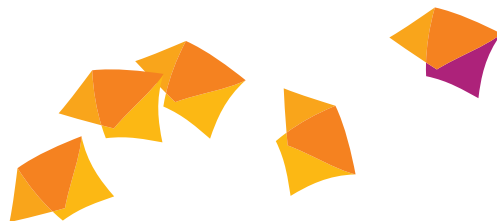




Literary Journal

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CHARLOTTE**LIT**

Edited by Antonia Reali

Piedmont IB Middle
Literary Journal
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mentor, inspiration, and friend;
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To every student who submitted their writing: congratulations.
To the few who were featured, and also to the others, who were brave
enough to show their stories. Keep writing!

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Brief Illness

By: Isaiah Brown

So far today it's been a drag
I don't feel good, which makes me tired
And no one will leave me alone which makes me mad
If I was looking for a job I wouldn't get hired
I had an accident today
Where I threw up and no one asked me if I was okay
Now I really don't think that anyone in this class cares
Which is so sad that it should make me cry
Not only that, it's only getting worse
I think that today I've been put under some kind of curse
I really hope this nightmare ends
Before I don't have any friends
Because let's face it most people are like Rick
No one wants to be friend with a person that's sick!
I just remembered that I have a game
I really hope this sickness doesn't stay the same
Whoa, look at that my sickness has gone away!
Looks like I'll be able to play
I really hope we win our game
And tomorrow we could win the championship name

Middle School Volleyball

By: Molly Canipe

It's just middle school volleyball. I told myself repeatedly. It's no big deal, it's not the end of world, You'll be okay. After a lot of deep breaths, I walked in. And I immediately tripped over someone's backpack. Great way to start the tryout, huh? I picked myself up and set my backpack down. It was the third day of tryouts. Probably the last day. Around 30 people gathered around the bright red bleachers, staring down at their feet, stretching, and talking. People gathered in huddles, talking quietly. As the door slammed behind me, people glanced up and immediately went back to talking. As I quietly joined a huddle, I found out what almost everyone was talking about. Each other. I know, sounds mean right? This was more of a I'm-nervous-but-I-don't-want-to-show-you kind of way. More of a "So-so will make it, definitely" kind of way. I stretched, reflecting on yesterday's tryout. I hadn't done great, in my opinion. Missed a couple serves, hadn't got my passes directly to the setter. Stupid stuff, mostly. I'm really hard on myself, though. I thought, Maybe you weren't as bad as you thought you were... No, I decided, you got this. Just focus on doing really well today.

Tryouts are some the most nerve-wracking experiences I've ever had. There's a certain point in a tryout where you realize that there are people that are better than you, but you just have to keep pushing. As we were stretching, I had that realization. I looked around at my classmates, peers, and people I had never even talked to, and I realized that 10 people in the crowd are my future teammates. The people I will high-five after every pint, the people that I will cheer with, the people that I will look around at while we are doing our rallying cheer. After the tryout, we were separated into two groups. One with around 11 people. That was my group. I was grouped with many people from last year's team. I looked around the lobby, a feeling of relief and ecstasy growing in my chest, like a balloon with helium. I had made the team.

Our first game, I felt prepared. The only doubt in my heart was the fact that it was this team that had blocked our last team from being undefeated. As we walked into the gym to warm up, a tight feeling grew in my chest. I looked around at my teammates, their expressions mirroring mine.

The other team walked in. My heart dropped. Their confidence filled the room, radiating from their skin. They warmed up, and the tightness in my chest only grew. Once again like a balloon, but not in a good way this time. The game was tough, with rallies going back and forth. As soon as I stepped out onto the court, the tightness melted away. I was in my element. I wiped my court shoes to give them more grip and ran onto the court. I leapt and crouched and fell a few times. I had never cared so much about the outcome of a game. I screamed and ran to the middle every point. There's a longer story I could tell, but the short version is, we won. The feeling I got when we ran to the middle

and performed our winning cheer was unlike anything else. At that moment in time, I felt like I could jump and touch the sky. What made the feeling so magical was the fact that I was proud of myself and how I played. I thought that I could do anything. I know that feeling well, every athlete does. It's why we play sports. I am not a professional, I play on a small middle school volleyball team. But that didn't matter. In my mind, I was happy. I was free.

Fast forward to pep rally. As we stood on the stairs, the nervousness of running around like maniacs in front of exactly 942 people got a lot more real. When Coach Ashley called our names, we ran. We were tripping over our feet and trying not to fall, but it was amazing. The energy was just fantastic. People were straining against the caution tape, grabbing hands, calling our names. As I high fived what felt like all 942 people. I finally got it. This is why people play games for a living. As I looked around at my teammates and imagined that they could feel it too. My point is, If you can, play a team sport. They are the most rewarding activity I have ever done. The feeling of looking around at your friends and teammates after winning, of having people root for you, the feeling of being something more than a student. You are a student-athlete, and that's all I've ever wanted.

