THIRD ANNUAL

THE KAPPY FAMILY

Anne Frank

Art & Writing

& COMPEITION

June 12, 2019 • AWARD CEREMONY
2019 THEME: the power of change

“How wonderful it is that no one need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

ANNE FRANK
With great pride, I commend everyone that entered this year’s Kappy Family Anne Frank Art & Writing Competition and congratulate all of this year’s winning students. We are overwhelmed by the creativity and profundity of this year’s 315 entries, and would like to acknowledge and thank every parent, guardian, and teacher involved for his or her encouragement and support.

This year, we celebrate this occasion on what would have been Anne Frank’s 90th birthday. More than seven decades since she wrote her diary and short stories, hatred and bigotry persist. We live in an increasingly complex world – one in which it is far too easy to disengage from communal responsibility and be complicit. We must remember that each of us can seize the **power of change** and make our world a better place. Indeed, it is “wonderful that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

This year’s students have opened their eyes, hearts, and minds to meaningfully reflect and channel their thoughts, opinions, and ideas into creative expression. In the act of creating a piece of art or writing, they have undergone a transformative experience and have changed. So too, each piece holds the power to inspire and empower our visitors. There is no end to that potential, and our hope is that we actualize that potential and identify our own ways to make our world a better place.

Aliza Tick
Education Specialist
Holocaust Memorial Center
Welcome to the 3rd annual Kappy Family Anne Frank Art & Writing Competition at the Holocaust Memorial Center. Our family is a proud sponsor of this contest that is designed to inspire and empower students to gain an understanding of the power of change. Anne Frank serves as an important symbol of an individual that portrays the lessons of the Holocaust. A sapling of the actual chestnut tree that grew outside of her attic window stands at the Holocaust Memorial Center today, resolute in its determination to withstand the forces of prejudice and bigotry. Anne Frank was wise beyond her years, and her observation “that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world” has inspired today’s wonderful contest submissions that prove her reflections to be true.

Our father, Garry Kappy, is the last surviving member of his family and is very excited to have the opportunity to present today’s awards. Born in Opatow, Poland, he was imprisoned in different labor camps at the young age of 15, where he dug ditches and slaved in a steel ammunition factory. He survived the horrors of the Buchenwald and Auschwitz and managed to eventually make his way to Detroit where he had a family with his beloved wife Viola, and a successful business career. Though it is important to him to memorialize all of the victims of the Holocaust, he feels that it is even more crucial to educate others in order to help prevent future genocides. Out of this inspiration, the Kappy Family Anne Frank Art & Writing Competition was born.

Congratulations to all of this year’s winners and thank you for sharing your very personal entries with all of us.

The Kappy Family
June 12, 2019
My artwork is about the power we hold that can change the world. I drew two hands, side by side, each with the Earth imprinted on them. The hands are coming together in unity. My artwork shows that the power to change the world is in the palm of each person’s hand. Each hand is beautiful on its own, but when joined together they form a complete picture. Like Mother Teresa says, “I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.” The true power to change is to change together.
People always wait for the "right moment" to make a difference. They might think that they're too young or that it isn't the right time. But does the sun wait for night to turn into day? No, it does not. And like the sun, many people can make a difference right now. There is no time limit; just time to make a difference, and to improve the world for the better of everyone and everything in it.
Though Anne Frank did not survive the Holocaust, she is an inspiration. I’ve recently had the chance to learn about this special person: to learn her story, to learn about her journey, and to read her inspiring words. In this oil pastel, there are objects that symbolize Anne Frank and her life. The star represents her Jewish identity. The book is her diary, her most prized possession, and the keeper of all her hopes, dreams, and feelings. Did you know that there is a flower named after her? In this oil pastel, Anne is holding a candle that represents the light of hope. Hope is what kept her sorrows from darkening her happiness. She led a life of courage and hope that we should all honor.
In this drawing, flipping a light switch is much more than turning on the lights. Anne Frank said, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world", and it is very true. Taking the first step to making change is just like flipping on a light switch. It is simple, but ends up lighting up a whole room. By deciding to take the small step of changing the world, there is much light one can bring to it.
The first amendment to the constitution of the United States protects the right to assemble and peaceably protest. I focused on this idea of the right to protest, the right to bring about change, which needs to be protected by the government itself. What if this right wasn’t protected? What if the right to change a government had to be approved by the government first? These questions are what I addressed in the piece. The use of ink relates well to the focal point of the piece being stamped paper, as stamping involves similar ink.
Change is scary to most people, but absolutely necessary for human survival. But little do people know that change doesn’t have to be a huge gesture or monumental decisions. Change starts with a simple act of kindness, or, in this case, the strike of a match. I decided to depict change by showing how lighting a match eradicates darkness and reveals new possibilities for light. By striking one match, you can light hundreds of candles. I chose to draw this picture with pastels to show the vibrant effects light has on dark surroundings.
My art depicts change. Some change is normal and accepted as fact. Seasons are an example of this, and, sadly, so was the Holocaust. Nowadays change is being embraced, but in the past it was trying to be erased. While in the annex, Anne Frank and her family could not see the beautiful transformation of the seasons, nor could they see the terrible changes around them. This painting also shows that no matter how great you may be, change can transform your life in an instant. Before the Holocaust, many people’s lives seemed perfect, and just like that it changed so much in so little time. Change can mean many different things, and my painting shows that no matter who or what you are change can ruin or save your life.
Ava Jacobs | Academy of the Sacred Heart, 8th Grade

I painted a portrait of Anne Frank using watercolors because the light saturation implies how kind and light-hearted Anne was. I found a magazine article and realized it applies to her quote, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world." The article describes how current leaders are speaking up for Jews. I put it on my artwork because it supports Anne's quote. Now when I look at my piece I think it's never too late to speak up, because when you do nobody is stopping you.
This painting represents that love isn’t defined by race. We shouldn’t base our beliefs on the past and move on. We made mistakes in the past, and we learned. Now, it’s time to change our ideas, be open minded, and accept everyone for who they are, no matter how they look.
In my painting you will see a large stack of dynamite that evolves into people. These people symbolize issues that we as a society need to face in order to progress and protect our futures. The people on their phones represent ignorance and inactivity, while others are depicted as angry and hostile. The people in the painting holding empty hats are the impoverished population, an issue often ignored today. The overall metaphor of my piece is that these issues are a ticking bomb that needs to be diffused immediately. The time on the clock is specifically 2:43. The reason I picked this time was because on a phone, 2-4-3 spells out “AID.” This symbolizes that it is time to help and aid the world. Overall, I tried to highlight that we not only don’t have to, but also cannot wait to change the world.
I was deeply inspired by this year’s theme, the power of change, and immediately thought of my experiences in Haiti. For the last two summers, I have traveled to Haiti to build schools for families that don’t have access to them. In this acrylic painting, a mother is buying supplies for herself and her son from one of the stores that was struck by a major earthquake. In my high school career, I have put in countless hours to fund raise to be able to build these schools. In turn, this shows just how much one person can impact many other lives worldwide, improving their resources to further their education and literacy.
Change. What does that mean to you? Is it a majority trying to make a stand for something different? Or perhaps it can be a single individual trying to think of something new? The uplifting idea of change in my art was to show that there's a chance for change by reaching out to others and bringing aspiration into their lives. All you need to do is reach, hang on, and pull up somebody desperate for innovation. The colored hands indicate people who seem to live a healthy life with no discrimination, no torture, no horrific violence, and no fear and trepidation. The other side - who lives with anxiety, depression, and horror - represent the hand with no color, having no signs of hope in their mind, body, spirit, or soul. The colorless are begging and pleading for help, hoping someone on the other side will lend a helping hand. Just when things get dull, there is sudden light at the end of the tunnel with not just one but several hands reaching out. They are hoping to bring the colorless towards the light, hoping to give them guidance to a better world, hoping to show them that things can change when you're not alone. I can imagine this art piece encouraging you to think about how you can help others by giving them a hand and leading them towards a more positive outlook on life. On top of that, being cooperative can make a huge difference in the world, not just because of the numbers, but because of the power and strength that people hold when their among one another and are filled with joy and happiness. At least that's what change means to me.
Night time can cause fear and can frighten people, but when a sunrise comes people can feel a sense of security and comfort. I tried to capture the powerful change a sunrise can have for someone.
After the dark there is always light, and after winter comes spring; even in the coldest days, you can find warmth and kindness.

