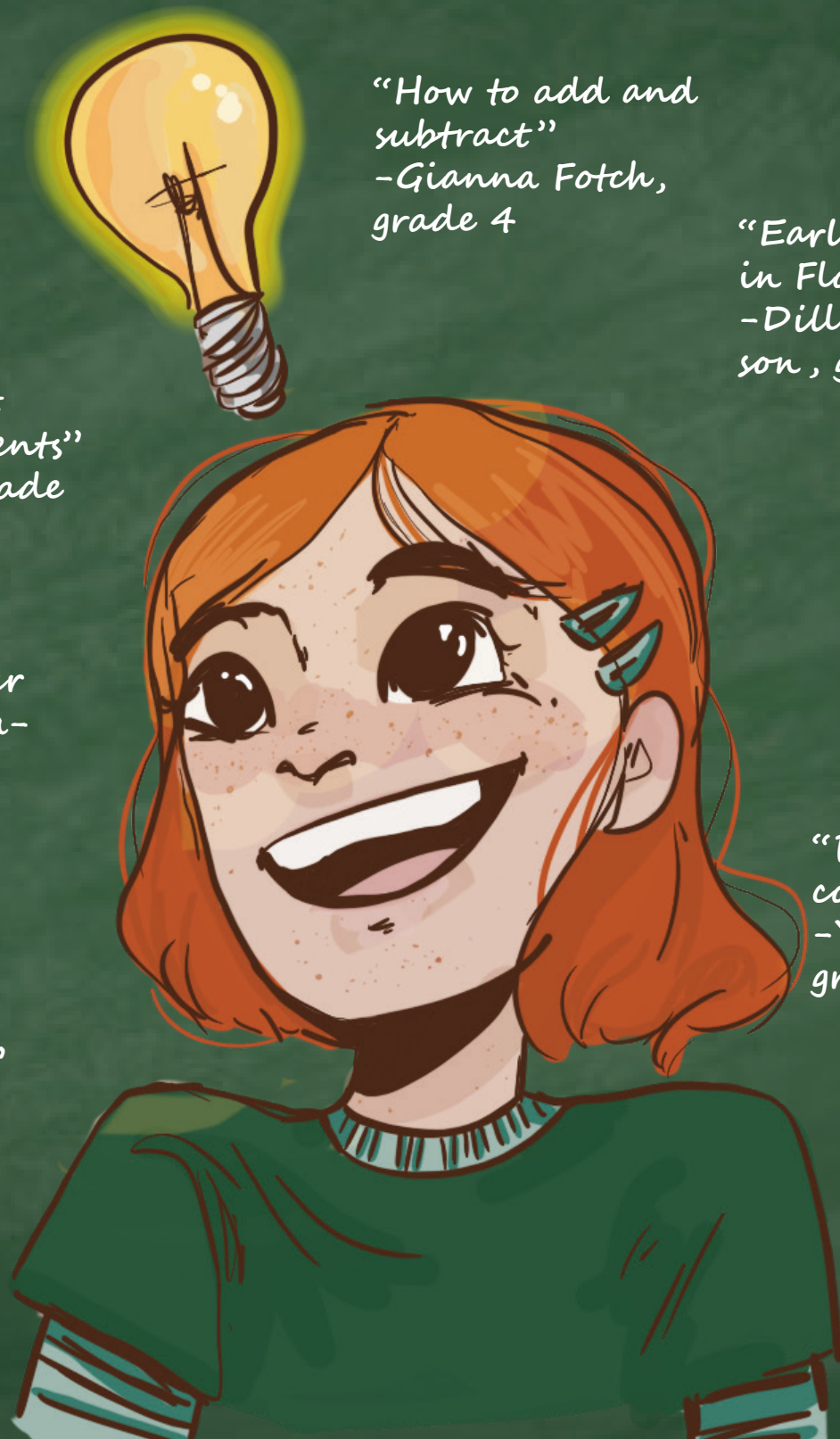
“Energy transfer and transformation”
-Felix Ratner, grade 4

“How electricity and circuits function”
-Kepler Hanzivasilis, grade 4

“Everything math”
-Matthew Sensenbrenner, grade 4

“Playing the recorder”
-Yashi Dedwao, grade 4

“Geography”
-Tej Atluru, grade 4



What is the history behind Christmas trees?

[student question submission]

Question submitted by second-grader Francesca Madrid



PHOTO BY GRACE JOHNSON

by Grace Johnson

Nothing shouts holiday spirit more than an evergreen tree covered in tinsel, ornaments and colorful lights. However, as many do not know, the tradition of Christmas trees goes way back in history, far before Christianity existed and was widely practiced.

According to an article by History.com, many ancient communities throughout Africa and Europe believed that evergreen trees would keep away evil spirits, witches, ghosts and illnesses. In the same way that present-day families decorate their homes during the holiday season, ancient peoples would hang evergreen tree boughs over their doors and windows.