Snowshoe Mountain

By: Jackson Dunham

We drove up Snowshoe mountain, and my brother and I immediately went snowboarding in the terrain park. We spent the entire day there, my brother doing some crazy backflips throwing snowballs at me mid flip. I was doing 360 spins over the jumps, grinded on a rail and did a 540 off of it. After a long day at the park we headed back to the house we rented.

The next day we went snowmobiling on some of the trails at Snowshoe. Most of the time there we were doing fine and having a lot of fun. Until we went down one trail where there was a huge ramp of snow that shot up. My brother decided it was a great idea to go as fast as he could over the hill. His snowmobile flipped over, he fell off, his snowmobile broke down, started smoking, then exploded. He was lucky enough to escape with just a scratch on his elbow. After that we headed home for the second night.

For the third day we went to Silvercreek. This time we had to take our sister. We started off on the bunny slopes but my brother and I quickly left her behind. Once we had gone down the easy slope a few times we went to a black diamond where she couldn't follow us. We went down it but my brother ended up going over a mogul too fast. He tried to save himself by landing on a rail, but he cracked his board, and that was the end of the day for us.

As soon as we woke up on the fourth day the entire mountain was covered in powder. My brother and I got out as soon as we could to enjoy the fresh snow. Today my mom was babysitting my sister so we could go back to the park. I was recording my brother doing some backflips as he was going down the hill. He landed a double backflip and then some guy came speeding down and almost hit him in the head with his board. Despite that, we were still able to do some cool grinds and box jumps, including the eight foot jumps called Air Carter and Jackson. At some point we took a break to visit the lodge and bombed down a hill real fast. This was probably my favorite day especially since we noticed some other kids recording us doing jumps and tricks which we thought was pretty cool. We ended up going home that night and staying up really late watching TV.

The next day was more of a rest day, we went up to the mountains around noon. My brother and I mostly just did small things, except for one insane jump where I got a lot of air and did a double front flip. Although, one jump my brother messed up really badly and landed bad and crushed the walky talky in his jacket pocket. After this incident our mom banned us from the terrain park for the rest of the day and we had to do regular slopes and small jumps. Eventually we got tired, headed back to the lodge, then headed home.

On the next day we had to go home, but we got one more day of snowboarding in. This was probably one of the better days; the U.S.A. snowboarding team wanted us to stay and practice with them after they saw what we had done. Unfortunately, we had to go, but overall it was a great trip, and we all enjoyed it.

Cancer Sucks

By: Breana Fowler

Life is made up of good and bad.
Life throws curve balls like Jerry Koosman.
Life gives you rewards, like when the New York Giants win a game.
But some people are more lucky than others.
It's like... winning the lottery.
One out of a million people win and do what they want with the money
Probably spend it on houses and cars.
Some people aren't as lucky as them.
Some fight battles and win.
Some aren't as lucky and lose the battle.
Well I guess I am not that lucky.
Cancer sucks.
December is supposed to be bright and fun, not black and dull.
But that's how my soul felt.
You lose one you lose another now you lose your mind.
Cancer sucks.
When you have someone you think you have them forever.
It's only when you don't have them that you start to appreciate them.
You miss them.
When you were little you thought that everything is going to be fine forever.
It's when something happens to you that you prayed so much that it wouldn't and
that it's going to be fine and then it happens.
Cancer sucks.
But life goes on and you can't do anything about it.
You meet new people make new friends.
You will always miss the person that is now gone
But they will always have a place in your heart.
You will love that person to the day you die.
Cancer. Sucks.

The Metal and the Wood

By: Ian Hamilton

R*ikka-tikka rikka-tikka rikka-tikka*, that was all I could hear as I headed up the steep incline. I looked over at the wood and thought about when the last time it was checked. It was white, with rusted bolts and colorless spots. I looked at my cousin, and we were thinking the same thing: what are the chances of this ride collapsing? We looked away from each other. I couldn't stand to think about something so horrible. The suspense was killing us. We were crawling up that hill for what seemed like forever. We tried to think about something else. And then finally, we were at the top of the hill.

We stopped moving and stayed there for a bit. We tried to make each other feel better by telling jokes but it didn't work. We looked at the flags at the top of the hill and saw 13 on them. What a coincidence. It was Friday the 13th and in the middle of summer. We were starting to move forward, inch by inch by inch. I started to think why I even wanted to go on this ride. It was the scariest roller coaster ride in six flags. It was the dirtiest and roughest ride here. Inch by inch by inch. We thought about why we chose the front and why not the middle. Inch by inch by inch. Then finally, the inches turned to feet and the movement was more rapid, now we were really moving. It felt as if I had pushed an eject button on my seat as we went down the 150 foot drop. Then we started to go uphill faster than before, and went down the other drop, smaller, but still the same feeling. This madness went on for two minutes. It was the scariest ride I have ever been on. When we finally got off, we went on the minecart ride. I don't think we payed any attention to that ride, because all we could think about was when could we go on that ride again.