Nora Chamas | BRYANT MIDDLE SCHOOL, 8TH GRADE
These are all sand dollars. They are the same, but they are different and none of them are perfect - just like people. This picture it shows different sizes, shapes, and colors of sand dollars. It doesn't matter what size, shape, or color you are. All the matters is what is on the inside.
I took this photograph at Auschwitz. The camp was so solemn and the grey sky was reflecting off the water puddles in the train tracks. We were taken on a tour and walked on roads past buildings and monuments. We kept walking, finding ourselves in a building full of what looked to be bunk beds. They were tall wooden structures with nails on the posts. I remember touching one, feeling the rough surface, uncomfortable even to the eye. And then I saw a rose placed delicately on the lowest bunk. It was red in a world of grey. Hope in a world of heartache. Love in a world of hate. It was beautiful. Many in our group began to cry realizing all of this. The people whose lives were stolen from them should be remembered. I call this photograph: Remembrance.
Change is important, and even the smallest things can make a difference. A butterfly flapping its wings can create rain instead of sunshine across the ocean after all. Reaching out is one of the biggest changes one can start. One person reaching out can change the day or life of someone else for the better. If one person reaches out, others might, too, thereby giving kindness to those who need it most.
This piece shows how self-expression and reflection on one’s own experiences can help improve someone’s mindset and can bring on a positive change in their life. This can be done through doing things such as writing or creating art about your experiences and emotions. The flowers in this piece are both real and made of paper. This is meant to represent growth and change overtime as a human being through art. Flowers surround the head and mouth in order to show that when people change, their thoughts and way of speaking change, too. The paint and flowers are in color while the model is in black and white. This is meant to show how art brings change. The colors used express a variety of different emotions. This piece was taken as a photograph to emphasize color and the positive aspects of changing oneself.
Honorable Mention Recipients

**DRAWING**

Annabele Ayrault | Brownell Middle School, 8th Grade  
Vic Fiato | Lake Orion High School, 11th Grade  
Yael Kaplan | Beth Jacob High School, 7th Grade  
Kaitlynn Lyzenga | Bangor High School, 11th Grade  
Mariana Matos | Stoney Creek High School, 12th Grade  
Laura Veasley | Harrison High School, 12th Grade

**PAINTING**

Brooke Behl | Stoney Creek High School, 11th Grade  
Keya Chinnam | Stoney Creek High School, 12th Grade  
Mikale Farr | Southfield Regional Academic Campus, 8th Grade  
Jillian Harris | Lake Orion High School, 12th Grade  
Esther Kim | Stoney Creek High School, 12th Grade  
Savannah Sievers | St. John Lutheran School, 8th Grade

**PHOTOGRAPHY**

Grace Handley | Stoney Creek High School, 12th Grade  
Jacenta Jacob | Stoney Creek High School, 11th Grade  
Marissa Malleck | Detroit Country Day School, 9th Grade  
Olivia Sappington | Detroit Country Day School, 10th Grade  
Emma Travitz | Stoney Creek High School, 11th Grade  
Charlotte Venn | Detroit County Day School, 11th Grade
Just Be a Friend

Natalie adjusted her hair just right before her turn sitting for spring pictures. She brought her special comb, moved her glasses, and began to brush. Mya popped out from the photo spot clearly happy about the one she just took. “Need any help?” Mya asked when she noticed Natalie struggling with her comb.

“I think I can help with that.” Natalie smiled boastfully. Science was Natalie’s best subject. Mya playfully rolled her eyes. Just then, Natalie felt a jerk at the back of her head, and her wig flew off.

“Hey!” Natalie yelled, but stopped herself immediately. Standing above her was a tall, large, mean-looking boy. He was clutching Natalie’s wig. His name was Julian Gates, and he was a notoriously known bully. Julian had been teasing Natalie for months, but for some reason it had been happening more frequently. He would usually call her names like hairless cat or egghead, but this time he stole her wig too.

“I just need to borrow some hair!” Julian mocked. “Just give it back and let me move on,” Natalie yelped.

“Or what egghead?”

“Just give it back!” Natalie yelled pathetically. “I only have one,” Natalie added.

“No!” Julian squeaked. Julian dropped the wig into the puddle. Natalie and Mya gasped, Julian walked away laughing.

Natalie ran the rest of the way home crying and holding a jacket above her bald head with one
hand, her ruined wig in the other. Everyone turned
to look her way, and the embarrassment flooded
her. Natalie’s mother couldn’t get the mud out of
her wig, so she had to wear a bandana to school the
next day. Natalie was having a bad day from the
start, when she heard Mr. Zerenelli yelling at Julian
in a classroom. Maybe I can get some dirt on Julian
for ruining my wig, Natalie thought devilishly. She
pulled out her phone and pressed record and hid
behind the door.

“You are failing most of your classes...” began Mr.
Zerenelli “All your work is garbage...If you don't
pass your midterm, you will be held back from sev-
enth grade!” Julian shamefully kept his head down.

“But I-”

“No buts about it!” yelled Mr. Zerenelli. Natalie
felt guilty and turned off her phone. All Julian
needs is some help, she thought. But this is his
problem, not mine. Natalie thought again. At lunch
Natalie noticed Julian sitting alone at a table. He
kept his head down. Natalie thought she heard
some sobbing.

“Maybe he just needs a friend,” Natalie thought.
She decided that after school she would go talk to
Julian about her mentoring him.

“You can't do that!” Mya said, “He's only ever
been mean to you. He ruined your wig.”

“Maybe he wouldn't be so mean if he had a friend,”
Natalie replied. After school Natalie noticed Julian
walking home, she tapped his shoulder.

“What do you want, hairless cat?” Julian shouted at
her.

“I was wondering if I could mentor you for your
failing classes,” Natalie said, “And then maybe af-
terwards we could get ice cream.” Julian stopped
and stared at her.

“Why are you being so nice to me?” Julian said less
harshly.

“Because I see you just need somebody to talk to,”
Natalie said. “I just want you to be my friend.” Jul-
ian turned away.

“But, why would you want to be friends with me?
I've only ever been mean to you...and I ruined your
wig.” Julian replied.

“I forgive you for that,” Natalie said sincerely. “So,
can we try to start over?”

“That would be nice,” Julian said with a smile.

Over the next week, Natalie helped Julian get back
on track with his studies. Julian passed his mid-
term, so he was not held back next year. Natalie
and Julian became great friends, and with Mya, too.
Natalie later found out that Julian had been acting
out because his parents recently divorced and it
was hard for him. Natalie’s small act of kindness
changed Julian’s life. No one had ever been so kind
and friendly to him. He never bullied or teased any-
one again. He also rose to the top of his class, and
even went to college. It may seem small but all a
person needs to do to change someone else’s life is
be a friend. It will make the world a better place,
no matter how big or small.
The light I wish to see every day never comes, and yet I continue to wait on its arrival. Today is no different. I wake up to the sound of my government-issued white noise machine. I quickly place a bit of cotton in both of my ears without the guard noticing.

Our every move was watched every single second of the day. I hadn’t yet gotten caught, and neither had my roommate, Nestor. I taught him the trick a few days after I got here…after I realized I could trust him.

Nestor came from a poor family that could only afford our country’s free genetic editing. It was required if you could not afford the plastic surgery necessary to create the perfect child. I too went through genetic editing. My parents changed my looks so much that I probably wouldn’t be recognizable if you compared me with my natural self. They gave me crystal blue eyes, full plump lips, a small nose, and freckles that coated the dark skin on my face.

We are greeted each day with the brainwashing music blared across the country to “prepare us for the day.” It is nothing more than a hypnotic tune that washes away all of our unique thoughts, and replaces them with the acceptable programming. Thankfully, my cotton trick has protected me from this conditioning.

I hear the guard yell, “Social time!” We have 5 minutes of supervised social time with our associates. Nestor walks up to me, “Zenovia, you still havin’ the same dreams that you have every night due to your PTSD?” I look at Nestor in shock and whisper, “Don’t be too loud. You know what will happen. You can be killed if they hear you discussing such an ailment.” Nestor whispers back, “I’m sorry. It’s just that I am so sick of this, being rounded up like cattle. We are treated like prisoners every day, and I know you’re tired of it too.” I put my head down as Nestor continued, “Remember how it was when you first got here? You fought guards, broke windows, did everything to make it clear that you were the rebel…and just three days later, you were this quiet little school girl sitting in the back of the classroom speaking to no one.”