History.com goes on to explain that the significance

of the evergreen tree in history grows as the winter solstice approaches.

The winter solstice is the shortest day of the year, when the sun shines the least. Because of this, around the thirty-second century B.C., ancient Egyptians believed that their sun god, Ra, was sick on the day of the winter solstice. In the night, they would celebrate his recovery by decorating with evergreen trees and branches because the somewhat everlasting life of an evergreen tree symbolized Ra's triumph over death.

Other ancient cultures, such as the early Romans and the Druids, used evergreen tree decorations on the winter solstice in similar ways.

According to The German Way & More, a blog based on the language and culture of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, in the sixteenth century, German Christians began the tradition of Christmas trees as they are now known. Martin Luther, an influential figure in the Protestant Reformation, is credited as the first to bring light to the Christmas tree. History.com explains the religious figure that one night after admiring the stars' beauty, Luther decided to recreate the night sky's beauty for his family by wiring candles to the festive

evergreen in his home.

History.com continues to explain that American settlers were wary of the Christmas trees at first because it was a custom that did not evolve alongside them.

Even though Europe had already embraced the new tradition as Christian, it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that European-Americans stopped viewing decorated evergreen trees as a Pagan tradition.

According to zmesience.com, by the mid nineteenth century, Queen Victoria had popularized the Christmas tree in England after a photo of the British royal family surrounding a Christmas tree surfaced in a London newspaper.

The symbolism of everlasting life held by the evergreen tree relates to many different cultures' views on their different gods and celebrations. The meaning of the evergreen reaches far beyond Christianity and is something that can unite everyone, regardless of personal religious identity.

What was once a small cultural tradition has grown to something much bigger which is a celebration of everlasting friendship and love, something the holiday season truly represents.



GRAPHICS BY BRIANNA NELSON AND NAINA CHAHAN

History of Christmas Trees

The trees used to be decorated with candles.

Christmas ornaments were not used until the 1890s.

The trees were first brought to America in the 18th century through German immigrants in Pennsylvania.

Christmas tree tradition started in 16th century Germany.

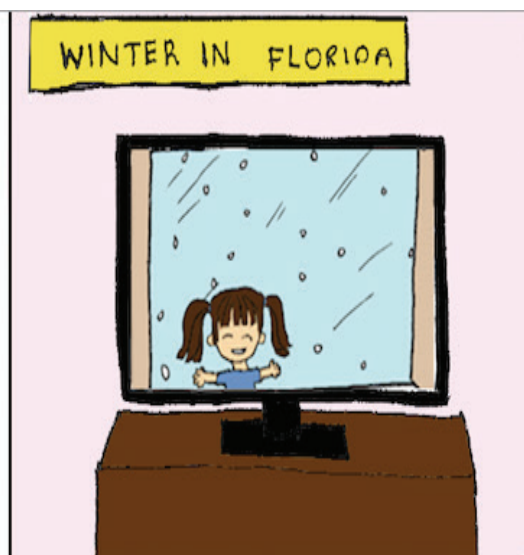
[Comic]

Winter in Florida vs. Elsewhere

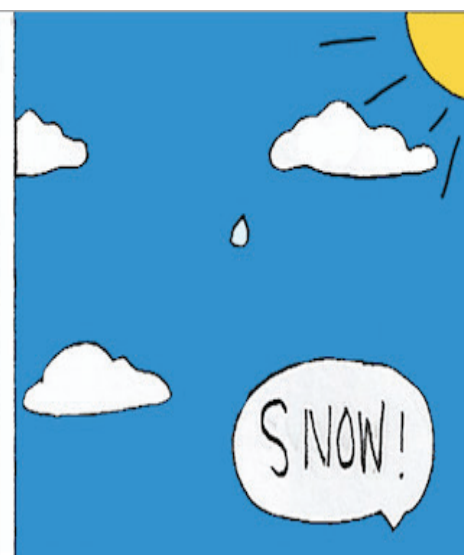
by Felicity Chang



Winter in — well, almost everywhere except Florida — is filled with snow.



In Florida, snowy climates are viewed on television sets and movie screens, not outside.



On a sunny Florida day, a child yells "Snow!" after seeing something in the sky.



It's just rain.

Holiday Word Scramble

fenowslka _____

nadlec _____

oioekcs _____

nomehar _____

montrnae _____

eihgsl _____

oesimtelte _____

fenowslka _____

stmsahrci etre _____

nmawosn _____

hwetar _____

perilacef _____

ndacy nace _____

neymhic _____

eainder _____

jaomu _____

yrostf _____

psghpiogn _____

Bringing the jolly and the holly

It's a known fact that the holiday gift-giving season can be a bit daunting, especially when finding a gift for your parents. Perhaps the most intimidating gift recipient is the disapproving father, who is especially hard to please. But fear not, The Match is here to showcase some classic gifts for even the pickiest parent. **by Anna Labiner**



Yarn

So versatile! So chic! Any dad will absolutely love a nice ball of yarn for the holidays. Give your dad this soft and stringy gift for an absolutely glowing response, and expect a new hand-knit sweater soon.