We were happy nothing bad happened. But later we pushed our luck. We went to go eat lunch and it started raining. We waited for two hours until it stopped, not knowing what would happen if we went on that ride. Then, the rain finally stopped. We raced over to the ride like little kids. We ran around the gates as fast as we could and went into the middle seat. There was no one else there except for us. The ride operator looked at us, looked at the ride, looked back at us, *and pulled the lever*. As we started moving, we wondered why he did that. But we kept on moving. Up the hill just like before, except this time the track was swaying and the wood was moving back and forth and back and forth. We started to feel curious about what was happening. We were scared. Then we went down the hill and everything was fine for a while. But then, a plank of wood behind us broke. And then another, and another until finally the emptiness of the track behind us seemed to be chasing us, trying to swallow us whole. We kept moving until we stopped at the gate. When we got off we started running like we've never ran before. We got back to our car and drove home. We would never forget that day.

זִיּוֹן (Tzion)

By: Zion Hodge

Zi·on (zīʾən), *n.* Singular proper noun: **Zion**; singular proper noun: **Sion**

The hill of Jerusalem on which the city of David was built; the citadel of ancient Jerusalem; Jerusalem; *in Christian thought*: the heavenly city or kingdom of heaven; the Jewish people or religion; the Christian Church. Origin: Hebrew.

I often ask my mom why she had to give me such an abnormal name when everyone else in my family has a normal one. My mother's name is Andrea, my father's is Mario, my sister's is Zoey, and my brother's name is Zach. Then there's me, Zion. I will never be able to go to a gift shop and find a tag with my name on it. I will always have to correct people because when they see Zion they automatically think **Zi-on** when in reality it's pronounced **Zi-en**. It never really bothered me; in fact the people who know how to pronounce my name correctly get more agitated than I do. Zion is used in the bible in the Book of Samuel. It's often used as a reference to Jerusalem, which is a place of worship to Christians, Muslims, and the Jewish people. It's also the name of a sacred mountain outside of Jerusalem. Zion is considered a time-honoured name to the Jewish and the Christians.

Most of the time, I love my name. To most Christians, it means the kingdom of heaven. I believe at the end of the day, nothing of this life matters. The main goal is to stand before the Lord on judgement day, recite all of your sins before him, and get past the golden gates of heaven to an never-ending paradise. Some people are lucky but some, not so much. My name reminds me of my end goal.

Other times, I don't love it very much. I have a serious problem with what people think of me. If I'm pretty enough, if what I wear doesn't look weird or nerdy, even what I listen to. So of course I automatically think of the worse when I first introduce myself. I always feel like when I say "Hi my name is Zion" people think 'Zion? What kind of name is that?' My name is also a boy name. More boys have the name Zion than girls do. Once, a substitute was taking attendance, when she asked what my name was I said Zion, she said "Oh, that's my son's name."

Another thing, there have to be about 60,000 churches that use my name. I pass by probably 20 of them on my way to school. Sometimes it's cool because I can make jokes about it with my friends but it also makes my name less unique. If I'm going to have a weird name, I'd rather it be not used as much.

In conclusion, all these things aren't really important. I love my name and how I have yet to find someone with the same name as mine. Some people have come close but there will never ever be another Zion Noelle Hodge. So as long as I'm stuck with this Hebrew, Jewish, Christian, time-honoured name, I'm happy.

Coaster Catastrophe

By: Kendall Jones

The shouts of excited people were drowned out by my heartbeat. I held my breath, today I would be riding my very first roller coaster. “Don’t worry, it’ll be alright,” Ryan assured. I realized my eyes were still closed so I slowly blinked them open. That was the worst mistake of the day (aside from getting on the coaster). The ride had left the station and was midway from the climax. My friend Amaya inhaled roughly. Her fingers were wrapped around the bar that strapped her down into the ride. The ride grew in altitude as my friends and I got closer to the top. I started thinking about how bad it could really be. My thoughts were soon interrupted by Ryan’s voice. “Here we go!” I came back to reality just as the ride flew down the tracks. I screamed with all my might, only for my voice to be washed away in the wind. (Oh, did I mention that I’m horrified of heights?) While I was screaming my head off, Amaya, was as silent as ghost. The train cars tilted down, and I hit the back of my seat roughly. My eyes fluttered open for a millisecond to see Ryan with his hands in the air! All of a sudden, the train made an upside down twist, which made me feel like I was flying. After numerous amounts of coaster tricks that made me feel like fainting, the ride came to a slow track. I opened my eyes and noticed we were moving back into the coaster station. I silently made a thankful prayer and took some deep breaths to gather myself. “That was so AWESOME,” bellowed Ryan. “You mean scary,” corrected Amaya. “How was it scary to you? You were completely silent over there,” I said. She grinned, “When I’m really scared, I don’t have the strength to scream.” We all laughed. The train cars pulled into the station and I got out, nearly tripping. I didn’t care though; I was just glad that I was out of the ride. We climbed down the exit stairs and walked down the sidewalk. Ryan stopped and stretched. “What next guys? Nighthawk, Intimidator, Afterburn?” I looked at him with my mouth agape. *You want to go on another ride? After all the torture on this one, I thought.* “No thanks, I’ll sit down for a bit. This ride tired me out.” I finally said. Amaya agreed. Ryan shook his head, clearly displeased. “Fine, you guys wait out here for me. I’m gonna ride the Intimidator real quick,” he said and gestured over to another overwhelming looking ride. I nodded my head in agreement. Amaya and I sat down on a bench and waited. She got on her phone while I tried to rethink what just went down. Today, I rode my first roller coaster. Fury 325.