I gave Nestor a nasty look, “I know that, Nestor! I just figured if I want to get out of here alive, I have to act the way they want me to. I want to avoid being thrown into that miserable ‘sane room.’ Either I act normal, or spend the rest of my days in that room until they finally kill me like they did Phoenix.”

Nestor’s eyes fill up with tears. Phoenix was his childhood friend who came here with him. They were both at a slumber party when they were taken away and brought here. Phoenix acted even crazier than I did. Eventually they put him in the sane room. When he refused to correct his behavior, they killed him. They made an example out of him in front of all of us. It was even broadcasted nationally to put fear in others who thought about acting the same way.

That quick social time was over. We were all handcuffed to our partners by the wrist. We were dragged into a huge truck filled with other children. We were all packed so close together we could hardly breathe. I looked at Nestor, “Today is finally
the day.” He looked so afraid. “I am scared,” he admitted.

However, it was now or never. The government had plans to spread their plan of “perfection” across the globe. We had to get our message out to stop them. Just getting our evidence out internationally could put an end to this horrific plan. We could all have our freedom back, and our government could be taken down, and all leaders could be executed.

The truck stopped. We pulled up to school. Here we learn how to be absolutely perfect - how to walk, talk, and interact. We were all past the basics. We needed to train on how to interact with our partners. Some partners were of the same gender, and some were of the opposite gender. It doesn’t matter, we all must interact the same.

I look at the large crates in the back of the truck. Nestor and I move as closely as possible. No one would suspect that us brainwashed perfect children would try to hide in one of them. If we could just hide in one of these crates, we could be transported to the central office where all the computers were secured.

We hopped into a crate, and as all of the children were led out the crates were totally ignored. Success! Moments later, we could feel the truck moving again. After about an hour of driving, we could feel it come to a rest. We were at the central offices!

The crates were unloaded into the basement where all of the unimportant computers were located. We hopped out with all of our evidence. The stupid guards never even bothered to check us. We had been recording our evidence of how we were all treated for years now. Sadly some of the recordings were filled with children’s screams and cries as we were brutally beaten and forced to act a certain way.

We found the closest computer and opened. No passwords were required for these “not-so-important” computers. We found a website where we could do a live broadcast. It was just what we needed. I hit record…

As we watched the blinking red lights of the recorder, and many government officials joining to view this broadcast, we nervously presented our evidence. “Hello. We are Nestor and Zenovia, or better known as citizens 1231 and 5474. We are from the country that is offering you a new way of life. We are telling you the truth about this propaganda...”
"I will never forget you," Hannah said, as she finished the play the cast had been working on for months. She was upset that it was over, but she was excited to get out of the itchy blue dress she was wearing. She bowed to the audience as they stood for a standing ovation. She saw her older sister, Esther, sitting in her wheelchair, cheering. Hannah was sad to see her sister in such a position, but she knew that Esther never thought of it as a burden. She could see in Esther’s eyes that she wanted to be on the stage and express herself through acting. Hannah had just accepted the fact that her sister was physically challenged. After the audience had dispersed, she spilled out of the blue dress that she never wanted to see again. All she could think about was how she wished that her sister could experience these accolades, and what she could do to help. As Hannah pushed Esther’s wheelchair toward the exit, she was getting congratulated. However, she was inattentive to the clamorations. Earlier, her mind was filled with 62 lines she had to memorize, but they all had crept out, one by one. All that was left was how she needs to do something for Esther. At home, Hannah began to ponder the hobbies her sister would enjoy.

"If you could do any hobby or club, which would you choose to do?" Hannah asked at home.

"I like watching you perform," Esther replied.

"But what would you like to do?"

"Me?" Esther was taken aback. “Well, I think I would choose theatre." Hannah knew Esther would be good at theatre. She was a brilliant actor, but her wheelchair stood in the way of true happiness. So, Hannah began to brainstorm. Maybe we can just do small skits at home? Nah. Too boring. Maybe she could call over friends and perform together? Hmm. Not bad, but not everyone can be here at the same time every week. Hannah thought endlessly. Every day she would walk to school to have more time to think. She thought of everything from a home theater to a mass production and decided against all of them. She doodled ideas in her sparkly purple notebook. She thought that maybe her friends could assist, so she got them together. They decided that they wanted to do a club for physically challenged students, and shared their ideas. Esther had already shared her love for theatre. Another said she would like to join a choir. A third one said he would like to paint. Hannah was discouraged to hear that none of them concurred with each other on what the club should revolve around. Esther and her friends, Juliet and Chelsea, couldn’t think of any ways to unite their interests and dislikes.

"What do we think all of the kids will like?" Hannah asked one day in frustration.

"I think it’s hard to find something that they all enjoy, so maybe we should think about doing different activities." Chelsea suggested. Hannah thought it was a brilliant idea, and she pondered on the question of how they could build different activities into one club.

Esther was very happy to be part of Hannah's club and was even more ecstatic when she learned the
new idea. For the following weeks, they tried a new activity at each meeting. They tried choir, storytelling, and art. Each of these could be showcased at different places, and each child's talent would earn them accolades and funds. They worked hard each week to perfect their masterpieces, and finally they went on a fieldtrip. They performed and presented, and earned a lot of compliments and smiles by doing what they loved.

Each week she would talk to the students, and she could hear in their voices that they were jubilant. The smallest step that Hannah took impacted the community, and was seen as a big leap in the eyes of others. Even though she thought it wasn’t much, Hannah’s impact gave these kids happiness and hope for the future. Her determination changed the face of the school, and she was content to finally see the sparkle shine bright in Esther's eyes.
Lauryn walks alone down the main hall of her school with a frown dragging on her face. Her gaze is fixated on the floor, not looking up to meet anybody’s eyes. It’s only the second week of school, and she already hates it just as much as she knew she would. Her mom told her she would love it, but she argued angrily saying she would rather be homeschooled. Her mom ended up forcing her to go.

She pulls at her skirt in irritation, hating the school uniform. She has been ignoring her family as much as possible for the past two weeks, wishfully hoping they will see how awful it is and take her out. So far it hasn’t worked, and now her family is being impatient and curt with her.

A burst of laughter drags her attention to a small group of girls walking together. One of the girls, short with curly hair, is in Lauryn’s math class. The other girls always follow the curly-haired girl as she goes to algebra before disappearing into their own classes in the same hall. Lauryn wishes they went to a different hall.

The Filipino girl turns away, feeling a mixed twinge of jealousy and irritation. She hasn’t made any friends, and she blames it on the fact that she didn’t know anyone before coming, although she hasn’t made any effort to make friends. It’s a new school with all new people, and she hates it. The bell rings just as she gets to class.

There are two seats occupied by a girl and boy whose eyes are glued to their computer, but she never talks to them. She might as well be wearing a sign that says “I have no friends.” She sits at this table every day, but that doesn’t make the humiliating burn go away. It heats up her cheeks just as much as any other day.

Tears sting her eyes, but she squeezes them shut so they don’t escape. She hates this school. The girl at the table gasps suddenly, reacting to something on her screen. The boy laughs at her reaction and soon the girl joins in until the two are a giggling mess.

Lauryn gets up, her eyes stinging more now, and rushes out of the cafeteria. She doesn’t look up, refusing to confirm the eyes that she can feel on her. The bathroom door opens and closes as she runs in to hide, wanting to cry quietly without being seen.

Christina walks down the halls of her school with her friends around her. She flashes her bright smile at anyone who meets her eye. It’s the second week of school, and the friendly girl is happy. She loves listening to her friend, Lanie, as she tells excited stories about her weekend. Lanie says a joke, and Christina laughs a little too hard, bumping into a girl with long black hair. Her books tumble from her hands onto the ground.

“Oops! Sorry!” Christina exclaims, leaning forward to pick up the books. The other girl doesn’t say anything, just bends down as well, and Christina...
looks at her. Her heart squeezes when she notices the girl's eyes are red.

“Hey, you’re in my math class. Lauryn, right?”

Lauryn pushes her hair behind her ear and nods.

Christina’s smiles, “Nice to meet you.” She looks up and sees her friends are gone, “Want to walk together?”

Lauryn shrugs and the two girls start down the hall together.

“Are you ready for that test tomorrow?”

Lauryn shakes her head, “No, I don’t think I’ll ever be ready.”