A box of tissues

This gift is an absolute necessity for any holiday-lover. Dads will love the opportunity to blow their noses knowing that they have secured the love of their children.



A jar of pennies

Any dad will love this alternative to their tired, old wallets. A jar of change is a great accessory to any outfit, so this gift is perfect for a dad who needs some help in the fashion department.



Hand sanitizer

Whether it's a heartfelt gift or a subtle hint towards your father's hygiene, this gift is a sure crowd pleaser, and will last them through flu season.

Student 'checks' his skills

by Alyson Mizanin

Instead of partaking in games with action figures or Rubix cubes, fourth-grader Benjamin Jiang plays with knights and kings. Jiang is a chess extraordinaire, having competed and succeeded in various tournaments both in and outside of Sarasota. Jiang hopes to further develop his chess prowess to reach the Grandmaster title within the coming years.

Having played chess since age seven, specifically since January 1, 2017, as a way to start the new year, Jiang has found extreme success in the game.

After his father, Michael Jiang, discovered chesskid.com, an interactive website designed toward suiting young players' needs for improvement, Michael Jiang entered the National K-12 Grade CHampionships tournament through the US Chess Federation in December of that year, held in Orlando. He placed 49 out of 211 participants in the second-grade level. Last year, Jiang participated in the following year's national scholastic tournament as a third grader, placing 33 out of 197.

Jiang has gone to national tournaments twice, but so many city- and county-based games that he has "completely lost track" of their numbers, earning him several trophies and monetary awards.

His recent achievements include placing second in the 2019 U.S. Open Scholastic, which was normally open to middle- and high-school students, as well as placing eighth in the 2019 Florida State



Fourth-grader Benjamin Jiang plays chess with Pine View's Elementary Chess Club. Jiang placed second in the 2019 U.S. Open Scholastic competition earlier this year.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY MICHAEL JIANG

Scholastic Championship, which was open to elementary-schoolers.

Jiang's success can be owed to the fact he often plays above his grade level in chess. Although the national tournaments are based on age, Jiang "plays up," or competes against older players because of his advanced abilities.

Because of his continued growth with the passtimes, Jiang thanks his father for introducing him to chess.

"My dad used to read chess books before he found chesskid.com, and that's where I've been practicing since," Jiang said. "He used to teach me because he was better than me when I started. Now, because of my practice, I'd say I'm better than him."

"I always thought chess was a good game, a good sport to learn," Michael Jiang said. "I thought it would be better for

him to learn than just playing video games. It was to make sure he had another sport [to compete in] and another way to challenge him."

Jiang hopes to reach Grandmaster levels as he continues pursuing chess. The Grandmaster title is awarded to players through the Fédération Internationale des Échecs (FIDE), or International Chess Federation. Players can achieve this status by scoring an Elo rating, which involves calculated outcomes of matches based on prior experience, of over 2500 and by holding norms, which occur in the event of one player beating a Grandmaster or a similarly skilled player.

"We will see how far he can go to, but I hope he will continue playing into the future. He wants to play at the top levels. He's already doing very well for his age, but he just wants to get better," Michael Jiang said.

[a column]

Sharing opinions



Leo Gordon,
Match Editor-in-Chief

Some say wisdom comes with age. It's an age-old sentiment, but in many aspects, it's faulty.

Whether they're on issues like TV show preference, favorite food, or political matters, we all have opinions. Fun, natural, and extremely diverse forms of expression, opinions play a large role in the formation of a person, starting from a young age.

I've always taken an interest in politics, for example, and over the years, since late elementary school, I've formed and tweaked political opinions I feel comfortable defending to this day.

As children, we're often told that we shouldn't have opinions on serious issues, or that if we do have opinions, they're unfounded.

I, like many students, experienced this dialogue from a young age.

Hearing people write or say things like, "You're only a middle schooler, stay out of politics," was disheartening, and made me feel like my opinions were being judged based on my age rather than my merits.

It wasn't just me, as many of my friends seemed interested in politics, forming their own opinions on issues per their own interest. This taught me that forming opinions was natural, and that even at a young age, in the face of irreverence by adults, my opinion, held value.

The issue is aside from politics or an interest in politics — the issue lies in the fact that students fear the existence of a personal opinion they feel will be seen by adults as unjustified or overambitious.

It's impossible to lack opinions in a world with so much to think about, especially at a time when globalization and technology offer us global news and entertainment at the movement of a mouse.

There's no reason to feel bad about having an opinion, so don't.

As we approach the new year, remember that it's okay to have an opinion, regardless of topic, and that your age plays no role in how equipped you are to hold such opinions.

As children, we're often told that we shouldn't have opinions on serious issues, or that if we do have opinions, they're unfounded.