The Spelling Bee

By Sean Kennedy

In 5th grade, I thought I could win the class spelling bee. The winner would go to the school one, then to the regional one, etc. Being a shy kid who didn't want to go in front of the class (I could made fun of for spelling something wrong) I didn't really want to participate. But on the other hand, I also did want to participate. So a few days before the class one, my teacher handed out a paper sheet of the words being used for it.

I studied that paper every day with my friends, family, and at school. I still didn't want to participate, as that was an option back then, but I had studied the words and at that point I was really confident. I didn't like going up in front of the class, but I felt I could win it. So on the day of the class spelling bee, I was really nervous and regretted attempting it at first, but I ended up participating.

It wasn't that hard, and I got the words correct. As my classmates were getting knocked out, it was nearing down to a few people. I was nervous that I would do something wrong at that point, but only a few kids were still in it. It narrowed down to me and another girl, and she ended up missing the word novelist. I had to spell it, get it correct, and spell one more word correct. I was surprised when I actually did all of those.

I won the class spelling bee! I didn't want to go up in front of the school, but I had to. So I studied a new list of words that the administrators gave me. Those days flew by, and I didn't feel like doing it when the day came, but I also wanted to win. It started out with the easier words first, which my parents will argue I got the harder words I kind of disagree, it narrowed down to about five people, and then that one word came to me.

Goblet. I got knocked out on that word. My parents said I got it correct every time that I practiced it, and I thought I spelled it the same way they corrected me, but I guess that I didn't. I was disappointed, but I was also relieved I didn't have to go any further into the rounds. That is one event that I won't really forget. I am happy that I ended up getting the best in the class, but I'm still mad at the word goblet.

Fear of Heights

By: Mahmoodullah Kidwai

I have this fear.

My legs shake. I break out in a cold sweat. I start jabbering to anyone who is near. As thoughts of certain death run through my mind the world appears a precious, awesome place. I imagine my own funeral then shrink back at the implications. My stomach feels strange. My palms are sweaty

I am terrified of heights.

It's not really a fear of being in a high place. Rather, it's the view of a long way to fall, of rocks far below me, of no firm wall between me and the edge. My sense of security is screamingly absent. There are no guardrails, flimsy though I picture them, or other safety devices. I can rely only on my own grip or lack of.

Despite my fear, two summers ago I somehow found myself climbing to a high place, quaking inside and out. All around the pool and on down to the rushing river there were boulders, large and small. The beach was strewn with rocks. On both sides of the fall, the jungle stretched to meet it, rising parallel on a gentler slope.

After eating our lunches within sight and sound of the fall we wanted to go to an area above it. We knew others had done so on previous trips. A few of us went first to make sure they were on the right path. But after they left my group of seven decided to go ahead without waiting for them to return. I suspected we were going the wrong way, but I kept silent, figuring that the others knew better. We went along the base of the hill until we reached the climb. It stopped me in my tracks.

The climb rose steeply above us. Along the right edge, the jungle hugged the rocks. Passage through its trees did not look possible. The majority of my view was filled with rocks. Looming high to the sky, the boulders rose in a tiered manner. Peering back down toward the river, I saw a steep slope of rocks all the way to the water. All I could think about was how far it would be to fall, but when I was done climbing I was so excited. It was worth it. Facing my fear taught me to have confidence in myself.

Abu Dhabi

By: Spriha Manjigani

“Life begins at the end of your comfort zone”- Neale Donald Walsch

I was scared. Really, really scared. We were standing in line at Ferrari World in Dubai waiting to get on the roller coaster, but this wasn't any old roller coaster (which is why I was scared). It was (and still is) the fastest roller coaster in the world. I absolutely *love* roller coasters of any kind and so I really wanted to see how it would go. I wasn't sure if I was ready for this, but it was too late to back out. Once we got into our separate cars, we were given goggles because of the severely high speeds we would be going at. I buckled up and was read to go. “Here goes nothing” I thought. I could feel myself moving but I was really really disappointed. IT WAS SO SLOW, and then we stopped. “Oh great, a malfunction.....maybe this just wasn't meant to be.” And then... We took off.