Christina laughs, “Yeah, me neither. I don’t think Ms. Charles knows division from multiplication.”

The two girls laugh and talk until they enter the math classroom. Christina waves to Lauryn as she walks to her seat on the other side of the room. Lauryn’s throat tightens and she waves back, but she doesn’t cry again for the rest of the day.

The days drag on and Lauryn and Christina walk to algebra together, laughing and talking the whole way. Christina’s fiercely positive attitude inspired Lauryn to look on the bright side, and Lauryn can feel her life changing for the better.

Lauryn meets Christina’s friends and sits with them at lunch every day. She mends her relationship with her family and starts talking to new people in her classes. With Christina’s encouragement, she picks up a sport, tennis, and she’s actually pretty good.

“Hey Lauryn, wanna come over on Friday?” Christina asks, her dark brown eyes bright.

Lauryn grins, “I’d love to.”

Maybe her new school isn’t so bad after all.

You never know how much a positive attitude and a friendly smile can make a change. A quick hello or short wave could make someone’s day. It isn’t always easy to look on the bright side, but it is always worth it. That’s the power of change.

“Hey mom.” Lauryn greets her mom when she gets home.

Her mom tilts her head, surprised, “Hey?”

Lauryn smiles before going to her room. She sits down at her desk and turns on music, humming along as she starts her homework.

Her mom looks up the stairs, still shocked, but shakes her head and goes back to the kitchen. She starts making dinner, unable to figure out why her daughter is in such a good mood, but relieved regardless.
She knew how it went - the laughter, shouts, and screams of teenagers who hadn’t seen their friends all summer. The expensive new shoes and outfits. The sun kissed skin. The exchanges of schedules and expressions of glee once students discovered they had classes with friends; everyone having somewhere to go, and something to do.

Everyone except her.

Jorja kept her head down as she searched the hallways for her new locker. Senior year - only one more year left until she could leave this place and be able to pursue her passion of writing poetry. Over the years, she learned to keep to herself and enjoy her own company and was not quite as disappointed as she had been in previous years when no one asked how her summer went.

Arriving at her locker, number 112, she began slowly twisting the combination. Shoving her notebooks and pencils on a shelf inside, she glanced at her schedule and discovered that her first hour of the day was speech class with Mrs. Svetsky. Goosebumps rippled over her body and she saw the arm hairs raise up on her caramel skin. She wanted this year to be different, but this made her have doubts. First thing I’m doing after this class is changing my schedule, she thought to herself as she headed off to Mrs. Svetsky’s class.

Finding a seat wasn’t hard; back of the class, out of the spotlight. Kids threw her unfamiliar glances, as if she were a new student, or didn’t belong in the class. She felt like both.

“Alright class,” Mrs. Svetsky bellowed. “Please listen up as I say attendance.” Shifting uncomfortably in her sear, Jorja raised her hand as the teacher called her name. As a way to distract herself, she began observing the class. Rebecca, the tall girl with glasses and the thick, red curly hair. James, short, yet tall in every other way. Jorja always heard him in the hallways speaking loudly with his friends, and she realized that she envied him in a way. Katherine, skinny, pale, and beautiful with long blonde hair. She always got a big role in the school plays. Elizabeth, Blake, Adonis, Luna. The list could go on. Jorja knew everyone in this class. She wondered if anyone knew something about her besides her name, or if they even knew that.

She couldn’t prepare herself for what came next. Mrs. Svetsky in her booming voice told the class to pull out papers and write an impromptu speech about themselves and what they hope to learn. They were then going to read it to the class. Aloud. Svetsky’s eyes scanned the room like a hawk looking for its prey, and landed on Jorja, the little mouse. Jorja walked up to the front of the room, her hands shaking while she held her paper and opened it up. The words formed in her mouth, but didn’t come out. She stood there like a deer in headlights as she felt a knot form in her throat. It took everything in her to not run out the class, not to cry.

“What are you waiting for? Speak darling.” Svetsky boomed. It was meant to coax Jorja, but instead it sounded like a death threat.

“M-m-my name is J-j-orja Ad-dams. I l-like writing p-p-poetry-“ She stopped as she heard snickers erupt like popcorn from the students.

“Spit it out!” Someone said.

Her paper fell from between her clammy fingers.
She ran out of the classroom, making eye contact with James before she escaped into the hallway. Even within those three seconds they locked eyes, she felt as if maybe he did know something about her.

Just as her eyes were turning back to their normal color from bloodshot red, and her nose stopped running, she heard a knock on the bathroom door. Holding her breath, she hoped whoever it was would go away.

“It’s James. I know you’re in there.” Her heart stopped. She felt as if she were watching herself from outside of her body as she opened the door. He stood there, holding her paper.

“Why’d you leave? I wanted to hear the rest.” His smile looked genuine, but she couldn’t answer him. “You like writing poetry, huh? I have an idea.” He let himself in the bathroom and shut the door.

“What’re you d-d-doing?” Jorja whispered as James pulled a notebook from his backpack and handed it to her.

“It’s a journal. You can write your poetry in it, read it to me. I used to help the literature teacher last year check students’ work. Your poems are amazing. I’ve read a lot of them. The world deserves to hear them.” Jorja looked at him, then at the journal, and took it. Her hands didn’t feel so clammy anymore.

Svetsky gave Jorja the same look she’d given her four weeks ago on the first day of school. But things were different now. Jorja wasn’t a mouse. She walked to the front of the class and scanned the students. This time, she was the headlight and the students were the deer. James smiled at her, and she knew exactly what would happen next.

“Something that is important to me is my poetry,” She began. The words flowed out smoothly. “And I have one to share with you all. It’s called Light.” Deep breath. She opened the notebook that she read to James from each night.

“In darkness, I dared to blend in in light, I dared to shy away. In this life, no one would know my name. In death, no one would remember. You awakened my soul flipped the switch of a light a light so bright that those around me shy away I dared to inspire others to shine as you inspired me.”

Jorja heard the applause and saw the nod of approval from Svetsky, but she only looked at James. Without him, she wouldn’t be standing in front of a class of students reading without a single stutter. Now she felt like she could take on the world.

Yeah, this year will be different.
The sunlight peeked through a tiny hole and landed on the right side of a seemingly lifeless body. The body sprung from the frigid cement floor and abruptly made peace with its surroundings; looking in every direction and raising awareness of every corner with subtle anxiousness. A seventeen-year-old boy assumed the position of the lifeless body and spoke.

“It’s morning and another night survived. But they’re getting closer.”

The boy soberly peeked through the wooden crater that let in miniscule amounts of light, and wondered when he could fully see the caprice sunlight that had awakened him just moments before. The door swung open; the boy jerked his head towards the door.

The sudden movement and change in light levels conspired to disorient him and a high-pitched disembodied voice entered the battleground.

“Asher!---you---have to---”

The voice flowed as fresh ocean waves upon a shore.

Asher struggled to stabilize his senses and interrupted cautiously.

“I have to what?”

The voice was that of a little girl.

“They’re next door!” the frantic child exclaimed.

Quickly understanding what she meant, Asher grabbed what little he had, dashed past the girl, out of the opening, turned back to express his gratitude with a kind smile, a skip and a turn, and quickly decided to head towards the railroads. It would be a perilous journey to the railroads as packs of two to three Nazi soldiers marched everywhere. Asher had to be smart and stealthy, which impassioned him.

Asher grinned, “I guess the time has finally come to fully see the sunlight.”

He stood for a moment, took a deep breath, let the cold air engulf him, promptly tasted the cold air which made his throat coarse, and then squinted up at the sun. Asher was teeming with hope. Seeing the sun excited him and made him envision a bright future. Just moments ago, he was rotting away in a cold, darkened, and damp cave-like shed. Unsure of when his ineluctable idleness would be interrupted by what he nearly escaped just a week before and forced everything away from him. Within seconds, he was sprung out of that deep hole devoid of the destined bountiful light. Asher felt overwhelming power within and then realized he was not in a situation to continue his synchronization with the world. Asher moved swiftly throughout the neighborhood, crushing packed white snow, ducking behind white barren shrubbery, and running behind glowing somber homes.

Asher was resting behind a cold house; catching his breath and warming his hands. A group of soldiers passed by on patrol - cold, and bored.

“It’s cold today.”

“It was cold yesterday.”

“It’ll still be cold tomorrow,” complained one of the nearby soldiers.
Asher was sitting only a few meters from the soldier and was out of sight.

“It’s cold today.”

“It was cold yesterday.”

“It’ll be bright and hot tomorrow, for sure. It’s only the middle of winter.” Asher mocked and chuckled.

The soldier, now walking farther away from Asher, had given him the energy to keep running. Asher did not think about what he would do once he got to the railroad, in fact, he doubted he would make it this far. But, he had made it. Asher waited a few moments, looked around, stood up, and prepared to run.

“You there!” a soldier exclaimed.

It was the soldier from earlier. He had dropped his hat where he stood before and had come back for it. Asher turned his head, smiled, performed a skip and a turn, and dashed away from the soldier. He was quickly in pursuit. The cold air rushed in Asher’s mouth and lungs, and his heart was pumping fast. He felt invigorated as he sprinted towards the railroad with the single hope of a train going by. Asher knew nothing about the train he based his livelihood upon; his hope was seemingly blind. He sprinted.

“There’s a train” Asher puffed.

He saw a train, casually passing by, yet right on time. He sprinted. Looking behind him, the soldier was near. He sprinted. He saw a box car open with a man sitting in it. He sprinted. The man saw him and became attentive.

“You there!” the young man yelled.

“Get close and grab my hand”

Asher continued to sprint, hesitated, looked up to the sun, held on to hope, sprinted some more, and clenched the young man’s hand. He was pulled into the cart and flopped to the floor. He turned back to smile at the soldier. The trained continued to roar.

Asher returned his attention to the man and fought to catch his breath.

“Thank you.”

“Don’t mention it. You got some fight in you,” the young man replied.

Asher looked up.

“Care to join me?” said the young man, extending his arm.

“Sure.” Asher grinned and grabbed his pale, warm hand.

“Great!”

“I’m Asher. By the way, what am I joining?”

“A rebellion,” the young man answered and paused.

“Asher, right? I’ll call you chief!”

Asher smiled, looked up at the sun, and inhaled the cold air.

“Great!”

At that moment, Asher didn’t know what it meant to join the young man who had graciously saved him and would soon save thousands of others. In a matter of minutes, Asher was on a path towards greatness to save others as he had just been saved. Asher realized that change can happen within a moment’s notice and hope, in any situation, is needed to persevere and perceive that change as an opportunity to change things for the better - for you, for others, and for the world.
Anne Frank wrote: “How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.” She was right. Many people believe that you must be an adult to make changes, but throughout history children have made a difference.

The Children’s Crusade

Thousands of children took to the streets on May 2, 1963. They didn’t scream or shout, they just walked down the cobbled boulevard, determined to make their mark on the world. The Civil Rights movement was in full swing, impacting hundreds of lives. Martin Luther King Jr. was meeting with other Civil Rights leaders in Birmingham, Alabama. They created a plan to peacefully protest segregation by filling up the Birmingham jails. The idea was that if there were too many people in the jails, the government would tire of constantly dealing with the jailed protesters. But they needed people to protest, and the young people volunteered. The Black kids of Birmingham had to leave the safety of their homes and march through the town to fight the stereotypes that bound them. They forced the citizens of Birmingham to take notice of the unfairness around them. In my eyes, they stood on the shoulders of those who had fought before them and continued the fight for true freedom. They taught me to have courage in the face of danger, and to be willing to take necessary risks to guarantee freedom for the future.

Malala Yousafzai

This powerful teen fought for female education and equality. Surrounded by illiterate women, she spoke publicly against unfair rules. As a result, she became a target. Eventually, she was shot in the left side of her head. We all face difficult challenges, but our obstacles help make us who we are. She faced hate from many people, but had the courage to keep fighting. Even when her life was in danger, Malala chose to take the hard road and keep challenging the stereotypes. This made her a beacon of hope for women across the globe. I learned so much from watching her fight for what she believed in, like how to take risks and to overcome the hate. I could see how passionate Malala was about equality for everyone.

Julia Bluhm

Julia Bluhm isn’t as well known as Malala, but that doesn’t make what she achieved any less impressive. At age 15, Julia convinced Seventeen magazine to feature healthy young women with normal proportions on their front pages. As a girl in a 21st century middle school, I know firsthand what it’s like to be self-conscious of my body. Women who undergo surgeries to be what society deems “pretty” surround us, and the norm is for women to wear excessive amounts of makeup. We don’t often see plus-sized or curvier models on the front page. Julia’s hard work has changed my way of thinking, and saved so many young girls from body negativity.

Mary Grace Henry

Eighteen-year-old Mary Grace isn’t well known either. She was an average student until she learned about impoverished girls in Africa. She - and many others - thought that the way these girls were
treated was unfair. So, Mary Grace stepped up to make a difference. She sold hair clips until she had enough money to send to a girls’ school in Africa. The money she raised was enough for sixty six girls to attend secondary school for four years. Many of people (myself included) think that they can only make a difference in the area around them. Mary Grace proved that wrong by changing the lives of those Ugandan and Kenyan girls. I learned that even the smallest of steps, like selling hair clips, can lead to the happiness and well-being of so many others. You must be willing to work hard if you want to be heard.

Anne Frank’s diary played an important part in unraveling the mysteries of the Holocaust. She was brave, strong, and smart. We can only wonder what she could have been had she survived. I am lucky to live in a time where there are so many amazing people to look up to and learn from. They teach us that our race, religion, background, and gender don’t matter in the long run. They refuse to let their age hold them back from creating a smarter, fairer world. And if we can persevere, fight with courage and bravery, and work hard, we truly can change our world for the better.
“Will you quiet down? The children are trying to sleep!” My mother yelled from downstairs. I slowly climbed out of bed and walked out of my room. I saw my little brother doing the same, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

He walked up to me, trying to hug me. I knelt down to his level, and he hugged me tightly.

“Will they stop?” He asked quietly. I gripped him tighter, holding on to him as if he were my last life-line.

“Soon, very soon.” I hope, I added but didn’t dare say it aloud so as to not smash his hopes. “Come on, let’s get ready for school, okay?”

He nodded slightly, heading back into his room. I sighed as I did the same.

“Mom, where’s dad?” I asked as she sat on her bed in the dark, working on her computer with my little brother next to her, fast asleep.

“I have no idea, sweetheart. He’ll be back soon,” She mumbled. “I hope.” She whispered, thinking I didn’t hear. I nodded slowly.

“Okay. Good night, Mom.” I said, not wanting to upset her already frail state.

“My father leaned forward, hands clasped, looking directly at me. “Your mother and I are getting a divorce.” I gasped quietly, barely audible. I shut my eyes tightly, feeling the tears start to form in my eyes.

“What is she doing?” My brother asked curiously after a few moments.

“She’s thinking.” My father said quietly, trying not to disturb me.

“What’s a divorce?” My brother asked loudly, not able to read the room. When no one responded he asked again. “Mommy? What’s a divorce?”

“It means that daddy and I won’t live with each other anymore.” She responded.
“What? Does that mean that one of us will have to go with Daddy and the other with Mommy, and we won’t get to see each other!” My brother exclaimed wildly, crying.

“No, no. That’s not it. You and your sister will be able to go to Mommy’s house, and then come to my house, too.” My father responded, immediately cheering my brother up.

“But you don’t have another house, Daddy!” My brother exclaimed.

“I know. We will go house shopping together and pick out another home for us. For now, we will stay at your aunt’s house. Alright, little man?” I opened my eyes slowly, seeing my brother nod enthusiastically.

“I-uh-I’m going to go to my room,” I said faintly, shakily getting up, and climbing up the stairs, falling multiple times.

“Why is she so upset?” My brother asked, happy once again. “There will be no more yelling anymore!” My brother started cheering, as my parents sat solemnly, glancing at one another.

I crawled to my room and shut the door soundlessly behind me. I didn’t even get to the pillows that lay on the floor before I exploded into tears, sobbing my heart out. My already torn heart shriveled up into nothing once I heard those words. Your mother and I are getting a divorce. Those words, the words in which would inevitably come, shattered me.

A few hours later, I sat soundlessly at the dinner table, staring at the food that lay in front of me.

“What’s so bad about that? Why is getting a divorce so bad?” My heart stopped. What was so bad about a divorce? There would be no more yelling, no more crying, no more heartbreak. We could be happy.

“I-I don’t know,” I responded honestly, glancing up at my mother. She nodded solemnly and stood up.