I was so disappointed at first but then I realized, that was their plan. They wanted to disappoint, then surprise. The max speed was 149 mph (which is why we had goggles). It was a really thrilling ride. We went so fast up and down and up and down over and over and over, at least 10 times. I loved it because it went up and down and even sideways. What made it even better was that we only had seatbelts (the exact same type of seatbelt in an airplane). The only part that I didn't really like was when we had the 0 gravity feeling. The roller coaster didn't stop when it got to the top of a hike up, it would just keep going because there was too much momentum for it to stop. When it would go down, there was this weird, uncomfortable feeling. It's like we powered through the ride, no stops. I was so excited but so scared all throughout the whole thing.

I think I really stepped outside my comfort zone with this because I was unsure about if I should do it. After I got on, it wasn't too bad. I think it was a great learning experience, telling me that I have to step out of my comfort zone if I want to live my life. I'm proud to say that I did go on the fastest roller coaster in the world and I do not regret it. I added the quote at the beginning because I think it's something everyone can learn from and it really reflects this situation well.

My Cousin's Graduation

By: Dominique Matthews

I woke up one day, ready to see my first graduation. I had never been to a high school graduation before, especially since this one was a home school. I remember my mom was trying to force me to wear a dress. I hate dresses more than anything, so I wasn't very happy. After we all got ready we left the house. In the car we went, all with suits and dresses.

A long 3 hour trip it was to Raleigh, and when we finally got there we were tired. We then went into a church and greeted our cousins. After laughs and hugs, we went inside the room where the graduation would be held. As we went my cousin Hannah showed my sister, Gabby, and I a surprise. She said we would use it when my cousin graduated.

We were finally seated, and the graduation started. My cousin Timothy and I played some games as we waited, annoying our parents. We were told to sit still, which we did until it was her turn. Then we heard it, the name Sierra. It was her turn! As she started walking up, cheers rose around her. But then Hannah, Gabby, and I unleashed the surprise. A loud air horn rang! It shook up the people around us, and everyone heard it. We were ready, though Sierra was not. She looked embarrassed and annoyed. But she just laughed it off and the graduation continued.

After that we met my uncle's brother and his family, and we all decided to go get something to eat. We drove for what felt like miles until we arrived at Golden Corral. We got a big table and sat down. We saw some people from the graduation, and said hello. Then we got food. We ate and talked for about an hour or two, then left. We all said our goodbyes as they went back to their new home in Ohio, and we came back to Charlotte.

Later in the year we went to Ohio for Thanksgiving, and she had started college. She found a boyfriend and she was doing well.

Who Ever Thought He Would Be So Strong

By: Nina Merritt

The whole thing started when my brother, William, complained that his stomach was hurting. We were in the Hamptons a couple years ago with close family friends, my mom was at the grocery store with my Auntie Rae and my brother was asking for her. I heard him screaming that his stomach was hurting. I thought it was just a stomach ache, I told him that mom wasn't home and that he should try to use the bathroom. He continued to scream, I didn't really know what to do so I called Jess, who was looking after us, and she gave him some medicine. He felt a little better but his stomach was still hurting. When my mom got back William told her that his stomach was hurting, he felt so bad that he couldn't even participate in any of the games we were playing. For the rest of the vacation he was too sick to do anything.

William started to feel better a little before we left to go home. When we got home William said that his stomach was hurting again. We still didn't know what it was. He started to get motion sick really easily. My mom tried giving him some food but he physically could not eat. Even the smell of food made him nauseous. My mom took him to the doctor and they said that it wasn't a big deal and he just needed to rest. After about a week he tried going back to football practice. He had to sit out because he was feeling dehydrated and lightheaded. Nobody really knew his pain, my mom made him keep practicing because she didn't want his coaches to think he was "weak". My brother was miserable. My mom took us home after practice and his motion sickness took the best of him. He said he was nauseous, my mom got nervous and rushed him out of the car. Sure enough, he was throwing up.

After that situation, my parents took him to urgent care and the doctor told them that it wasn't just the flu, it was... appendicitis. He had to get surgery and he had an IV because he still couldn't eat. It even hurt him to walk. The first go around he was in the hospital for about a week. They let him go because he was doing better. It turns out he wasn't better, a couple days later he was checked back into the hospital. He had to get a CT Scan and finish his recovery. He was released for the second time five days later. Because he couldn't eat he lost 8 pounds when he was sick. He had to have an IV at home for a while but he was feeling better, he started to eat more and eventually he could start to go to school and football practice.

My brother had a near-death experience and the doctors said that it was lucky we caught it when we did. It was a very scary situation for my whole family. My brother stayed strong and right now he is healthier than ever. I will never forget when my brother had appendicitis.