“Well, good night.” She shut the door behind her, and I thought more about what she said as I heard her retreating footsteps.

Happy. We all could be happy. No more late nights waiting for dad. No more ignoring the screams that I so wanted to forget. We could be happy. I smiled slightly at the thought of getting a good night’s rest without worrying. Worrying about my parents, my father, and my brother. I could be happy.

I used to hate change. I hated how the change in my parents’ behavior caused them to feud. I hated how I never got to see my father anymore, whether he was out late or at work. I hated being the one my brother looked up to for comfort when I wasn’t even able to comfort myself. I hated it all. But, in this situation, change was for the best. After my father said those piercing words, I embraced the change that they offered me. I was finally happy. I guess that was an example of the power of change.
Change As Our Superpower

I started to wail hysterically as my nanny, who I had known for two long years, placed me into a stranger's arms. I was terrified and had no idea what was going on, yet I knew something was about to change. I yelped and flailed as my new mother was trying ineffectually to comfort me. I felt tears that were not mine leave trails on my face. She, too, was crying. I now know that those were not tears of sadness. They were tears of an overflowing joy that had built up inside of her and were now ready to be released as she kissed my head.

I left the orphanage and stayed in China for two more weeks with my new family. The first few days were hard, as my whole world had just changed. I was also suffering from a cold, so I was continuously crying from discomfort, and it seemed that nothing could make me happy. We stayed in a comfortable hotel where I learned to trust these loving strangers. They took me to many beautiful and interesting attractions around the area. We went to a humongous zoo, a gorgeous church, and Chinese markets. We would dine at restaurants, but my parents soon learned that all I needed to be satisfied was banana, bread, and watermelon. I started to open up and learned to laugh and smile with these people. My sister would play games with me and tickled me until I couldn’t giggle any louder.

As the wheels hit the runway, my family was overjoyed to finally be in Michigan. We quickly got off the plane and went to get our suitcases. We seemed to fly through the airport, eager to get in our own car. Once the car was packed, we drove and drove until we finally rolled up to our driveway. My father opened up all of the doors as my sister unbuckled me from my car seat. As my mother and father got the luggage out of the trunk, my sister brought me into my new house. She trudged up the stairs and we entered a new territory. I looked around my room examining every little object. Plushies, books, and blankets were neatly arranged around the room.

After a few weeks, my mother dressed me up and led me to our family room where I saw balloons all over. New cars pulled up into our driveway, which befuddled me. Strangers started to walk through the front door and they greeted me as if they knew me. A lady, who I now know as my aunt, kissed the top of my head tenderly. My mother came into the room with gifts. She explained who brought each gift for me, but I ignored her and eagerly ripped apart the wrapping paper. I got all sorts of lovely
things from these people. I showed off my new toys to my aunts and uncles. My cousins joined me, and we laughed as we played together joyfully, wishing that that moment would never end.

I look back at those memories daily. I still can’t believe that was twelve years ago. My mother always tells me how much I had changed her life, and that she knew I was the one the very moment she had seen my picture on the adoption website. My mother used change, adoption, to save me from a life of poverty and hunger. She gave me a life of happiness and opportunity.

From everything that I have experienced in my fourteen years of life, I have adopted the idea that most people are scared of change. We fear what don’t know or can’t fully understand. We like to stay inside our boundaries, yet we yearn to accurately know the future. When someone mentions the word change, we often experience a negative emotion. I am also the type of person who hates change. I am, however, trying to change this. Change is something that has been with me ever since the day I was born. However, I now see that I was a huge change in my family’s life. It was extraordinary, and I can’t even fathom how my family had made such a positive change in my life, and how I changed theirs. We should learn to accept and embrace change; we have this source of power within us that only we can control. We can use that power to help those in need, like a child wanting to be adopted.
TIKKUN OLAM LOLLIPOPS

“Oh, what if we make hamantaschen?” Emily suggested.
“That would be great, except that requires us to bake, and also costs more money than we have,” I responded.
“That’s good though. I like the idea of distributing something to people,” Rabbi Yarden said.
“Oh, and we can put a little message on what we hand out that says something like ‘Happy Purim’ or ‘Chag Sameach!”’ Emily said.
“So what can we hand out that we can afford?” Matthew asked.
“What if you guys hand out lollipops and attach your message to them?” Rabbi Yarden suggested.
“Yes! That’s it! And we can pass them out at the beginning of the school day on Purim,” I said.

We excitedly regrouped to tag our candy with festive Purim greetings so that we could hand them out at our high school in celebration of the Jewish holiday of Purim, that commemorates how a multitude of Jewish lives were saved from annihilation thousands of years before Hitler.

There we were, a handful of Jewish student in a public high school, banding together to form an after school Jew Crew Club. We took it upon ourselves - with the help of a local Rabbi - to bring awareness to our diverse high school community about Judaism. The story of Purim recounts how Queen Esther saved the Jewish people from being obliterated by the king’s evil advisor, Haman. It is read every year in synagogues all over the world to remind us of its relevance to today, as the world is in constant jeopardy of falling prey to evil again if we allow it. The story itself shows how one person can make a difference, and the importance of finding a way to do the right thing, especially when it involves standing up for others. This is also seen through Anne Frank, an innocent Jewish girl who perished in the Holocaust and now speaks from the grave through the diary she left behind. Her diary has been published in more than seventy languages as a testament to how one person, regardless of circumstances, can make a meaningful difference.

In my sophomore year of high school I read Night, in which the late Elie Wiesel, a renowned Holocaust survivor and author, recalls the hell of concentration camps. Wiesel writes that “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of beauty is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of sacred is not profane, it’s indifference. The opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference” (Sanoff). Elie Wiesel’s writings, like those of Anne Frank, made me realize that humanity loses its humanity when people refuse to act. It also made me realize that one person can make a difference by refusing to be indifferent.

Purim, Anne Frank, and Elie Wiesel model the Jewish value of tikkun olam, the obligation that each of us must find a way to repair the world through meaningful action. The Jew Crew, armed with Purim lollipops as a conversation piece, had set out to raise awareness so that people in our community - regardless of ethnicity or religious beliefs - will connect, respect, and better understand one another more.

Morning of Purim

I got to school that morning and took a quick glance around to see if anyone else from the Jew Crew was there. I spotted Emily and Matthew with the candy. Each of us, with colorful bowls of candy
in hand, took a side of the commons where students meet in the morning. We nervously looked out over all of the socializing and anticipated that another thousand or so students would stream through the doors. I dove into the sea of students and went from table to table passing out Purim lollipops. With each one I passed out I said “Happy Purim” with a big smile. To my astonishment, students not only smiled back, but also said thank you and asked with genuine interest why we were passing out candy. I told them the story of Purim in a nutshell - how Haman’s diabolical plan to massacre Jews was derailed by a brave queen who stood up for their right to live. Even more surprising, they said, “Oh, that’s so cool.” I was shocked that they actually listened, engaged, and were interested. In such a self-absorbed world where people are glued to their phones, it felt good to have a two-sided dialogue face-to-face with my peers. I continued passing out lollipops, and the reactions just got better. Getting out of my comfort zone and getting other people out of theirs brought about more than just awareness about Judaism. These interactions generated conversations that made us more connected, more aware and more caring of one another. These same people sometimes seem rude or bitter, but here is proof that there is another side to them that is just under the surface. These simple conversations are powerful because they demonstrate the inherent inner strength of our community, individually and collectively.

The Jew Crew may be a drop in the bucket of our high school population, yet we were able to demonstrate that we are all not that different from one another because of our common ability to reach out and positively interact. Celebrating Purim in my predominately non-Jewish high school was one of the most uplifting experiences that I have had in high school. This experience proves that establishing mutual respect prevents intolerance from emerging so that genocides become inconceivable from ever recurring. We must never forget our past, and we must never remain indifferent while others suffer. When the moment comes, we must not waiver to act in the face of fear. The concept of tikkun olam carries the weight of all of those men and women that believe in a better future. Repairing the world is difficult but still possible; it starts with the individual, or maybe even a small group of Jewish kids in a non-Jewish high school passing out lollipops on Purim.
I heard Sadie’s paws scratch against the wooden kitchen floor as she steadily crept towards the sound of my sobs. She climbed into the nest that I made with my legs that were twisted up like a pretzel. Although I dreaded the blanket of hair that would cover me after I stood up, her calming presence outweighed any amount of hair that I would have to discard later. After placing her head on my arm, she nuzzled me gently as if to ask “what’s wrong?” and I burst into tears. I began to recount the day’s horrors, and tears continued to stream down my face. Sadie’s irregular heartbeat matched my jagged, heavy breaths, and I felt comfort in our synchrony. After I finished recanting my dilemmas, Sadie looked up at me, and the hair around her eyes was cocked to look like eyebrows raised in unease. She was a vision of concern, and she wrinkled her nose at the mention of my problems. Although she was only a dog that could not comprehend the complexity of my issues, I felt that she understood me in a way that no one else would.

I thought about how Sadie always showed excitement when I was happy, and how when I was crying she was always right there to comfort me. I wondered how she always knew how to make me feel special no matter the circumstances. There was this special bond between us, and we had a mutual understanding. Then I realized that I felt that she always understood and sympathized with me because she had always listened to me. Sadie had not listened to me to offer suggestions and respond with her insight, but she seemed to listen to understand and to be a spirit that heard my problems for what they were. I realized that even if Sadie had someone genuinely cared about what I had to say. I also recognized that far too often I listened to my friends to offer insight and my opinion, instead of listening to understand their situation. Sometimes our presence is greater recognized not by our voices, but by our actions.

I decided that I would follow in Sadie’s footsteps, and I became a more compassionate presence in my friends’ lives. I listened to their stories and seldom offered my opinion unless it was requested. Although difficult for me to accomplish at first, I digested the true process of listening. This process requires patience and practice, yet the benefits are plentiful. When I listened to respond, my friends and I were often at odds based on a difference in opinion. When I decided to understand while listening, there were fewer disagreements between us, and our friendship bonds strengthened because we began to understand and appreciate each other. Although my experience was on a rather small scale, I believe that the power of listening is perhaps one of the greatest weapons within our artillery.

In the world today, society lacks a sense of understanding. People refuse to understand other methods of thinking, governmental policy, and religion. Humans are too set with their own ideals and beliefs that they forget that over eight billion human beings also have their own ideals and beliefs. Today, people listen to respond, to argue, and to challenge. I believe that a simple change in the way society listens will contribute to the solving of many difficult societal pressures. Although a greater listening sense will not create everlasting world peace,
people can use this newfound ability and understand how to build relationships with those beyond the original social group. If people take the time to sympathize with the goals of other nations, the new understandings may lead to compromises between countries, or even more friendly relations between two superpowers. Although we often lack the desire to figure others out, a simple change in the way we think will result in continuing positive outcomes.

How incredible is it that an animal that is arguably less complex than humans is able to provide such strength and emotional support when humans often cannot do the same? Sadie, a Labrador, is perhaps one of my favorite individuals to talk to, because she seems to understand my pain even if she has not gone through the same tragedies. A simple change in the way I listen has created stronger relationships among family, friends, and strangers. I have become more forgiving and understanding of the world around me all because of a very hairy brown dog and her seemingly endless love.
A SMALL WORLD BUT A BIG IMPACT

I firmly believe that you do not need to change the world on a global level to cause an impact. You don’t even need to change the world of your own community; if you can change one person’s life then you have changed someone’s world. By doing so, that person will live on and impact someone else’s life, and the chain reaction will continue. There was a video I watched in an English class when I was a sophomore. It was about a man who stopped doing what he was doing to help someone in need. That someone became grateful and went on to pass along the favor and helped someone else. It became a chain reaction and eventually came back to the first man who started the chain. In summary, a bunch of people helped one another and impacted each other’s day all because of one person.

I have a best friend who is suicidal. She struggles with many personal demons that can really mess up her days. My friends have told me countless times that I am the most helpful person they know. So, I make it a goal to be there for my friend - and really anyone in need of a hand - who struggles with the will to live.

One day I was hanging out with a group of my friends in White Lake when I got a call from that friend. She was crying about how much she hated life and that she was sorry that she had to leave. I tried talking to her and tried to tell her that her pain is only temporary, but she wouldn’t listen to me. She hung up on me and I ran out of my friend’s house without a second thought. I sped down the road praying that she would be alive by the time I made it to her house. I ran into her house and found her standing in the bathroom with a pill bottle in her hand. She looked to me and said, “I never thought anyone could ever actually care for me, yet here you are again.” The rest of the day consisted of me consoling her and helping her back into what society calls sanity. I tried to make her see how much goodness there is in the world and how pain is only temporary. A couple months later I am glad to say that she is alive and well.

If I had hesitated even for a moment she could have been unconscious by the time I got to her house. I didn’t need to cause a global change to impact a world. I impacted my best friend’s world by saving her from making a huge mistake. Because of this impact, she has lived to see more of her life and she is in a much better place. According to her, I inspired her to continue living. There is not just one world, there are over seven billion. Seven billion people live on this planet, all living their lives. Some have personal demons while others are living their best lives. While global impacts are impressive, impacting someone’s world brings you the same rush of accomplishment and gratitude. You might not even know that you are impacting someone’s world by just being who you are. That is what I find so magical. You can easily impact someone’s world unintentionally and that is the most inspirational notion.
ALL THE SMALL THINGS

A young boy reaches down
To place a gasping fish
Back in its tank.
A girl places money
In the guitar case
Of an emaciated street musician.
A couple pushes food
Toward a hissing,
Bedraggled cat.

The fish lives,
The musician lives,
The cat lives,
The world is changed.

An old woman waters
A thirsty bed of
Yellow daisies,
A busy student leaves
His cinnamon raisin bagel
For the ravenous squirrel on his balcony,
A preoccupied salesman pauses
By a hunched crying form
And wraps them in a hug.

The flowers live,
The squirrel lives,
The crying form lives,
The world is changed.

To change the world
You don’t need to
Redirect the rivers,
To change the world
You don’t need to
Move the mountains,
To change the world
You don’t need to
Shake the earth,
The world can still be changed.

Changed by simple expressions
Of simple kindness,
Simple words,
Simple gestures.
Because not everything needs
The over-complication of expectations.
When did changing the world
Become a competition?
If the fish lives,
The musician lives,
The cat lives,
The flowers live,
The squirrel lives,
The crying form lives,
Then the world is changed.
And it does not matter
How small the change seems,
Because change is change,
And there are a billion small worlds
Waiting to be changed
Small does not mean insignificant.

The world is changed
In small ways
By throngs of people
Every day.
This does not mean they shake the world,
But they live,
And they help others live as well.

And thus,
The world is irrevocably transformed.
It only takes one person to pursue,
Changing the world abrupt.
Change can be meant to improve,
Change can be to corrupt.
Whether the change is very slight,
Or the change is rather might,
Change is perhaps the greatest power on Earth.

One heinous man comes to rise,
Gains many followers through his lies;
Countless beings, he did discriminate,
Such a monster to kill and eliminate,
Slaughtering millions because of hate.
Horrifying how fast life can rearrange,
That’s the power of change.

One change can affect another,
Families forced into hiding to suffer.
The diary of a girl, known by all,
Shares how her world begins to fall,
Merely because she’s undesired and small.
This happened to people no matter the age,
That’s the power of change.

Only the most brutal, cruel, and worst,
Would expose the innocent and let them be forced,
To be separated from their beloved home;
They’re no longer free, now cannot roam,
Split from loved ones, feeling utterly alone,
Arrested, imprisoned, and put in a cage,
That’s the power of change.

At this point, people have lost all hope,
They can no longer bear nor cope.
Glumly, miserably, down and depressed,
Disheartened, sorrowful, and oppressed.
This was a gloomy and doleful stage,
That’s the power of change.

When innocent lives are in danger,
It takes a good heart to help a stranger.
Assist, aid, and keep them alive,
While they are being deprived,
Of being able to live and survive.
Being a hero can have a huge range,
That’s the power of change.

As times grow more and more dark,
Others find enough spirit and spark,
To see the wrongs and make them right;
To defeat the darkness and bring back the light;
To give their tears and sweat to fight,
Without expecting anything in exchange,
That’s the power of change.

Now comes the pivotal moment,
When the Allies decide to defeat the opponent.
Show them that they’ve just begun,
Roll up their sleeves and get work done,
Liberating countries one by one,
Show them their bravery, courage, and rage,
That’s the power of change.