Don't Play Tag With Adam

By: Tyler Price

A cool, mid-summer day in 2012. I was about 8 years old at the time, without a single care in the world. I was over at my grandfather's house when I heard a knock on the door. It was a kid named, as far as I remember, Adam. I had, years before played a game of tag with him, in a lawn that, supposedly, had fertilizer that wasn't to be exposed to skin, or it could lead to potential poisoning or death. He had accidentally pushed me down in the lawn, but I was perfectly fine. Now, 3 years later, I didn't think anything bad could possibly happen. We played tag for about 10 or 15 minutes, before we got tired.

Both of us out of breath, we had a short conversation that went a bit like this: "Hey Adam," I said, to which he replied, "What?" in response I tagged him and ran. Except... I didn't get far. I actually slipped on some dirt and fell hard on my chest, landing on a few bricks near the patio of their house. Of course, this knocked the wind out of me, but since I had no prior experience with such a sensation, I thought I'd never be able to breathe again. My thought process went something like: OHNOICANTBREATHEIMGONNADIE!

I lay on the ground for about 5 minutes after I fell, before finally being able to stand up. When I did, I guess I stood too quickly, because I threw up on some dirt. Adam went to get help, and some of Adam's family swept some dirt onto it. My Mom had also come outside, worried, because I hadn't just gotten right up and started back playing, and she carried me to the couch in my grandfather's house.

"Mom, I'm sleepy," I said, but she said not to go to sleep, and she didn't let me. If it weren't for her not letting me sleep, I probably wouldn't be here typing this story. Either that, or I'd be in a coma for a few months after.

Anyway, she called an ambulance, and I was taken to a nearby doctor's office, and, as far as I know, they couldn't find anything wrong, so they transferred me to a nearby hospital. Upon arriving, I remember being wheeled into an elevator, then a room with very bright lights overhead, the smell of sanitation, and a bunch of doctors surrounding me, covering me with instruments and being told "this will only feel like a pinch" as I was given an IV. Of course, at the time, 'just a pinch' was also, of course, a stab with a foreign object, so I shed a single, dramatic tear.

I was then wheeled into a place where I was to be scanned to see if there was anything that they couldn't see from the outside. Finally, I was wheeled into a hospital room. It was fairly small, with a TV that the bed was facing, and a window on the right wall.

A few hours later, I discovered why it hurt when I laughed (there were times when my parents would joke), coughed, and even sat up: A level 5 liver laceration.

Of course, eight year old me didn't understand what the word 'laceration' meant, but the doctors defined it; basically, my liver was nearly split in half, which, of course, scared me. I was thinking, as most 8-year-old minds would think at the time, "What if it never heals?" and "Am I gonna die?"

A week and a few blood (and other bodily fluid) samplings later, I was released from the hospital. I was advised to not run around for a few months after the incident. I also learned one important lesson from the events of that day: Don't play tag with Adam.

Scarowinds

By: Jordyn Smith

This all started about a year ago. One of the kids of my mom's friend wanted to see if I was available to go to Scarowinds, one of the scariest but most entertaining things in the state. I was hesitant. I didn't want to seem like a wimp because I used my track speed to get away from all the creeps and monsters, leaving my friend in the dust. It took some contemplating, do I stay or do I go? I decided to face my fears and go.

While I was in my friend's car, he started talking about what we could do and couldn't do. He told me he didn't want to go in any mazes or haunted houses, because he was afraid. I wanted to jump up and down and thank him, but I kept it under control.

As we entered the park, we both marveled at how they transformed the place so quickly. Just yesterday it was all fun and games but now, it looked like R.L. Stine himself came and told them what to do to make every corner a good spot to get scared.

The first monster we saw looked like he was a giant piece of deformed clay with a brown, dusty, veiny face. He came up to us and we laughed. He wasn't as scary up close as he was far away. We came up to him and gave him a high five. I was thinking, if this is the worst of them, I would be ok! Bad news is, he wasn't the worst of them, good thing is, my friend knew how to hide.

We ran up to giants that were 15 feet tall and we walked past dwarfs that were 3 feet tall. We saw everything from demon contortionists to zombies that could run. The worst place was definitely the most open part of the theme park with the fastest, scariest clowns you could think off. Now you may just be thinking of a clown with big feet and balloons but these clowns were the exact opposite. They had long pointed teeth and long, sharp, gleaming knives, ready to gut anyone who got in their path. They would chase you until you left their alley and went back to roaming pointlessly.

When me and my friend came across these things, the scariest monsters in the park, we looked at each other and took off, me right in front and him on my heels. That was our best bonding moment when we were able to read each other's minds and know exactly what to do. We ran until we found a candy shop and went in.

The best part was when we learned the secret that they can't go into stores. We would run from store to store until we got to the ride we wanted. Then we rode and ran for the closest store. We may have looked like complete idiots hiding under everything we could, but it was worth it. I got to have fun, and be scared at the same time.

Selling Food

By: Cassandra Stallings

It was an adventure that all started when my mom told me that my family, (sister, brother, mom, and dad) were moving to the Dominican Republic. I couldn't believe it! I had never been outside of the US before. I remember how eager I was to move. Life in Ocala, Florida was boring and dull. Where we lived, we didn't have any neighbors for miles. My mom told me that the Dominican Republic was crazy and a lot different from here. When she used to live there, people would go out on the street at ungodly hours in the morning trying to sell eggs and fruits and vegetables. I tried to imagine that here in Florida, but failed. What would people think if they woke up to men shouting out, "eggs for sale" or "get your oranges people." I would have freaked out. I couldn't wait to experience the new culture.

When we landed in the Dominican Republic after our hour and a half flight, I stared around in awe at all the people speaking Spanish. It's not like I was unaccustomed to people speaking Spanish around me, it's just that I had never seen so many people speak it in one place. After we left the airport, we drove to a city called Moca where we were supposed to meet our aunt, Nena. I found out that I was going to be living with Aunt Nena for a month while my parents looked for a job. Two weeks had passed, and I was hating the Dominican Republic. There were no people on the streets selling food, I had no friends, and life was even more boring than it was in Ocala. I asked my mom why she had lied to me about the Dom Rep. being "crazy," and a quick spanking taught me not to accuse my mom of lying. Anyways, after that, she told me that the cool stuff was in La Capital and we hadn't been there yet.

After a month had passed, we finally moved out of Aunt Nena's apartment. I was so excited because I thought we were going to move to La Capital, but nope!, we just had to move to a different place. This city was called Mejoramiento Social. This place was not the safest or the nicest. I remember hearing gunshots almost every night while I was in bed. We lived in a run down hotel for a month. The owner to the hotel was an old blind man who was the sweetest person there ever was. He would give us ripe chinolas and avocados and would always help us if there was anything we needed. Although we had a place to live, I didn't really have a life. The only time I would ever come out of that horrible hotel room was to go to little stores with my mom to buy food and necessities. That was the only time I was allowed out of the hotel because it was so dangerous. I still didn't have any friends and at this point, I just wanted to go back to Florida. It seemed like we were never going to move to La Capital.

After a month had passed in Mejoramiento Social, we moved yet again. At this point, I had lost all hope of ever moving to La Capital, so I was very surprised to find out that was where we were going. We moved into a very big and pretty apartment. My

dad had found a stable job as a teacher at a private school and he enjoyed teaching the kids the English language. After a few weeks of us living in La Capital , we found an awesome church and started going there every Sunday. I met a lot of new friends from my new church, and I also started school. This was the first time I was going to school in the Dominican Republic. School was not the best. I got bullied a lot and the teachers were very mean and irresponsible. I couldn't go to the school my dad taught at because it was too expensive. Despite the school issue, I still loved La Capital. I met one of my best friends who lived on the floor above me in the apartment building, I had a chance to experience the culture of the Dominican Republic, and I finally got to see men on the streets at ungodly hours of the morning selling food.

My Grandmother

By: Zoe Szanton

My grandmother died recently, so I want to share my fondest memories of her and the time we spent together. In all the years I had with her, my greatest memories of her are having her come to every performance I had. I have had many performances in my life but my second to last performance was one of my favorite memories of her. We went to lunch together after the performance. I had just done Shrek the musical and I was singing all the songs for the play and she was listening, reminding me that I had a beautiful voice. When we got to Red Robin's, her and my brother's favorite restaurant, we all sat down and she ordered fish. I remember trying to try the salmon from her plate. She was okay with me eating some of it because she knew that we ate salmon at our house. It was great, but when my brother started eating his pizza he got sauce all over his face and he had to go to the bathroom to clean his mouth. Then we dropped her off at her house and went home.

Another memory of my grandma is when we would watch Judge Judy, The Price Is Right or Wheel Of Fortune together. We both loved these shows. I would sit on the bed with her when the shows came on and when someone won we would talk about how they got the right answer or when someone won the case we would negotiate who should have won or sometimes change the channel to some show my brother liked.

When my grandmother died I wasn't planning on going to the funeral but I ended up going, I had my friend to help me through it but I cried the whole time. My grandmother was one my favorite people and I am still very sad. If I could bring her back I would. I miss seeing her and going over to my aunt's house for parties and seeing her in her jewelry and dresses and fancy clothes.

All I need to remember that she is in a better place and she will be well remembered by my family and I.