Everyone heaves a big sigh of relief,
It’s finally over, to everyone’s disbelief.
Even though the war’s finally won,
There’s still damage to clean and get done.
Pick up the broken pieces ‘till there’s none.
A new chapter has started, time to turn the page,
That’s the power of change.
The war is over, yet we'll never be the same,
What has happened was inhumane.
Horrible, atrocious, mass genocide.
Take this as a lesson, take this as a guide;
“Never again” shall this happen, they did decide.
The result is for better and worse; how strange,
That’s the power of change.

It only takes one person to pursue,
Changing the world abrupt.
Change can be meant to improve,
Change can be to corrupt.
Whether the change is very slight,
Or the change is rather might,
Change is certainly the greatest power on Earth.
The Man’s Message

He plants the first seed in the ground then the next and the next and the next
‘Til the sky was no longer veiled in bright blue with cotton candy clouds plastered over
But is smeared a deep-looking indigo with stars that stain the sky like freckles

The sun shines brightly, as if glad to be noticed again
He plants the first seed in the ground then the next and the next and the next
‘Til the young deer appear with their silent hooves to explore the mysterious twilight hour

The birds within the forest use their varied and never-ending songs to alert anyone who will listen
He plants the first seed in the ground then the next and the next and the next
‘Til the golden sun and silver moon cross paths more times than He can count

The bees longing to collect the pollen from the breathtaking flowers rush out of their hive
He slowly whispers to the saplings and whispers and whispers and whispers
His breath can no longer whisper and whisper and whisper

The warm colors of dawn cover the earth and bring the wind to greet the saplings
The saplings whisper and whisper and whisper to the wind His words
‘Til the cold shades of dusk sweep over the earth and send the wind adrift to spread his message

“To plant one seed is to plant one seed of change in our world.”
COUNTING DOWN

A life can go by in
Years
Months
Weeks
But
Days
Hours
Seconds
Is the time it takes to end.

Because it’s that easy to end it right now, to capitalize on human nature’s bent for self-destruction:
S-E-C-O-N-D-S,
To swallow up asterisms, the radio static messing with your frequencies.
M-I-N-U-T-E-S,
To tie up your heartlines like telephone cords, unable to disentangle the messy knots of wanting.
H-O-U-R-S,
To burst like TNT, or a cherry bomb during an elementary game of four corners.
D-A-Y-S,
To tear yourself into shreds of disillusioned despair.

But it also only takes so much, to burn brighter than that particular almost:
S-E-C-O-N-D-S,
To tell your friends ‘I love you’.
M-I-N-U-T-E-S,
To illuminate a smile full of split starlight, and a laugh full of interstellar ringlets and bounding heart
H-O-U-R-S,
To rebel against the nightmares of an existential mind, unflinchingly subscribing to a faith in self-love
D-A-Y-S,
To stop rumors, words so insouciantly sadistic in the name of a truth in omnishambles.

A change can be so
Slight
Simple
Instinctive
But
Transcendent
Important
Vital
That it saves a life.
A SONNET OF INFLUENCE

Now take this time to fantasize with me
Of such a world where all of humankind
Thinks best of agreeing to disagree
And only hostility can you find;
Society where at its very best
Displays an ever slight and mere disgust
And at its worst such feelings are expressed
As quite unruly fury if you must.
Now add to this horrid scenario
A single human being with a heart
Who’d fight for love rather than fight their foes
And on others strong morals they’d impart
If now the rest could learn from their mistakes
Think of the difference that one could make.
THE POWER OF CHANGE

Change is something that can be done by anyone at any time
It is a shared power that is stronger than physicalities
Changing the world may not always be easy
And it doesn’t always have to be large scale
Change is unique to each person
Everyone has something amazing to bring to the table
The table of ask and answer
The table of help and innovation
The table of new and better experiences
But why is it so hard to change?
We have been given this incredible power
To influence how people think, move and act
But we don’t use it
Is it because we are lazy?
Are we afraid?
Why shouldn’t we use this extraordinary potential?
Wonderful and brave people have come before us
Eager to right wrongs and improve life for people they would never meet
And doing things, some unimaginable, to make change
These weren’t superheroes, just ordinary people like you and me
Who decided to choose the less traveled path
And face brutal obstacles
Some people have not discovered this astonishing ability
And others are afraid to use it
But this is a mighty force
One better used when there is more of it
I will definitely be using this marvelous gift to the best of my ability
I will encourage others to do the same
Knowing that, whether big or small
Global or personal
Change is something that will remix and improve this waiting world
Honorable Mention Recipients

**FICTION**

Emma Bezemek | Walled Lake Central High School, 12th Grade  
Anish Jain | Avondale Middle School, 7th Grade  
Elizabeth Pamp | Mt. Pleasant Schools, 8th Grade  
Veronica VanKosky | University High School Academy, 12th Grade  
Vaishnavi Vemuri | North Farmington High School, 10th Grade  
Julie Webber | Southfield Christian School, 7th Grade

**NON-FICTION**

Kendal Brown | Walled Lake Northern High School, 12th Grade  
Hannah Brown | Walled Lake Northern High School, 12th Grade  
Mikaela Celeskey | Walled Lake Northern High School, 12th Grade  
Elizabeth Gentner | St. John Lutheran School, 8th Grade  
Lea Sharpe | Anchor Bay Middle School North, 8th Grade  
Natalie Tsimhoni | West Hills Middle School, 8th Grade

**POETRY**

Selga Jansons | Brownell Middle School, 8th Grade  
Mary Kunnummyalil | Wyandot Middle School, 7th Grade  
Lydia McNanney | Brownell Middle School, 8th Grade  
Arin Miller | West Hills Middle School, 8th Grade  
Natalie Qaji | Mercy High School, 11th Grade  
Nudar Shabil | International Academy East, 10th Grade
Art Judges:
Elizabeth Barrett-Sullivan
*Arab American National Museum*

Elizabeth Brazilian
*Child Safe Michigan*

JJ Curis
*Library Street Collective*

Maxine Frankel
*Maxine & Stuart Frankel Foundation for Art*

Gretchen Gonzales Davidson
*Arts and Education Advocate*

Rebekka Parker
*Detroit Institute of Arts*

Cameron Wood
*Cranbrook Institute of Science*

Writing Judges:
Jonathan Bush
*Western Michigan University*

Lisa Gretchko
*Howard & Howard Attorneys PLLC*

Sherry Margolis
*WJBA FOX 2 Detroit*

Despina Margomenou
*University of Michigan*

Corey Harbaugh
*Fenville Public Schools*

Milan Gandhi
*Med-Share*

Sarah Radner
*Hillel Day School*

We would like to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to...

Graphic Design:
*Woods Communications, LLC*

Printing:
*Allied Printing Company, Inc.*

Framing Company:
*Millers Artist Supplies Co.*

Caterer:
*Quality Kosher Catering*

Videographer & Photographer:
*Flow Video*

Additional Financial Support:
*Milan and Rachel Gandhi*

...and to the Kappy family and our dedicated staff
### Participating Schools:

- Abbott Middle School
- Academy of the Sacred Heart
- Anchor Bay Middle School North
- Armada High School
- Avondale Middle School
- Beth Jacob School
- Bangor High School
- Berkley High School
- Big Rapids Middle School
- Brandon High School
- Breckenridge High School
- Brownell Middle School
- Brownstown Middle School
- Bryant Middle School
- Cambridge High School
- Carlson High School
- Clifford Smart Middle School
- Dakota High School
- Derby Middle School
- Detroit Catholic Central High School
- Detroit Country Day School
- East Hills Middle School
- Farber Hebrew Day School
- Farmington High School
- Frankel Jewish Academy
- Harper Woods High School
- Harrison High School
- Henry Ford Academy
- Hillel Day School
- International Academy East
- Lake Orion High School
- Liberty Middle School
- Marian High School
- Mercy High School
- Michigan Virtual Charter Academy
- Millennium Middle School
- Mt. Pleasant Schools
- North Farmington High School
- Northville High School
- Novi Middle School
- Oakland Early College
- Oscar A. Carlson High School
- Redford Union High School
- Rochester High School
- Seneca Middle School
- South Lyon High School
- Southfield Christian School
- Southfield Regional Academic Campus
- St. Anne Catholic Grade School
- St. John Lutheran School
- St. Regis Catholic School
- Stoney Creek High School
- University High School Academy
- Vista Meadows Academy
- Walled Lake Central High School
- Walled Lake Northern High School
- West Bloomfield High School
- West Hills Middle School
- Wyandot Middle School