Rare Moments

By: Meheret Zelalem

I really do love my family. There are a lot of us. My grandma had 14 children, 6 boys and 8 girls. It's fun when we have special occasions and "get togethers". The house is always full of cousins, aunts, and uncles. We have so much fun those times. We really cherish those moments. We all have those times where we don't get along or we fight. But it all fades and we forget about it. Then we have my mom, my dad, and my brother. 27 cousins total. We're from all around the world, some in Europe, some in the US, and some in Africa. But the many many miles that we are away from each other doesn't stop us from those rare moments.

Over the summer my grandfather on my mother's side came from Ethiopia to visit. He stayed along time in Maryland where a lot, I mean a lot, of my cousins live. Then, finally, he came here to Charlotte to see us for a week. Even though it was only a week and we didn't know how long it would be until we saw him again, we made the best of the time that we did have with him. We would get together and watch the Olympics. My grandpa really does love the Olympics. He can watch it for hours, but track is his favorite of all. I guess it "runs" in the family.

With my grandpa living so far away, in a completely different continent, he doesn't really speak much English. He speaks Amharic, the Ethiopian language. But that's what makes it fun, I learn from him. I try to teach him some English, and he tries to teach me Amharic, it's fun to learn it. And every time I remembered that he would only be here for a week, I got sad. My mom always reminded me that there would be other times that I would see him. In my mind I always knew I may never see him again. But I pushed the miserable memories away. And reminded myself "only a week", make the best of it.

Then there's my grandma. I've heard so many stories about her from uncles, aunts, and my parents. I don't really remember her much. I visited her when I was 9, and earlier when I was 4. My mom always tells me the story of how she was there when both me and my brother were born. They always describe her as a sweet, loving, caring person who thought of others. I have no doubt in my mind that she is that perfect picture. I really do hope to see her soon, now that she's grown sick.

Those "rare moments," they're exactly what they sound like. There special and they mean a lot to you. But they don't come around very often. And you especially never forget them, the more they mean to you. I have many of them but this is definitely one that I will remember for the rest of my life. Everyone has them, whether you have 1 or 5. These are what bring our families closer. How we get to know each other more, and grow close.

My grandpa is now leaving this Sunday. I'm really upset that I didn't get to see him for the last time. He's been staying in Maryland since he left Charlotte. My cousin is getting married next year. You never know, I might see him there. Which, by the way, would be amazing. Not just for me but for the whole family to get together. Who know it may even become another one of those "Rare Moments," fingers crossed.

Power of Depression

Anonymous Author

Depression.

A word that ripples fear into anyone's soul, even if they don't show it.

Depression is that one word that can shatter a person if it describes something they've gone through. When people think of depression, I will bet you anything that one of the first things they think about is suicide. You know, when someone kills themselves because emotions boil up inside them until they feel like they're going to explode, so they do the one thing to let out emotions. Die.

Death is the thing that we all fear, that and time. When will time stop? When will we run out of it? When you have depression, you run out when you choose to. I was bullied. Picked on. Teased. Hurt. And I never told a soul. The smile on my face has been fake for the past two months. A fake smile is saying "I don't want you to notice me, like in the movies, but I actually want attention but no one will give it to me." I wonder why.

My depression began when my uncle died a few years ago. I eventually got over it, and when I was in a class and we wrote stories about something that impacted our lives. I made many cry when I presented mine, people still talk about it to this day.

That helped me get over my depression back then, but middle school brought it back. People teased me, picked on me, but I never called it bullying, because I was afraid. Fear covered me, from head to toe. Fear blinded me, blinded me from seeing the light of life, and hope.

Still today, if someone asked who bullied me, I would be too afraid to tell. I am still depressed to this day, but no one knows. I won't let them know. I know I need help, and I know where to get it. I don't want help. If I did, I would've known better and gotten it by now. What's stopping me you might ask?

Fear. Fear is the thing that stops all men and women from greatness. Fear of embarrassment, fear of being ignored, and fear of being denied. If you ever met me in real life, face to face, you never would've guessed I was depressed.

I love acting, running, playing video games, and of course, singing. I sing privately, not to anyone else or with anyone else. Singing is another way I let out all the feelings bottled up inside me. I don't know what else I would do without the music I write. Before I go on, I should explain what made me depressed.

I was bullied, for one thing. I was also stressed and had anxiety. My parents stressed me out. They had such high expectations for me, I didn't know how to follow them up. I had an 84 in math, but that wasn't even good enough for them. They wanted all A's. Like my brother. The one thing they compare me to. "Be more athletic, like your brother, and get all A's, like your brother!"

I know, I know. It's normal for younger siblings to be compared to older ones. The thing is, my brother's in 5th grade. Yup. My parents think it's so easy there, that it will be just as easy in middle school. This is one of the main things that caused my stress.

I still to this day have suicidal thoughts, but I know I'll make it through. I have amazing friends, who would never let me fall, and if I did, they would help me up. Suicide is a word that still scares me. If you have these thoughts, don't be like me. Get help when you need it, don't let fear blind your path to success. Let the sun rays of hope and life blind you instead.